

SCRUTINY BOARD (DEVELOPMENT)

TUESDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor B Cleasby in the Chair

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

67 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair admitted to the agenda a late report from the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing on Addressing Worklessness (Minute No. 73 refers). This report was unavailable at the time of agenda despatch.

68 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

69 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2007 be approved as a correct record.

70 Executive Board Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 24th January 2007 be noted.

71 Overview and Scrutiny Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 8th and 29th January 2007 be noted.

72 Update on the Strategic Review of Planning and Development Services

The Chief Planning Officer submitted an update report on the strategic review of Planning and Development Services in order that Members could consider and comment on the progress on implementing the solutions within the five identified improvement themes.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer in the Development Department, who presented the report and responded to Members' queries and comments.

Issues raised and discussed by Members were in summary:

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

- The benefits of involving Ward Members at the pre-application stage, that would, save time later and therefore free up resources in the longer term.
- The procedures and process of notifying interested parties of planning applications and achieving a balance between the cost and more widely publicising applications.
- The logging of controversial planning applications.
- The operation of Plans Panels and the possibility of a fourth panel.
- Giving better guidance as to what was permissible in planning applications and giving feedback where applications were turned down.
- The importance of safeguarding officers from allegations of collusion between themselves and developers and the need for transparency.
- The benefits that the further computerisation of the planning application process would bring.
- The need to improve relationships and communication between officers and interested parties.
- The need to provide better enforcement feedback to Members.
- Concern regarding the number of applications that panels were advised to accept, which were rejected by Members and then overturned at the appeals stage.
- The possible future use of external parties to deliver a whole range of services to the Department and measuring the performance of these external partners.
- Performance targets and in particular those for major applications which were just hitting their targets but improving.

The Chair thanked Mr Crabtree for his report and response to the issues raised above by Members.

RESOLVED – That the report and comments made by Members as above be noted.

(Note: Councillor Davey left the meeting at 10.45 during the consideration of this item.)

73 Addressing Worklessness

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing submitted a report outlining the current and planned work within the Department to develop a more co-ordinated approach to the challenge of addressing worklessness. The report also summarised the key areas where work had been undertaken and set out key priorities to move this forward.

Sue Wynne, Head of Regeneration Policy and Planning, Neighbourhoods and Housing and Mark Scott, Service Manager, Learning and Leisure, attended the meeting to present the report and respond to queries and comments raised by the Board.

In brief summary the main issues discussed were:

- The basis for the allocation of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding for activity to address worklessness particularly relating to West Leeds.
- The transfer of the Jobs and Skills service from Learning and Leisure Department to the Department of Neighbourhoods and Housing.
- The need for a cross sectoral co-ordinated approach to addressing worklessness informed by an overarching action plan.
- The role of the Council as a large employer in the City and as a potential exemplar to other employers.
- The need to communicate commissioning opportunities widely and to build the delivery capacity of organisations in the voluntary sector.
- The way in which improvements to the evidence base have enabled the identification of and a better understanding of the multiple barriers individuals face in neighbourhoods where there are concentrations of worklessness and the targeting of resources to address this.
- The varied and tailored approaches required to motivate and support people into work.
- The wider benefits of assisting people into work including savings to the public purse.

Officers were also requested to provide Members with information on what Neighbourhood Renewal Funding West Leeds received per head of population compared with the rest of the city receiving funding from this source and in particular that of the Super Output Area in West Leeds.

As the Jobs and Skills Service would transfer to the Department of Neighbourhoods and Housing on 1st April 2007, it was recognised by the Board that next municipal year the worklessness issue would be included in the portfolio of the Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing). However Members felt that the Scrutiny Board (Development) could continue in the role of monitoring and driving forward the programme.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That a draft framework be developed that would enable monitoring of progress in addressing issues of worklessness and that if appropriate a paper on this matter be brought to this Board in the new municipal year.
- (c) That the Member of the Board be provided with the information requested concerning the Neighbourhood Renewal funding in West Leeds.

