

SCRUTINY BOARD (HOUSING AND REGENERATION)

TUESDAY, 30TH APRIL, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors B Atha, D Collins, J Cummins,
P Grahame, S Lay, V Morgan, D Nagle,
C Towler, B Urry and G Wilkinson

111 Chair's Opening Remarks

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

As this was the last meeting within the current Municipal Year, the Chair thanked Board Members, officers and other witnesses for their contributions and support during the past year.

He also informed the meeting that Mr S Robinson, Governance Services would be leaving the Council on the Early Leavers Initiative at the end of May after 40 years service. Board Members conveyed their best wishes to Mr Robinson.

112 Late Items

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

- Student Housing – Revised report of the Chief Planning Officer (Agenda Item 8) (Minute 118 refers)
- Engagement with Owners of Retail Units in the City Centre (Agenda Item 9) (Minute 120 refers)
- City Priority Plan Review Timeline – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement)(Agenda Item 11)(Minute 121 refers)
- Work Schedule – Executive Board minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April 2013 (Agenda Item 12)(Minute 122 refers)

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

113 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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

114 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor M Iqbal.

Notification had been received for Councillor B Urry to substitute for Councillor M Iqbal.

115 Resignation of Co-opted Member

The Head of Scrutiny Support and Member Development submitted a report informing the Board of the receipt of the resignation of Mr George Hall as Co-opted Member to the Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED –

- a) That this Board notes the resignation of Mr George Hall as a Co-opted Member to the Board as set out in the report.
- b) That on behalf of the Board, the Principal Scrutiny Adviser be requested to write to Mr Hall expressing their thanks to him for his contribution to the work of this Scrutiny Board and that of the former Scrutiny Board (Regeneration) in 2011/12.

116 Minutes - 26th March 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2013 be approved as a correct record.

117 Matters Arising from the Minutes

- a) Scrutiny Inquiry – Strategic Partnership Boards (Minute 107 refers)
The Principal Scrutiny Adviser informed the meeting that the Board's minute and resolution on this issue would be reported to the Housing and Regeneration Strategic Partnership Board in June 2013.

118 Student Housing

The Director of City Development submitted a revised report which explored issues underpinning the preparation of a new planning policy for student housing development in the city and listed current planning permissions and enquiries for purpose built student accommodation in the city.

Appended to the report was a copy of a report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods entitled ' Update on the analysis of current housing market trends within the Leeds 6 postcode areas' for the information/comment of the meeting.

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

- Councillor P Gruen, Executive Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services

- Mr Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer, City Development
- Mr Robin Coghlan, Team Leader, City Development
- Mr John Statham, Head of Housing Partnerships, Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Mr Mark Ireland, Services Manager, Area Renewal, Environment and Neighbourhoods

The Chief Planning Officer presented the revised report and highlighted the background issues in relation to student accommodation in the city. He referred to the fact that student numbers were falling and some of the peripheral student areas for example in Meanwood and to the rear of the arena were discounting vacant units suggesting a surplus of supply in certain areas. At the same time the number of current planning permissions in place totalled 2471 new student bedrooms in purpose built accommodation. The Council continues to receive applications for student development often in locations which were considered unsuitable by adjoining occupiers and local residents with further enquiries being received on a regular basis. He referred to the closure of Boddington Hall. Finally, he referred to the Council's planning policy set out in the Unitary Development Plan 2006 (UDP) which was expected to be superseded by policy in the draft Core Strategy when this plan is adopted in late 2013 or early 2014. He informed the meeting that it was therefore work in progress and welcomed Board Members views on the content.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the reports.

