

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

30th September 2013

A MEETING of the REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on MONDAY, 30TH SEPTEMBER 2013 at 1:30 PM

PRESENT:

Vice Chair - Councillor Paul Wray

Councillors John Sheppard, Yvonne Woodcock, Ted Kitchen, Bob Ford, Chris McGuinness and Eric Tatton-Kelly

Invitee: Paul Smillie (Unite)

Also in Attendance:

Peter Dale (Director of Regeneration and Environment), Scott Cardwell (Assistant Director of Development), Tracey Harwood, Interim Assistant Director - Strategic Housing, Iain Brittain (Performance and Improvement Service Manager), Julie Crook (Director of Corporate Services), Jeremy Johnson (Economy and Commissioning Manager) and Alan Lowther (Policy and Performance Manager)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Tony Revill, David Nevett, Ken Keegan, Jane Kidd and Richard Cooper-Holmes

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

During the course of the meeting, a report was presented on St Leger Homes of Quarter One 2013/2014 Quarterly Monitoring Report. Councillor Paul Wray declared a Personal Interest at the beginning of the meeting by virtue of being a Board Member on St Leger and did not take part in the discussions concerning this item.

56. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13th June, 2013

RESOLVED that: -

The minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting held on 13th June, 2013 be

ACTION

All to note

approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, the order of the agenda was agreed by the Panel to be changed so that the St Leger Performance Report became Item 7, the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Performance Report became Item 8, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Workplan became Item 9 and the Doncaster's Economic Growth Plan became item 10. This was due to unforeseen circumstances concerning availability of Officers.

All to note

57. PUBLIC STATEMENTS

There were no public statements made at the meeting.

All to note

58. VERBAL REPORT FROM CABINET MEMBERS BY COUNCILLORS GLYN JONES, CHRISTINE MILLS AND BILL MORDUE

Councillor Glyn Jones, portfolio holder for Housing, Equalities and Cohesion attended the Panel meeting to outline the key priorities and challenges within his area and respond to questions.

The Cabinet Member outlined his portfolio priorities which included: -

- New Build Council Housing
- Sheltered Schemes
- Demolition
- Environmental Projects – Six Streets
- Gypsy and Traveller Sites
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Land and Asset Review
- Delivery of Extra Care Facilities
- HCA Delivery Programme
- New Delivery Model
- Category 1 Hazards
- Caravan Site Inspections per year
- Licensable Housing with Multiple Occupancies licensed
- Proactive HHSRS Inspections completed – hit squad
- Empty Properties
- Implementation of the gold standard to prevent homelessness.
- Stronger families agenda
- Welfare Reform Planning
- Localism Act
- Single Homelessness Sub Regional Work
- Improvement Planning for Gypsy and Travellers

A Member questioned why members of the gypsy and traveller community are not purchasing their own land. Members were informed that this option had been put forward but that there had been no interest expressed. Concern was raised that Doncaster has a number of gypsy and traveller sites which was about 50 compared to the lower number of 5 sites in York.

Reference was also made to the tendering process for pitches which had been bid at £90,000 per pitch; Members were informed that only one tender had been put forward.

Houses in Multiple Occupancies (HMOs) were raised and a Member expressed concern that HMOs were rejected at planning but then was approved through licensing. It was felt that this should be looked further.

A request was made for more clarification about which Cantley Garage site had been referred to during the Cabinet Members presentation in respect of New Build Council Housing. The Cabinet Member offered to provide more details of this.

Interim Assistant
Director - Strategic
Housing

In respect of the issue of bats at Trafalgar House, Members were informed that officers were working with Natural England and would provide Members with information on timescales.

Interim Assistant
Director - Strategic
Housing

There was a discussion concerning empty properties and it was confirmed that flats above shops were classed as an empty property. Questions were raised about the progress of empty property figures and Members were informed that compared to 6,000 two and a half years ago there were now around 3,800. The Policy and Performance Manager explained that due to legislative changes the methodology for measuring empty properties had changed and as a result of this there was a different way of counting and empty properties figures had gone down approximately 1,000 since this has changed. It was clarified that there was a new baseline but that since May 2012 there was a downward trend and that this was still going in the right direction.

Interim Assistant
Director - Strategic
Housing

In respect of Welfare Reform planning, Members enquired about current figures regarding those council tenants who were in arrears. It was reported that from current figures of 3,477 that were affected 2,346 were in some level of arrears of which 1,515 had not been in arrears at the beginning of April. Members asked how many were in arrears at the 31st March 2013. The Panel were informed that that this information would be supplied following the meeting.

Next, Councillor Christine Mills, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste attended the Panel meeting to outline the key priorities and challenges within her area and respond to questions. It was explained to the Panel that some of the areas within this portfolio were very broad and therefore sometimes overlapped with other Cabinet portfolios.

