

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

MONDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors A Blackburn, R Downes,
J Dowson, D Hollingsworth, G Hyde,
J Jarosz, J Marjoram, L Mulherin and
M Rafique

55 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone at today's Scrutiny Board (Environment & Neighbourhoods) meeting and introduced guests from Trinity and All Saints University, a group of students studying journalism.

The Chair welcomed the journalism students and invited them to ask Members relevant questions at the end of the meeting.

Board Members were then asked to introduce themselves.

56 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor A Castle. The Chair also informed the meeting that Susan Upton, Head of Waste Management was also unable to attend today's meeting.

57 Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were declared:

- Councillor A Blackburn in her capacity as a Director of Groundwork Leeds (Agenda Item 8 – Minute 60 refers), and in her capacity as a Director of West North West Homes (Agenda Item 10 – Minute 62 refers).
- Councillor J Dowson in her capacity as a Director of Groundwork Leeds (Agenda Item 8 – Minute 60 refers).
- Councillor G Hyde in his capacity as a Director of East North East ALMO (Agenda Items 9 & 10 – Minutes 61 & 62 refer).

58 Minutes and Matters Arising - 9th October 2009

Referring to Minute 53 of the last meeting, the Chair confirmed that the unemployment figures requested would be considered by the Worklessness Working Group as part of its next meeting on 17th November 2009 and that a full progress report would be brought back to the Board at its 14th December 2009 meeting.

Following discussions on the previous minutes, the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods agreed to supply Members with information on the following issues:

- Minute 50 – Inquiry into Older People’s Housing – it was acknowledged that levels of under occupancy across Council housing stock was an issue raised during this inquiry and also an earlier inquiry into Lettings. Previously the Board recognised the need for the council to increase its customer profiling to help alleviate difficulties in finding suitable alternative accommodation for customers who apply to downsize. Members requested an update on this and also the numbers of customers that had taken advantage of the Council’s incentive scheme to downsize.
- Minute 48 – Statement on Enforcement of Dog Fouling – Dog Warden Service Strategy – confirmation was sought on whether the new Community Environmental Officer posts were going to be able to enforce fixed penalty notices as part of their remit and not just pass on information to the Dog Wardens. Clarification was also sought on the timetable of when the other measures were to be implemented, especially those involving Dog Control Orders.
- Minute 51 – Housing Solutions/Mortgage Rescue – Members requested further details regarding Mortgage Rescue Schemes and the reason for the low uptake on such schemes.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9th October 2009 be approved as a correct record.
- (b) That the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods supply Board Members with information on the issues now raised.

59 Executive Board Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 14th October 2009 be received and noted.

60 Inquiry into Recycling

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report in line with sessions one of the Board’s Inquiry into Recycling.

Appended to the report was a copy of the following documents for Members’ information/comments:

- Inquiry Into Recycling – Terms of Reference (Appendix 1 refers)
- Summary report of the Working Group meeting held on 19th October 2009, together with various maps indicating no green areas by wedge (Appendix 2 refers)
- Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods – Scrutiny Inquiry into Recycling – Existing Collection and Disposal Methods (Appendix 3 refers)

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members’ queries and comments:

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Councillor J Monaghan, Executive Member for Environmental Services

In brief, the main issues raised were:

- Confirmation of when the report on the Recycling Infrastructure would be submitted to Executive Board for consideration.
(In response, the Director informed the meeting that the report had been delayed until a resolution had been reached regarding the streetscene dispute).

It was acknowledged that this report acknowledges the Board's inquiry and reflects any significant issues that are being raised.

- Members considered the existing service gaps in terms of the SORT recycling provision. In terms of addressing this gap, particular emphasis was made on finding solutions to meet the needs of those particular local areas.
- Members noted that 55% of the city currently receive collections of garden waste and that around a further 22% of remaining household waste were deemed suitable to be included in collection routes. Members sort clarification of what impact that 22% would have on improving the overall collection figures.
(In response, the Director informed the meeting that it would add 2% to the overall figures).
- Members recognised the need for further clarification on which plastics are recyclable and also suggested lobbying manufacturers to restrict the unnecessary use of packaging and the many different types of plastics used. Members also highlighted the confusion caused by the coding system used by manufacturers to show which plastics are recyclable as not all authorities collect the full range of recyclable plastics.
(In response, the Director also recognised the benefits of having a national campaign for plastics with a clear set of guidance).
- Particular reference was also made to recycling glass. The Executive Board Member for Environmental Services acknowledged that whilst there were extensive bottle banks placed across the city there were certain areas which do not have access to a bottle bank and that solutions need to be made to meet their needs.
- Members felt that some of the bottle banks were a noise nuisance and that there needs to be closer working with Planning in order to decide where the most appropriate place would be to site the bottle banks in order to avoid noise nuisance in residential areas.
- Members felt there was a need for more collections at bottle banks in order to avoid frequent overflows. It was also suggested that more partnership work needs to be carried out with local supermarkets rather than duplicate efforts for bottle bank collections.

- With regard to the new waste transfer station off Kirkstall Road, clarification was sought on the next round of public consultation as Members understood that further research would be done in relation to the potential impact on traffic at this particular site. It was highlighted that local residents felt that there were other sites across the city that would be more appropriate, such as along the Ring Road and not in the centre of city.

(In response, the Director informed the meeting that once final bidders had been identified there would be further consultation. However, there would be no further consultation regarding the location of the site itself as this had already been agreed and put into the specification. Bidders had been given the opportunity to put forward alternative locations, but none had been identified to date.

