

ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)

4th January 2005

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Southerd (Chair), Councillor Taylor (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Bell, Carroll, Isham, Shepherd, Stone and Whyman, M.B.E.

Conservative Group

Councillors Atkin, Bladen, Ford and Mrs. Hall.

In Attendance

Councillor Jones (Labour Group).

APOLOGY

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Mrs. Walton (Independent Member).

EDS/50. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND REPORTS**

The Chair introduced Peter McEvoy who had recently joined the Council as its Head of Environmental Services. He welcomed the return of Councillor Bell and made reference to the recent disaster in Asia.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

EDS/51. **GENERAL FUND ESTIMATES AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2004/05 AND 2005/06**

The Committee was asked to consider the probable out-turn for 2004/05 and the cash limit estimate for 2005/06. It was proposed that these estimates would be included in the consolidated budget of the Council, subject to the Council's overall financial position. Details were also provided of proposed Revenue Service Developments and new capital investment for 2005/06, together with proposals for the level of fees and charges under the responsibility of this Committee, for the next financial year. A detailed budget booklet had been provided, together with appendices showing:-

- The value and cost of capital assets currently used in delivering the Committee's services;
- An analysis of central and departmental service recharges into the Committee's services;
- An analysis of a statutory pensions adjustment as it affected this Committee for 2004/05;
- A summary of the proposals for Revenue Service Developments and new capital investment; and
- A schedule showing the proposed fees and charges for the Committee's services for 2005/06.

With regard to Capital Charges, all services were required to show the capital cost of using assets. These came in the form of internal recharges and consisted of three elements, namely an interest charge, depreciation and a deferred charge. Capital charges could vary each year as they depended on the level of capital grants and contributions. It was important to note that these were purely accounting adjustments. The central and departmental service recharges were provided and these could also vary each year, dependent upon how staff time was allocated. Again, it was important to note that these were internal recharges.

The report explained the pension adjustment for 2004/05. Due to a change in accounting standards, the actual cash contributions to the pension fund were no longer charged to the Committee's services. The charge now made represented the amount required to make good the deficit on the pension fund in the longer term. This was known as the FRS 17 adjustment. The adjustment was significant in 2004/05, as the original estimates were prepared on the cash basis and these costs were shown in an appendix to the report.

The budget for 2005/06 had initially been compiled at November 2004 prices. An allowance for inflation had been included where it was considered unavoidable, to calculate the cash limit estimate for 2005/06. Details were provided of the assumptions built into the estimates. Capital investment was considered and the report outlined the Committee's current schemes. In addition, a request was being made for a Council contribution in 2004/05 to the Hilton Cycleway project. The total project cost was estimated to be approximately £283,000, of which the Council's contribution would be £9,000.

The Service and Financial Planning Working Group had met on 20th December 2004 to consider the overall financial position, the financial strategy and the initial budget proposals for 2005/06. The Group was scheduled to meet in early January to progress proposals. Appended to the report was list of proposals for new revenue spending and capital investment. Further information had been circulated on the initial scoring of each bid.

The transfer of liquor licensing might have additional cost implications for the Council. Detailed costings were still being prepared and whilst it was anticipated that such costs should be fairly minimal, these would need to be monitored. The Government had made it clear that the overall increase in grant settlement included provision for implementing this service. A final appendix provided a schedule of proposed fees and charges to operate from 1st April 2005, together with a comparison to the existing charge.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the scored schedule of service development bids would be considered by the Service and Financial Planning Working Panel at its Meeting on 10th January 2005. Members were asked to consider the relative priority of the projects identified, as they had initially been compared against the Council's corporate priorities. With regard to the schedule of fees and charges, it was noted that a number of these were still to be confirmed. These fees were due to

be set by the Government and details would be provided to Members in due course.

