

SCRUTINY BOARD (HOUSING AND REGENERATION)

TUESDAY, 26TH MARCH, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors D Collins, P Grahame, M Iqbal,
S Lay, M Lyons, V Morgan, D Nagle and
C Towler

Mr G Hall – Co-opted Member

102 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the March meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration).

103 Late Items

There were no formal late items of business to consider, however the Chair agreed to accept the following as supplementary information:-

- Executive Board – Minutes of a Meeting held on 13th March 2013 (Agenda Item 9)(Minute 109 refers)

The document was not available at the time of the agenda despatch, but made available to the public on the Council's website.

104 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary and other interests declared at the meeting.

105 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors J Cummins and G Wilkinson.

Notification had been received for Councillor M Lyons to substitute for Councillor J Cummins.

106 Minutes - 26th February 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th February 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

107 Scrutiny Inquiry - Strategic Partnership Boards

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development referred to the remit of the Scrutiny Board to act as the 'critical friend' to the Housing and Regeneration Strategic Partnership Board. In doing so, the Board was asked to consider the strengths of this particular Partnership Board and also identify potential areas for development. To assist the Scrutiny Board, a background report was also provided by the Housing and Regeneration Board entitled 'Scrutiny Inquiry – Strategic Partnership Boards - Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods'.

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:-

- Councillor P Gruen, Executive Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- Councillor R Lewis, Executive Member, Development and the Economy
- Mr Martin Farrington, Director of City Development
- Ms Christine Addison, Chief Regeneration Officer/Acting Chief Asset Management Officer, City Development
- Ms Maggie Gjessing, Housing Investment Manager, City Development

Prior to presenting the report, the Director of City Development conveyed an apology received from Neil Evans, Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing.

The Director of City Development introduced the report and highlighted and commented on the challenge of achieving growth in the current housing market. He stated that 3,828 housing units had been delivered in 2008/09 but this had fallen to 1,700 in 2010/11 and had risen to 1,931 in 2011/12. However, the latest figure of 1,200 houses delivered in 2012/13 was only 52% of what the target was in the Council's core strategy and therefore there were significant areas of improvement to be made. Whilst the Council had significant influence it was not within its power to deliver the homes required. As the Council is the lead agency, the largest land owner and the planning and highways authority it has considered how it could facilitate housing growth. To this end it had developed a series of initiatives and mechanisms including the

- development of the brownfield land programme
- older peoples housing and care programme
- facilitation of self-build schemes
- reviewed its policies on affordable housing

Finally, the Director of City Development referred to the membership of the Housing and Regeneration Strategic Partnership Board and in particular to the importance of having Building Society representation on the Board as mortgage access was one of the key factors to housing growth.

The Chief Regeneration Officer gave the Board a brief update on the background and membership of the Housing and Regeneration Strategic Partnership Board. She stated that the strength of the Board was the range of its members but advised the meeting that it remained difficult to engage the private sector in its work. Specific reference was made to the

- work of the board's Sub Groups, namely the East Leeds Regeneration Board and the Housing Forum
- Council's City Priority Plan target for affordable housing in 2012/13 of 525 and the likely outcome of just under 500 affordable homes being delivered

- target set for reducing the number of empty properties by 2,200 and the likely outcome being 2,300
- various energy efficiency targets which would be met this year

The Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services stated that he was satisfied with how the Housing Forum was working and the fact that there was now one voice for housing in the city. It had good representation from the private sector and the Housing Associations. The meetings were not officer led and any Member of the Board could place items on the agenda and present reports. He then referred to the East Leeds Regeneration Board and acknowledged that it had taken sometime to reach an accord and clarity as to the direction it wanted to move towards. It was clear that any development in East Leeds was dependent upon having the necessary infrastructure in place. Finally, he referred to the difficulties of selecting representation from the private sector on the Board. It was clear that developers were often not without prejudice and pursue their development interests. He stated that membership remained an issue and that the group was still emerging and that further work needed to be undertaken to develop relationships further.

