

## **REGENERATION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

Wednesday 6 January 2010 at 6.00 p.m.

### **Panel Members present**

Councillor D. Pitt (Chair)  
Councillor D. Anson  
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul  
Councillor L. Harrison  
Councillor K. Sears  
Councillor I. Shires  
Councillor B. Tweddle

**Invited Panel Members Present** Alan McDevitt – Children’s and Young People  
Scrutiny and Performance Panel – Parent Governor  
Co-opted Member

### **Officers present**

Tim Johnson	Executive Director – Regeneration
Mike Tichford	Assistant Director – Regeneration
Alison Butcher	Project Director – Transforming Learning in Walsall Programme
Andrea Potts	Head of Supported Housing
Julie Jones	Homelessness and Housing Service Manager
David Lockwood	Housing Standards and Improvement Manager
Debbie Parkes	Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager
Craig Goodall	Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer

### **45/09 APOLOGIES**

There were apologies for absence from Councillors S. Coughlan and K. Phillips.

### **46/09 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

### **47/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

Councillor Shires declared a personal interest in item 6, ‘Overview of Housing Services’.

### **48/09 MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2009, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.**

(annexed)

## 49/09 **BUILDING SCHOOL FOR THE FUTURE**

Members were informed of the progress to date with the development and delivery aspects of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

Alison Butcher explained progress to date and planned next steps regarding the BSF programme.

The following are the principle points from the ensuing discussion:

- Sample Schemes – it was previously anticipated that Frank F Harrison School would take part in the sample scheme, however, Pool Hayes School was selected as the sample school as its site and the type of work expected to take place was a better representation of the programme as a whole.
- Wider opportunities for community use of school buildings was a priority of the programme. Community provision in each of the schools local areas would be reviewed and funding levered in for specific projects where possible.
- A Member expressed the wish for Willenhall Project Reference Group to be kept informed of developments with the Pool Hayes scheme.
- The Chair noted that the BSF topic had a cross cutting agenda that sat within the remits of several Scrutiny and Performance Panels. Craig Goodall advised that a formal scrutiny working group was probably not the best way to monitor the BSF programme due to its fast changing nature. It was suggested that further opportunities to engage with Members across Scrutiny and Performance Panels and political parties could be explored by Alison Butcher but high level monitoring should still take place at Scrutiny and Performance Panel level, preferably by one lead Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That:**

- 1. Willenhall Project Reference Group be informed and consulted regarding developments at Pool Hayes School as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme;**

**and;**

- 2. consideration be given to the most suitable vehicle for the regular involvement and consultation of Members as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme.**

## 50/09 **OVERVIEW OF HOUSING SERVICES**

Members received a presentation (annexed) providing them with an overview of Housing Services provided by Walsall Council including a spotlight on the Councils relationship with private landlords.

The following are the ensuing points from the ensuing discussion:

- Household engaging in anti-social behaviour would be primarily be dealt with by the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit at Safer Walsall Partnership and would include signposting to support services for families. As a final step the housing team would advise on delivering a legal eviction.
- There was a list of accredited landlords but this list did not record property ownership.
- The Housing Service engaged with local letting agents to ensure that properties were being managed appropriately.
- Members discussed the benefits of banks developing their lending criteria for buy-to-let landlords to include being accredited with local authorities. It was noted that the recession had caused many accidental landlords.
- British Gas was set to begin working with Walsall Housing Group to improve the energy efficiency of their existing housing stock. Other energy providers were being engaged with to try and secure further investment. Members were keen to further explore energy efficiency in housing.
- Problems concerned with void properties were discussed. Members learnt that it was a difficult process to contact and engage with owners to resolve problems with void properties. It was noted that the 'best value' options for meeting Walsall's housing needs were maintaining the existing stock and bringing void properties back into use. The locations of void properties were known to the Council and close partnership working with other council departments and partners was undertaken to monitor them and prevent problems occurring. Members were keen to explore further issues with void properties in the future.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That a map showing void properties in Walsall be provided to the Panel.**

#### **51/09 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10 AND FORWARD PLAN**

Members considered the work programme for the year ahead and the latest edition of the Forward Plan.

Following the previous discussion on housing Members wished to consider items later in the year on void properties and energy efficiency in homes.

*89/09 Project W2R provision for energy from waste capacity from Staffordshire County Council*

*90/09 Project W2R – provision of energy from waste capacity from Staffordshire County Council*

A Member requested further information on these two proposed decisions.

#### *73/09 Leisure centres*

A Member requested that the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel be kept informed of progress with this decision.

## *28/09 Walsall Gigaport*

Members enquired about progress to date with this scheme in the context of the recession and agreed to hear an item at a future meeting.

Members also discussed issues around public transport and the potential to ask questions of Centro on plans and priorities for the local area. The Chair reminded the Panel that they were currently operating a joint working group with the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel on integrated transport who were planning to engage with Centro therefore the outcome of this work should be awaited before inviting Centre to a Panel meeting. Members requested an update on recent working group activity.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That:**

- 1. the Panel be provided with further information on the decisions relating to Project W2R of energy from waste capacity from Staffordshire County Council;**
- 2. the Panel review recent activity with the Walsall Gigaport scheme;**
- and;**
- 3. Members be updated with progress to date with the Integrated Transportation Working Group.**

### **52/09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members noted the date of the next meeting as 21 January 2010.

*The meeting terminated at 7.35 p.m.*

Chair:

Date: