

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

MONDAY, 11TH MAY, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors A Blackburn, A Castle,
D Coupar, D Hollingsworth and G Hyde

125 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 two late items of urgent business relating to the draft final report in relation to the Private Rented Sector Housing Inquiry and the draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2008/09 (Agenda Items 8 and 12) (Minutes 131 and 133 refer).

The reports were late due to the short timescale involved in producing the reports and consulting interested parties on their content.

126 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 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12) (Minutes 130,131, 132, 133 and 136 refer)
- Councillor A Blackburn in her capacity as a Director of West North West Homes (Agenda Items 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12) (Minutes 130,131, 132, 133 and 136 refer)
- Councillor D Coupar in her capacity as a member on the Belle Isle North Estate Management Board (Agenda Items 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12) (Minutes 130,131,132,133 and 136 refer)
- Councillor D Hollingsworth in his capacity as a Director of East North East Homes (Agenda Items 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12) (Minutes 130,131, 132, 133 and 136 refer)and as a member on the Aire Valley Neighbourhood Renewal Board (Agenda Item 11) (Minute 132 refers)
- Councillor G Hyde in his capacity as a Director of East North East Homes (Agenda Items 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12) (Minutes 130,131,132,133 and 136 refer)

127 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Gabriel, Kirkland, Marjoram, Mulherin and Rafique.

128 Minutes - 20th April 2009

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

129 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Performance Report – Quarter 3 2008/09 (Min No 120 refers)

The Chair reported that the additional information requested by Members would be circulated in the next fortnight.

130 Draft Leeds Housing Strategy

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report on the draft Leeds Housing Strategy, in line with the Budget and Policy Framework.

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/comment of the meeting:-

- Strategic Theme 1: Increasing the supply of Affordable Housing (Appendix 1 refers)
- Strategic Theme 2: Improving Housing Quality (Appendix 2 refers)
- Strategic Theme 3: Promoting Independent Living (Appendix 3 refers)

The following officers were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:-

Bridget Emery, Head of Housing Strategy and Commissioning
Rob McCartney, Housing Strategy and Commissioning Manager

In brief summary, specific reference was made to the following issues:-

- The definition of affordable housing was discussed (Paragraph 2.5 of report refers);
- The need for sufficient green space to be built into all developments, and how this was proposed to be tackled locally;
- The likely effect of the current recession on the proposals outlined in the Strategy, especially the likelihood of attracting private investment, e.g. to improve the private rented sector. Reference was made to the need to develop other innovative means of attracting investment, for example the partnership approach developed in Liverpool, involving the Liverpool Health Trust;
- Initiatives to try to involve landlords in improving housing conditions, such as the Accreditation Scheme;
- Establishing a more localised approach towards housing allowances, which considered the location, type and condition of rented properties;

- Other initiatives, such as Housing Associations buying or leasing empty properties from developers, to let as social housing;
- Actions Plans (3- one for each strategic key theme identified in the Strategy) would evolve once the proposed Housing Strategy was approved, but these needed to be flexible and responsive to reflect the current volatile nature of the housing market;
- The proposed promotion of 'Warm Zones' was welcomed, but it was recognised that, again, it was a question of being able to secure sufficient funding to enable this initiative to progress.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be received and noted.
- (b) That the Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser prepares and circulates to Members for comment a draft written summary of comments at today's meeting, for submission to the Executive Board in July, when it considers the draft Leeds Housing Strategy.
- (c) That the officers be thanked for all their hard work, and the manner in which they have supported the Board and responded to Members queries and comments, both today and throughout the last municipal year.

131 Scrutiny Inquiry - Private Rented Sector Housing - Draft Final Report

Referring to Minute 95 of the meeting held on 9th February 2009, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report seeking the Board's approval of the draft final report in relation to the above Inquiry.

Appended to the report was a copy of a document entitled 'Draft Private Rented Sector Housing Scrutiny Inquiry Report' for the information/comment of the meeting.

Andy Beattie, Head of Service, Pollution Control and Housing, was in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:-

In brief summary, the main points of discussion were:

- Andy Beattie distributed copies of the Spring 2009 edition of 'The Network', the newsletter of the West Yorkshire Association Partnership, which showed that many of the issues identified in the Board's report supported improvement initiatives already being undertaken in the area;
- The fundamental difference between the aims and objectives of an Accredited Tenants Scheme (ATS) and a Tenant Referencing Scheme were discussed. In terms of a Tenant Referencing Scheme, it would be more helpful if Recommendation 15 referred to the 'Leeds City Region' rather than just West Yorkshire;
- Andy Beattie made reference to an anticipated response from the Government by the autumn to the Rugg Review, the national review of the private rented sector (Paragraph 1.8 of the Board's final report refers)

RESOLVED –

- (a) That subject to the above suggested alteration in respect of Recommendation 15, the Board's draft Final Report on Private Rented Sector Housing be approved;
- (b) That Andy Beattie be thanked for all his hard work, and the manner in which he has supported the Board and responded to Members' queries and comments, both today and throughout the last municipal year.

