

SCRUTINY BOARD (INFRASTRUCTURE, INVESTMENT & INCLUSIVE GROWTH)

WEDNESDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor P Truswell in the Chair

Councillors N Buckley, L Cunningham,
N Dawson, K Dye, J Goddard, K Maqsood,
M Shahzad, J Taylor and P Wadsworth

63 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals.

64 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no exempt information.

65 Late Items

There were no late items.

66 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

67 Minutes - 8 January 2020

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

68 Housing Mix Inquiry - Recommendation Tracking and Update

The report of the Director of City Development updated the Board on progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the Board's inquiry into Housing Mix.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Debra Coupar – Executive Member
- Martin Elliot – Head of Strategic Planning, City Development
- Sarah Hellewell - Principal Planner, City Development

The following was highlighted:

- Recommendation 3 – More training on viability was planned within the next 12 months.

- Recommendation 4 – There would be training and workshops for officers with regards to the housing needs assessment.
- Recommendation 5 – There had been 4 new Neighbourhood Plans developed in the last year and a referendum had been passed to develop one for Wetherby.
- Recommendation 8 – Housing mix remains a key area of decision. There was difficulty in achieving the correct amount of 2 bedroom units. Housing mix is raised at an early stage of planning applications. There had been an increase in the provision of affordable housing.
- Recommendation 9 – A report had been considered at Development Plans Panel regarding the effectiveness of the policy.
- Recommendation 10 – There had been amendments to policy with regards to accessible housing.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following was discussed:

Recommendation 3

- Members sought reassurance about the level of challenge from the Council to developers with regards to viability. Officers confirmed that viability is challenged on a regular basis and noted that Planning Practice Guidance will now require any viability assessment to be prepared on the basis that it will be made publicly available other than in exceptional circumstances.

It was agreed that Recommendation 3 remains at Position Status 4 – Acceptable progress made. Continue monitoring.

Recommendation 4

- There has been a requirement for policies to reflect the types of housing need locally along with the requirements of developers. Requirements for future development have previously been established using advice from estate agents to determine demand and there has then followed a negotiation with developers.
- Planning permission could be refused if the housing mix was not appropriate.
- Council housing waiting lists are considered with regard to the housing needs.
- It was agreed that there is a need to provide affordable housing in all parts of the city. Members discussed the need to use the available tools at the Council's disposal to ensure local people can remain within communities where they have social, familial and/or employment ties.
- The council house programme was focussed on the inner areas of the city.
- It was noted that it is preferable for affordable housing to be provided on site but officers acknowledged that there is also an option to provide affordable housing within a "commutable distance".

It was agreed that Recommendation 4 remains at Position Status 4 – Acceptable progress made. Continue monitoring.

Recommendation 5

- Concern was raised that residents did not know about forthcoming Neighbourhood Plans and the Board considered whether more could be done to raise awareness of the Neighbourhood Planning process. It was reported that there was a dedicated Neighbourhood Planning team to provide support to local residents going through the process. However, it was reiterated that the development of Neighbourhood Plans is designed to be controlled by the residents involved rather than the Council.
- Members discussed the varied nature of Neighbourhood Plans and the differences in the support required by residents developing these proposals. It was reported that Neighbourhood Plans could differ for a variety of reasons and different solutions were needed for different parts of the city.
- The Board agreed it would be useful to share best practice based on the experience of the various groups developing Neighbourhood Plans.

It was agreed that Recommendation 5 remains at Position Status 4 – Acceptable progress made. Continue monitoring.

Recommendation 8

- The Board reiterated the need to keep Climate Emergency at the forefront of development and also discussed the need for improved social and green infrastructure to be part of all new developments.
- Encouraging families to live in the City Centre was regarded as a priority and the Board discussed ways in which to develop places in the centre that would be desirable for families.
- Policy stated that appropriate housing mix was needed ahead of long term need. There were other factors that affected this. The policy would be reviewed over time.
- Members queried how progress would be made in delivering the historic “backlog” of affordable housing. Officers confirmed that progress is being made but this would not be remedied by just using Section 106 agreements. There needs to be more innovative work with registered social landlords.
- Members discussed the approach to self-build sites with officers providing an example of how the Council has worked to de-risk a site in Armley to enable progress to be made.

It was agreed that Recommendation 8 remains at Position Status 4 – Acceptable progress made. Continue monitoring.

Recommendation 9

It was agreed that Recommendation 9 remains at Position Status 4 – Acceptable progress made. Continue monitoring.

Recommendation 10

It was agreed that Recommendation 10 remains at Position Status 4 – Acceptable progress made. Continue monitoring.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report and discussion be noted.
- (2) That the agreed status of tracking recommendations be approved.

