

SCRUTINY BOARD (NEIGHBOURHOODS AND HOUSING)

THURSDAY, 20TH JULY, 2006

PRESENT: Councillor R Pryke in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, P Ewens, R Finnigan,
A Gabriel, G Hyde, M Phillips, M Rafique
and D Schofield

7 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The following Members declared personal / prejudicial interests for the purpose of Section 81 (3) of the Local Government Act 2000 and paragraphs 8 to 13 of the Members Code of Conduct:

Councillor J Akhtar – Declared a personal interest as a Member of East Leeds ALMO Board.

Councillor P Ewens – Declared a personal interest as a Member of Leeds North West ALMO Board.

Councillor G Hyde – Declared a personal interest as a Director of East Leeds ALMO Board.

Councillor D Schofield – Declared a personal interest as a Director of South East Leeds ALMO Board.

8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armitage and Atkinson.

9 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That subject to an amendment to record that Councillor Gabriel had submitted her apologies in advance of the meeting, the minutes of the meeting held on 7th June 2006 be agreed as a correct record.

10 MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 5th June 2006 be received and noted.

11 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 14th June 2006 be received and noted.

12 ALMO REVIEW UPDATE

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented a report containing an update on the review process currently being conducted to determine the future of the city's ALMOs. Members heard that there was a need to consider the long term future of the six existing ALMOs in Leeds in

terms of financial viability and sustainability given the removal of Government size restrictions and the ongoing reduction of the Authority's housing stock.

The following Officers were in attendance:

- Neil Evans, Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing;
- John Statham, Strategic Landlord Manager, Neighbourhoods and Housing.

The report, which had been considered by the Executive Board on 5th July 2006, detailed the latest information on the ALMO review and the conclusions reached. Members were informed that a financial review had been undertaken by Price Waterhouse Coopers in the initial stages, from which it was recommended that the number of ALMOs be condensed into one or two bodies. However there had been strong feedback from the six existing organisations suggesting that three ALMOs would be a preferable option, in order to retain a more local focus.

On being put to the Executive Board, it had been decided to dispense with the option to form two ALMOs as it was felt this proposal lacked the local focus associated with the three ALMO option, whilst not being as administratively simplistic as a single ALMO was likely to be. Therefore it had been agreed to hold a postal ballot beginning in mid-August to determine the views of tenants, based on the two options of one ALMO or three ALMOs. Executive Board had indicated that their preference was for three ALMOs.

The Board heard that should the three ALMO option be implemented, they would be constituted as follows in order to retain the EASEL area within one ALMO: West and North West; North East, East and the EASEL area of South East; and South with the remainder of South East.

The main areas of discussion around the topic were as follows:

- How the new Boards would be structured and operate in terms of roles / membership;
- The sustainability of any new arrangements, given the acknowledgement that stock numbers were likely to continue to fall;
- Whether all Boards had undergone uniform consultation as part of the review;
- The technicalities of the ballot itself, particularly whether the two options would be presented objectively and if the paper would be made available in a variety of languages;
- Whether there was the possibility of ALMOs managing private housing stock in the future;
- The recommendation from the Audit Commission that Chairs of Boards be independent;
- The need for Boards to remain 'arms length' from the Council in their day-to-day running, whilst still remaining accountable to the Authority.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

(Councillor Akhtar left the meeting at 11:00 am at the conclusion of consideration of this report.)

13 INQUIRY INTO REGENERATION IN BEESTON HILL AND HOLBECK - DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report detailing proposed terms of reference for the Board's Inquiry into Regeneration in Beeston Hill and Holbeck, which had been identified as an area for investigation at the previous meeting. It was reported that whilst regeneration fell largely within the Development portfolio, it had been agreed that the Board would consider housing and community issues.

Cllr Gabriel clarified for the Board that it was actually Beeston Hill, not Beeston, that was currently earmarked for regeneration work and it was agreed that the terms of reference would be amended.

Dave Richmond, Area Manager for South Leeds, attended the meeting to brief the Board on the work currently being undertaken in the area and the key issues. He was also available to answer any queries from Members.

Members briefly discussed the contents of the report and the scope of the inquiry. It was agreed that a site visit to the area in question would be a beneficial exercise for Members. This would be scheduled to take place on the day of the next meeting, with the public meeting to commence after the site visit. Members asked to be supplied with maps and a briefing note in advance of the visit.

RESOLVED – That the terms of reference for the Inquiry into Regeneration in Beeston Hill and Holbeck be agreed.

14 RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS (AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR)

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented a report detailing responses to recommendations made by two previous inquiries conducted by two separate Boards during 2005/06. The board were reminded that the monitoring of these recommendations now fell within the remit of the Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing.)

The recommendations related to the Inquiry into Affordable Housing, undertaken by the Scrutiny Board (Thriving Communities) and the Inquiry into Anti-Social Behaviour Interventions, undertaken by the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Community Safety.) Members were informed that a paper containing responses to recommendations in relation to the Inquiry into Housing Conditions, undertaken by Scrutiny Board (Children and Young People) had been despatched separately to the main agenda.

The Board discussed points raised in the recommendations in relation to the three separate inquiries. Neil Evans, the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing, was present at the meeting and able to respond to minor queries made by Members concerning the recommendations.

In response to a point raised by Members regarding the *Revizit* scheme, (recommendation 13 – responses to the Anti-Social Behaviour Interventions inquiry) the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development agreed to circulate a copy of the relevant report on this issue to the Board.

RESOLVED – That the responses to the three inquiries be noted.

15 WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which detailed the current work programme of the Board, including scheduled and unscheduled items. Members were invited to comment on and make amendments to the Work Programme, as appropriate.

Also appended to the report for Members information was a copy of the Forward Plan for 1st July to 31st October 2006, along with the latest minutes of the Thriving Communities Corporate Priority Board meeting.

The Board discussed the contents of the Work Programme. The provision of emergency accommodation for young single people in the city was identified as a further area for scrutiny and added to the programme. Members also agreed that a site visit to Beeston Hill and Holbeck be organised prior to the start of the next meeting as part of the inquiry into regeneration in the area.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and the revisions to the Work Programme be noted.

16 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 6th September at 11:00 am (visit to Beeston Hill and Holbeck Regeneration Area for Board Members to commence at 9:30 am.)

(The meeting concluded at 11:45 am.)