

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9th September 2002

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

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

Conservative Group

Councillors Harrison (arrived at 4.45 p.m.) and Mrs. Robbins.

In Attendance

Mr. J. Symonds, Derbyshire County Council.

CYS/21. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 29th July 2002 were received.

CYS/22. **LOCAL PLAN SECOND DEPOSIT DRAFT – PROGRESS**

The Committee was advised that staff had been negotiating objections with a view to getting them withdrawn since this matter was discussed by the Committee in April 2002. Officers acknowledged guidance published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) which acknowledged that objections from the local community lobbying against allocations and from the commercial sector promoting alternative sites were likely to be very difficult to resolve and trying to reach a compromise, time consuming and sometimes impossible. The advice was that local authorities should devote least effort to these issues at this stage.

It was reported that Officers were currently in the process of appointing a Programme Officer and Counsel and would be receiving an advisory visit from an Inspector on 18th September 2002. It was intended to hold seminars for Members in the latter half of September on the main issues arising from the consultation and then to produce a report to Committee during October. It was envisaged that it would then be possible to commence the six week consultation on the second deposit draft by the end of October.

Officers anticipated the Public Inquiry would commence towards the end of May 2003 and last for twenty weeks. Discussions with the Inspector during his advisory visit would ascertain whether or not the Council's programme was realistic so that Officers could obtain formal approval of the programme in October.

The Committee received and noted the report.

CYS/23. **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL – BEST VALUE REVIEW – PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The Committee received a copy of the Development Control Best Value Implementation Plan and noted progress made to date.

It was reported that a part-time Enforcement Officer had recently been appointed and would assist with implementing certain actions within the plan.

Ian Reid advised that 18 months ago Inspectors had deemed that this service would not improve. The rationale behind this comment was that the Inspectors could not see where the Council could inject additional resources. However, the Council had made improvements where additional resources were not required and it was hoped that this would be reflected when the service was re-inspected in November 2002.

CYS/24. **OLDER PEOPLES' SERVICES – BEST VALUE REVIEW**

Mr. John Symonds of Derbyshire County Council was in attendance at the Meeting and gave a detailed presentation on the Best Value Review into Older Peoples' Services. He advised that it was intended to listen to what older people had to say and that to date they had advised that so far there had been "limited listening". The review was based on the initiative "Better Government for Older People – If we get it right for old people it will be right for all". A workshop had been held in May 2002 and Officers had met with 150 older people to obtain their views.

It had become apparent that older people did not want residential care but wanted independent living. They wanted to remain in their own homes and therefore the review need to look at accommodation, support, information provided, social contact, allowing older people to retain their dignity and advice on finance. Accommodation strategies were required and the County Council would work with this Council's Housing Officers in this regard.

The review would look at home security, fire prevention, and physical safety.

Initial discussions had revealed that with regard to the health of older people there was a need to prevent ill health, re-assure older people regarding ill health, provide aftercare support and cater for the emotional wellbeing and cost of healthy living for older people. (For example, most older people had indicated that they did not wish to use the NHS Chiropody Service because there was no consistency in the Chiropodist which they would see. Therefore, many older people chose to pay for private chiropody services).

With regard to quality of life, older people wished opportunities to be provided for purposeful use of time.

Officers had looked at the issue of engaging older people in the review and had concluded that they would prefer "nothing about us without us". Older people needed to be involved in the planning and decision making about the services provided for them, Officers needed to listen to feedback provided and Partnership Forums needed to be established. Sometimes issues raised by older people appeared somewhat minor but they required consideration. (For example, Officers were aware that £4.5 million was spent every year on concessionary travel but improvements were needed whereby bus provision was very limited). Older people had expressed concern regarding changes to both the warden service and the home help service. They had expressed concern that they could not get to the Doctors via public transport, did not have access to a pharmacy, could not maintain their garden, change a light bulb or have furniture moved at a reasonable cost. Many older people could

not reach their fuse box, could not get to a library and were ignorant as to how to get assistance for the provision of spectacles etc.

It was noted that one of the largest groups of carers were older people (i.e. an older woman caring for her husband). It was felt that with regard to Sheltered Housing schemes consideration needed to be given to the storage of wheelchairs and involving disabled and older people in the design of future sheltered housing schemes.

Mr. Symonds advised of the level of consultation undertaken and reported that he was currently working with Jo Smith of the South Derbyshire CVS to set up an Older Persons' Reference Group.

Councillor Evens referred to the fact that many services provided for older people were provided by many different agencies and queried whether there was a case for a more streamlined approach to service provision. Mr. Symonds indicated that it had not been proven that a change in organisational structure would resolve such problems and referred to an experience at Rotherham where such a reorganisation had made little difference. He acknowledged that practice needed to come together and there was a requirement for the ownership of the principle of 'providing the best service possible'. The concept "Supporting People" would inform some areas of overlap (e.g. the Home Help/Warden Service). The Chair noted the big changes in the Social Services Department of the County Council and advised that he hoped that once the reorganisation had "settled" there would be more partnership working in evidence. Mr. Symonds advised that the scope of the review was being presented to Derbyshire County Council's Scrutiny Committee in October and he was confident that partnership working would be an approach recommended and arrangements would be established thereon.