Councillor Ford highlighted the proposal to provide a free Saturday morning refuse freighter service and he requested that this be given a higher priority. The Chair explained that there had been no evidence to suggest an increase in the levels of fly tipping when this service was withdrawn. It was also questioned why there had been such a high increase in the cost of the animal licence for breeding of dogs. The Head of Environmental Services assumed that this fee had previously been too low and the proposed increase was to bring it in line with the costs incurred by the Council in providing the service. Councillor Atkin sought clarification about the issue of immigration certificates and it was confirmed that the Home Office required such a certificate that a residence was available for immigrants.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the estimates of Revenue Income and Expenditure for 2004/05 and 2005/06 for the Committee's Services be referred to the Finance and Management Committee for approval.***
- (2) That a request for additional Capital Funding of £9,000 in 2004/05 for Hilton Cycleway be referred to the Finance and Management Committee.***
- (3) That the proposals for Revenue Service Developments and new capital investment for 2005/06 be approved for consideration by the Finance and Management Committee.***
- (4) That the Committee's proposed fees and charges for 2005/06 be approved.***

EDS/52.DRAFT SERVICE PLANS 2005/08

The Committee gave consideration to Draft Service Plans for the Planning and Environmental Health Divisions. It was noted that some elements of the Environmental Health Service Plan were the responsibility of the Housing and Community Services Committee. The Policy and Economic Regeneration Service Plan was not presently available and would be reported to a future Meeting of the Committee.

Service Plans provided an important part of the Council's performance management framework and details were given of those other elements within this framework. The Service Plans followed the same format as last year, with the addition of a new section on "workforce planning" and changes to the section on managing risks. Plans covered a three year period, although in practice they would be reviewed and rolled forward annually. Progress reports would continue to be made every six months. Details were provided of the sections contained within each service plan. All plans had been developed on the basis that there would be no change in the level resources devoted to that service area. Proposals for service developments or reductions, along with New Capital Projects would be considered through a separate mechanism and incorporated into the Service Plans at a later date. Proposals resulting from the new Corporate

Plan would also need to be included later. It was proposed therefore, that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to agree final versions of the plans when the budget and Corporate Plan had been approved.

Members were invited to highlight issues stemming from the Service Plans that they would wish to be included in the budget process.

Consideration was given to the Planning Service Plan. Councillor Taylor sought clarification on the remit of the external consultant for urban design. The Head of Service explained that this role would look not only at architecture, but also open spaces between development. The Member questioned whether this post would look at issues like Planning Policy Guidance and amenity and this was confirmed. Councillor Atkin asked about the proposed Action Plan to regenerate the area between Swadlincote Town Centre and Woodville. He questioned proposed road improvements, particularly in the area of the “Clock Garage”. The Head of Planning Services referred to the Local Plan proposals for an additional link road between Woodville and Swadlincote and the endeavours to promote the economic regeneration of large sites in this area, which were currently in a poor condition. The Chair supplemented with an explanation of this historic issue.

The Leader of the Council and Councillor Bladen made further comment on the appointment of consultants to provide technical expertise. The Leader was concerned that the consultants would be hamstrung by Government requirements and it might impinge on appropriate designs for South Derbyshire. Councillor Bladen referred to density guidance and hoped that general guidance could be provided of the essential character of the area. Increased densities of development could be accommodated where appropriate, but not at all costs. The Officer agreed to take Members’ comments on board when providing the brief to consultants.

Councillor Bladen also submitted a question regarding the Planning Delivery Grant, workloads and service planning. Councillor Atkin questioned whether there was guidance on maximum densities of development and responses were provided.

Members then considered the Managing Risks section of the Plan. The Leader sought clarification on the risks associated with a downturn in the economy and reductions in work for the Planning Service. Councillor Ford referred to the risk of legal challenge and the Council’s response to the Local Plan Inspector’s Report. Officers explained the advice sought to minimise the risk of challenge. The Performance Indicator on the proportion of new homes developed on brown field sites was discussed. The target had reduced, principally, because of the deletion of the Willington Power Station site from the Local Plan.

Consideration was given to the Service Plan for Environmental Services. The Chair voiced concerns about the low score relating to the Service Development bid for the Waste Minimisation Plan. The Leader referred to budget pressures and particularly the new licensing regime, where the fee income was unlikely to meet the costs of delivering this new service. It was confirmed that the Council had no discretion to increase the level of licensing fees charged. Following a question from Councillor Atkin,

Officers explained the Service Development Proposal to improve Street Cleansing, to meet future requirements, including plans for the removal of engrained chewing gum. The Chair commented on this Service Development Proposal and it might be possible to phase in certain elements on a year by year basis.

