

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

MONDAY, 20TH APRIL, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors A Blackburn, A Castle,
B Cleasby, D Coupar, D Hollingsworth,
G Hyde, G Kirkland and M Rafique

113 Chair's Opening Remarks

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

114 Declarations of Interest

The following personal interests were declared:-

- Councillor B Anderson in his capacity as a Director of West North West Homes (Agenda Item 9) (Minute 120 refers)
- Councillor A Blackburn in her capacity as a Director of West North West Homes (Agenda Item 9) (Minute 120 refers)
- Councillor B Cleasby in his capacity as a Lead Member for the Central and Corporate portfolio (Agenda Item 9) (Minute 120 refers)
- Councillor D Coupar in her capacity as a member on the Belle Isle North Estate Management Board (Agenda Item 9) (Minute 120 refers) and as a Member on Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care) (Agenda Item 12) (Minute 123 refers)
- Councillor D Hollingsworth in his capacity as a Director of East North East Homes (Agenda Item 9) (Minute 120 refers)
- Councillor G Hyde in his capacity as a Director of East North East Homes and as a Member on the Licensing Committee (Item 9) (Minute 120 refers)

115 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor A Gabriel, Councillor L Mulherin and Councillor J Marjoram.

116 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

117 Matters Arising from the Minutes

(a) Miscellaneous Properties (Minute 107 refers)

The Chair referred to the above issue and informed the meeting that, in the absence of Councillor Marjoram, he would like to pass on his request that the Council seeks external legal advice when renewing the leases for miscellaneous properties.

Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, who was in attendance, acknowledged this request.

(b) Inquiry into EASEL – Draft Terms of Reference (Minute 110 refers)

The Chair referred to the above issue and informed the meeting that following a request by the Board, a letter had been sent to the Chairs of the Central and Corporate Functions Scrutiny Board and Corporate Governance and Audit Committee.

It was noted that the Central and Corporate Functions Scrutiny Board had considered the request for it to look into the procurement arrangements for EASEL and had recommended that this should be taken up by the new Board during the new municipal year.

118 Executive Board Minutes

RESOLVED – That the Executive Board minutes of the meetings held on 4th March 2009 and 1st April 2009 be received and noted.

119 Enforcement of Dog Fouling

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report presenting a monthly update on the enforcement of dog fouling across the city.

Stacey Campbell, Service Manager was in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments.

In summary, specific reference was made to the following issues as clarification to questions raised:-

- clarification as to why there had been low levels of fixed penalty notices issued in comparison to the high numbers of service requests in February 2009
(The Service Manager responded to advise that Fixed Penalty Notices issued would always be lower in comparison with other types of service requests dealt with by dog wardens and outlined the difficulties in gathering evidence to issue notices as well as highlighting the other service pressures, with particular reference to stray dogs. It was agreed that the monthly update report would be revised for the new municipal year to provide a breakdown of the various service requests made)
- the concerns expressed about the lack of enforcement to prevent dog fouling and the need for more flexible working and effective monitoring in hotspot areas
(The Service Manager responded and confirmed that such issues would be addressed under the service review, which was requested by Scrutiny following its recent inquiry into dog fouling enforcement, however Fixed Penalty Notices were issued and paid and prosecutions did take place on a regular basis)
- clarification of the action taken by the Council in introducing dog bins at 'hot spots' throughout the city

(Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer, who was in attendance, outlined the current protocol explaining that these bins were the responsibility of Parks and Countryside)

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- (b) That this Board conveys it's thanks to the staff within the Dog Warden Service for their continuing efforts in this area.

(Councillor B Cleasby joined the meeting at 10.10am during discussions of the above item)

120 Performance Report Quarter 3 2008/09

The Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement submitted a report regarding the Quarter 3 performance indicators (PIs) in respect of Environment and Neighbourhoods. The report and appendices charted progress against targets across the raft of individual performance indicators in this area, and highlighted areas of under-performance and/or concern in relation to improvement priorities and actions being taken to remedy matters.