With regard to traffic impact at the Kirkstall Road site, the Director informed the meeting that the lorries using the site were not expected to cause any major problem as the lorries would not enter the site during the peak times).

It was agreed that this issue would be picked up with Ward Members separately.

- A Member raised concerns that in some areas where there is a green bag collection service, the green bag was not always replaced for future use.
- Clarification of the overall Education Strategy for recycling.
(In response, the Director confirmed that resources had been put into educating people about recycling which has had a positive impact on the majority of people. The focus now was targeting the hard to reach areas such as the transient population i.e. students).
- Clarification was sought on what impact the strike action has had on the Council's current recycling targets and whether there would be an evaluation on this in the future. It was also felt that the public may need to be encouraged again to start recycling.
(In response, the Director informed the meeting that in September 2009 the department achieved around 30% recycling with the vast majority being through the household waste sites. However the overall tonnage of recycling collected was down as was the amount of waste collected for disposal).

Members requested the most up-to-date target figures and details of the target figures for last year to use as a comparator.

It was agreed that this information would be forwarded to next Working Group meeting in December 2009.

- How much of the recycling waste had been contaminated?
(In response, the Director informed the meeting that he was unaware of how much people were either stopping or contaminating recyclables. It

was noted that over the next few days the Council would be taking a sample of green bins, from five selected routes across the city to ascertain whether any ordinary rubbish had ended up in the recycling bin due to the black bins overflowing).

Members requested clarification of those five routes.

- Clarification was sought on when waste management were proposing to return to monthly collections.
(In response, the Director informed the meeting that monthly recycling collections would start from Monday, 16th November 2009).

Members requested that the collection dates be communicated effectively to residents either via leaflet or by using the local media.

- Members also advised that the database on the Council's recycling web page that is used by Members and the public to clarify refuse and recycling collection dates be kept up-to-date as Members had looked up a number of addresses which were not recognised by the database.
- Members made reference to the use of fortnightly collections and food waste collections and sort clarification of when the Food Waste Trial Pilot Scheme in Rothwell would commence.

It was acknowledged that whilst the pilot was still planned for the future, it would be difficult to proceed with the Scheme under the current circumstances.

- Members referred to the Way Forward Review of Waste Collection Services and the report submitted to Executive Board on 22nd July 2009 where it was agreed that the process of market testing waste collection be commenced.

The Executive Board Member for Environmental Services informed the meeting that a reference to this had been made at the Council meeting held on 16th September 2009 requesting reconsideration of the agreement to proceed with market testing.

(In response, the Director informed the meeting that the Council wants to achieve the best quality service and if that can be achieved inhouse then the Council would not commence with market testing, but if not, then market testing would be carried out).

- Members felt there was a need to undertake a cost analysis in terms of providing a tailored service for local areas. Such analysis would help to inform the Board with its final recommendations.
- Members suggested that as part of the inquiry it would also be worth researching what methods other countries had adopted for recycling as best practice.

The Chair thanked Councillor Monaghan and Neil Evans for their attendance.

RESOLVED - That the summary report of the Working Group meeting held on 19th October 2009 and the report by the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods regarding existing collection and disposal methods and the comments now made, be received and noted.

Note: Councillor D Hollingsworth joined the meeting at 10.15 a.m. and Councillor M Rafique joined the meeting at 10.30 a.m. during consideration of the above item.

61 Inquiry into the EASEL Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a summary report of the Working Group meeting held on 15th October 2009.

Appended to the report was a copy of the following documents for Members' information/comments:

- Appendix 1 – Summary Report of the Working Group meeting held on 15th October 2009.
- Annex A – EASEL Working Group – update on programme and consultation.

Stephen Boyle, Chief Regeneration Officer was in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments.

In brief, the following issues were raised:

- In acknowledging the methods adopted in the consultation process, clarification was sought on how many residents had been consulted as part of the EASEL Programme.
(In response, the Chief Regeneration Officer informed the meeting that overall there had been extensive consultation on the Area Action Plan involving around 4,000-5,000 people in the EASEL area and that consultation continues using a variety of methods such as newsletters, community radio and ALMOs who have their own forums).

It was noted that the Council were now looking to adopt a revised approach to neighbourhood planning, in light of the current economic climate, that would now focus on detailed plans for specific smaller areas within the EASEL area.

The Chair thanked Stephen Boyle for his attendance.

RESOLVED - That the summary report of the Working Group meeting held on 15th October 2009 be received and noted.

62 Response to the CLG Consultation Around Social Housing Allocations

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report, together with a copy of the Council's proposed response to the Communities and Local Government (CLG) consultation on social housing allocations, 'Fair and flexible'.

Following a working group meeting held on 15th October 2009 to discuss the Council's proposed response with senior housing officers, the comments made by the working group were incorporated into the Council's response and this was subsequently circulated to all Board Members for consideration and endorsement before being submitted to the CLG on 23rd October 2009.

Angela Brogden, Principal Scrutiny Adviser presented the report and responded to Members' questions and comments.

RESOLVED – To note and formally endorse the Council's response to the CLG consultation on social housing allocations, 'Fair and Flexible'.

63 Work Programme

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

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

- Appendix 1 – Current work programme, including an update on the reviews being conducted by the Board's working groups.
- Appendix 2 – Relevant extract of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st November 2009 to 28th February 2010.

The Chair reminded Board Members that Performance Management Training had been arranged for Friday, 13th November 2009 at 1.00 p.m.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report, its appendices and the comments now made be noted.

64 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 14th December 2009 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting at 9.30 a.m.).

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.

(The meeting concluded at 11.50 a.m.)