

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES) - CONSULTATIVE MEETING

THURSDAY, 17TH JUNE, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, B Anderson,
A Blackburn, K Brooks, D Collins,
M Dobson, R Finnigan, A Gabriel,
P Grahame, C Howley, M Midgley,
D Ragan, K Ritchie and T Smith

1 **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

2 **Minutes - 25 March 2021**

RECOMMENDED – That the minutes of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board meeting held 25th March 2021 be noted.

3 **Scrutiny Boards Terms of Reference**

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the Board's terms of reference for information.

It was noted that the remit of the Scrutiny Board had changed with digital access and the contact centre now part of Strategy and Resources remit.

RECOMMENDED – That the Board's terms of reference be noted.

4 **Performance Update**

The report of the Directors of Resources and Communities, Housing & Environment provided a summary of performance against the strategic priorities for the council and city and other performance areas relevant to the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board. The report also provided an update on progress in delivering the council priorities in line with the Best Council Plan and covered quarter 4 (Year-End) Performance.

In attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Harland – Executive Member Communities
- Cllr Rafique – Executive Member Environment and Housing
- Cllr Hayden – Executive Member Infrastructure and Climate Change
- James Rogers - Director of Communities, Housing & Environment
- Tim Rollett - Intelligence and Policy Manager
- Adam Crampton - Head of Property management
- Nahim Ruhi-Khan - Head of Strategy and Investment
- Sean Flesher – Chief Officer, Parks and Countryside
- Gerard Tinsdale - Chief Officer, Housing

- Kate Morris - Head of Transport Planning
- John Woolmer – Chief Officer Environmental Services Communities, Housing & Environment

Members discussions focussed on the following matters:

- Temporary accommodation
- Adaptations - Members were of the view that listing adaptations by ward variation and estate variation may provide better information.
- Unauthorised Encampments.
- Service charges for tower blocks.
- Re-let times and disrepairs.
- Housing Benefit expenditure. It was noted that the service can differentiate between council house and private claims if need a breakdown. In relation to the Welfare Rights Team Cllr Ritchie asked the Board to note the “first class” service the officers provide.
- Bin collection rates including concerns in relation to the assisted collection service.
- Residential parking permits and inappropriate parking in residential areas.
- Leeds Park Standard and information in relation to weed spraying.

Responding to questions from Members the Board was provided with the following information:

- There are fewer than 40 instances of temporary accommodation being used in the city. However, numbers using temporary accommodation had seen a significant rise to between 240-250 at one point during the pandemic. Use of temporary accommodation in Leeds is substantially lower than other cities.
- The adaptations service has had reduced capacity due to Covid, but it was hoped that the service would be back on track by the end of this financial year.
- Prior to the pandemic, work had started to look for new sites for gypsy and travellers in the city. This work had now re-started and officers would be speaking with ward members.
- Information would be sought in relation to service charges and a written update provided.
- Void numbers had increased due to the pandemic and difficulties accessing the required materials. The Board discussed pressures on global supply chains for materials such as composite doors and plaster. However, as the restrictions start to be lifted work has now started up again. It was noted that tenants were able to check on repairs to void properties. The service was also looking to allow new tenants into properties whilst works are undertaken.
- Significant work is being undertaken to address repairs but as noted, there have been difficulties in accessing materials. This has caused a rise in complaints in relation to repairs. It was also noted that a new contract with Mears for the west had been agreed and is due to start in July. Members were advised that this would not be a continuation of

the contract with Mears and that a briefing note would be provided to Members setting out the specification changes of the contract.

- Members were advised of a move away from the annual visits to council homes towards an online 'check in' service. However, should concerns be raised with a tenancy, an officer would visit the property.
- It was acknowledged that there had been issues with bin collections including assisted bin collections. The refuse service has faced challenges through the pandemic with a reduced workforce, vehicles out of service for deep clean, temporary staff not familiar with routes and end of day reporting on missed streets. However, the service has set up a project team reviewing routes, prioritising improvements to end of day reporting and using back up crews to try and collect missed streets within 48 hours.
- Clarity was provided on criteria for residents parking permits. It was noted that these schemes were not reviewed, they were assessed and if no issues were raised the scheme remained in place.
- It was noted that Parks and Countryside had been unable to supply floral displays across the city due to the restrictions of the pandemic and reduced staffing. However, assurance was given that floral displays will be re-instated when the restrictions allow.
- Data could be provided in relation to the Leeds Park Standard and suggestions in relation to repairs to equipment and facilities could be provided as additional information to the report.

The Chair thanked all those who had attended for this item and said that the work which had gone into providing the report was appreciated by the Board.

RECOMMENDED – To

- a) Note the Quarter 4 performance information contained in the Appendices to this report and the issues which have been highlighted and consider if they wish to undertake further scrutiny work to support improvement over the coming year in any of these areas.
- b) Note that the Best Council Plan (BCP) sets out the council's key objectives and priorities. This report provides an overview of the relevant Environment, Housing and Communities performance relating to this plan, enabling the Scrutiny Board to consider and challenge the council's performance.

5 Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team Review: Implementation Update

The report of the Chief Officer, Safer Leeds provided the Board with an update on the outcome of the LASBT review, which was implemented in 2019.