The Council's Leader referred again to the transfer of liquor licensing. In particular, he asked about consultation arrangements for applications and the involvement of the Police. He wished to ensure that the Police were involved, so that their valuable expertise was not lost. Officers understood that the Police would be consulted routinely and the Leader asked for a detailed response. There was a discussion about the delegation arrangements and a comparison was made to the scheme for Development Control. It was understood that the Regulations for Liquor Licensing were likely to be more prescriptive. Members had been informed about the process previously and the Leader commented on the current approach through the Magistrates Court. He questioned how the Council would examine if applicants were a fit and proper person to hold a liquor licence.

Consideration was given to key tasks on waste minimisation and fly tipping. Councillor Isham referred to the refuse collection arrangements over the Christmas holiday period and she asked Officers to look at how this could be covered in the future. The Deputy Chief Executive explained the current arrangements. At the Sainsbury's recycling facility there had been instances of fly tipping and a Member reported problems where refuse sacks had been left outside properties during the Christmas period. Officers agreed to look at the arrangements to cover the Christmas holiday period for the following year. Councillor Taylor supported the views regarding waste minimisation and education. He spoke of the Council's enforcement role and the opportunity of working with the Environment Agency on this issue. He referred also to the scored service development bids and requested that the Service and Financial Planning Working Panel be asked to give priority to this issue.

Councillor Stone referred to the key task for a Street Cleansing Action Plan and he asked whether this would improve street cleansing away from the Town Centre. The Head of Environmental Services hoped that plans to target "hot spots" would address some concerns. The Chair reminded of the responsive service provided by the Clean Team. Councillor Atkin questioned the contingency arrangements where the refuse collection service had to be suspended because, for example, of a heavy snowfall. In such circumstances, efforts were made to inform residents via the media and then to collect the backlog of refuse at the earliest opportunity. Councillor Hall felt that problems were experienced in the rural areas with refuse collection around Bank Holidays. Officers explained the arrangements in place to ensure a continued service around Bank Holidays.

Councillor Atkin referred to the Managing Risks section of the report and Dealing with Major Disasters. He questioned whether the Committee could consider the Environment Agency Flood Plan at a future Meeting. The Deputy Chief Executive responded that the Trent Fluvial Strategy was considered by the Council and comments were made to the Environment Agency. The Council's Local Plan did not permit development in the flood

plain and there was no conflict between the two documents. The Deputy Chief Executive also confirmed that the Service Plan for Policy and Economic Regeneration would be submitted to a future Meeting.

Councillor Shepherd submitted a number of items for consideration by the Service and Financial Planning Working Panel. He referred to the Vehicle Disposal Scheme launched in conjunction with the Crime and Disorder Partnership. The current scheme ran until December 2004 and he questioned if it was to be continued. There had been an increase in the value of scrap metal and little uptake of the scheme. The Chair questioned the need for publicity, to ensure that unwanted vehicles were disposed of properly. Councillor Shepherd then explained that British Telecom no longer permitted litter bins to be placed on telephone poles. He questioned whether any funding had been set aside for the relocation of such litter bins. Initially, budget provision would be required to replace those litter bins that had already been removed. Comment was also made about the provision of dog waste bins. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the cost of bin provision or relocation was relatively low, but the revenue implications of emptying additional bins was more significant. Councillor Shepherd then referred to the provision of new bus shelters. There was a joint scheme in place to finance new shelters, but on some occasions there was a funding shortfall and he asked that the Working Panel consider this issue. Finally, Councillor Shepherd commented on refuse collection and Civic Amenity sites. He asked that Officers continue to seek unrestricted access for South Derbyshire residents to the Raynesway Civic Amenity facility.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the draft Service Plans for Planning Services and Environmental Services be approved as a basis for service delivery over the period April 2005 to March 2008.***
- (2) That the draft Service Plan for the Policy and Economic Regeneration Division be submitted to a future Meeting of the Committee.***
- (3) That the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee to agree the final versions of these plans, when the new Corporate Plan and the 2005/06 Budget have been approved.***
- (4) That Members' views be taken forward on those matters to be addressed through the budget process.***

T. SOUTHERD

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 7.40 p.m.

