

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

21ST JUNE, 2011

A MEETING of the REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the MANSION HOUSE, DONCASTER on TUESDAY 21ST JUNE, 2011 at 10.00 A.M.

PRESENT :

Chair – Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors Jill Arkley-Jevons, Joe Blackham, Marilyn Green, Deborah Hutchinson, Ted Kitchen, David Nevett, John Sheppard and Yvonne Woodcock.

Also in Attendance :

Paul Smillie – Unite

Councillor Ray Mullis, Cabinet Member, Housing

Councillor Cynthia Ransome, Cabinet Member, Communities; Street Scene; Environment Protection

Councillors Sue Wilkinson and Bob Johnson

Ian Brittain, Performance and Compliance Manager, SLHD

Judith Jones, Director of Housing Services, SLHD

Alan Lowther, Performance and Improvement Consultant

Peter Dale, Director Regeneration and Environment

Drew Oxley, Acting Head, Trading Services

Gill Gillies, Assistant Director, Environment

Gary Wells, Assistant Director, Strategic Housing

Scott Cardwell, Assistant Director, Development

Laura Greenwood, St Leger Scrutiny Panel - Observer

Alan Sherratt, St Leger Scrutiny Panel - Observer

Maureen Tennison, St Leger Scrutiny Panel - Observer

Linzi Clarke, St Leger Scrutiny Panel - Observer

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from the Vice-Chair, Councillor Richard Cooper-Holmes and Councillor Barry Johnson JP.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

ACTION

All to note

2. MINUTES OF THE JOINT ECONOMY AND ENTERPRISE AND SAFER, STRONGER AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING HELD ON 21ST MARCH, 2011 AND THE ECONOMY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING HELD ON 21ST MARCH, 2011.

Joint Economy and Enterprise and Safer, Stronger and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel 21st March, 2011

Minute 4. Joint Authority PFI Procurement of Waste Treatment Facilities

The Chair asked if the consultation on the potential closure of Household Waste Recycling Centre sites had begun and what the results were.

Gill Gillies, Assistant Director, Environment, informed the Panel that the consultation had not yet taken place and discussions were underway with Councillor Mark Thompson, Cabinet Member, Finance and Corporate Services; Environment; Trading and Support Services but would report back.

All to note

Asst. Director Environment

Minute 41. Procurement and Local Economy

An update had been requested, to include a further breakdown of the Council's purchase spend with local suppliers. Peter Dale, Director, Regeneration and Environment, informed the Panel that work was taking place between the Council and Doncaster Chamber on how to assist businesses and be able to access the Your Build Framework. Gary Wells, Assistant Director, Strategic Housing, reported that a more flexible approach was now being undertaking to assist businesses in the tendering process. The Director, Regeneration and Environment undertook to ask Steve Mawson, Assistant Director, Finance and Performance, to respond to Members outside of this meeting.

Director Regen. Env.

A request was made for more information regarding the finances entering the Chamber of Commerce and the Scrutiny Consultant undertook to enquire if OSMC were looking into this and would report back to the Panel.

Scrutiny Consultant

<p>A Member raised the issue of there being no local purchasing action plan and no set targets and encouraged the Panel to request this information.</p>	<p>All to note</p>
<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the Minutes of the Joint Economy and Enterprise and Safer, Stronger and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting held on 21st March, 2011 and the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting held on 21st March, 2011, be approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.</p>	<p>All to note</p>
<p>4. <u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u></p>	
<p>There were no Public Statements made at the meeting.</p>	<p>All to note</p>
<p>5. <u>TERMS OF REFERENCE 2011/12</u></p>	
<p>The Panel received a report which outlined the Terms of Reference of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel which had been approved at Annual Council on 20th May 2011</p>	
<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the Terms of Reference of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel, be noted.</p>	<p>All to note</p>
<p>6. <u>COUNCILLOR RAY MULLIS - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING</u></p>	
<p>Councillor Ray Mullis, Cabinet Member for Housing, gave a verbal presentation to Members, outlining his priorities in respect of Housing issues.</p>	
<p>Councillor Mullis explained that housing priorities were wide-ranging and addressed the following issues:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to have less empty properties and better standards in private sector housing • more affordable housing and new homes in general • ensure the decency programme was developed • improve the focus on effective governance and performance management of St. Leger Homes by DMBC and to enable St Leger Homes to have more autonomy to deliver • improve the range of housing options for people at threat of homelessness or in housing need 	

- to ensure the Council have the ability to deliver our priorities in accordance with increased value for money and customer satisfaction

Members were pleased to note that the Neighbourhood 'Hit Squad' was now in Bentley as it had proved beneficial in other areas.