69 Smart Cities Update

The report of the Director of Resources and Housing provided the Board with an overview of the smart cities agenda and an update on the Council's Smart Leeds programme.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor James Lewis, Executive Member
- Stephen Blackburn, Assistant Solutions Architect
- Dylan Roberts, Chief Digital and Information Officer
- Jason Tutin, Digital Learning and Development Manager

The following was highlighted:

- The Executive Board was updated on the smart cities agenda periodically.
- The need to use new technology to provide better outcomes for the people of Leeds.
- The need for services to consider digital aspects when considering any work.
- Main areas of focus included the following:
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Travel and Transport
 - Housing
 - Climate emergency
- Work with colleagues across the city.

In response to comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- The exponential expansion of the Smart Cities programme was discussed in the context of the increased use of smart technology in our homes.
- The Board was informed that the Smart Cities programme aims to determine how data can be combined to drive value and improve outcomes. The importance of taking a partnership approach to deliver preventative interventions was discussed including the need to combine budgets.
- Cyber security was a key concern for members, who discussed the need to have the necessary protection in place.

- How digital systems could be used in housing was outlined. Tenants and tenants groups had been engaged in how systems could be implemented.
- Data that was available from Data Mill North was available to third parties. This did not include any personal data and no personal data was available to third parties.
- Use of technology in the home - this included management of the house - measuring damp, CO2; could help people who are living in fuel poverty, improve health outcomes and assist people to live in their own homes for longer.
- Provision of free wi-fi to tenants. This had been successful and led to improved community support and engagement. There is an ongoing programme to provide more free wi-fi in community buildings and housing. Members asked officers to consider whether a similar programme could be rolled out in sheltered housing blocks. Officers confirmed this is under consideration but highlighted that there is a wider mix of provision of sheltered accommodation.
- Use of technology for waste collection – this included reduced travel, use of in-cab technology for refuse vehicles and prevention of unnecessary collections all of which would have a positive impact on climate concerns.
- The need to communicate and increase awareness to partners. Some services were more proactive. There were digital aspects in all service areas.
- Resources – where there was a case for a return on investment this could attract resources. Recruitment and retention of staff was also important.

It was agreed that the Chair writes to the relevant Director to reiterate the importance of embedding a shared service approach to the co-ordination of the Smart Cities programme.

RESOLVED –

- (1) Support the work to improve data usage and collection through investigating how a next-generation city data platform will enable the Council to derive more value from data and through working collaboratively with cities such as London on shared data models which will review standards and information governance.
- (2) Endorse the approach of working increasingly with partners from all sectors (e.g. universities, other councils, tech companies) to continue to promote Leeds as one of the UK's leading smart cities by testing and trialling new technologies that can lead to improved outcomes for citizens.
- (3) Support the work to review how IoT devices can assist with understanding the city environment to improve decision making, and work on use cases that enable the testing of these devices that can assist with business cases and city wide deployment.

- (4) Approve the introduction of indicators to track progress and suggest changes or where additional ones should be included. These indicators will be reviewed annually to identify if the correct ones have been identified and are delivering better understanding of progress.

70 Digital Inclusion - Recommendation Tracking

The report of the Head of Corporate Governance and Scrutiny Support & Chief Digital and Information Officer set out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the scrutiny inquiry Powering up the Leeds Economy Through Digital Inclusion.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor James Lewis, Executive Member
- Stephen Blackburn, Assistant Solutions Architect
- Dylan Roberts, Chief Digital and Information Officer
- Jason Tutin, Digital Learning and Development Manager

The following was highlighted:

- Work highlighted that was over and above what was tasked with at the beginning of the Inquiry to achieve city priorities.
- Digital Inclusion was now being written into city strategies including the Inclusive Growth Strategy and was now seen as fundamental.

In response to comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- Since the last update there had been the recruitment of an additional Digital Inclusion Officer funded by the Better Care programme working on the pathfinder programme.
- The national approach to the pathfinder programme was discussed including the ways in which information and learning can be shared.
- Members welcomed the approach to providing services in community hubs and libraries and the investment in this provided by the Council. There had been over 1,000 Digital Champions trained across the city.
- There had been some work with schools but there could be a stronger connection. Wider engagement with young people may also be explored in future.
- Community centres – there had been a focus on priority communities where there was little or no provision.
- Funding arrangements and sustainability of the service remain a concern for Board members.
- Savings made through digital inclusion work.
- The tablet lending scheme and use of voice activated technology.
- Resourcing community groups – provision of funding from Wellbeing Funds, Housing Advisory Panels and MICE money.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report and discussion be noted.
- (2) That the recommendation tracking remain at position status 4, acceptable progress made, continue monitoring.
- (3) That the Chair writes to the Director of Housing and Resources with regards to sustainable funding for the Digital Inclusion programme.

71 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Democratic Services presented the Board's work schedule for the remainder of the current municipal year.

A copy of the work schedule and January Executive Board minutes were appended to the report.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

72 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 8 April 2020 at 10.30 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 10.15 a.m.)