

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

MONDAY, 9TH FEBRUARY, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors A Blackburn, A Castle, G Hyde,
G Kirkland, J Marjoram, L Mulherin and
M Rafique

86 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair consented to the submission of the following late items of business:

- Item 11 – Inquiry into Street Cleaning – Appendix 1, Working Group Summary Report
- Item 12 – Inquiry into Private Rented Sector Housing – Appendix 1, Working Group Summary Report
- Item 13 – Inquiry into Asylum Seeker Case Resolution – Appendix 1, Working Group Summary Report

These reports were late due to the short timescale involved in producing the reports and consulting working group members on its content.

87 Declarations of Interest

The following personal interests were declared:-

- Councillor B Anderson in his capacity as a Director of West North West Homes (Agenda Items 9, 11, 12 and 14) (Minutes 92, 94, 95 and 97 refer)
- Councillor G Hyde in his capacity as a Director of East North East Homes (Agenda Items 9, 11, 12 and 14) (Minutes 92, 94, 95 and 97 refer)
- Councillor A Blackburn in her capacity as a Director of West North West Homes (Agenda Items 9, 11, 12 and 14) (Minutes 92, 94, 95 and 97 refer)
- Councillor J Marjoram in his capacity as a Panel Member of West North West Homes (Agenda Items 9, 11, 12 and 14) (Minutes 92, 94, 95 and 97 refer) and also in Agenda Item 12 in his capacity as a private sector landlord (Minute 95 refers)

88 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cleasby, Coupar, Gabriel and Hollingsworth

89 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2009, be confirmed as a correct record.

90 Executive Board - Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board held on 14 January 2009 be noted.

91 Request for Scrutiny

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development outlined a request for scrutiny from Councillor Selby suggesting that the Board should conduct an inquiry into the East and South East Leeds (EASEL) Regeneration Scheme. Appended to the report was a copy of the request letter from Councillor Selby which outlined the reasons for the request.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Selby to the meeting along with Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and Stephen Boyle, Chief Regeneration Officer.

The Chair invited Councillor Selby to explain the reasons for his request and the following issues/concerns were raised by Councillor Selby:

- The delay in progress with the scheme;
- The apparent changes in the scheme to what had previously been agreed by Executive Board and what is now proposed
- That people living in the EASEL area were not being kept informed of what was happening with the scheme
- Dates of key decisions by Executive Board and the subsequent lack of action following such decisions
- The need for more community engagement and consultation
- The lack of an agreement for the Joint Venture Company (JVC)

In response to Councillor Selby's concerns, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reported that EASEL was one of the Council's largest schemes and therefore it was expected that there would be a long gestation period. Following the first report to Executive Board in 2004 there had been a further 17 reports as the proposals had evolved. It was explained that current market forces had meant further revision to the scheme and that it was vital to work to get the best deal for the Council and people in the EASEL area. Building had begun on Phase 1 of the project and it would continue to be a long term regeneration project with the building of 5,000 new homes.

With regards to community consultation, the Board was informed that newsletters had been delivered to residents of the EASEL area and other existing mechanisms such as Area Committees and Community Forums had been used. More detailed neighbourhood planning was also being prepared.

Further issues discussed in response to Members questions and comments included the following:

- Public perception of the scheme particularly as there had been large scale demolition of properties in comparison to new building work.
- A suggestion that a Working Group be formed to consider the scope for a possible inquiry into EASEL and that key events and decisions in the development of the EASEL scheme be listed chronologically for those unfamiliar with the scheme and the Working Group's consideration.

RESOLVED – That a Working Group be established to consider the scope for a possible inquiry into the EASEL Regeneration Scheme

(Councillors Mulherin, Rafique and Kirkland joined the meeting during the discussion of this item at 10.10 a.m., 10.15 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. respectively).

