

Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing)

Wednesday, 7th June, 2006

PRESENT: Councillor R Pryke in the Chair

Councillors D Atkinson, P Ewens,
R Finnigan, M Phillips, M Rafique and
D Schofield

1 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the first meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing) of the Municipal Year.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The following Members declared personal / prejudicial interests for the purpose of Section 81 (3) of the Local Government Act 2000 and paragraphs 8 to 13 of the Members Code of Conduct:-

Councillor P Ewens – declared a personal interest as a Member of Leeds North West Homes ALMO.

Councillor D Schofield – declared a personal interest as Director of South East Leeds Homes Board.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hyde and Armitage.

4 PRESENTATION FROM THE DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOODS AND HOUSING

The Chair informed Members that as this was the first meeting of the Municipal Year, the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing, Neil Evans, had been invited in order to discuss current and future issues facing the department. The Board were also given the opportunity to raise any questions with the Director in preparation for setting the initial work programme for the forthcoming year. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing, Councillor J L Carter, also attended the meeting.

The following Officers were in attendance:

- Trevor Kerry, Chief Community Safety Officer
- Helen Freeman, Chief Environmental Health Officer
- Christine Addison, North West Leeds Area Manager

The Scrutiny Board received a presentation from Officers outlining the structure of the department, along with the details of key officers. Members were informed that the department was divided into five divisions – Support Services, Housing Services, Regeneration, Community Safety and Environmental Health. Each relevant Officer then gave an overview of the

challenges and key issues facing their individual departments, all of which would have a possible bearing on the work of the Board in the coming year.

Following the formal presentation, Members were given the opportunity to ask questions of the Officers in relation to the work of the department. The key topics discussed were as follows:

- The need to reinforce the work of the Community Safety team in relation to anti-social behaviour with support from the Authority's Legal department;
- How the problem of homelessness in young men is being tackled;
- The number of empty homes currently in the city;
- The proliferation of student housing within Leeds, particularly large developments of purpose-built accommodation;
- The implications of the Children's Act upon housing;
- The actual figures in relation to the number of refugees and asylum seekers in receipt of housing assistance in the city;
- The fact that some wards have not yet benefited from the overall city-wide reduction in crime levels;
- The merits of publicising the outcome of successful legal action in relation to noise nuisance;
- The future of ALMO's in Leeds and the steps being taken to consult with local residents on the issue;

The Chair thanked the Executive Board Member and Officers for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the presentation and ensuing discussion be noted.

5 WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Scrutiny Support and Member Development submitted a report proposing guidelines for the development of a Work Programme for the Scrutiny Board for the 2006/07 Municipal year.

Members were reminded that as Scrutiny Boards were now aligned to Executive Member portfolios, the remit of the Board related to those priorities within the Corporate Plan associated with Neighbourhoods and Housing.

The following issues were raised as possible topics for further scrutiny:

- The proposed reorganisation of Leeds ALMOs;
- Partnership working across the Council, particularly District Partnerships;
- Area Management arrangements
- Housing and regeneration in Beeston and Holbeck
- Safer Leeds Partnership
- Supporting People
- The Government's 'Respect' agenda.

Following discussions it was agreed that the initial work programme be devised by the Chair in consultation with the Principal Scrutiny Officer. A copy of the programme would be circulated to all Board Members for their information and approval.

RESOLVED – That a copy of the initial Work Programme be circulated to all Board Members for approval.

6 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Thursday 20th July 2006 at 10:00 am (pre-meeting at 9:30 am.)

(The meeting concluded at 11:35.)