

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

MONDAY, 19TH APRIL, 2010

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors A Barker, A Blackburn,
A Castle, J Dowson, D Hollingsworth,
G Hyde, J Jarosz, J Marjoram and
L Mulherin

112 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the April meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods).

113 Declarations of Interest

The following personal interests were declared:-

- Councillor A Blackburn in her capacity as a Director of West North West Homes (Agenda Item 8) (Minute 117 refers)
- Councillor G Hyde in his capacity as a Director of East North East Homes (Agenda Item 8) (Minute 117 refers)
- Councillor J Jarosz in her capacity as a Probation Officer employed by the National Probation Service (Agenda Item 10) (Minute 119 refers)
- Councillor A Castle in her capacity as a Member on the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (Agenda Item 10) (Minute 119 refers)
- Councillor D Hollingsworth in his capacity as a Member on the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (Agenda Item 10) (Minute 119 refers)

114 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors R Downes and M Rafique.

115 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th March 2010 be approved as a correct record.

116 Executive Board - Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 10th March 2010 be received and noted.

117 Procurement of the Grounds Maintenance Contract for 2011 - Formal Response to the Scrutiny Board's interim Statement

Referring to Minute 85 of the meeting held on 11th January 2010, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report presenting the formal response to the Board's Statement in relation to the procurement of the grounds maintenance contract for 2011.

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

- Scrutiny Interim Statement – Procurement of the Grounds Maintenance Contract for 2011 (Appendix 1 refers)
- Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods – Executive Board – 10th March 2010 – Environment and Neighbourhoods Inquiry in to the Procurement of the Grounds Maintenance Contract for 2011 (Appendix 2 refers)
- Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods – Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) – 19th April 2010- Procurement of the Grounds Maintenance Contract for 2011 – Formal Response to the Scrutiny Boards Interim Statement (Appendix 3 refers)

Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer, Environment and Neighbourhoods was in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments.

In acknowledging the poor response received in relation to the Scrutiny Board's initial invitation to all 31 Parish and Town Councils to attend a meeting of the working group to discuss the future content of the grounds maintenance service contract, Members questioned whether engagement with the Parish and Town Councils had improved.

Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer informed the meeting that officers within Environment and Neighbourhoods would be approaching all of the Parish and Town Councils again during key stages of the procurement process.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- b) That any recommendations which had not yet been completed would be included in future quarterly recommendation tracking reports to enable the Board to continue to monitor progress.

(Councillor J Marjoram joined the meeting at 10.10am during discussions of the above item)

118 Procurement of Housing Contracts Review - Draft Statement

Referring to Minute 6 of the meeting held on 3rd June 2010, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on the draft Statement of the Board in relation to the procurement of housing contracts.

Appended to the report was a copy of a document entitled 'Draft Scrutiny Statement Procurement of Housing Contracts April 2010' for the information/comment of the meeting.

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

Wayne Baxter, Chief Procurement Officer, Chief Executive's Department
Debbie Forward, Supporting People Manager, Environment and Neighbourhoods.

Wayne Baxter, in his presentation, made specific reference to Recommendation 5 within the draft statement and provided further background about officer declarations in particular and the ongoing debate both locally and nationally about whether the register of employee interests should also be made available to the public.

Following a brief discussion, the Board agreed that it would be more appropriate for recommendation 5 to be directed at the Council's Monitoring Officer and Chief Officer for Human Resources for implementation. Members also amended the recommendation to request that an update report be brought back to Scrutiny within 3 months. The Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser was therefore requested to redraft this recommendation as follows:-

Recommendation 5 – (i) That the Chief Human Resources Officer and the Council's Monitoring Officer be requested to explore ways in which the requirement for all Members and officers to formally register and declare any interests/relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors or potential contractors can be made more transparent as part of any contract review process. (ii) That an update report be brought back to Scrutiny within three months.

The Chair then welcomed Debbie Forward, Supporting People Manager, to the meeting who was conveying comments received from Councillor J L Carter, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing, and Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, on the recommendations within the draft Statement.

In consideration of the comments made, the Board agreed to make the following amendments to the draft recommendations:-

Recommendation 1 – the Board agreed to include the words 'Where this was not possible due to unforeseen emergency situations, then to ensure that an inspection was undertaken within 48 hours or the next working day' to the end of this recommendation.

During the meeting, specific reference was also made to the following issues:-

- clarification of the number of inspections that have been conducted with regard to the provision of temporary accommodation
(The Supporting People Manager responded and informed the meeting that 280 properties had been inspected last year. It was also reported that currently there are no families placed in the private sector as temporary accommodation)
- clarification of the inspection arrangements in place in terms of the provision of temporary accommodation for Asylum Seekers

(The Supporting People Manager responded and explained that the UK Border Agency was primarily responsible for commissioning and managing the provision of private sector accommodation for Asylum Seekers and therefore would have in place their own inspection arrangements)

- in acknowledging the robust inspection regime now adopted by the Council, it was proposed that the Chair writes on behalf of the Board to the UK Border Agency to advise that such good practice is also adopted by them in relation to the provision of temporary accommodation for Asylum Seekers in Leeds
- reference was again made to the need to reduce the numbers of requests made to waiver/invoke contract procedure rules.
- clarification was sought on the number of requests still being made by Environment and Neighbourhoods to waiver/invoke contract procedure rules and the reasons for such requests. It was recommended that the successor Board receives details of such requests made over a recent quarterly period and uses this to review and evaluate the situation *(The Supporting People Manager explained that the majority of waivers will relate to Supporting People contracts as not all will be subject to competitive tender due to the high volume of contracts in place and therefore contracts are prioritised for competitive tender)*

RESOLVED-

- a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- b) That, subject to incorporating the above comments, approval be given to the Board's Statement on the Procurement of Housing Contracts in accordance with the report now submitted.
- c) That the Chair writes on behalf of the Board to the UK Border Agency advising that the robust inspection regime adopted by the Council in relation to temporary accommodation was also adopted as good practice in relation to the provision of temporary accommodation for Asylum Seekers in Leeds.
- d) That the successor Scrutiny Board receives details of requests made by the directorate to waiver/invoke contract procedure rules over a recent quarterly period and uses this to review and evaluate the situation.

(Councillor D Hollingsworth joined the meeting at 10.15am during discussions of the above item)

119 Crime and Disorder Scrutiny - Draft Protocol

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on the draft protocol in relation to Crime and Disorder Scrutiny in Leeds.

Appended to the report was a copy of a document entitled ' Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) – Protocol between the Scrutiny Board and the Community Safety Partnership in Leeds' for the consideration and agreement of the Board.

Marcus Beacham, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Community Safety), Environment and Neighbourhoods, was in attendance to respond to any queries and comments from Members.

The Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser informed the meeting that following the Scrutiny Board's meeting, formal agreement of the protocol would also be sought from the Safer Leeds Partnership Executive.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- b) That approval be given to the draft protocol between the Scrutiny Board and the local Community Safety Partnership in relation to crime and disorder scrutiny in Leeds in accordance with the report now submitted.

120 Current Work Programme

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

Also attached was the current Forward Plan of Key decisions for the period 1st April 2010 to 31st July 2010.

RESOLVED-

- a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- b) That the work programme be approved in accordance with the report now submitted.

121 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 17th May 2010 at 10.00am (Pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.30am)

(The meeting concluded at 10.40am)