The Panel asked questions and responses were received in respect of housing issues and Section 215. Members were advised that S215 gave the power to Local Authorities to improve the quality of the exterior of properties and gardens. A S215 gave residents a certain amount of time to complete work required and if the work had not been completed, the Council would finish the work and charge the resident.

The Director of Regeneration and Environment reported that the number of officers having access to S215 powers was being expanded to include Housing Officers, not just Planning Officers as previously. Members hoped that the S215 system was evaluated and mainstreamed. The Director further reported that there were a few staff in Planning Enforcement and also some staff in housing that would soon have S215 powers. Gill Gillies, Assistant Director, Environment, reported that eventually there will be 10-20 staff trained in S215.

Gary Wells, Assistant Director, Strategic Housing, informed Members that non-residential properties could also be subject to a S215 notice and owners recharged if work was undertaken by the Council. The Assistant Director undertook to report back to Members on the average timescale for a property to be tidied up and the process involved.

Asst. Director
Strat. Hsng

In answer to a Member's question regarding what financial resource underpinned S215, the Assistant Director responded that this was primarily officer time and in actual cash income, there was £67k in the private sector budget. The recoupment of cash may take a while and some works may even have to be written off.

A Member raised concerns that the S215 process would never be truly effective as there were no dedicated resources. The Director responded that most residents, once issued with the threat of S215, completed the outstanding works at no cost to the Council. The Assistant Director reported that 90 letters had been sent out last year and only one had action issued and the resident completed the work themselves.

Councillor Mullis reported on the Windhill development in Mexborough that was developed through Pathfinder and as the Pathfinder Scheme had now ceased, the decency programme would help residents in that area. The Council were also looking at opportunities to release properties in the Borough and were actively looking at private small scale property development.

In answer to a Members question regarding Council garages being replaced with housing, the Assistant Director, Strategic Housing reported that residents had been approached for their local priorities and the Council were working with any developers, housing associations and St Leger Homes (SLH) for affordable homes. He also advised Members that sites had already been started and would be finished this year. The houses were now with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and the Council should find out next month how successful the process was and the Council were now going through the process again for the next phase of sites.

Members were further informed that a complete assessment was done on the garage sites for their suitability for development and the process was in liaison with the Planning Department.

The Assistant Director, Strategic Housing, advised Members that local Ward Members had been approached for their priorities, i.e. affordable housing, non-housing or to be retained as garages.

In respect of assistance for first time buyers, the Assistant Director reported that there was a first time buyer initiative, working with the HC and in July there should be a better understanding of how this was beneficial to Doncaster. In working with new developers, affordable housing was only a proportion, there was also low-cost housing or shared ownership. The Assistant Director undertook to provide details on the mix of sites already in the system and what the mix would be to come in the future.

Asst Director
Strat. Hsng

The Panel were informed that there was a shortage of affordable housing and the Council were looking to increase all housing stock, i.e. HCA, rent, etc. as well as the purchase of private empty homes that would be passed on to SLH to increase the Council stock.

The Chair thanked Councillor Mullis for his priorities and Officers for their responses.

RESOLVED

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| (1) that the verbal presentation from Councillor Ray Mullis be noted; | All to note |
| (2) that the Assistant Director, Strategic Housing, report back to Members on the average timescale for a property to be tidied up and the process involved; | Asst. Director
Strat. Hsng |
| (3) that the Assistant Director provide details on the mix of housing sites already in the system and what the mix would be to come in the future; and | Asst. Director
Strat. Hsng |
| (4) that Councillor Ray Mullis be invited back to a future meeting to update Members on his priorities. | Scrutiny
Consultant |

7. COUNCILLOR CYNTHIA RANSOME, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES

Councillor Cynthia Ransome, Cabinet Member for Communities, Street Scene and Environment Protection, gave a verbal presentation to Members, outlining her priorities as Cabinet Member, which were:

- the setting up of an enforcement team to deal with environmental protection
- the setting up of street scene to enable the delivery of cleaner, better neighbourhoods with better street cleaning, grounds maintenance and these services would improve resident's satisfaction.

Councillor Ransome reported that the Council has all the services available and they need co-ordinating and an integrated enforcement team would bring all the resources together, including the Police etc. The enforcement team would have tasks to complete and would meet on a regular basis.

- the protection of the most vulnerable residents using all the tools and powers available i.e. anti-social behaviour, environmental crime, littering etc.

