

ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

9th March 2006

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Taylor (Chair), Councillor Lauro (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Bell, Carroll, Dunn (substitute for Whyman MBE), Isham and Shepherd.

Conservative Group

Councillors Atkin, Bale and Ford.

In Attendance

Councillor Mrs. Hood (Conservative Group).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Whyman M.B.E. (Labour Group), Councillor Mrs. Hall (Conservative Group) and Councillor Mrs. Walton (Independent Member).

EDS/59. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 10th January 2006 and the Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 2nd February 2006 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chair.

EDS/60. **MEMBERS QUESTIONS AND REPORTS**

The Deputy Leader reported that the Nottingham East Midlands Airport had published its Draft Masterplan for consultation. She spoke about the noise impact of the Airport, the employment opportunities and its benefits for the local economy. She felt the Council should consider this consultation document. Officers confirmed that a report would be submitted to the next Finance and Management Committee Meeting to consider how to deal with this consultation. A preference was expressed for a small group to consider the consultation and then to submit a report to a Policy Committee.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

EDS/61. **PRESENTATION ON ECONOMIC REGENERATION**

The Chair gave an introduction to this presentation on the South Derbyshire Economic Regeneration Strategy. He invited the Chief Executive to give an overview of inward investment achievements. The Chief Executive referred Members to a schedule of selected major inward investments. He spoke of the approach to Economic Regeneration to date and the work undertaken by Officers. There was now a need to look at the underlying position.

The Head of Policy and Economic Regeneration set the scene and took Members through a number of presentation slides. The programme was outlined and information provided on economic regeneration work previously. Key themes were reported and a further slide looked at performance and delivery.

Mike Roylance, the Principal Economic Regeneration Officer then provided a national perspective, highlighting areas of decline and growth. The position in South Derbyshire was discussed, it being reported that the area was in a period of transition from its coalfield legacy. There was a need to revitalise the Town Centre and to tackle pockets of deprivation. A further slide touched on issues affecting people, business, deprivation and workforce skills issues.

Kevin Mason the Economic Development Officer then presented further slides on workforce and business development, infrastructure issues and regenerating communities. He also provided information on tourism. The Principal Economic Regeneration Officer continued the presentation, looking at economic regeneration and how regeneration worked. Details were provided of the key organisations and their strategies together with key partners that the District Council worked with. The Head of Policy and Economic Regeneration then outlined the way forward, explaining the need for an economic regeneration strategy and the essential elements of such a strategy. Details were also provided of the project brief for this strategy.

Questions were invited and the Vice Chair voiced concerns about access to further education. Whilst he appreciated that the Council was not the Education Authority, he questioned how debate could be stimulated on the provision of tertiary education. In reply, Officers explained their surprise at the report's findings and the link between education and deprivation. There was an opportunity to liaise with the appropriate education providers, to seek a solution to this problem.

Councillor Dunn referred to National Forest visitor attractions and particularly Conkers in North West Leicestershire. He sought information about the number of day visits and overnight stays, given the perceived lack of accommodation within South Derbyshire. Officers confirmed that overnight stays resulted in greater income for the local economy, but it was noted that the National Forest destination was still being developed. Officers confirmed the amount of income generated for the previous financial year, recognised the success of Conkers as a visitor attraction and the need to have a vision to develop such attractions. The Corporate Plan sought to encourage residents to use the local tourism facilities. Councillor Dunn questioned whether the Council could provide nursery facilities on a 'not for profit' basis. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that Derbyshire County Council was developing children's centres as part of a national initiative. The District Council could seek to raise these issues with Derbyshire County Council.

Councillor Shepherd commented on the links between education and employment opportunities. He hoped the Council would link with education providers to raise this issue, given the survey findings. Officers were aware of falling pupil numbers, which might give the opportunity to create sixth form colleges within existing establishments.

Education provision for those over 16 years of age was the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). There was a need to forge a partnership with the Local Education Authority and the LSC on this issue.

