

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY DEVELOPMENT)

TUESDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor R Pryke in the Chair

Councillors C Beverley, B Gettings,
R Harington, J Jarosz, R Procter,
N Taggart, G Wilkinson, A Barker,
J Matthews and A Ogilvie

86 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair admitted to the agenda two reports:

- Report of the Director of City Development to the 13th February 2009 Executive Board entitled '**City Centre Park**' (Minute No. 91 refers).
- Report of the Chief Highways Officer to the 13th February 2009 Executive Board entitled '**Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme Design Vision and Guide**' (Minute No. 95 refers).

These reports had been unavailable at the time of the agenda despatch as their release to the Executive Board was not until after the despatch of the Scrutiny Board (City Development) agenda and reports. Both these reports had been circulated to Board Members prior to the meeting.

87 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Pryke declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 11 'Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme Design Vision and Guide' (Minute No. 95 refers) in his capacity as a member of the Yorkshire Regional Flood Defence Committee.

Councillor Matthews also stated in the interests of transparency, that he was a member of the North West (Inner) Area Committee which had referred the A660 Phase 1 Design and Cost Report dated 24th November 2008 to the Scrutiny Board (City Development) for discussion at its January meeting.

88 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors A Hussain and Lobley.

89 Minutes of Last Meeting

With regard to Resolution (b) of Minute No. 82, third bullet point, Councillor Pryke advised that he had not yet received information from Officers on all the city's Wards covered by **LEGI** schemes and would take this up with the department.

RESOLVED – That, with the amendment to Resolution (b) of Minute No. 82, second bullet point to read ‘That the department respond directly to: ... Councillor Barker’s request for a meeting on LEGI.’, the minutes of the meeting held on 13th January 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

90 Climate Change Strategy

The Sustainable Development Unit submitted a report providing Members with an opportunity to comment on the draft ‘Leeds Climate Change Strategy: Vision for Action’ prior to its submission to the Executive Board and full Council for approval.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting to present the report and respond to queries and comments from the Board, George Munson, Climate Change Officer and Tom Knowland, Head of Sustainable Development, both Sustainable Development Unit, City Development.

The Climate Change Officer presented the report and advised Members that:

- The strategy had taken two years to develop and was Leeds’ response to signing the **Nottingham Declaration** in June 2006.
- The strategy had been released for **consultation** in February 2008 and the draft attached to the report took into consideration the consultation responses received. The draft also took into account the current state of the economy and resources available from the Council and from external sources.
- The intention was that the strategy would be presented to the Executive Board in March and then Full Council in April 2009. It was planned that the final strategy document would be **published in May 2009**.

In brief summary, the following issues were raised and comments made by Members concerning the draft strategy:

- That the strategy be more specific with regard to **listing financial incentives** to install home energy efficiency measures.
- That the phrase ‘we need to shift the emphasis to **larger, more affluent households**’ be reworded to make it clearer that social housing was not being ignored but that it was with the larger more affluent households where the potential for greater carbon savings could be made.
- The **true cost** to the city of *not* creating a low carbon economy – Members were advised that the Council was working with the University of Leeds to ascertain the costs of action versus inaction and the results would be available within the next two years.
- **Independent measuring of Leeds’ ecological footprint** – Members were advised that the organisation Forum for the Future was a national charity that published an independent index of all large cities and towns in the UK.
- Publicity, education and **public relations** – Members were advised that an Environmental Communications Officer was to be recruited shortly.
- **Plans Panels** – Officers advised that advice on ecological impact was given on planning applications, however the climate change strategy

would not have an effect on an individual planning application basis as planning law did not allow it.

