

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 5TH FEBRUARY, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

Councillors S Bentley, J Chapman,
B Gettings, T Hanley, A McKenna, W Hyde,
E Minkin and R Pryke

APOLOGIES: Councillor B Anderson

77 Chair's Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular the representatives of local running clubs, who were present in connection with Agenda Item 9, Leeds Half Marathon, and Members and officers introduced themselves.

78 Declaration of Interests

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

Councillor Chapman – Agenda Item 11 (Minute No. 84 refers) – ALMO Working Group – Progress Report – Director of West North West Homes Leeds ALMO Board.

Councillor Gettings – Agenda Item 11 (Minute No. 84 refers) – ALMO Working Group – Progress Report – Member of Outer South Area ALMO Panel.

79 Minutes - 8th January 2008

- (a) Leeds Strategic Plan and Council Business Plan 2008-2011 – Outcomes and Priorities (Minute No 73 refers)
The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development undertook to pursue and circulate the proposed final amended wording referred to in the second bullet point of this minute

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th January 2008 be confirmed as a correct record.

80 Minutes - Executive Board - 23rd January 2008

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 23rd January 2008 be received and noted.

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Tuesday, 11th March, 2008

81 Scrutiny Inquiry - Responding to the Needs of Migrants and their Families

Further to Minute No 65, 11th December 2007, and Minute No 75, 8th January 2008, the Committee received an update from Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, who was present at the meeting, regarding the progress and work of the multi-agency officers' New Migrant Communities Task Group on this issue in Leeds.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- The fact that Leeds, due to its facilities and economy, was attractive to both economic migrants and refugees and asylum seekers;
- The need to bear in mind the distinction between **economic migrants**, who often were from EU Accession States in Eastern Europe, and **refugees/ asylum seekers**, often from world trouble spots, the different rules applying to these groups and their different needs. There was a national and local strategy in place for dealing with refugees and asylum seekers, their distribution across and within regions, and the Council was involved in discussion and negotiations with the Government in this regard. There was no such strategy or controls in respect of economic migrants. Economic migrants had no right to access **benefits or social housing** for the first 12 months, but having established themselves during that period, they were entitled under EU law to the same rights as a citizen of the UK – not preferential rights;
- The historical context to the current situation as outlined above;
- The **benefits of immigration**, as well as some of the difficulties, and the need to better disseminate information and dispel myths;
- The importance of **communicating directly with immigrant communities**, not just between agencies, taking on board the experience and support structures established by earlier immigrants, and the need not to forget the immigrant communities already well-established in the City, such as Kurds and French-speaking black immigrants;
- The recent Government decision to reduce funding nationally for **English lessons** for immigrants, and what Leeds could do to enhance this service and to provide appropriate **translation and interpretation services**;
- Members requested further information regarding the **numbers and ethnic breakdown** of refugees and asylum seekers across the Yorkshire and Humber region. The situation regarding the numbers of both refugees and asylum seekers and economic migrants arriving in the area had changed dramatically over the past 10 years, and this in turn would involve **service planning** changes to meet different needs.

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods undertook to take on board Members' comments, to supply the additional information requested and to provide the Committee with a **further update report** following the proposed publication in March of the results of the research project currently being undertaken under the auspices of the Task Group.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted, and the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submit a further progress report later in the year.

82 Leeds Half Marathon

Further to the cancelled Call-In meeting scheduled for 23rd January 2008, following a decision to reinstate the Leeds Half Marathon for 2008 and to review its long-term future, the Committee considered a report submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development and also received further evidence in respect of this matter.

Present at the meeting to respond to Members' queries and comments were Councillor John Procter, Executive Member (Leisure), Martin Farrington, Acting Chief Recreation Officer and Mark Allman, Head of Sport and Active Recreation. Also invited to speak were Bob Jackson (Valley Striders running club), Colin Morath (Abbey Runners) and Bob Foulkes (Horsforth Harriers).

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

- The **background** to and reasons behind the original decision to cancel the Half Marathon in 2008. Principally, these had been a desire to provide effective support to the Jane Tomlinson 'Run for All' 10k event, the close proximity of the proposed dates of the two events in May 2008, the pressures imposed on the Sport and Recreation Service by organising either of these events, let alone two virtually simultaneously, the relative importance and status of the Half Marathon and the number of participants in comparison with the 'Run for All', and long standing issues regarding the route and condition of the Half Marathon course and the amount of disruption caused by the necessary road closures. The officer decision to cancel the Half Marathon in 2008, taken in consultation and with the agreement of Councillor Procter, and pending a review of the long term future of the event, had therefore been taken for valid reasons. However, this decision had proved unpopular, especially amongst the running fraternity, and a decision had been taken to **reinstate** the race, but to move it to September. One possible date had been 21st September, but it was now more likely to be **7th September**, and this date was currently being canvassed with interested parties;
- The lack of **consultation** with Members and interested parties, which had it taken place might have avoided the controversy, and the need for appropriate consultation to always be a prime consideration whenever delegated decisions were taken. Two specific suggestions arising from the discussion were the proposed formation of a **forum** comprising representatives of local running clubs, with whom the Council could consult, and the **Council publishing details of local running events on its website**, both of which it was felt would aid communication and co-ordination. The decision also did not appear to have been included in the **Forward Plan of Key Decisions**, and the Head of Scrutiny undertook to investigate.

