

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

30th May 2002

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Southerd (Chair), Councillor Taylor (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Brooks, Carroll, Mrs. Mead (substitute for Councillor Whyman), Pabla, Mrs. Rose (substitute for Councillor Ford), Shepherd and Sherratt.

Conservative Group

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

In Attendance

Councillor Rose (Labour Group).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Ford and Whyman (Labour Group) and Councillors Douglas and Shaw (Conservative Group).

ES/1. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th March 2002 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

ES/2. **SERVICE PLANS – MONITORING REPORTS**

It was reported that Service Plans provided an important part of the Council's performance management framework. In November 2001, the Committee approved Service Plans as a basis for service delivery over the next twelve to eighteen month period. Monitoring reports were submitted to identify the progress that had been made in the six months before and after the plans were approved. Each report contained sections on:-

- a description of the service
- achievements (especially from a service user perspective)
- areas for improvement (along with explanations)
- service developments (agreed as part of the last budget round)
- budget reductions (and the implications for service users)
- new/emerging issues (which might affect the way the service was delivered over the next 6 months)
- progress on Best Value Reviews
- progress on corporate, departmental and service key tasks
- performance in respect of Best Value and Local Performance Indicators and Targets

A second round of monitoring reports would be submitted to the Committee in October 2002. Members took the opportunity to consider each of the Service Plans submitted. With regard to the Planning Services Division, Members discussed the implications of planning applications being submitted via the internet. The numbers of planning applications received had increased by 34% since 1999 and the Divisional Manager praised staff in responding to the increased workload. Members noted the concerns voiced over responding to further increased workloads without additional resources being provided. There was a discussion about the Sharpe's Pottery project and a recent donation received from the Bretby Pottery. Members were informed of the unsuccessful efforts to restore a former tram standard.

For the Technical Services Division, achievements included compliance with eight of the nine Best Value Performance Indicators for 2001/02. The ongoing service improvements were reviewed and a verbal update was provided on the increased maintenance to the town centre and its toilet facilities. A Member referred to the service development proposal submitted for the collection of side refuse from certain properties as part of Bank Holiday collection arrangements. The service development proposal had been considered during the budget process but had not been included in the 2002/03 budget. It was intended to re-submit this development proposal as part of the forthcoming financial review.

Promotion and publicity was sought for the "blue bag" paper recycling scheme and reference was made to the calendar of collections. An outline was given of publicity proposals and a further suggestion made was to affix information labels to residents' wheeled bins. Members requested that the target date for securing improved access to civic amenities in adjacent districts be brought forward and there appeared some confusion over the closure of the civic amenity facility at the Newhall landfill site.

Members voiced concerns over the problems caused by ragwort and it was reported that discussions were ongoing with the County Council to agree a policy on the treatment of this notifiable weed. It was proposed to submit a further report to the Committee once the policy had been agreed by the County Council. The performance indicators and targets were reviewed and a verbal update was given on the actual out-turn for 2001/02.

The Service Plan Monitoring Reports for the Economic Development and Environmental Health Divisions were also considered and the Divisional Managers outlined key achievements for these service areas. Particular reference was made to the revised Government guidance for dealing with abandoned vehicles.

RESOLVED:-

That Members approve the Service Plan Monitoring Reports submitted for the Planning Services and Economic Development divisions and the reports for the Technical Services and Environmental Health Divisions in relation to the responsibilities of the Committee.

ES/3. **DERBYSHIRE TOURISM MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

It was reported that the Derbyshire Tourism Officers Group (DTOG), working in conjunction with an external Tourism Consultant, had developed a new

Tourism Management Strategy for Derbyshire. This built on previous tourism strategies, provided a wider context for the South Derbyshire strategy and the continued emergence of the National Forest as a tourism destination. A copy of the Strategy document was appended to the report. Following the foot and mouth outbreak, Derbyshire County Council had undertaken an increased role in tourism. It had recently approved a significant tourism budget and was in the process of establishing a Tourism Officer's post.

As part of the development of the Strategy, various private sector organisations were consulted and in November 2001, the County Council arranged a Tourism Conference. The Derbyshire Tourism Forum (DTF) was subsequently established and details were given of its composition. At the first Forum Meeting it was agreed to adopt a constitution for the body, subject to approval of the Strategy by individual local authorities. It was anticipated that the DTF would be the body to oversee and drive forward implementation of the Strategy.

