

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

THURSDAY, 6TH JANUARY, 2011

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors A Barker, G Driver, P Ewens,
R Grahame, G Hyde, J Marjoram,
L Mulherin and P Wadsworth

69 Late Items and Supplementary Information

The Chair agreed to accept the following documents as supplementary information to the agenda already published:-

- Agenda Item 7 (Minute No. 72 refers) – Possible Inquiry on Acquisitive Crime with Focus on Domestic Burglary – copy of PowerPoint presentation slides submitted by Safer Leeds.
- Agenda Item 10 (Minute No. 75 refers) – Variances against Departmental Budget 2010/11 – A copy of the summary for Period 8 supplied by the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods.

The above documents were not available at the time of the agenda despatch.

70 Declarations of Interest

The following personal declarations of interest were made:-

- Agenda Item 13 (Minute No. 78 refers) – Strategic Governance Board and Shared Service Centre – Councillors G Driver, R Grahame and P Wadsworth in their capacities as ALMO Directors.

See also later Minute No. 78.

71 Minutes - 23 November and 2 December 2010

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings held on 23rd November and 2nd December 2010, together with the notes of the Gypsy and Traveller Working Group meeting held on 13th December 2010, be confirmed as a correct record.

72 Possible Inquiry on Acquisitive Crime with Focus on Domestic Burglary

The Board considered whether or not to undertake a Scrutiny Inquiry into acquisitive crime, with the focus on domestic burglary.

To assist the Board, it received a presentation from Superintendent Simon Whitehead, Chief Officer, Community Safety, and Simon Hodgson,

Performance and Intelligence Manager, Safer Leeds, who both responded to Members' queries and comments.

In brief summary the main points of discussion were:-

- The historic statistical performance in this particular area, from a high of 16,341 domestic burglaries in 2002/03 to a low of 7,670 in 2005/06, before an increase over the past four years to a figure of 9,521 in 2009/10.
- The co-ordinated efforts being made via the Safer Leeds Partnership to tackle the issue, and the fact that for the period from October 2009 to September 2010 there had been 8,756 recorded domestic burglaries – down 1,104 compared to the previous 12 month period.
- The November 2010 follow-up inspection by the Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, the results of which were imminent. It was agreed that these should be circulated to Board Members when they were received.
- The links to anti-social behaviour, and the current initiative to integrate Police, ALMO and Council approaches and initiatives in this area.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the Board agrees to undertake an Inquiry in respect of acquisitive crime, with the focus on domestic burglary.
- b) That a Working Group be established to take the work forward, open to all Board Members to participate, but to include the Chair and Councillor R Grahame.
- c) That it be accepted that, due to the Board's current work programme, it may not prove possible to commence this Inquiry until the 2011/12 municipal year.

73 Environment and Neighbourhoods Performance Report - Quarter 2 2010/11

The Board received and considered a report submitted by the Head of Policy and Performance relating to performance information in respect of a raft of national and local performance indicators which fell within the remit of the Board to monitor.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

74 Initial Budget Proposals 2011/12

In accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, the Board considered the Executive's initial budget proposals for 2011/12, as discussed at the Executive Board meeting held on 15th December 2010.

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

- Councillor P Gruen, Executive Member, Neighbourhoods and Housing.
- Councillor T Murray, Executive Member, Environmental Services.
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods.
- Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Stephen Boyle, Chief Regeneration Officer, Environment and Neighbourhoods

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

- The current difficulties being experienced with refuse collection across the City. It was noted that an update report would be submitted to the Board on 17th January 2011.
- The current discussion taking place between the Council and the Police regarding the funding, numbers and role of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). It was noted that the Board would receive a specific report on this issue in due course.
- The Council's waste management strategy and the effect of the £8 per tonne increase in the landfill tax from April 2011, which would cost the Council an additional £1.2m in 2011/12. It was noted that a decision had been taken not to currently roll-out across the City the food waste recycling project successfully piloted in the Rothwell area, as it was currently not cost-efficient to do so. However, this would be reviewed in the future, and part of that review would include an evaluation of the possible use of anaerobic digesters.
- The drop in car parking income, and the comprehensive review currently being undertaken to ensure that Council-owned parking facilities remained competitive. The possible use of the Primrose Hill High School site for parking purposes was raised, and it was agreed that this suggestion should be referred to Councillor R Lewis, Executive Member, Development and Regeneration.
- The current corporate review of Council premises and staffing numbers was raised. Reference was made to the statement at Paragraph 10.9 of the report of the Director of Resources to the Executive Board on 15th December 2010, and the comments relating to 'equality impact assessments and workforce representation issues'. A Member

commented that this sounded very much like affirmative action to protect certain categories of employees, whereas, in his view, any staffing review should concentrate purely on identifying and retaining the best people for the job, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity considerations.

The officer responded by stating that this was a reference to issues such as reasonable adjustments for disabled employees who may be relocated, and the possible disproportionate effect of some proposals on certain sections of the workforce, e.g. cleaning staff, due to gender issues.

- The possible amalgamation of regulatory functions, e.g. Environmental Health, across several authorities.
- Locality working, and the possible greater delegation of functions to Area Committees. There was criticism from some Board Members regarding the timing and the manner in which the locality working proposals had been handled at Area Committee level.
- The possible assimilation of CareRing into Telecare Services in Adult Social Care, with resultant cost savings. A Member mentioned a problem with a specific property, and he was encouraged to raise the matter outside the meeting with the Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser.