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

- The concerns expressed that Pennine House, Russell Street was a complete departure from the traditional areas for student accommodation and was the main reason why this issue was being discussed at today's meeting
- Clarification if Council policy on student housing had been fixed within the Core Strategy
(The Chief Planning Officer stated that the policy on student accommodation in the Core Strategy had moved to a criteria based policy which would for example enable the cumulative impact of student accommodation in an area to be taken into account. It would enable the development of supplementary planning polices for specific areas. He explained that the Core Strategy would be subject to a public examination in the summer of 2013 whereby the "soundness" of the plan policies would be considered by an independent inspector who would hear from objectors and from the Council. The review would involve key stakeholders including higher education providers, UNIPOL, key developers and local groups)
- Clarification as to why the Chief Planning Officer made a decision to revise the original published report and what elements had been changed
(The Chief Planning Officer explained that Re'new had been commissioned to examine demand and supply for student housing in

Leeds and report on options for future decision making. However, Re'new's report which had been circulated with the agenda papers was in fact an interim position statement and had not been seen or commented upon by officers and did not focus on Leeds. It had therefore been withdrawn)

- The concerns expressed that all the schemes detailed in section 3.8 of the report for student accommodation were located in one ward which had areas of serious deprivation
- Clarification as to whether landlords were paying council tax on vacant student flat and the policy that applied during the summer months when student accommodation was empty
(The Services Manager responded that he understood proof of identity was required by the Council tax office re students to exempt landlord from Council tax charges. He thought landlords applied for an exemption from Council tax for the year, but he agreed to seek clarification and circulate details to all members of the Scrutiny Board)
- Clarification of the policy for the 'Area of Housing Mix' and whether or not there were any restrictions on the locations of student accommodation
- The need for the Board to consider the final report from Re'new as it would propose policies and management arrangements to better assess the future provision of student housing and the suitability of locations based on consultations it had carried out with key stakeholders including higher education institutions UNIPOL and others active in the student market
- It was reported that a cross Council initiative was to be established on the issues relating to the traditional student housing areas

RESOLVED-

- a) That the contents of the revised report by the Chief Planning Officer and the report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods be noted.
- b) That it be recommended that a formal inquiry on student housing be undertaken by the successor to this Scrutiny Board in the new municipal year and that the Principal Scrutiny Adviser draw up draft terms of reference for consideration at its first meeting in June 2013.

119 Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership Devolution Opportunities - Post Heseltine Review

A report of Leeds City Region was submitted in relation to the potential devolution of funding to the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership by Government, in response to the Lord Heseltine Review.

Mr Colin Blackburn, Executive Officer, Customer Access and Performance , was in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments.

In his presentation, the Executive Officer specifically made reference to details of the potential devolution proposals to Local Enterprise Partnerships

and the bidding process would be announced in the Spending Review on 26th June 2013. He highlighted that it would be a national competitive process.

Discussion ensued on the contents of the report.

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

- Clarification if the EU Structural Investment Fund was separate to the Transport Fund
(The Executive Officer responded that the LCR LEP would need to submit a Growth Plan for the EU funding by September 2013, and separate criteria rules would apply for the funding, but all individual projects locally would be put through a single assessment framework once developed. This would result in improved co-ordination and better funding packages)
- Comment that whilst welcoming more devolution of resources from the centre concern that the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Policy contribution to fund the proposed transport schemes in the region could result in an increase Council tax contribution of between 2% and 3%
- The fact that funding for improved transport and other regeneration schemes was needed now to unlock brownfield sites in the city
- Clarification of Government funding that would be made available over the next five years and what contribution the Councils would be expected to contribute towards the schemes identified and how viable they were
(The Executive Officer responded that this was not yet known but the LEP had already received £36m devolved funding to support business activity in the region. Housing and Regeneration had no budget at the present time but proposals may be included in the Spending Review announcement. He stated that the Transport Fund was based on a £10 billion Programme. Other Government projections remained unclear)
- Clarification if the Council was still in competition with other local authorities and what track record of competitive bidding the Council had in this regard
(The Executive Officer responded and confirmed that there would be a competitive process and that it was envisaged that the Council and LCR would be in a good position as it was one of the most established Local Enterprise Partnerships in the Country with a good track record of delivery)
- Clarification as to whether there is a deprivation indices in the city region which was used to weight areas with greater deprivation
(The Executive Officer responded that there was a Single Appraisal Framework being developed and existing models would be developed and built upon)
- The need for the Scrutiny Board to influence policy in this area in view of the huge areas of deprivation within the city

RESOLVED-

- a) That the contents of the report be noted.

