

SCRUTINY BOARD (SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 16TH JANUARY, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

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

68 Late Items

Members received a Supplementary Agenda which detailed confidential appendices to Agenda Item 10, Car Parking Update.

69 Declarations of Interest

Councillor G Hyde declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8, Recommendation Tracking due to his position as a Director with the East North East Home ALMO.

Councillor J Hardy declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8, Recommendation Tracking due to his position as a Director with the West North West Homes ALMO.

Councillor R Graham declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8, Recommendation Tracking due to his position as a Director with the East North East Home ALMO and also Agenda Item 9, Recycling Strategy Update due to his Membership of GMB.

70 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Townsley.

71 Minutes - 22 November and 12 December 2011

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings held on 22 November and 12 December 2011 be confirmed as correct records.

72 Recommendation Tracking

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development provided an update on the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny review of the Council's Housing Lettings Process.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor P Gruen, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Regeneration
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- John Statham, Head of Housing Partnerships
- Rob McCartney, Head of Housing Support

Prior to the meeting, the Chair had met with officers to discuss the progress on the recommendations outlined in the report. Members had been issued with a revised Appendix which detailed the progress status. Each of the recommendations was given one of the following categories:

1. Stop Monitoring
2. Achieved
3. Not achieved (Obstacle)
4. Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
5. Not achieved (Progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring)
6. Not for review this session

Additional information in the revised appendix was highlighted and Members were asked to consider changes made to the status of progress on the recommendations.

In summary, the following was discussed:

- Recommendation 1 – The Board was informed of IT assessments/testing, the production of a user manual and work within the ALMOs to support new tenancies. It was suggested that this Recommendation be moved from Category 5 to Category 4.
- Recommendation 2 – It was suggested that this be moved from Category 5 to Category 4. The Board was informed of joint working with West Yorkshire Police for the development of an information sharing protocol. Pilot schemes were underway and new powers would also be available under the Localism Act for local authorities to have more freedom in determining who should qualify to go on their housing waiting list.
- Recommendation 3 – It was suggested that this be moved from Category 5 to Category 4. Further information reported including the adaptation of policies by the ALMOs to reflect legal guidance and changes from the Pinnock Case and closer working between the ALMOs and Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team (LASBT).
- Recommendation 4 – Further reference was made to joint working between the ALMOs and the LASBT and also the ALMOs adherence to LASBT service standards. It was suggested that the recommendation be changed from Category 4 to Category 2.
- Recommendation 5 – Issues discussed included assessment of eligibility for foreign nationals, repatriation services, support for homeless and potential homeless. Further discussion focussed on welfare reform and the capping of benefits – the Board was informed of support being provided to tenants and private landlords and also work undertaken via working groups that involve private landlord

representatives to assess the potential impacts of the reforms. Funding from the Department of Work and Pensions and also the Department for Communities and Local Government had been made available to help reduce the impact of the reforms and explore opportunities for reducing homelessness.

- Recommendation 6 – It was suggested that this be moved from Category 4 to Category 2. Additional information submitted informed the Board of the case conferencing approach being a good practice model and how this was used.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted and that the recommendation monitoring progress be amended as suggested.

73 Financial Health Monitoring 2011/12 - Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development informed Members of the financial health of the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate after eight months of the financial year 2011/12.

The following were in attendance for this item:

Councillor P Gruen, Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Regeneration

Councillor M Dobson, Executive Board Member for Environmental Services
Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment and Neighbourhoods

It was reported that a working group meeting of the Board was held on 4th January to consider the directorate's 2012/13 initial budget proposals. A draft report summarising the observations and recommendations of the Scrutiny Board in relation to these budget proposals was tabled at the meeting for Members consideration and agreement.

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

- Increase in overspending – this was principally affected by Waste Services – higher than expected landfill and increased refuse service costs. Revised routes were due to be implemented for refuse collection. Members requested further budgetary information for the Refuse Service.
- Increased fuel costs – allowances had been made for increased fuel costs but these had risen more than expected over the past year.
- Comprehensive work was being carried out regarding the Council's fleet of vehicles and cost of repair against replacement would be considered.
- There was a commitment to look at the viability of using anaerobic digestion, this would be done with assistance from the PFI team.

RESOLVED – That the financial health monitoring report in relation to month 8 and discussion be noted.

That the draft report summarising the Scrutiny Board's observations and recommendations in relation to the directorate's 2012/13 initial budget proposals be agreed.

74 Recycling Strategy Update

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development referred to a report that Executive Board had received on 14 December 2011 which gave an update on progress against the Recycling Strategy. The Executive Board report was appended to the Agenda and included a number of proposals that related to future service development opportunities and had been approved at the meeting on 14 December 2011.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor M Dobson, Executive Member for Environmental Services
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Andrew Lingham, Waste Strategy and Policy Manager
- Liz Behrens, Strategy and Development Manager, Waste Management

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

- Collection of glass for recycling – there were several issues to consider including the move to fortnightly green waste collection, should it be collected with other dry recyclables and current market value. There were also issues regarding the cost of processing and whether it could be recycled or just used as aggregate.
- Recycling of energy efficient light bulbs – there was currently the facility to do this at Household Waste Sorting Sites.
- Landfill costs were currently £56 per tonne with a gate fee of £24 per tonne. In relation to the Local Authority Benchmarking information, Members recommended the inclusion of landfill costs as a comparable measurement.
- That the areas for the fortnightly recycling and residual waste collections pilot scheme during 2012/13 had not yet been identified.
- Recycling of food waste – the pilot carried out in Rothwell had been successful. It was reported that over ten percent of waste sent to landfill was food waste. The recycling pilot took cooked as well as uncooked waste.
- The need to continue promoting the method of composting and publicise the Council's existing scheme for providing compost bins.
- That an update on the implementation of recommendations arising from the earlier Scrutiny Inquiry into Recycling needs to be brought to a future meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted.

75 Car Parking Update

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development provided Members with an update in relation to the Council's car parking charges and provision as requested by the Board.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor M Dobson, Executive Member for Environmental Services
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Graham Wilson, Environmental Health Manager
- Mark Jefford, Parking Manager
- Robin Coghlan, Team Leader (Policy), City Development

Members were informed that the Scrutiny Board (Sustainable Economy and Culture) was undertaking an Inquiry into travel movements within the City and whilst this did not make reference to car parking there would be opportunity to dovetail the findings of any separate review around car parking into this Inquiry.

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

- In relation to Woodhouse Lane Car Park, 6 floors of capacity was closed during a period of repair and improvement works.
- Price was not the main determining factor in influencing people where to park. National research showed location and security were considered to be more important.
- It was felt to be cost prohibitive to install ticket machines that accepted card payment.
- The Council owned twenty six percent of car parks in Leeds and aimed to set prices slightly lower than privately owned car parks.
- The long term policy of the Council was to develop distinct short stay and long stay car parks in the City.
- Regulation of private car parks on undeveloped land to ensure physical and qualitative improvements.
- Impact of the New Generation Transport and other major transport schemes.
- Park and Ride schemes.
- It was anticipated that the Car Parking Strategy would be taken to Executive Board around the middle of the year.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report and discussion be noted.
- (2) That a Working Group be arranged to discuss further the approach of the Council in relation to Car Parking.

76 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development detailed the Board's work schedule. Also attached were copies of recent Executive Board Minutes and a copy of the Forward Plan relating to the Board's portfolio.

Members were informed that there would be a meeting of the Fuel Poverty Working Group on Wednesday, 1 February at 10.00 a.m.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted

77 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 13 February 2012 at 10.00 a.m. (pre-meeting for all Members at 9.30 a.m.)