The Chair congratulated officers on the work undertaken and these sentiments were echoed by Councillor Brooks who represented the Council on the DTF. Councillor Brooks also paid tribute to County Councillor Carlile for his drive and recognition of the tourism products within Derbyshire.

The introduction of street entertainment to town and village centres was suggested. Members commented on the tourism opportunities within South Derbyshire, the beautiful rural areas and the interesting urban heritage features. Marketing and promotion of the District were discussed.

RESOLVED:-

That the Council adopts the Derbyshire Tourism Management Strategy.

ES/4. **PROPOSED DIVERSION OF PUBLIC FOOTPATH NOS. 9 & 45, CHURCH BROUGHTON**

It was reported that an application had been received to divert a short section of public footpath Nos. 9 and 45 in the Parish of Church Broughton. Details were submitted of the current definitive line of each path and the proposed diversions, together with the assessment of the Public Rights of Way Officer.

Informal consultations had been undertaken and objections had been received from the Church Broughton Parish Council, the Ramblers Association and the Council for the Protection of Rural England. In addition, eleven individual letters had been received objecting to the proposal. An outline of each of the objections was included in the report. A verbal update was provided that Derbyshire County Council has submitted a holding objection and would determine its position following a local Area Committee.

The Local Ward Member felt that this was a complex and controversial issue, which had been ongoing for some time. He hoped that the Committee would undertake a site inspection and commented on specific sections of the report. Contrary views were expressed that there was no justification to support the diversion of the public rights of way and it was noted that the applicant had a right of appeal to the Secretary of State for the Environment.

RESOLVED:-

That in light of the objections received, the Committee does not support the making of a Diversion Order for Public Footpath Nos. 9 and 45, (part), Church Broughton.

ES/5. **COMPOST SCHEME**

The Committee was reminded of the development of the Compost Scheme. The Scheme had provided a cost effective means of increasing the Council's recycling rate. Its success to date was due in no small part to the willingness of residents to separate their waste. Some residents found it difficult to contain their residual waste in the black wheeled bin and allowances had been made within the Scheme to recognise this. Statistically, the Composting Scheme contributed 3.7% of the Council's estimated total recycling rate of 9.7%. The Scheme had been complemented by inspectors undertaking the Cleansing the Environment Best Value Review.

The current situation was reported. The Biffa Composting Facility at Etwall was monitored strictly by the Environment Agency (EA) and in February of this year, representations had been made over the relative amounts of paper and card contained in the green waste delivered to the site. The EA had advised it might prosecute the Council and action had been taken to seek residents co-operation in removing paper and card from their composting bins. With the threat of prosecution, it had been necessary to reject some bins and send their contents to landfill, which had caused an adverse reaction from residents. Discussions had been held with the EA and Biffa to clarify the situation and a verbal update was given. A proposal was outlined for the establishment of cardboard disposal sites. The EA had agreed to accept a proportion of lightweight cardboard packaging, but heavy duty cardboard boxes would not be acceptable. Clarification would be provided to residents through the composting newsletter.

There was an ongoing national issue which could have significant implications for the Council's Composting Scheme. The Department for the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) was undertaking a review following a European Order, regarding the composting of material containing animal bi-products. It was possible that this could result in green waste, including kitchen waste having to be composted under covers or even in closed containers. A national announcement would be made on 7th June 2002.

To deliver the statutory recycling targets would require expansion of the scheme by approximately 4,000 properties per year. To satisfy the "proximity principle", one of the themes of the Government's national waste strategy, discussions had been held with Sita, which operated a well established composting facility at Lount in North West Leicestershire. The Company was willing to take green waste from the Council and this would provide an opportunity to expand the Composting Scheme to Melbourne. This proposal was welcomed by Councillor Carroll as one of the Ward Members for Melbourne.

The financial implications were reported and the Scheme was self-financing operationally within the level of the recycling credit received. A service

development proposal was approved of £14,500 to assist expansion of the Scheme, primarily to cover the anticipated additional costs of waste transferral. The need for this finance would be reduced if the Scheme was extended to Melbourne and the waste delivered to Lount. DEFRA had indicated that additional funding might be available for recycling initiatives and that joint bids would be considered more favourably. A single bid had been submitted for Derbyshire, co-ordinated by Derby City Council.

