

SCRUTINY BOARD (SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 18TH JULY, 2011

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors R Grahame, K Groves,
M Hamilton, P Harrand, G Hyde, J Jarosz,
E Taylor, C Townsley and N Walshaw

17 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the July meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities).

18 Declarations of Interest

Councillors R Grahame and G Hyde declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, Sources of Work and Areas of Priority, and agenda item 8, Financial Outturn 2010/11, in their capacity as Directors of East North East Homes. (Minute Nos. 22 & 23 refer)

Councillor E Taylor declared a personal interest in agenda item 8, Financial Outturn 2010/11, in her capacity as Support Executive Member (Environmental Services). (Minute No. 23 refers)

Councillor R Grahame declared a personal interest in agenda item 9, Work Programme, due to his residence being in close proximity to land at Grimes Dyke, East Leeds. (Minute No. 24 refers)

(Further declarations of interest were made at later points in the meeting.)
(Minute No. 22 refers)

19 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Marjoram.

20 Minutes - 20 June 2011

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

21 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Minute No. 5 – Changes to the Council's Constitution

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor agreed to provide the Scrutiny Board with information on the outcomes and financial implications of call-in decisions in 2010/11.

22 Sources of Work and Areas of Priority

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which provided guidance on possible areas within the Environmental Services portfolio for the Scrutiny Board to consider in line with its terms of reference.

Appended to the report was a letter from Councillor Dobson, Executive Member (Environmental Services) outlining potential areas for scrutiny.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, the following officers to present the report and respond to Members' questions and comments:

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Helen Freeman, Head of Environmental Action.

Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, updated the Scrutiny Board on the following key areas:

- Improvements in public engagement and targeted communications, particularly in relation to recycling.
- Refuse services and lessons to be learnt.
- Residual waste project – outcome of preferred bidder expected in November 2011.
- Suggestion that the Scrutiny Board reviewed levels of regulation undertaken by Environmental Health in relation to health and safety at work, including food safety, with a view to exploring opportunities for delivering a better value for money service.

The Chair then invited Members' questions and comments and in brief summary, the key areas of discussion were:

- Confirmation that pavement washers were no longer used by LCC as they were not considered effective in removing pavement staining. Focus was on priority areas, particularly, removing loose litter and trade waste.
- Exploring waste treatment technologies, with reference made to the gas plasma technology currently used in Belgium.
- Development of the bio-methane fuel station in Cross Green and potential for the sustainable treatment of food waste through anaerobic digestion.
- Good practice in Barking and Dagenham in relation to encouraging public responsibility for disposal of waste.
- That the report submitted to Scrutiny in September 2010 detailing the outcome of the new recycling services pilot in Rothwell be circulated to Board Members, along with the relevant extract of the 'Value for Money Profiles 2010' report in relation to Environmental Services.
- Exploring opportunities to operate different combinations of recycling services across Leeds.

- The impact of withdrawal of discretionary grants, particularly Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.
- Further work to be undertaken around education and raising awareness in localities through the work of Area Committees and associated Environmental Sub Groups.
- Update on Dog Control Orders – phase 2 consultation due to commence in August 2011.

Potential areas for scrutiny were summarised as follows:

- Food waste collections linked to the Scrutiny Board's previous inquiry into recycling.
- Delegation of specified environmental services to Area Committees and review of locality working arrangements – it was suggested that this piece of work be undertaken in the New Year.
- Managing and minimising complaints within the refuse collection service – Councillor R Grahame to continue his role as co-optee on the Resources and Council Services Scrutiny Board to review the Contact Centre and Customer Access Programme.
- Ensuring effective communication / engagement strategy in relation to the residual waste PFI project – to be reviewed once preferred bidder was known.
- Grounds maintenance – to maintain a watching brief on the procurement of a new contract, particularly in ensuring that the implementation plan was effective.
- Regulatory services undertaken by Environmental Health.
- Dog control orders – working group to be established focussing on proposed options arising from the consultation.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the report and contributions made during the discussion be taken into account when the Board is finalising its work programme and deciding its priorities.

(b) That the Chair, in conjunction with officers, be authorised to draw up inquiry terms of reference for subsequent approval by the Scrutiny Board.

(Councillor Harrand left the meeting at 10.30 am during the consideration of this item.)

(Councillors R Grahame, Groves and Jarosz declared a personal interest in this item in their capacity as Members of the GMB union.)

23 Financial Outturn 2010/11

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the 2010/11 outturn position for the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate and provided an explanation of budget variations.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Summary report of the Environment and Neighbourhoods Services – Outturn 2010/11
- Summary report of the Housing Revenue Account – 2010/11 Outturn

The following officers attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments:

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment and Neighbourhoods.

In brief summary, the key areas of discussion were:

- Concern about the frequency of budgetary updates to Scrutiny and the need to ensure that, in future, these were aligned to Executive Board updates.
- Concern about areas across the city in need of weed spraying – it was advised that this was the responsibility of Parks and Countryside.
- The impact of delays in implementation of bus lane enforcement and refurbishment of Woodhouse Lane car park.
- Reported overspend in relation to jobs and skills due to the slippage of the restructuring proposals.

RESOLVED – That the report and information appended to the report be noted.

24 Work Schedule

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

The following information was appended to the report for Members' information:

- Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities) Work Schedule for 2011/12
- Minutes of Executive Board held on 22 June 2011
- Extract of Forward Plan of Key Decisions relevant to the Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities) for the period 1 July 2011 to 31 October 2011

The Chair reported that Simon Whitehead was due to attend the September Scrutiny Board meeting to provide a presentation on the Burglary Reduction Strategy. All Members of the Council were invited to attend this presentation.

An update on the elected Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire was due to be provided to the Scrutiny Board around December.

A number of working group meetings were planned to take place in August. The Principal Scrutiny Adviser agreed to provide an update of those Members that had responded to the invitations to date. Invitations to attend the working group in relation to dog control orders would be sent following the Board meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted
- (b) That the Principal Scrutiny Adviser produces an updated work schedule to be confirmed at the next Scrutiny Board meeting.

25 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 12 September 2011 at 10.00 am (Pre-meeting for all Members at 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 11.35 am.)