

# **SCRUTINY BOARD (INFRASTRUCTURE, INVESTMENT & INCLUSIVE GROWTH)**

**WEDNESDAY, 26TH JUNE, 2024**

**PRESENT:** Councillor H Bithell in the Chair

Councillors A Ali, N Buckley, K Dye, S Lay,  
A Maloney, M Millar, A Scopes and  
M Shahzad

## **1 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no appeals against refusals of inspection of documents.

## **2 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public**

There were no items excluded from the public domain.

## **3 Late Items**

There were no late items.

## **4 Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests.

## **5 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes**

Apologies were received from Cllr Sonia Leighton, Cllr Izaac Wilson and Cllr Matthew Robinson.

Cllr Annie Maloney attended as a substitute for Cllr Leighton.

The Chair welcomed new members to the Scrutiny Board and also thanked former members including the 2023/24 Chair, Cllr Abigail Marshall-Katung.

## **6 Minutes - 3 April 2024**

The Chair invited the Principal Scrutiny Advisor to provide an update on matters arising from the minutes of 3 April 2024.

The following matters were subsequently noted:

- The approved End of Year Statement referenced at minute 85 has been published on the committee webpage, along with those of the other four scrutiny boards. The 2023/24 Scrutiny Annual Report will also be published on the same webpage once it has been considered at full Council on 10 July.

- A letter has been received from the office of the Secretary of State for Transport, apologising for the delay in responding to the concerns raised by the Scrutiny Board about road deaths involving young people and the reconsideration of graduated driving licences. Unfortunately, a detailed response will not be received until after the General Election.

**RESOLVED:** The Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth) approved the minutes of 3 April 2024 as a correct record.

## **7 Terms of Reference**

It was noted that the accompanying report sets out the Scrutiny Board's Terms of Reference as agreed by Council at the AGM on 23 May 2024.

The following appendices were noted:

- Appendix 1: General Terms of Reference applicable to all Scrutiny Boards
- Appendix 2: Article 6 of the constitution, which outlines Scrutiny Board remits and any special responsibilities. Members were advised that responsibility for flood risk management is allocated to the Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth).
- Appendix 3: Scrutiny Board alignment with officer Delegated Functions and Executive portfolios 2024/25.

The Principal Scrutiny advisor highlighted changes in Executive responsibilities relating to the Scrutiny Board and advised members that two additional functions now fall within the remit of the Scrutiny Board – international and domestic inward economic investment and culture.

**RESOLVED:** Members noted the contents of the report.

## **8 Co-Opted Members**

Members were advised that the Council's Constitution includes provision for the appointment of co-opted members to individual scrutiny boards.

This report sets out general provisions regarding co-option which are applicable to all Scrutiny Boards.

There are no specific legislative requirements for this Scrutiny Board to co-opt external representatives.

Typically, this Scrutiny Board has determined not to co-opt external individuals to the Board. Instead, members have agreed to bring expert witnesses to meetings for specific items of business as required. This is in part due to the breadth of subjects within the Board's remit.

It is recommended that this approach does not change unless or until members reach a point where they determine co-option would add specific value.

**RESOLVED:** Members agreed not to co-opted any additional individuals to the Scrutiny Board at the current time.

## 9 Performance Report

The Chair introduced the performance report, which summarises performance against strategic priorities that fall within the remit of the Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth).

Those in attendance for this item were:

- **Cllr J Pryor** (Executive Member, Economy, Transport & Sustainable Development)
- **Cllr J Lennox** (Executive Member, Housing)
- **Martin Farrington** (Director City Development)
- **Eve Roodhouse** (Chief Officer, Culture & Economy)
- **Dave Feeney** (Chief Planning Officer)
- **Martin Elliot** (Head Strategic Planning)
- **Angela Barnicle** (Chief Officer, Asset Management & Regeneration)
- **Emma Kamillo-Price** (Senior Intelligence Officer)

### Unemployment in Leeds

Members sought clarity about whether unemployment data can also be a determinant of health outcomes. In response, Eve Roodhouse advised the Scrutiny Board that joint work is taking place between the employment and skills service and health colleagues to examine this issue in more detail.

Eve noted the data confirms that the wards with the highest numbers of Universal Credit claimants are also the areas where there are known to be higher levels of deprivation. Given these existing links there is a significant amount of targeted work in these communities.

Members queried how the service measures the impact of targeted interventions within specific communities. The Scrutiny Board was advised that this is challenging. Outcomes relating to individuals who engage with Council services are tracked. However, it is difficult to continue to track outcomes once individuals move beyond Council services.

Members were provided with examples of the outstanding work of tutors who focus on supporting learners to develop their skillset in order to progress into work, further study or volunteering.

Members requested further information about the number of people who are categorised as economically inactive.

Eve confirmed that ONS data about economic inactivity is available and can be provided at a future meeting. She noted that there is a need to understand why people are economically inactive so interventions can be effectively targeted. Members expressed concern about an increase in those who are inactive due to physical or mental health issues.

The Chief Officer was asked how people in communities with high Universal Credit claimants can be supported to develop the skills necessary to access new jobs that are being created in the city.

