

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2nd December 2002

**PRESENT:-**

**Labour Group**

Councillor Harrington (Chair), Councillor Bambrick (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Evens, Rose and Sherratt.

**In Attendance**

Councillors Stone and Bell.

**APOLOGY**

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Mrs. Robbins (Conservative Group).

CYS/43. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st October 2002 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

CYS/44. **LOCAL PLAN REVIEW - PROGRESS**

It was reported that since the previous review, an advisory visit had been made by an Inspector who was complimentary about the set up and use of the database. The same Programme Officer and Counsel as used for the previous Local Plan had been engaged and a replacement Local Plans Officer had been in post for approximately four weeks.

Negotiations had taken place with various objectors and as a result, 54 objections had been unconditionally withdrawn and 57 objections had been conditionally withdrawn. All outstanding objections and representations of support had been reported to a Special Meeting of the Environmental and Development Services Committee on 20th November 2002. Objectors had been sent a copy of the recommendations relating to their objections prior to the Meeting. As the Plan was important to all Members, the Chair had extended an invitation to all Councillors and the Committee had referred its recommendations to a Special Meeting of the Council to be held on 4th December 2002. The revised document could not be placed on deposit formally until a letter of general conformity with the Structure Plan had been received from the County Council.

It was anticipated that the consultation period of six weeks would commence on 16th December 2002 at the earliest. It was hoped that the website could also be utilised for this purpose.

CYS/45. **CLEANSING THE ENVIRONMENT - BEST VALUE REVIEW - PROGRESS ON DELIVERING THE ACTION PLAN**

The Committee received a report on the progress being made on the Action Plan arising out of the Best Value review on Cleansing the Environment. The Best Value review was completed in Autumn and inspected in October 2001. The Action Plan contained over seventy actions and a summary of the

progress made in the last year was provided. Reasonable progress had been made in delivering the Action Plan, although absences in key posts had necessitated its rescheduling. However, it was anticipated that staffing should be at its full complement in the New Year, including the appointment of a temporary member of staff in August as included in the Action Plan. A full and enlarged staffing structure should enable the remainder of the Plan to be delivered to the programme.

The Clean Team had now been in operation for almost twelve months and during the first eleven months had dealt with approximately 1,350 incidents. Fly tipping cases were being cleared within a day and compliments had been received on the speedy response to telephone calls. Members enquired whether a feedback system was in operation and it was confirmed that the Clean Team had been encouraged to report any 'hot spots' in cases of litter and dog fouling for future proactive purposes. There had been problems associated with a temporary vehicle but a dedicated vehicle was now in place.

#### CYS/46. **WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING**

Members received an overview of the current position regarding collection of domestic waste and the measures in place or being developed to reduce, recycle and compost this waste.

Each year, over 400,000 tonnes of household waste were produced in Derbyshire with approximately 38,000 tonnes from South Derbyshire. All councils in the county had been working together to tackle the problem, resulting in the production of the Derbyshire Waste Management Strategy, which had three objectives, as follows:-

- Reduce the amount of waste produced
- Make the best use of waste produced through recycling, composting or energy recovery
- Minimise the risk of pollution from waste management practices

In South Derbyshire, the Council was the waste collection authority and the County Council was the waste disposal authority. The Disposal Contract expired in 2005 and investigations were currently taking place with regard to integrated approaches to a new waste management contract. Six national waste contractors had expressed an interest with a view to open tendering in 2003 for a new contract likely to be between 15 and 20 years and worth several tens of millions of pounds. The national waste targets involved the recycling or composting of at least 30% of household waste by 2010 and at least 33% by 2015. This Council, together with Derby City Council and the districts of Erewash and Amber Valley, had now signed agreements for Brightstar Environmental to develop an innovative, high technology Solid Waste and Energy Recovery facility to be located at Sinfin. The new plant was expected to be operational by early 2005.

(At 5.15 p.m., Councillor Bell joined the Meeting.)

The amount of waste collected per head of population was high compared to other areas (14% above average) and continued to rise. More attention needed to be given to waste minimisation measures and to promote this message actively within the community.

The cost of waste collection (including recycling and composting) was high compared with other councils and the reasons for this were under investigation. This year, the cost per household was expected to be £35.85, being an increase of 3%. The Government had set a target of recycling or composting 14% of household waste by 2003/04 and 21% by 2005/06. In 2001/02, this Council had achieved a rate of 10.2%. This year, the target was 12.5% but the estimated performance was 11.2%. The Council's performance was a little higher than the national average but was likely to be significantly better than the average cost.

Last year, the Council recycled 6.2% of the total household waste collected and this was expected to rise to 6.5% in the current year. The Council was also trying to encourage the composting of kitchen and garden waste. In 1996, a pilot project had been launched to collect compostable waste from 1,200 homes. The trial was successful and the scheme now covered nearly 8,000 homes in the areas of Etwall, Egginton, Hatton, Hilton, Repton, Twyford, Willington and Melbourne. The scheme was operated in partnerships with Biffa Waste at Etwall and Sita Waste at Lount. Other partnerships were also under consideration as the scheme needed to be expanded by 4,000 properties per annum to meet the Government's targets. Last year, the Council composted 4.0% of household waste. This year, based on further expansion of the scheme, the target was 6.2% but the estimated performance was 4.7%.

