

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

MONDAY, 11TH OCTOBER, 2010

- PRESENT:** Councillor B Anderson in the Chair
Councillors G Driver, P Ewens, G Hyde,
M Iqbal, J Marjoram and L Mulherin
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors A Barker and R Procter
- ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors S Bentley, P Gruen, J Illingworth
and K Maqsood (Agenda Item 7)

34 Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of personal interests were made:-

- Councillor B Anderson – Agenda Item 8 (Minute No. 38 refers) – Vision for Leeds 2011-2030 – in his capacity as a member of the Leeds Initiative Climate Change Partnership.
- Councillor G Hyde – Agenda Item 10 (Minute No. 40 refers) – Budget Analysis for HRA and General Fund – in his capacity as a Director of East North East Homes ALMO.
- Councillor M Iqbal Agenda Item 13 (Minute No. 43 refers) – Scrutiny Inquiry – Private Sector Rented Housing – in his capacity as a private landlord.

35 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors A Barker and R Procter (no substitutes).

36 Minutes - 13th September 2010

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th September 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

37 Presentation - Homes and Community Agency

The Board received a presentation on the work and priorities of the Homes and Community Agency.

Present at the meeting, and responding to Members' queries and comments were:-

David Curtis, Director, Yorkshire and the Humber, HCA.

Naz Parkar, Head of Yorkshire and the Humber, HCA.

Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods.

Liz Cook, Head of Affordable Housing, Environment and Neighbourhoods.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:-

- The excellent working relationship which existed between the Agency and the Council;
- The draft Leeds Investment Plan (LIP) which was due to be considered by the Executive Board on 3rd November 2010, following which further consultation was planned, including with Members;

David Curtis indicated that, notwithstanding the need for consultation on the LIP, it would be extremely helpful to the HCA to at least have an indication of the Council's priorities by the end of January 2011;

- The high number of empty properties across the City (approximately 6,500), the reasons for this, including speculative building of City Centre apartments, and what might be done to bring more properties into occupation;
- The assistance and expertise which the HCA might be able to provide regarding specific, problem development sites in the City, where development had stalled and residents were experiencing problems, and also in respect of the Board's Inquiry into gypsy and traveller site provision;
- The uncertainties regarding the land and assets currently held by the soon to be defunct Development Agencies;
- The likelihood that the HCA in future would have less resources to invest in regeneration support and skills and capacity building;
- The role of the HCA in analysing and progressing PFI schemes, including its ability to assist to deliver accommodation to Level 4 standard, rather than Level 3. Reference was made to the need for sustainable communities, which took into account public health, housing density, education and green spaces issues at the design stage. The HCA saw no conflict between sustainability/lifetime homes standards and the development of supported or sheltered accommodation – both were needed in sustainable communities;
- The need for discussions between the Environment and Neighbourhoods and Development Directorates regarding a whole range of issues arising from the demise of the Regional Spatial Strategies, and the need to look at possible complementary funding

sources following the outcome of the imminent Comprehensive Spending Review;

- The proposed 'New Homes Bonus', whereby it was proposed that local authorities could claim back from the Government six times the annual Council Tax for each new home built, and how this revenue funding source might be capitalised to invest in future homes. The HCA would work with the Council's officers on this issue;
- The need to possibly expand and re-organise the existing Affordable Housing Partnership, as well as to review and revitalise existing regeneration partnerships.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the presentation and resultant discussion be received and noted with interest, and Mr Curtis and Mr Parkar be thanked for their attendance and the manner in which they have responded to Members' queries and comments.
- b) That the Board is ready and able to assist in any role which the Executive Board or the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods feel might be helpful in respect of the Leeds Investment Plan which is due to be considered by the Executive Board in November.

38 Vision For Leeds 2011 - 2030

The Director of Leeds Initiative submitted a report outlining proposals to consult on, and to develop and update, the Vision for Leeds document, to take it forward to cover the period up to 2030.

Martin Dean, Head of Leeds Initiative and International Partnerships, attended the meeting and responded to Members' queries and comments.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were as follows:-

- The stated aim and objectives of the proposed new Vision.
- Reference was made to the paragraph relating to tackling climate change on page 5 of the draft document. A view was expressed that restraint and caution should be exercised when making quasi-scientific statements, as not everyone agreed on the extent or effects of global warming and its alleged effect on climate change.
- Similar comments were made regarding the use of terms such as 'fairness' and 'happiness' which were relative and subjective terms.
- Comment was also made regarding the need to include reference to two specific issues – sustainable transport policies and adequate child care services.