In answer to the achievability due to staff cuts, Councillor Ransome declared that it was achievable as the team would be more focussed and people would be responsible for the actions agreed and have to report back.

Councillor Ransome reported that there were 3,400 fines issued last year in relation to littering.

Members raised concerns that if the proposals to close dump-it sites went ahead, this would only encourage fly-tipping, which would not be good for the street scene. The Director, Regeneration and Environment reported that a meeting was to be held with Councillor Mark Thompson, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services; Environment; Trading and Support Services, later this week regarding the possible closures and the consultations that would need to take place.

Members were further concerned that the Carcroft site had recently been refurbished yet was now down as a possible closure. Concerns regarding staff at the sites were also raised as the majority do not assist residents with their recycling and this should be a part of their job.

A Member held the opinion that it was time residents took ownership of the street scene and took pride in having clean streets like other countries did. Other Members agreed that residents needed to take personal responsibility for litter.

In answer to a Member's question, if fly-tipping had increased during the time when the Carcroft site was closed for refurbishment and the Assistant Director, Environment, undertook to look at the statistics and report back.

Asst. Director
Environment

The Panel was advised that the statutory amount of household waste recycling centres was one and Doncaster currently had six. It was noted that recycling was cost-effective and the sites were well used but they cost money to run and as an organisation the Council needed to save money. If any sites closed, there would still be a mix of sites around the Borough and discussions would take place with Councillor Mark Thompson to see how he wished to proceed.

A Member reported that a compressor had been hired at the Carcroft site even though the site had mains electricity. The Assistant Director responded that the cost was borne by the waste site contractor, not the Council and the electricity supply was just waiting to be connected.

The Assistant Director reported that the Government had changed the waste strategy and it was currently being looked at and would be brought to Members if required.

A Member expressed displeasure at the imported waste from Sheffield that was gathered at Skelbrooke and would eventually be spread on the land and would contaminate the land. The Member asked why Doncaster was allowing contaminated material from another Borough to be dumped here. The Assistant Director reported that the Sterefibre was a lot of Doncaster's waste and had not yet been licensed to spread on land.

The Chair noted that Councillor Thompson had been invited to attend the August meeting of the Panel. The Assistant Director undertook to bring back a report on Sterefibre and the Environment Agency be invited to attend the meeting also.

Asst. Director
Environment
Scr. Consult.

The Chair thanked Councillor Ransome for her priorities and Officers for their responses.

The Chair reported that she would invite the Cabinet Members back to a future meeting.

Scrutiny
Consultant

RESOLVED

- (1) that the verbal presentation from Councillor Cynthia Ransome be noted;
- (2) the Assistant Director, Environment look at the statistics to see if fly-tipping had increased during the time when the Carcroft site was closed for refurbishment and report back to Members.
- (3) that the Assistant Director, Environment bring back a report on Sterefibre to a future meeting;
- (4) The Environment Agency be invited to attend a future meeting
- (5) that Councillor Ray Mullis be invited back to a future meeting to update Members on his priorities.

All to note

Asst. Director
Environment

Asst. Director
Environment

Scrutiny
Consultant

Scrutiny
Consultant

8. ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT- QUARTER 4, 2010/11

Alan Lowther, Performance and Improvement Consultant introduced this item which informed the panel of the final quarter St. Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD) performance information.

The Consultant reminded Members of the informal Panel meeting held on 26th May that looked at the future of reporting. He advised that the report presentation for 2011/12 would change and in future reports would have a common format. From 2011/12 Quarter 1 report, the future reports for St. Leger Homes would be brought to the Panel by them.

Members were informed that the Regeneration and Environment report usually based on Local Authority agreements and national indicators had now ceased. In future the 2011/12 reports would be based on the Corporate Plan.

The Consultant reported that the majority of indicators had a positive trend, with improvements across all. The one red indicator, SLH_CP2 Decency – Number of Properties Delivered, was 2.5% behind the planned construction programme, as a result of underperformance by Wates Living Space, community issues at Duncroft, the impact of December's inclement weather and the Town Centre Low Rise being 10 units behind programme. This indicator would have been Amber but SLH took out the Amber level. The outstanding completions were still part of live schemes and would continue into 2011/12 as work in progress.

Judith Jones, Director of Housing Services, SLHD, explained that the profiles figure correctly for what was happening in Doncaster and what areas had not improved. If the decency programme could not be carried out due to inability to access the property, the voids would be filled by other areas and other programs. The Director reported that there would be fluidity throughout the year of programs and work to be completed.

