

ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)

7th January 2003

**PRESENT:-**

**Labour Group**

Councillor Southerd (Chair), Councillor Taylor (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Mrs. Mead (substitute for Councillor Brooks), Pabla, Shepherd and Whyman M.B.E.

**Conservative Group**

Councillors Bale, Douglas, Shaw and Mrs. Wheeler (substitute for Councillor Mrs. Walton).

In Attendance

Councillor Bell (Labour Group).

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Brooks and Carroll (Labour Group) and Councillor Mrs. Walton (Conservative Group).

**REPORT OF MEMBERS**

The Chair congratulated Councillor Barrie Whyman who had been recognised in the Queen's New Year Honours. The Leader voiced his thanks and would speak on this at the forthcoming Council Meeting.

**MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE**

EDS/49. **PROPOSED DIVERSION – PUBLIC FOOTPATH NO. 9 (PART) PARISH OF FOSTON AND SCROPTON**

Further to Minute No. ES/18 of 11th July 2002, the Committee received an update on the diversion of this public right of way. In accordance with Members' instructions, additional consultation was undertaken and an Order was then made under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. During the subsequent consultation period, a formal objection was received and this meant the Council was unable to confirm the Diversion Order itself. Members were asked to consider whether they wished to support the making of the Diversion Order and therefore to submit the Order, together with certain supporting documents to the Planning Inspectorate.

In receiving the report, a Member sought clarification on the "Right to Roam" and how this would affect public rights of ways in South Derbyshire. A comment was also made about possible future diversion applications in the Foston area.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Council submits the proposed diversion of Public Footpath No. 9 (Part), Parish of Foston and Scropton to the Planning Inspectorate for confirmation.***

EDS/50. **EXTENSION OF COMPOST SCHEME**

A report was submitted to advise Members of the ongoing development of the Compost Scheme and to seek approval to its proposed expansion. The Scheme had commenced in 1996 and subsequently been expanded to some 8,100 households in South Derbyshire. The development of composting sites at Etwall and Lount had allowed the Council to focus on expansion of the Scheme. Between September 1996 and March 2002, approximately 4,800 tonnes of waste had been composted. In Spring 2002, the Environment Agency restricted the quantity of paper and card that could be composted. In response, two “super banks” had been installed at Hatton and Willington and further bank was proposed for Melbourne to enable the recycling of these materials.

There was an ongoing national issue that could effectively ban the composting of catering waste using the “open window” system. The Department of the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs was undertaking a consultation with the composting industry. It was possible that resulting legislation would mean that green waste, including kitchen waste would have to be composted under covers or even in enclosed containers. Advice was being sought to determine the implications of such legislation.

To meet statutory recycling targets and outcomes from the Cleansing of the Environment Best Value Review, expansion of the scheme was required by around 4,000 properties per year. It was proposed to expand the scheme to 6,700 households in the Ticknall, Calke, Smisby and urban areas to achieve the target specified in the Best Value Plan by the end of 2003/04. A programme of waste analysis had shown that the domestic waste stream in these areas contained a sufficient level of compostible materials. Members were reminded of the successful expansion of the scheme to Melbourne and Kings Newton in September 2002. The compostible waste from these properties had been taken to the site operated by SITA at Lount. It was proposed to take the compostible waste from the additional 6,700 households to the same composting site, in line with the proximity principles.

The financial implications were reported and a Service Development Proposal of £11,000 had been submitted in the budget round to assist the expansion of the scheme. The report recognised the valuable role played by the community in separating their waste, the need to maintain the quality of the compostible waste collected and the implications of failing to do so. It concluded by recognising the cost effective manner in which the composting scheme helped to deliver the Council’s recycling targets.

Members commented on the expansion of the scheme to more rural areas and felt it would be beneficial to receive periodic statistics on the composting initiative. This could be provided via the Members’ Bulletin. Clarification was sought on the additional service development cost and assurances were also sought regarding the timing of the scheme’s expansion, to ensure it was

successful. Officers outlined the approach that was undertaken to seek the successful implementation of each new composting round. Other issues discussed were the length of the composting “season”, the target tonnages of compostible materials and the national targets/pressures to reduce the landfill of waste.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the Council’s Compost Scheme be extended to 800 households in Ticknall, Calke and Smisby in March 2003, to 2,400 households in Midway during July 2003 and 3,500 households in Woodville and Hartshorne during March 2004.***
- (2) That the green waste collected be taken to the composting facility operated by SITA at Lount.***

EDS/51. **UPDATING THE ENGLISH INDICES OF DEPRIVATION – STAGE 1 CONSULTATION REPORT**

It was reported that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) had published a report for consultation on proposals to update the indices of deprivation. The deadline for comments was 15th January 2003. The Government allocated significant resources based on the indices and their modification would impact on such allocations.

An outline was given of the document and one of the crucial questions posed was how far the number of domains and indicators could be expanded. The increasing availability of data and co-operation between Government initiatives made it conceivable for a far larger number of indices. This raised the dilemma of how new indicators or domains should relate to those already in existence and whether there was a point at which transparency suffered in the pursuit of more information.

Under the current indices, many of the larger coalfield areas benefited as the indices reflected more accurately the problems of those areas. The South Derbyshire position remained relatively unchanged, principally because of the diversity of the District. There were a number of sections of the document worthy of comment, whereby subsequent changes if incorporated into the indices could benefit the District.

In particular, comment was proposed that:

- The continuing use of Incapacity Benefit (IB), as an indicator of exclusion from employment and of Health deprivation, should be supported. This was one of the more important factors in highlighting former mining areas which tended to have a higher share of such claimants.
- The figures for IB claimants, and for Job Seeking Allowance claimants, should also be extended to cover the 60-64 male age group. Again there tended to be large numbers of older men on these benefits in former coalfield areas.
- Of the six district-level indices, two (the number of employment deprived and the number of income deprived) measured absolute numbers and as such would have a bias in favour of the very largest authorities irrespective of the relative levels of deprivation. This practice would

disadvantage shire districts in particular and should be modified to better reflect the situation.