- Members also requested Martin Dean to provide them with an electronic copy of the Vision document.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above comments, the work carried out to date to develop a new Vision for Leeds 2011-2030, and the proposals for consultation, be noted.

(NB: Councillor L Mulherin left the meeting at 11.49 am, during the consideration of this item.)

39 Scrutiny Inquiry - Integrated Offender Management

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted the Board's draft final report and recommendations following completion of its Inquiry on Integrated Offender Management. The report was delayed due to a number of comments being received from the Crown Prosecution Service which needed to be addressed.

RESOLVED – That the Board's proposed draft Inquiry Report on Integrated Offender Management be approved and circulated for formal response to the Board's recommendations.

40 Budget Analysis for the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund

Further to Minute No. 25, 13th September 2010, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report updating Members regarding the key variances and the projected outturn figures for 2010/11 as at the end of period 5 (31st August 2010) in respect of both the HRA and the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate General Fund.

Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment and Neighbourhoods, attended the meeting and responded to Members' queries and comments. In brief summary, the main points of discussion were:-

- Had the £1.8m in additional void incentive payments yet been transferred to the ALMOs? Richard Ellis undertook to pursue this.
- How accurate were the year-end predictions?

Richard Ellis outlined the process of monthly meetings with Chief Officers and budget holders. No large variations were evident to date, and it was regarded that the process was as robust and accurate as it was possible to be. However, the number of imponderables, such as car parking income and waste management and recycling levels, meant that forecasting could never be 100% accurate.

- Projected savings as a result of the review and restructuring of refuse collection and streetscene services.

Richard Ellis explained that teething problems meant that the implementation of the revised collection rounds, etc, had slipped by 3 months, from June to September. Any further problems would have an impact on projected saving levels for the current year.

- There was no additional money to expand the Directorate's normal recycling education programme.
- The Chair indicated that the Board was ready and willing to assist the Executive Board and officers with regard to any review of services/budgets as a result of the imminent Comprehensive Spending Review, if requested.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above comments, the report be received and noted.

41 Scrutiny Inquiry - Gypsy and Traveller Site Provision in Leeds

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report regarding the proposed Terms of Reference for this Inquiry.

The Board agreed that, ideally, the Inquiry should be completed by the end of the year and that this might necessitate an extra Board meeting, possibly on 2nd December 2010. It was also agreed that as part of the Inquiry, the Working Group needed to look at successes and limitations in respect of the existing site at Cottingley Springs.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above comments, the draft Inquiry Terms of Reference be approved.

(NB: Councillor J Marjoram left the meeting at 12.15 pm at the conclusion of this item.)

42 Co-option to the Board for particular Scrutiny Inquiries relating to Crime and Disorder

RESOLVED – That approval be given to the co-option of Mrs Janet Spencer, Independent Member of the West Yorkshire Police Authority, to the Board, in a non-voting capacity, in respect of any Inquiries in relation to the Board's crime and disorder responsibilities.

43 Scrutiny Inquiry - Private Sector Rented Housing - Recommendation Tracking

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on progress made in implementing the Board's recommendations following publication of its report on private sector rented housing.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the report be received and noted and the status attributed to each of the Board's recommendations be agreed.
- b) That the Board receive a further report in March 2011 regarding outstanding actions in respect of Recommendations 10 and 15.

44 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted the Board's work programme, updated to reflect decisions taken at previous meetings, together with a relevant extract from the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st October 2010-31st January 2011 and the minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board held on 25th August and 23rd September 2010.

RESOLVED – That, subject to any changes necessary as a result of today's meeting, the work programme be approved.

45 Dates and Times of Future Meetings

Monday, 8th November 2010.
Thursday, 2nd December 2010 (provisional only).
Monday, 13th December 2010.
Monday, 17th January 2011.
Monday, 14th February 2011.
Monday, 14th March 2011.
Monday, 11th April 2011.

All at 10.00 am (Pre-Meetings 9.30 am).