

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING)

THURSDAY, 19TH JANUARY, 2017

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors J Bentley, A Blackburn,
K Bruce, D Collins, A Gabriel,
A Garthwaite, P Grahame, A Khan,
M Lyons, K Ritchie and G Wilkinson

63 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting, however the following matters were brought to the attention of the Scrutiny Board for information:

- Councillors A Gabriel and A Khan advised that they were private rented landlords.

The above Board Members remained present for the duration of the meeting.

64 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

There were no apologies for absence.

65 Minutes - 8 December 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2016 be approved as a correct record.

66 Matters arising from the minutes

Minute No. 60 – Peckfield Landfill Site - Update

The Board was advised that arrangements had been made for the Chair of the Scrutiny Board to meet with the West Yorkshire Area Manager at the Environment Agency. This invitation had been extended for all Board Members to attend. The meeting was scheduled for Monday, 27 February at 10.00am.

67 Housing Related Matters

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which presented a further update surrounding areas of housing policy/activity identified by the Board during its June meeting.

These included:

- Implications and progress relating to the 2016 Housing and Planning Act;
- The quality of private rented sector housing;
- Issues with Right to Buy properties after completion;
- Turnaround times for filling void council properties; and
- Tenant Scrutiny Board and the wider tenant involvement framework.

The report also provided clarification regarding the role of the Tenant Scrutiny Board and its support and governance arrangements. It also reflected the role of the Tenant Scrutiny Board within the wider Tenant Involvement Framework.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Tenant Involvement within Housing Leeds – Voice of Involved Tenants Across Leeds (VITAL)
- Tenant Scrutiny Board – Terms of Reference.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Jill Wildman, Chief Officer, Housing Management
- Simon Costigan, Chief Officer, Property and Contracts
- Mandy Sawyer, Head of Neighbourhood Services
- Sharon Guy, Housing Manager, Tenant Scrutiny
- John Gittos, Chair of Tenant Scrutiny Board.

The key areas of discussion were:

Implications and progress relating to the 2016 Housing and Planning Act

- An update that the Housing and Planning seminar for Elected Members was to be re-scheduled as the Council is still awaiting further clarity from Government surrounding a number of issues within the Act. Further details to be provided in due course.

The quality of private rented sector housing

- Clarification regarding the rights of tenants, particularly in relation to housing standards and the role of the Housing Options team.
- Greater education needed in ensuring that landlords are made aware of their responsibilities.
- Government proposals to widen the scope of mandatory HMO licensing. However, the Council is still awaiting further details on this.
- The importance of addressing standards in the sector, particularly in terms of poor quality homes and returning empty homes back into occupation. Linked to this, particular reference was made to the

targeted use of resources such as the Leeds Neighbourhood Approach in Holbeck.

- Issues associated with rogue landlords.
- The Board agreed to undertake more detailed scrutiny of the quality of Private Rented Sector Housing as part of its next housing themed meeting.

Issues with Right to Buy (RTB) properties after completion

- An update regarding the role of the Tenancy Fraud Team.

Turnaround times for filling void council properties

- Concern about break-ins and damage to void council properties. The Board was advised that valuable items were fitted around the needs of tenants.
- Acknowledgement regarding the positive work undertaken by LCC in relation to reducing the level of void council properties in Leeds.

Tenant Scrutiny Board and the wider tenant involvement framework

- The Board discussed and acknowledged the statutory role of the Tenant Scrutiny Board and also received an overview of its key achievements by the Chair of the Tenant Scrutiny Board.
- In acknowledgement of the existing wider tenant involvement framework, the Board identified the need to ensure a more co-ordinated approach to wider tenant involvement.
- A suggestion that a working group be established to review the role of wider tenant involvement groups.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (b) That the Board undertakes more detailed scrutiny of the quality of Private Rented Sector Housing as part of its next housing themed meeting.
- (c) That a working group be established to review the role of wider tenant involvement groups.

(Councillor K Bruce joined the meeting at 10.10am during the consideration of this item.)

(Councillor J Bentley left the meeting at 11.10am at the conclusion of this item.)