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:-

Councillor L Carter, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing
Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer
Debra Scott, Head of Service Improvement

For ease of reference, the Chair went through the appendices page by page, inviting Board Members to comment on those areas of under performance and/or concern.

In summary, specific reference was made to the following issues as clarification to questions raised:-

Corporate Balanced Scorecard 2008/09 Issues

- Value for Money / Resources (PI Ref BSC-8) – clarification as to what actions were being taking to improve on this indicator in relation to paying undisputed invoices on time
- *(At the request of the Chair, Councillor B Cleasby in his capacity as Lead Member, Central and Corporate portfolio, outlined the Council's current position on ensuring the payment of invoices.*

Environmental and Neighbourhoods Quarter 3 2008-09 Update

- PI Ref NI 16 'Serious acquisitive crime rate per 1,000 population' – the concerns expressed that North West Leeds had seen the largest increase in offences and the requirement for this data to be supplied to the relevant Area Committees
(The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing responded and agreed that this data should be forwarded to Area Committees. The

Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods agreed to feed this issue back to the Area Managers for appropriate action)

- PI Ref NI 18 'adult re-offending rates for those under probation supervision' – clarification of whether the department was any further in gathering relevant data for this indicator
(The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing responded by explaining that whilst the data was not available at the time of reporting, the Council had now received draft data and requested the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to supply the Board with this information and to copy in the Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement Team on the response)
- PI Ref NI 39 'rate of hospital admissions per 100,000 for Alcohol Related Harm' – the need for the Primary Care Trusts to supply the missing data to a future Board meeting
(The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods responded and agreed to consult with the Director of Public Health to supply this information)
- PI Ref NI 158 '% of non-decent council homes' – the concerns expressed about the apparent downward trend and the reasons behind this
(The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing and the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods responded and it was noted that such figures would continue to vary as they were based around assumptions in view of the fact that the decency programme does not involve whole house improvements. It was highlighted that the Council was still on track in meeting its target.)
- the need for the Board to be supplied with data in relation to burglaries and the impact this has had on the costs to insurers. Links were also made between burglaries and drug use and further information around treatment services for drug users was requested.
(The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods responded and agreed to supply the relevant information to the Board)
- PI Ref NI 196 'improved street and environmental cleanliness through reducing levels of fly tipping whilst increasing levels of enforcement activity' – the need for the Board to be supplied with data from the previous year
(The Chief Environmental Service Officer responded and agreed to supply the relevant data to the Board. The Board also noted that changes to recording practices had increased the level of reporting for fly tipping)
- PI Ref NI 184 'food establishments in the area which are broadly compliant with food hygiene law' – clarification of how the Board could obtain more data in this area and how this linked into the licensing of premises
(The Chief Environmental Services Officer responded and informed the Board that this was a new indicator and therefore further work was being undertaken around base lines. In terms of the licensing issue, he agreed to provide Board Members with a more detailed explanation of how inspection data influenced the Council's licensing function)
- PI Ref NI 193 'kilograms of residual household waste collected per household / percentage of municipal waste land filled' – clarification as to why the department does not provide residents with a second brown bin and feedback to-date in relation to the fortnightly collection pilot

(The Chief Environmental Services Officer responded and outlined the reasons why the department did not provide a second brown bin. The Board noted that the fortnightly collection pilot was working resulting in more recycling and less residual waste. However, in relation to the level of green bin contamination, he agreed to provide further details to the Board)

- PI Ref NI 33A 'number of deliberate primary fires per 10,000 population' – concern was expressed about the high number of missing data around the national fire indicators

(The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods responded and informed the Board that work was continuing with the fire service on those specific issues raised. He agreed to come back to the Board with an update in due course)