Councillor Mrs. Robbins expressed concern regarding changes in the Meals on Wheels service and advised that many older people felt disregarded. Mrs. Robbins raised an individual query regarding the Meals on Wheels service in her particular Ward and agreed to provide further details of this matter to Mr. Symonds for action.

Ian Reid asked how the District Council could be best kept informed as to the processes undertaken as part of the review and how conclusions of the review were arrived at. Mr. Symonds advised that he was prepared to return to a future meeting of the Committee towards the end of the review to present details of the findings. He also suggested that once the Older Persons Reference Group was established representatives of the District Council be included as part of this group which was welcomed by the Committee.

Mr. Symonds agreed to provide a copy of his slide presentation together with a report of the workshop held to Members for future reference. The Chair thanked Mr. Symonds for his presentation.

(At 5.25 p.m. Councillor Harrison left the Meeting).

CYS/25. CLEANSING THE ENVIRONMENT – BEST VALUE REVIEW – PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Committee was advised that some thirty-eight of the actions in the Implementation Plan were due to have been completed to date. Of these, fourteen were complete, ten were in progress and eleven required re-scheduling. Three aspects could not be undertaken as they were subject to service development proposals which had not been funded.

Members were advised that less progress had been made than programmed due to the absence of key staff members. The Recycling Officer had been absent for several months on sick leave and the Senior Engineer (Refuse and Cleansing) post had been vacant since March. The latter post was being re-advertised in the new form of Senior Waste Development Officer. In addition, the newly created post of Waste Development Assistant was filled in August. This post was created specifically on a three year contract basis to assist with the delivery of the Action Plan.

When the senior post was filled, staffing would be at full complement, giving more confidence that the plan could be delivered without further slippage. One of the most significant actions completed was the creation of the Clean Team Hit Squad which commenced operations at the beginning of December 2001. In the nine months of operation the team had dealt with nearly 1200 cleansing incidents (mainly fly tipping but also the removal of dog dirt, dead animals, graffiti, hypodermic needles and leaf fall). The average time to respond to fly tipping was now less than one day.

The Committee noted the progress made to date on the Cleansing the Environment Best Value Review.

CYS/26. HEALTH AND SAFETY ENFORCEMENT – PROGRESS ON ACTION PLAN

The Committee received a detailed progress report on this matter. This item had arisen from the inspection carried out by the Health and Safety Executive in November 2001 where it was deemed that the Council was one of the worst performers in the country in this area. The Council had now satisfied the main requirements arising from the inspection and had also appointed an additional Environmental Health Officer to assist in this area. Recent contact with the Health and Safety Executive had deemed that the Council were on course to meet the requirements of the Review and the Health and Safety Executive would visit to re-inspect following a twelve month period.

The Committee noted the progress made on the Health and Safety Enforcement Action Plan.

CYS/27. COMMUNITY SAFETY – BEST VALUE REVIEW

The Committee was advised that representatives from Council's across Derbyshire had met in July to explore a joint working approach to a Community Safety Best Value Review. Advice received from the Best Value Inspectorate (BVI) was to look widely before beginning to scope the review. The BVI acknowledged it was not possible to review the whole area of community safety and therefore the review needed to be kept in manageable

portions. The BVI were interested in the impact on the public and not on internal processes.

It was noted that Leicestershire County Council (LCC) had recently undertaken a review on community safety. The initial scope for the review was deemed too wide, and had therefore been agreed that Derbyshire could adopt the LCC review framework but learn from this review's mistakes.

It had been agreed in principle to undertake combined working on Best Value. Each participating organisation was to retain ownership of their own review. The aim was to avoid duplication in specific/local best value work. The methodology used was to be consistent and the extensive level of consultation and surveys undertaken by partnerships would be sufficient to inform the review. There was a need to produce topics, agree county-wide joint topics and set up individual review teams. A service provider meeting was arranged for 24th September 2002. The possible areas for the review to include were outlined basically as funding, joint making, mainstreaming, communications and priority areas (being persistent offenders, violent crime and anti-social behaviour (alcohol)).

CYS/28. **CRIME AND DISORDER STRATEGY – PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION**

The Committee received a presentation on the work of the Action Teams. The Chair noted the success made in this area. Mrs. Robbins advised that there was suspected substance misuse in the Aston Ward (Elvaston) and accordingly, Emma Julian, the recently appointed Community Drugs Officer agreed to write to all Members and parish councils advising of her appointment and advising that any such reports should be forwarded to her.

(At 5.50 p.m. Councillor Mrs. Robbins left the Meeting).

CYS/29. **CULTURAL STRATEGY**

Consideration of this item was deferred to a future Meeting.

CYS/30. **SOUTH DERBYSHIRE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

The Committee was advised that following the District Auditor's report to Members in January 2002, two seminars had been held for senior staff and Members, both facilitated by Dr. Steve Rogers of INLOGOV and covering aspects of developing community strategies and local strategic partnerships. A further meeting between the Council and key stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sectors who were likely to form the core of the local strategic partnership was to be held at the Bretby Conference Centre on 2nd October 2002. It was hoped that an agreement could be reached at this meeting on proposals for the establishment and operation of the local strategic partnership, the provisional timetable for the production of the strategy and a process of involving all other potential interested players. On the same day, arrangements had been made to involve most of the Council's Divisional and Unit Managers and other key officers in the process and for them to be briefed by Dr. Rogers.

K. HARRINGTON

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 5.50 p.m.