

SCRUTINY BOARD (SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 12TH MARCH, 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, C Townsley and
N Walshaw

At the start of the meeting, the Chair paid tribute to Graham Wilson, Environmental Health Manager, who sadly passed away on 21st February 2012.

85 Declarations of Interest

Councillor J Hardy declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 7 due to his position as a Director of the West North West Homes ALMO, as did Councillors G Hyde and R Grahame due to their positions as Directors of the East North East Homes ALMO.

86 Minutes - 13 February 2012

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

87 Local Lettings Policies Annual Review

The report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods provided information on the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 relating to age discrimination and on the outcome of the annual review of the Local Lettings Policies. The provisions of the Equality Act relating to age were expected to come into force from April 2012 and the ALMOs and BITMO completed their reviews on this basis.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Kathryn Bramall, Leeds Homes Policy Manager
- Gerard Tinsdale, Area Manager – East North East Homes Leeds
- Richard Walker, Head of Tenancy Management and Customer Services, West North West Homes Leeds
- Simon Costigan, Chief Executive of Aire Valley Homes Leeds

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

- It was reported that the provisions of the Equality Act relating to age discrimination would be delayed to October 2012 at the earliest.
- Reference was made to the partnership working with Police in relation to those lettings policies that have adopted the 'Good Neighbourhood' criteria aimed at tackling particular 'hotspot' areas in terms of burglary
- Age restricted lettings – issues discussed included flexibility around current restrictions and confirmation that whilst preference for sheltered housing is given to customers aged 60 and over, these are not classed as local lettings policies.
- Tenant mapping exercise – a lot of work had been undertaken by the ALMOs in relation to profiling tenants.
- Impact of the Welfare Reforms and the need to create more sustainable communities.
- Working proactively with problem families via the Signpost project.
- The rights of tenants in terms of the succession of tenancies.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted.

88 2011/12 Quarter 3 Performance Report

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access and Performance) provided a summary of the quarter 3 performance data relevant to the Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities).

Councillor Mark Dobson, Executive Member for Environmental Services and Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods were in attendance for this item.

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

- Empty council properties above shops – it was agreed to provide the Board with information on this. The total number of void properties was currently approximately 1.2% which was the lowest it had ever been.
- Burglary reduction – Leeds was still performing poorly against comparator cities but there had been a continued reduction. Members requested that this data be included in future performance reports. Members also discussed the fitting of new style locks to properties and the Community Action and Support Against Crime (CASAC) scheme.
- Refuse collection – issues surrounding the Council's refuse vehicles and back up teams. Reference was also made to the collection of bulky waste, commercial waste and fly tipping.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted.

89 Financial Health Monitoring 2011/12

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

Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment and Neighbourhoods, and Councillor Mark Dobson, Executive Member for Environmental Services were in attendance for this item.

Issues discussed in relation to the report included the following:

- Overspend on staffing – this was affected by various issues including a delay in restructures and additional support for the refuse service.
- Overall savings to be made across the Council following staff restructures.
- The Directorate was trying to accommodate a £9 million budget reduction this year and would need to save a further £4.5 million next year.
- Members requested further information on the previous years budget in relation to staffing costs and also the projections for the next year.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted.

90 Recommendation Tracking

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development set out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny review of the phase 2 Dog Control Orders.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Mark Dobson – Executive Member for Environmental Services
- Tom Smith - Locality Manager, South and Outer East Leeds
- Paul Spandler – Service Manager, South and Outer East Leeds Service Team

Members agreed the progress made on all the recommendations detailed within the report with the exception of Recommendation 9 which related to the additional use of Dog Control Orders within parks and playing pitches that are used by Schools that have no on-site green space. In particular, exploring the use of the Dogs on Leeds at all Times Order for such areas..

In response to Members comments and questions regarding Recommendation 9, the following issues were discussed:

- Members were informed that schools that use parks and playing pitches in lieu of their own on-site green space should have a formal agreement with Parks and Countryside Services to do so. It was highlighted that Parks and Countryside Services had no evidence that

there is a greater problem with dog fouling in the parks formally used by schools.

- That further to legal advice that had been given to the Project Board on the issue, the Project Board had considered it more appropriate to undertake targeted enforcement of the existing Dog Fouling Order within such parks than to introduce further Orders. Members sought clarification of the legal advice provided to the Project Board.
- Members felt that the council had a duty of care towards those school children that used these parks and therefore requested further action.
- Further to the concerns raised by the Scrutiny Board, Councillor Dobson agreed to re-visit the matter again with officers and to report back to Scrutiny early in the new municipal year.
- It was suggested that Recommendation 9 be re-categorised to Category 5 (Progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring).

RESOLVED –

- i) That the report and discussion be noted.
- ii) That Recommendation 9 be re-categorised to Category 5 and further information be brought to the Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities) early in the new municipal year.

91 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 final meeting of the Fuel Poverty Working Group on Tuesday, 20 March 2012 at 10 am.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted

92 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 3rd April 2012 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.)