

## SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

**MONDAY, 14TH MARCH, 2011**

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

Councillors G Driver, P Ewens,  
R Grahame, G Hyde, M Iqbal and  
L Mulherin

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor J Marjoram

### **100 Declarations of Interest**

The following personal declarations of interest were made:-

- Agenda Item 10 (Minute No. 106 refers) – Budget Analysis for Housing Revenue Account and General Fund – Period 10, 2010/11 – Councillors G Driver, R Grahame and G Hyde in their capacity as ALMO Directors.

### **101 Minutes - 14th February 2011**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

### **102 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

- a) Curb Clean Media Advertising in the City Centre (Minute No. 93 refers)

Further to Minute No. 93, 14<sup>th</sup> February 2011, the Chair read out a statement from Chris Gomersall, Head of Property Services, City Development, updating the Board on developments subsequent to the Board's last meeting.

The Executive Member, Development and Regeneration, had been made aware of the Board's views and comments made at the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2011 meeting, and regarded that the trial period should continue, pending a report back to the Board on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2011, after which the situation would again be reviewed.

**RESOLVED** – That the position be noted.

- b) Dog Control Orders (Minute No. 95 refers)

In response to a Member's query, the Chair stated that 'status quo', as referred to in part (a) of the Board's resolution last time, in this instance meant that the existing Order, limiting the number of dogs which an individual could walk at any one time to no more than four, would

remain unaltered, pending consultation on the introduction of Phase 2 and a report back to the Scrutiny Board. However, as minuted, officers would continue to exercise discretion to allow up to 6 dogs to be walked, providing that they were being walked responsibly, pending the final outcome of the consultation and a report back to the Board, which would include consideration of the possible voluntary licensing scheme for dog walkers discussed at the last meeting ( Min. No. 95, resolution (b) refers).

### **103 Scrutiny Inquiry - Intelligence Gathering and Sharing**

**RESOLVED** – That the item be deferred to 11<sup>th</sup> April 2011 meeting.

### **104 New Strategic Plans 2011 - 2015**

The Chief Executive and the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a joint report outlining proposals for a new strategic planning structure, which encompassed the Vision for Leeds document, the Council's Business Plan and also a review and re-shaping of partnership arrangements across the City and the Leeds Initiative.

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

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods.
- Martin Dean, Head of Leeds Initiative and International Partnerships.
- Heather Pinches, Performance Manager.

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

- The need for ALMOs to be on board as a partner in delivering the strategic plans. The Director indicated that this was in hand;
- Action Plans – the next stage of the process would be to draw up action plans regarding how the various priorities would be achieved, and these would be submitted in due course to Scrutiny Boards. It was suggested that Members needed base-line information in order to be able to measure eventual improvement;
- 'Leeds' economy will be prosperous and sustainable' – Care needed to be taken to ensure that Leeds residents benefited directly from any increased job or training opportunities, especially those residents from a BME or deprived background, and that the City was not just creating opportunities for non-Leeds people. The Council itself needed to do more to ensure that the make up of its own work force better reflected the ethnic make up of the City;

- Transport – Concerns were expressed regarding communities being left isolated by lack of proper public transport provision and lack of services after 10.00 pm. Reference was made to the Bus Quality Contract initiative which hopefully would address the issues;
- Health and Wellbeing – Anti-smoking measures needed targeting at children just as much, if not more, than adults, and teenage pregnancy rates also needed tackling more efficiently;
- Housing – The desperate need for more affordable housing needed to be addressed, and tackling current empty property levels was regarded as part of the possible solution. New homes were only part of the issue – there were also infrastructure concerns too.
- The Council should, it was suggested, explore gas plasma technology in relation to reclaiming landfill sites and job creation;
- Local residents needed greater encouragement and involvement in civic affairs;
- Education achievement levels, school attendance issues and school transport matters were touched upon;
- The Government’s current review of the benefits system and its effects on people in receipt of the Disability Living Allowance, and on single parents in terms of training opportunities, was discussed. Members felt that a training seminar on this topic for Council Members would be useful;
- It was accepted that, against a backdrop of world recession and vastly reduced resources, the Council was limited regarding what realistic effect it could have on some of the above issues. However, it needed to be identifying ‘gaps’ and opportunities where perhaps it could play a significant role in improving the lives of Leeds’ residents.

**RESOLVED –**

- a) That, subject to the above comments and suggestions, the report be received and noted.
- b) That the Board receive further reports as and when action plans are developed.

(NB: Councillors P Gruen and M Iqbal joined the meeting at 10:03 am, at the commencement of this item.)

**105 Environment and Neighbourhoods Performance Report - Quarter 3 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.

Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, responded to Members' queries and comments. In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:-

- Gully cleansing, York Road – Councillor R Grahame requested that these be cleaned at the earliest opportunity and properly maintained thereafter. He also requested a copy of the current cleansing rota for this area.
- Refuse collection – Members requested that the Director supply them separately with an update regarding the latest situation;
- Worklessness- The Board requested an update report in the new municipal year on progress in implementing the recommendations contained in its Inquiry report. Members also regarded that the Council could and should be taking the lead in terms of job training initiatives, perhaps in partnership with local colleges and Job Centre Plus. Councillor Gruen suggested that there was scope for an Inquiry, perhaps a joint one with the Scrutiny Board (City Development), into the Council's role in this area, how the landscape had changed, etc.
- Further statistical information was requested regarding the numbers of people on Job Seekers Allowance and Disability Living Allowance.

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

#### **106 Budget Analysis for Housing Revenue Account and General Fund - Period 10 2010/11**

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods updated the Board regarding the key variances and outturn figures for 2010/11 in respect of both the HRA and the General Fund for period 10 (end of January 2011).

In attendance at the meeting, and responding to Members' queries and comments, were Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, and Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment and Neighbourhoods,

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

- The projected 2010/11 overspend on staffing should reduce significantly next year as the restructuring plans come to fruition and as the managing workforce change effects worked their way through;

- Car Parking – Charges and the balance of long stay/short stay parking provision were currently under review. As part of this, the former Primrose Hill School site was being considered, as previously suggested by a Board Member.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

#### **107 Scrutiny Inquiry - Gypsy and Traveller Site Provision in Leeds**

Further to Minute No. 85, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011, the Board received and considered the formal response of the Executive Board to the Scrutiny Board's Inquiry recommendations.

- P.57, Paragraph 2.1(ii) – It was clarified that it was, in fact, Leeds GATE which was opposed to any suggested expansion of the current Cottingley Springs site.

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods stated that he had profound concerns regarding any possible expansion of Cottingley Springs, in view of the previous problems experienced.

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

#### **108 Japanese Disaster**

It was agreed that it appeared to be appropriate for the Council to formally express its deepest sympathy for, and solidarity with, the people of Japan at this time, and the Principal Scrutiny Adviser undertook to follow this up.

#### **109 Mike Earle, Democratic Services**

This being his last Board meeting prior to his retirement on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011, on behalf of the Board the Chair thanked Mike Earle for all his work on behalf of the Board and the City Council, and wished him a long and happy retirement.

#### **110 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2011, at 10.00 am (Pre-Meeting 9.30 am).