- **Briefings**– Officers advised that briefings would be provided on climate change.
- Whether a climate change strategy was worth having – Members were advised that Leeds was competing against other cities. It needed to attract **investment** and therefore needed to be resilient to climate change and prepare for a low carbon economy. Having a strategy was therefore necessary to give a clear indication to partners that Leeds was committed to dealing with this issue.
- Whether the **resources** were available to make any difference – Officers advised that it was necessary for Leeds to have this strategy to show its partners that Leeds was serious about the effects of climate change. This strategy represented the Local Authority’s first step forward. It would be reviewed in 2011 and it was hoped that by then Leeds would be in a better position to make firmer commitments.
- The wider picture of long-term **energy security** – Officers acknowledged the importance of having locally sourced energy supplies to reduce the reliance on imported energy.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the Board’s comments, resulting from the above discussions, be forwarded to the Executive Board by 13th February 2009 when the Leeds Climate Change Strategy was being submitted for approval.

(Note: Councillor Harington joined the meeting at 10.15am during the consideration of this item.)

91 City Centre Park

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report providing Members with the opportunity to comment on the Report of the Director of City Development entitled ‘City Centre Park’, prior to its consideration by the Executive Board on 13th February 2009.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Councillor John Procter, Executive Member for Leisure and Martin Farrington, Acting Chief Recreation Officer, Asset Management, City Development.

The Acting Chief Recreation Officer introduced the report and summarised that the report to Executive Board was as a result of the **City Centre Vision Conference** in January 2008, where delegates drew up a number of key issues that they felt needed to be addressed in order to move Leeds city centre forward. One of the issues highlighted was the perceived **lack of greenspace in the city centre** and from this came the concept of the city centre park.

An **audit** of existing, publicly accessible green spaces was undertaken, from which was formulated a series of **medium term objectives** for a new piece

of quality greenspace in the city centre, particularly near to the River Aire. The audit identified **Sovereign Street**, which was currently a surface car park, as the only site that could conform to the medium term objectives. A **feasibility study** would need to be carried out which would cost £50k from the Council's revenue contingency.

Longer term objectives were to achieve a larger park south of the River Aire, as it was recognised that this area was likely to see the most development in the next 10-15 years.

In brief summary Members raised the following issues:

- Whether there were proposals to **'green' the city centre** ie more bushes and flowers.
- The Sovereign Street site's potential to allow **development plots**.
- The **size** of the proposed park.
- Whether the Civic Trust's suggestion that the Sovereign Street site become a **bus terminus** had been considered.
- The need for the Sovereign Street site to be a **quality** provision.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report of the Director of City Development to the Executive Board dated 13 February 2009 be noted.
- (b) That the Board be informed of the decision of the Executive Board after its meeting on 13th February 2009.

92 Roundhay Mansion Update

The Chief Recreation Officer submitted a report providing Members with an update on the current position with regard to the Roundhay Mansion.

The Chair welcomed Councillor John Procter, Executive Member for Leisure and Martin Farrington, Acting Chief Recreation Officer, Asset Management, City Development to present the report and respond to queries and comments from the Board.

RESOLVED – That the current progress with the letting of Roundhay Mansion be noted.

(Note: At 10.55am, the meeting was adjourned for 15 minutes.)

93 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report providing Members with a copy of the Board's current Work Programme. The Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st February to 31st May 2009 and the Executive Board Minutes of 14th January 2009 were also attached to the report.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser presented the report. Members discussed various additional items for inclusion on the Work Programme and information for circulation. These were in summary:

- Concerns regarding complicated **planning application files** which had gone missing – The Principal Scrutiny Adviser agreed to contact the Chief Planning Officer for a response to the Chair and Councillor R Procter on the process for logging, monitoring and security of planning files.
- Information requested on the procurement process for the **Leeds Arena** and funding arrangements.
- Information on suitable alternatives to **York Stone Paving**, particularly in conservation areas in view of the scarcity and cost of York Stone, which is being targeted by thieves.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That, subject to the above comments and additions, the Work Programme be agreed.

94 Draft Statement A660 Corridor Transport Issues following Request for Scrutiny

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report attaching the draft Statement and recommendations resulting from a request for scrutiny by the North West (Inner) Area Committee on A660 Corridor Transport Issues, which the Board considered at its meeting on 13th January 2009.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser presented the report and advised that the statement had been cleared by the City Development Department and no comments had been received from the Director of City Development or the appropriate Executive Board Member. However there were two minor amendments to be made on page 44 of the statement with regard to the witnesses heard by the Board:

- The spelling of the Chief Highways Officer's name, and
- The member of the public was a Mr Tony Green, who was representing himself, not any particular organisation.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Gary Bartlett, Chief Highways Officer, and Andrew Hall, Transport Strategy Manager both from City Development.

