

SCRUTINY BOARD (HOUSING AND REGENERATION)

TUESDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors D Collins, D Coupar, C Gruen,
M Iqbal, S Lay, V Morgan, D Nagle,
C Towler and G Wilkinson

20 Late Items

There were no late items of business to consider.

21 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

22 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor P Grahame and J Cummins. It was reported that Councillors D Coupar and C Gruen were in attendance as their respective substitute Members for this meeting.

23 Minutes - 8 August 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 August 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

24 Notes of the Directorate's Working Group meetings on Student Accommodation - 28 June and 9 July 2013

Members received notes of the Directorate's Working Group meetings on student accommodation held on 28 June and 9 July 2013.

The Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services, Councillor P Gruen reported on the current position. He stated that a report had been submitted to the Executive Board on 4 September 2013 outlining the reasoning for the amendment to Core Strategy Policy H6, relating to Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA).

Whilst recognising that the scrutiny process uses working groups on a regular basis to speed the process the Executive Board Member and the Scrutiny Board expressed the view that the scrutiny process was sometimes inflexible when matters had to be dealt with extremely urgently.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the notes of the Directorate's Working Group meetings on student accommodation held on 28 June and 9 July 2013 be received.

- (ii) That the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development be advised of the Scrutiny Board's views that the scrutiny process was sometimes inflexible when extremely urgent matters had to be dealt with.

25 Council approach in dealing with off-site affordable housing contributions

The Scrutiny Board considered a joint report of the Director of City Development and Director of Environment and Housing which was requested at its meeting in June 2013 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 on Council owned and non-Council owned land.

The report considers the approach set by national and local policy in relation to commuted sums in particular to Protected Areas of Search (PAS) sites which were reported in March 2013 to the Executive Board.

Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Board Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services, Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer and Robin Coghlan, Team Leader Policy, were present for this item.

In brief summary, the main areas of reference and discussion were the:

- National Planning Framework and the Core Strategy.
- Report to Executive Board on Housing Investment Land – a Strategic Approach to Delivery.
- Robustness of the affordable housing process.
- Stages of the process where Ward Members were consulted on all Section 106 agreements including affordable housing.
- Definition of Viability and Needs assessments.
- Clarification that the definition of need applies on a city wide basis.
- Use of commuted sums as a lever for investment in the inner area.
- Introduction of a planning protocol.
- Needs for more green space in the inner areas.
- Training for Members on what affordable housing means, how the numbers were calculated and how it worked elsewhere?
- Brownfield sites owned and identified by the Council for redevelopment and the many sites in the city owned by external organisations including the NHS and Railtrack that would remain undeveloped.
- Approach that has been made to the Homes and Community Agency to de-risk brownfield sites to make them shovel ready for development.

RESOLVED – That the joint report of the Director of City Development and Director of Environment and Housing on the Council approach in dealing with off-site affordable housing contributions including commuted sums be noted.

(Councillor M Iqbal attended the meeting at 10.50am during consideration of this item.)

26 Reference to Work Schedule

In anticipation that the Executive Board Member may leave the meeting the Chair referred briefly to item 10 of the agenda and in particular the request by Executive Board to review the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation data published in 2008 and any fresh data that might be relevant. A useful discussion ensued and the Board agreed to clarify its position in consideration of its work schedule later in the meeting.

27 Council Policy on the Provision of Cookers to Tenants

The Scrutiny Board considered a report of the Director of Environment and Housing on the Council's position in relation to the provision of cookers and fridges to tenants.

Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Board Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services, John Statham, Head of Housing Partnership and Lorraine Wright, Services Manager – Relationship Manager, were present for this item.

In brief summary, the main areas of reference and discussion were the:

- Confirmation that Council tenancies were currently let on an unfurnished basis.
- Council reserve the right under the terms of the tenancy to offer additional services which would be the subject of a charge.
- Local Welfare Support Scheme introduced by the Council in April 2013 which provides support for families and vulnerable people faced with unforeseen difficulties and emergency situations.
- Furniture Re-Use schemes.
- Need for further work to be undertaken to;
 - (a) Identify the cost of providing, maintaining and servicing cookers and fridges to Council tenants;
 - (b) Consider an eligibility criterion that might apply;
 - (c) Determine the level of service charge that would apply and whether housing benefit would cover such charges;
 - (d) Identify the benefits and risk of provision and any best practice from other local authorities.
 - Role of the annual tenancy review as a mechanism for identifying vulnerable tenants.
 - Tenancy Scrutiny Panel

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the report of the Director of Environment and Housing on the Council's position in relation to the provision of cookers and fridges to tenants be noted.
- (ii) That a further report be considered by this Scrutiny Board from the Director of Environment and Housing on the potential for developing a

scheme that would provide cookers and fridges to those tenants in need.

- (iii) That the Scrutiny Board is scheduled to receive an update on the implementation and operation of the new housing management arrangements at its meeting on 26 November 2013 and that the report also includes details of the annual tenancy visits and the Tenancy Scrutiny Panel.

28 Work Schedule

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which set out in Appendix 1 the Scrutiny Board's work programme for the current municipal year.

Attached as appendix 2 to the report was a copy of the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 4 September 2013.

The Chair requested that an update on the Community Infrastructure Levy be incorporated into the Board's work schedule.

The Board discussed further the request by the Executive Board to review the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation data published in 2008 and any fresh data that might be relevant.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the Board's current work schedule be noted and updated to reflect the issues identified during today's meeting or raised by Members between meetings.
- (ii) To note the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 4 September 2013.
- (iii) That in view of the short timescales involved the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submit a report on the Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Requirement Study for consideration at an additional meeting of the Scrutiny Board to be arranged early in October 2013.

29 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 29 October 2013 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 11.51am)