92 Grounds Maintenance Draft Service Improvement Plan

The report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods informed Members that the current Grounds Maintenance contractor was required to submit an annual Service Improvement Plan (SIP) to identify key issues for the forthcoming contract year and measures to address these issues. The SIP had been developed as a joint document between Glendale Managed Services and Leeds City Council to ensure that there were agreed service priorities. A draft copy of the SIP was submitted with the report.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting for this item:

- Stephen Smith – Head of Environmental Services
- Nick Temple-Heald – Chief Executive, Glendale
- Mike Brunskill – Regional Director, Glendale

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- The contractor worked closely with the ALMOs and had been represented at residents meetings and community forums when requested. There was a willingness to meet and work with Elected Members where necessary.
- The difficulties in identifying ownership of some areas of land and who held responsibility for its maintenance.
- Monitoring of grounds maintenance work – this fell to the individual departments who owned the land and training had been given to ALMO staff to carry out their own monitoring.
- New parts of land that required maintenance under the contract were still being identified and others transferred between departments. There were issues surrounding areas that may be undergoing monitoring by more than one department and it was suggested that monitoring arrangements be reviewed.
- Collection of grass cuttings – it was reported that the contractor was not contracted to collect grass cuttings and that the service would incur additional costs for the contractor to carry out this function.

- How Elected Members and the Board could have input into the Service Improvement Plan.
- The provision of mapping information for Members on a ward basis. It was reported that more detailed information was now available and could be sent to Elected Members.

RESOLVED – That the draft action plan be noted and for the Principal Scrutiny Adviser to provide the service with a summary of the Board's comments on the draft Plan.

93 Enforcement of Dog Fouling

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report regarding monthly data in relation to dog warden services as previously requested by the Board. A supporting report on the role of the Dog Warden Service was also appended along with a copy of the Board's draft statement on the Enforcement of Dog Fouling in Leeds.

The Chair welcomed Graham Wilson, Head of Environmental Action and Parking and Stacey Campbell, Service Manager to the meeting for this item.

During the Board's discussions, further clarification was provided in relation to timescales for impounding stray dogs. The Board also considered and agreed its Statement on the Enforcement of Dog Fouling.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the December 2008 data relating to the numbers of dog fouling Fixed Penalty Notices issued, prosecutions made, stray dogs impounded and dog service requests be noted.
- (2) That the background report on the different roles of the Dog Warden Service be noted.
- (3) That the Board's Statement on the Enforcement of Dog Fouling be agreed.

94 Inquiry into Street Cleaning

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development informed the Board of the Working Group meeting held on 14 January 2009 with officers from Environment and Neighbourhoods, Area Managers, Area Committee Chairs and representatives from the ALMOs and ENCAMS. A summary report of the discussions was provided for Members.

RESOLVED – That the summary report of the Working Group be noted.

95 Inquiry into Private Rented Sector Housing

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development asked Members to consider evidence in line with the Board's Inquiry into Private Sector Housing, namely the following areas:

- The Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme and the incentives to accreditation;
- The views and experiences of private landlords and tenants;

- Common perceptions of the different housing tenures and the impact this has on private rented sector housing;
- The Council's role in promoting private rented sector property and offering advice to prospective tenants;
- The impact of the Local Housing Assessment (housing benefit) on private rented sector housing;
- The role of the Council in offering advice and support to private landlords about the various options available to them to enable their properties to be re-occupied

Following a Scrutiny Working Group meeting on 19th January 2009, a summary report of the Working Group's discussions regarding the Inquiry and aforementioned areas was also submitted and Members were informed that there would be another meeting of the Working Group in February 2009.

RESOLVED – That the summary report be noted in line with session two of the Inquiry into Private Sector Rented Housing.

96 Inquiry into Asylum Seeker Case Resolution

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development asked Members to consider evidence in line with session two of the Board's Inquiry into Asylum Seeker Case Resolution, namely the following areas:

- An assessment of the possible service requirements as the case resolution process developed;
- Assessment of the impact of case resolution on the placement of asylum seekers across the city and links with existing community cohesion policies;
- Assessment of any identified equality impacts

Following a Scrutiny Working Group meeting on 22nd January 2009, a summary report of the Working Group's discussions regarding the Inquiry and aforementioned areas was also submitted.

RESOLVED – That the summary report of the Working Group be noted.