Officers were congratulated on the success of the Composting Scheme and on responding to the difficulties experienced regarding the treatment of card and paper. It was felt that packaging regulation and education were required. Expansion of the Composting Scheme to the urban core was also discussed and the Chair requested a report to the next Meeting on the financial and other implications of this idea. The Vice-Chair spoke of the benefits of the Composting Scheme, welcomed the proposed expansion to Melbourne and referred to the waste minimisation, sustainability and proximity issues.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That Members note the ongoing progress and recent developments to the Compost Scheme.***
- (2) That the Scheme be extended to Melbourne in September and, subject to finalisation of details, the green waste collected from Melbourne be taken to the composting facility operated by Sita at Lount.***
- (3) That a further report be submitted to the next meeting on the implications of introducing the composting scheme to the urban core of the District.***

Note: At 7.20 p.m. Councillor Carroll left the Meeting.

ES/6. **BEST VALUE REVIEW – CLEANSING THE ENVIRONMENT**

The Committee received a progress report on implementation of the action plan for this Best Value Review. Some 31 actions within the Committee's areas of responsibility were due for completion by this time and of these, 12 had been completed, 6 were in progress and it was proposed that 11 be rescheduled. Two items could not be progressed as the associated service development proposals had been unsuccessful.

The rescheduling proposals were required as some key personnel had left the Council's employment whilst others were on long-term sickness absence. Appointments to the vacant post and to the new temporary recycling officer post would ensure appropriate staffing resources to deliver the action plan. Further information had been provided in the service plan progress reports.

RESOLVED:-

That Members note the progress made on implementing the Action Plan for the Cleansing the Environment Best Value Review and agree to the re-scheduling of those actions identified.

ES/7. VEHICLE PROCUREMENT – CLINICAL WASTE SERVICE VEHICLE

Under Minute No. ES/19 of 14th February 2002, the Committee approved the procurement of a vehicle for the collection of infectious clinical waste. The vehicle was required to meet statutory regulations regarding the collection and transportation of such waste. Following introduction of the new system, it was established that the collections could be undertaken within one working day which did not warrant the purchase of a new vehicle. It was proposed to re-fit a new body and tail lift to an existing tipper vehicle to undertake the clinical waste collections. This would realise an annual saving to the Council of £1,800 and provide greater flexibility to the street cleansing fleet of vehicles.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approves the refitting of an existing vehicle to collect clinical waste.

ES/8. INCREASING COSTS OF THE COLLECTION OF FRIDGES AND FREEZERS

It was reported that in April 2000, a charge was introduced for the collection of bulky household refuse. At that time, it was decided not to introduce the charge for the collection of fridges and freezers. European regulations required the extraction of CFCs from insulation linings and consequently, retailers had ceased collecting old fridges. Requests to the Council for its free collection service had trebled and sub-contractors were being used to cope with the extra demand. It was not yet known when recycling plants with the capability to extract CFCs from insulation linings would be available.

If current demands for this service were maintained there would be an annual cost to the Council of approximately £16,000 and a charge of £11.75 per item would have to be raised to recover these costs. The current charge for collection of a bulky item was £14.50 and it was known that other authorities were charging for the collection of fridges and freezers. The Government was providing extra resources to waste disposal authorities for the storage of fridges and freezers, but no additional monies had been made available to the collection authorities.

Members discussed the establishment of CFC recycling plants, the differing charges levied by other local authorities and voiced their concerns over fly-tipping and its implications. It was confirmed that residents could dispose of fridges and freezers at their local civic amenity site free of charge and they were urged to make use of this service.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee introduces a charge of £11.75 to cover the increasing cost of collecting fridges and freezers.

Note: Councillors Mrs. Rose and Mrs. Wheeler recorded that they were not in favour of this decision.

ES/9. **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 28th March 2002 were received.

PROPOSED NATIONAL FOREST TOURISM PARTNERSHIP (Paragraph 7)

The Committee approved proposals for integrated promotional activity for the National Forest with the long-term aim of establishing the area as a sub-regional tourism destination.

COMPOST SCHEME (Paragraph 9)

The Committee approved in principle an offer to receive and process green waste from the Council's Composting Scheme.

VEHICLE PROCUREMENT - FOOTWAY SWEEPER (Paragraph 10)

The Committee accepted a tender for the supply of a footway sweeper.

FOOTPATHS AGENCY (Paragraphs 1 and 11)

The Committee made a recommendation to the Finance and Management Committee on delivery of the Footpaths Agency.

T. SOUTHERD

CHAIR