In response Eve reassured members that the employment and skills team already carry out work with specific groups who may be struggling to access work. The SEND Next Choices event provides an example of good practice which has been adopted in other areas.

A recent Ofsted inspection judged the adult skills service to be outstanding. An example of the work of this service is the support provided for people who had been forced to flee Afghanistan.

It was noted that the Council seeks to identify opportunities to influence partners through the Business Anchors Network to support the development of more apprenticeship schemes and to encourage changes in business practice designed to encourage more diverse workforces.

Eve offered to provide a separate briefing for Cllr Ali on matters linked to Gipton and Harehills.

### **Business Start-ups, Scale Ups and Survival Rates**

Martin Farrington provided an overview of the headline data relating to business start-ups, business scale ups and business survival rates. He noted the lag in the provision of some national data.

Members sought reassurance about the number of start-ups and scales ups as compared to other authorities. Data relating to West Yorkshire comparatives was requested.

Eve Roodhouse advised the Scrutiny Board that she anticipated that Leeds would reflect national trends in relation to start-ups as consequence of the impact of Bank of England interest rate rises on the economy.

It was suggested that historical comparatives are included in future reports to allow members to better understand trends over time. Members also requested that Core City comparisons are provided in relation to data sets in wherever possible in future performance reports.

Martin noted that each start up is categorised as one unit within the performance data, which does not differentiate between the size and economic output of those units.

Eve Roodhouse reflected on the positive environment for capital investment in Leeds and the long-standing support for emerging sectors such as digital. She highlighted business support schemes, which target SMEs and make use of both national and regional funding streams.

Eve noted that the Council also seeks to maximise its influence and convening power with the aim of helping to strengthen economy.

### **Growth in New Homes and Number of Affordable Homes Delivered**

Martin Farrington highlighted the significant delivery of new homes in the city, noting that 4,441 homes is the highest level of delivery since records began in the 1970s. He informed the Scrutiny Board that the approach to strategic land supply is vital to the success of the Council's approach.

Cllr Pryor welcomed the successful partnership approach in Leeds and noted that if similar outcomes could be replicated in other areas the collective impact could significantly ease the national housing crisis.

Despite increasing the delivery of new homes, Martin and Cllr Pryor acknowledged there remains growing demand pressure in the city.

Members asked for clarity about the difference between 'affordable' and 'social' housing. Concern was raised about the cost of affordable homes for people on low incomes in Leeds.

Martin Elliot provided the Scrutiny Board with a summary of the requirement in planning policy for two categories of tenure for affordable housing – 60% social rent and 40% intermediate rent.

Martin Farrington highlighted the challenge of developing a robust business case to enable the delivery of new council homes while also delivering social rents in these properties. As a consequence of market conditions, it is often not possible to set rent for these properties at a social tenure.

Members were advised that the Council is using mechanisms elsewhere - such as commuted sums - to turn affordable rents to a social rent.

Martin Elliot confirmed that local need is considered in negotiations with developers.

Angela Barnicle and Cllr Lennox highlighted the scale of affordable housing delivery in Leeds over the last five years in comparison to other cities. Angela also reflected on the Leeds Affordable Housing Growth Partnership Action Plan, which set the ambition to scale up affordable housing delivery by all partners in the city between 2022-25.

The Chair welcomed the innovative approach to housing delivery. She requested that officers deliver a workshop for members on the way in which

funding for housing delivery operates currently. Members also agreed that it would be beneficial to have a private round table event with stakeholders ahead of the Leeds Affordable Housing Growth Partnership Action Plan being examined by the Scrutiny Board in January 2025.

Cllr Lennox raised concern about the likelihood that new council homes are likely to be lost from the Council's housing stock within 5 years due to the right to buy. More than 600 homes a year are lost through right to buy. She also noted that 40% of properties purchased through right to buy later become private rentals. This creates a significant additional challenge for the Council as it seeks to meet increasing housing need.

Martin Farrington observed that there is a national housing crisis that is most acutely felt at point of greatest need. He suggested that Scrutiny members may wish to examine the challenging impact of long-standing rules associated with the way in which right to buy receipts can be used.

### **Residential Developments Built to Required Accessible and Adaptable Standards**

In response to member queries, Martin Farrington confirmed that performance data in relation to residential developments built to required accessible and adaptable standards is monitored through building control certificates.

### **Number of People Killed or Seriously Injured in Road Traffic Collisions**

The Chair reiterated the Scrutiny Board's support for Vision Zero and noted that there will be a full update on progress towards this ambition at the September meeting.

Martin Farrington set out the most recent data relating to the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions each year, including the number of young people.

The Scrutiny Board was reminded of the changes to the police system that is used to record road traffic collisions, which now automatically assigns a severity classification to casualties.

Members explored learning from the school streets programme including ways in which compliance is being encouraged. Further information was requested about the outcome of barrier trials and parent road safety programmes.

Gary Bartlett noted that the city's road safety record around schools is very good. However, he acknowledged that there is a perception that it is unsafe due to the volume of cars, buses and school children in the vicinity of the school at peak periods.

