

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

MONDAY, 14TH DECEMBER, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

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

65 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone at today's Scrutiny Board (Environment & Neighbourhoods) meeting.

66 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 a late item of business relating to a summary note on the key issues raised by the working group to-date (Agenda Item 9)(Minute 72 - Appendix 1 refers).

67 Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interested were declared:

- Councillor A Blackburn in her capacity as a Director of West North West Homes Leeds Homes (Agenda Item 8 – Minute 71 refers).
- Councillor A Castle in her capacity as a member of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (Agenda Item 8 – Minute 71 refers).
- Councillor D Hollingsworth in his capacity as a Director of East North East Homes Leeds and a Member of the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (Agenda Item 8 – Minute 71 refers).
- Councillor J Jarosz in her capacity being employed as a Probation Officer/Court Liaison Officer, Leeds Magistrates Court (Agenda Item 8 – Minute 71 refers).

68 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor G Hyde.

69 Minutes and Matters Arising - 9th November 2009

The Chair gave an update on the following minutes relating to information requested by the Board, as referred to in Minute 58:

- Minute 50 - Inquiry into Older People's Housing – That a written update around customer profiling and the number of customers taking advantage

of the Council's incentive scheme to downsize would shortly be circulated to Board Members.

- Minute 48 – Statement on Enforcement of Dog Fouling – Dog Warden Service Strategy - The Chair explained that a full progress report following the Board's review around Dog Fouling Enforcement would be submitted to the 8th February 2010 meeting. However, Members requested that this information be considered earlier by the Board.
- Minute 51 – Housing Solutions/Mortgage Rescue – That a written explanation for the low uptake of mortgage rescue schemes was submitted to Board Members last week.
- Minute 60 – Inquiry into Recycling - With regard to the new waste transfer station off Kirkstall Road, further clarification was sought on the commencement date for the traffic survey to measure the potential impact that the lorries using the site would have on traffic levels.
(In response, Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer highlighted that the traffic survey was expected to commence in February 2010).

In noting that lorries would not be expected to enter the site during peak times, clarification was sought on what were considered to be 'peak times'. Members also requested confirmation of expected movements of those lorries accessing the site and the tonnage of waste to be transported.

70 Executive Board Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 4th November 2009 be received and noted.

71 Performance Report 2009/10 Quarter 2

The Head of Policy and Performance submitted a report providing an overview of performance against the priority outcomes relevant to Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board including analysis of performance indicator results at the end of Quarter 2 in order that the Board may understand and challenge current performance.

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members' questions and comments:

- Councillor L Carter, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing.
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods.
- Debra Scott, Head of Service Improvement.
- Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer.

The Chair invited Board Members to comment on those areas of interest within the performance indicators.

In brief, the main issues raised were:

- TP-1a – Increase in the number of decent homes.

Minutes approved at the meeting
held on Monday 11th January 2010.

- Councillor Dowson requested a further update on the houses currently under appraisal in Chapeltown.
(In response, the Director agreed to send this information to Councillor Dowson).
- TP-1d – Reduce the number of people who are not able to adequately heat their homes.
 - Reference was made to the discontinuation of the Heat Lease Scheme by ALMOs following criticism by inspectors about the scheme being inequitable. However, Members felt that an alternative ‘top up’ scheme should be considered to allow residents to pay towards an enhanced heating system beyond the expected decency standard. Clarification was sought on what would happen to existing residents already part of the Heat Lease Scheme.

Members requested that a report be submitted to this Scrutiny Board setting out the different schemes available to help address fuel poverty, including those targeted at the private sector.

- Improvement Priority – ENV-2b-Increase the amount of waste reused and recycled
 - Members questioned the impact of the recent industrial action on recycling collection figures. It was highlighted that whilst the October figures did not show a significant reduction in the collection of recyclables, the December and January figures would help to give a clearer picture of the level of impact.

Members therefore requested that these figures be reported back to the Board.

Reference was also made to the poor condition and state of cleanliness on Black Hill Road, which was a route used by lorries from Nutramulch Yorkshire Limited Recycling.

Members requested that this matter be addressed and brought to the attention of Highway Services.

Following the strike action, Members sought clarification of how the efficiency measures now in place would help to increase recycling rates and noted that where resources were to be freed up, this would be targeted at recycling work.

Members sought assurances that all street cleansing routes within the city centre were being covered without the need for overtime.
(In response, Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer agreed to formally report back to the Board on this matter).

It was also noted that the food waste collection pilot scheme would now commence in February 2010.

