

## **SCRUTINY BOARD (HOUSING AND REGENERATION)**

**TUESDAY, 27TH NOVEMBER, 2012**

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors B Atha, D Collins, J Cummins,  
P Grahame, M Harland, M Iqbal, S Lay,  
V Morgan, C Towler and G Wilkinson

Mr G Hall – Co-opted Member

**57 Chair's Opening Remarks**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the November meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration).

**58 Late Item**

There were no formal late items of business to consider, however the Chair agreed to accept the following as supplementary information:-

- Brownfield Sites - Report of the Director of City Development (Agenda Item 12) (Minute 67 refers)

The report was not available at the time of the agenda despatch, but subsequently made available to the public on the Council's website.

**59 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests**

There were no disclosable pecuniary and other interests declared at the meeting.

**60 Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor D Nagle.

Notification had been received for Councillor M Harland to substitute for Councillor D Nagle.

**61 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2012 be approved as a correct record.

**62 Good Practice Guide to Pre-Application Engagement**

Referring to Minute 51 of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2012, the Chief Planning Officer submitted a report on a good practice guide to pre-application engagement.

Appended to the report was a revised draft copy of a document entitled 'Good practice guide to pre-application engagement' for the information/comment of the meeting.

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

- Mr Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer, City Development
- Ms Helen Cerroti, Development Project Manager, City Development

In his presentation, the Chief Planning Officer informed the meeting that the guide had now been revised in light of the Board's comments. Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report and appendices.

In summary, specific reference was made to a number of issues including:

- A view that the revised guide was still not prescriptive enough as discussed at the previous meeting  
*(The Chief Planning Officer responded and outlined his concerns at being too prescriptive in approach as there were wide variations in the scale of developments and therefore one size does not fit all)*
- The concern that planning officers may interpret the guide in different ways and as a consequence there was a need for officer training in order to achieve a consistent approach on this issue  
*(The Chief Planning Officer stated that arrangements were in hand for the necessary training to take place)*
- To note that the good practice guide was voluntary and not mandatory on developers for pre application engagement
- The proposal to include in the guide a simple flow chart on the steps developers should take to ensure proper engagement with officers, ward members and local communities at pre planning application stage and useful contact details  
*(The Chief Planning Officer responded and agreed to include a flow chart in the guide and consider the inclusion of local community group details as appropriate)*
- Clarification if officers had taken into consideration recommendation 9 b of the Housing Growth Inquiry and whether or not they would be rewriting the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)  
*(The Chief Planning Officer responded and stated that the guide did go well beyond the SCI guidance)*

**RESOLVED -**

- a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- b) That the revised draft guide be discussed further at the Board meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

(Councillor M Iqbal joined the meeting at 10.30am during discussions of the above item)

**63 Warning Over Neighbourhood Regime**

A copy an article entitled ' Warning over Neighbourhood Regime' was submitted for the information/comment of the meeting following a recent Northern Growth Summit conference which was addressed by the Council's Chief Planning Officer.

Mr Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer, City Development was in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report and appendices.

In summary, specific reference was made to a number of issues including:

- Clarification of the neighbourhood planning process and its implications arising from the Local Government Association (LGA) briefing: Growth and Infrastructure Bill 2012 – House of Commons Second reading on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2012
- Clarification if representations and comments had been made by the Chief Planning Officer to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and Local Government Association (LGA) on the Growth and Infrastructure Bill  
*(The Chief Planning Officer responded and confirmed that representations had been made to the Local Government Association and the Department for Communities and Local Government. He stated that he would be happy to circulate to the Board the response submitted to the LGA on this issue)*

In conclusion, the Chair stated that there was considerable political lobbying going as a consequence of the proposals in the Bill which would have serious implications for Leeds and referred to an all party working group which had been established on this issue.

**RESOLVED** -That the contents of the document be noted and received.

**64 Directors Response to Executive Board on the Recommendations of the former Regeneration Scrutiny Board following Completion of its Inquiry on Affordable Housing by Private Developers**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report following the Directorate's formal response to the Executive Board following completion of the Scrutiny Board's Inquiry on Affordable Homes by Private Developers.

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

- Scrutiny Inquiry into Affordable Housing by Private Developers – Joint Report of Directors of City Development and Environment and Neighbourhoods – Executive Board – 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012
- Scrutiny Inquiry Report – Affordable Housing by Private Developers – Scrutiny Board (Regeneration) – May 2012

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

- Mr Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer, City Development
- Mr Robin Coghlan, Team Leader Policy, City Development

- Ms Maggie Gjessing, City Development

Discussion ensued on the contents of the report and appendices.

**RESOLVED -**

- a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- b) That this Board notes the joint report of the Directors of City Development and Neighbourhoods and Housing which was presented to the Executive Board in response to the former Regeneration Scrutiny Board's report and recommendations on affordable housing by private developers.

**65 Updated progress on returning private sector empty properties back into occupation**

Referring to Minute 49 of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2012, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report on progress in relation to returning private sector empty properties back into occupation.

