

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

THURSDAY, 9TH JANUARY, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, A Blackburn,
A Gabriel, A Khan, M Harland, N Sharpe,
K Brooks, T Smith and D Jenkins

63 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal.

64 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no exempt information.

65 Late Items

There were no late items.

66 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

67 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bentley, Collins, Grahame and Gruen.

Councillor Jenkins attended as a substitute for Councillor Gruen.

68 Minutes - 3 December 2019

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held 3rd December 2019, be approved as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

Minute 59 – *Disposal of Green Spaces*. Members were informed that an invitation had been sent out to Members of the three Scrutiny Boards (Environment, Housing and Communities, Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth and Strategy and Resources) in regard to a joint working group to be held 27th January 2020 2-4pm.

Minute 60 – *Anti-social use of fireworks*. Members were informed that a working group had been proposed for the 9th March 2020 10am – 12pm, and invitations would be sent in due course.

69 Financial Inclusion and Universal Credit Update

The Chief Officer Customer Access and Welfare submitted a report that provided Members with an updated position on the roll out of Universal Credit (UC), a year on from the introduction of full service in Leeds.

Appended to the report included:

- Universal Credit Claimants by Ward and Community Committee
- Citizen's Advice Enquiries
- Welfare Rights UC enquiries by ward
- Financial Inclusion Update – Executive Board Report 19th September 2019

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Jo Rowlands, Financial Inclusion Manager
- Mandy Sawyer, Head of Neighbourhood Services
- Kevin Bruce, Service Manager
- Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer Customer Access and Welfare
- Nick Hart, Deputy Head Customer Contact
- Simon Betts, DWP
- Allison France, DWP
- Nick Morgan, Chapelton CAB

The officers in attendance provided Members with a presentation highlighting some background context of UC, the National Policy Changes in 2019 and Key Statistics in regard to LCC Welfare and Benefits, LCC Housing, DWP and Citizens Advice. Members heard that issues remain outstanding with the Advanced Payments Process, residents receiving incorrect advice to claim for UC and those residents whom remain in vulnerable situations requiring assistance to deal with their claims.

Members' discussed a number of matters including:

- *Out of Hours queries provision.* Members were informed that 37 Community Hubs across the city provided free public access to phones with a direct CAB hotline. In regard to the DWP, a service was available until 6.30 p.m.; the service had been considering an online service subject to a need being identified.
- *Pre-existing debt.* A Member raised concerns in regard to the UC advanced payments, and whether pre-existing debt had been taken into consideration to alleviate further debt concerns. Members were informed that a comprehensive review is undertaken prior to lending, and subject to the outcome, the resident could be referred to further services around the city. Further to this, the Executive Member for Communities suggested that residents who are being impacted from UC, be provided with the opportunity to attend a future Scrutiny Board meeting.
- *Food poverty.* A Member queried the mechanisms in place to help support foodbanks, and whether data could be provided per ward. In responding, the Board heard that due to the various 'in-formal'

foodbanks (churches, schools and charity organisations), it would be difficult to produce such data. Further to this, the Board were informed a report on Food Insecurity was expected at a future Executive Board meeting.

Members of the Board welcomed the collaborative approach taken by partners in the city to support those Leeds residents who have become, or are in the process of becoming, recipients of Universal Credit.

The Board recognised the need for continued Scrutiny, and the Chair proposed its successor Board hold a working group, to hear from those Leeds claimants affected by UC, and that this be prioritised by mid-2020.

RESOLVED – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the contents of the report, along with Members comments raised during the meeting;
- b) Requested that the successor Scrutiny Board undertake a working group to gain insight into the issues claimants are experiencing with UC.

70 Locality Working and Priority Neighbourhoods

The report of the Director of Communities and Environment provided an update on the progress of key developments in 2019 on the implementation of the locality working approach in our most disadvantaged wards and neighbourhoods.

Appended to the report included the Locality Working Strategic Framework; Community Engagement Approaches; Community Committee Activity; and the Draft Priority Area Annual Report 2019.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Shaid Mahmood, Chief Officer Communities
- Elizabeth Jarmin, Head of Stronger Communities
- Martin Dean, Area Leader
- Alison Szustakowski, Localities Programme Manager
- Andrew Birkbeck, Localities Programme Manager
- Jane Pattison, Localities Programme Manager
- Stuart Byrne, Localities Programme Manager

The Chief Officer Communities provided Members with a presentation highlighting:

- The progress of work in priority neighbourhoods and target wards and the themes that have emerged;
- The application of the principles of locality working using examples from work programmes to articulate good practice;
- Ongoing challenges and the 'Big Asks' that have been made to the council's directorates through the Neighbourhood Improvement Board (NIB);

- The emerging performance management framework for locality working;
- Key achievements 2018/19.

In addition, officers in attendance briefly provided the Board with an update of the work undertaken in 2019, highlighting:

- Partnership work with Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust (LTHT)
- New Community Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Leeds Neighbourhood Approach (LNA)
- The plans for demolishing the former Gate pub and establishing an ambitious plan for the site

Members expressed their appreciation for the work undertaken by the Communities Team, in making a difference to those areas of deprivation in Leeds.

