

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

THURSDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, J Bentley,
A Blackburn, D Collins, A Gabriel,
P Grahame, A Khan, P Gruen, M Harland,
N Sharpe, K Brooks and T Smith

78 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal.

79 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no exempt information.

80 Late Items

There were no formal late items.

81 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

82 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

There were no apologies for absence.

83 Minutes - 9 January 2020

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held 9th January 2020, be approved as an accurate record, subject to a minor change to minute 67 to read:

- *Councillor Jenkins attended as a substitute for Councillor P Gruen.*

Matters Arising

Minute 71 – Referral to Scrutiny: River Cleanliness. Members heard that an update would be provided at the Scrutiny Board meeting (Environment, Housing and Communities) to be held 5th March 2020, on the outcome of the multi-partner session. Additionally, the Board were informed that the Scrutiny Advisor would be providing Members with a copy of the response to the previous deputation.

84 Fuel Poverty Update

Agenda items 7 – Fuel Poverty Update, 8 – Energy Efficiency in Council Housing Stock and 9 - Carbon Reduction in the Private Rented Sector (PRS), were considered together by the Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities).

The reports of the Sustainable Energy and Air Quality Team, and the Director of Resources and Housing, provided Members with information regarding the approach taken in Leeds to alleviate fuel poverty and promote affordable warmth, the energy efficiency activity undertaken with council housing stock, and the Council's approach in supporting carbon reduction in the private rented sector.

In attendance at the meeting were:

- Cllr Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Neil Evans, Director Resources and Housing
- Jill Wildman, Chief Officer Housing
- Rob Curtis, Programme Officer, Resources and Housing
- George Munson, Senior Project Manager, Resources and Housing
- Nahim Ruhi-Khan, Head of Strategy and Investment
- Mark Ireland, Service Manager, Private Sector Housing

The officers in attendance each provided Members with a presentation highlighting the following:

Energy and Fuel Poverty

- An overview of the Leeds housing stock, with specific mention to homes being predominantly D rated, and the ambition for stock to be As and Bs
- Key fuel poverty statistics in Leeds and England
- Switching homes from natural gas by 2030, with the possibility of moving to hydrogen or retrofitting heat pumps
- Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy 2017 – 2030 (city wide projects, targeted areas and interventions)
- Area Renewal mixed tenure whole house retrofit and the benefits
- Historic domestic energy work

Private Rented Sector

- The issues facing the city, on-going work with landlords to improve energy efficiency, and the need to educate landlords about the changing regulatory environment associated with energy efficiency measures
- Transformational Insulation for Back to Backs (TIBB) - the 3m planned investment with priority areas Beeston and Holbeck, after the successful pilot scheme with Harehills in 2018/19.
- 85% have SAP rating D or below
- Investment in the group repair scheme, including obtaining monies as part of the Leeds Neighbourhood Approach in the Nowell's.
- Continuing to lobby Government to provide financial incentives such as the Private Sector Renewal Grant, along with tax changes and legislation changes in regard to public money (housing benefits to housing conditions including the SAP rating)

Council Housing

- Council Housing Investment including replacement of heating systems and boilers, installation of district heating systems into high rise blocks, installation of solar PV panels, loft and cavity wall installation and the replacement of single glazing to double glazing.
- District Heating & Leeds Pipes – 690 homes to be completed by September 2021.
- The reduction of carbon emissions by 11,000 tonnes per year and improved air quality.
- Tenant Support - Green Doctor in partnership with Leeds City Council
- The Shakespeare Court, Grange and Towers programme – external wall insulation in high rise blocks had been undertaken, and will be completed in due course.
- The exploration of various new innovative projects such as Air Source Heat Pumps, Fitting the Future and Priority Neighbourhoods
- Ground Source Heat Pumps.
- The upcoming challenges with inter-war estates, 1960's built high-rise and non-traditional properties in regard to investment
- Considerations for priority areas to deliver the ambition for the capital investment programme.