Appended to the report was a copy of the Empty Property Strategy Action Plan for the information/comment of the meeting.

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

- Mr John Statham, Head of Housing Partnerships, Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Mr Mark Ireland, Service Manager, Environment and Neighbourhoods

Detailed discussions ensued on the contents of the report.

In summary, specific reference was made to a number of issues including:

- Clarification as to how the number of private properties had been brought back in to use so successfully and requested that a short seminar on this issue be arranged for all Members of Council (*The Head of Housing Partnerships responded and agreed to convene a seminar in conjunction with the Members Development Team*)
- Clarification of the progress being made to date on the potential for a Empty Homes Doctor service
- Clarification of the figures in relation to long-term empty homes returning into use and the comparison of other core cities

In concluding discussions, the Board welcomed the findings contained within the report and commended officers on the work undertaken in this area.

**RESOLVED –**

- a) That officers be commended for the work undertaken in achieving the return of 3243 private properties back in to occupation in 2011/12 and a further 1526 properties by the end of quarter 2 2012/13.

- b) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted setting out the progress made against recommendation 3 from the Safer, Stronger Communities Scrutiny inquiry report in to the Private Rented Sector (2012).

**66 Financial Position Statement 2012/13 - City Development and Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorates**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report providing Members with a financial position statement of the City Development and Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate's in relation to this Board's responsibilities after six months of the financial year 2012/13.

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

- 2012-13 Budget Position – Period 6
- Housing Revenue Account – Period 6
- Capital – ALMOs and BITMO/Other Strategic Landlord (HRA)/ E&N – Housing General Fund/City Development – Regeneration Services

Mr Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment and Neighbourhoods was in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report and appendices.

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

- The concerns expressed at the reduced staffing levels within the Regeneration Unit and whether this was effecting the effectiveness of the unit
- Clarification of the figures in relation to Essential car user allowances (*The Head of Finance responded and it was noted that this area was currently under review*)
- The need to look at reducing the Council's expenditure on the purchase of petrol and diesel. The Board noted that this specific issue was being addressed by the Scrutiny Board (Resources and Council Services)

**RESOLVED -**

- a) That this Board notes the projected financial position of the Directorates City Development and Environment and Neighbourhoods in relation to the areas listed in the appendices after six months of the financial year 2012/13 as set out in the report submitted.
- b) That a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board on the staffing levels within the Regeneration Unit of the City Development Directorate.

## 67 Brownfield Sites

Referring to Minute 51 of the meeting held 30<sup>th</sup> October 2012, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report regarding brownfield sites.

A copy of a report entitled 'Brownfield Sites' prepared by the Director of City Development was circulated at the meeting as supplementary information.

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

- Mr Adam Brannen, Programme Manager, City Development
- Mr Martin Sellens, Head of Planning Services, City Development
- Mr Chris Gomersall, Head of Property Services, City Development

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report and appendices.

In summary, specific reference was made to a number of issues including:

- Clarification of the process undertaken in relation to Asset Management placing a Council/non Council brownfield site in the Strategic Housing Land Area Assessment (SHLAA)
- To welcome the detail contained within the report and appendices and to request that a copy of the non-Council owned brownfield sites be circulated to all Members of Council for information  
*(The Programme Manager responded and agreed that this be circulated by the Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser)*
- The concerns expressed that on a number of non-Council owned brownfield sites listed, the authority did not know the name of the owners  
*(The Programme Manager responded and stated that work was continuing to identify the owners of these sites)*

In concluding discussions Councillor B Atha put forward the following motion for the Board to consider:

'That all officers owning development land or prospective development land in the City of Leeds or shares in companies involved in it's development of such land be required to register their interests in a register held by the Chief Executive's Office which was open to the public on demand. Any such breach of this duty would be deemed prima facie of a serious disciplinary offence'

### **RESOLVED –**

- a) That the contents of the report and supplementary information be noted and welcomed.
- b) That this Board recommend that all officers owning development land or prospective development land in the City of Leeds or shares in companies involved in it's development of such land be required to register their interests in a register held by the Chief Executive's Office

which was open to the public on demand. Any such breach of this duty would be deemed prima facie of a serious disciplinary offence.

- c) That the Principal Scrutiny Adviser be requested to notify the Chief Executive of this recommendation as now outlined.

## **68 Work Schedule**

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the Scrutiny Board's work programme for the current municipal year.

Appended to the report was a copy of the following documents for the information/comment of the meeting:

- Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration) Work Schedule for 2012/2013 Municipal Year (Appendix 1 refers)
- Executive Board – Minutes of a Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012 (Appendix 2 refers)
- Forward Plan of Key Decisions – 10<sup>th</sup> September 2012 -13<sup>th</sup> November 2012 (Appendix 3 refers)

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser, Scrutiny Support presented the report and responded to Members' queries and comments.

### **RESOLVED -**

- a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- b) That the Executive Board minutes and Forward Plan be noted.
- c) That the work schedule be approved as now outlined.

## **69 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2012 at 10.00am in the Civic Hall, Leeds  
(Pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.30am)

(The meeting concluded at 11.55am)