- the need for education awareness to be promoted on fire safety by the new Board in the new municipal year and for leaflets to be distributed to residents warning them of dangerous electrical appliances e.g. deep fat fryers etc
- PI Ref LKI -CS8A 'addressing domestic violence by (a) increase the number of reported incidents of domestic violence' – the need for the department to continue working with the Police to understand how reported incidents were being captured, recorded and reported.
- PI Ref LKI -CS8B 'addressing domestic violence by (b) reduce repeat victimisation as a proportion of reported domestic violence incidents' – clarification of how the targets were set and whether they were seen as a challenge
- PI Ref LKI -HAS 11 'number of sanctuary installations completed' –the Board acknowledged the links between this indicator and its impact on the numbers of acceptances for violence and harassment levels
- PI Ref LKI -RC1 'number of household collections missed per 100,000 collections' – clarification of how the department intended to resolve this ongoing problem

(The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods responded and commented on the problems associated with missed bin collections to-date around such issues as strike action (i.e. work to rule), snow and icy conditions etc)

- the need to address the issue of mechanical breakdowns in respect of refuse vehicles
(The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods responded and agreed to investigate this issue further)

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- (b) That this Board also notes and welcomes those areas where continued improvements had been made and conveys its thanks to the staff who had contributed to such achievements.

(Councillor M Rafique left the meeting at 10.25am during discussions of the above item)

(Councillor A Castle left the meeting at 11.25am at the conclusion of the above item)

121 Update on the Supporting People Programme

Referring to Minute 68 of the meeting held on 8th December 2008, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report presenting a quarterly update on the Supporting People Programme.

Debbie Forward, Supporting People Manager was in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments.

Board Members sought clarification on whether there was a scheme under the supporting people programme to support work with prolific offenders.

The Supporting People Manager responded and confirmed that the Supporting People Programme does support offenders to address their housing needs and that Sheffield Hallam University were conducting research to capture the impact of such services and the wider benefits. The Board also noted that the level of funding allocated to Leeds for housing related support services would reduce by £1 million in 2010/11 and therefore this saving would need to be found from existing services. In view of the efficiencies already achieved to date, the Board acknowledged the challenge of achieving this additional saving through the application of value for money measures without compromising service quality.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted and welcomed.

122 Young People's Scrutiny Forum Report - 'Protecting Our Environment'

The Head of Scrutiny Support and Member Development submitted a report presenting the report of the Young People's Scrutiny Forum entitled 'Protecting Our Environment'.

The Board specifically acknowledged the reports findings around waste management, environmental education and sustainability.

Laura Nield, Scrutiny Advisor, presented the report and responded to Members' queries and comments.

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

- clarification of whether the Forum had received the Board's previous recommendations in relation to waste management, environmental education and sustainability
- the need to congratulate the young people on their sterling work in this area
- to endorse 'Recommendation 4' within the Forum's report in relation to the Council undertaking more work in promoting the idea of 'reducing and re-using' as well as recycling
- clarification of the age and composition of the Young People's Scrutiny Forum

- clarification if Elected Members had been consulted on the report findings and to encourage, in future, more direct liaison with ward members, especially when seeking advice on green issues etc
- the need to work together with the Children's Services Board and the young people to monitor the implementation of the Forum's recommendation and to involve both the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and the Chief Executive of Education Leeds in this process
(The Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser responded and agreed to follow up this issue)

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- (b) That the Forum's final report and recommendations be noted.
- (c) That approval be given to monitor progress in implementing those recommendations which fall within the Environment and Neighbourhoods portfolio, in conjunction with the Leeds Youth Council Scrutiny Panel.

123 Current Work Programme

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

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/comment of the meeting:-

- Current work programme (Appendix 1 refers)
- Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st April 2009 to 31st July 2009 (Appendix 2 refers)

The Chair informed the meeting that he had received a letter from Councillor J Chapman, Chair of Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board, requesting that the Board investigates and monitors the current situation regarding Roseville Doors, as concerns were raised during the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board on 11th March 2009.

Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that this issue would be put into the work programme as unscheduled pending the agreement of the successor Board to take this matter forward in the new municipal year.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.

124 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 11th May 2009 at 10.00 am (Pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.30 am)

(The meeting concluded at 11.50am)