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**To**  
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Date 5<sup>th</sup> November 2008

**Subject**  
Scrutiny Chairs' Progress Reports - Scrutiny Board 3

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**1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the work of Scrutiny Board 3 during the period June to mid-October 2008, together with the recommendations and other outcomes of this work.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the information contained in this briefing note and to consider any further action.

**3 Information / Background**

3.1 **Activity**

The Board held 5 formal meetings during this period.

Issues considered by the Board over the period were as follows:-

- Government consultation on Eco-towns
- Commercial Property Disposals
- Road Safety School Audit
- Coventry's Citywide Business Improvement District (BID)
- Municipal Waste Strategy
- Project Transform and visits to alternative energy from waste technologies
- Empty Property Strategy
- Homelessness bench-marking
- Car Parking Strategy
- Parking Services Review
- The Board has also chosen to establish a sub-group to investigate a number of issues around Verge Maintenance and policies to manage parking issues on grass verges.

3.2 **Recommendations**

- 3.2.1 In June following consideration of a report regarding the government consultation on Eco-towns the Board decided to make a detailed recommendation seeking to strengthen the council's response. This centred on concerns that the development of Eco-towns would weaken wider regeneration and economic development activity. The Board held that Government should focus investment on existing urban areas where an amount of infrastructure was already in place rather than diffusing investment and creating other

problems like congestion by developing the Eco-town model. Cabinet agreed the suggested response of the Scrutiny Board.

- 3.2.2 Having held an additional meeting in August to consider the Draft Municipal Waste Strategy the Board chose to make recommendations to Cabinet expressing strong support for the Strategy whilst also seeking to make improvements to the public consultation exercise which was about to commence. The Board felt that the summary document would benefit from the addition of some comparative data showing the levels of recycling performance by our European partners. Cabinet agreed the Board's suggested amendments.
- 3.2.3 At the Board's last meeting Members considered the proposed submission of an Outline Business Case for PFI credits to procure a replacement Energy from Waste facility for Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire. In concluding a considerable amount of scrutiny work the Board chose to unanimously support the proposed submission, being mindful that exact site location, technology choice and a number of other detailed issues would be the subject of further work by 'Project Transform' which would be reported to the Board.

### 3.3 **Outcomes**

- 3.3.1 The Board has invested considerable time in the current civic year to Housing issues, considering reports on the Empty Property Strategy, Homelessness Benchmarking and Coventry Homefinder. The various efforts of Housing officers in seeking to ensure a satisfactory supply of affordable housing in the City have been supported, as have efforts to become involved in the private sector by intervening to bring Empty Homes back into use. Following consideration of the most recent report on Homefinder, Members agreed various amendments to the scheme, however in response to a number of queries regarding the housing needs of young people asked for a further meeting to be convened with social housing organisations and Children's Services to follow up these concerns.
- 3.3.2 Work on a road safety audit outside Coventry Primary schools has been on-going from the last civic year. As a result of the Board's work safety features outside each school have been mapped and various schools were found to require additional features to be introduced to ensure young people were protected. The Board has been delighted to see this work carried out by City Services officers in a timely fashion.
- 3.3.3 Reducing waste, increasing recycling and the various efforts to make Coventry's Waste Strategy as effective as possible has been a recurring theme over recent months. The Board has concluded a number of site visits, viewing potential technologies and gaining ideas of how the development of a new energy from waste plant in the City might progress. The Board has provided a considerable amount of feedback to Waste Services officers, supporting them in this important area of policy development.
- 3.3.4 In response to concerns raised locally about the Coventry Citywide BID the Board met with the organisations Chief Executive. Whilst concluding that the ballot and the process around establishing the BID had been properly arranged, subsequent issues have arisen and it is possible that the Board will return to this topic.
- 3.3.5 Whilst the publication of the Jerde Partnership Master plan has rightly dominated the headlines the Board has been concerned with more modest but equally important policy work. The Car Parking Strategy has to be successful to ensure that the maximum benefit is obtained from a thriving City Centre. Retail, Leisure, Housing and Commercial uses all compete in the City Centre and have conflicting priorities. The Board hope to assist City Development officers early in the New Year in continuing the development of this policy. In order to ensure that a policy is effective it is also important that the Council has a

robust and efficient parking enforcement function. The Board has also engaged with City Services officers on ensuring that the development of this operational area is successful.

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