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

- Acknowledgement of the benefits that this Partnership Board had brought in terms of bringing together Councillors with other partners, including those from the voluntary sector
- Clarification as to why there was no mention of the work of the North East Quadrant Forum in the report which included representation from East Leeds Parish Councils, local schools and ward members and was chaired by Councillor P Grahame
(The Director of City Development responded and acknowledged the valued work that was being undertaken by the Forum)
- How brownfield sites could be redeveloped to reduce the pressure on greenfield sites?
(The Director of City Development referred to the development of the 10 year Brownfield land programme which would require more bespoke measures to make brownfield sites more attractive to developers. This could include attracting new house builders to the city and encouraging niche house builders more suited to developing smaller and more difficult sites)
- Reference to the fact that whilst planning approvals had been given for a number of housing developments in East Leeds, they were subject to the development of the East Leeds Orbital Route (ELOR) and Manston Lane and other improvements in order to secure the 12,500 jobs on offer in East Leeds
(The Executive Board Member Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services acknowledged the importance of getting the necessary infrastructure in place in East Leeds in order to unlock the land that already had planning approval for housing development. He stated that

the Director of City Development was currently leading on a feasibility study on the financing of the ELOR)

- Reference to the Carla11 judgement and the fact that despite phases 2 and 3 greenfield sites being released three years ago to provide 12,000 homes there were no sites 'shovel ready' for development
- The need to challenge developers to increase their build out rates on sites currently averaging say 30 to 40 homes per year per site to 60 to 80 homes per year
- Whether the Home Builders Federation would be more representative of the house builders on the Housing and Regeneration Strategic Partnership Board and Sub Groups
(The Director of City Development agreed that this would be considered)
- Whether decontamination of brownfield sites funded by the Council would be sufficient to make sites more viable for development
(The Director of City Development stated that decontamination alone would not be sufficient. What was needed was a range of initiatives. He referred to the government decision to offer home buyers a 20% interest free 5 year loan that would provide buyers with a substantial initial deposit and make brownfield sites more viable)
- Reference to affordable housing and the view that some officers were taking a firm line on the percentage of affordable homes required for developments within the 'golden triangle' and were none negotiable. This was of particular concern if developers had not had previous dealings with the Council and were put off at the first hurdle by such an inflexible approach
(The Director of City Development recognised this concern and agreed that every request required a proactive, considered and in depth response in order to achieve the best and most effective outcomes)
- Concern that the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) has no democratic accountability and no formal decision making powers. Although there were planning approvals for 21,000 housing units the SHLAA had accepted the view of developers that 8,000 units were not achievable for development
(The Executive Board Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services reported that a paper would shortly be presented to the Executive Board that reviews the membership, operation and terms of reference of this group. The Chair referred to the Scrutiny Board meeting on 30th October 2012 which expressed concerns as to whether the SHLAA was fit for purpose and welcomed the Executive Board Members intervention on this matter)
- The approval of the Executive Board to accept a request from the Homes and Community Agency (HCA) that the Council transfer four Listed Buildings into its ownership at Tower Works, Globe Road, Holbeck. The transfer of the buildings would be accompanied by a financial dowry funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government and will result in the City Council and HCA working in partnership to bring forward the redevelopment of Tower Works and the wider Holbeck Urban Village

- Members noted that many of the views and recommendations of the Scrutiny Board on housing growth, re-development of brownfield sites, development of greenfield sites and concerns over the SHLAA process had been acknowledged by the relevant Executive Members. A number of initiatives had been progressed and approved by the Executive Board which were supported by this Scrutiny Board.
- Taking a firm line on the percentage of affordable homes required for developments within the 'golden triangle' and were none negotiable.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the reports be noted.
- b) That the Scrutiny Board continues to monitor progress in delivering the development of the brownfield land programme which it strongly supports.
- c) That the Director of City Development consider the Board's suggestion that the Home Builders Federation might be a more appropriate body to represent house builders on the Housing and Regeneration Strategic Partnership Board and Sub Groups.
- d) That the Scrutiny Board welcomes confirmation by the Executive Board Member (Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services) that the Executive Board would shortly consider a report reviewing the membership, operation and terms of reference of the Strategic Housing and Land Availability Assessment.
- e) To note that the Director of City Development acknowledged the Board's concerns that some officers were taking a firm line on the percentage of affordable homes required for developments within the 'golden triangle' and were none negotiable and instead every request by developers ought to be proactive, considered and given an in depth response that would achieve the best and most effective outcomes for the city.
- f) To support the initiative to bring forward the redevelopment of Tower Works and the wider Holbeck Urban Village.
- g) That the Scrutiny Board's observations and recommendations would be provided to the Partnership Board and would also inform the wider Scrutiny report to Council in relation to the Strategic Partnership Boards.

