

SCRUTINY BOARD (HOUSING AND REGENERATION)

TUESDAY, 26TH NOVEMBER, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors D Collins, J Cummins,
P Grahame, M Iqbal, J Lewis, V Morgan,
C Towler and G Wilkinson

44 Late Items

There were no late items.

45 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

46 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence had been submitted by Councillors Bernard Atha and Sandy Lay. Notification had been received that Councillor James Lewis was to substitute for Councillor Bernard Atha.

47 Minutes - 29 October 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2013 be approved as a correct record.

48 Using HRA resources to support housing growth - progress and update

The Director of City Development and Director of Environment and Housing submitted a joint report which provided the Scrutiny Board with an update on an approach approved by Executive Board to the use of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) resources to fund a programme of investment to add to the stock of council housing in Leeds over a four year period.

Appended to the report was a copy of the Executive Board report (17 July 2013) entitled 'Council Housing Growth Programme'.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Maggie Gjessing, Housing Investment Manager, City Development
- John Statham, Head of Housing Partnerships, Environment and Neighbourhoods.

The main areas of discussion were:

- Confirmation that 80 expressions of interest had been submitted from across the city in relation to empty properties for potential purchase that were being progressed.
- Officers agreed to provide the Scrutiny Board with further information about the Council's approach to the acquisition of empty properties that had previously been purchased under the Right to Buy scheme. Members were advised that the Council's approach was less restrictive than had existed previously.
- Emphasis on the need to address local priorities and development of local letting policies where appropriate. Officers agreed to report back to the Scrutiny Board with evidence of how local letting policies had been applied.
- Acknowledgement that there was significant demand for adapted housing. Members were informed that an adapted housing register was being developed.
- A request for further information about the costs of purchasing off plan properties.
- Confirmation that some extra grant funding had been secured to deliver this site to a high energy efficiency rating.
- Clarification that it was too early at this stage for the inclusion of new affordable housing funded through the use of S106 commuted sums to be included in the programme.
- Strong emphasis had been placed on ensuring good quality design for the new housing stock and Members were advised that the HCA's space standards for affordable housing had been utilised. The Scrutiny Board requested further information about the additional cost of adopting these standards against the cost of a typical property built by volume house builders.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted and the various requests for information set out above be provided.

49 Recommendation Tracking - Affordable Housing by Private Developers

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which outlined further progress that had been made in implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry report on affordable housing by private developers.

Appended to the report was a copy of the recommendation tracking flowchart and recommendation tracking timetable.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- John Statham, Head of Housing Partnerships, Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Maggie Gjessing, Housing Investment Manager, City Development

- Robin Coghlan, Team Leader – Policy, City Development
- Nasreen Yunis, Principal Planner, City Development.

The status of recommendations were agreed as follows:

- Recommendation 1 – Not achieved. (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring).
- Recommendation 2 – Not achieved. (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 3 (i) – Not achieved. (Progress made not acceptable.) It was agreed to request a further report to a future Scrutiny Board meeting to assist with progressing this recommendation and also recommendations 4 and 5 (see below).
- Recommendation 3 (ii) – Not achieved. (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 3 (iii) – Achieved (for 1st sentence of recommendation). Stop monitoring (for remainder of recommendation).
- Recommendation 4 – Not achieved. (Progress made not acceptable.)
- Recommendation 5 – Not achieved. (Progress made not acceptable.)
- Recommendation 6 – Not achieved. (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- Recommendation 7 – Stop monitoring.
- Recommendation 8 – Achieved.
- Recommendation 9 (i) – Not achieved. (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 9 (ii) – Achieved.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board approves the status of recommendations as set out above.

(Councillor Mohammed Iqbal joined the meeting at 11.03 am during the consideration of this item.)

50 Housing Management Review

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report which outlined the progress made on the Housing Management Review since the Executive Board decision to reintegrate the council housing service back into the Council.

Appended to the report was a copy of the proposed structure of the new Housing Leeds service.

Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, presented the report and responded to Members' questions and comments.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Acknowledgement of lessons learnt from previous PFI schemes. Members were advised that a new post was being proposed within Strategic Housing to lead on PFI development.
- The new structure will bring together elements of best practice from across each of the three former ALMOs.

RESOLVED – To note the progress to date on the Housing Management Review.

51 Tenant Scrutiny

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report which updated the Scrutiny Board on progress in developing the future of Tenant Scrutiny within the new Housing Leeds Service.

The following draft information was appended to the report:

- Protocol between the Tenant Scrutiny Board and Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration)
- Tenant Scrutiny Board – Terms of Reference
- Tenant Scrutiny Board – Procedure Rules
- Tenant Scrutiny Board – General Arrangements.

John Statham, Head of Housing Partnerships, Environment and Neighbourhoods, presented the report.

Members emphasised the need to publicise the work of tenant scrutiny, and the importance of having a good range of people on the Tenant Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED – That the progress to date in developing a single Tenant Scrutiny Board be noted.

52 Annual Tenancy Visits

The Interim Chief Officer, Housing Management, Housing Leeds, submitted a report which updated the Scrutiny Board on the current process for undertaking a programme of annual tenancy visits to Council tenancies.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Annual Tenancy Verification Form
- Performance report covering the period 1 April 2013 to 4 November 2013.

Simon Costigan, Interim Chief Officer, Housing Management, presented the report and responded to Members' questions and comments.

The main areas of discussion were:

- The need for more robust monitoring of troublesome families. Members were advised that suitability checks of applicants were undertaken which included a record of any criminal and anti-social behaviour. The Scrutiny Board requested further information about the types of checks undertaken.
- Challenges associated with the provision of white goods, particularly in terms of on-going service and maintenance costs. Officers agreed to undertake further work with local charitable organisations to discuss future provision. It was noted that a further report on this topic was scheduled for the Board meeting on 7 January 2014.
- Suggestion that a series of action points be incorporated into the Annual Tenancy Verification Form and that a copy be provided to the tenant.

RESOVLED – That the report and appendices be noted.

(Councillor James Lewis withdrew from the meeting at 12.07 pm during the consideration of this item.)

53 Community Infrastructure Levy

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which updated the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board on the work undertaken by the Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board in relation to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Appended to the report was a copy of the Scrutiny Board's (Sustainable Economy and Culture) comments to Executive Board.

Kate Arscott, Principal Scrutiny Adviser, presented the report.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the work undertaken by the Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board be noted
- (b) That the Chair of the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board be nominated to take part in future work in relation to the Community Infrastructure Levy that is undertaken by the Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board.

54 Work Schedule

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

Appended to the report was the current version of the Board's work programme, together with the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 6 November 2013.

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Tuesday, 7th January, 2014

Kate Arscott, Principal Scrutiny Adviser, presented the report.

The key points of discussion were:

- Members agreed to a request that the date of the Scrutiny Board meeting on Tuesday, 28 January 2014, be rescheduled to the following week, Tuesday, 4 February 2014.
- In relation to Leeds City Region, Members agreed to a suggestion to undertake pre-decision scrutiny on development of the Strategic Economic Plan. This would involve joint working with the Scrutiny Board (Sustainable Economy and Culture) either in the form of a working group or as an additional meeting.

RESOLVED – That the work schedule, as amended, be approved.

55 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 7 January 2014 at 10.00 am. (Pre meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 am.)

(The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm)