

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

WEDNESDAY, 30TH JANUARY, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

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

66 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the Chair admitted to the agenda the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 23 January, 2008, which were to be considered as part of agenda item 8. The document was not available at the time of agenda despatch and had been admitted in order to allow Members to consider the minutes at the earliest possible opportunity.

67 Declarations Of Interest

Councillors B Anderson and A Blackburn declared a personal interest in any matters relating to their membership of West / North West Leeds Homes ALMO. In addition, Councillor D Hollingsworth declared a personal interest in any matters relating to his membership of Leeds East / North East Homes ALMO.

68 Apologies For Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Mrs R Feldman, G Hyde, A Ogilvie and F Robinson.

69 Minutes - 19th December 2007

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th December, 2007 be approved as a correct record.

70 Matters Arising

Further to Minute 63, **Waste Solution for Leeds**, Members noted the contents of the Jacobs report, which provided clarification of the 100 possible sites, together with details of the 42 sites taken forward for assessment and the outcome of the assessment. In addition, maps showing the location of the 42 long-listed and 4 short-listed sites was also provided.

71 Minutes - Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 6th November and 11th December 2007

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6th November and 11th December, 2007 be received and noted.

72 Minutes - Executive Board - 19th December 2007 and 23rd January 2008

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board meetings held on 19th December, 2007 and 23rd January, 2008 be received and noted.

73 Leeds Strategic Plan and Council Business Plan - Outcomes and Priorities

The Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement) submitted a report, which outlined the progress made to date in the development of the Leeds Strategic Plan and Council Business Plan.

Appended to the report as Appendix A was a full consultation report, which summarised the feedback received.

Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and Heather Pinches, Performance Manager, attended the meeting to update the Board and respond to Members queries and comments.

The Performance Manager reported that the draft business outcomes and improvement priorities were being presented to the Scrutiny Board for the first time. In relation to the Council Business Plan, it was noted that Members had no specific queries or comments.

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods introduced the Leeds Strategic Plan and referred members to the key themes for the Board to consider (Appendix A - pages 58 – 61 refer), namely:

- Environment City;
- Thriving Neighbourhoods; and,
- Stronger Communities

In brief summary, the main issues discussed were:-

- Members queried the influence of various **inspection processes**. *(The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods advised that the development of the Plan was primarily driven by priorities and outcome of consultation with stakeholders).*
- The Chair reported that other Scrutiny Boards had raised concerns relating to the lack of consultation with young people, sustainability issues and strengthening the reference to family.

The Chair thanked Heather Pinches for her attendance.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the strategic outcomes and improvement priorities for the Leeds Strategic Plan be noted
- (2) That the draft business outcomes and improvement priorities be noted.

74 Budgetary Issues and Considerations

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report in relation to particular service areas that the Board wished to consider as part of the proposed budgetary considerations.

Appended to the report was an Executive Board report, 'Developing the Financial Plan 2008-2013', which set out the Council's financial position in the current year and the likely impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007.

Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods attended the meeting and responded to Members queries and comments. In brief summary, the main issues discussed were:-

- Efficiency savings and the withdrawal of the **Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF)**. *(The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods referred to those areas that might be affected by efficiency savings and advised Members that, given the current financial climate, some services areas would inevitably be affected. However, it was reported that the delivery of the **Integrated Waste Strategy** and mainstream front-line services would remain priority areas. It was further reported that some service areas that had previously been funded through NRF were to be brought into the wider work of the Area Management Teams).*
- One Member referred to the Housing Revenue Account and queried the proposed **rent increases** for Council tenants. *(The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reported on advice issued by the Government, which sought to converge Council and Housing Association rent levels. The Board was informed that the likely result was an increase of 7.8 % for Council tenants, which the Council considered was unreasonable. It was reported that based on the Council's negative subsidy calculation, current projections indicated a rent increase in the region of 5.8%. It was further reported that, while some budgetary issues within the Council's Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) may arise as a result, this had been foreseen as a potential issue and the use of reserves may help to ease budget pressures).*

The Chair suggested that the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods be invited to report back to the Board after the budget for 2008/2009 had been agreed. It was felt that this would enable the Board to more fully consider the

financial constraints that the Department was under and identify the impact in any specific service areas.

The Chair then thanked Neil Evans for his attendance.

RESOLVED – That during the current municipal year the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods be invited to report back to the Board after the 2008/2009 budget had been finalised and agreed, to enable the Board to more fully consider the financial constraints affecting the Department and to identify the impact in any specific service areas.

75 Integrated Waste Strategy for Leeds - The Role of the Third Sector

The Board received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development in relation to the role of the third sector in delivering the Integrated Waste Strategy for Leeds.

The Chair introduced Richard Vietch and Luna Gomez, representing Leeds Organic Growers (LOGs) who had been invited to attend the meeting to provide the Board with an outline of the organisation and the specific work they were involved with. The Board was informed that LOGs was hoping to launch a green garden waste collection service working in the Inner North West Wards of Kirkstall and Weetwood.

In brief summary, the main issues discussed were:-

- Members considered the Council's process for awarding contracts in relation to collecting, re-using, recycling and/or disposing of **garden waste**.
- The Board discussed **health and safety** issues. It was noted that health and safety was one of LOGs primary concerns.
- The Board discussed the need to use **equitable cost comparisons** when comparing collection/disposal costs, to help demonstrate value for money.

The Chair suggested that Pippa Milne, Waste and Recycling Manager, be invited to present a report to a future meeting of the Board (as outlined in paragraph 2.2 of the report) to further explain the Council's work with third sector organisations and the process for awarding contracts in relation to collecting, re-using, recycling and/or disposing of different waste streams. It was also suggested that other social enterprise representatives be invited to attend the meeting. In addition, Members were advised that, should they be interested, visits to the LOGs site could be arranged.

The Chair thanked Richard Vietch and Luna Gomez for their attendance.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Waste and Recycling Manager be invited to present a report to a future meeting of the Board (as outlined in paragraph 2.2 of the report) and that other social enterprise representatives be invited to attend that meeting.

76 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on the Board's work programme.

Appended to the report was a copy of the following documents for information/comment at the meeting:-

- (a) Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) – Work Programme – January 2008 (Appendix 1 refers)
- (b) Forward Plan of Key Decisions – 1st February 2008 to 31st May 2008 (Appendix 2 refers)

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser suggested that the follow-up report in relation to Budgetary Issues and Considerations, requested by Members, might usefully be provided at the meeting to be held in March.

One Member queried whether issues had been tracked throughout the year. The Principal Scrutiny Adviser referred Members to unscheduled items contained within the work programme, and advised that Members would be invited to agree priorities and timescales for these items.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted
- (b) That, subject to the amendments highlighted at the meeting, approval be given to the amended work programme as now reported.

77 Dates and Times of Future Meetings

RESOLVED – That the meeting scheduled to take place on Wednesday 23rd April, 2008 be cancelled.

The dates and times of other future meetings were agreed as follows:-

- Wednesday 27th February, 2008
- Wednesday 26th March, 2008

Both at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meetings at 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 11.11 am)