- There were proposals to incorporate new ‘domains’ covering crime and the environment should data availability allow. Without comparable evidence it was difficult to assess whether this would make a difference to South Derbyshire’s position. Although a legacy of the extractive industries remained in some areas, a great deal of remedial work had been carried out over recent years. Crime figures on the other hand could highlight particular ward areas.
- On the question of lack of suitable accommodation, the issue of housing affordability was raised and it was likely that the London Boroughs would press for its inclusion. This should be resisted, as although homes might be more expensive in London and the Home Counties they also represented immense capital assets for their owners.
- There was also pressure from larger urban areas and the London Boroughs to have a measure of ethnicity (or variants such as English as a second language) included (for example in the Education domain) but it could be argued that ethnicity in itself did not measure deprivation.

The Coalfields Communities Campaign had requested the Council to express its support along these lines.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That a response be submitted to the Consultation Paper from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, as set out above.***

EDS/52. **GENERAL FUND BUDGETS 2002/03 AND 2003/04**

The Committee was asked to consider the General Fund Budgets for 2002/03 and 2003/04. The probable estimate for 2002/03 showed total net expenditure of £3,139,070 which was an increase of approximately £214,000 over the original cash limit estimate. The reasons for this increase were due largely to the reallocation of internal costs. A table was submitted showing each of the variances. The cash limit estimate for 2003/04 was £3,380,930. This was a further increase of approximately £240,000 on the probable out-turn for 2002/03 and the main variances were reported.

Members also considered the following appendices:-

- Appendix 1 – a summary of each cost centre under the responsibility of each Divisional Manager, showing the build-up to a “bottom line” total net expenditure for the Committee overall.
- Appendices 2 and 3 – an analysis detailing the major variances.
- Appendix 4 – a summary of the proposed service developments for 2003/04.
- Appendix 5 – a schedule showing the proposed fees and charges for the Committee’s Services for 2003/04

The budget for 2003/04 had initially been compiled at November 2002 prices. An allowance for inflation had been included where it was considered unavoidable, to calculate the cash limit estimate for 2003/04. Details were provided of those assumptions built into the estimates. The Council’s overall financial position was reported showing the probable level of spending and projected balances for the current financial year to 2005/06. The Council’s

overall financial position on its General Fund appeared fairly healthy, which was due in part to an increase in the Government grant of approximately 12.5%.

A Service and Financial Management Working Group had met to consider the budget proposals initially. In essence, the Working Group had suggested that overall balances be set at a minimum level of £1million over the three year planning period. This should act as a further contingency against future potential costs associated with the closure of the Newhall tipping facility and extension of the Council's recycling programme. The Working Group had identified a need to incur new spending of some £508,310 over the next three years and details were provided of the service development proposals for 2003/04. It was noted that the change of tipping facility and the kerbside collection scheme for dry recyclables had scored very highly. However, due to uncertainty and the need to clarify certain issues around these schemes, it was proposed that no specific resources be earmarked for the schemes.

The final Appendix provided a schedule of the proposed fees and charges to operate from 1st April 2003, together with a comparison to the existing charge.

A question was submitted on the removal of the budget for emptying of pails and clarification was provided on the delivery of this service.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the estimates of income and expenditure for 2002/03 and 2003/04 for the Committee's services be approved and referred to the Finance and Management Committee.***
- (2) That the proposals for service developments for 2003/04 be approved and referred to the Finance and Management Committee.***
- (3) That the Committee's proposed fees and charges for 2003/04 be approved.***

EDS/53. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2003/04**

It was reported that the Council had four main separate funding streams for capital resources. The single capital pot had previously been split between the general fund and housing capital schemes. It was now one single purpose fund that could be used as the Council wished for any capital project. In essence, it comprised the Government's annual capital borrowing allocation to local councils (credit approvals), together with any capital receipts that the Council might generate in the year from the sale of land and Council homes.

The Government had also introduced an element of incentive, based on the standard of each Council's Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan. For South Derbyshire, this had provided some £125,000 of capital resources. A table was submitted which summarised the anticipated resources via the Single Capital Pot and this totalled £686,000. Members noted that the Council had entered previously into covenant principle agreements which

were serviced from annual capital resources. Funds had already been committed at the last budget round for 2003/04 towards the Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme and Maurice Lea Park refurbishment.

The estimates had assumed that the Council would set aside 75% of the proceeds of Council house sales and 50% of the proceeds from other land sales. The Government was due to relax these rules, which might allow the Council to use the whole proceeds from land sales for housing purposes.

Over recent years, the Council had generated usable capital receipts through the sale of land and council homes. These were summarised in a table within the report and totalled some £1,640,000. The Council had complete freedom regarding the use of these capital resources, but they were finite and could not easily be replenished as the Council had few remaining valuable land holdings. Overall, the level of capital resources available was £2,326,000.

All capital spending proposals had been scored by a Member Panel against an agreed criteria for project assessment. The results of the scoring process for the schemes within the control of this Committee were appended to the report, together with the anticipated cost of each scheme. All of the projects could be funded from the usable capital resources but once used, these resources could not easily be replaced. The Service and Financial Planning Working Group was proposing that the resources be used gradually over a four year period. In essence, for this Committee, it had suggested an allocation of £80,000 for improvements to the Delph Centre Units in Swadlincote. The Chief Finance Officer commented that overall, capital resources were less than in previous years.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Committee approves the capital spending proposals as submitted.***

T. SOUTHERD

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 6.35 p.m.