

SCRUTINY BOARD (SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 20TH JUNE, 2011

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors R Grahame, K Groves,
M Hamilton, P Harrand, G Hyde, J Jarosz,
J Marjoram and N Walshaw

1 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities) of the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillors G Hyde and R Grahame declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 12, Inquiry to Review the Establishment of a Shared Service Centre for the Leeds Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) – Draft Final Report, due to their respective positions as Directors of the East North East Homes ALMO Board. Minute No.10 refers.

3 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors E Taylor and C Townsley.

4 Minutes of the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) held on 11 April 2011

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) held on 11 April 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

5 Changes to the Council's Constitution

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development provided the Board with information on recent amendments to the Council's Constitution, as agreed by Council on 26 May 2011, which directly related to and/or impacted on the work of Scrutiny Boards. The more significant amendments made to the Council's Constitution in relation to the Overview and Scrutiny function were summarised in the report.

Members of the Board were informed of the following main changes:

- There would now be 5 themed Scrutiny Boards that reflected the Boards of the Strategic Partnership.

- Changes to the Call-In process – this included the requirement to consider the financial consequences of calling in a decision. This will be part of the required pre Call In discussion with the relevant Director or Executive Board Member. It was also noted that any Scrutiny Board Member can be a signatory to a Call In, even if they are a member of the Scrutiny Board considering the Call In.

Members sought further clarification regarding the consideration of the financial consequences of calling-in a decision.

RESOLVED – That the amendments to the Council’s Constitution as outlined in the report be noted.

6 Co-opted Members

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development sought the Board’s formal consideration for the appointment of co-opted members. Reference was made to the provision in the Council’s Constitution for the appointment of co-opted members.

Members discussed the different options for co-opting members to the Board including appointing co-opted Members for the duration of the Municipal Year or making ad-hoc appointments to provide specialist support and advice on specific inquiries.

RESOLVED - That the Board agrees to appoint co-optees on an ad hoc basis, as and when considered necessary to assist with particular matters or inquiries.

7 Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Joint Protocol

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development referred to the extended remit of local authorities to scrutinise crime and disorder functions. The Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities) had been designated as the Council’s ‘Crime and Disorder Committee’. A copy of the joint protocol between Scrutiny and the local Community Safety Partnership was attached to the report.

Members were informed that any referral of Crime and Disorder matters for scrutiny would be given consideration by this Board and that the Board could also review the work of the Community Safety Partnership.

RESOLVED – That the joint protocol between Scrutiny and the local Community Safety Partnership be noted.

8 Sources of Work and Areas of Priority/Work Schedule

To assist the Board in effectively managing its workload for the forthcoming Municipal Year, the report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development provided information and guidance on potential sources of work and areas of

priority within the terms of reference. Copies of the terms of reference along with recent Executive Board minutes and a copy of the Council's Forward Plan were appended to the report.

A further report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development requested the Board to consider its work schedule for the forthcoming Municipal Year. A draft work schedule was appended to the report.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor P Gruen, Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Housing and Regeneration)
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- John Statham, Head of Housing Partnerships
- Martin Dean, Head of Leeds Initiative and International Partnerships

Martin Dean addressed the meeting regarding a particular area of review already outlined within the Board's terms of reference. This related to 'the relationship and respective roles of the City Council and third sector organisations in mitigating the negative effects of the recession on the communities they serve'.

It was reported that there had been a key meeting between the Council and third sector partners in November 2010. As a result, it was noted that a review of the third sector is now underway on behalf of the Strategic Planning and Policy Board to address issues around infrastructure, procurement and commissioning, as well as engagement and capacity building with the third sector.

In response to Members' comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- That the review of the third sector needs to identify more clearly how the Council is measuring effectiveness, performance and value for money.
- Concerns that third sector organisations were branching out into other areas outside their expertise in order to attract or receive funding.
- Reference to a piece of work carried out by Leeds Voice on the value of the third sector to the economy of Leeds – it was reflected that having a healthy third sector attracted more business to the City.
- In response to a request for a progress update on the 'What if Leeds?' consultation, it was reported that the Vision for Leeds had been approved by the Leeds Initiative Board and was due to be considered by Executive Board before it went to full Council for approval.

Rather than conduct a separate review, the Board agreed to feed into the existing review of the third sector where appropriate and keep a watching brief of its progress.

The Chair thanked Martin Dean for his attendance.

