

SCRUTINY BOARD (NEIGHBOURHOODS AND HOUSING)

WEDNESDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER, 2006

PRESENT: Councillor R Pryke in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, P Ewens, A Gabriel,
G Hyde, M Phillips, M Rafique and
D Schofield

42 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed those present to the November meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing.)

43 LATE ITEMS

The Board agreed to admit the minutes of the Thriving Communities Corporate Priority Board as a late item onto the agenda for consideration. Officers reported that the minutes had not been available at the time of agenda despatch but had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Members declared personal / prejudicial interests for the purpose of Section 81 (3) of the Local Government Act 2000 and paragraphs 8 to 13 of the Members Code of Conduct:

Councillor P Ewens – Declared a personal interest as a Member of Leeds North West ALMO Board (Minute no. 52 refers.)

Councillor A Gabriel – Declared a personal interest as the Chair of the Beeston Hill and Holbeck Regeneration Board (Minute no. 49 refers.)

Councillor D Schofield – Declared a personal interest as a Director of South East Leeds ALMO Board (Minute no. 52 refers.)

45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armitage and Atkinson.

46 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 11TH OCTOBER 2006

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th October 2006 be approved as a correct record.

47 MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 9TH OCTOBER 2006

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting held on 9th October 2006 be noted.

48 MINUTES - EXECUTIVE BOARD - 18TH OCTOBER 2006

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 18th October 2006 be noted.

49 HOUSING BASED REGENERATION IN BEESTON HILL AND HOLBECK - PARTNERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUNDING ISSUES

(Councillor Hyde joined the meeting at 10:05 am, at the commencement of consideration of this item.)

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing submitted a report which provided Members with further information on the regeneration of Beeston Hill and Holbeck, with particular emphasis on partnership infrastructure and funding and resources. The report was intended to supplement the tour of the area that had been undertaken by the Board prior to the September 2006 meeting.

Mark Ireland, Service Manager, Neighbourhoods and Housing, John Bracewell, Neighbourhood Renewal Manager, Neighbourhoods and Housing and Steve Williamson, Chief Executive of *Re'new* attended the meeting to present the report and respond to Members' questions and comments.

The Board heard that *Re'new* had been involved with the regeneration work in Beeston Hill and Holbeck for the past seven to eight years. This period had seen increased partnership working, new investment and examples of community engagement that were considered to be second to none in the city as a whole. Whilst considerable progress had been made, there was still much work required to take the project forward, including improving and extending partnership working and securing further private sector investment.

Members went on to discuss the following issues in relation to the scheme:

- The benefits of construction companies involved in the regeneration project employing local labour, particularly school leavers as apprentices;
- The work of *Construction Leeds* in promoting jobs, skills and training in the local area following the receipt of European funding;
- Progress made in the bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government for PFI credits and the other strategies in place should the bid prove unsuccessful;
- The financial cost of the project up to this point;
- The status of the planning application for Shaftesbury House and the view that renovation of this prominent landmark would provide further impetus to the regeneration of the area and confidence of the local community;
- The need to engage all sections of the local community in measures to tackle crime in the area;
- Recently undertaken initiatives to remove abandoned bricks and rubble from the area which had previously been used by individuals seeking to cause criminal damage;
- Progress made in conjunction with the Police towards tackling the problems of prostitution and drug dealing;
- The role that the new school in the area would play in working towards improved community cohesion;
- The long-term nature of the regeneration programme which had begun with the facelift to Tempest Road as a statement of intent.

The Chair thanked Officers for their attendance and contribution to the discussions.

RESOLVED –

- a.) That the contents of the report be noted;
- b.) That the focus for the next and final report will be complementary improvements to service and environmental factors and the role of the private rented and private development sectors.

(Councillor Ewens left the meeting at 10:20 am during consideration of this item. Councillor Akhtar joined the meeting at 10:20 am during consideration of this item.)

50 THE PURPOSE AND ROLE OF THE SAFER LEEDS EXECUTIVE AND BOARD

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing presented a report updating the Board on the work of the Safer Leeds Partnership which had been established in 1998 in response to the Crime and Disorder Act. Members heard that the Act stipulated that Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships be established by local authorities. The Safer Leeds Partnership sought to tackle crime and drug misuse and the fear of these issues throughout the Leeds area. The report summarised the work of the Partnership and its priority themes.

Supt Richard Jackson, Chief Officer, Neighbourhoods and Housing and Harvinder Saimbhi, Community Safety Development Manager, Neighbourhoods and Housing, attended the meeting to present the report and respond to Members questions and comments.