The Cabinet Member outlined her key priorities which included:

-

Fuel Poverty

- Energy efficiency initiatives in public and private sector housing
- Developing support for Doncaster residents with regard to switching to optimum cost tariffs

Waste

- Preparation of waste contact tender specification
- Construction of waste transfer station
- Construction of waste treatment plant in conjunction with Rotherham and Barnsley

The Cabinet Member also thanked the group for their involvement with the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Environmental Strategy.

A question was raised at the committee meeting about the amount of residual waste remaining at the end of the waste treatment process that will be in place in the new plant

There was a brief discussion in respect of recycling food waste. Members were informed that officers were currently working on organising the criteria for the new tender as the contract is currently due to expire. It was commented that there was a need to find a cost effective tender and a Member commented that the wording should encourage contractors working together.

Finally, Councillor Bill Mordue, portfolio holder for Highways, Street Scene and Transportation attended the Panel meeting to respond to questions regarding the key priorities and challenges within his area.

The Cabinet Member outlined his portfolio priorities which included: -

- Speed Reduction Schemes

Cabinet Member

- Highways
- Car Parking Offer
- Streetlighting
- Cycling Policy

There was a brief discussion in respect of cycling and whether Doncaster was meeting the minimum width as some areas were considered as very dangerous, for example, by the hospital. It was commented that the roads within Doncaster are very narrow.

In respect of highways, concern was raised that some of the white line road markings were sometimes non-existent.

All to note

RESOLVED that the Panel:

- Note the update of the priorities as presented by Councillor Glyn Jones, Christine Mills and Bill Mordue.

59. ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT – QUARTER ONE 2013/14.

Members received a report informing them of the latest St Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD) performance information. The report highlighted the main areas of performance that in quarter four 2012/13 were either off target or of concern.

It was noted that at the end of quarter one; all 5 of the strategic priorities contained within the St Leger Homes Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) were on target (green). Of the 9 Key Performance Indicators contained within the ADP, 5 were on target (green), 2 were within tolerance (amber) and 2 were out of target (red). Of the 2 out of target indicators performance was as follows:

- Theme 1: Value for Money
- Theme 2: Supporting communities and individuals by tackling crime and anti-social behaviour

There were two KPI's, whilst off target, that were still within tolerance levels set for quarter one. They were 'Appointments Made and Kept' and 'Scheduled Repairs – Percentage of Promises Kept'

Regarding, Theme 2, it was clarified that the definition of a repeat perpetrator was in reference to medium and high cases that were repeated within a 12 month period and not rehoused. The biggest problem that was being faced was noise although it was recognised that factors such as good weather could influence this outcome.

All to note

RESOLVED that the Panel:

- i. Note the Quarter one performance actions; and
- ii. Note actions to deal with performance issues.

60. FINANCE & PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT: 2013/14 QUARTER 1.

Members received a report informing them of the latest Regeneration and Environment Directorate financial and performance information for quarter 1 of this financial year 2013/14. The Directorate revenue spend was projected to underspend by £226k and the forecast Capital spend for 2012/13 was £102.43m.

Regarding performance, of the 14 across priority themes, at the end of quarter one, ten objectives were on track, three were mostly on track but with some concerns and one objective off track

In reference to Category Hazard one, it was reported that the strategic housing team was working with the Enforcement Team to find smarter ways of reporting the resolution of Category 1 Hazard complaints because the time taken to resolve issues can be impacted upon, especially if there was a need to seek recourse through the courts. It was noted that whilst alternative measures are being considered, which will be reported on in the future, no hazards are being neglected and resolution of all is being pursued.

In respect of Housing with Multiple Occupancies (HMOs) targets, the Panel was informed that there was a time factor in the process which means that the previous target of 100% was unachievable and therefore a 95% figure has been set.

Regarding Empty Properties being brought back into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), it was noted that it will be up to Council to decide whether it chooses to roll over any of the £10m of council funds that has been put aside, if not spent within the revised 2 year target.

All to note

RESOLVED that the Panel:

- i. Note the Quarter 1 Finance and Performance information.

61. REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PLAN REPORT 2013/14

The Panel received a report which provided an update on its last meeting held on 16th June 2013. The Scrutiny Officer outlined the following updates and reminders to the Panel: -

- That the Panel would focus on the new Waste Contract at an extraordinary Panel Meeting which was likely to be in November 2013 and that further information on the arrangements would be provided as soon as possible.
- That there will be an informal extraordinary Panel Meeting regarding the Work Programme on the 14th October 2013, where Panel Members would be meeting with providers such as A4E, Serco as well Job Centre Plus. It was explained that the purpose of this meeting was to receive an update on how the programme has progressed since it was introduced. The Panel was informed that previous meetings had been held with the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel approximately two years previous.
- A reminder that at its December meeting the Panel would be focusing on the Bus Partnership Contract.