97 Inquiry into Older People's Housing

The Head of scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report in line with session two of the Board's Inquiry into Older People's Housing. The session aimed to focus on the following areas:

- Issues surrounding affordable housing for older people;
- Ensuring that older people had a safe and secure environment to live in, with a sense of belonging to and participating in communities;
- The role and development of Assistive Technology, Telecare and Telehealth services in promoting the capacity of older people to live independently;
- Problems relating to fuel poverty and older people.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Liz Ward – Disability Service Manager
- Tim O'Shea – Head of Commissioning, Adult Social Services
- Mark Phillott – Commissioning Manager, Adult Social Services,
- Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer
- Alan Jones, Fuel Savers Manager
- Susan Chesters, Chair of the Leeds Older People's Forum
- Caroline Starkey, Deputy Manager of the Leeds Older People's Forum
- Bill Rollinson, Director of Care and Repair Leeds and Member of the Leeds Older People's Forum

Liz Ward addressed the meeting and informed the Board of the Leeds Telecare Service. She gave examples of the kinds of equipment and packages that were available, such as falls sensors and fire and carbon monoxide detectors. The Telecare Service was not intended to replace personal support but to supplement other support mechanisms available. The following issues were discussed in relation to Leeds Telecare Services:

- Individuals would be assessed to ascertain the need for Telecare equipment and that there is a target of 7 days for supplying such equipment. Emergency situations eg, individuals being discharged from hospital are given priority. It was explained that there are some items of telecare equipment which are not kept in stock and may take longer to supply.
- Engagement with the EASEL scheme regarding new buildings and supply of Telecare services.
- That Telecare equipment was provided at no cost to the users. The only element of the service which is subject to charging, under the council's fairer charging policy, is the mobile response service for people who do not have two key holders who can respond in an emergency.
- Arrangements for response to sensor alerts which are usually through the CareRing response centre although in some situations people have telecare sensors which can alert people living in the same household.

The Board was informed about rises in the local elderly population. It was anticipated that there would be a rise by 20% of over 55's and 40% of over 85's by 2020. This would have an impact on the kind of housing that was required in Leeds and the supply of accessible homes and lifetime homes was a main issue of the Leeds Housing Strategy.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- More co-ordination was needed with transport providers, healthcare providers, shops and other services. It was recognised that partnership work was important and Health and Social Care involvement would feature.

- How to support people living in private sector housing and to ensure that private sector landlords are fulfilling all their responsibilities.
- The role of the voluntary sector in Leeds.
- How to inform older people of the choices available to enable them in order to make informed decisions about their future housing support needs.
- To ensure all older people are aware of eligibility for improved heating and insulation to help address the problems of fuel poverty.
- The increase in the number of older people with learning disabilities and mental health problems.
- Support for people in fuel poverty. There were 21,000 referrals in the past year, 7,500 of these being from people of a pensionable age. Leeds had a high proportion of winter deaths and measures had been taken to address this. There was a need to highlight this with those responsible for housing provision and groups such as those with COPD would be targeted.
- Social isolation – this was deemed a key issue in relation to housing provision and social inclusion was being promoted as a priority area. The Leeds Older People’s Forum had provided training on tackling social isolation that had involved housing staff. Concern was expressed about older people living alone in private accommodation and it was recognised social isolation also affected those in shared and sheltered accommodation
- The choice of people to remain in their homes. There had been identified issues with under occupation in social housing. Incentive schemes were available for those in under occupied homes.
- The role of sheltered housing wardens and provision of activities for residents.

RESOLVED – That the evidence provided and discussed be noted in line with session two of the Board’s Inquiry into Older People’s Housing.

(Councillor Rafique left the meeting at 11.35 a.m. during discussion of this item)

98 Current Work Programme

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development outlined the Board’s current work programme. Also appended to the report was a copy of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

It was reported that the only amendment to the Work Programme was to include the proposed Working Group for the EASEL Regeneration Scheme.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be agreed and amended as discussed.

99 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 16 March 2009 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting at 09.30 a.m. for all Board Members).