- **The long term future of the Half Marathon** – Councillor Procter indicated that the decision to reinstate the Half Marathon in September provided a breathing space for the Council and interested parties to review the longer term future of the event. In its early years, the Leeds Half Marathon had been an extremely popular, well supported and high profile event. Perhaps due to the proliferation of events since then, its popularity had waned somewhat, although it still attracted in the region of 3,000 runners. Councillor Procter indicated that while ever there was sufficient demand from participants for the Leeds Half Marathon, he was happy to support its continuation – it was up to the entrants to prove its popularity. The documented problems with the route, and the strain imposed on the Sport and Recreation Department in organising the event, were matters which would have to be taken into account when planning for the future.

The original decision had, in part, been taken in order to allow the Council and the Department to concentrate on trying to establish a high profile, nationally recognised event for the City, and it was possible that the **Jane Tomlinson 'Run for All'** would provide that opportunity in terms of possibly up to 10,000 participants, sponsorship and media coverage.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted and Members be informed of the agreed final date of the 2008 Leeds Half Marathon.
- (b) That the matter be referred to the Scrutiny Board (Culture and Leisure) with a view to that Board monitoring the proposed review of the event for 2009 and beyond.
- (c) That OSC receive a further report in due course when the proposed future of the event is clearer.

83 Recommendation Tracking - Scrutiny Inquiry - 'When Contracts Go Wrong'

Further to Minute No 36, 11th September 2007, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report updating the Committee regarding progress on the implementation of its recommendations arising from the Committee's 2006/07 Inquiry entitled 'When Contracts Go Wrong'.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That in respect of the first two recommendations, these be categorised as 4 (not achieved, but progress made acceptable, and continue monitoring) and the third recommendation be categorised as 2 (Achieved).

84 ALMO Working Group - Progress Report

Further to Minute No 40, 9th October 2007, and Minute No 75, 8th January 2008, the Committee received a progress report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development regarding the work of the ALMO Working Group, which had been looking at issues surrounding the use of Right to Buy receipts within the capital programme and whether or not an Inquiry was necessary.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and the Working Group meet at least one last time to resolve any outstanding issues.

85 Performance Report - Quarter 3 2007/08

The Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement submitted a report updating the Committee on performance against targets across a raft of statutory and local indicators, involving all the Scrutiny Board's areas of responsibility, highlighting achievement levels for Quarter 3 (1st October to 31st December 2007).

Marilyn Summers, Chief Executive's Department, attended the meeting and responded to Members' queries and comments. In brief summary, the main issues discussed were:-

- The significant improvements in performance in the areas of **crime reduction and adult social care**;
- Continuing concerns regarding **staff sickness absence levels**. It was agreed that this matter should be picked up by the Scrutiny Board (Resources);
- **Graffiti** – The on-going problems with tackling graffiti were noted, and Members expressed concern at the apparent lack of progress in tackling the problem. Surprise was also expressed at the reference to the 'targeting of resources to the areas of greatest need, such as recreation and industrial areas'. Whilst graffiti was an eyesore wherever it appeared, Members stated that residential areas were a greater priority, and called for greater consultation with Ward Members e.g. Inner North West area. The issue was referred to the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) for further consideration;
- **Youth Provision** – The patchy nature of the provision of the youth service across the City was remarked upon, with some areas having no provision at all and others having inadequate provision which did not take into account recent expansions in population numbers. Sickness levels amongst youth workers was also an issue. Councillor W Hyde stated that the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) was considering these same statistics at its meeting on 14th February and would take into account Members' comments;
- **Adoptions** – It was noted that the Council would not achieve its target for raising the rate of adoptions for Looked-After Children and Young People in Leeds. It was felt that to a large degree this was a direct consequence of an increase in the number of social workers employed and the continuing high number of children and young people placed in care in Leeds for their own protection.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments, the report be received and noted.

86 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 February to 31st May 2008.

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

87 Dates and Times of Future Meetings

Tuesday 11th March 2008

Tuesday 8th April 2008

Both at 10.00 am (Pre-meetings at 9.30 am)