

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING)

TUESDAY, 2ND FEBRUARY, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors J Bentley, D Collins, A Gabriel,
P Grahame, R Grahame, M Iqbal, M Lyons,
J Pryor, K Ritchie and G Wilkinson

68 Late Items

In relation to agenda item 8, the Board received an updated version of performance information that had been omitted from appendix 1.

69 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

70 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor A Khan. Notification had been received that Councillor R Grahame was substituting for Councillor A Khan.

71 Minutes - 12 January 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2016 be approved as a correct record.

72 Matters arising from the minutes

Minute no. 63 – Effective lettings and tenancy management

The Board acknowledged the need to consider issues in relation to public health.

73 Flooding - the role and impact on service areas within Environment and Housing

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented a briefing on flooding and the role and impact on service areas within Environment and Housing.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Report to Executive Board dated 20 January 2016 – Storm Eva Recovery Plan.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member (Communities)
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Helen Freeman, Chief Officer (Environmental Action)

The key areas of discussion were:

- Tributes were paid to the resilience of local residents and businesses affected by the flooding as well the vital response provided by frontline staff and volunteers.
- Clarification was sought regarding the lead department for flooding as Members acknowledged that this matter cuts across a number of directorates. The Board was advised that James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) had been given the responsibility to lead a new Council Flood Emergency Management Team in direct response to the flooding at Christmas 2015.
- Clarification was sought about who to contact in case of flooding and reference was made to the Council's Flood Risk Management Team within Highways and Transportation service area to seek advice in the first instance. In the event of flooding, the public can contact the Council for advice on **0113 222 4407** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). However, in an emergency or outside of these hours, the contact number is: **0113 376 0499**.
- The Board identified a need to ensure a coordinated approach between the Environment and Housing and City Development directorates in relation to gully cleansing. Members noted that new software is expected to be operational from Summer 2016 to help address this matter.
- Members learned that the Council had 5 gully vehicles and 5 gully crews on each shift (20 posts), with existing vacancies currently in the process of being filled.
- The Board recognised the potential for future joint scrutiny working on this matter with the Citizens and Communities and City Development Scrutiny Boards.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.

74 Provision of Police Community Support Officers in Leeds

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report setting out the Board's intention to consider its observations and recommendations in a statement to the Executive Board following its recent review of the provision of PCSOs in Leeds.

The following were in attendance:

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Superintendent Sam Millar, Chief Officer (Community Safety)

- Chief Superintendent Paul Money, Leeds District Commander, West Yorkshire Police.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Confirmation that the Executive Board will now be considering options in relation to the deployment of Council funded PCSOs at its March meeting.
- Confirmation that, although the policing budget for provision of PCSOs in Leeds had not yet been confirmed, an increase in the provision of fully funded PCSOs in Leeds was anticipated. Linked to this, the Board was advised that the current proposal was to provide at least one fully funded PCSO in every Ward.
- Clarification was sought regarding the types of activity linked to a demand led approach, which included, calls for service, crime levels and anti-social behaviour.
- Confirmation was sought regarding proposals for a new shift pattern arrangement for PCSOs.

RESOLVED – That the Board awaits confirmation of the policing budget for the provision of PCSOs in Leeds prior to formulating its observations and recommendations in a statement to the Executive Board.

75 Performance update

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which presented performance information relevant to the Board's remit.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Environment and Housing Performance Information, September 2015 (Housing)
- Environment and Housing Performance Information, December 2015 (Community Safety, Waste and Environment).

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member (Communities)
- Councillor Richard Lewis, Executive Member (Regeneration, Transport and Planning)
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Debra Scott, Head of Resources and Strategy, Environment and Housing.

The key areas of discussion were:

- The impact of the bedroom tax on rent arrears. The Board was advised that limited financial support was available through the discretionary housing fund.

- Issues associated with increased demand for council housing and lack of supply.
- The need to develop incentives aimed at encouraging tenants to switch from payment by cash to direct debit. The Board was advised about support provided by Leeds Credit Union to help tenants with online banking and managing budget priorities.
- Clarification sought regarding landfill figures for September 2015.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the performance information contained in the report and appendices be noted.
- (b) That the Board be provided with clarification regarding landfill figures for September 2015.

76 Work Schedule

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the 2015/16 municipal year.

The following updates were noted:

- The Board requested further information about temporary housing, particularly the type of housing and where tenants were being housed.
- The Board sought clarification regarding potential implications of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority role and Devolution Agenda on local housing-decision making.
- The Board briefly discussed arrangements for a Special Meeting to consider the provision of PCSOs in Leeds.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the work schedule be approved.
- (b) That the Board arranges a Special Meeting to consider the provision of PCSOs in Leeds.

77 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 22 March 2016 at 1.30pm (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 1.00pm)

(The meeting concluded at 3.20pm)