Gary advised the Board that three barrier trials are taking place, He noted the challenge of delivering school streets in the absence of specific guidance from the Department for Transport.

Cllr Lay reflected on his work as a nurse in A&E and the consequences for individuals and their families of road traffic collisions. He reiterated collisions are typically caused by dangerous driver behaviours.

Members sought reassurance about the potential impact of proposed legislative changes regarding 20mph zones. Gary informed the Scrutiny Board that 20mph limits are already in place in many areas and the challenge for Leeds is delivering interventions to encourage compliance.

### **City Centre Footfall**

Martin Farrington introduced the performance information relating to city centre footfall, highlighting the impact of changes in working patterns on Monday-Friday footfall.

Members were advised that investment in physical assets in the city centre by global retail brands was a sign of confidence in the local economy.

Concern was raised about the impact of ongoing roadworks on ease of access to the city centre.

In response, Cllr Pryor set out increased figures for leisure travel at weekends which suggest changes in footfall during the week were attributable to post-covid changes in working patterns.

Eve Roodhouse noted that officers are exploring whether an alternative dashboard can be developed for the city to better measure performance.

### **Planning Applications**

The planning service continues to perform well in terms of the percentage of planning applications determined on time.

However, it was noted that the service continued to make use of extensions to timescales for determination. This provides greater certainty with regards to times scales but if Government proposals for an “Accelerated Planning Service” progress this will place performance under greater pressure.

### **OFLOG Indicators**

Members were reminded that the Office for Local Government (OFLOG) was launched during the LGA conference in July 2023. It was noted that OFLOG is bringing together a suite of metrics with the aim of providing more accessible data about the performance of local government.

The suite of metrics is expected to expand. Current metrics that fall within the remit of the Scrutiny Board are included in the performance report.

## **Planning**

David Feeney outlined the difference between the different categories of planning applications included in the report. He went on to provide an update on the progress of the Local Plan Update and Leeds Local Plan 2040, which will be subject to public consultation later in the year.

## **Road Maintenance**

Gary Bartlett responded to queries relating to road maintenance. He noted that the percentage of roads that should be considered for maintenance looks consistent and reasonable. However, he advised the Board that the statistics are financially equivalent to a backlog of around £300m.

The Chair put on record the Scrutiny Board's thanks to Eve Roodhouse for her work with the Board and her wider contribution to the city. Members wished her every success in her new role with the Local Government Association.

**RESOLVED:** The Scrutiny Board noted the performance information contained in the appendix to the performance report.

Members requested further scrutiny over the coming year, namely:

- A private working group to be provided to Scrutiny Board members on the way in which funding for housing delivery currently operates.
- A private roundtable with stakeholders to be facilitated ahead of the Leeds Affordable Housing Growth Partnership Action Plan coming back to the Scrutiny Board in January 2025.

## **10 Sources of Work & Draft Work Schedule 2024/25**

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor set out potential sources of work for the Scrutiny Board to help shape consideration of the work programme.

The Board was advised that the draft work schedule included in the agenda pack is a live document that will be considered by members at every Scrutiny Board meeting.

The initial draft collates requests from members of the 2023/24 Board and known items of business such as budget consultation and performance monitoring.

The Chair proposed that meetings include both 'big ticket' items and smaller items where there is potential for greater short-term impact on decision making.

Matters noted as areas of interest for Scrutiny Board members included:

- Legacy of Leeds 2023, potentially involving representatives from the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board.
- Leeds Museums and Galleries: work with communities with protected characteristics
- Availability and storage of replacement materials including Yorkshire Stone.
- Innovative approach to UTMC
- Transition from building to long term operation of FAS2 including challenges of revenue and operational intelligence.
- Establishment of the Aire Resilience Company
- Urban Drainage with a focus on consistency of duties linked to the building of reservoirs.
- Integrated water management, with links to natural flood risk management.
- Biodiversity net gain and river credits.
- Meanwood Valley Farm site visit at a future date as a potential model of natural flood risk management (pending further discussions over the summer).
- Working Group on how funding for affordable housing delivery operates.
- Private roundtable with stakeholders on challenges and opportunities for affordable housing ahead of public discussion on affordable housing in January.
- Delivery of new Council and affordable housing, including consideration of social and affordable rents.
- An evaluation of the use of EDI assessments in planning.
- Accommodation BID
- Associations between unemployment and health outcomes.
- Working Group / remote training session on the latest developments with the Social Progress Index

Cllr Buckley raised concern about the potential future expansion of motorbike access to bus lanes following the successful trial on the A65.

It was agreed that Gary Bartlett will provide an initial written briefing on the current situation to inform a decision by members as to whether further scrutiny is required.

**RESOLVED:**

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor is asked to update the work draft 2024/25 in line with member requests.

Gary Bartlett will provide a briefing on the current position regarding access to bus lanes for motorbikes.

**11 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Board will take place on **17 July 2024** at **10.30am**. There will be a pre-meeting for all Scrutiny Board members at **10.00am**.