

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 8TH JANUARY, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair
Councillors B Anderson, S Bentley,
J Chapman, B Gettings, T Hanley,
A McKenna and E Minkin

Apologies Councillor W Hyde and R Pryke

68 Chair's Welcome

The Chair welcomed Members and officers to the first meeting of the Committee in 2008, and wished everyone a Happy New Year. The Chair also welcomed Councillor Chapman to her first formal meeting of the Committee, following her appointment as Chair of the Scrutiny Board (Health and Adult Social Care).

69 Declarations of Interest

The following Members made personal declarations of interest in respect of the following items:-

Councillor Anderson – Agenda Item 9 (Minute No 74 refers) – Developing the Financial Plan 2008-2013 – Chair of West North West Homes Leeds ALMO Board.

Councillor Chapman – Agenda Item 9 (Minute No 74 refers) – Developing the Financial Plan 2008-2013 – Director of West North West Homes Leeds ALMO Board.

70 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors W Hyde and Pryke.

71 Minutes - 11th December 2007

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th December 2007 be confirmed as a correct record.

72 Minutes - Executive Board - 19th December 2007

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 19th December 2007 be received and noted.

73 Leeds Strategic Plan and Council Business Plan 2008 - 2011- Outcomes and Priorities

Further to Minute No 42, 9th October 2007, and Minute No 51, 6th November 2007, the Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement) submitted a report updating Members on the proposed final Outcomes and Priorities to be included in the Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-2011, following the extensive consultation exercise carried out last year. The report also outlined the proposed business outcomes and improvement priorities contained in the draft Council Business Plan 2008 – 2011, which would support the delivery of the Leeds Strategic Plan.

In attendance at the meeting to respond to Members' queries and comments were:-

James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement)
Alan Gay, Director of Resources
Doug Meeson, Chief Officer (Financial Management)
Jane Stageman, Chief Executive's Department
Heather Pinches, Chief Executive's Department

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:-

- It was agreed that the Council Business Plan 2008 – 2011 should be referred to **all** Scrutiny Boards for consideration and possible comment, not just OSC;
- The proposed final outcomes and priorities of the Leeds Strategic Plan did not currently reflect the Committee's views, finally agreed at the last meeting (Minute No 51 refers), relating to the role of Members as 'Community Champions' and 'Leaders of Change', nor the specific reference to the leadership role of Members in planning matters and the design and quality of the built environment. This latter point was an important issue, close to the heart of Councillors and the public, and needed to be reflected in the document. Some suggested amendments were discussed, and James Rogers undertook to circulate to Members some proposed final amended wording for comment;
- 'Looking After Leeds' – reduced vehicle emissions, and the harmful effect caused by sometimes minor roadworks which seemed to overrun, leading to stationary traffic queues and greater pollution. It was reported that a Change Strategy linked to this theme was currently being worked on, and would be the subject of Member consultation.
- 'Leadership' – improving leadership at all levels, and how this must be linked to ongoing training, lifelong learning and personal development plans.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments and requests for amendments, and any others which may be forthcoming from other Scrutiny Boards, the current proposed outcomes and priorities associated with the

Leeds Strategic Plan and the Council Business Plan 2008 – 2011 be received and noted, for forwarding to the Executive Board in March 2008.

74 Developing the Financial Plan 2008 - 13

The Committee considered a report submitted by the Director of Resources regarding the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for the period 2008 – 2013, which was linked to the Council's Business Plan 2008 – 2011. The report set out the Council's current financial position, the likely impact of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review, and would form the basis for the initial budget proposals for 2008/09, to be considered by Council in February 2008.

The Director of Resources responded to Members' queries and comments. In brief summary, the main issues highlighted were:-

- The review of Service Areas currently being undertaken, and comparisons being made with authorities of a similar size, to identify where under-provision needed to be addressed;
- The forecast budget pressures for 2008/09 and beyond, including pay awards and the effect of equal pay legislation, the impact of the Integrated Waste Strategy and Gershon efficiency savings (which were now 3% per annum, up from 2.5%). Members requested details of the outcome and costs of the current job evaluation exercise being carried out by the Council when the final outcome was known;
- The impact of early retirement packages, especially for senior Council managers;
- Proposed rent increases next year, in the order of 7% - 8%, against a backdrop of seemingly constantly changing priorities on the part of ALMOs, which left tenants frustrated and disappointed when proposed improvement schemes were either cancelled or postponed;
- The newly-merged ALMOs, which had previously been successful in obtaining 2* status, giving them access to £403m of additional capital funding, and concerns regarding what might happen if their status was reduced. Members also noted that since April 2004, 75% of receipts guaranteed through the Right to Buy (RTB) scheme were required to be paid over to the central government, and requested to be supplied with details of the RTB figures for the past three financial years, including how much the remaining 25% was worth, and what it was utilised for;
- The current review of Council income levels and charging policy, and the need for transparency where in effect the Council was subsidising a particular service e.g. sports charges;
- The review of the Council's physical assets e.g. buildings/service points, which would involve Member and service user consultation;
- The best value review of the Council's role as service provider, or service commissioner, which was outcomes - focussed.

- Members expressed disappointment that presently the Council would lose money as a result of the Government's decision to replace the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund with a Working Neighbourhoods Fund, with changed criteria. The detailed reasons for the Council's predicament were explained, and the Council was actively lobbying the Government regarding what it regarded as unfair anomalies which had an adverse effect on Leeds.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments and requests for further information, the report be received and noted.

75 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a copy of the Committee's work programme, updated to reflect decisions taken at previous meetings, together with a relevant extract from the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st January to 30th April 2008.

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development made reference to several proposed changes to the work programme:-

- Subsequent to the Committee's 11th December 2007 meeting, when the Committee had considered initial evidence for its 'Responding to the Needs of Migrants and their Families' Inquiry, it had been suggested that the Inquiry should in effect be held in abeyance in view of the work currently being undertaken by, amongst others, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods. It was agreed that the Director be invited back to the February Committee meeting to update Members;
- The Committee also agreed to add to the February agenda a report back on the views or any comments of other Scrutiny Boards regarding the Council Business Plan 2008 – 2011 (see Minute No 73);
- Reference was also made to the agreed further meeting of the Committee's ALMO working group, looking at the proposed Terms of Reference for an Inquiry (Minute No 40, 9th October 2007 refers), and the length of time being taken to supply Members with the requested details of the staffing levels and operating costs of the Group Offices (Minute No 40, 9th October 2007, Minute No 51, 6th November 2007 and Minute No 62, 11th December 2007 refer).

RESOLVED – That subject to any changes necessary as a result of today's meeting, the Committee's work programme be received and noted.

76 Dates and Times of Future Meetings

Tuesday 5th February 2008

Tuesday 11th March 2008

Tuesday 8th April 2008

All at 10.00 am (Pre-Meetings at 9.30 am).