

ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

3rd June 2004

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

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

Conservative Group

Councillors Atkin, Ford and Mrs. Wheeler (substitute for Councillor Bladen).

In Attendance

Councillor Mrs. Walton (Independent Member)

It was noted that at the present time, Councillor Mrs. Walton was no longer a Member of the Committee following her resignation from the Conservative Group, pending the Council's consideration of the political proportionality and re-allocation of seats on Committees.

EDS/1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Southerd (Chair) (Labour Group) and Councillors Bladen and Mrs. Hall (Conservative Group).

EDS/2. **MINUTES**

The Open and Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th April 2004 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

EDS/3. **HISTORIC BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREA GRANTS**

It was reported that responsibility for Historic Building and Conservation Area (HBCA) Grant applications previously lay with the Development Control Committee. The applications were determined by a Historic Buildings and Conservation Area Grants Sub-Committee. As part of the recent review of Committee Terms of Reference, the function had transferred to the Environmental and Development Services Committee.

Since April 2001, a Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS) Sub-Committee had determined Swadlincote HERS grant applications. Both sub-committees had been effective and included site inspections where appropriate. It was proposed that the HERS sub-committee be renamed and its terms of reference expanded to enable it to deal with both HERS and HBCA applications. The suggested terms of reference for the "Grants Sub-Committee" were:-

Swadlincote Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme Grants

- to deal with all matters relating to the Swadlincote HERS as delegated to South Derbyshire District Council by English Heritage.

Historic Building and Conservation Area Grants

- to determine all applications for grant assistance and requests to start work without prejudice to applications;
- to determine whether any grant payment should be reclaimed where a property was sold within three years of the grant payment or any other period as the committee might decide to set as a standard condition; and
- to set grant priorities for the fund at the beginning of each financial year.

Several grant applications had been awaiting consideration since 1st April 2004. To avoid any further delay, it was proposed that the Committee determine those applications submitted.

The report then considered priorities for 2004/05. For the past four financial years the HBCA Grants budget had been set at £5,000. In order to distribute this limited amount to those most worthy projects, grants had been allocated on the basis of agreed priorities. Only those applications falling into a priority category had been determined in the first six months of the financial year. The funds remaining after 1st October had then been made available for any eligible application, regardless of its category. Last year, the priorities were repairs to buildings at risk and works of restoration. It was considered that these priorities had worked well, they remained applicable it was proposed that they should continue.

Consideration was given to specific grant applications for No. 67 High Street, Melbourne, No. 21 Castle Street, Melbourne, Broughton House, Shardlow, Daniel Hayes Farm, Pistern Hill, Smisby, No. 42 Derby Road, Melbourne and No. 39 Blanch Croft, Melbourne. For each application, details were provided of the nature of the property, the works involved, the cost of eligible works and the proposed grant amount. With regard to Broughton House, Shardlow it was reported that a second quotation had now been received, but this did not affect the proposed level of grant funding.

Members gave consideration to the proposed name for the sub-committee and Councillor Bell suggested “Heritage Grants Sub-Committee”. This was debated and there might be some confusion with a former grants scheme that had been transferred to Sharpe’s Pottery. Councillor Mrs. Wheeler sought clarification on the number of Members to serve on the Sub-Committee. It was confirmed that at its Annual Meeting, the Council had approved the composition of the proposed Sub-Committee, but this could be revisited at a Special Council Meeting on 16th June 2004. Councillor Bell questioned how many grant applications had been received and it was confirmed that those received were set out within the report. The Planning Services Manager felt that if further funding was provided, it would result in additional grant applications. Councillor Bell also commented that grant proposals seemed to be based on the total cost of eligible works, including Value Added Tax. He questioned whether the Council would be able to reclaim the VAT element thereby increasing the available grant monies. This issue would need to be researched with Finance Officers. It was also questioned whether the level of detail within this report meant that it should have been received in the Exempt part of the Meeting. Officers were satisfied that details of grant applicants could be considered in public.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Swadlincote Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme Sub-Committee be renamed and its Terms of Reference expanded to encompass the determination of applications submitted under the Swadlincote Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme and Historic Building and Conservation Area Grants Scheme.**
- (2) That the Sub-Committee be named “The Heritage Grants Sub-Committee” and that it has delegated powers as set out within the report.**
- (3) That priority for grant aid from the 2004/05 Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas Grants budget be given to:-**
 - (i) Repairs to “buildings at risk” and**
 - (ii) Works of restoration**
- (4) That for the first six months of the financial year only, HBCA grant applications falling within the above priority categories be determined and that should there be any remaining funds, non-priority applications be determined after 1st October 2004, with grants awarded according to the merits of each case.**
- (5) That the following HBCA grant applications be approved:-**
 - (a) 67 High Street, Melbourne**
That Miss J. Lawrence be offered a 40% grant up to a maximum of £869 towards eligible costs of £2,173.18 for the restoration of two windows and a door and frame on the front of the property as set out in the estimate from W.B. Bradford (Measham) Ltd. dated 6th November 2003, subject to the usual conditions and the following additional conditions:
 - (i) that the external ironmongery be approved**
 - (ii) that the joinery be painted to an agreed colour before the grant is paid**
 - (b) 21 Castle Street, Melbourne**
That subject to the receipt of competitive estimates Mr. W.S. Gilmour be offered a 40% grant up to a maximum of £1,006 towards the eligible costs of £2,514.50 for restoring two first floor leaded light windows at the property, subject to the usual conditions and the following additional condition:
 - (i) that the windows be painted to an agreed colour before the grant is paid.**
 - (c) Broughton House, Shardlow**
That Dr. A.J. Kempton be offered a 33% grant up to a maximum of £1,021 towards eligible costs of £3,096 (£2,635 + 17.5% VAT) for restoring three first floor sash windows at the property as set out in the estimates from Ventrolla Sash

