

## SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

MONDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2009

**PRESENT:** Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors A Blackburn, A Castle,  
R Downes, J Dowson, G Hyde, J Jarosz,  
J Marjoram and M Rafique

### 31 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance at today's meeting and welcomed Councillor Jane Dowson to her first meeting of Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods).

### 32 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Hollingsworth, Councillor K Hussain and Councillor Mulherin. The Chair also announced that Councillor Jarosz would be arriving late due to a prior engagement.

### 33 Declarations of Interest

The following personal interests were declared:

- Councillor B Anderson in his capacity as a Director of West North West Homes (Agenda Items 8 & 9 – Minutes 36 & 37 refer).
- Councillor A Blackburn in her capacity as a Director of West North West Homes (Agenda Items 8 & 9 - Minutes 36 & 37 refer). The Councillor also declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 12 (Minute 40 refers) in view of her husband's capacity as Chair of Roseville Enterprises Advisory Group.
- Councillor A Castle in her capacity as a member of West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Authority (Agenda Item 8 – Performance Indicators 22 & 23 - Minute 36 refers).
- Councillor G Hyde in his capacity as a Director of East North East Homes (Agenda 8 & 9 – Minutes 36 & 37 refer). The Councillor also declared a personal interest in his capacity as a member of the Licensing Committee (Agenda Item 8 – Performance Indicator 17 (NI184) - Minute 36 refers).

### 34 Minutes and Matters Arising - 13th July 2009

The Chair confirmed that the additional information requested by the Board at the last meeting, as detailed in Minute numbers 25, 26 and 29, had been provided to Board Members and that no further action was required.

**RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2009 be approved as a correct record.

### 35 Executive Board Minutes

**RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the Executive Board meetings held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July and 26<sup>th</sup> August 2009 be received and noted.

## 36 Quarter 1 Performance Report 2009/10

The Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement submitted a report presenting the key areas of under performance at the end of Quarter 1 (1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009).

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents:

- Appendix 1 – Environment & Neighbourhoods 2009/10 – Quarter 1
- Appendix 2 – Updated 2008/09 Year End Results

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

- Councillor J Monaghan, Executive Member for Environmental Services
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer
- Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer
- Superintendent Simon Whitehead, Leeds Area Community Safety

An apology for absence was conveyed on behalf of Councillor J L Carter, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods & Housing.

The Chair informed Officers that Steve Clough, Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement Team had attended the pre-meeting to give Members a brief overview of the Quarter 1 performance data.

The Chair invited Board Members to comment on those areas of specific interest within the performance indicators. A general discussion ensued around the Council's performance for reducing residual household waste with references made to the fortnightly SORT pilot; the preparations in place for the food waste collection pilot and plans for future residual waste facilities. It was also noted that a report was due to be considered by the Executive Board in October around improving the recycling infrastructure.

In brief, the main issues raised were:-

- BP-05C – Rent collection by the Local Authority as a proportion of rents owed on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings.
  - Members sought clarification of the difficulties in getting the 1% increase in order to achieve the 97.50% target. In acknowledging that a provisional target was still to be agreed, Members also questioned whether ALMOs would be seeking to reduce this target. (In response, Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer, informed the meeting that in view of the current economic climate, the current performance was considered to be positive. However, every effort was being made to encourage ALMOs to push to achieve a good performance rate. Ongoing work was progressing with the ALMOs to understand the impact of the current economic climate and what effect this was having on rent collection. The department are now

looking at best practice from other local authorities within the region that had achieved positive results in rent collection.

- NI16 – Serious acquisitive crime rate
  - Members sought clarification on the figures relating to the acquisitive crime rate.  
(In response, Superintendent Simon Whitehead, Leeds Area Community Safety explained that this particular indicator takes account of a number of different offences which make up the serious acquisitive crime rate. Whilst domestic burglary offences had recorded the biggest increase (up 30%) it was noted that these figures had now started to fall as a result of more intensive management programmes and improved data sharing mechanisms).
  
- NI152 – Working age people on out of work benefits
  - Members expressed concern over the six month time lag for receiving the Department of Works & Pensions (DWP) data.  
(In response, Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods explained that the Council collates its own local intelligence data but the Data Commission only recognised the official figures produced by the DWP in the performance indicators. The Director informed the meeting that that he had no problem with future performance reports making reference to this additional local data as part of the commentary.