Members' discussed a number of matters including:

- A request for the revised presentation to be distributed to Members of the Board, to include the additional slide on the private rented sector.
- Members discussed in detail their support of the Executive Member for Communities, in suggesting to arrange a cross visit to Government with the intention of lobbying ministers about investment incentives, regulation/legislation changes, and innovative solutions to deliver improved energy efficiency across different housing sectors. Members heard about work that had been undertaken with the Heat Network Delivery potentially formed a source of evidence to take to central government. The Director of Resources and Housing re-iterated the existing strong case studies with Cross Green and Holbeck, and the need to make financial cases around problematic areas. The Scrutiny Board supported this and were keen for officers to look into the 'Leeds specific asks'.
- Clarity was sought about whether it was possible to enforce Selective Licensing in order to specify standards for owner occupier housing. Members heard the Government had been looking at a SAP rating C by 2030, but this was yet to be considered.
- Particular reference was made to the idea of focusing on insulating homes in an attempt to reduce the carbon footprint, as an alternate method to heating homes. Additionally, it was acknowledged that the apprentice levy could be factored in to growing in-house expertise.
- In responding to a query in regard to the Decent Home Standards, the Director of Resources and Housing explained that council housing had achieved the Decency Standard in 2012, with council stock having a thermal efficiency SAP rating D, and therefore reached the limit. The Executive Member for Communities added that the Standard was

outdated, and suggested that this form part of one of the 'asks' from the Local Authority.

- Clarity was sought on the considerations of using hydrogen as an alternative method of gas. Officers explained that a grant had been obtained for safety testing purposes as part of an exploratory third party pilot that could involve Leeds in its initial roll out, but the decision by Government had not yet been confirmed.
- Additional information was sought on plans for insulating public buildings. Members were informed that the Asset Management Strategy would look to reduce buildings by 20%, and the options available in terms of better energy performance for historic buildings.

The Chair expressed that good work had been undertaken, and welcomed the innovative ideas and thanked officers for their attendance.

RESOLVED – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the contents of the reports;
- b) Noted the challenges Leeds faces as well as the approach taken in Leeds to alleviate fuel poverty and to promote affordable warmth, the activity undertaken with council housing stock, and the Board welcomed the approach in supporting carbon reduction in the private rented sector;
- c) Requested that the information provided during discussions be actioned;
- d) Requested that the successor Scrutiny Board be minded to schedule a space on the work programme in the 2020/21 municipal year, and that an update on the progress be received.

Councillor Collins arrived at 11am, during discussion of this item.

Councillor Bentley vacated at 11:30am, during discussion of this item.

85 Energy Efficiency In Council Housing Stock

The item was considered alongside agenda item 7 – Fuel Poverty Update, and agenda item 9 – Carbon Reduction in the Private Rented Sector. Minute No. 84 refers.

86 Carbon Reduction in the Private Rented Sector

The item was considered alongside agenda item 7 – Fuel Poverty Update, and agenda item 8 – Energy Efficiency in Council Housing Stock. Minute No. 84 refers.

87 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Democratic Services submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's schedule for the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year. Copies of the Board's work schedule and the minutes

of the Executive Board meeting held 7th January 2020 were appended to the submitted report.

Members discussed the items on the upcoming work schedule, regarding working groups on the following:

- Disposal of Green Spaces 27th January – Members were informed that an update following the meeting would be provided in due course;
- Car Parking Policy 17th February 12:30 – 14:00;
- Community Impact of Nuisance Fireworks 9th March 10am – 12:pm. Additionally, Members were informed that the working group had received an interest to attend from various partners.

RESOLVED – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the matters outlined in the report
- b) Noted the Executive Board minutes
- c) Agreed the overall work schedule

88 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note the date and time of the next meeting as Thursday 5th March 2020 at 10.00 p.m.

(The meeting closed at 12:05)