

ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

17th April 2008

**PRESENT:-**

**Conservative Group**

Councillor Bladen (Chairman), Councillor Ford (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Mrs. Farrington (substitute for Councillor Lemmon), Mrs. Hood, Murray (substitute for Councillor Bale), Mrs. Patten, Timms and Watson.

**Labour Group**

Councillors Mrs. Lane, Rhind, Taylor, Tilley and Wilkins (substitute for Councillor Southerd).

**In attendance**

Councillors Mrs. Brown (Independent Member), Jones (Conservative Group) and Lane (Labour Group).

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Bale and Lemmon (Conservative Group) and Councillor Southerd (Labour Group).

EDS/48. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th March 2008 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

EDS/49. **REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - FLOODING**

A report was submitted following a request by the Environmental and Development Services Committee to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to look at flooding issues in the South Derbyshire area, and to provide recommendations to improve how these issues were dealt with in the future. The Scrutiny Committee interviewed Officers from the District Council, together with representatives of Severn Trent Water and the Environment Agency, as part of this review.

Attached to the report were annexes detailing a summary of recommendations and an overview of the work completed in preparation of the report.

The Chairman congratulated the Scrutiny Committee on the work that had been completed in compiling this report. Councillor Taylor added that this report was welcomed and was very important to the residents of South Derbyshire. Councillor Mrs. Brown asked who was the District's representative on the Regional Flood Defence Committee, and it was suggested that the District Council considered having a representative on this Committee.

In summarising this report, Councillor Jones requested that, as not enough time had been given for consideration of the representations on household

drainage, this aspect of the report be referred back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be included in the future Work Programme.

**RESOLVED:-**

**(1) That the report of Overview and Scrutiny be received and that the recommendations contained therein, a copy of which is included in the Signed Minute Book at SMB 1, be approved and adopted, subject to the following amendment:-**

**Bullet Point 8 to read:**

- **The Planning Department to continue to secure sustainable drainage where appropriate.**

**(2) That this item be referred back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for inclusion on the future Work Programme, for further consideration of the representations on household drainage.**

**MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE**

EDS/50. **BEST VALUE REVIEW OF STRATEGIC HOUSING SERVICES**

A report was submitted requesting that Members approve a supplementary budget of £18,000 to cover the costs associated with the Best Value Review of Strategic Housing Services.

It was confirmed that the Audit Commission would be inspecting South Derbyshire District Council's Strategic Housing functions in the week commencing 16th June 2008. During this inspection, they would consider how the Council had delivered housing generally, and affordable housing specifically, through its own policies and procedures that included use of its own current stock, land and through Section 106 planning agreements. The inspection would also look at homelessness, general housing advice and Private Sector housing issues.

The Performance Manager position at the District Council was currently vacant and there was no capacity within the Housing Department to progress the strategies and improvements required prior to the inspection. It was proposed to second two members of staff within the Housing Department and backfill their posts for a temporary period. There would also be associated costs of setting up focus groups, providing brochures and other costs, which the Council had to bear.

**RESOLVED:-**

**That the Finance and Management Committee, at its Meeting on 1st May 2008, be recommended to approve a supplementary budget of a maximum of £18,000 to enable the District Council to present its best case to the Audit Commission Inspectors.**

**EDS/51. WASTE AND CLEANSING SERVICES – POLICIES / SERVICE LEVELS REVIEW**

It was confirmed that tender documents for the Waste and Cleansing Service would be issued in July 2008 and were currently under preparation. In order to complete contract specification documents, decisions on service levels were required.

Policies and service levels as a whole were approved by Members as part of the Cleansing the Environment Best Value review in the year 2000. Whilst the basic refuse collection activities remained similar, the development of the recycling and composting schemes had introduced significant changes to the service. The Council's Audit letter for last year drew attention to comparatively high total tonnages and costs per head of population. The policy adjustments proposed within the report offered a response to this, and would have a positive effect on the issue of waste minimisation. However, whilst they would not bring huge reductions, they would restrict or prevent further growth and maintain the pressure to recycle.

The current policies and service levels were attached as an Annexe to the report.

The changes were summarised as follows:-

- Restricting the amount of side waste collected, for householders who missed a collection during the Christmas and New Year period to a maximum of three sacks (currently no limit is stipulated).
- Introducing a policy whereby only bins with lids closed would be emptied (following the issue of warning stickers for first time offenders, bins with lids propped up would not be emptied).
- Decisions regarding the issue of larger bins to householders on the basis of medical needs to be delegated to officers.
- The policy was clarified to explicitly prohibit garden waste being placed in the residual waste bin.

Full details of these items were included within an Annexe to the report.

It was not proposed at this time to make any changes to the existing policy regarding the close down of the 'brown bin' collection for short breaks during the Christmas and New Year holiday period. The current policy allowed for a short closedown period at this time of year and it was suggested that this be left unaltered for the time being. This allowed flexibility to provide improvements on recent years arrangements. When the proposals within the tender bids for the Waste and Cleansing service had been evaluated, Bank Holiday collection arrangements would be finalised and publicised. There were also concerns to be addressed from the Council's Compost facility providers regarding the potential difficulties that might be caused to the composting process during the Christmas and New Year period, if the waste contained a disproportionate amount of cardboard.

Members asked various questions in regard to the proposed changes, including issues surrounding the suspension of the compost scheme at Christmas, the issuing of stickers on bins with lids propped up with rubbish,

the flexibility that could be built into a tender document, the provision of larger bins for medical grounds and the removal of chewing gum.

A discussion ensued on the removal of chewing gum, particularly within Swadlincote town centre. It was requested that further investigation be made and consideration be given to the removal of chewing gum.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the policy and service levels shown at Annexe SMB2 be approved as the baseline service for Waste and Cleansing in the District.***
- (2) That the Head of Environmental Services be requested to provide a report to the next Environmental and Development Services Committee on 3rd June 2008, detailing the current position regarding the proposed Waste and Cleansing Services tender, and that further detail be provided on issues surrounding the removal of chewing gum.***

EDS/52. **ESTABLISHMENT OF JOINT HIGHWAYS FORUM**

The Committee received a report considering proposed arrangements for establishing a Joint Highways Forum.

The 2007/08 Corporate Plan Target (Theme 6: Stronger in the Region) provided for the establishment of a local Highways Forum in partnership with the County Council. A meeting had been held with the Area Manager of the County Highways Authority to discuss the details and it was proposed that the Forum would be held on a six-monthly basis at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Offices. Initially this would be a 'pilot' for two years before being reviewed.

It was suggested that the Forum be open to general discussions relating to roadworks, footways, traffic, parking and street cleaning, being mainly County Highways Authority functions. Appropriate Officers from the District and County Council would attend and it was proposed to invite representatives from parish councils together with the Urban Core Members, County Councillors and the local M.P. A list of suggested agenda items was included within the report.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the proposed arrangements for establishing a Joint Highways Forum be confirmed.***

EDS/53. **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.***

**STAFFING SHORTAGE IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT (Paragraph 1)**

***The Committee considered the implications of a staffing absence in the Planning Department, and the most financially viable proposal to address this.***

J. BLADEN

CHAIRMAN