In answer to a question regarding residents declining access, the Panel was informed that there had been an issue in the past with Wates development but this had been resolved and the declining of access was often due to vulnerability. It was noted that windows were being replaced in the high rise flats in Balby and residents declining was not allowed and would be enforced through legal action if necessary.

It was noted that SLH_CS8 Complaints Activity – Service failures and SLH_GI1 Total Number of Accidents were new Key Performance Indicators last year so there was no history to report. Members were informed that the information collated was taken seriously and the team sent summary

sheets listing all complaints to Assistant Directors and Service Managers on a monthly basis, as well as attending Directorate management meetings to discuss actions.

A Member was pleased to note the SLH_RM13 Gas Service target was at 99.97%.

The Chair thanked Officers for their report and answers to Members' questions.

RESOLVED that the St. Leger Homes of Doncaster Quarterly Monitoring Report – Quarter 4, 2010/11 be noted.

All to note

9. PERFORMANCE UPDATE REPORT – MARCH 2011
(QUARTER 4)

The Performance and Improvement Consultant introduced this item and informed Members of the performance issues, particular in relation to delivering Doncaster's Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets.

The Consultant noted that some indicators were historical, some were data only as the Council might not have any control over them and 68% were rated green where the Council did have control.

A Member reported on the new opportunity centres and in the Bentley Ward, the statistics were that £290k had been invested into training, yet no-one had undertaken any training only one person had gained employment which was not value for money.

The Director, Regeneration and Employment responded that some centres had been successful and specifications had been changed. He further reported that if programs were delivered with no results shown, then there was a need to stop them and redirect the money elsewhere.

It was noted that Doncaster's figure of 4.8 for Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) claimants to each vacancy was better than the Regional average at 6.2 and the England average of 5.8.

The Director reported that the indicator to schools was below where it should be and the Work Schools Enterprise program needed to be more focussed.

In answer to a Member's comment regarding the closure of libraries, the Director explained that hopefully very few would close and instead they would be run by the community.

The Panel heard from a member of the St Leger Scrutiny Panel who came as an observer and was a 23 year old single mum on income support who did various voluntary works. She had been told that she would be transferred to job seekers allowance once her son was age 6 and if, by next January, she had no paid employment, she would have to give up all her voluntary work or lose her benefits. She also considered that there was not much encouragement to find work and there was no support given.

A Member asked for an explanation into Serco and Action for Employment (A4e) and Scott Cardwell, Assistant Director, Development, explained that Doncaster had won a national contract from the Government to help people into work and benefits would be restricted if people did not find work.

A Member reported that there were incentives for companies to get people into work but wondered for how long and that people had training for so long but with no job at the end of it. The Assistant Director reported that this was a Government approach not Doncaster Council's and he undertook to obtain a briefing note with trigger points for Members to see what would happen.

Asst. Director
Development

A Member held the view that the Panel would like a clear plan of delivery and list of providers and how this would impact on Doncaster. It was further noted that if new businesses were not employing people from Doncaster, they would not be bringing any economy into the Borough.

In response to questions regarding the opportunity centres, the Director advised Members that there were ten centres, mainly based in libraries and the provision of assisting people back into work needed to be joined up so there was no duplication of service.

The Performance and Improvement Consultant advised Members that the Corporate Plan would be more local reporting and milestones (updates) on transformational projects.

It was noted that the job seeker information was data only as the Council did not have much control over them – it was more the Job Centre Plus and the Department for Work and

Pensions that had the control. The Panel considered inviting a representative from the Job Centre Plus to a meeting to see how they could integrate with the Council and work together. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Consultant would seek to invite Serco, A4e and Job Centre Plus to a future meeting.

Scrutiny
Consultant

The Chair thanked Officers for their report and answers to Members questions.

RESOLVED

- (1) that the Performance Update Report – March 2011 (Quarter 4) be noted;
- (2) that the Assistant Director obtain a briefing note with trigger points for Members to see in respect of assisting people into employment; and
- (3) that the Scrutiny Consultant invites Serco, A4e and Job Centre Plus to a future meeting.

All to note

Asst. Director
Development

Scrutiny
Consultant

10. OUTLINE OF THE REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Peter Dale, Director, Regeneration and Environment gave a verbal presentation to Members outlining his role and remit for the Directorate.

The Director explained that the focus of the Directorate was on economy and the ways in which the service can contribute to the economy, through transport and connectivity, housing and creating a vibrant town centre including Doncaster market. The focus being on White Rose Way and FARRRS, supply of land, capital sales program and housing – to reduce empty properties and increase standards.