In summary, Officers advised the Board that:

- All options regarding the **Clarendon Road/Woodhouse Lane junction** were still being reviewed and considered.
- **Recommendations** three and four of the Scrutiny Board statement were already being carried out.
- The **Transport Sub-Committee of the North West (Inner) Area Committee** would be meeting on 25th March 2009 and it was hoped to have some proposals ready to discuss at that meeting. In the meantime Ward Members were being briefed.

- Additional funding had been allocated by the Regional Transport Board to fund a new **NGT project** and further understanding of the implications of this for the A660 corridor would be required prior to Officers being in a position to report back fully to Members. It was hoped to be able to report back in March 2009.

Concern was expressed by the Ward Member for Headingley regarding the **delay in the installation of the pedestrian crossing** at the Clarendon Road/Woodhouse Lane junction and how the Department were **communicating** this to members of the public.

The Transport Strategy Manager advised that **traffic modelling** at this junction was being carried out again and would include a model just to include pedestrian signals. The Chief Highways Officer would be notified of the outcome of this remodelling in March. As regards communications to the public, Members were informed that a **script** had been prepared so that all officers were quite clear on what advice should be given to the public and to make sure that it was consistent with the information already provided to Ward Members.

RESOLVED – That the Board’s statement and recommendations be agreed.

Gritting Policy

At this point in the meeting the Chair praised the way Highways officers had communicated with Members over the **recent severe weather conditions** and in the way the highways had been dealt with generally as regards gritting. He requested that the Board’s thanks be conveyed to staff and management for their efforts.

The Chief Highways Officer agreed to pass on these compliments to his staff.

(Note: Councillor Taggart joined the meeting at 11.20am and Councillor R Procter left the meeting at 11.25am during the consideration of this item.)

95 Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme Design Vision and Guide

As a result of a request from the Board for an update report on the progress of a flood alleviation scheme for Leeds, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report attaching the Chief Highways Officer’s report to the Executive Board of 13th February 2009 entitled ‘Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme Design Vision and Guide’.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting to present the report Gary Bartlett, Chief Highways Officer, City Development. Mr Bartlett introduced Mr Martin Slater from the Environment Agency, who was based in Leeds and led on this project.

The Chief Highways Officer and Mr Slater summarised the report and issues surrounding the scheme. It was emphasised that DEFRA had to be

convinced that public money was being spent in the most beneficial way; that the tax payer would receive best **value for its money**. Also, as Leeds was **competing for these funds** with other cities in the country, it was important that support for proposals for a Leeds flood defence scheme were not delayed, otherwise funds might be diverted to these other cities.

In brief summary, the following issues were raised by Members:

- Impact of flood defences on other areas **downstream** – Members were advised that modelling was used to analyse any detrimental impact that schemes might have downstream.
- The **height of the raised defences** and other measures and whether these might affect the attractiveness of existing riverside walkways – Members were informed that the Design Vision and Guide included plans which showed the heights of the raised defences and heights of possible floods.
- Whether consideration had been given to creating a **bypass channel to the River Aire** to contain flood water – Members were advised that a 1 in 200 year flood would increase the flow of water in the River Aire by 40 times. A new channel would be enormously expensive and there might not be space to build it. However storage upstream at Rodley and Keighley was being investigated.

The Chair thanked Mr Slater and the Chief Highways Officer for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report of the Chief Highways Officer to the Executive Board dated 13 February 2009 be noted.
- (b) That the Board be informed of the decision of the Executive Board after its meeting on 13th February 2009.

96 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Noted that the next meeting of the Board would be held on Tuesday 17th March 2009 at 10.00am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.30am.

The meeting concluded at 12.00 noon.