It was questioned whether the Council received the recognition it deserved for National Forest initiatives. Councillor Bale used examples of other South Derbyshire facilities that were perceived by some to be outside this District. He commented on the road network through the District and the previous perception of the Urban Core, because of its mining and clay heritage. The Chair agreed with this view in part, but he also recognised the significant progress made in recent years. Councillor Carroll spoke of the changing aspirations of residents and the need to meet these aspirations. Councillor Ford pursued the discussion on tertiary education, referring to declining industries, new growth industries and opportunities to provide incentives for students.

Officers replied to the various issues raised. The Head of Planning Services referred to the current Town Centre consultation and the feedback received to date, which showed residents' aspirations. With regard to the National Forest as a visitor destination, it was crucial not to think about district boundaries. The Chair spoke about the regeneration funding targeted on North West Leicestershire. Whilst many of the closed collieries were within that area, a proportion of its employees were South Derbyshire residents.

Councillor Atkin pursued the discussion about tourism and the need for hotel provision. In reply, Officers confirmed the greater potential income from overnight stays and the employment opportunities. The Vice Chair spoke of the benefits of the Rosliston Forestry Centre and its development. In future, there would be forestry related jobs and there was a need to provide appropriate training for this. Other Members echoed the significant progress made at the Rosliston Forestry Centre.

In response to a question from Councillor Isham, there was further discussion about hotel accommodation and the joint marketing with neighbouring authorities within the National Forest. The Chief Executive summarised that South Derbyshire was a vibrant area with space to grow. The economy was booming compared to other areas. There was a need for investment in education and transport, together with preparing a workforce for the new industries being attracted to the area. He felt this was an excellent presentation with great depth. The Chair agreed, thanking Officers for the presentation. He felt that Members' questions showed their interest in this area and the importance of the issue. He was pleased to see the involvement of Planning Officers and referred to other key presentations held this week, which showed how the Council could be 'joined up' in its approach. To engage other Members he proposed a workshop prior to bringing the project brief back to the Committee.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the presentation be received.***

- (2) That a workshop be arranged for all Members of the Council on this topic, before the project brief is submitted to the Committee.**

EDS/62. PERFORMANCE REPORT 2005/06 (APRIL – DECEMBER 2005)

A report was submitted to examine performance for the Committee's responsibilities over the period 1st April to 31st December 2005. In November 2005, the Finance and Management Committee adopted "achieving more", a new framework for managing performance across the Council. The framework provided for the preparation of quarterly performance reports covering key areas of the Council's work. The first report was submitted and performance had been assessed by the relevant manager using a "traffic light" system to show those areas likely to be achieved, at risk of failure or unlikely to be achieved.

The Committee was responsible for the delivery of 61 Corporate Plan milestones, Community Strategy actions and Best Value Performance Indicators. Targets had been set for 49 of these and formed the basis of the performance report. At the end of December 2005, the Committee was expected to achieve 74% of its targets, as compared with 67% for the Council as a whole. A further 6% were expected to be brought back into line by March 2006, as a result of planned remedial measures. Most progress was being made on delivery of the Corporate Plan milestones, with 79% on track for delivery by the end of March 2006.

Members reviewed the report and took the opportunity to ask questions. Councillor Shepherd sought clarification of the indicator on the provision of affordable housing. The Deputy Chief Executive replied, explaining the nature of this indicator and the proposed way forward. Councillor Carroll referred to waste minimisation and particularly recycling centres. Performance could be improved further by varying collection frequencies to meet the public's demands generated by the amounts of recyclable materials. It was requested that a review be undertaken by the Head of Environmental Services and that a report be submitted to a future Meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Atkin sought an update on enforcement action against fly-tipping. The Head of Policy and Economic Regeneration confirmed this was a new indicator, to seek a year on year reduction in fly-tipping and therefore a year's data was needed to enable comparison. It was agreed to supply further information to the Member on this issue. In response to a question from Councillor Ford, further information was provided on the types of composting process utilised. It was noted that the indicator in question was concerned with capacity, rather than the method of composting used. Councillor Bale pursued the point about untidy recycling sites. He also spoke about the need to consider abandoned vehicles as a potential asset, in view of their scrap value. The Chair considered that recycling centres had been a victim of their own success, as a year on year increase was being achieved in the amount of recyclable materials collected. Councillor Carroll agreed that progress was being made, but all recyclable materials should be collected, rather than relying on the Clean Team to remove surplus items as refuse. With regard to the composting scheme, she questioned whether the timing could be reviewed, to start and finish later in the calendar year. It was agreed that

