

ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

18th August 2005

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Taylor (Chair), Councillor Lauro (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Bell, Carroll, Isham, Lane (substitute for Councillor Stone) and Pabla (substitute for Councillor Whyman, M.B.E.).

Conservative Group

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

Independent Member

Councillor Mrs. Walton.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Shepherd, Stone and Whyman M.B.E. (Labour Group) and Councillor Ford (Conservative Group).

EDS/19. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 7th July 2005 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

EDS/20. **GROUNDWORK EREWASH**

It was reported that at the last budget round the Council approved expenditure of £30,000 per annum for expansion of work by Groundwork Erewash into the Council's area. The National Forest Company was committing an additional £4,000 per annum and the total of £34,000 per annum would be match funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), to launch a programme of short and longer term work within the South Derbyshire District. The funding basically paid for Groundwork's Officer time to work on projects.

A working group consisting of the Director of Community Services, staff from Groundwork, the National Forest Company and Groundwork's independent consultant had met on several occasions to identify a short-term work programme. Heads of Service from the Council had been involved in expanding the initial areas of work. The Working Group had identified a short-term work programme for the period 2006/08. These were projects that would launch the work of the Trust in South Derbyshire and would be additional to the £1.5 million per annum of Groundwork activity already taking place in Amber Valley and Erewash. The operational area would be called Erewash Valley and South Derbyshire.

Details were provided of the following short-term projects:-

1. Capacity Building in the Environmental Sector in South Derbyshire
2. Implementation of Open/Green Space Strategy
3. Town Centre Improvements – Swadlincote
4. Industrial Estates Greening Programme
5. Housing Area Enhancements
6. Waste and Recycling
7. National Forest Developments

The report proposed joint working, longer term Programme Areas as follows:-

1. Regeneration and capacity building in areas with social and physical enhancement needs
2. Landscape design and enhancement
3. Support and Growing the Environmental Sector
4. Assistance to Parish Councils and other voluntary sector organisations
5. Heritage Interpretation and Arts Activities
6. Health and the Environment
7. Raising civic pride and environmental awareness, particularly with youth
8. Forestry and Woodlands
9. Environmental Business Services
10. Improvements to Housing

The report then explained the organisational plan for the Erewash and South Derbyshire Sub Area, to have a Committee reporting to the main Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire Board of the Trust, with at least two members who would sit on the main board. It was envisaged that the Erewash Valley and South Derbyshire Committee would have eleven members and details were given of the proposed composition. Presentations to elected Members of the Local Authorities would keep them informed of progress with the Trust. The role of the Area Committee was also reported, together with the composition of the main board of Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire.

The report outlined the staffing arrangements of the main trust office and each of the sub-areas, including the composition of local area teams and the skills that would be provided.

The Deputy Leader of the Council welcomed the report, the funding that would be attracted to the District and she referred to the excellent track record of Groundwork Erewash. She sought further information on the involvement of the public, particularly in unparished areas. She also asked about Member involvement, how they would be kept informed and have an input into the works undertaken. The Head of Leisure and Community Development replied that Groundwork Erewash was good in its “broker” approach to public involvement. He referred to works undertaken in the Hilton Ward, which provided a good example of this. There would be a consultation strategy for each project undertaken. With regard to Members, he recognised that there was an issue of reporting back and felt that an annual review would be provided together with

quarterly up-dates. Councillor Mrs Walton referred to the work undertaken in Hilton and she commended the efforts of Groundwork Erewash to involve the public. Councillor Bale pursued the point about Member involvement and he was concerned about the dependency on external funding. He sought clarification about the requirements before external funding was attracted; he recognised that the project was very ambitious and was to be applauded. The Head of Leisure and Community Development explained the position with matched funding from the ODPM. He also gave examples of other funding that could be attracted for specific projects. The Chair spoke of the previous projects undertaken by Groundwork Erewash and the significant funding attracted in return for pump-priming local authority funding.

Councillor Atkin sought further information about the appointments to the various bodies and he questioned the implications of a party withdrawing from the scheme. Officers clarified the arrangements for representation, including Member involvement at Board level. If a partner withdrew from the scheme, its financial contribution would not be matched by the ODPM, but he explained the commitments already in place.