RESOLVED –

- a) That, subject to the above comments, the report be received and noted.
- b) That a further report on the more detailed budget proposals be submitted to the Board at the appropriate meeting.

(NB: 1 Councillor G Hyde and P Gruen joined the meeting at 10.50 am and 11.07 am respectively, during the consideration of this item.

2 Councillor T Murray and Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, left the meeting at 11.26 am, during the consideration of this item.)

75 Budget Analysis for the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund 2010/11

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods updated the Board regarding the key variances and the outturn figures for 2010/11 in respect of both the HRA and the Directorate General Fund for Period 7 (end of October 2010) and Period 8 (end of November 2010).

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

- John Statham, Strategic Landlord Manager, Environment and Neighbourhoods.
- Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment and Neighbourhoods.
- Stephen Boyle, Chief Regeneration Officer, Environment and Neighbourhoods.

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

- Rent arrears and how the Council and ALMOs would respond in 2011/12, especially following the introduction of the new Universal Benefit.

The officers indicated that this was very much a current, live issue as the HRA situation was assessed. The ALMOs currently worked under a performance incentive regime in terms of rent collection on behalf of the Council. In addition, the Council was liaising with other local authorities regarding best practice methods, but it was accepted that this was an issue in the current economic climate, and ALMOs needed advice and support from the Council.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

76 Response to the Board's Inquiry into Integrated Offender Management

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report responding to the recommendations contained in the Board's 2009/10 Inquiry into Integrated Offender Management.

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

- Stephen Boyle, Chief Regeneration Officer, Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Jim Willson, Chief Officer (Drugs and Alcohol), Environment and Neighbourhoods

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

- Recommendation 5 – That the Leeds Strategic IOM Board and the West Yorkshire Criminal Justice Board give consideration to the development of a local dedicated IOM Court in order to best utilise partnership resources.

Although this was being looked at and would, from a partnership perspective, be a useful move, the suggestion had not found favour

with the Crown Prosecution Service, principally on cost grounds it was believed.

- Recommendation 10 – That the Safer Leeds Partnership Executive leads on developing existing communication frameworks to help further raise the profile of offender management amongst local communities, etc.

It was noted that an update report would be submitted to the Board during 2011/12.

- Reference was also made to the Government's recent Green Paper, entitled 'Breaking the Cycle', which may impact on some of the Board's recommendations.

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

77 Monitoring Report on the Recommendations of the Worklessness Inquiry

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report updating the Board regarding progress on the implementation of the recommendations contained in its 2009/10 Inquiry into Worklessness.

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

- Stephen Boyle, Chief Regeneration Officer, Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Sue Wynne, Head of Regeneration, Environment and Neighbourhoods

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

- Recommendation 3 – Review of outreach provision and Jobshop services.

It was reported that this review should be completed by the end of January 2011. Some positive action had already taken place with a Jobshop at the new Harehills Joint Service Centre (JSC), the relocation of the Chapeltown Jobshop to the new Chapeltown JSC, and the establishment of a pilot outreach project at the Youth Service Centre in the Burmantofts and Richmond Hill Ward.

The point was made that, in all cases, Local Members needed to be kept informed of developments, and any positive news on the jobs front.

- It was hoped that the development of the Government's Single Work Programme would help in terms of encouraging all partners – the Department for Work and Pensions, Jobcentre Plus, Connexions, local colleges and private contractors – to work together in a co-ordinated manner to tackle worklessness.
- In respect of the above, the Council had recently been successful in obtaining ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) funding of £1m for the establishment of Employment Leeds, and an official launch was being planned.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the report be received and noted, and a further update report be submitted to the Board during 2011/12.
- b) That the Board place on record its recognition and appreciation for all the hard work and dedication of Sue Wynne in the performance of her duties.

78 The Future of Council Housing - Strategic Governance Board and Shared Service Centre

Further to Minute Nos. 59 and 60, 23rd November 2010, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report regarding the draft Terms of Reference of the proposed new Strategic Governance Board, and the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted the draft Terms of Reference for the Board's proposed Inquiry into the establishment of a Shared Service Centre.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the report be received and noted.
- b) That Board Members respond individually to the Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser with any comments on the Terms of Reference of the Strategic Governance Board, and the Principal Scrutiny Adviser report any comments back to the Board.
- c) That the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry into the proposed Shared Service Centre be approved, and a Working Group be established to take forward the Inquiry, open to all Board Members, but to include the Chair and Councillor R Grahame.

(NB: Councillor G Hyde declared a personal interest in this item in his capacity as an ALMO Director.)

79 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted the Board's current work programme, updated to reflect decisions taken at previous meetings, together with minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 15th December 2010, and a relevant extract from the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st December 2010 to 31st March 2011.

The Board agreed:-

- a) to defer consideration of the proposed report on the Vision for Leeds, Leeds Strategic Plan and Business Plan priorities from 17th January to 14th February 2011;
- b) to bring forward the currently unscheduled report on vacant housing into the 2010/11 work programme, to include reference to assistance and encouragement for tenants to downsize from family-size accommodation if their circumstances have changed;
- c) to include an update report on the current refuse collection situation on 17th January 2011 agenda.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above amendments, the Board's work programme be approved.

80 Dates and Times of Future Meetings

Monday, 17th January 2011.

Monday, 14th February 2011.

Monday, 14th March 2011.

Monday, 11th April 2011.

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