

SCRUTINY BOARD (HOUSING AND REGENERATION)

TUESDAY, 9TH DECEMBER, 2014

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors J Chapman, P Grahame,
R Grahame, J Illingworth, J Lewis, D Nagle,
J Pryor, A Smart and G Wilkinson

48 Chair's Comments

The Chair welcomed John Gittos, the new Chair of the Tenant Scrutiny Board, to the meeting.

49 Late Items

There were no formal late items of business to consider. However the Chair agreed to accept the following item as supplementary information:

- Draft comments on the draft Housing Strategy (agenda item 12) (Minute 58 refers)

50 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

51 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors C Campbell, D Collins, M Iqbal and C Towler. Notification had been received that Councillor J Chapman was to substitute for Councillor C Campbell, Councillor R Grahame for Councillor M Iqbal and Councillor J Lewis for Councillor C Towler.

52 Minutes - 11 November 2014

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2014 be approved as a correct record.

53 East Leeds Orbital Road

The Director of City Development submitted a report which provided an update in relation to the East Leeds Orbital Road.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel
- Martin Farrington, Director of City Development

- Gary Bartlett, Chief Highways Officer

The key areas of discussion were:

- The Council is currently working towards Gateway 1 approval by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority in January 2015
- The Combined Authority processes are a requirement of the government's agreement with the City Region as part of the Strategic Economic Plan
- Confirmation that officers and the Executive Member shared the ambition to deliver this project as quickly as the complexity of the project allowed
- A request for confirmation that all stages due to have been completed by this point were complete. Officers agreed to check and confirm this.
- Potential opportunities for speeding up the construction phases of the project have been identified
- Communication with landowners along the route were not complete. Members were keen to see this progressed as quickly as possible
- Questioning as to whether the chosen procurement route was the most efficient to deliver the road as soon as possible
- Confirmation that the project was taking account of the most up to date relevant public health objectives
- Members of the Scrutiny Board would prefer no further permissions to be granted for further house building in the affected area until the road has been built

The Board decided to continue to monitor progress, and requested an update report in March 2015. This report should clearly highlight any changes in the timetable from the current version of the Gantt chart. It should also include details on the current housing consents in the area, any applications under consideration and the implications of these for the highway network in the interim period..

RESOLVED – That a further progress report be brought to the Board in March 2015.

54 2014/15 Quarter 2 Performance Report

The Director of Environment and Housing and the Director of City Development submitted a joint report which provided a summary of performance against the strategic priorities for the council and city relevant to the Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration).

The following information was appended to the report:

- A summary of performance at Quarter 2 across both City Priority Plan (CPP) and Best Council Plan (BCP) priorities.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Martin Farrington, Director of City Development
- Simon Costigan, Chief Officer Strategic Housing

- Anna Tansley, Service Manager, Performance & Business Improvement

The main areas of discussion were:

- Plans to introduce one or new indicators on housing decency linked to the new Leeds Housing Standard
- Concern that a high proportion of the housing growth was attributable to empty properties returned to use rather than new build housing, and the actions being taken to respond to this.
- Information on the Housing Growth 'breakthrough' project and membership of the Member Steering Group
- A request to provide members with a breakdown of arrears by area
- A request for further information about under occupancy cases
- Clarification of the support being provided to tenants seeking to downsize
- Concern about the performance levels on adaptations and repairs, and a request that future performance reports provide a breakdown by priority category
- A suggestion that the Tenant Scrutiny Board be provided with similar performance information on repairs
- A request that consideration be given to introducing one or more indicators on energy efficiency measures
- A request for further information about former council houses bought under right to buy legislation and then rented out privately to tenants who claim housing benefit

RESOLVED

- a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted
- b) That the further information requested be provided to Members
- c) That future performance reports incorporate a breakdown of adaptations and repairs performance by priority category
- d) That consideration be given to introducing one or more indicators on energy efficiency measures

55 Financial Position Statement 2014/15 - City Development and Environment and Housing Directorates

The Directors of Environment and Housing and City Development submitted a joint report which presented a financial update report in relation to services within this Board's portfolio.

The following were in attendance:

- Richard Ellis, Head of Finance (Environment and Housing)

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Board notes the projected financial position of the Directorates of City Development and Environment and Housing at period 6 of the financial year 2014/15.

56 Empty Property Buy Back Scheme

The Head of Housing Partnerships submitted a report which provided information about the Council's approach to buying back former Council homes.

The following were in attendance:

- John Statham, Head of Housing Partnerships.

The main areas of discussion were:

- 16 properties had now been bought
- An underspend on the original scheme meant that a further 2 empty properties would be returned to use
- Members asked for further detail on the costs of the new build housing as a comparator, in particular the costs of meeting the council's specification over and above standard volume house building costs
- Clarification of the assessment process before agreeing to buy back property
- The identification and mapping of long term empty property that might be suitable to buy back
- The potential for purchasing property on the open market
- Options for existing owners who might wish to sell back to the council
- The contribution of empty properties that are returned to use in meeting the housing growth target, with a 5 year target of 2,000 homes to be returned to use

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Board notes the success of the empty property buy back scheme.

57 Delivering Housing on Council Brownfield Land - Quarterly Update

The Director of City Development submitted a report which provided an update on progress to bring forward new housing development on previously developed land within Council ownership.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Council Brownfield Land Update Schedule.

The following were in attendance:

- Mark Mills, Executive Manager (Regeneration).

Members welcomed the progress that had been made since the Scrutiny Board undertook to receive regular monitoring reports.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and appendices be noted and that the progress made be welcomed.

58 Work Schedule

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which detailed the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the current municipal year.

The following information was appended to the report:

- The Scrutiny Board's work schedule
- Minutes of the Tenant Scrutiny Board meeting held on 13 November 2014
- Minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 19 November 2014
- Draft comments on the draft Housing Strategy

It was noted that the proposal for taking forward the work arising from Mr Hall's request for scrutiny was not yet available.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the work schedule be approved, subject to the inclusion of a progress report on the East Leeds Orbital Road in March 2015;
- b) That the Board's comments on the draft Housing Strategy be agreed; and
- c) That the Chair and the Principal Scrutiny Adviser be authorised to finalise the terms of reference for the scrutiny work arising from Mr Hall's request for scrutiny, following email consultation with all Board Members and the relevant Directors and Executive Members.

59 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday 20 January 2015 at 1.30pm (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 1.00pm)

(The meeting concluded at 3.40pm)