- b) That a report be submitted to the successor to this Scrutiny Board in the new municipal year following the Government's announcement in its spending review on 26th June 2013 as to its proposals for devolution and the Local Enterprise Partnership's bidding process for funding.

120 Engagement with Owners of Retail Units in the City Centre

Referring to Minute 109 of the meeting held on 26th March 2013, the Director of City Development submitted a report on what engagement there had been with building owners in the city centre following the opening of Trinity Leeds where businesses had vacated premises to relocate to this prestigious development and similarly when Victoria West opens.

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

- Shop Relocations (Appendix 1 refers)
- Footfall figures (Appendix 2 refers)
- Art in Unusual Spaces Programme (Appendix 3 refers)

Ms Cath Follin, Head of City Centre Management was in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments.

In her presentation, she reported on the latest information regarding vacant shop units within the city centre; leasing arrangements; footfall figures and the measures in place that the Council could take regarding the filling of vacant units.

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

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

- Clarification if the department had any influence to control the proliferation of cheap product shops located within the city centre (*The City Centre Manager responded that these could not be controlled and was based on supply and demand*)
- The need to encourage the creation of more traditional shops in the City Centre and having a role in developing a strategy with partners (*The Head of City Centre Management responded and outlined the protocol for supporting independent businesses. Clarification of the cost of the works currently undertaken in Dortmund Square (The Head of City Centre Management responded and agreed to forward the relevant information to the Principal Scrutiny Adviser for dissemination to Board Members)*)
- To acknowledge that following the opening of Trinity, Leeds had now risen from being ranked 7th in the UK in retail shopping terms to being ranked 4th and was now outperforming Liverpool and Oxford Street in London
- Clarification if the city centre had a policy on retail mix similar to that of a policy adopted in Otley

(The Head of City Centre Management responded and outlined the aims of the Unitary Development Policy for retail/leisure. She agreed to investigate this issue further and to forward the relevant information to the Principal Scrutiny Adviser for dissemination to Board Members)

RESOLVED- That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.

(Councillor D Collins left the meeting at 11.50am during discussions of the above item)

(Councillor D Nagel left the meeting at 11.55am during discussions of the above item)

121 City Priority Plan Review Timeline

The Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement) submitted a report presenting a review of the City Priority Plan Timeline.

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

- Ms Heather Pinches, Executive Officer, Performance Management
- Ms Maggie Gjessing, Housing Investment Manager, City Development

Prior to discussing the report, the Board noted that the proposals for change would be brought to Scrutiny for consultation in advance of any changes being made formally.

Discussion ensued on the contents of the report.

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

- Clarification as to whether the headline indicator for a minimum ratio of 65:35 development of new homes on brownfield to greenfield land had always been the same
(The Housing Investment Manager responded and informed the meeting that the indicator had been the subject of change in the past)
- Clarification about the validity of City Priority Plan in view of the budget cuts within the authority
(The Executive Officer responded and informed the meeting that the planning and budget process was very closely linked and was work in progress)
- Clarification of the figures in terms of now and the future vision regarding improving housing conditions and energy efficiency
(The Executive Officer responded and confirmed that targets in this area had been retained within the business plan)

RESOLVED-

- a) That the contents of the report be noted.

- b) That this Board notes the timelines for refreshing the City Priority Plan as now outlined.

122 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 23rd April 2013 (Appendix 2 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 schedule showing the work schedule completed for 2012/13 be noted.
- c) That the issues raised and discussed at today's meeting be included on the agenda for the first Board meeting within the new Municipal Year.

(The meeting concluded at 12.10pm)