

SCRUTINY BOARD (SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 9TH SEPTEMBER, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Bentley, A Blackburn,
N Buckley, P Davey, R Grahame,
M Harland, P Harrand, G Hyde, J Jarosz
and N Walshaw

19 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to accept the following supplementary information:

- Scrutiny inquiry into tackling domestic violence and abuse – draft terms of reference (Minute no. 23 refers)

The above document was not available at the time of agenda despatch, but was subsequently made available on the Council's website.

20 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

21 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

There were no apologies for absence.

22 Minutes - 22nd July 2013

Further to minute no. 14, the Chair provided the following updates:

- A working group meeting had been scheduled for 25th September 2013 to consider the full range of indicators considered by the Environment and Housing directorate relevant to the Scrutiny Board.
- As the Board's nominated representative, Councillor Jarosz had been invited to attend the Resources and Council Services Scrutiny Board meeting on 30th September 2013 when it considers High Cost Lenders.
- A copy of the Policing Protocol Order 2011 had been circulated to Board Members to help clarify the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable.

Further to minute no. 15, the Chair made reference to the presentation provided by Scrutiny to the Parish and Town Council Seminar on 6th September 2013. This was to update local councillors on the progress made in implementing the Scrutiny Board's recommendations following its review aimed at strengthening the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd July 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

23 Scrutiny inquiry into tackling domestic violence and abuse - draft terms of reference

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the draft terms of reference for the Board's forthcoming inquiry into tackling domestic violence and abuse.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services.

In consideration of this report, the following issues were discussed:

- Acknowledging that female genital mutilation is now associated with the definition of domestic violence and abuse and recognising the seriousness of this problem within the UK
- The importance of working with schools in raising awareness of domestic violence and abuse amongst young people
- The appropriate use of intelligence gathered from the health and social care sector to maximise local knowledge of this problem
- Acknowledging the involvement of representatives from the Children and Families Scrutiny Board and the Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board in this inquiry.

RESOLVED – That the draft terms of reference for the Board's forthcoming inquiry into domestic violence and abuse be approved.

24 Tackling illegal money lending in Leeds

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development referred to the concerns expressed by Members in July in relation to illegal money lending activity in Leeds and the Board's request for further information on this area of work.

The attached report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) therefore provided an annual progress report of the work of the Birmingham based Illegal Money Lending Team and included an action plan for the work to be undertaken to address this issue.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Dave Roberts, Financial Inclusion Strategy Manager
- Mike McAughtrie, LIAISE Officer, (Lead in Awareness, Intelligence, Support and Education), Illegal Money Lending Team, Yorkshire and Humberside Trading Standards.

In consideration of this report, the following issues were discussed:

- Consumer Credit Licenses - a business offering credit or lending money to consumers, or allows customers time to pay for goods and services, must be licensed with the Consumer Credit Licensing Bureau of the Office of Fair Trading under the Consumer Credit Act 1974.
- Future regulation – it was noted that the Financial Conduct Authority is taking over the regulation of consumer credit from the Office of Fair Trading on 1 April 2014.
- The role of the national Illegal Money Lending Team, which was established in 2004 and is run by Birmingham City Council Trading Standards department.
- Addressing key barriers – that a key barrier is the reluctance of residents to report loan shark activity. To address this, the specialist Birmingham team operates a 24 hour dedicated, confidential hotline for consumers to report loan sharks. The Board requested that this be made available to all Elected Members.
- Enforcement activities – particular reference was made to the on-going work with West Yorkshire Police to embed the work of the Illegal Money Lending Team in their processes.
- Educational work – it was noted that a key aim is to encourage residents not to borrow in the first instance and to use alternative lenders, such as Leeds City Credit Union, instead. This area of work is being progressed by the Citizens and Communities directorate and is closely linked to the efforts being made in addressing High Cost Lenders too.
- Identifying high risk communities – it was noted that data mapping based upon social characteristics was undertaken by the Council's Corporate Intelligence Unit to assess areas of the city most at risk of illegal lending. Members requested further details of this analysis.
- On-going action – in welcoming the level of activity already undertaken in addressing illegal money lending in Leeds, a suggestion was made to develop a separate communications workstream to be incorporated into the Leeds Action Plan, which is developed by the Illegal Money Lending Team in conjunction with the Council and other partners.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the report be noted

(b) That the Scrutiny Board arranges a separate working group meeting to discuss taking forward the suggestion of developing and incorporating a separate communications workstream into the Leeds Action Plan for tackling Illegal Money Lending.

25 Scrutiny review of Strategic Partnership Boards - formal response to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the formal response to the Board's earlier review of the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership. Also attached for information were draft terms of reference relating to the new Communities Board.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Rachael Loftus, Policy and Performance Manager.

In consideration of this report, the following issues were discussed:

- Progress relating to the Leeds Poverty Challenge – it was noted that a third briefing to all Elected Members would be circulated in September.
- Communities Board – it was noted that the Chair of the new Communities Board would be the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services, with Executive accountability via the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities).
- Business Community representation – in noting the membership of the new Communities Board, a suggestion was made to also seek representation from the Business Community.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the report be noted

(b) That a further update report is brought back to the Scrutiny Board in January 2014.

26 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the Board's latest work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing

- Harvinder Saimbhi, Head of Anti-Social Behaviour.

The Chair informed the Board that the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel had discussed the prevalence and impact of PCSOs in West Yorkshire during its meeting in July and resolved to ask local Scrutiny Committees to investigate the impact of PCSOs in their district with a view to feeding back its findings to the Panel. In discussing this issue with the Director of Environment and Housing and the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services, the Board agreed to accept this request.

The Chair also invited the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services to share his views around other potential areas of work for the Board to undertake this year in relation to his portfolio.

The areas raised were as follows:

- Hate Crime – in acknowledging the interest already expressed by the Scrutiny Board around this area of work, it was noted that whilst Safer Leeds have already undertaken a lot of work to help develop a better understanding of emergent Hate Crime issues and extremist behaviours, this remains a priority area that Scrutiny may wish to explore further.
- Promoting Localism – sharing good practice and exploring future opportunities in delivering services underpinned by the locality design principles.
- The role of the third sector within localities and exploring how links can be strengthened.

The Director of Environment and Housing and the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) were also invited to share their views around the potential areas of work for the Scrutiny Board. In doing so, references were made to the work areas also discussed by the Board in July in relation to the Environment portfolio.

Whilst agreeing to pursue a piece of work around the Hate Crime agenda, the Board decided to discuss and prioritise the other potential areas of work as part of its October meeting.

RESOLVED – That the Board's work schedule be updated to reflect the key issues discussed during today's meeting.

27 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 21st October 2013 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 11.45 am).