

ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)

4th January 2011

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Watson (Chairman), Councillor Roberts (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Bale, Bladen, Mrs. Brown, Ford, Mrs. Patten and Timms.

Labour Group

Councillors Mrs. Lane, Rhind, Taylor and Tilley.

Independent/Non-Grouped Member

Councillor Pabla.

In Attendance

Councillors Atkin and Mrs. Farrington (Conservative Group).

EDS/34. **QUESTION BY A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 11**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 11, Councillor Mrs. Brown gave notice of the following question:

“What difficulties were experienced by the South Derbyshire District Council refuse collection teams during the exceptionally severe weather at the end of November and during December of last year?”

The Director of Community Services responded that the first two weeks of December and the final week before Christmas saw heavy and extended snowfall in Derbyshire in what turned out to be the coldest December for 100 years. Collection crews made strenuous efforts to continue servicing all properties in the severe icy conditions and thanks to their dedication, only four out of eighty daily rounds due for collection during the month were completely abandoned. There were particular streets and individual properties that could not be serviced because of their inaccessibility in the ice, usually on un-gritted roads on an incline.

In the interest of public safety a 26 tonne refuse freighter slipping on ice was to be avoided if possible. The problem was illustrated dramatically when during the same period, a refuse freighter was struck head on by a tipper lorry that slid on the ice. The freighter was seriously damaged and the driver sustained minor injuries.

A dedicated workforce tried their best to get through the snow. If a street was missed the crews noted it, and over the days following each missed collection, an additional freighter was sent out as soon as it became safe to do so. Even if bins were not presented at the kerbside, if they could be seen by the crew, they were fetched and emptied. At least 80% of properties that were missed received a follow up visit as soon as it was possible to do so. Consequently

by 16th December the service had caught up with all missed collections from the early December snow.

The last households who had been affected by the snow to date would be visited tomorrow, and this included many properties in Woodville and Melbourne and one or two other locations. Sincere apologies went out to those particular families who had been worst affected by the disruption to service.

Members requested that their thanks be passed to the workforce for their efforts during this difficult period.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 11, Councillor Rhind gave notice of the following question:

“Did the Chairman find out if there were any consultations undertaken between Derbyshire County Council Highways and South Derbyshire District Council prior to the instigation and starting of any work relating to the highways of South Derbyshire. If so, what consultation took place?”

The Head of Planning responded that the County Council sent out letters to all relevant parties, including the District Council, for individual works such as those relating to the mini roundabout at Midway Road/Newhall Road. The letters were addressed to an officer at the Depot. He had been requested that, in future, when a letter was received, it was copied to the relevant Ward Members by email.

The Capital Programme was on the Derbyshire County Council website, but was not particularly easy to find, so it had been requested that it be placed in a more obvious location on the website in future years.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

EDS/35. PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES TO PLANNING APPLICATION FEES IN ENGLAND

Fees for planning applications were currently set nationally, which meant that they did not have to take account of differing local circumstances and market conditions. Whilst they had been increased over recent years, independent research commissioned by the previous Government that looked at 11 Local Planning Authorities (LPA's), identified that authorities were recovering around 90% of their costs on average, and that around 35% of development management resources were allocated to dealing with applications that did not currently incur a fee.

Charging for planning applications reflected the principle that the applicant expected to pay a fee for an application that could bring a measure of private benefit. Fees should reflect the overall cost of handling, administering and deciding the application, including related overheads.

3 options were being considered by the Government:

- Decentralising responsibility for setting planning application fees to LPA's;
- Decentralising planning application fees whilst setting a cap on maximum fee levels; and
- Maintaining the current system of centrally set planning application fees whilst increasing fees by 10-15%.

The Government's preference was the first option.

The consultation document contained a series of 8 questions relating to aspects of fee charging. These were outlined within the report with a suggested response for Members to consider.

RESOLVED:-

That the response to the consultation on changes to planning application fees as detailed in the report be approved.

