

SCRUTINY BOARD (INFRASTRUCTURE, INVESTMENT & INCLUSIVE GROWTH)

WEDNESDAY, 15TH JUNE, 2022

PRESENT: Councillor P Truswell in the Chair

Councillors P Alderson, N Buckley,
M Foster, J Garvani, S Hamilton,
A Hussain, W Kidger, M Shahzad,
N Sharpe and I Wilson

1 **APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no appeals.

2 **Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public**

There were no exemptions.

3 **Late Items**

There were no late items.

4 **Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

5 **Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes**

The following apologies were noted:

- Cllr J Pryor (Executive Member) in relation to item 9
- Jonathan Moxon (Flood Risk Manager) in relation to item 10

6 **Minutes - 6 April 2022**

The minutes of the 6 April 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

The Chair confirmed that the KSI Inquiry Report, referred to in minute 71, would be considered at the meeting of the Board on 13 July 2022.

7 **Terms of Reference**

Members noted the 2022/23 Terms of Reference for the five Scrutiny Boards, as agreed at the Annual General Meeting of Council on 26 May 2022.

8 **Co-Opted Members**

The Board considered the provision to appoint co-opt members to the Scrutiny Board. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Board would not seek to appoint co-opted members at this time.

9 **Performance Report**

Members considered a summary of progress towards a suite of key performance indicators (KPIs), reflecting the ambitions of the Best Council

Plan and relevant to the remit of the Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth Scrutiny Board.

The information reflected performance in quarter 4 of 2021/22 or, where that was not available, the most up to date information.

The following attended the Scrutiny Board for this discussion:

Cllr Helen Hayden – Executive Member
Martin Farrington – Director, City Development
Tim Rollett – Intelligence and Performance Manager
Eve Roodhouse – Head of Economic Policy
Gary Bartlett – Chief Office, Transportation and Highways
Heather Davies – Principal Planning Policy Officer

The updated format of the performance report was discussed. Members were advised that current KPIs are being reviewed following the recent adoption of the Best City Ambition. Tim Rollett advised the Board that he is intending to discuss the initial outcomes of the performance review (revised set of KPIs and proposed changes to the report format) with Scrutiny Board Chairs.

Members noted the importance of presenting contextual historical data to enable members to identify trends and to make meaningful comparisons between different years. Members highlighted the benefits of including comparative data from Core Cities and statistical neighbours where possible.

Martin Farrington provided an overview of performance data as set out in Appendix 1 of the Performance Update, including indicators such as employment in Leeds, business survival rates, delivery of affordable homes and the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions.

The following matters were discussed by the Board:

- **New Business Start Ups** (KPI 4): Clarity was sought about the method of determining the figures for new start-ups. The Board also discussed the impact on start-up rates of Covid restrictions at the start of the year and ongoing economic volatility.
- **Visitor Economic Impact** (KPI 8): Members sought further information about predicted rates of economic recovery in Leeds. In response, Eve Roodhouse highlighted a strong recovery in occupancy rates reported by Leeds Hotels and Venues Association, an increase in conference bookings and significant additional traffic to the Visit Leeds website. Trends in footfall at Leeds railway station were considered, as were vacancy rates for retail outlets in the city centre. It was noted that there is still work to be done to support some demographic groups to return to the city centre.

Clarity was sought about the impact of Covid-related grants on the local economy. Martin Farrington agreed to confirm the value of grants distributed to the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors.

- **Number of affordable homes delivered (KPI 13):** The Board discussed the current number of new build homes in development and the anticipated dates of delivery. The challenges of land availability, procurement and viability were considered. Board members sought clarity as to the distinction between an annual target for delivery and the target relating to a historic backlog in delivery. Members were reassured that levels of foreseeable developments suggest Leeds will make 'in roads' into the backlog over the next three years.

The Board was advised that there will be two Local Plan Updates in the Autumn, one of which will specifically address affordable housing. The Council also intends to initiate a new strategic housing market assessment.

The Board expressed concern about current levels of social housing given demand in the city. Members sought further detail about current performance in relation to requirements for all new build housing developments to have 30% accessible and adaptable and 2% wheelchair accessible properties.

It was agreed that the draft Delivery Partnership Plan will come back to the Scrutiny Board for consideration. It was also agreed that Helen Davies will confirm the number of properties purchased through the Right-to-Buy programme by ward.

CIlr Kidger left the meeting at 11.28am.

- **Number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions (KSI 17):** The Board's long-standing interest in this performance indicator was outlined. The Chair confirmed that the final version of the 2021/22 inquiry report into the prevention of deaths and serious injury on Leeds roads will be considered by the Scrutiny Board in July. Gary Bartlett updated the Board on action taken to progress the adoption of 'Vision Zero' in Leeds. Members requested further information about how to access Connecting Leeds updates and communication.

RESOLVED:

The Board resolved that:

- The contents of the report be noted.
- The Principal Scrutiny Advisor will liaise with the Director of City Development to identify the most appropriate way in which the Board can consider draft Delivery Partnership Plan.

- The following additional information should be provided to the Board:
 - a) The value of Government grants distributed during the pandemic to the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors.
 - b) The number of right-to-buy sales by ward in 2020/21 and 2021/22.
 - c) Current performance in relation to requirements for all new build housing developments to have 30% accessible and adaptable and 2% wheelchair accessible properties.
 - d) Links through which members can receive information from Connecting Leeds

10 Referral to Scrutiny: Flood Risk Management (Kirkstall - Cllr Illingworth)

The Scrutiny Board considered a Referral to Scrutiny in the name of Cllr John Illingworth about the impact of aspects of Flood Alleviation Scheme 2 (FAS2) on Kirkstall residents.

