

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

WEDNESDAY, 25TH JULY, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors C Beverley, A Blackburn,
D Coupar, Mrs R Feldman, A Gabriel,
D Hollingsworth, R Lewis, L Rhodes-
Clayton and F Robinson

11 Chairs Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods).

12 Declarations of Interest

The following personal interests were declared on Agenda item 10 – Minute 18:

- Councillor B Anderson in his capacity as Chair of West/North West Homes
- Councillor A Blackburn in her capacity as a Council Board Member on West/North West Homes.
- Councillor D Coupar in her capacity as a Member of Belle Isle Tenants Management Organisation.
- Councillor A Gabriel in her capacity as a Member of the Beeston Hill and Holbeck Residents Association.
- Councillor D Hollingsworth in his capacity as a Council Board Member on East/North East Homes.

13 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors G Hyde and A Ogilvie.

14 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 14th June 2007

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the last Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) held on 14th June 2007 be confirmed as a correct record.

15 Minutes - Executive Board - 4th July 2007

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 4th June 2007 be received and noted.

16 Minutes - Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 4th June 2007

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4th June 2007 be received and noted.

17 Members' Questions

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which afforded Scrutiny Board Members the opportunity to put questions to the Executive Member with responsibility for Neighbourhoods and Housing portfolio.

Opening the session the Chair welcomed Councillor J L Carter and Mr Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to the meeting and he asked the Executive Board Member to briefly outline the current issues, pressures and opportunities facing his portfolio in the coming year.

The following issues were raised:

Housing - There is an ongoing priority to obtain **decency** and the need to secure sufficient funding.

PFI Swarcliffe and Holbeck Improvement Work - The recognition that such contracts were difficult to manage and the need to learn from this and past contracts, particularly in relation to tenant management.

Gateway Review – Little London and Beeston Hill - The works for this scheme have gone well and it is anticipated that the scheme will be completed in October 2007.

EASEL - Progress on this project was discussed.

Affordable Housing - The Government's green paper and the proposals therein in relation to affordable housing was discussed. Particular issues discussed were land usage, definitions of affordability, the different schemes available to help house owners purchase properties.

The Executive Member suggested that this Scrutiny Board might like to consider further proposals within the Green Paper.

Community Safety – a broad ranging discussion was held around the Executive Member's responsibilities in relation to community safety, particularly the following issues:

- **'Champion Operation'**
- **Drugs and Rehabilitation.**
- **PCSOs.**
- **Tagging and the Early release of prisoners .**

Choice Based Lettings - A full debate took place on the current system of choice based lettings, other available means of letting and the relationship between letting policies and housing supply. Members raised a number of concerns in relation to the current system. The Executive Board member stated that he would welcome Scrutiny Board undertaking a full inquiry on this matter.

Gypsies and Travellers - The Executive Board Member informed the meeting that there is to be an independent review on this matter in the autumn.

Capital Receipts – A debate took place on the use and allocation of capital receipts. The debate particularly focused on support for capital receipts being treated as ‘city receipts’ and the view that capital receipts in part or whole should stay within the ward in which they were generated. Whilst not coming to any conclusions it was acknowledged that any review would require a review of all capital receipts generated and their contribution to capital developments as a whole.

Concluding the debate, the Chair thanked the Executive Board Member and the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods for attending today’s meeting and commented on the fact that such an open and wide ranging discussion was good for the scrutiny function and transparent decision making.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That all Members of Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) be supplied with a copy of the former boards inquiry into Gypsy and Travellers sites.
- (b) That Councillor Steve Smith, Executive Board Member for Environmental Services be invited to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Board to discuss his portfolio.
- (c) That the Scrutiny Board undertake an inquiry into Choice Based Lettings.

18 Monitoring of Scrutiny Board Recommendations

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report following the recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee to adopt a new, more robust system of recommendation tracking to ensure that Scrutiny recommendations were more rigorously followed through.

It was reported that each Scrutiny Board is to receive a quarterly report, coinciding with the quarterly presentation of performance information which will commence in September 2007.

Following the Chair’s request for an early update on the recommendations on the inquiries made by the former Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing) into Anti Social Behaviour Intervention (2004/05) and the Affordable

Housing (2005/06). The Board was presented with an update on progress towards meeting these recommendations.

Julian Mayfield, Community Safety Manager and Ernie Gray, Housing Strategy Development Manager attended the meeting and responded to Members questions and comments in relation to their respective inquiry.

In brief, the main issues raised were:

- Recommendation 3 and 4 relating to a system to **prevent multiple breaches of ASBOs**. In response the Officer informed the meeting that more work was needed to ensure that the data was correct and that the Department are looking at how these breaches are officially managed. It was announced that Members will receive an update on this issue at the January 2008 meeting.
- Recommendation 12 – Members to be kept informed of **Anti-Social Behaviour** issues and activities within their Wards by Council department and ALMOs within the constraints of the law. Some Members informed the meeting that they were not being kept informed. In response, officers assured the meeting that this matter would be investigated further and would look at ways in which the information can be made more accessible. Members requested that some form of reminder should be sent out to Members with regard to those ASBOs in their own Wards.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the update on those recommendation provided by the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods be received and noted.
- (b) That a revision into the ways in which Members are notified with regard to Anti-Social Behaviour orders, especially multiple breaches be investigated.
- (c) That this Board's comments regarding the enforcement of Alcohol Licences be passed on to the relevant officer.

19 Inquiry into Regeneration in Beeston Hill and Holbeck - Formal Responses to Recommendations

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report attaching the formal responses provided by the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods following this inquiry.

John Bracewell, Area Regeneration Officer – South Leeds attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments.

Members welcomed the positive response to the Board's recommendations.

RESOLVED - That the report and appendices be received and noted and be formally incorporated into the Recommendation Tracking system.

20 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on the Board's current work programme and the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for July to October 2007.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and appendices be received and noted.
- (b) That the Principal Scrutiny Advisor be instructed to set up a Working Group to draft terms of reference for an inquiry into Choice Based Lettings to include:

Councillors B Anderson, A Gabriel, D Hollingsworth and L Rhodes-Clayton.

21 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 19th September 2007 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting at 9.30 a.m.).

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting concluded at approximately 12.15 p.m.