

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

THURSDAY, 5TH MARCH, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, A Blackburn,
D Collins, A Khan, P Gruen, M Harland,
N Sharpe, K Brooks, T Smith and
R Grahame

89 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

90 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

91 Late Items

There were no late items.

92 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

93 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received from Councillors A Gabriel, J Bentley and P Grahame. Councillor R Grahame was in attendance as substitute.

94 Minutes - 6 February 2020

Matters arising

Minute 83 – Minutes of previous meeting. The Chair noted that further discussions had taken place prior to the meeting with Councillor A Lamb and relevant officers in regards to river cleanliness. The Board felt that the matter required further consideration, and therefore would recommend to the successor Board that an inquiry be conducted on a West Yorkshire basis.

Minute 84 – Fuel Poverty Update. Members were advised that the Shakespeare Shakespeare Court, Grange and Towers external wall insulation programme had commenced, but was not yet complete. Therefore, it was requested that the minute be amended to reflect the current stage of construction.

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held 6 February 2020 be approved as an accurate record, subject to the amendment as set out above.

95 Housing Repairs Update Report

The Director of Resources and Housing submitted a report that provided an update on progress following the recommendations of the Board's Working Group in September 2018.

The following were in attendance:

- Jill Wildman, Chief Officer for Housing
- Adam Crampton, Head of Property Management
- Robert Goor, Responsive Repairs Service Manager

The following documents were appended to the report:

- Chartered Institute of Housing – Working Together to Rethink Repairs and Maintenance (Summary)
- Scrutiny Working Group – Environment, Housing and Communities Housing Repairs meeting notes 26 September 2018

The Head of Property Management and the Responsive Repairs Service Manager provided a PowerPoint presentation, including the following:

- Progress against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Housing Responsive Repairs and Voids (RR&V), along with context to performance below target;
- Update regarding the RR&V Delivery Strategy approved by Executive Board in October 2019, incorporating the focus on developing local plans to address local needs, and a complete review of the whole voids and lettings process;
- Contribution to the carbon neutral target – rethinking repairs and driving environmentally friendly tenant behaviour, to also reduce fuel poverty.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- *Introduction of more online self-service.* As part of the 'Rethinking Repairs' project officers outlined an ambition to provide service users with an improved online self-service facility to book repairs at their convenience.
- *Reuse and recycling of unwanted items.* Members requested an update on initiatives to reduce waste by reusing and recycling items left in homes at the end of tenancies, and were advised that the team were working closely with the third sector;
- *Appointments kept and customer journey.* Members sought clarity regarding a target for improvement against the RR3 Appointments Kept KPI. The Board was informed that although measures were taken to ensure that such targets are met, the primary focus of the new strategy

is to improve the whole customer journey, which will include redesign of the internal process in advance of appointments, to ensure that appointments are not only kept, but are also productive;

- *Flexibility around reporting repairs and appointment slots.* It was suggested that support for reporting repairs be made available at community hubs across the city, particularly to assist residents with English as a second language. Members also noted that broad appointment slots up to a six hour period can have a negative impact on the most deprived communities in the city who are unable to work during this time;
- *30 day target for re-letting void properties.* Members commented on the restricted efficiency of a 30 day target for re-letting void properties, and suggested that a shorter target would save Council funds and reduce waiting lists. However, they also noted the opportunity this time provides to deliver energy efficient measures such as improved insulation and low energy light bulbs.
- *Tenant contents insurance.* In response to a query, Members were advised that the Council offers a contents insurance scheme for tenants, which is recommended at the outset of each tenancy.
- *Audit processes.* Members were advised that 10% of repairs are made available for audit, and requested that the most recent audit report for RR&V be circulated following the meeting.

RESOLVED – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the contents of the report and appendices, along with Members comments;
- b) Requested that details be circulated in relation to audit report for Responsive Repairs and Voids.

96 Reducing Repeat Customer Contact - Recommendation Tracking

The Director of Communities and Environment submitted a report that updated members on progress against the recommendations that emerged from the 2016/17 Inquiry by the then Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Board.

The following were in attendance:

- James Rogers, Director of Communities and Environment
- Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer for Customer Contact and Welfare
- Adam Crampton, Head of Property Management
- Robert Goor, Responsive Repairs Service Manager

The status of the remaining recommendations were agreed as follows:

Recommendation 1: 2 (Achieved)

Recommendation 3: 1 (Stop monitoring)

Recommendation 4: 1 (Stop monitoring)

Recommendation 5: 2 (Achieved)

Recommendation 10: 2 (Achieved)

RESOLVED – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the contents of the report;
- b) Agreed the position status of the recommendations as set out above;
- c) Agreed to close the inquiry.

Councillor D Collins left the meeting during discussion of this item at 11:50 a.m.

97 Community Hubs Update Report

The Director of Communities and Environment submitted a report that set out the progress and development of Community Hubs.

The following were in attendance:

- James Rogers, Director of Communities and Environment
- Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer for Customer Contact and Welfare

The status of the remaining recommendations were agreed as follows:

Recommendation 2: 2 (Achieved)

Recommendation 3: 2 (Achieved)

In relation to Recommendation 3, members relayed concerns raised by residents about the absence of suitable provision for private and confidential conversations to take place within mobile community hubs. The Chief Officer acknowledged the concerns at this early stage of implementation and assured Members that operational issues with the mobile provision would be carefully monitored going forward.

RESOLVED – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the contents of the report, along with Members comments;
- b) Agreed the position status of the recommendations as set out above;
- c) Agreed to close the inquiry.

98 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Democratic Services submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's schedule for the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year. Copies of the Board's work schedule were appended to the report, as well as a note from the Joint Scrutiny Working Group held 27

January 2020 and the draft minutes of the Executive Board meeting held 12 February 2020.

With no scrutiny matters to be considered at the meeting scheduled for 16 April 2020, the Chair confirmed the meeting was cancelled.

Members were advised that the 'Approach to the Disposal of Green Spaces' formal scrutiny statement had been sent to the Director of City Development for clearance.

RESOLVED – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the contents of the report and appendices;
- b) Noted that the formal scrutiny statement 'Approach to the Disposal of Green Spaces' would be circulated electronically to Members for approval in due course;
- c) Agreed for the meeting scheduled for 16 April 2020 to be cancelled.

99 Date and Time of Next Meeting

As per Minute 98, the meeting scheduled for 16 April 2020 will no longer take place.

The Chair thanked Board Members for their attendance and contributions throughout the municipal year. The Chair also noted that Councillor P Gruen would not be returning to the Council following the election in May, and wished him well in his future endeavours.

The meeting ended at 12:05 p.m.