

## **SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)**

**THURSDAY, 21ST OCTOBER, 2021**

**PRESENT:** Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, A Blackburn,  
D Collins, A Gabriel, P Grahame, K Brooks,  
T Smith, K Ritchie, R Charlwood,  
M Midgley and D Ragan

### **12 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents**

There were no appeals.

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

There was no exempt information.

### **14 Late Items**

There were no formal late items. However, some supplementary information relating to the minutes from the previous meeting held 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021, was distributed to members prior to the meeting.

### **15 Declaration of Interests**

Although there were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests made at the meeting, Councillor J Akhtar required an 'other interest' to be recorded in relation to Agenda Item No. 8 (Housing Activity Update) because he is a tenant of a local housing provider.

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

Apologies for absence were received of behalf of Councillor C Howley.

### **17 Minutes - 23 September 2021**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021, be approved as an accurate record.

#### Matters Arising

Minute 9 – Scrutiny Inquiry – Waste Services – Terms of Reference. The Chair provided an update on the discussion of the terms of reference at the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board and the suggestion put forward that their remit should look at contractual issues relating to the RERF. It was noted that an invitation for a remote working group has been circulated to members,

to discuss issues relating to the current 'baseline' for refuse and recycling services

## **18 Housing Activity Update**

The report of the Chief Officer (Housing) provided an update on housing activity during quarter 1 of 2021/22.

Appended to the report included the Housing Activity Report – Quarter 1 2021/22.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Rafique, Executive Member for Communities
- Gerard Tinsdale, Chief Officer Housing
- Adam Crampton, Head of Property Management
- Nahim Ruhi-Khan, Head of Strategy and Investment

The Chief Officer Housing, introduced the report and provided the following information in relation to housing activity:

- 16k tenants have moved onto Universal Credit, and the challenges surrounding this;
- A face-to-face service has resumed with 237 walkabouts being carried out in quarter 1;
- The backlog of responsive repairs has reduced to 9k, although challenges remain with supply chain and labour market issues – the difficulty with building supplies has impacted on repairs and investment;
- There are currently 700 properties in void;
- There has been an increase in complaints regarding the delay in improving properties and responding to repairs. It was confirmed the service has been tweaked to ensure better engagement with customers and to also benefit social isolation;
- Homelessness is being prevented by 90%, putting Leeds in a strong position when compared against the national figure;
- Private sector housing colleagues are working with various agencies, landlords to identify ASB related issues and strengthening links with local authorities;
- The Housing Strategy Review is due for renewal, and consultation continues with a report being brought to the next Board meeting in November.

The Board discussed the following key matters:

- The effectiveness of communication between residents regarding the timeliness of repairs and the different forms of communication for elderly residents.
- Concerns regarding contractors not fulfilling repairs and communication between contractors and residents. It was noted that the new contract with MEARS set out new expectations and Key Performance Indicators. Additionally, it was reported that there has been a 15%

reduction of responsive repairs recorded, albeit the demand is returning, and backlog is anticipated. It was of the opinion of officers that the backlog of repairs will be cleared by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, and it was confirmed that of those repairs, they are deemed non-essential.

- Wider issues relating to damp, and clarity on the type of properties suffering such issues. It was confirmed that there is a dedicated team to deal with complex repairs and there are strategies being developed to implement longer term actions. It was noted that the majority of properties were Pre-1919 stock and traditional brick properties;
- It was confirmed that issues relating to the extended lettings period is primarily due to covid safe practises and labour market issues.
- It was confirmed that updated information relating to contact details for housing offices across the city will be provided to Board members.
- The variety of issues associated with homeless people migrating into Leeds. It was confirmed that this was primarily due to domestic violence and abuse.
- Clarity on the process to regain housing stock.
- Clarity on the processes in place when dealing with landlords failing to apply or hold a licence. It was noted that a timescale on the time taken for enforcement action, will be provided to members outside of the meeting.

**RESOLVED** – To note the contents of the report and detailed update in relation to housing activity, together with comments raised during discussion of this item.

## **19 Capital Programme Investment to Improve Energy Efficiency in Council Housing Stock**

The report of the Head of Strategy and Investment provided an update in relation to capital investment to improve energy efficiency in Council Housing Stock.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Rafique, Executive Member for Communities
- Gerard Tinsdale, Chief Officer Housing
- Nahim Ruhi-Khan, Head of Strategy and Investment

The Head of Strategy and Investment provided an update on projects within the 5-year investment programme that will contribute to decarbonisation of council housing, as well as an update on the capital investment planned to council high rise buildings that will contribute to the climate emergency agenda.

Responding to questions, officers provided the following information:

- In high rise buildings the most expensive form of heating is the current electric storage heating system. It is not possible to install individual Air source heat technology in high rise building, therefore Ground source heat pump technology offers the lowest running costs to tenants

living in high rise buildings and the greater CO2 savings compared to Air source heat technology.

- Clarity on the assessment for investment across properties in all wards – there are a number of considerations when determining where to target investment, this includes: worse first, lowest energy performing properties, condition of the property (if other priority works are required) including Health and Safety, whether the project would go into a priority area and those properties that meet criteria for external funding. If all things are equal, consideration will also be given to the spread of investment across the city.

Members thanked the officers in attendance, specifically for the work undertaken to accelerate delivery of programmes and saving monies for tenants.

**RESOLVED** – To note the contents of the report, together with comments raised during discussion of this item.

## **20 Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime**

The report of the Head of Democratic Services provided background information regarding the transfer of Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) functions to the West Yorkshire Mayor and the ongoing development of a West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan.