Other issues raised by the Director were reducing carbon emissions, environmental strategy including a preliminary flood assessment, PFI Waste Contract – between Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster, implementing structures, reviews on highways to ensure value for money and marketing Doncaster as a product.

Drew Oxley, Acting Head, Trading Services explained the role of Trading and Support Services within the Directorate. The Service includes Schools Catering, Transport Services, InPress, Cemeteries and Crematoria, Technical Services, Metro Clean, Bentley Training Centre, Facilities and Estates, Public Building Maintenance, Stores and the Energy Team.

Scott Cardwell, Assistant Director, Development introduced the Development and Regeneration part of the Directorate and the teams within his Service were Invest in Doncaster, Schools Rebuilding Team and Success Doncaster. Also under his remit were 3D, including CCQ major projects and myplace – project management for other Council developments, Assets and Development including planning applications and building control.

The Assistant Director further explained that the Programmes team maximised European funding to match against Council money and the Economic and Planning Policy team helped to deliver the Borough Strategy priorities. The team also produced key documents and gave advice on detailed design, heritage, tree and hedgerow and ecology enquiries required on planning applications.

Gary Wells, Assistant Director, Strategic Housing, explained that staff were currently going through a restructure and the Housing Service included Housing Investment Strategy, Housing Regeneration and Housing Inclusion and Access.

Members were informed that the Housing Capital Programme had always been the largest capital programme, with £119m investment available for housing over the next four years, though this did not reflect unfunded ones due to government cuts. Key documents for 2011-2014 were the housing strategy, for 2011-2012 a one year short-term housing improvement plan and the local investment plan which was a longer 10 year plan.

The Assistant Director advised that in respect of housing regeneration, 40 property appreciation loans were part of private sector money, which was no longer available due to Government cuts.

Within Housing and Inclusion Access, more work was to be undertaken with landlords as there had been 400 illegal eviction queries.

Gill Gillies, Assistant Director, Environment, introduced her Service which was a front line service delivery that included Street Scene, Highways and Transport, Environmental Protection and Waste and Recycling. It was noted that the Environmental Protection and Waste and Recycling sections were to merge.

A Member considered that Success Doncaster and Invest in Doncaster had work that overlapped and the Director responded that he thought the new structure would address this issue.

The Chair thanked Peter Dale, Director of Regeneration and Environment and Assistant Directors for their informative presentation.

RESOLVED that Members note the verbal presentation given by Peter Dale, Director of Regeneration and Environment.

All to note

11. REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PLAN 2011/12

Members were provided with and asked to agree a work plan for 2011/2012, which included topics to be considered for mini-reviews. The work plan was to be more focused to allow an opportunity for in-depth analysis of key issues.

The focus for the 2011/12 work plan at present was as follows:

- Delivery of regeneration and the environment across the Borough against the Localism Bill
- Private Sector Housing Delivery
- Environmental Strategy (Policy Development)

It was noted however that the work plan was a live document which would be reviewed and monitored at each formal Panel meeting.

As one of the areas of focus for the work plan was Environmental Strategy (Policy Development), it was proposed and agreed by Members at the work planning event on 26 May, to form a working group of the Panel. The working group would undertake appropriate policy development work for the Council's Environmental Strategy and make appropriate recommendations to the Executive.

A Member considered the Council had missed out previously regarding obtaining funding in local enterprise zones and the Director of Regeneration and Environment undertook to ensure the airport had a high profile for any future investment opportunities.

Director
Regen. Env.

The Scrutiny Consultant also informed the group that there would be more of a focus this year on monitoring outcomes and impacts following the work of the Panel.

RESOLVED that the Panel:

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| (1) | approve its work plan for 2011/12, taking into account issues considered at the informal work planning meeting held on 26th May, 2011; | All to note |
| (2) | ensure the work plan takes account of best principles of Scrutiny work planning guidance; | All to note |
| (3) | note the work plan was a living document and agree to monitor progress against the work plan at each formal meeting and agree how often recommendations put forward to the Executive were monitored; | All to note |
| (4) | noted the action points for the Enterprising Doncaster meeting held on the 25th March and agenda and action points for the 3rd June, 2011; and | All to note |
| (5) | agree Membership of a working group for the current municipal year to make recommendations to the Executive regarding policy development work for a Council Environmental Strategy as follows: | All to note |

Councillors Jane Kidd, David Nevett, Richard Cooper-Holmes and Barry Johnson.