Councillor Bell commented on the financing arrangements and questioned when project funding would be in place, to enable schemes to start. The Officer gave clarification of the timings for delivery of projects. In response to a further question from Councillor Bell, there was a discussion about the longer term position and the Council's commitment to this initiative. Council Bell felt that Members' input was needed into prioritising projects. It was intended to submit periodic reports to Members, possibly through the Service Plan process. The Deputy Chief Executive viewed this from a performance management aspect and briefs would need to be agreed with policy committees. There was a softer process of negotiation and delivery of outcomes, but reports would be provided to policy committees and through the Members Bulletin.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approves the ODPM bid document for work within the South Derbyshire District Council's area.

EDS/21. **ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

It was reported that the Local Authority Eco-Management and Audit Scheme was a voluntary scheme of self-management, aimed at continuous year on year improvement in environmental performance. The scheme was calibrated against an internationally determined standard and was externally audited and accredited. The benefits of active engagement in such a scheme were set out within the report. The Council had documented its aim of achieving an environmental management system. This was described as an aim in the 2003 Corporate Plan, but progress had been limited and previous service development bids had been unsuccessful.

At its meeting in January 2005, the Council committed to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. This involved commitment

to reducing the contribution to climate change gases from the Council and its partners.

An opportunity had arisen to access expertise needed to implement EMAS at a very economic rate. High Peak Borough Council had been granted beacon status for sustainable energy and had received an accreditation to the EMAS standard. As part of its beacon status, the Authority had the obligation to assist other local authorities on the same issue. This Council had been offered the services of an EMAS and sustainability expert for the remainder of the current year, free of charge. By utilising this Officer's expertise throughout the pre-accreditation phase of the project and engaging managers from each service to commit to delivering the project, it would be possible to avoid the expense of appointing a full-time EMAS Officer. A provisional assessment had been undertaken of the Council's position, together with the necessary steps towards accreditation and a project outline was submitted.

A draft Environmental Policy had been produced, based on a standard model and the Committee was asked to consider this in principle. Discussions would be held with Service Heads and changes might be suggested to tailor the policy to the specific needs of the Council and its District. A final draft would then be submitted to the Committee for approval in February 2006.

The financial implications were reported and High Peak Borough Council had requested a contribution to cover the costs of the Officer's time following the end of the beacon year. This equated to £3,500 per annum for two years. The other costs associated with this project were also reported.

Councillor Carroll sought further information about the funding commitment and referred to earlier discussions, that this work could be absorbed within existing budgets. The Deputy Chief Executive clarified the position and this proposal gave an opportunity to pursue the previously agreed objective, whilst incurring lower costs.

The Chair referred to the EMAS principles, the previous support expressed by himself and Councillor Bell for such an initiative and concerns about delivery. A lot of work was required and there was a need for an on-going commitment and champions within each area of the Council. He commented on the need to engrain this initiative throughout the Local Authority. The Deputy Chief Executive agreed that there was the need for a driver and commitment throughout the Council and in this way, the EMAS initiative was similar to several of the Council's other key objectives. He recognised the additional work required and the benefits that could stem from EMAS. He then replied to a question from Councillor Atkin regarding the staffing implications for the future. Councillor Bale asked about the future financial implications and the Chair replied that this report gave initial consideration to EMAS. The Council could consider potential service developments at a future date. The Deputy Chief Executive added that there were some clearly defined costs associated with EMAS, whilst other costs were less easy to determine.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Council commits to the programme for implementation of Local Authority EMAS, as outlined in the report.***
- (2) That the Committee adopts the draft Environmental Policy as submitted.***

EDS/22. **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.

MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 7th July 2005 were received.

PUBLIC TOILETS PROVISION IN REPTON (Paragraph 8)

The Committee agreed financial support towards the provision of a public convenience in Repton.

CONTRACT FOR NEW COMPOSTING FACILITIES (Paragraph 9)

The Council's commitment was given to a new compost processing contract.

S TAYLOR

CHAIR