Appended to the report included copies of the public consultation papers and the partner consultation documents.

The following were in attendance:

- Alison Lowe, Deputy Mayor for Crime and Policing
- Paul Money, Chief Officer Safer Leeds

The Deputy Mayor for Crime and Policing discussed the priorities of the new West Yorkshire Mayor in relation to policing and Crime, and the ongoing development of the new West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan. Members were also provided with an overview of the consultation and variety of partners involved, as well as timescales for the consultation process and Draft Plan. Additionally, it was noted that there is a commitment from West Yorkshire Police to re-write an internal plan in accordance with the Police and Crime Plan.

The Board discussed the following points:

- Ensuring ‘catching criminals’ remains a priority – the effectiveness and efficiency of the police force remaining a number one priority that will be reflected in the Plan, as well as understanding local priorities to provide better outcomes for people.
- Clarity on the consultation process for harder to reach communities – it was confirmed there has been contact with various organisations, LGBT / BAME groups, Faith Leaders, and individuals during the

consultation process as well as messages being sent out radio stations, TV, places of worship and public transport.

- Concerns regarding issues affecting women's safety, and more specifically, issues relating to targeted date rape drugs. It was confirmed that a meeting is being established with the Students' Union and Alex Sobel MP to look at the prevalence of women's safety. It was reported that there has been 1 case of spiking with a needle in Leeds in the last 3 years, and possible underreporting concerns; supporting victims will be a focus in the Plan. The Chief Officer Safer Leeds discussed a variety of work ongoing with strategic / operational groups, as well as a campaign for 'Ask Angela', linking to vulnerabilities in night-time economy for women. The Deputy Mayor raised concern regarding CPS Charging Protocol and confirmed such concerns have been sent to the APCC.
- Resourcing implications relating to disability hate crime. The Deputy Mayor encouraged use of the Mayors funding.

The Chair reiterated the importance of ensuring all communities respond during the consultation process, more specifically the harder to reach communities and thanked the Deputy Mayor for her attendance. The Chair suggested an invitation be extending to the Deputy Mayor at a future meeting, to discuss progress on women's safety.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- a) To note the contents of the report, together with comments raised during discussion of this item.
- b) To note the intention to receive an update from the Deputy Mayor at a future meeting, relating to women's safety and a broader update.

## **21 Reducing Carbon Emissions Across the Council Estate**

Further to the minutes of the meeting held 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021, the report of the Chief Officer for Sustainable Energy and Air Quality provided an update on progress with measures intended to reduce carbon emissions across the Council's estate.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Walshaw, CEAC Chair
- Polly Cook, Chief Officer Sustainable Energy and Air Quality

The Chief Officer Sustainable Energy and Air Quality introduced the report and provided an update on the work to reduce emissions from the corporate estate and a range of the Council's activities including an update on sustainable Council fleet and staff business travel schemes and measures being implemented.

It was noted that work is underway to quantify scope 3 emissions, to include areas such as food. It was anticipated that an action plan for scope 3 will be pulled together prior to Executive Board in February 2022.

The Board discussed the following matters:

- Clarity on the Council's position to move to 100% electricity provided from green sources, as well as the deliverability for large scale solar schemes within Leeds.
- The importance of ensuring viable alternatives will be in place in relation to the car leasing scheme.
- The partnership approach to discuss different investment opportunities at an early stage and supporting business approaching the Council.
- Public transport options for staff to encourage people to use busses / trains, instead of cars. It was noted that further work is required to inform staff of available options.

The Board commended the work undertaken so far, as well as the commitment to meet the City target of net zero carbon by 2030.

**RESOLVED** – To note the contents of the report, together with comments during discussion.

(Councillor J Akhtar vacated the meeting at 12:50, during consideration of this item)

## **22 Tackling Anti-Social Use of Fireworks: Inquiry Response**

The report of the Head of Democratic Services set out the advice of senior officers in response to the recommendations set out in its Tackling Anti-Social Use of Fireworks Inquiry Report.

The Chair informed the Board that a service update will be provided at the November meeting from the Chief Officer Safer Stronger Communities and the ASB Service Delivery Manager, to discuss how the service has responded to Bonfire Night and Halloween.

**RESOLVED** –

- a) To note the contents of the report and the response of senior officers to the recommendations set out in the inquiry report.
- b) To agree the final version of the report and associated advice to be shared with Executive Board.
- c) To note that an update will be provided to the Board in November on the experience of Bonfire Night and Halloween 2021.

## **23 Safer, Stronger Communities Leeds Plan 2021-24**

Further to the minutes of the meeting held 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021, the report of the Chief Officer Safer Stronger Communities introduced the final version of the Safer, Strong Communities Leeds Plan 2021-24 following formal consultation and ahead of consideration by Executive Board.

The Board unanimously supported the final version of the Plan.

**RESOLVED** – To note the contents of the report and agreed to recommend the final version of the Plan to Executive Board.

## **24 Work Schedule**

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report which detailed the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the 2021/22 municipal year. This was appended to the report together with the Executive Board minutes from the meeting held 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2021.

The Chair informed the Board of the possibility for a forthcoming Inquiry at the meeting to be held in November 2021, regarding a review of a policy around tree maintenance.

**RESOLVED** – To note the contents of the report and the work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.

## **25 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – To note the date and time of the next meeting as 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at 9.45 am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 am)

(The meeting concluded at 12:45 pm)