

SCRUTINY BOARD (HOUSING AND REGENERATION)

TUESDAY, 20TH JANUARY, 2015

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors C Campbell, D Collins,
P Grahame, J Illingworth, M Iqbal, D Nagle,
J Pryor, A Smart, C Towler and
G Wilkinson

60 Late Items

There were no formal late items of business to consider. However the Chair agreed to accept the following supplementary information in relation to agenda item 9:

- Draft Revised Foreword and Draft Memoranda to 'Neighbourhoods for Living' document. (Minute No. 66 refers)

A revised document for the recommendation tracking item (page 69 of the agenda pack) was also circulated to Board Members. (Minute No. 68 refers)

61 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting. However, in relation to agenda item 8, Tenant Home Contents Insurance Scheme, Councillor P Grahame drew the Board's attention to the fact that she was a former employee of Royal Sun Alliance. As this was not a pecuniary interest, Councillor P Grahame remained in the meeting for that part of the discussion (Minute No. 65 refers).

62 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

There were no apologies for absence.

63 Minutes - 9 December 2014

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2014 be approved as a correct record.

64 2015/16 Initial Budget Proposals

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the initial 2015/16 budget proposals relevant to the Scrutiny Board's portfolio.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel)
- Councillor Richard Lewis, Executive Member (Transport and the Economy)
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Richard Ellis, Head of Finance (Environment and Housing)
- Simon Criddle, Head of Finance (City Development).

The key areas of discussion were:

- Greater emphasis needed in the report regarding the number of staff that had been redeployed.
- Concern regarding insufficient insulation in high rise flats. The Board was advised that an investment plan was being reported to the March Executive Board. The Scrutiny Board asked to receive a copy of the investment plan.
- Further work needed to demonstrate how resources were being allocated.
- Clarification how tenants could access information about the investment plan. Members were advised that there was tenant representation on the Housing Advisory Board which had undertaken work on the investment plan. Information was also included in the tenants' newsletter.
- Concerns regarding the increase in service charges to tenants for the maintenance of communal areas.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the initial budget proposals be noted and any comments from this Scrutiny Board be forwarded to the Executive Board through the Scrutiny Board (Resources and Council Services).
- (b) That the draft housing investment plan come to the Board for pre-decision scrutiny.

65 Tenant Home Contents Insurance scheme

The Chief Officer (Housing Management) submitted a report which provided the Scrutiny Board with an overview of the Tenant Home Content Insurance Scheme and the benefits it provided to the Council and its tenants.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel)
- Mandy Sawyer, Head of Neighbourhood Services
- Ben Mallows, Neighbourhood Services Officer
- Frank Morrison, Insurance Manager.

The main areas of discussion were:

- Concern regarding the poor take-up of the scheme. At present 5.6% of tenants utilised the scheme.
- Clarification sought regarding the much higher than average take up in some Leeds postcodes compared to others. The Board was advised that this may have been due to inconsistent approaches to promoting the scheme. This was being addressed through an ongoing programme of training.
- Confirmation that the scheme was promoted to tenants as part of annual tenancy visits.
- Whether the Council had explored converting from an 'opt in' to an 'opt out' approach. Members were advised that this would require setting an average insured amount which may not be sufficient for all tenants. It would also require a change to the tenancy agreement.
- The role of ward Members and the Tenant Scrutiny Board in helping to promote the scheme.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Scrutiny Board notes the content of the report and the benefits of the Tenant Home Content Insurance Scheme to the Council and its tenants.
- (b) That Housing Management designs a marketing package to increase the take up of the Tenant Home Content Insurance Scheme.
- (c) That progress in encouraging take up is reported back to the Board in due course.

66 Leeds Housing Standard - Design Quality (update) - Memoranda to 'Neighbourhoods for Living' (January 2015)

The Chief Planning Officer submitted a report which invited the Scrutiny Board to contribute to the consultation on the new Foreword and Memoranda to the 'Neighbourhoods for Living' document.

The Board was advised that a copy of the Draft Revised Foreword and Draft Memoranda to the 'Neighbourhoods for Living' document had been circulated separately and made available on the Council's website.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Tim Hill, who had recently been appointed Chief Planning Officer. Tim was replacing Phil Crabtree who was leaving the Council at the end of January under the Council's Early Leavers Initiative. The Board thanked Phil for his hard work and support to the Scrutiny Board and wished him all the best for the future.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel)
- Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer

- Tim Hill, Chief Planning Officer
- Mark Burgess, Design Team Manager.

The key areas of discussion were:

- A query regarding insufficient reference to public health. The Board was advised that reference to public health was included under background issues, health and well-being. However, the main emphasis of the document was on design standards and wider concerns regarding public health featured more prominently in the Council's Core Strategy.
- The Board welcomed the document, particularly in terms making clear the Council's expectations regarding design standards.

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Board welcomes the contents of the Memoranda to Neighbourhoods for Living and the new Foreword to the existing main document.

67 Accommodation for Students and impacts on residential neighbourhoods

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which requested the Scrutiny Board to note the final report of the Leeds Student Accommodation Working Group.

A copy of the working group's final report was appended to the report for the Board's information.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel)
- John Statham, Head of Housing Partnerships.

The main areas of discussion were:

- Clarification whether a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charge was imposed on developers that developed Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA). It was agreed that the Principal Scrutiny Adviser would follow this up on the Board's benefit.
- Confirmation that progress would be monitored by the Leeds Housing Forum and the Inner North West Community Committee Planning Sub-Group. A 6 month refresher followed by an annual update was anticipated.

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Board welcomes the final report of the Leeds Student Accommodation Working Group.

(Councillor D Nagle left the meeting at 3.28pm at the conclusion of this item.)

68 Recommendation Tracking

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which invited the Scrutiny Board to monitor progress against a recommendation from the affordable housing inquiry.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Recommendation tracking flow chart
- Progress report on one outstanding recommendation from the board's inquiry report on affordable housing by private developers.

A revised document for the outstanding recommendation had been circulated separately and made available on the Council's website.

The status of the recommendation from the scrutiny inquiry on affordable housing by private developers was agreed as follows:

- Recommendation 3 (ii) – Achieved.

RESOLVED – That the above recommendation status be approved.

69 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 18 December 2014
- Minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 17 December 2014.

Members asked for further information on work with tenants living in properties with communal space on what improvements could be made.

RESOLVED – That the work schedule be approved, subject to the addition of the following items:

- Pre-decision scrutiny of the Housing Investment Plan
- An initial report on improving standards in high-rise flats.

70 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 at 1.30pm (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 1.00pm)

(The meeting finished at 3.35pm)