

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

THURSDAY, 24TH JULY, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors A Blackburn, A Castle,
B Cleasby, D Coupar, A Gabriel,
D Hollingsworth, G Hyde, L Mulherin and
M Rafique

13 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the July meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods).

The Chair also welcomed Councillor Mulherin who had replaced Councillor J McKenna on the Board for the remainder of the municipal year.

14 Declarations of Interest

The following personal interests were declared:-

- Councillor B Anderson in his capacity as Chair of West North West Homes (Agenda Item 9) (Minute 19 refers)
- Councillor A Blackburn in her capacity as a Director of West North West Homes (Agenda Item 9) (Minute 19 refers)
- Councillor D Coupar in her capacity as a member on Belle Isle North Estate Management Board (Agenda Item 9) (Minute 19 refers)
- Councillor D Hollingsworth in his capacity as a Director on East North East Homes (Agenda Item 9) (Minute 19 refers)
- Councillor G Hyde in his capacity as a Director on East North East Homes (Agenda Item 9) (Minute 19 refers)

15 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor J Marjoram and Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods.

16 Minutes of Previous Meetings

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the minutes of the meeting held on 16th June 2008 be confirmed as a correct record.
- (b) That, subject to the following amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 24th June 2008 be confirmed as a correct record:-

Minute 9 'Declarations of Interest' – to delete the word 'regular' in both declarations to read 'as a user of Beckett Street Car Park'

Minute 11 'Review of Call In Decision – Parking Price Review' – to amend Councillor J Coupar's name to read 'Councillor D Coupar' in the sentence 'Prior to considering the written evidence.....'

17 Executive Board - Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 11th June 2008 be received and noted.

18 Members' Questions - Executive Member for Environmental Services

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on issues for the Board's work programme with the Executive Member for Environmental Services.

The following representatives were in attendance:-

Councillor S Smith, Executive Board Member for Environmental Services
Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer, Environment and Neighbourhoods

The Chair invited Councillor Smith to make a brief presentation on the key priorities and objectives around Environmental Services.

Following the presentation, Board Members were given the opportunity of raising questions.

In summary, specific reference was made to the following issues:-

- rolling out of the brown bin schemes – clarification of the timescale for the delivery of **brown bins** for residents living in Tingley/West Ardsley
(The Executive Board Member informed the meeting that in accordance with the aims of the two year rolling –out programme, it was envisaged that the brown bins would be delivered to the above areas by the end of the financial year. It was noted that details of the roll out programme would be sent to Board Members)
- rolling out of green and black bins – clarification of the timescale for the delivery of **green and black bins** to residents across the city
(The Executive Board Member informed the meeting that, despite some properties being difficult to service, this issue would be addressed by officers within Environmental Services)
- weeds growing on the roadside – the concerns expressed about the size and the amount of weeds growing on the roadside, especially within the Horsforth area
(The Executive Board Member confirmed that when the current Parks and Countryside contract expired, this issue would be addressed by officers within Environmental Services)
- emptying of litter bins within the Chapel Allerton ward – the concerns expressed about **on-going missed bin collections**

(The Executive Board Member confirmed that this issue would be addressed by the Chief Environmental Services Officer)

- the need for **additional litter bins** across the city, in particular within the Middleton Park ward and the non-replacement of litter bins at bus stops
(The Executive Board Member confirmed that there was a need for more litter bins across the city. He agreed to look into this issue, together with the replacement of litter bins at bus stops)
- **street cleaning** – clarification of the **ALMOs** responsibility within this area and the urgent need for a resolution, together with areas to be mapped out with increased schedule preparation
*(The Executive Board Member informed the meeting that despite the areas of responsibility being made very clear to the **ALMOs**, there were some operational difficulties in this area which would be addressed by officers within Environmental Services)*
- **enforcement, dog fouling and fly tipping** – the need for more publicity and for the Board to measure the performance of enforcement
*(The Executive Board Member informed the meeting that discussions were ongoing with the Police around the role of **PCSOs** in enforcement and that feedback from these discussions would be provided to the Board. The Board noted and welcomed that the courts were very active with supporting the Council in the area of enforcement)*
- clarification of the procedures around spillages when collecting bins
(The Executive Board Member confirmed that Environmental Services were directly responsible for spillage)
- **street cleaning schedule** in Horsforth/Otley – concerns raised by the North West (Outer) Area Committee around the six/eight week schedule
(The Executive Board Member responded and agreed to refer this issue to the Chief Environmental Services Officer for appropriate action)
- **missed bin collections** due to cars being parked in cul-de-sacs
*(The Executive Board Member responded and outlined the operational issues. The Board noted that Environmental Services would continue to address this important issue in conjunction with the **DVLC**)*

The Chair invited Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer to make a brief presentation on the key priorities and objectives within the Environmental Services division.

Following the presentation, Board Members were given the opportunity of raising questions.

In summary, specific reference was made to the following issues:-

- **street cleaning** within the North West Outer ward – concerns expressed about the irregular Saturday street cleaning cycle within the North West Outer ward
(The Chief Environmental Services Officer agreed to discuss this issue with relevant officers within Environmental Services)
- **missed bin collections** in Chapeltown and Beckhill area and the need for more parking attendants within the Chapel Allerton ward
(The Chief Environmental Services Officer confirmed that he would investigate these issues)
- **missed bin collections** in Farnley and Wortley ward, together with the concerns expressed around elderly residents being removed from the list
(The Chief Environmental Services Officer responded and outlined the current bin delivery programme and agreed to review the scheme for elderly residents)

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (b) That a vote of thanks be conveyed to Councillor S Smith and Andrew Mason for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.