132 Scrutiny Inquiry into the East and South East Leeds (EASEL) Regeneration Project

Referring to Minute 110 of the meeting held on 16th March 2009, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on evidence in line with session one of the Board's Inquiry into the East and South East Leeds (EASEL) Regeneration Project.

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/comment of the meeting:-

- Inquiry into the East and South East Leeds (EASEL) Regeneration Scheme – Terms of Reference (Appendix 1 refers)
- Summary report of the working group meeting held on 6th April 2009 (Appendix 2 refers)

RESOLVED – That the Board notes the summary report of the working group meeting held on 6th April 2009.

133 Annual Report 2008/9

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report seeking approval of the Board's contribution to the Annual Scrutiny Report.

Appended to the report was a copy of a document entitled 'Draft Annual Report 2008/09 Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)' for the information/comment of the meeting.

RESOLVED – That approval be given to the Board's contribution to the composite Annual Report in accordance with the report now submitted.

134 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on the Board's current work programme, including a list of provisional items for the Board's successor body to consider in respect of the 2009/10 municipal year.

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/comment of the meeting:-

- Current work programme (Appendix 1 refers)

Minutes approved as a correct record
on 15th June 2009

- Relevant extract of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st May 2009 to 31st August 2009 (Appendix 2 refers)

Members felt that the successor Board should give priority to the Roseville Door Factory and ALMO inspections items. Reference was also made to an Inquiry next year into the City's Independent Living Projects – possibly a joint Inquiry involving the Adult Social Care Board.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments, the Board notes the current position with regard to the work programme which would be forwarded to the new Board for the 2009/10 municipal year for consideration.

135 Scrutiny Inquiry into Asylum Seeker Case Resolution - Draft Final Report

Referring to Minute 96 of the meeting held on 9th February 2009, the Head of Scrutiny Support and Member Development submitted a report seeking the Board's approval of the draft final report in relation to the above Inquiry.

Appended to the report was a copy of a document entitled 'Draft Asylum Seeker Case Resolution Scrutiny Inquiry Report' for the information/comment of the meeting.

Consideration was also given to initial comments on the draft report received from the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Migration Partnership (YHRMP) and the UK Border Agency (UKBA). In particular, the Board agreed to the suggested amendment to Recommendation 8, for a 'joint' action plan to be developed by the YHRMP and UKBA, aimed at strengthening communication links between all key partners across the region.

Sharon Haque, Leeds Refugee and Asylum Service Manager, attended the meeting and responded to Members' queries and comments.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That subject to the above alteration in respect of Recommendation 8, approval be given to the Board's Inquiry report on Asylum Seeker Case Resolution.
- (b) That Sharon Haque be thanked for all her hard work and the manner in which she has supported the Board and responded to Members' queries and comments both today and throughout the last municipal year.

136 Scrutiny Inquiry into Street Cleaning - Draft Final Report

Referring to Minute 94 of the meeting held on 9th February 2009, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report seeking the Board's approval of the draft final report in relation to the above Inquiry.

Appended to the report was a copy of a document entitled 'Draft Street Cleaning Scrutiny Inquiry Report' for the information/comment of the meeting.

Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer, and Stephen Smith, Head of Environmental Services, attended the meeting and responded to Members' queries and comments:-

- Recommendation 1 – It was agreed to amend this to make reference to fulfilling the Council's obligations under the Environmental Protection Act
- Recommendation 3 – Reference to an action plan to be deleted from this Recommendation and for this to be amended to include reference to the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods taking immediate steps to strengthen communication links between the different street cleansing service areas
- Recommendation 2 – To add to this Recommendation, making reference to the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods producing an action plan within 6 months aimed at bringing the Council's responsibilities under the Environmental Protection Act, for keeping land clear of litter and refuse, into one single service area
- Recommendation 7 – To be expanded to include reference to training and induction for all relevant staff, e.g. estate caretakers, not just street cleaning operatives.

RESOLVED-

- (a) That subject to the above proposed amendments, approval be given to the Board's Final Inquiry Report into Street Cleaning.
- (b) That the officers be thanked for all their hard work, and the manner in which they have supported the Board and responded to Members' queries and comments, both today and throughout the last municipal year.

137 Chair's Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked Members and witnesses for their contribution and commitment to the Board during the past year. He also thanked the Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser and Corporate Governance Officer for their support throughout the municipal year.

The meeting concluded at 11.26 am.