(Councillor M Iqbal joined the meeting at 10.20am during discussions of the above item)

(Councillor M Lyons left the meeting at 11.00am at the conclusion of this item)

108 2012/13 Quarter 3 Performance Report

The Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access and Performance) submitted a report providing a summary of performance against the strategic priorities for the council and city relating to the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board.

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/comment of the meeting:-

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Tuesday, 30th April, 2013

- City Priority Plan Performance Report – 2012/13 Quarter 3
- 2012/13 Directorate Scorecard – Quarter 3 2012-13

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:-

- Councillor P Gruen, Executive Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- Ms Christine Addison, Chief Regeneration Officer/Acting Chief Asset Management Officer, City Development
- Ms Maggie Gjessing, Housing Investment Manager, City Development

Prior to discussing the report, the Executive Board Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services informed the meeting that it was his intention to develop and refresh the key performance indicators in an attempt to make them more meaningful.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, welcomed this proposal which was also supported by the Chief Regeneration Officer who agreed to liaise with the Executive Board Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services on the timescales involved with a view to providing a report on this issue at the next Board meeting in April 2013.

The Chief Regeneration Officer presented the report and provided the meeting with the latest figures and targets in relation to such key issues as the number of new homes and affordable homes that had been built, the reduction in the number of empty properties and energy conservation measures completed.

Specific reference was made to the Green Deal and that a report would be submitted to a future Executive Board meeting on this matter.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report and appendices.

In summary, specific reference was made to a number of issues including:-

- Clarification of proposals in relation to the New Homes Bonus in 2014
- Clarification if the empty homes referred to in the report were privately owned
(The Chief Regeneration Officer responded and confirmed that the empty homes were privately owned)
- The need for the Board to revisit the ownership of properties and shops with a view to bringing council properties back into the housing stock
- Clarification of pepper potting in relation to the type of affordable housing where it was delivered on site through s106 agreements
- Clarification if the authority met the EU Energy Efficiency objectives in relation to Council non-housing property

(The Chief Regeneration Officer responded and agreed to ask colleagues in Neighbourhoods and Housing to investigate this issue and provide a written response to Members of the Board)

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- b) That an initial report on how a review of the current performance indicators might be achieved to make the data more meaningful be submitted to the next Scrutiny Board meeting on 30th April 2013.

109 Work Schedule

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the Scrutiny Board's work programme for the current municipal year.

Appended to the report was a copy of the following documents for the information/comment of the meeting:

- Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration) Work Schedule for 2012/2013 Municipal Year (Appendix 1 refers)
- Executive Board – Minutes of a Meeting held on 13th March 2013 (Appendix 2 refers)

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser, Scrutiny Support presented the report and responded to Members' queries and comments.

The Chair made specific reference to the newly opened Trinity Shopping development within the city centre and raised his concerns as to what would happen to those shops/businesses which had been vacated as a result of relocating to major shopping developments. He requested a report at the next meeting of the Board in April 2013 on the engagement process that had taken place between the Council and affected businesses and land owners. He also made reference to Hammersons and development of the Eastgate Quarter and requested that the same information be incorporated in to the report to assist Board Members with their deliberations on this issue.

In concluding discussions, Mr G Hall referred to the Local Enterprise Partnership and requested that this issue be tied in with the report referred to above. The Principal Scrutiny Adviser responded and informed the meeting that on going discussions were being held with representatives from the Local Enterprise Partnership in relation to agreeing a convenient date for the organisation to attend a future Board meeting.

RESOLVED -

- a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- b) That the work schedule be approved as now outlined.
- c) That the Director of City Development submit a report to the next Scrutiny Board meeting on 30th April 2013 on what engagement there had been with building owners in the city centre following the opening of Trinity Leeds where businesses had vacated premises to relocate to

this prestigious development. Similarly what engagement would there be with building owners where tenants vacate their premises to move to the Eastgate Quarter once completed. What were the projections for both these developments attracting new businesses and how many businesses were likely to close and relocate to the new developments? What was being done to prevent the decline of shopping areas that were vacated by branded names?

110 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday 30th April 2013 at 10.00am in the Civic Hall, Leeds
(Pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.30am)

(The meeting concluded at 11.45am)