The Board requested that they receive monthly unemployment figures, for both male and female unemployed and, broken down into Council wards .
  
- PI LKI-HAS4 – Number of homeless acceptances made in the year
  - Members requested further details of the homeless prevention work being undertaken by the Council.  
(In response, Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer gave a brief update and agreed to provide information about the approach taken by the Council).
  
- NI158 - % non-decent council homes
  - Clarification was sought on whether the figures included houses currently under appraisal, with particular reference made to housing within the Chapletown area.  
(In response, Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer explained that such housing would be included in the figures pending the conclusion of the appraisal).
  
- NI 32 – Repeat incidents of domestic violence
  - Members noted that a baseline figure had not been included for this indicator and requested that this be rectified.
  
- NI 184 – Food establishments broadly compliant with food hygiene law
  - It was noted that the Council had successfully applied for a £33,000 grant from the Food Standards Agency to assist businesses in

completing their Food Safety Management Plan to comply with the new law.

- NI 28 / NI 29 – Knife crime rate and Gun crime rate
  - Whilst the Board acknowledged that both of these indicators were new and that datasets had only recently been pulled together, Members requested that comparative data be provided to the Board to illustrate the recent trends in performance.

The Chair thanked Councillor Monaghan and Officers for their attendance.

**RESOLVED -**

- (a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- (b) That the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods be requested to provide the Board with monthly unemployment figures, for both male and female unemployed and, broken down into Council wards .
- (c) That the Chief Housing Services Officer provide Board Members with further information on the Council's homeless prevention work.
- (d) That this Scrutiny Board notes, with sadness, the sudden death of Jas Panesar, East North East Homes and wishes to place on record their sincere appreciation for his past services to the Authority.

- Note:
- (a) Councillor M Rafique joined the meeting at 10.10 a.m. during discussions on the above item.
  - (b) Councillor J Jarosz joined the meeting at 10.50 a.m. during discussions on the above item.
  - (c) During consideration of NI 184 Food establishments indicated above, Councillor G Hyde declared a personal interest in his capacity as a member of the Licensing Committee.

**37 Inquiry into Street Cleaning - Formal Response**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report presenting the formal response to the Board's inquiry into Street Cleaning.

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents:

- Appendix 1 – Street Cleaning – Scrutiny Inquiry Report.
- Appendix 2 – Environment & Neighbourhoods – Chart detailing the response of the Directorate.

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

- Councillor J Monaghan, Executive Member for Environmental Services
- Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer

The Board welcomed the responses to their recommendations.

Members sought clarification on the Council's budget for replacing and providing more street bins.

In response, the Executive Member for Environmental Services informed the meeting that a great many bins were lost due to vandalism and it was proposed that this would be looked at in terms of the budget for next year.

Board Members also sought clarification with regard to Recommendation 1 on when the piece of research around the wider implications of having one single service area responsible for keeping land clear of litter and refuse would be completed and brought back to Scrutiny for consideration.

Whilst the formal response made it clear that the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods did not envisage that this recommendation would include any of the contained land owned by the Council such as parks and school grounds, the Board reiterated the importance of ensuring that there were clear lines of accountability for all pieces of land and that any land not clearly assigned to a park or school should, by default, become the responsibility of the proposed single service area.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance.

**RESOLVED** - That the report and appendices and the comments now made, be noted.

### **38 Inquiry into Recycling - Draft Terms of Reference**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report and draft terms of reference for the Board's forthcoming inquiry into Recycling.

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

- Councillor J Monaghan, Executive Member for Environmental Services
- Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer

The Executive Board Member for Environmental Services informed the meeting that he was happy with the draft terms of reference but suggested the Board also makes specific reference to looking at the range of materials currently recyclable at the household waste sorting sites and bring sites and whether there was scope to expand the range.

Councillor Monaghan also informed the meeting that he had met with Friends of the Earth who were interested in the inquiry and requested that the Board looked into the option for collecting items for reuse at the household waste sorting sites.

As part of the inquiry, Councillor Monaghan also requested that the Board look at setting priorities on any of its recommendations for additional recycling facilities.

**RESOLVED** - That, subject to the inclusion of the Executive Board Member's comments above, approval be given to the terms of reference for the Board's forthcoming inquiry into Recycling.