The Board went on to discuss the following points arising from the report:

- How the issue of prostitution was being tackled in the city, particularly in the areas of Holbeck and Chapeltown, with particular reference to work being undertaken to implement the recent adoption of a national strategy;
- The complexity of Home Office crime reduction measurements and the progress of the Safer Leeds Partnership in meeting these targets;
- Prevention and enforcement work in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, particularly in terms of the number of prosecutions for a breach of ASBO;
- The new practice of issuing 'bolt-on' ASBOs to some individuals who had already been convicted of a relevant criminal offence;
- The invitation for Leeds to become a 'Respect Action Area' as part of the Government's Respect Agenda and the initiatives associated with this such as parenting programmes and youth inclusion;
- Whether Designated Public Places Orders (DPPOs) were proving effective in terms of tackling consumption of alcohol on the streets;
- Steps being taken to tackle the increasing problem of robbery, particularly of takeaway delivery drivers, in the Chapeltown area;

- How the work of the Safer Leeds Partnership linked into divisional policing plans following the recent police restructure;
- Differing perspectives on the success of the merger in terms of results and resources;
- The need for improved communications from the Police to Elected Members and local residents regarding policing issues and operations in their local areas.

The Chair thanked Officers for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

(During consideration of this item, Councillor Akhtar retrospectively declared a personal interest as a member of the West Yorkshire Police Authority.)

51 **PCSO REVIEW**

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing submitted a report informing Members of the completion of a review into Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs.) Members heard that the report had been commissioned during the last municipal year by the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Community Safety) which had expressed an interest in the impact the new role had upon community safety and solving specific local issues.

Andy Mills, Head of Community Safety, Neighbourhoods and Housing; Supt Richard Jackson, Chief Officer, Neighbourhoods and Housing and Neil Evans, Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing, attended the meeting to present the report and respond to Members' comments.

The Board heard that the report had focussed on four wards in the city and provided a brief insight into the work undertaken by PCSOs. Officers reported that feedback from local communities as to the effectiveness of the new posts had been universally positive. Members were informed that the role and remit of PCSOs covered a wide range of issues, from offering crime prevention advice to residents to gathering intelligence. The difference between those working in the inner and outer wards was highlighted. Members heard that PCSOs in the inner city often played a more reactive role in tackling incidents on a day-to-day basis, whilst those in the outer areas had more scope to tackle crime proactively.

Members discussed the following issues in relation to the report:

- How PSCO posts were to be funded in the future;
- The level of turnover of staff (this was reported to be around 25%, the majority of which was movement of PSCOs into the regular Police force;)
- Understaffing and recruitment concerns;
- The possible extension of the powers of PCSOs, which areas they could be tasked with and how this was likely to be achieved;

- The reported differences between the experience of individuals working as PCSOs in the outer wards compared with those in the inner city areas.

The Board expressed their satisfaction with the work of PCSOs across the city. The Chair thanked Officers for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

52 MINUTES - THRIVING COMMUNITIES CORPORATE PRIORITY BOARD - 16TH OCTOBER 2006

Neil Evans, Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing, was in attendance at the meeting. Members were invited to ask questions or make observations regarding the minutes or any other related issue.

The Board went on to discuss the following points:

- The progress made on the issue of tackling worklessness in certain areas of the city, particularly in terms of altering procurement practices in order to attract smaller businesses to participate in Council-led initiatives on the issue;
- The feasibility of the Authority purchasing surplus accommodation that was reported to be available in the new purpose-built student blocks in order to house those in housing need;
- What progress had been made on the accommodation needs assessment for travellers following the deputation to Full Council in September;
- Moves being made to ensure that asylum seekers coming into the city are dispersed over the whole of Leeds and not concentrated in a few small areas;
- The Education Leeds initiative to allocate one school per wedge in the city to teach English to newly arrived asylum seekers and the issues of funding and accessibility associated with the scheme;
- How the ALMO restructure was progressing, particularly in terms of the relocation of staff across the new organisations;
- Where profits from the sale of right to buy properties were invested and the reported sharp decrease in right to buy sales this year.

The Chair thanked the Director for his attendance and contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Thriving Communities Corporate Priority Board meeting held on 16th October 2006 be noted.

(Councillor Schofield left the meeting at 12:10 pm, at the conclusion of consideration of this item.)

53 WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which detailed the current work programme of the Board, including scheduled and unscheduled items.

Appended to the report for Members' information was a copy of the Forward Plan for November to February 2007.

The Board agreed to schedule a report on private rented accommodation for the December meeting. Two separate reports on District Partnerships and Supporting People would be considered at the January meeting, subject to the necessary information being available. It was also decided to circulate Members' initial suggestions regarding recommendations for the final report of the Inquiry into Regeneration in Beeston Hill and Holbeck to the Board for comment, rather than establish a working group.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and the revisions to the work programme be noted.

54 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 6th December 2006 at 10:00 am (pre-meeting for Board Members at 9:30 am.)

(The meeting concluded at 12:15 pm.)