

ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

5th October 2006

**PRESENT:-**

**Labour Group**

Councillor Taylor (Chair), Councillor Dunn (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Carroll, Mrs. Lane, Shepherd, Tilley, Venning and Whyman, M.B.E.

**Conservative Group**

Councillors Bale, Mrs. Hall, Mrs. Hood and Mrs. Wheeler (substitute for Councillor Ford).

**In Attendance**

Councillors Bell and Lane (Labour Group).

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Ford (Conservative Group) and Councillor Mrs. Walton (Independent Member).

EDS/34. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th August 2006 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

EDS/35. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND REPORTS**

The Chair advised of the need to consider an urgent item during the Meeting. This related to the Leicestershire and Leicester Waste Development Framework and the matter was urgent because of the deadline for responses to a consultation document.

EDS/36. **REPORTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

(a) **Special Project Achieving Targets 2006/09 – Planning Applications**

Under Minute No. EDS/13 of 13th July 2006, the Community Scrutiny Committee was asked to consider recommendations made by the Improvement Panel regarding the achievement of targets for determining planning applications. It was reported that the Community Scrutiny Committee had considered this matter on five occasions and an outline was given of the issues discussed at each Meeting, together with the Scrutiny Committee's findings. It had endorsed the steps taken by the Head of Planning Services, to make necessary changes to improve performance with regard to the determination of planning applications in the context of a sustainable departmental structure.

On behalf of the Scrutiny Committee, its Chair thanked Members and Officers for the work undertaken in completing this review. He gave an outline of the views from Officers within the service and those of the Scrutiny Committee. The Leader of the Council felt the report provided

reassuring reading for Members and Officers within this department. The Chair suggested that the Scrutiny report recommendations be taken forward and considered within the next three months.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Committee receives the report from the Community Scrutiny Committee and gives consideration to the recommendations made within the next three months.***

(b) Achieving Targets 2006/09 – Waste Management

The Chair of the Community Scrutiny Committee presented its report following a review of the recommendations from the Improvement Panel, regarding waste management performance. The Scrutiny Committee had considered this matter on several occasions and the report summarised the issues discussed at each Meeting. The Scrutiny Committee's findings were summarised under six themes:

- Recycling
- Composting
- Waste minimisation (education/publicity)
- Improving the quality of our service to our customers
- Improving efficiency
- Strategic approach to waste management.

In conclusion, the Scrutiny Committee's report referred to the Corporate Plan priority for "a cleaner and greener South Derbyshire". The waste management service needed to reflect the important position it commanded in delivering this priority. Recommendations were made for short, medium and longer term actions. On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Officers and Members for their contributions to this project. The Scrutiny Committee felt that implementing its recommendations would help to achieve top quartile performance for some areas.

The Chair of the Policy Committee extended his thanks to both Officers and the Scrutiny Committee for the significant work undertaken on both special projects. The Leader of the Council referred to the report recommendations and the need for these to be considered seriously. He hoped that Officers would take cognisance of the report and implement its recommendations.

Councillor Mrs. Wheeler commented on the recommendations that were overarching and sought to influence other organisations. She questioned whether any subsequent report would have detailed financial implementations. Councillor Bale referred to a recommendation for increasing the "Green Box" collection scheme across the District and hoped this would not jeopardise the current services provided. He agreed with proposals for proactive school education and offering a wheeled bin cleaning service, but questioned how this would be funded. Councillor Lane referred Members to a further report recommendation for an urgent review of the financial implications of this service. He reminded Members that this was not a matter of choice and there was a need to review service delivery, to secure the best value for money.

The Head of Environmental Services offered to submit a further report on the various issues raised and the financial implications to this Committee's Meeting on 9th January 2007.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the report from the Community Scrutiny Committee be received and that Officers take cognisance of its recommendations in reporting back on the issues raised to this Committee's Meeting on 9th January 2007.***

EDS/37. **SERVICE PLANS 2006/2009**

It was reported that Service Plans were an important part of the Council's performance management framework. They were an important link between high level plans and strategies, such as the Corporate Plan and personal performance objectives established through the Employee Review and Development Scheme. Over the past year the form and content of Service Plans had been reviewed in the light of the "Achieving More" Performance Management Framework. The report explained the sections contained within each Service Plan, which covered a three year period. In practice, Service Plans would be reviewed and rolled forward annually, with monitoring reports submitted on a quarterly basis.

