

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING)

TUESDAY, 22ND MARCH, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

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

78 Late Items

There were no late items.

79 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

80 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor A Gabriel. Notification had been received that Councillor R Grahame was to substitute for Councillor A Gabriel.

81 Minutes - 2 February 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2016 be approved as a correct record.

82 Matters arising from the minutes

Minute No.73 – Flooding – the role and impact on service areas within Environment and Housing

The Board emphasised the need to ensure a co-ordinated approach between Environment and Housing and City Development directorates in relation to gully cleansing, specifically when removing and re-installing bollards to undertake works.

83 Housing related matters

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which presented an update on a series of summaries of housing issues that were presented to the Board in September and December 2015.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member (Communities)
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing

- Jill Wildman, Chief Officer (Housing Management)
- Tom Finch, Head of Housing Contracts
- Rob McCartney, Head of Housing Support
- Mandy Sawyer, Head of Neighbourhood Services
- John Statham, Head of Housing Partnerships
- John Gittos, Chair of Tenant Scrutiny Board (in attendance for item on Tenant Scrutiny Board inquiry)

Members were informed that John Statham was retiring from the Council at the end of the month after 41 years' service. The Board thanked John for all his hard work and positive contribution to Leeds City Council.

The key areas of discussion regarding the various themes were:

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) growth programme with a focus on HRS council house programme and use of Right to Buy (RTB) receipts

- Clarification regarding the site allocations process, including an update on the provision of affordable housing across Leeds.
- An update on the positive work undertaken in relation to the new build development at Little London.

Progress with the Empty Homes Strategy

- The development of a neighbourhood approach to tackling empty homes.
- The important work undertaken by partners and the third sector, particularly in tackling more complex cases.
- The need to address issues regarding the classification of second homes.
- A request to be provided with a breakdown of empty homes by Ward.
- The positive development of landlord forums.

Standards within the Private Sector

- The need to develop closer links with Environmental Services to ensure environmental enforcement actions are also being taken where appropriate.
- The implementation of the new regulatory responsibility relating to property letting and managing agents through the Property Redress Scheme.

Update on Tenant Scrutiny Board Inquiry – Environment of Estates

- Confirmation that the draft scrutiny inquiry report regarding environment of estates was being presented to the April meeting of Tenant Scrutiny Board for approval.

Community Lettings Policies

- Confirmation that Community Committees were being consulted on the review of community lettings policies.
- An update on the review of support offered to tenants.
- Confirmation that the Scrutiny Board will have a further opportunity to discuss the final proposals before the outcome of the consultation and final proposals are presented to the Executive Board in September 2016.

Enforcement of Tenant Agreements

- Reported issues regarding obstructions in communal areas. Details about policies in place to address issues were to be provided to the Board.
- Confirmation that a feasibility study was being undertaken regarding the Council's approach to garages that were no longer considered fit for purpose.
- Training requirements identified in relation to the approach of some officers when undertaking Annual Home Visits.

Update on Leeds Housing Strategic Landlord Association (SLA) Forums

- No issues identified by the Board.

Temporary Accommodation

- The important role of housing related support services.
- Greater emphasis on development of self-contained accommodation.

Responsive Repairs and Maintenance

- Confirmation that a performance review was being undertaken to address issues, including a review of the charging model.
- A request that the Board be provided with an update on work with furniture re-use organisations.

Implications of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority role and Devolution Agenda on local housing decision making

- Clarification around West Yorkshire Combined Authority constitution.
- Funding for delivery of housing through the Growth Deal by the WYCA.
- Joint working arrangements between the WYCA and the Homes and Communities Agency to coordinate investment discussions.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the update on housing related themes be noted.
- (b) That the requests for information be provided.

(Councillor P Grahame joined the meeting at 1.50pm and Councillor M Iqbal at 2.05pm during the consideration of this item.)

84 Housing and Planning Bill 2015

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an overview of the key proposals set out within the Housing and Planning Bill 2015.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member (Communities)
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Jill Wildman, Chief Officer (Housing Management)
- John Statham, Head of Housing Partnerships.

The key areas of discussion were:

- The practical difficulties associated with implementing aspects of the Bill.
- The need to take account of regional variances, the different markets outside of London and the differences in incomes across the country.
- The need to address the full range of needs, particularly balancing the shift to home ownership with the demand for affordable housing.
- Concern about the changes to end lifetime tenancies for new tenants and the issues associated with this.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (b) That the practical suggestions about implementation contained in the report be fed back to government.

85 Neighbourhood policing in Leeds, including the provision of Police Community Support Officers

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented an overview of Neighbourhood Policing in Leeds, with particular reference to the provision of Police Community Support Officers.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Executive Board report dated 9 March 2016 – Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)
- Scrutiny Board (Environment and Housing) report dated 22 March 2016 – Neighbourhood Policing in Leeds – New Operating Model.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Mark Dobson, Executive Member (Environmental Protection and Community Safety)
- 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:

- An update on the level and deployment of PCSOs across Leeds.
- Clarification provided regarding the formula for distribution of PCSOs. The Board was advised that the police funded allocation was based on crime levels, anti-social behaviour and calls for service.
- Particular reference was made to the differences in PCSO allocations in the outer north west and outer north east areas. It was noted that local Neighbourhood Chief Inspectors are able to provide Ward Members with a more comprehensive analysis of the data that determines the deployment of policing resources in their localities.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

(Councillor M Lyons left the meeting at 3.45pm during the consideration of this item.)

86 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 Board briefly discussed arrangements for the April Board meeting. As part of the environment themed report from the directorate, the Board requested that this report included an update on bulky waste and recent successes utilising covert cameras to detect fly tipping.

It was noted that the April Board meeting was also to include an update on the Peckfield Landfill Site, particularly in relation to the following areas; communication; restoration and aftercare; and contingency planning.

The Board briefly discussed the possibility of undertaking the April Board meeting at the Veolia Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility. The Principal Scrutiny Adviser agreed to report back regarding the feasibility of this.

RESOLVED – That the work schedule be approved.

87 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 26 April 2016 at 1.30pm (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 1.00pm)

(The meeting concluded at 4.05pm)