The following people were in attendance for this item:

Cllr Helen Hayden - Executive Member
Martin Farrington - Director of City Development
Richard Dennis - Civil Engineering Manager
Peter Charlesworth - Project Principal, BMMJV

Richard Dennis delivered a presentation providing an overview of the background to FAS1 and FAS2. The presentation highlighted the impact of the 2015 Boxing Day floods and the potential economic impact of such an event occurring in Leeds during the working week.

The Scrutiny Board was provided with the background to the phased approach to flood risk management adopted by Leeds City Council after 2015. The presentation included examples of cutting-edge technology such as moveable weirs, linear defences, and a flood storage area at Calverley, as well as natural flood management within the catchment of the River Aire.

Cllr Illingworth outlined his concerns about aspects of the FAS2 scheme in Kirkstall, which he proposed could offer scope for future learning and potentially strengthen aspects of the current programme.

Cllr Illingworth highlighted three general concerns about FAS2:

- **Flood storage:** Impact on the city's overall flood storage capacity given the decision not to progress with proposals for storage at Rodley.
- **Sheet Steel Piling:** Impact of the use of sheet steel piling on biodiversity.
- **Green space:** A lost opportunity to release more green space in densely populated parts of the inner city by displacing economic activity to less populated areas.

Cllr Illingworth requested that further consideration be given to specific aspects of the scheme that have a direct impact on Kirkstall:

- **Flood storage capacity:** Cllr Illingworth requested confirmation as to whether additional capacity has been identified to compensate for the "loss" of proposed storage at Rodley.
- **Kirkstall Meadows:** Concerns were raised about the impact of retaining three rugby pitches in close proximity to a nature reserve.
- **Kirkstall Valley Farm and the adjacent allotment:** Cllr Illingworth raised concern that new flood management mechanisms could increase the flood risk for the farm and allotments, potentially resulting in the contamination of the land with raw sewage and thereby risking the farm's organic certification.
- **Flow control structure at Kirkstall Abbey:** Reassurance was sought about the appearance and value for money that will be provided by a new flow controller at Kirkstall Abbey.

Richard Dennis responded by noting that the current flow control mechanism at Kirkstall Abbey is not suitable as a modern-day flood management asset. However, he reassured the Board that the current controller will be retained as a historical asset. The Board was informed Government funding allocated to FAS2 cannot be used for other purposes within a locality.

Officers clarified that there is an increased risk of flood depth at Kirkstall Valley Farm, as opposed to an increase in flood risk. The increase in flood depth would only occur when that land is already in flood. It is forecast that there would be no difference in flood depth during a 1 in 10-year event. During a 1 in 200-year event the difference in depth would be 150mm at a point when the site is already experiencing depths of between 750mm and 1.5m.

The Scrutiny Board was advised that substantial consultation took place about plans for additional flood storage in Rodley. In response to significant community concern about the potential impact on Rodley nature reserve, the Executive Board chose not to progress with flood storage proposals.

In response to proposals for a 'managed retreat' from flood zones in Kirkstall, officers noted that such an approach would not have met the Government criteria for funding in the aftermath of the 2015 flood event. The Government required a flood prevention scheme and the Council secured £160m for its subsequent flood risk management proposals.

Officers confirmed that FAS2 will protect 1,048 properties and 370 existing businesses, and will unlock 1,613 new homes. The scheme has been scrutinised by Defra Executive Commission, Environment Agency Major Projects Team and Her Majesty's Treasury. In all instances it has been assessed as providing good value for money.

Martin Farrington noted that Kirkstall Meadows is currently laid out as rugby pitches and is in private ownership. The Environment Agency regards playing pitches as compatible with flood zones. However, historically flooding has contaminated the land making three of five pitches unsuitable for use. Sport England was a statutory consultee with regards to the two pitches still in use. It is intended that part of the site will continue to be used as sports pitches.

Officer reassured the Scrutiny Board that where possible FAS2 aims to maximise opportunities to improve the local environment. Professor Sir John Lawton, Chair of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, has been part of the programme Board.

Residential and commercial property damage in Kirkstall in 2015 was considered, along with the emotional impact for people living and working in the area. Consideration was given to SMEs who face prohibitively expensive insurance premiums. It was noted that FAS1 provides evidence of the positive impact of effective flood risk management on insurance premiums.

The Executive Member suggested that for every £1 spent on protecting a property £5 is saved in renovation and clean-up costs, as well as early intervention delivering carbon savings and reducing insurance premiums.

Otley FAS scheme was highlighted as an example of how protective interventions can deliver substantial benefits to local people.

Officers reiterated that FAS2 is an integrated programme of interventions that stretch along the whole of the River Aire's catchment area. In 2015 almost 3,000 residential properties within the catchment area were affected by flooding.

The Scrutiny Board was provided with information about the natural flood management measures incorporated into FAS2, including the planting of two million trees.

It was the view of the Executive Member that it would not provide good value for money at this stage to re-engage external modelling experts to meet with Cllr Illingworth and officers to further test elements of the scheme that are in progress and fully funded.

It was proposed that some of the principles of concern discussed at the meeting might be applied when the Board considers other schemes, including those presented within the Annual Flood Risk Management Report.

RESOLVED:

- That further scrutiny of this specific issue will not be scheduled within the current work programme.

11 Sources of Work

The report from the Head of Democratic Services was noted by the Board and considered in conjunction with item 13.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

12 Work Schedule

RESOLVED –

- That the work programme be agreed.
- That an update be requested for Board members on the Council's response to Covid-19 and the action taken to support the city's recovery, set within the context of delivering inclusive growth and tackling persistent inequalities (with the format of the update to be determined through consultation between officers and the Chair).

13 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Board will take place at 10am on 13 July 2022.