A Member of the Panel asked what progress had been made regarding making the asset plan accessible to Members. The Panel was assured that this issue would be looked into.

Reference was made to the work of the Panels Strategy Working Group who had met twice, once on the 16th September to contribute to the Environment Strategy and Green Infrastructure Strategy. Secondly, they met to look at the Cycling Strategy at a working group meeting that took place prior to the formal meeting of the 30th September 2013.

For the Environment Strategy and Green Infrastructure Strategy, a copy of the feedback was circulated which had included the following for ratification: -

Priority 1: Waste Minimisation

P1.1 - Target should be made 'SMART' to enable better monitoring reporting (this goes for all actions where target is 'on-going').

P1.2 - Have 2 separate actions and targets – 1 about Strategic Site at Manvers and 1 about the Doncaster Transfer Station, so can report on separately in future

Priority 2: Deliver more Energy Efficient Housing

P2.2 - The first part of this target appears to relate to planning (Core Strategy Target) and the latter to energy efficiency – would make sense to split the action /target accordingly.

Priority 3: Effective Flood Mitigation

P3.5 - Canals and Rivers Trust should be mentioned in the list

Scrutiny
Officer/Director of
Regeneration and
Environment

P3.6 - There could be a publicity campaign to promote lawns rather than drives/paving of front gardens

Priority 5: Create a more attractive Street Scene

P5.1a Discussed whether there were other things which contributed towards an attractive street scene and suggestion was to look at other areas in Town Centre where empty shops could have artwork on front as had been done at Waterdale

Priority 6: Protect and promote our historic environment

P6.11 Suggest website is re-examined and made more user friendly

Priority 7: Protect and promote our natural environment

P7.4 Explore what website is used by Area teams to promote local events and use this to also promote local environmental assets and activities

P7.13 Make information available to local community groups who want to do this sort of thing themselves

The Scrutiny Officer then spoke about a meeting of the Strategy Working Group that had taken place that morning to discuss the Cycling Strategy. Following the discussion the group had made the following recommendations, for ratification: -

1. That consideration is provided to trialling a Free Bike scheme similar to the one used in London from venues such as the railway station and park and ride areas.
2. That further promotion and ways are looked at as to how we can make Doncaster a more cycle friendly town and improve its resident's perception of it as a cycling town.
3. When undertaking consultations, that alternative ways are considered to engage with surrounding communities and not just the town centre.
4. That support is provided to a proposal of opening the town centre (from Frenchgate via Mansion House) during quieter times of the day, for example, commuter hours.

Also, a Member of the Panel requested from an earlier discussion that a further recommendation to be included as follows: -

5. That further investigation is undertaken to check whether Doncaster's cycling paths are meeting the minimum width in accordance with legislation.

An enquiry was also made whether the wearing of hats was a legal requirement. The Director of Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny informed the Panel that he would seek clarification.

Director of
Regeneration and
Environment

At an informal meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the 28th February 2013, the Panel met to consider the following questions: -

- How as a Council can we improve access to finance for developers to meet our housing target; and
- How as a Council, can we assist buyers to purchase their own homes within Doncaster?

Interim Assistant
Director - Strategic
Housing

A verbal update had been scheduled to take place at the meeting on the recommendations made. Due to time constraints Members were informed that this information would be circulated outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED that;

- i. The Panel comment on the revised work plan as detailed in Appendix A.
- ii. Approve the Cycling Strategy recommendations as detailed above.
- iii. Approve the Environment Strategy recommendations as detailed above.

62. Doncaster's Economic Growth Plan.

The Panel received a report containing the approved version of the Growth Plan which had been developed through wide consultation including an informal Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny meeting that took place on the 14th of September 2013.

Members raised a number of comments and concerns as part of the discussion.

Clarification was sought on what a 'low economic community' and whether this was the same as a deprived community.

Concern was raised that there were people who were now unemployable as a result of not being skilled. Members were informed that more positive partnership working was being undertaken. The role of education and apprenticeship was

supported by Members.

Reference was made by a Member of the Panel to an incorrect entry made in page 12 of the Economic Growth Plan which referred to 'Our proposed schemes as detailed on Page 13 of this document' whereby no scheme were actually listed on Page 13.

Also further information was requested about the Science of Behaviour Project referred to on Page 23. The Assistant Director of Regeneration informed Members that further detail would be provided.

A Member enquired about how many jobs created were for local people and was informed that information could be supplied for the FARRRs contract and referred to the Meet the Buyer Event in October.

Assistant Director of
Regeneration

All to note

RESOLVED that;

- i. The Panel note the Economic Growth Plan and annual delivery plan approved by Cabinet at its 18th September 2013 meeting
- ii. The Panel receive a progress update every 6 months, the first of which would be in the form of a presentation on the delivery plan and associated performance indicators at the Panels formal meeting in March 2014.