

SCRUTINY BOARD (HOUSING AND REGENERATION)

TUESDAY, 25TH JUNE, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors B Atha, D Collins, P Grahame,
M Iqbal, C Macniven, V Morgan, D Nagle,
C Towler and G Wilkinson

1 Late Items

There were no late items of business to consider, however the Chair agreed to accept the replacement of pages 13 to 18 of the agenda, which had been circulated in error with a document marked appendix a, Board's terms of reference (Agenda item 7) (Minute 5 refers).

2 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

3 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor J Cummins and Councillor S Lay. Councillor C Macniven was in attendance as a substitute Member for Councillor Cummins.

An apology was reported from Councillor B Atha that he would be late attending the meeting due to a prior engagement.

4 Minutes - 30th April 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 30th April 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

5 Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board, which remained unchanged.

In line with the Scrutiny Board's role as critical friend to the Housing and Regeneration Partnership Board, the report also presented a summary of the Scrutiny Board's observations and recommendations following its assessment of the Partnership Board in March 2013.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6 Co-opted Members

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development sought the Board's formal consideration for the appointment of Co-opted Members.

The Board was informed that they could appoint the following:

- Up to five non-voting co-opted members for a term of office that does not go beyond the next Annual Meeting of Council; and/or
- Up to two non-voting co-opted members for a term of office that relates to the duration of a particular and specific scrutiny inquiry.

In consideration of this report, the Board agreed to consider the appointment of co-opted members on an ad-hoc basis for any inquiries where it was deemed appropriate.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7 2012/13 Quarter 4 Performance Report

The report of the Deputy Chief Executive provided a summary of performance against the strategic priorities for the Council and city related to the Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration).

The following officers were in attendance:

- Paul Maney, Head of Strategic Planning Policy and Performance
- Maggie Gjessing, Housing Investment Manager, City Development
- Debra Scott, Head of Performance and Service Review
- John Statham, Head of Housing Partnership, Environment and Neighbourhoods.

In consideration of this report, a number of issues were discussed which included:

- Empty private and Council properties.
- Council tax payments on empty properties.
- Delivery of affordable housing where in respect of the Housing Association programmes the Council anticipates that delivery will be back loaded towards the end of the spending review period i.e. up to 2015 but still expect the properties to be delivered.
- Housing supply and the range of activities that the City Development and Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorates were undertaking to maximise and accelerate housing growth.
- Easel and the developer bringing forward a planning application at Spofforth Hill. Reference was made to the discussions taking place around the possibility of taking the affordable homes contribution as a commuted sum in another part of the city and concern that ward Members had not been consulted on the proposals.

- Confirmation that review of the membership and process of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) had been completed and that Councillors J Procter and C Campbell had been appointed to this body. The Chair reported that developers had been given notice that they would now be required to submit detailed viability assessments for all brown field sites to the SHLAA which they considered to be economically unviable.
- Clarification as to responsibility for the collection of housing data including house completions and its importance. Reference was made to the fact that persistent under delivery of homes could result in more land being zoned for housing as the 5% buffer as detailed in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) guidance could be increased to 20% in certain circumstances.
- Reference to the review being undertaken to ensure performance reports continue to be fit-for-purpose and the consequent suspension of the next quarter 1 performance report. Members reiterated the fact that they wanted more meaningful data and which was not purely based on relevant priorities in the Council Business Plan and City Priority Plan.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted
- (b) That details of empty Council properties going through repairs prior to letting broken down by ALMO and those which are for sale or disposal be circulated to Members of the Board for information.
- (c) That a joint report of the Director of City Development and Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods be submitted to the Board on the Council's policies and approach to determining when an affordable homes contribution from a development is taken as a commuted sum in another part of the city and who is consulted on the proposal.
- (d) That the Director of City Development submit a progress report to a future meeting of this Board updating Members on the review and what data was to be included in future performance reports.

(Councillor B Atha attended the meeting at 10.25am during consideration of this item.)

(In relation to this item and reference made above to a planning application for Spofforth Hill, Councillor G Wilkinson drew the Board's attention to the fact that his son-in-law owns some of this land.)

8 Sources of Work

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development provided information and guidance on potential sources of work and areas of priority within the Board's terms of reference.

Apologies for absence were reported from Councillor P Gruen, Executive Board Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services and Neil Evans, Director Environment and Neighbourhoods.

The following officers were in attendance to share their views on potential areas of work for the Board this year:

- Martin Farrington, Director City Development
- Mr Paul Maney, Head of Strategic Planning Policy and Performance
- John Statham, Head of Housing Partnership, Environment and Neighbourhoods.

The following issues were identified as areas for Scrutiny involvement this year:

- Review the impact and policy implications for the city later in the year of the Government's decision to allow home extensions of a specified size under permitted development for a three year period from May 2013.
- Consider the Council's policies and approach to determining when an affordable homes contribution from a development was taken as a commuted sum in another part of the city and who is consulted on the proposal.
- Review the enforcement process for the removal of gypsies and travellers on illegal sites in the city to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose.
- Receive regular updates on the implementation and operation of the new housing management arrangements agreed by the Executive Board in June 2013.
- Consider how the self-financing Housing Revenue Account was being used to stimulate investment in Council housing and particularly affordable housing?
- Consider and respond to the review by the Communities and Local Government's Select Committee on empty properties to be published later this year.
- Review how Section 106 agreements were constructed, formulated and implemented to ensure the process was fit for purpose.
- Review the Council's policy of not providing gas or electric cookers to its tenants from a health and inequality perspective.
- Undertake site visits to developments which include the provision of affordable homes to review the quality and location of these within the site.

RESOLVED – That the report and issues identified be noted.

9 Inquiry to consider Student Accommodation - Draft Terms of Reference

The Chair referred to the report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development on proposed draft terms of reference for an inquiry on student

accommodation in the city which had been requested by the Scrutiny Board at its meeting on 30th April 2013.

The Chair advised the Board that since this report had been circulated he had had discussions with the Executive Board Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services on the proposed inquiry. He reported that in order to avoid duplication of effort it was proposed that the working group established by the Executive Board Member reviewed the issues of student accommodation in the city. It was further proposed that a number of Members of this Scrutiny Board be co-opted on to that working group to represent this Board's views and concerns.

RESOLVED – That a number of Members from this Board be co-opted on to the working group to review student accommodation in the city.

10 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the draft work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

RESOLVED – That the Board's work schedule be updated to reflect the key issues discussed during today's meeting and identified in minute nos. 7 and 8 above.

11 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 30th July 2013 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 12.00 noon).