

SCRUTINY BOARD (DEVELOPMENT)

TUESDAY, 23RD JANUARY, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor B Cleasby in the Chair

Councillors P Davey, D Hollingsworth,
G Latty, R Lewis, M Lobley, A Lowe and
A Ogilvie

58 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Cleasby declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 12 (Minute No. 66 refers) as a Member of the Development Plan Panel which had also considered the Local Development Framework – Annual Monitoring Report, and declared his intention to leave the meeting for this item. Members voted unanimously that Councillor Hollingsworth would Chair the meeting for Item 12.

59 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Millard and Taggart.

60 Minutes of Last Meeting

The Chair confirmed that, as requested at the previous meeting, Members had been circulated with information provided by the Development Department, on:

- the current position on the sale of the former Blackgates Infant School site at Tingley and the signing of the Heads of Terms with Mintons;
- the lessons learnt in relation to the erection of the Telecoms mast on Rawdon Billing;
- the results of the survey sent to businesses in Leeds to gauge how satisfied local businesses were with the Council in helping to create a good business environment for the city;
- XSITE - the Development Department's in-house magazine.

The Chair also referred to the response from Councillor Harris on the issue of tackling worklessness, which had been considered at an earlier meeting of the Board.

Regarding Minute No. 53 on Ring Road Safety, Members raised a general concern with Officers of the Development Department, about the length of time the legal process took in considering minor objections to various road safety improvement schemes, which in some instances led to further accidents.

RESOLVED -

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Tuesday, 20th February, 2007

- (a) That the above comments be noted.
- (b) That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th December 2006 be approved as a correct record.

61 Executive Board Minutes

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 13th December 2006 be noted.

62 Overview and Scrutiny Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4th December 2006 be noted.

63 Chief Planning Officer

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report at the Board's request, introducing the newly appointed Chief Planning Officer, Mr Phil Crabtree, who commenced his duties on 2nd January 2007.

The Chair welcomed Phil Crabtree to the meeting. Mr Crabtree was accompanied by the Director of Development, Jean Dent.

Mr Crabtree stated that he had been meeting with Members, Officers and Plans Panels and acquainting himself with the city. Major issues he had identified as priorities were the successful implementation and resourcing of the strategic review, improving performance in the processing of the particularly high volume of planning applications received in Leeds, pushing up the standards of design and improving customer satisfaction with the service.

Members were then invited to ask questions and raise issues with the Chief Planning Officer for which he was responsible.

Issues raised by Members were in summary:

- The benefits of online planning applications.
- The involvement of Councillors and Parish Councils at an earlier stage in the planning application process.
- Enforcement and communication difficulties between departments and some Councillors. The need to provide a better enforcement service.
- Notification to Councillors of planning applications received in neighbouring Wards.
- Support for community groups creating design statements for their Wards. Members were advised of the possible assistance with funding from Area Committee budgets for this.
- The development pressure in particular areas of Leeds and the need for development plans to be drawn up for many villages and the suburbs.

The Chair thanked the Officers for attending the meeting and advised the Board that a paper would be included on the February agenda of the Board

from the Chief Planning Officer on Planning a Better Future - Planning and Development Services, which should address many of the issues and concerns raised by Members.

RESOLVED – That the above discussion and issues identified for further scrutiny be noted.

64 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on the Board's Work Programme, together with the Forward Plan of Key Decisions pertaining to this Board's Terms of Reference covering the period 1st January to 30th April 2007 for Members' consideration.

Members discussed various issues that they wished to be addressed in reports already included in the Work Programme, but there were no changes requested to the existing Work Programme.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and Forward Plan of Key Decisions be noted.
- (b) That there be no changes to the existing Work Programme.

65 Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 20th February 2007 at 10.00am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.30am.

66 Local Development Framework - Annual Monitoring Report

Having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item, Councillor Cleasby left the meeting for the consideration of this matter and Councillor Hollingsworth took the Chair (Minute No. 58 refers).

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report attaching the report of the Director of Development which set out the City Council's Local Development Framework – Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The Director's report had been considered by the Development Plan Panel on 5th December and the Executive Board on 13th December 2006. The AMR was subsequently dispatched to meet the Secretary of State's deadline for submission of 31st December 2006.

Members had been advised in the covering report that the AMR was being presented to the Scrutiny Board (Development) to note for information and to comment on the overall approach, with a view to incorporating any suggested changes in future Annual Monitoring Reports. Members were also advised that any specific changes they recommended would have to be submitted back to the Development Plan Panel and the Executive Board for their consideration.

In attendance to present the report and respond to Members' queries and comments were Peter Shilson, Team Leader Data, Steve Speak, Chief Strategy and Policy Officer and David Feeney, Head of Planning and Economic Policy, all from the Development Department.

In brief summary, the main issues raised were:

- The transition period between the old and new system and the overlap of local indicators with regional indicators.
- Affordable Housing – Concern that this indicator took no account of losses of existing affordable housing through Right-to-Buy sales and demolition, thus the stocks of affordable housing remained at low levels. Members were advised that housing market assessments would be looked at regionally and holistically in order to produce an improved plan.
- House building – Members were advised that the indicators were simplistic and did not show that the high figures in house building overall related to the boom in flats in the city centre. Members were advised on the need for more robust plans and negotiations with developers in the city centre to maintain standards of development.
- Waste removal and recycling figures – these issues and concerns, in particular that the indicator did not include commercial and demolition waste, would be debated at the March meeting of the Board when Officers would present a progress report on the development of a Sustainable Construction Design Guide.
- Brownfield sites – concerns whether there was separate data to indicate the amount of development in back gardens. Members were advised that the data could be reworked to provide this information, but it was considered that this type of development was a very small proportion of the total.
- Whether the AMR was value for money and being used to develop Council policies more efficiently and effectively.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their report.

RESOLVED – That the report and comments be noted.

(Note: Councillor Lewis joined the meeting at 10.40am during the consideration of this item.)

The meeting concluded at 11.10am.