The Committee considered the Service Plan for the Planning Service. Councillor Mrs. Wheeler referred to the section of the report on workforce planning and congratulated the Division on its approach to staff development. Next, the Committee considered the Service Plan for the Policy and Economic Regeneration Division. The Leader referred to the section on promoting and developing tourism, questioning the projected income for the area from tourism. This was calculated based on visitor numbers and Officers explained the growth in tourism for the area over recent years. Given this upward trend, Councillor Mrs. Wheeler stated the need to focus on relevant Council services and to target resources accordingly. Officers agreed that whilst there were economic benefits for the local area from tourism, there was also an impact on services.

The Chair referred to the development of the Economic Regeneration Strategy, the significant changes in engaging others and he thanked the Officers involved to date.

Consideration was then given to the Service Plan for the Environmental Services Division. Councillor Tilley found the measurement of certain indicators confusing, not quantifiable and he quoted examples to demonstrate this. Officers accepted the point, whilst explaining that there was a standard format to such data and it was not possible to quantify, for example some of the issues raised under the key tasks section. A reply was provided on the issues raised by Councillor Tilley.

Councillor Bale referred to fly tipping problems and felt that the work of the "Clean Team" was increasing. He presumed the cost of this service was rising and there was a need for additional civic amenity facilities. The Chair replied that significant enforcement measures would be taken against anyone caught fly tipping waste. There was a joint initiative with the Environment Agency to undertake enforcement using new powers. The Leader added that closed

circuit television would be used to provide evidence for such enforcement. The Head of Environmental Services confirmed that covert equipment would be used and some prosecutions were already being pursued. In response to a question from Councillor Shepherd, there was a discussion about siting the equipment effectively in known “hot spots”, to secure evidence.

With regard to the format of Service Plans, the Leader questioned whether this could be altered to avoid the need for combined Service Plans to be submitted to more than one Policy Committee. Officers agreed to pursue this. The Leader also spoke about the focussing of services in line with the public’s priorities and he was looking forward to increased enforcement against littering and dog fouling. The Council needed to implement a tough regime to answer the public’s concerns on these issues. He also applauded the improvements in services under the waste and cleansing section of the report.

Councillor Venning referred to the section of the Service Plan on managing risks and a context was provided with regard to vehicle thefts and serious damage to them. In response to questions from Councillor Mrs. Wheeler, further explanation was provided on certain performance indicators and targets. In particular this related to complaints about household waste and the composting service and other Members praised performance in this area.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Service Plans for Planning Services, Environmental Services and Policy and Economic Regeneration be approved as the basis for service delivery over the period to March 2009.***

EDS/38. **GREEN WASTE COLLECTION SCHEME – REVIEW OF WINTER CLOSDOWN PERIOD**

Following a Member’s request at a previous Committee Meeting, a report was submitted to review the winter closedown period for the Green Waste Collection Scheme. Members were advised of the current operation of the scheme and statistics were provided on the amount of compostable waste collected over the three previous years, at the start and end of each calendar year. It was noted that the amounts collected were influenced to a degree by prevalent weather conditions and commentary was provided on particular conditions during the period monitored. Members were also reminded of plans to move to an “in vessel” composting process and the benefits of this approach.

Councillor Carroll thanked Officers for the report and noted that further consideration would be given to this area at the January Meeting, when discussing the detail of the Scrutiny Committee report presented earlier in the Meeting.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the period of the windrow composting scheme remains unaltered and that the success of the 11 months per year “in vessel” composting pilot scheme be monitored, with a view to the roll out of that scheme as the preferred solution to any concerns over the winter closedown period.***

EDS/39. **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES GUIDE AND STANDARDS**

It was reported that a Corporate “Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards” had been approved by the Finance and Management Committee. This document would set standards for use of the telephone, written communication, face to face contact and customer feedback.

A consistent style of booklet would be used for all services and a range of five booklets had initially been produced, including one for Environmental Services. The report explained proposals to ensure a consistent approach in terms of style, the performance information to be included and the standard content of each booklet. The Environmental Services Guide was the first to be produced and because of the number of services included within this area, it was likely to be the most extensive. The text from the guide was appended for consideration and an example of the guide was circulated. Details were provided of the proposed locations for such guides and the consultation undertaken to date. The report also highlighted discussions with a Charter Mark lead assessor, regarding the general format and detail of the guide and feedback had been complimentary. The service guide had been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and a verbal update was given on the feedback from that Meeting.