(Councillor D Coupar and Councillor G Hyde joined the meeting at 10.05 am during discussions of the above item)

(Councillor D Coupar left the room at 10.25 am and returned at 11.05 am during discussions of the item on the Inquiry into Choice Based Lettings (Minute 19 refers)

19 Inquiry into Choiced Based Lettings - Response to the Board's Recommendations

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on interim recommendations made following an Inquiry into Choice Based Lettings.

The following representatives were in attendance:-

John Statham, Head of Strategic Landlord, Environment and Neighbourhoods
Kath Bramall, Leeds Homes Policy Manager, Environment and Neighbourhoods

In addition to the above report, a copy of additional information entitled 'Leeds Homes Performance Management Summary Quarter 1 2008/09 for Ward Members' was circulated for the information/comment of the meeting.

For the benefit of Board Members, the Chair went through each individual recommendation seeking comments, which were duly noted by the officers' in attendance.

In summary, specific reference was made to the following issues:-

Recommendation 2(i)

"That the Strategic Landlord ensures that all local ward members are provided with quarterly performance information relating to local housing issues, in particular waiting times and lettings". Where possible, the information should meet the following requirements:

- the need for the data to be broken down into wards, including data on the letting summary
- clarification of how Board Members perceived the information contained with this document
(The Head of Strategic Landlord responded and stated that the aim of the document was to provide elected members with core lettings information that would help them when dealing with residents. The focus was on the details around the waiting lists/balance of lettings/waiting times with reference to the average length of time shown in weeks)
- the need for this information to be made available within the public domain and for ALMOs to be consulted on the specific detail
- clarification of the number of customers seeking 'general needs' and a requirement to look at various trends
- clarification of the anticipated number of applications received within the 1st quarter in six months time and on the number of people who have bidden, together with details of those who were successful
- the need for those on 'general needs' to be broken down with a focus on families and single people which would assist Elected Members when conducting their surgeries
- ensure that there is consistency in the lay-out of categories, including the different bands and priority plus
- the need for the figures to be kept up to date and for some narrative to be included on explaining the trends
- the need to focus on the number of properties that were empty or available for letting
- to provide a brief description of terms contained within the information.

Recommendation 6

"That, by December 2008, the Strategic Landlord review the application registration procedures to ensure that appropriate checks on customers' identities are undertaken at an earlier stage of the lettings process, for example, as part of the housing need assessment process".

- clarification of what checks were being undertaken and the need for more detail
- the need to talk to corporate social housing providers

Recommendation 8(i) and (ii)

“(i) That, by December 2008 and in conjunction with each ALMO and the BITMO, the Strategic Landlord seeks to develop and implement suitable strategies to tackle sub-letting of council properties”.

“(ii) That a review of such strategies is undertaken 12 months after implementation, with a view to ensuring such strategies are and remain fit for purpose”

- the need for more detail on sub letting

Recommendation 9(i)

“That by April 2009, the Strategic Landlord, through the ALMOs:-

Ascertains the level of under-occupancy across all council housing stock “

- the need to focus on those people moving from houses to flats and for the policy to be more flexible
(The Head of Strategic Landlord responded and agreed to investigate this matter further)

General Comments

- the need for the Board to address **older people’s needs and the private sector**

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- (b) That a vote of thanks be conveyed to the Head of Strategic Landlord and his support staff on their excellent contribution to this Inquiry, together with a similar message being sent to the ALMOs.
- (c) That the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development be requested to include the following issues within the Board’s future work programme:-
 - Older People’s Housing
 - Private Sector Housing

20 Wyther Community Centre

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report on the process of assessing the Wyther Community Centre.

Steve Crocker, West and North West Area Manager, Environment and Neighbourhoods was in attendance and responded to Members’ queries and comments.

Discussions ensued on the contents of the report and specific reference was made with regards to the reasons behind the delay and clarification of the closure and demolition process.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.

- (b) That the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development be requested to refer to this report to the North West (Inner) Area Committee for their consideration.

(Councillor M Rafique left the room at 11.10 am and returned at 11.20 am during discussion of this item)

21 **Current Work Programme**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on the Board's current work programme.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- (b) That the following working groups be established to draft terms of reference:-
 - (i) Street Cleaning – including ALMOs / Departmental relationships
Membership
Councillor B Anderson
Councillor B Cleasby
Councillor G Hyde
 - (ii) Private Sector Housing – to include Empty Dwelling Management Orders, Licensing and Voids
Membership
Councillor B Anderson
Councillor A Gabriel
Councillor G Hyde
Councillor L Mulherin
 - (iii) Older People's Housing
Membership
Councillor B Anderson
Councillor A Blackburn
Councillor A Castle
Councillor G Hyde
Councillor M Rafique
- (c) That in relation to measuring the performance of **enforcement** (Minute 18 refers), the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development be requested to include this issue on the Board's work programme for future consideration.
- (d) That in relation to the **letter of complaint and request for scrutiny** received on **noise nuisance** in Hunslet, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development be requested to advise the member of the public that no further scrutiny would take place on the matter, however an update would be requested from the Environment and Neighbourhoods department on how this matter was to be resolved.
- (e) That the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development be requested to invite Councillor L Carter and Councillor S Smith to the October Board

meeting and thereafter on a two monthly basis to discuss matters within the Board's portfolio.

22 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 8th September 2008 at 10.00 am (pre-meeting to be held for Board Members at 9.30 am)

(The meeting concluded at 11.30 am)