Members considered a table indicating the results of a user satisfaction survey performed on 1,000 householders. This showed high levels of satisfaction with refuse collection, although less for recycling facilities. A further questionnaire would be circulated in 2003/2004.

Following a query by a Member on abandoned vehicles, it was reported that a progress report would be submitted to the next Meeting.

CYS/47. **CRIME AND DISORDER STRATEGY – PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION**

Michelle Collins, the Community Safety Officer, presented an update on the activities of the Action Team, a copy of which is attached at Annexe 'A' to these Minutes.

CYS/48. **CULTURAL STRATEGY**

It was reported that this Strategy was in the course of preparation and an Action Team was to be established to progress the matter.

CYS/49. **COMMUNITY SAFETY – BEST VALUE REVIEW**

It was reported that this Council would be linking with the County Council on this Review. A scoping document had been prepared, key objectives identified and the final document would be ready at the end of December.

CYS/50. **DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT**

The Committee received a progress report on compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 which had been introduced by the Government to end the discrimination that many disabled people faced. The Act gave disabled people rights in the areas of employment, access to goods and

services and buying land or property. Employment and first rights of access came into force on 2nd December 1996, further rights of access came into force on 1st October 1999 and the final rights of access would come into force in October 2004.

An audit was carried out in 1996 of the Civic Offices and other relevant buildings and 49 buildings were identified for which the Council had responsibility. However, only 10 of these buildings were open to the public or occupied by the authority which the Council would apparently be responsible for under Part M of the Building Regulations and now the Disability Discrimination Act. These were the Civic Offices, the Green Bank Leisure Centre, the Grove Hall, Etwall Pool, Etwall Squash Courts, Maurice Lea Memorial Park Sports Pavilion, Eureka Park Sports Pavilion, Swadlincote Town Hall, the Market Hall and Rosliston Farm Visitors Centre. These properties had been assessed at that time for accessibility, toilet facilities and audience facilities. Of the ten assessed, only six met the criteria required at that time. According to the survey, the other 39 properties were either leased or not open to the public on a regular basis.

Upon reviewing the guidance provided in relation to accessibility and through discussions with other authorities, it was considered that many of these properties also needed to be audited and improvements undertaken. To ensure compliance with the Act, these ten properties should be re-audited and there were also eleven internal and external communal areas in the sheltered housing complexes that would need to be assessed.

Larger Councils employed a Disability Access Officer but this Authority did not have such a post nor had existing staff with either the capacity or skills to undertake these audits. As this was a specialist operation, a consultant would have to be engaged to assess the properties and supply an action plan and costing to enable the Council to comply with the Regulations.

To meet the cost of the audit, a revenue bid of £40,000 had been submitted. It was hoped that funds could be identified from this year's budget to commence the works rather than waiting until 2003/04. When the audit had been undertaken, a capital bid would need to be made based on the costs identified by other authorities. Some authorities had spent up to £500,000 and the timing of such a capital bid would need to be discussed further when the funding for the audit had been agreed.

The Equal Opportunities Policy also required updating.

#### CYS/51. **BEST VALUE – CAR PARKING**

The Committee received a report outlining the background to the Best Value review of car parking and the decision to remove it from the Work Programme.

The review was originally programmed to commence in 2001/02 as a follow-up to the Value for Money study on fees and charges. It was included in the second year reviews as a follow-on from Cleansing the Environment and would have completed a full review of the Technical Services Division.

On 15th October 2001, Members were informed that the review was to be carried out by the Clean Team which had just completed its own Cleansing

the Environment review. Accordingly, it was agreed that the review would be re-programmed to commence in January 2002 and a more detailed report was to be submitted to a future Meeting of the Committee (Minute No. CYS/8 refers). However, in view of the Audit Commission's report on evaluating progress by Councils since this regime was introduced, new guidance was issued which indicated that reviews should be more strategic, challenging and focussed on delivering improvements in service delivery. This involved moving away from small reviews to larger cross-cutting reviews including, where necessary, other Councils. Therefore, a revision of the overall programme was agreed and Members approved the removal of the Car Parking Best Value review from the programme (Minute No. CYS/29 of 4th March 2002 refers). This had now been included in a proposed Year 4 (2003/04) review of Technical Services which would be a small tidying-up review to cover all those services not already covered by the Cleansing the Environment review. However, Members were reminded that a Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) had now been introduced and the Derbyshire authorities were due to be inspected from October next year which may lead to further changes to the Best Value programme.

A Member questioned whether the Council should try and derive income from car parking charges and this could be a matter which Members may wish to scrutinise in due course.

K HARRINGTON

CHAIR

The meeting terminated at 5.50 p.m.