the Head of Environmental Services look into this issue and submit a further report to a future Meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Performance Report for the period April to December 2005 be received and that the remedial measures proposed be endorsed.***
- (2) That the Head of Environmental Services undertakes a review of the operation of recycling centres and the composting scheme collection periods and that a report be submitted to a future Meeting of the Committee on these issues.***

EDS/63. **ENMAINMENT OF CRITICAL ORDINARY WATERCOURSES**

Further to Minute No. EDS/46(b) of 2nd February 2006, a report was submitted about the enmainment of Critical Ordinary Watercourses (COWs). Members were reminded of the decision taken in July 2005 not to contract back the maintenance of the four COWs in South Derbyshire after enmainment by the Environment Agency (EA). A copy of the previous report had been circulated to provide background.

At a Flood Liaison Group in October 2005, in response to questions, a representative of the EA had expressed an opinion regarding its service level. The relevant section of those Minutes had also been circulated.

The report included a summary of the key issues behind the decision not to contract back the service. Clarification had also been sought from the representative of the EA regarding the comments expressed at the Flood Liaison Meeting and an extract of the response received had been included within the report. The EA's approach would be strategic and preventative through regular inspections, routine maintenance and investment. An example of this was the allocation of capital funding by the EA already for a flood alleviation measure on the Salt Brook. Whilst the Council's service was responsive, particularly during working hours, it did not have the staff or financial resources to undertake the necessary preventative work, or the expertise to undertake required environmental work. The flooding emergencies of November 2000 and the impact it had on local communities were recognised. However, on balance it was still felt that enmainment would improve the overall service offered to the community and would enable Council staff to concentrate on the numerous other flooding and land drainage problems that required attention.

The Chair was mindful that this item had been requested by the Hatton Ward Member, who had submitted apologies for this Meeting. He had discussed this matter with the Member, who was still not convinced from the report that residents would receive the service required.

Councillor Ford felt that the Officer recommendations were correct and the service should be undertaken by the Environment Agency. Councillor Atkin referred to other watercourses in the North East of the District and he questioned whether these could be enmained. Officers replied that the enmained watercourses had been identified, but there was likely to be a

process for future review. Councillor Bale was mindful of the problems experienced in the Hatton area. However, he noted that the Council could only contract back this service for a two year period. He felt that the EA could provide an effective service and noted that the District Council would still have some responsibilities, including the provision of sandbags. He did not feel that the District Council could offer the same level of service as the EA.

Other Members expressed an opposite opinion, echoing the concerns of the Hatton Member about service delivery from the EA. It was questioned whether this issue could be investigated further before making a final decision and suggested that a working panel be formed to discuss these issues with the EA. It was noted that the District Council still had maintenance responsibilities for all other watercourses within the District and questioned what the implications were of maintaining these additional four watercourses. Officers explained that if the decision was taken to contract back the service, the Council would have to meet the EA's specification for service delivery. There were also some legal concerns. Only two local authorities within the Midlands had decided to contract back the service following enmainment. The Chair recognised the tight timescale to determine this matter. In the circumstances, it was suggested that a sub-committee be formed, with delegated powers to determine this matter.

RESOLVED:-

That a Sub-Committee be appointed, comprising the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee, Councillor Whyman M.B.E. and two representatives of the Opposition Group, with delegated powers to determine whether to contract back maintenance responsibility for the enmained Critical Ordinary Watercourses.

EDS/64. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985)**

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 Special Meeting held on 10th January 2006 and of the Meeting held on 2nd February 2006 were received.

SWADLINCOTE MARKET (Paragraph 9)

The Committee discussed future arrangements for the Swadlincote Market.

S. TAYLOR

CHAIR

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