In attendance for this item were:

- Paul Money - Chief Officer, Safer Leeds
- Claire Smith - ASB Delivery Manager

The Board was provided with a presentation which covered the following points:

- Why the service had been reviewed
 - Ensure long term sustainability
 - Increased demand on service
 - LASBT becoming a 'catch all'
 - Increased Vulnerability
- Key areas of focus
 - Triage system for referrals
 - Creation of a Community MARAC
 - Review of Mediation provision
 - Review of Noise Processes
 - Creation of a communication plan
 - Re-location of the LASBT West Team
 - Development of an ASB Strategy
- Review completed but still evolving
 - Reducing re-offending
 - Drugs and Alcohol
 - Youth Justice Partnership
 - Serious Organised Crime
 - Gypsy and Traveller Unauthorised Encampments

The Boards discussions included:

- The trial of a noise app.
- Partnership working with housing.
- Proposals for mediation.
- The revised website and the use of the Decision Tree for reporting anti-social behaviour.

In response to the Boards questions officers provided the following information:

- It was recognised that mediation could be a powerful investment for the future. Proposals for this had started for procurement of the service prior to Covid.
- The website has been developed over the last 12 months, and now includes the decision tree which offers advice as well as sign posting to other services where appropriate.
- The CAT's system is being used to log information and is acknowledged that it is more user friendly which has increased public confidence in the service.
- The closer partnership between LASBT and housing is proving to be a effective in enabling officers to address more complex cases.
- The service is looking to recommence Operation Champions.

It was noted that Members would be informed when the Noise App was launched.

RECOMMENDED – To note the contents of the report.

6 Parking Strategy and Management Update

The report of the Director of City Development and Director of Communities, Housing and Environment was a follow up from a previous report to Scrutiny Board in September 2019 and working group discussion in February 2020. The report responds to a request from the Board to discuss the city centre parking strategy and its wider context.

The report provided a high-level overview of city centre parking strategy. It goes on to outline the general approach to the management of on-street parking in those areas surrounding the city centre and outside the main city centre controlled parking management area. The report also reviews issues related to the COVID pandemic and lockdowns, including discussion relating to the Council's Park and Ride Operations at Elland Road and Temple Green.

In attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Hayden – Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate Change
- Cllr Rafique – Executive Member for Environment and Housing
- Mark Jefford - Service Manager
- Kate Morris - Head of Transport Planning
- Nick Hunt - Traffic Engineering Manager
- John Mulcahy - Chief Officer, Elections and Regulatory

Members discussions focussed on the following areas:

- Enforcement action for those commuters who are choosing to park beyond the city centre into the adjacent inner-city residential areas causing nuisance, anti-social behaviour and loss of amenity to residents.
- Park and Rides Schemes which have proved to be successful with a request for similar schemes to be available in other areas of the city.
- Use of technology to enable disabled drivers to locate disabled parking spaces in the city.
- Traffic Restriction Order schemes. Members were of the view that such schemes should be in discussion with relevant ward members to ensure that they were in the right areas.
- Concerns were raised in relation to parking on pavements which Members recognised did not fall within the remit of Parking Enforcement Officers, but with the Police. Members were of the view that clarification was required in relation to inappropriate parking on pavements.
- Section 106 funding in relation to traffic management.

Responding to questions from Members the Board were informed of the following:

- Enforcement action for overspill parking outside the city centre was an ongoing challenge. Work was progressing to review the true city centre boundary with a view to improving enforcement action.
- A pilot scheme with a private operator is currently being trialled for the use of technology to assist disabled drivers to locate parking spaces in the city.
- Development Control do try to secure funding around all new developments in the city. It was acknowledged that the funding was dependent on the scale of the development.

The Executive Members thanked the officers for the work that they were doing in relation to enforcing against inappropriate parking in the city. They recognised the issues raised by the Board and were able to empathise with ward members on the issues that overspill parking caused to residents.

It was acknowledged that the Parking Service needed better relationships with the Police and other services to enable them to continue to address and provide solutions on parking issues across the city.

The Chair thanked the officers for the report and their attendance at the meeting.

RECOMMENDED – To note and consider the contents of the report.

7 Sources of Work

This item was considered alongside Agenda Item 10 – Work Programme.

8 Work Programme

This item was considered alongside Agenda Item 9 – Sources of Work.

The report of the Head of Democratic Services set out a draft work schedule for the Environment, Housing & Communities Scrutiny Board which was presented at Appendix 1 for consideration and discussion. Reflected in the work schedule were known items of scrutiny activity, such as performance and budget monitoring, identified Budget and Policy Framework items and recommendation tracking.

Members were invited to look at the reports discussed and contact either the Chair or the PSA with regards to any areas of potential work.

Members were asked to further consider the draft inquiry report regarding the Anti-Social Use of Fireworks (Appendix 3). It was noted that formal agreement of the report must take place at a meeting of the Scrutiny Board that is held in accordance with the 1972 Local Government Act. However, members were asked to agree any amendments and recommend publication of a final version once formal approval is provided at the next suitable meeting.

RECOMMENDED– To

- a) Consider and discuss the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the 2021/22 municipal year.
- b) Consider the draft inquiry report relating to the Anti-Social Use of Fireworks (Appendix 3) with a view to a final version being formally approved at the next Scrutiny meeting held in accordance with the 1972 Local Government Act.

9 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RECOMMENDED – To note the date and time of the next meeting as 15th July 2021, at 10.30 am (there will be a pre-meet for members at 10 am)

The meeting concluded at 12:50