Neil Evans addressed the Board on issues relating to Safer Leeds. These included the following:

- That intelligence gathering and sharing mechanisms were undergoing significant change. Particular reference was made to the review of intelligence structures within West Yorkshire Police.
- The Leeds Burglary Reduction Strategy and £1,326,000 being made available through the Community Safety Fund to support the delivery of the Leeds Burglary Reduction Programme.
- Changes in tackling anti-social behaviour by bringing the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, Police and ALMOs closer together. The Board agreed to keep a watching brief of the effectiveness of this new approach
- Proposals set out within the Police Reform Bill which involves replacing police authorities with directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners and new Police and Crime Panels. It was unclear at this stage how these new roles would relate to the existing Community Safety Partnership and also the Scrutiny function. This was therefore considered a key area for Scrutiny to explore further.

The Board was also informed of issues surrounding housing including changes to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the standard/provision of private rented accommodation across the City.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- Fuel poverty – this was raised as a potential area for Scrutiny. However, clarification was to be sought as to whether this matter came under the remit of this Board.
- Welfare Reform Bill – the implications of this Bill in relation to housing benefit levels
- Creation of a Leeds Enterprise Zone – in developing the new Enterprise Zone, Members emphasised the need to take on board the issues previously raised by Scrutiny around job creation and sustainability in the employment market. It was agreed that this would be relayed back to the Regeneration Scrutiny Board for consideration.
- Private rented sector housing issues – reference was made to the Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme and the Private Rented Sector Working Group that worked closely with private landlord representatives. Further issues discussed included licensing of HMOs; the Council's regulatory powers for enforcing health and safety; direct payments of housing benefits to landlords and how to get empty properties back into use.
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – It was noted that the Localism Bill included proposals to change the way social housing is funding which involves an end to the current system of Housing Revenue Account Subsidy. A major piece of work was being carried out by the directorate around the implications of this reform.

Members discussed future areas of Inquiry for the Board. The Board agreed to keep a watching brief of the changes underway for improving community safety intelligence functions. At this stage, the Board also agreed to establish working groups to consider possible terms of reference for the following reviews:

- Anti-social behaviour – Councillors Anderson, Groves and Jarosz
- Implications of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill – Councillors Anderson, M Hamilton and G Hyde
- Reform of Council housing finances (Housing Revenue Account) – Councillors Anderson, R Grahame and Hyde
- Private rented sector housing – Councillors Anderson, Groves, M Hamilton and Walshaw
- Implications of the Welfare Reform Bill – Councillors Anderson, Hyde and Jarosz
- Fuel Poverty – Councillors Anderson, R Grahame and Marjoram

It was noted that some of these issues could be linked together. The Principal Scrutiny Adviser was therefore requested to discuss these further with the Chair and to write out to all Board Members to confirm membership of these working groups.

Members were also reminded that further discussion regarding the Board's future work programme would take place with Councillor M Dobson, Executive Member (Environmental Services)

RESOLVED –

- (1) That, where appropriate, the Scrutiny Board feeds into the existing review of the third sector by the Strategic Planning and Policy Board and keeps a watching brief of its progress.
- (2) That the Principal Scrutiny Adviser liaises with the Chair regarding the above working groups and writes to all Board Members confirming membership of these working groups.
- (3) That the Work Schedule be amended in line with today's discussion.

(Councillor M Hamilton joined the meeting at 10.20 a.m. and Councillor Harrand left the meeting at 11.00 a.m. during the discussion on this item. Councillor G Hyde left the meeting at 11.15 a.m. following the conclusion of this item).

9 Inquiry to Review the Establishment of a Shared Service Centre for the Leeds Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) - Draft Final Report

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development referred to the Inquiry Reviewing the Establishment of a Shared Service Centre for the Leeds Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOS) carried out by the Scrutiny

Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods). A copy of the draft final report into the Inquiry along with a summary of the evidence was presented and the Board was requested to agree the final report and recommendations.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Board's final report and recommendations be agreed.
- (2) That a formal response to the recommendations be produced in line with normal procedures for scrutiny inquiry reports as set out in Scrutiny Procedure Rule 14.1.

10 Date and Time of Future Meetings

Monday, 18 July 2011
Monday, 12 September 2011
Monday, 10 October 2011
Monday, 14 November 2011
Monday, 12 December 2011
Monday, 16 January 2012
Monday, 13 February 2012
Monday, 12 March 2012
Tuesday, 3 April 2012

All meetings commence at 10.00 a.m. with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.30 a.m. and are scheduled to be held in the Civic Hall, Leeds.

The meeting concluded at 11.20 a.m.