Key issues raised in discussions, were as follows:

- The Board discussed CCTV service charges, and the on-going work being undertaken in order to transform the service digitally.
- A Member sought clarity on the long term comprehensive solution to the challenge of Kingsdale Court. The Board were informed work is undergoing to look at different approaches for the site, and proposals would be brought back to the Scrutiny Board at a later date.
- The Board discussed the Councils engagement with local and national businesses, and the work on-going cross directorate and with the Leeds Business Innovation District (BID).
- Members were informed that detailed guidance could be provided in regard to the Rethink Formulation – Leeds Model. Members were keen to understand how the formulation provided a consistent and clear model for developing a shared understanding of a family and their presenting issues.
- Particular reference was made to the lack of involvement GP's had at the Neighbourhood Improvement Boards (NIBs). Members heard that discussions had taken place, for GP's to attend the Holbeck NIB, and an update would be provided at the 6 NIBs. Furthermore, the Executive Board Member for Communities suggested that the report be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board to consider involvement, in tackling health inequalities in the most deprived areas of Leeds.
- Members discussed the changes in the Indices of Deprivation for Leeds, and queried the timeliness of expanding the remit of work into other priority neighbourhoods. The Executive Member for Communities explained that with the resources available, 6 out of the 16 priority neighbourhoods had been focused on; the team will be working efficiently in order to effectively move on to the others.

The Chair proposed that the Scrutiny Advisor in conjunction with the Chair, write to the Health and Wellbeing Board, to suggest providing an input into this area of work as part of their agenda.

RESOLVED – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the contents of the report, along with Members comments raised during the meeting;
- b) Requested that the Board recommends to the Health and Well-Being Board that the report is considered by its members with a view to determining whether the Board can take action to support the work of the Neighbourhood Improvement Board.
- c) All Scrutiny Boards to be made aware of the report by the Chair of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board in order to identify opportunities to support the activity and best practice set out in the report.

71 Referral to Scrutiny: River Cleanliness

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented a referral for Scrutiny, alongside some background information to help inform the Board's consideration.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Lamb, referrer
- Jonathan Moxon, Floor Risk Manager
- Councillor Rafique, Executive Board Member for Environment and Communities

The referral for Scrutiny was submitted as follows:

To consider an inquiry to look at how plastic pollution can be reduced in the River Wharfe, how relevant agencies such as the Council, Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water can co-ordinate their efforts more effectively, whether the local treatment plant upgrade is operating effectively to deal with sewage, how effective storm collecting tanks are and how the public and businesses can be encouraged to reduce plastic waste getting into the river network.

Councillor Lamb presented the request for Scrutiny to the Board, and expressed his concern in regard to the large amounts of plastics and raw sewage being deposited into the waterways; and the negative impact this had on eco-systems. Councillor Lamb further explained difficulties of meeting with third sector organisations, such as Yorkshire Water, and asked the Scrutiny Board to further this investigation. Members heard that a deputation came to Full Council on 13th November 2019, raising concerns about plastics, raw sewage and wider pollution in the River Wharf; a response had yet to be provided.

In responding, the Flood Risk Manager informed the Board that the paper in response to the deputation hadn't been finalised, but confirmed it contained information such as an extension programme, in order to engage local people to coordinate and facilitate activities. It was confirmed that the Council have minimal powers in the action that can be taken; the involvement of third party organisations is critical in securing a response to the challenges identified.

Members acknowledged the importance of resolving the problem, further agreeing that deferring the matter for Scrutiny until the Board meeting in March provides the opportunity for the deputation response to be received, and meetings to take place with those third party organisations.

RESOLVED – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):
a) That the contents of the report, along with Members comments, be noted;
b) That the matter be deferred for consideration by the Scrutiny Board (EHC), by March 2020.

72 Financial Health Monitoring

The report of the Head of Democratic Services, provided Board Members with information with regard to the financial health of those service areas that fall within the remit of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board.

Information for Month 7 of the financial year, was appended to the report.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor Lewis, Executive Member for Resources
- Neil Evans, Director Resources and Housing
- Paul Money, Chief Officer Safer Leeds
- Michael Everitt, Head of Finance
- Kevin Mulvaney, Head of Finance

RESOLVED - The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) noted the contents of the report and the appended documents.

73 Initial Budget Proposals 2020/21

The report of the Head of Democratic Services, set out a report for the budget proposals 2020/21.

The proposals had been considered at the Executive Board meeting on 7th January 2020, and would be re-submitted to Executive Board, following Scrutiny considerations in line with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework; for the approval of the budget.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor Lewis, Executive Member for Resources
- Neil Evans, Director Resources and Housing
- Paul Money, Chief Officer Safer Leeds
- Michael Everitt, Head of Finance
- Kevin Mulvaney, Head of Finance

RESOLVED - The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) noted the contents of the attached Executive Board report.

74 Best Council Plan Performance Report Quarter 2 2019/20

The report of the Director of Resources and Housing and Director of Communities and Environment provided a summary of the Best Council Plan (BCP) performance data for Quarter 2 2019/20.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor Rafique, Executive Member for Environment and Active Lifestyles
- James Rogers, Director Communities and Environment
- Neil Evans, Director Resources and Housing
- Jill Wildman, Chief Officer, Housing Management

RESOLVED - The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) noted the contents of the report and the appended documents.

75 Best Council Plan Refresh

The report of the Head of Democratic Services, advised Members of an approach to refresh the Best Council Plan for the period 2020/21 to 2024/25.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Lewis, Executive Member for Resources
- Coral Main, Head of Business Planning and Risk

RESOLVED - The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) noted the contents of the attached Executive Board report.

76 Work Schedule

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's schedule for the 2019/20 municipal year. Copies of the draft work schedule and the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held Monday, 25th November 2019 were appended to the report.

Members discussed the items on the upcoming work schedule, including working groups for:

- Disposal of Green Spaces 27th January 2-4pm;
- Car Parking Policy – 17th February 12.30 – 2.30pm;
- Community Impact of Nuisance Fireworks – 9th March 10am – 12pm.

RESOLVED – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the matters outlined in the report
- b) Noted the Executive Board minutes
- c) Agreed the overall work schedule

77 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note the date and time of the next meeting as 6th February 2020 at 10.00 p.m.

(The meeting concluded at 13:00)