Window Renovation Specialists dated 26th March 2003 subject to the usual conditions and the following additional condition:

- (i) that the windows be painted to an agreed colour before the grant is paid.**
- (d) Daniel Hayes Farm, Smisby**
That Mr. A. Moseley be offered a 33% grant up to a maximum of £676 towards eligible costs of £2,043.40 for restoring cast iron rain water goods at the property as set out in the estimates from Ben Chester Estates Maintenance and Traditional Crafts dated 1st April 2004, subject to the usual conditions and the following additional condition:

 - (i) that the rainwater goods be painted before fixing and that the colour be agreed.**
- (e) 42 Derby Road, Melbourne**
That Ms J. Hudson be offered a 40% grant up to a maximum of £962 towards eligible costs of £2,404 for the restoration of a sash window, stone step and a door and frame on the front of the property, as set out in the estimate from Long Life Windows (and including a provisional estimate for the step) dated 26th March 2004, subject to the usual conditions and the following additional conditions:

 - (i) that a sample of the stone for the step be approved before work starts;**
 - (ii) that the precise pattern of the joinery be agreed before work starts;**
 - (iii) that the external ironmongery be approved; and**
 - (iv) that the joinery be painted to an agreed colour before the grant is paid.**
- (f) 39 Blanch Croft, Melbourne**
That Mrs. C. Parker be offered a 40% grant up to a maximum of £466 towards eligible costs of £1,165 for the restoration/repair of doors and frames on the front and rear of the property, as set out in the estimate from Graham Twells Joiner, dated 30th March 2004, subject to the usual conditions and the following additional conditions:

 - (i) that the precise pattern of the joinery be agreed before work starts;**
 - (ii) that the external ironmongery be approved; and**
 - (iii) that the joinery be painted to an agreed colour before the grant is paid.**

EDS/4. 2003/2004 SERVICE PLANS – YEAR END MONITORING REPORTS

It was reported that Service Plans were an important part of the Council's Performance Management framework. Towards the end of 2002, the Committee approved Service Plans for the Planning Services, Economic Development, Technical Services and Environmental Health Divisions. These

plans were intended to provide a basis for service delivery over the 2003/04 financial year. The Committee gave consideration to Service Plan reports for each Division, which reviewed progress at the end the Service Plan period. Each report provided a description of the service, achievements, unfinished tasks, performance indicators and the lessons learned.

The Planning Services Manager highlighted sections of his report, commenting on legislative changes for Planning and the potential impact for the District. The Leader of the Council referred to the Division's achievements, specifically those to develop management competencies and develop and implement proposals for E-Government. He questioned the value of the Best Value Performance Indicator on planning cost per head of population. He felt it unfortunate that the report did not recognise the good performance of this section. He questioned what the Division had learnt from dissatisfied customers and asked why there was no target for certain Best Value Indicators. He also sought information about "fair access".

In response, the Planning Services Manager spoke about the upgrading of software systems used by the Division, commented on the planning portal and the current issues to be resolved. There were undoubted benefits to customers from the computer based initiatives, but they had not reduced staff workload. He agreed that certain Best Value Performance Indicators seemed of little value and it was difficult to compare individual local planning authorities. He explained that the statistic on dissatisfied customers was not supported by qualitative information and it resulted from a prescribed Government form. The Officer also explained that achievement of the Best Value Indicator for the Development Plan containing comprehensive indicators and targets would be satisfied by adoption of the revised Local Plan. The issue regarding "fair access" was a corporate matter, that was currently being considered.

The Leader of the Council then sought further information on the lessons learned and particularly the development of strategies for improving staffing levels. The Officer confirmed that whilst the Planning Delivery Grant was provided, additional staffing levels could be sustained. If this funding was withdrawn, the Council would need to consider this matter. The Leader of the Council questioned the anticipated date for adoption of the revised Local Plan. It was explained that the Planning Inspectorate had suffered certain operational difficulties. It was anticipated that a report would be received by October 2004, but the Leader felt that Members and Local Plan respondents had a right to be kept informed. It had previously been anticipated that the revised Local Plan would be published in June.