68 Performance Update

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which presented a summary of the most recent performance data, and provided an update on progress in delivering the relevant priorities in the Best Council Plan 2015-20.

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Thursday, 16th February, 2017

The following information was appended to the report:

- Environment and Housing Performance Information November 2016 (Housing)
- Environment and Housing Performance Information (latest available 2016) (Community Safety, Waste and Environment).

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor Lucinda Yeadon, Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability
- Councillor Richard Lewis, Executive Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Simon Costigan, Chief Officer, Property and Contracts.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Details about an upcoming review of adaptations and the Board's potential involvement with this.
- The issue of unauthorised encampments and the need to ensure a consistent approach, particularly in relation to use of Section 61.
- Concern about an increase in burglaries in some parts of the city. The Board was provided with an update on the Council's lock replacement scheme.
- Clarification sought regarding homeless related figures included in the report.

RESOLVED – That the Board notes the most recent performance information contained in appendices 1 and 2 and the issues that have been highlighted.

69 Financial Health Monitoring

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which presented the latest financial health monitoring update (month 7) that was considered by the Executive Board at its meeting on 14 December 2016.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor Lucinda Yeadon, Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability
- Councillor Richard Lewis, Executive Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Richard Ellis, Head of Finance for Environment and Housing.

RESOLVED – That the latest financial health monitoring report (month 7) considered by Executive Board at its meeting on 14 December 2016, be noted.

70 2017/18 Initial Budget Proposals

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which introduced initial budget proposals for 2017/18.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor Lucinda Yeadon, Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability
- Councillor Richard Lewis, Executive Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Richard Ellis, Head of Finance for Environment and Housing.

The key areas of discussion were:

- The potential for significant cost savings arising from proposed efficiency measures within Leeds Building Services that would also help make this service more competitive.
- Clarification about proposed arrangements for refuse collection re-routing. The Board was pleased to note the involvement of frontline staff to help inform proposed changes to routes and stressed the importance of engaging effectively with Elected Members too. The Board agreed to keep a watching brief on the implementation of the proposed changes.
- An acknowledgment that a number of the directorate's proposed efficiencies were linked to the Council-wide review of Locality Working. The Board was keen to monitor the potential impacts of this review in relation to Environmental Action services and particularly street cleansing.
- Clarification about reductions in front line horticultural staff and grass / hedge cuts on highway assets. The Board was advised that discussions had taken place with Community Committees about how best to develop this approach and also the involvement of community groups.
- Development of the corporate approach to volunteering and work with key partners.
- An update on the proposal to introduce charges for replacement wheeled bins and bulky waste. Linked to this, the Board highlighted the need to consider the implications for those households not in receipt of a brown bin collection that are being advised to use the bulky waste collection service instead.
- Confirmation regarding proposed increases in parking charges, including at Woodhouse Lane car park. The Board was advised that

the car park was operating at full capacity and the proposed parking charges were still less than other private operators in the city.

- In acknowledging the range of charging proposals being put forward, the Board emphasised the importance maintaining some flexibility to be able to review and revisit such charges where appropriate.
- Confirmation that discussions with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) regarding future funding arrangements were still ongoing.
- An update on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) pressures and savings, including proposed increases in service charges.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments, the Board notes the Executive Board's initial budget proposals for 2017/18.

(Councillor A Gabriel left the meeting at 12.40pm during the consideration of this item.)

71 Work Schedule

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the 2016/17 municipal year.

The Board was advised that the February Board meeting was themed around community safety. It was noted that the PCC was unable to attend the Board meeting on 16 February 2017. The Chair had therefore requested a working group meeting instead and the PCC had agreed to this. The working group meeting was scheduled for Thursday, 2 February 2017 at 1.30pm.

The next session of the Air Quality Inquiry was provisionally scheduled for Wednesday, 1 March 2017 and would be focused on transport related matters. DEFRA had therefore been invited to attend this session.

RESOLVED – That subject to any on-going discussions and scheduling decisions, the Board's outline work schedule be approved.

72 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 16 February 2017 at 10.00am (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30am)

(The meeting concluded at 12.50pm)