EDS/36. **SERVICE BASE BUDGETS 2011/2012**

A report was submitted to inform Members of the Committee's proposed Base Budget for 2011/12. This included an overview of the Committee's spending areas. It was proposed that the estimated income and expenditure was included in the consolidated budget of the Council for 2011/12, subject to the Council's overall medium-term financial position. The report also set out proposals for the levels of fees and charges under the responsibility of this Committee for the next financial year, and a summary was included of the Committee's existing capital investment programme.

The Committee was responsible for services where substantial amounts of income were generated for the Council. These included licensing, building regulation applications, land charges and local planning applications. Income streams might have a big impact on the Council's overall financial position, could be difficult to predict, and subject to external factors, such as the type and volume of planning applications and when individual licenses were due for renewal. Consequently, income from these sources was considered to be a fairly high risk in the Council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP). Previous budget and monitoring reports had highlighted over the last 2 years that the current economic downturn has had a negative impact on these major income streams and this has had a significant effect on the Council's overall financial position. The budgets proposed in the report continued to show a downward trend, although not as great as compared to 2010/11. In addition, the scrapping of the personal land and property search fee at a national level, together with the need to make a provision for potential refunds under environmental information regulations would continue to affect future income levels, as previously reported.

The current economic situation was set to continue for at least the short-term. However, as a growth area, these income streams might improve in the future through increased planning applications and a more buoyant housing market. In addition, the future of local planning was set to change, and the change was

expected through the Government's recently published Localism Bill, and from the consultation on setting planning fees locally.

The Council's MTFP was reviewed and updated in October 2010 ahead of the detailed financial settlement arising from the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR 10). It was expected that sustaining the Council's overall financial position over the medium-term would be challenging given the proposed cuts in grant funding recently announced.

During this budget round, all service areas were asked to look closely at current spending in order to reduce budgets wherever possible, but at the same time maintain service provision. The spending proposals for 2011/12 included some budget reductions in waste and cleansing services and also some departmental expenses in planning. In addition, as part of the Corporate Services Strategic Partnership, the Council's service provider was formulating a programme of procurement and service transformation reviews to take effect from April 2011.

Details of the Committee's overall net revenue expenditure were provided, with the Committee's expenditure estimated to decrease overall between 2010/11 and 2011/12 by £134,008. An analysis of these variances was detailed. The proposed base budget for 2011/12 did not allow for inflation. Some base costs would be subject to inflation during the year and in some cases it would be unavoidable. Allowances for inflation based on various assumptions regarding price increases etc, would be calculated across the main spending heads and in total held as a central contingency.

Details were given of the Council's approved capital investment programme.

An appendix was provided showing a schedule of the proposed levels of fees and charges that would operate from 1st April 2011, together with a comparison to the existing charge. Where applicable, VAT was also added at the standard rate. Details on the following fees and charges were also included within the report:

- Trade Waste;
- Land and Property Searches;
- Private Hire Licences;
- Charges under the Licensing and Gambling Act 2005;
- Planning Services;
- Fees for Building Regulation Applications
- Pest Control Services; and
- Dealing with Stray Dogs.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) ***That the proposed revenue income and expenditure for 2011/12 for the Committee's services be accepted and referred to the Finance and Management Committee for approval.***
- (2) ***That the proposed fees and charges for 2011/12 as detailed in the report be approved.***

- (3) That the proposed changes to the Scheme for the Recovery of Building Regulation Costs and Associated Matters as set out in the report be approved.**
- (4) That delegated power be given to the Building Control Manager in consultation with the Head of Finance and Property Services and the Chairman of this Committee to alter and adapt the Scheme for the Recovery of Building Regulation Costs and Associated Matters as detailed in the report.**

EDS/37. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985)**

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT REVIEW AND RESTRUCTURING OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORATE (Paragraph 4)

The Committee was consulted on the above reviews and gave its approval.

P. WATSON

CHAIRMAN