- Improvement Priority – TP-3a. Reduce worklessness across the city with a focus on deprived areas
 - Reference was made to the closure of Chapeltown Job Shop and the lack of communication with Area Management regarding the circumstances of the closure.

Members questioned whether the Council had thought about establishing mobile Job Shops to help target hard to reach areas. *(In response, the Director informed the meeting that more emphasis was now placed upon providing outreach work which allows individuals to access support within their own homes).*

The Board noted the LSC Skills for Success programme and requested further information regarding the areas being targeted by the programme and its current success rate.

Members also sought clarification of the contribution made by Environment and Neighbourhoods in helping to address the rising numbers of young people 'Not in Employment, Education or Training' (NEETs). Particular reference was made to the new Future Jobs Fund programme, which was targeted at long term unemployed people, and also the work being conducted via the Worklessness Strategic Outcomes Group. Whilst acknowledging that Children's Services was the lead directorate for delivering the NEET action plan, Members felt that Environment and Neighbourhoods should be working more closely with Children's Services to help deliver this plan.

- Improvement Priority – TP-2a. Creating safer environment by tackling crime
 - Members suggested that the performance analysis of serious acquisitive crime should be broken down into areas to highlight the particular hotspots where there was a greater need for targeted resources.

Members also acknowledged the need for greater consistency of police personnel within areas of the city and particularly those areas with high crime rates. It was suggested that such consistency would help the police to develop a closer working relationship with communities.

- National Indicators 18, 32, and 34 relating to adult re-offending rates for those under probation supervision; repeat incidents of domestic violence; and domestic violence – murder.
 - Concerns were raised that there remained data quality issues with the above indicators. It was noted that Safer Leeds we progressing with this issue with the Police and Probation Service.

RESOLVED - That the report and appendices and the comments now made be noted.

72 Worklessness Review - Update

Following a request from the Board for an update on the Worklessness Review, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report giving up-to-date unemployment figures.

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

- Appendix 1 - Worklessness Review – Summary of the key issues raised to date.
- Appendix 2 – Monthly report to Worklessness Strategic Outcomes Group: October 2009.
- Appendix 3 - Quarterly report to Worklessness Strategic Outcomes Group; October 2009. City-wide working age client group date update.

Sue Wynne, Head of Regeneration, Policy and Planning presented the report and responded to Members' questions and comments.

In acknowledging the list of existing employability support provided within Leeds, Members suggested adding mentoring schemes which are targeted at Schools to provide leadership and guidance for young people too.

Particular reference was made to the 4 Families pilot programme, which was targeted at households furthest away from the labour market and aims to achieve better integrated working. However, further clarification was sought on the areas targeted by this programme.

It was noted that this pilot was based on the lessons learned from the Signpost programme. Similarities were also made with the existing Common Assessment Framework (CAF) within Children's Services in terms of adopting a lead mentoring approach. However, clarification was requested on whether the 4 Families mentors would also report directly to Schools.

Reference was made to the membership of the Worklessness Strategic Outcomes Group (WSOG). Whilst acknowledging representation from Children's Services, Members raised concerns that the group did not include a representative from Education Leeds. *(In response, Sue Wynne agreed to report this back to the Chair of the WSOG).*

In noting the local unemployment data, clarification was sought on whether the figures for Job Seeker Allowance claimants still included those which had expired. *(In response, Sue Wynne agreed to get clarification from Jobcentre Plus).*

The Chair thanked Sue Wynne for her attendance.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report and its appendices be received and the comments now made be noted.

- (b) To note that the next working group meeting was now arranged for Monday, 4th January 2010.

73 Recommendation Tracking

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a quarterly recommendation tracking report which focused on previous inquiries into Affordable Housing (2006) and CO2 emissions (2008).

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents:

- Appendix 1 – Recommendation tracking flowchart and classifications.
- Appendix 2 – Recommendation tracking – Progress Report (December 2009).

Members agreed the status assigned to the outstanding recommendations from the Affordable Housing and CO2 Emissions inquiries. With regard to the CO2 Emissions recommendations, Members requested that the Board be kept informed of future progress via the City Development Scrutiny Board.

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

74 Procurement of the Grounds Maintenance Contract for 2011 - Draft Interim Statement

RESOLVED – That consideration of this item be deferred to the next Scrutiny Board (Environment & Neighbourhoods) meeting to be held on 11th January 2010.

75 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 December 2009 to 31st March 2010.

As requested earlier in Minute 71 above, that a report setting out the different schemes available to help address fuel poverty, including those targeted at the private sector be added to the work programme.

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

76 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 11th January 2010 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting at 9.30 a.m.)

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a successful 2010.

(The meeting concluded at 11:50 a.m.).