### **39 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:-

- Appendix 1 - Current work programme
- Appendix 2 – Relevant extract of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31 December 2009.

The Chair gave a brief update on the work programme and on the key changes made to the work programme relating to the timetable for the EASEL inquiry which had slipped as a result of the timing and scope of the neighbourhood planning exercises being reviewed in light of the recession and that the proposed review around enforcement management had been removed from the work programme as Members initial concerns related to the City Development portfolio.

In relation to the unscheduled items, the Board sought clarification on whether the Councillor J L Carter, the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing had spoken with the ALMOs yet to clarify what the scope of any ALMO Management Review would be before this was considered by Scrutiny Board (Environment & Neighbourhoods).

Members noted that a further report regarding the future options for Council Housing was due to be considered by the Executive Board in October 2009 and Members requested a copy of the report as soon as the information became available.

**RESOLVED** - That the contents of the report, its appendices and the comments now made, be noted.

### **40 Roseville Door Factory Closure**

The Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods submitted a report presenting an update on the Roseville Door Factory closure.

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

- Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer
- Sandie Keene, Director of Adult Social Services
- Anna Clifford, Business Change Project Manager
- Alex Watson, Human Resources Manager
- Sarah Tostevin, Human Resources Manager

A long discussion ensued and Board Members were happy with the progress reported regarding the redeployment of the 36 staff from the Roseville Door Factory into mainstream jobs and placements across the Council.

The key issues raised were as follows:

- That all 27 disabled staff employed at Roseville Door Factory had their skills profiles directed to the weekly Redeployment Board. Members received a summary of the posts, placements and pilot schemes now identified for these members of staff.
- That the non-disabled staff at the factory would formally enter Managing Workforce Change from 1st October 2009.
- That mainstreaming disabled staff with high support needs raises challenges and risks which need to be strategically managed. However, there was a need to move away from the traditional route of segregated support services for disabled staff.
- That the Council needs to think more strategically about pathways into mainstream employment as part of its overall Disability Employment Strategy.
- That a simplified route of access to specialist support resources would increase the speed, quality and take up of the support that was available.

Members agreed that no further Scrutiny action be taken by this Board and that a formal response be submitted back to Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care) highlighting the Board's satisfaction on this matter.

The Chair thanked those officers who had undertaken the task of redeploying the 36 staff in such a professional manner and for their attendance at today's meeting.

#### **RESOLVED -**

- (a) That the contents of the report and the comments now made be noted.
- (b) That a formal response be submitted to Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care) highlighting the Board's satisfaction on this matter.

#### **41 Inquiry into Asylum Seeker Case Resolution - Formal Response**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report presenting the formal response to the Board's earlier inquiry into Asylum Seeker Case Resolution.

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents:

- Appendix 1 – Asylum Seeker Case Resolution – Scrutiny Inquiry Report
- Appendix 2 - Chart detailing the response of the Directorate.

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

- Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer
- Sharon Hague, Asylum Services Manager

Sharon Hague, Asylum Services Manager explained that many of the recommendations had either been implemented or in the process of being implemented.

It was also reported that the baseline data indicated in Recommendation 1 had been received by the department eight days ago. Members requested that they be provided with a copy of that data.

In brief, the main issues raised were in relation to Recommendation 6. It was highlighted that the Council had now provided UK Border Agency with all the necessary information regarding its National Assistance Act and Children's Act cases that require resolution (83 in total). Whilst three of those cases had now been resolved, a further thirteen were expected to be resolved quickly. The Board learned that the UK Border Agency had refused to give an indicative timeframe for resolving the remaining cases due to other priorities. Members were concerned about the lack of commitment shown by the UK Border Agency to resolve those cases and agreed to take the matter up with UK Border Agency and the Minister of Immigration.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance.

**RESOLVED -**

- (a) That the report and appendices be noted.
- (b) That a copy of the baseline data be submitted to Board Members.
- (c) That the Chair writes to the UK Border Agency and Minister of Immigration on behalf of the Scrutiny Board in relation to the above matter.

**42 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-Meeting at 9.30 a.m.).

Scrutiny Board Members requested that a reminder be sent out via email regarding the change of date of the next meeting which was to take place on a Friday instead of the usual Monday.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 a.m.