(Note: Councillor Taggart joined the meeting at 10.55am during the consideration of this item and Councillor Lowe left the meeting at 11.30am at the conclusion of this item.)

74 Travelwise Campaign Update

The Director of Development submitted a report on the development of the Council's TravelWise campaign to promote sustainable methods of travel

within the city and highlighted key achievements and progress in Leeds since 2004.

Andrew Hall, Transport Strategy Manager and Ray Hill, Senior Transport Planner, both in the Development Department, were in attendance to present the report and respond to Members' queries and comments.

Officers advised that the report concentrated on the softer transport measures that were in place to encourage motorists to use public transport, by trying to change their attitudes and behaviour through the use of a mixture of incentives and disincentives.

Members were interested in a whole range of other measures that could be put in place to ensure that Leeds did not become grid locked. In summary the main issues raised included:

- Measures to keep traffic flowing, such as improvements to traffic signalling, the removal of pinch points, the introduction of double red lines and red routes.
- Bus based Park and Ride – Members were advised that this was being considered. It was noted that the site at Stourton, formerly included as part of Supertram, was being considered as a strategic site, however establishing the site would involve considerable investment and would probably require the services to be subsidised at least initially.
- Providing motorists with incentives to use public transport, for example by ensuring that vehicles were clean, modern, comfortable and convenient. The possibility of being given free trials to encourage the use of buses was also raised. It was noted that for certain new residential developments free travelcards were provided as part of the planning agreement package.
- The need to explore the provision of incentives so that it would be in the commercial interest of the operators to have fare structures in place that would encourage motorists to use the buses.
- Particularly for areas that had no local rail links, the need to improve the flow of traffic, such as by removing vehicles making deliveries to shops and blocking the highway, which had an effect on both public and private transport. It was considered that as the enforcement of parking restrictions was now the responsibility of the Local Authority it would be easier to target trouble spots. Members asked about the number of traffic wardens that were working during the rush hours.
- The consideration of Park and Ride at Wetherby.
- The improvements to traffic signalling, particular through the use of GPS technology.
- The need for more suburban railway stations on the existing rail network.
- The need to press METRO and the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority as part of the development of the city region, to consider reopening former railway lines for communities and providing additional railway stations on existing lines.
- A smarter way of using bus lanes so that they were not perceived to be under used by motorists.

- The possible role of cameras to enforce bus lanes.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report and the discussion as above be noted.
- (b) That Metro and the Passenger Transport Authority be requested to look at incentives to encourage motorists to try buses on routes where bus corridor improvements had taken place, for example the A65.
- (c) That Members be provided with information on how many parking wardens worked during the rush hour period.
- (d) That an update report on the issues raised above be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

(Note: Councillors Millard and Lobley left the meeting at 12.02pm during the consideration of this item.)

75 Quarter Three Performance Report

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report attaching the report presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5th February 2007, which highlighted performance issues across the Council arising from quarter 3 performance information. Also attached to the report was the quarter 3 performance information relevant to the Scrutiny Board (Development)'s portfolio.

Richard Mills, Principal Scrutiny Officer, presented the report and reminded Members of the new arrangements for reporting performance management information to scrutiny.

Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer and Maggie Craigs, Chief Support Services Officer, both from the Development Department, were in attendance to respond to Members' queries and comments.

Members requested further information on conservation areas being proposed for Armley and Chapeltown (BV219 refers).

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That Members be provided with further information requested on proposed conservation areas for Armley and Chapeltown.

76 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted the Committee's current Work Programme, updated to reflect decisions taken at previous meetings, together with the Forward Plan of Key Decisions pertaining to this Board's Terms of Reference covering the period 1st February to 31st May 2007.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and Forward Plan of Key Decisions be noted.

- (b) That any other reports as requested at today's meeting be incorporated into the Board's Work Programme.

77 Date and Time of Next Meeting

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

The meeting concluded at 12.25pm.