Councillor Taylor asked that information be sent to Members on the likely date for completion of the Local Plan. The Deputy Chief Executive offered to issue a press release and the Planning Services Manager spoke of potential legal issues. The Leader of the Council was mindful that Members would make the final decision on whether to accept the recommendations of the Local Plan Inspector. In response to a question from Councillor Bell, information was provided on the classification of planning applications as "major" or "minor".

Consideration was given to the Economic Development Division's Service Plan. Following a question from Councillor Ford, information was provided about tourism promotion, specifically the successful lobbying of EMDA and

the classification of the National Forest as special project within a strategy. Councillor Mrs. Wheeler referred to a project on farmers' markets that had been suggested some twelve months ago. It appeared that no progress had been made, although she was mindful that the Economic Development Assistant had left the Council. Management Team had recognised the impact of the drain of resources from the Economic Development Unit. Councillor Wilkins sought further information about the Environmental Improvement Scheme and it was agreed that this be provided. Councillor Whyman referred to specific performance indicators which were identical to those for 2002/03. He questioned the relevance or value of these statistics. He then referred to the poor condition of the Civic Offices and was aware that funding had been provided to improve its decoration. Many other local authorities had a scheme of planned maintenance for their civic buildings. The Leader then referred to the section on lessons learned and specifically the marketing of vacant sheltered housing complexes. He felt that Officers should have sought further information, if they were unsure of the Committee's instructions. Councillor Wilkins agreed that the asset management statistics were meaningless. The Deputy Chief Executive commented about the condition of the Civic Offices and arrangements were being to address the reported problems. Councillor Isham felt that direction signage within the Civic Offices should be improved.

Members then discussed the Service Plan for the Technical Services Division. The Deputy Chief Executive praised staff for the additional responsibilities absorbed since the departure of the Divisional Manager. These sentiments were echoed by the Chair. Councillor Ford referred to the composting scheme and questioned whether grass could be collected from Council maintained sites to increase the amount of compostable material and remove unsightly residue. The Member also commented on road sweeping in the Willington and Findern Ward. The Direct Services Manager reminded Members of the increased frequency of grass cutting and grass was collected from the first six cuts of maintenance at sheltered housing schemes. He explained that to collect all grass would effectively double the cost of grass maintenance.

Councillor Mrs. Wheeler praised the initiative to develop and implement a fly tipping plan. She was delighted with the choice of location for the pilot scheme and had seen a reduction in fly tipping problems in the area concerned. Councillor Carroll was pleased with the progress made on recycling. However, problems had been experienced recently with fluid leaking from the vehicle which collected compostable materials. There was a discussion about this problem and the measures taken by the Direct Services Organisation to clear deposits from roadways in the area concerned. Councillor Carroll was also concerned about the lack of response to telephone and Email enquiries. She then referred to the cardboard Recycling Centre in Melbourne. There had been previous criticism over the design of the Cardboard Recycling Bank. The scheme had proved to be successful and there was a need for more frequent emptying of the recycling banks. Clarification was sought about the classification and collection of clinical waste. Officers confirmed that there was concern over the service presently received from the Cardboard Recycling Contractor and options were being explored.

With the approval of the Chair, Councillor Mrs. Walton spoke to this item. It was confirmed that the statistics for litter bin emptying included dog waste

bins. Councillor Mrs. Walton requested additional cardboard recycling facilities in the Hilton area to meet the needs of the increasing population. The Direct Services Manager advised that no further progress had yet been made, but it was hoped to secure an additional location for a cardboard recycling bank, linked to a planning application in the area. Councillor Wilkins commented that the emptying of litter bins seemed inconsistent. Councillor Atkins sought information about the frequency of grass cutting and in his own Ward, the grass had only been cut once this year. He also sought an update on the motion by Councillor Harrison to reintroduce a free bulky refuse collection service. The Direct Services Manager agreed to research the concerns raised by Councillor Atkins. It was clarified that the motion to reintroduce a free bulky refuse collection service had been withdrawn and was subject to a further report being submitted to a future meeting of this Committee, including the financial implications.

Councillor Stone sought information about the maintenance arrangements for garden areas at sheltered housing schemes and he explained a particular problem with weed infestation. The Direct Services Manager confirmed that such maintenance took place twice each year and was due imminently. The Deputy Chief Executive suggested that this matter be pursued with the Housing Division, hopefully to prevent a recurrence of the problem in future years.

The Committee gave consideration to the Environmental Health Service Plan. The Officer highlighted that all required enforcement actions had followed due process. Councillor Ford questioned whether legislation was planned to restrict the sale and use of fireworks. Officers were not aware of any planned legislation at this time. Councillor Mrs. Wheeler praised the arrangements to transfer telephone calls for certain environmental health functions to the Customer Services Division. She felt this was an exemplar for other service areas. Councillor Carroll requested that for future Service Plan reports, page numbers be provided and the service areas be split for each Committee to avoid confusion.

S. TAYLOR

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 7.50 p.m.