

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 22ND MARCH, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors C Beverley, A Blackburn,
S Golton, P Gruen, J McKenna, T Murray,
F Robinson and P Wadsworth

91 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the March meeting of the Scrutiny Board (City Services).

He informed the meeting that Paul Markham, Head of Highways Services, City Services Department would be retiring today after 40 years service with the Council. On behalf of the Board, the Chair paid tribute to him for all the work and support he had given to this Scrutiny Board and the Council.

In concluding, the Chair and Members of the Board wished him well for the future.

Helen Finister, Chief Officer, Streetscene, City Services Department was in attendance and outlined the interim acting up arrangements within the department, as a consequence of his retirement and having regard to the current restructuring of the Council, following which she agreed to e mail details to Board Members for their information/retention.

92 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

93 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was made on behalf of Councillor J Jarosz.

94 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd February 2007 be approved as a correct record.

95 Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 5th February and 5th March 2007 be received and noted.

96 Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP)

The Director of City Services submitted a report on the Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP).

The purpose of the report was to advise the Board of the progress being made towards publishing a Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP).

Helen Finister, Chief Officer, Streetscene, City Services Department and Helen Franklin, Acting Head of Highways Services, City Services Department were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments.

In summary, specific reference was made to the following issues:-

General Issues

- clarification of the next steps in respect of approving and publishing the Highways Asset Management Plan
*(The Board noted that the department would be arranging **workshops/seminars** in the summer on the overriding parent document of the Highways Asset Management Plan in order to engage contributors including Members of the Council)*
- clarification of **joint working arrangements with partner authorities**
(The Acting Head of Highways Services confirmed that joint working across the Council departments and with our partner authorities was essential in developing the parent and sibling documents. The Acting Head of Highways Services referred to the West Yorkshire working group which she Chair's and which was established to ensure a consistent approach by authorities in developing their individual reports on HAMP as part of the Local Transport Plan (LTP2) submission in 2005. She stated that the Council leads on this issue as much was already imbedded in our policies and procedures)
- clarification of the **quality of materials used in road repairs**
(The Acting Head of Highways Services reported that trials using different repair materials had been inconclusive and were more expensive. She reported that the importance of quality control was deemed effective to ensure that the repair was properly compacted which would increase the life expectancy of the repair)

Street Signage Issues

- clarification as to whether the department had consulted Board Members in respect of the sibling document for street name plates which had now been completed and the need for Members to be supplied with this information
(The Acting Head of Highways Services agreed to provide Members of the Board with details)
- clarification as to the feasibility of **erecting street nameplates on both sides of the road** and the policy for **repairing and replacing street nameplates**
(The Acting Head of Highways Services responded and agreed to consult with the Traffic Engineering Manager with a view to a report being submitted on these issues at a future Board meeting)
- clarification of the **cleaning programme** currently undertaken by the department in respect to **street signs and illuminated street signs**

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (b) That the Traffic Engineering Manager be requested to bring a report back on the issues identified above to a future meeting of the Scrutiny

Board and that the Acting Head of Highways Services be also requested to send details on the sibling street name plates document to Board Members.

(Councillor S Golton joined the meeting at 11.05am during discussion of the above item)

(Councillor A Blackburn joined the meeting at 11.10am during discussion of the above item)

97 **Traffic Management Act 2004**

The Director of City Services submitted a report on the development of the Traffic Management Act 2004.

Helen Finister, Chief Officer, Streetscene, City Services Department; Helen Franklin, Acting Head of Highways Services, City Services Department and Andrew Molyneux, Highways Planning Engineer, City Services Department were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments.

In summary, specific reference was made to the following issues:-

General Highway Issues

- clarification of the ways in which forthcoming changes in legislation governing streetworks under the Traffic Management Act 2004 could be used to ensure suggested **highway works don't unnecessarily impede traffic flows**
- the balance to be achieved to enable **statutory undertakers** to carry out **essential repairs** whilst keeping traffic moving in the city
- clarification of the audit arrangements in place to ensure delivery of the authorities duty under this legislation
(The Highways Planning Engineer referred to the Department for Transport's criteria for intervention under this Act and confirmed that the first audit would be carried out in 2008)
- the development of **Leeds Travel Information website** and its expansion to include CCTV footage and mobile phone access

Utilities/Road work issues

- the need to ensure that **enforcement action** was taken against **statutory undertakers** who carry out road works beyond the date registered on the network management system and **vehicle owners** who park on the highway illegally causing obstruction particularly at peak times
- details of the **finest imposed on utility companies** who exceed the registered date
- the view that the department should also give **advance warning of road works** via public notices in addition to providing details on the internet
- examples cited where action was needed to be taken against contractors and statutory undertakers who disregard the **safety of pedestrians** (including those with disabilities) when carrying out repairs

(The Chief Officer, Streetscene responded to these concerns and assured Members that where incidents are reported they were followed up and actioned appropriately, but resources were limited)

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (b) That a progress report on this issue be submitted to a future meeting of the Board.

98 City Services Newsletter - 'City Scene'

The Director of City Services submitted a report evaluating the benefits of staff newsletters and the magazine 'City Scene' against expenditure involved.

Randal Brown, Director of City Services; Tom Smith, Head of Performance Management, City Services Department and Emma Kennedy, Senior Communications Officer, City Services Department were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments.

In summary, specific reference was made to the following issues:-

Staff Feedback/Distribution Issues

- the view expressed that feedback should be sought from staff as to the value of this publication and further clarification as to how this publication was distributed
(The Board noted that the department had previously attached copies of the newsletter to wage slips, but this practice had recently ceased following a charge imposed by the Employee Administration Service (EAS) and that e mail was not always the best solution in view of the diversity of staff working in the department. Postage was only used as a last resort)

Environmental Issues

- the view of a Member that whilst accepting that the paper used for "City Scene" included a percentage of recycled paper, the production techniques to produce a glossy finish required the use of a number of chemicals
(The Director of City Services responded that this was the only publication his department produced on glossy recycled paper as a quality publication conveyed the right message to staff)

Value for Money Issues

- the overall view expressed by Board Members that 'City Scene' was a high quality, highly effective internal communications mechanism within the department where the benefits of a departmental newsletter outweigh the relatively **low cost** of production and distribution

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

99 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny Support and Member Development submitted a report on the Board's work programme.

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

- (a) Scrutiny Board (City Services) – Work Programme (Appendix 1 refers)
- (b) Leeds City Council – Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st March 2007 to 30th June 2007 (Appendix 2 refers)

Randal Brown, Director of City Services was in attendance.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- (b) That approval be given to the work programme for the April meeting as now reported and that other outstanding issues be referred to the relevant Scrutiny Board for consideration in the new Municipal year.
- (c) That progress on the Board's recommendations be reported at the next meeting during consideration of the Board's draft Annual report.

100 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board (City Services) be held on Thursday 19th April 2007 commencing at 10.00 am in the Civic Hall, Leeds (Pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.30 am)

(The meeting concluded at 12.15pm)