The Leader of the Council applauded this document and considered it was excellent. Councillor Bell, Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee felt that its content should be sub-divided, because of the size of this guide. It should satisfy customer requirements and with better presentation, it would make for ease of use. Councillor Mrs. Wheeler noted that the document was available in other languages and she questioned whether Polish should be included as a further language. Officers understood that five alternate language versions were available and these were selected based on population numbers within the District. This would be kept under review, because of changes in population.

Councillor Tilley commended the document and supported Councillor Bell’s view that the document should be sub-divided. The Head of Environmental Services confirmed that there was a suite of service specific leaflets and this was a summary document of the service standards.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the combined Service Guide and Standards for Environmental Services be amended in line with Members’ comments and be approved for publication.***

***Note: at 7.15 p.m. Councillor Bell left the Meeting.***

EDS/40. **LEICESTERSHIRE AND LEICESTER WASTE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – PREFERRED OPTIONS**

It was reported that Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council were preparing a joint Waste Development Framework, which would set out the spatial strategy for future waste development for the period to 2021. The development framework comprised the “Waste Core Strategy and

Development Control Policies” and “Waste Site Allocations” documents. In accordance with Government requirements, an accompanying “Sustainability Appraisal” had also been published, to assess the potential social, environmental and economic effects of the policies and proposals. Following the consideration of representations made in response to the current consultation, a final draft document would be published and this would be subject to further consultation.

The Waste Site Allocations document identified two sites in close proximity to the South Derbyshire boundary. These were at Swains Park, to the east of Overseal and at Hemington Quarry to the east of Shardlow and Great Wilne. The report identified the potential use of each site, together with a brief description of the processes involved.

The Sustainability Appraisal noted the negative impact of waste recycling facilities, but also the need to consider this in the context of strategic need to meet the waste recycling and disposal requirements of the area over the plan period. The negative impact for each site was reported. In conclusion, the report focused on the impact for South Derbyshire of each site and it proposed an objection to the allocation at Swains Park.

Members felt that concerns should also be recorded about the impact of proposals for the Hemington Quarry site. In particular, the Environment Agency should undertake an assessment and concern should be raised with the Leicestershire authorities. The Head of Planning Services confirmed the duty on all local authorities to consult neighbouring district and parish councils. Councillor Shepherd represented the authority on the Elvaston Quarry Waste Disposal Site Liaison Committee and he felt that this proposal would be a matter of great concern to local residents. Whilst it was explained that this proposal was for the continuation of a current facility, he felt the Council should register objections, particularly about the increased flooding risk and that this site use should be curtailed at the earliest opportunity.

With regard to the Swains Park site, it was questioned whether civic amenity facilities could be secured as part of this proposal. Officers clarified that this site was more likely to be used for commercial activity, for composting and material recycling. Councillor Venning voiced her concerns about access to the Swains Park site and highway issues for the surrounding area, particularly Woodville.

The Leader of the Council sought a consistent level of response on both sites, touching on the highway implications for the Swains Park proposals and the flooding risks associated with the Hemington Quarry site. The Chair commented that the Council was cautious about cross border activity and he questioned whether it would be useful to reiterate these concerns to the Environment Agency. Councillor Shepherd requested that copies of the consultation response be circulated to appropriate local parish councils and the Elvaston Quarry Waste Disposal Site Liaison Committee.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That Members’ comments be taken on board in objecting strongly to the consultation document on preferred options for the sites at Swains Park and Hemington Quarry.***

***(2) That in addition to responding to Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council, responses be sent to both regional offices of the Environment Agency and copies circulated to the Overseal, Woodville and Shardlow and Great Wilne Parish Councils, together with the Elvaston Quarry Waste Disposal Site Liaison Committee.***

EDS/41. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985)**

***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.***

**MINUTES**

***The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th August 2006 were received.***

**MEMBERS QUESTIONS AND REPORTS – REFUSE COLLECTION SERVICE (Paragraph 1)**

***A Member reported concerns on the operation of this service.***

**PLANNING SERVICE BUSINESS RE-ENGINEERING AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS (Paragraph 4)**

***The Committee was informed about the re-engineering exercise undertaken within the Planning Service and it considered associated staffing implications.***

**CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS (Paragraph 3)**

***The Committee appointed a contractor for the delivery of ten conservation area appraisals.***

S. TAYLOR

CHAIR