

SCRUTINY BOARD (SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors A Blackburn, N Buckley,
P Davey, R Grahame, M Harland,
P Harrand, G Hyde, J Jarosz, S Lay,
K Mitchell and N Walshaw

38 Late Items

The following late items were submitted to the Agenda:

- Agenda Item 6 – Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2012
- Agenda Item 12 – West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Authority Consultation – Comments from Scrutiny

39 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and other interests

Councillor R Grahame declared an interest in Agenda Item 10, Scrutiny Review of the New Grounds Maintenance Contract due to his membership of GMB and Agenda Item 12, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority Consultation due to his membership of the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

40 Minutes -22 October 2012

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

41 Recommendation Tracking - Fuel Poverty Inquiry

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development provided the Board with an update on progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous scrutiny inquiry into fuel poverty.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Neil Evans – Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Robert Curtis – Environment Policy Team
- Kathy Kudelnitzky – Chief Officer, Localities and Partnerships
- Dr Beth Logan – Policy and Performance Manager, Leeds Initiative
- Dawn Bailey, Healthy Living Manager, NHS Airedale, Bradford and Leeds Cluster
- Brenda Fullard, Consultant in Public Health, NHS Airedale, Bradford and Leeds Cluster

The draft status categories assigned to each recommendation within the report were agreed by the Board.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- Appointment of Fuel Poverty Champions at Area Committees. A decision was made at the Area Chairs Forum in July 2012 to await the outcome of the Council's area review given that this covered the general role of Area Committee Champions and their support needs. However, it was noted that some Area Committees had already appointed a Fuel Poverty Champion prior to this decision. A report setting out the findings and recommendations of the Council's area review is expected at the December meeting of the Executive Board.
- Involvement of Locality Health and Wellbeing Managers at Area Committee level.
- It was noted that the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) made £2.59m available to Leeds City Region to spend on a 'Green Deal Go Early' project. The Council submitted a proposal for c£1.28m with the intention of delivering grants to public and private sector properties in deprived hard to treat areas and 0% interest loans to less deprived private sector properties.
- That a report was due to go to Executive Board in December regarding the Leeds City Region long-term Green Deal project.
- Partnership working with private landlords
- Options for bulk fuel purchasing – a funding opportunity had been announced by DECC to help coordinate and conduct a bulk fuel purchasing initiative. In line with this, a proposal is to be presented to Executive Board in December.
- Development of the Winter Plan for Leeds and partnership work with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to achieve this. Members requested a copy of the Winter Plan.
- As part of Winter Plan, Leeds City Council, with support from NHS Leeds Public Health and CCGs submitted a proposal to the Department of Health's 'Warm Homes Healthy People Fund' to increase energy saving advice and measures to vulnerable people. The Board was pleased to note that this had been successful.
- It was noted that the Member Seminar on Fuel Poverty will take place on Wednesday 19th December 2012.
- Ongoing projects and schemes – outreach work with Groundwork; work with Leeds Federated Housing; and a pilot scheme with the Citizen's Advice Bureau to offer joint fuel tariff, debt and income maximisation advice over the winter period.
- That the Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility would be enabled for heat and power and there was a clear intention for a district heating scheme.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted.

42 Provision of Allotments in Leeds

The report of the Chief Officer of Parks and Countryside set out the context of allotment provision in Leeds with particular reference to demand for food growing space. It discussed options and related issues in providing additional allotment space to fulfil demand.

Sean Flesher, Chief Officer, Parks and Countryside and Joanne Clough, Trading and Operational Manager, Parks and Countryside were in attendance for this item.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- The report only referred to allotments managed by Leeds City Council and not those under Town or Parish Council control.
- Allotments at High Ash Drive – work was ongoing with a private landowner regarding vehicular access to the site.
- Over 300 plots had been brought into use since 2007 to help meet increased demand, with a further 22 planned in the near future.
- The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment for Leeds, published in July 2011, identified a total of 143 allotment sites (108 of which are in council ownership) covering 145 hectares. However, it had been assessed that an additional 39 hectares of allotment land was needed to meet demand. Core Strategy Planning officers had been asked to identify land. However, there was no capital funding currently allocated for the development of new sites. There was a reliance on Section 106 funds, funding from Town and Parish Councils and contributions from Area Committees and Ward Members.
- Around 4,000 questionnaires were sent out during the summer of 2012 to all plot holders who currently have an allotment and to those on waiting lists to gain an understanding of the demographic profile of allotment users.
- Management of waiting lists – it was reported that a new full time Community Food Growing Officer would have responsibility for managing allotments as well as encouraging community food growing projects across the city.
- Members requested for further information of allotment provision in Leeds including those belonging to Town and Parish Councils and comparisons with core cities. This information is to be considered by a working group of the Board early in the new year.

RESOLVED – (a)That the report and discussion be noted.

(b) That the additional information requested by Members be considered by a working group of the Scrutiny Board early in the new year.

43 Provision of Bereavement Services in Leeds

The report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods set out the role and responsibilities of Bereavement Services within Parks and Countryside and considered capital investment requirements and overall resource implications in managing cemeteries and crematoria across the city.

Sean Flesher, Chief Officer, Parks and Countryside and Joanne Clough, Trading and Operational Manager, Parks and Countryside were in attendance for this item.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- All 23 cemeteries operated by the Council were multi faith. In addition to this, there were also a number of privately run cemeteries across the City.
- An out of hours service is provided for specific faith groups with the exception of Christmas Day.
- Security improvements including installation of CCTV at Harehills Cemetery and improvements at Hunslet were welcomed. It was reported that these had not been funded through Area Committees.
- Combined use of heat and power from crematoria – some work had been done at Rawdon and heat exchange was used for the chapel building and offices. At other crematoria there was limited opportunity to do this due to the location of buildings.
- Costs of services and comparisons to other core cities. It was reported that costs were reviewed annually and full price and service details were available on the Council's website.
- Cemeteries and Crematoria and the Leeds Quality Park Standard. It had been noted that improvements had been made at 13 of the sites since the last assessment although only one had achieved the Leeds Quality Park Standard. It was estimated that the cost, excluding building works, to bring cemeteries and crematoria sites up to the Leeds Quality Park standard is around £550k and there was a current reliance on funds from Section 106 monies.
- Capital investment for mercury abatement measures– it was reported that the new equipment had been installed at Rawdon that would contribute towards meeting targets in relation to the abatement of mercury emissions. The mercury waste was collected and disposed of by contractors.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted.

44 Scrutiny review of the new Grounds Maintenance Contract - draft report

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the Board's draft report following its review of the grounds maintenance contract.

RESOLVED – That the Board's report following its review of the new grounds maintenance contract be agreed.

45 Recycling review - draft terms of reference

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented draft terms of reference in relation to the Scrutiny Board's forthcoming recycling review. The review was aimed at improving recycling through effective communication and education.

RESOLVED – That the terms of reference for the forthcoming recycling review be agreed.

46 West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority Consultation - comments from Scrutiny

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the draft response of the Board in relation to the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority's consultation on proposals to changes to emergency cover in West Yorkshire.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the draft response of the Scrutiny Board be agreed and submitted to the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority as part of its public consultation process.

47 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development informed the Board of its forthcoming Work Programme. Recent Executive Board minutes were also appended to the report.

Members were reminded of forthcoming work for the Board including the Parish and Town Council Review and items for the next agenda including Performance Management and the co-ordination of services between Parks and Countryside and Environmental Action Services.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

48 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 10 December at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.)