

ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

7th June 2007

**PRESENT:-**

**Conservative Group**

Councillor Bladen (Chairman) and Councillors Bale, Lemmon, Mrs. Patten, Watson, Mrs. Wheeler (substitute for Councillor Ford) and Wheeler (substitute for Councillor Timms).

**Labour Group**

Councillors Mrs. Lane, Richards, Taylor, Tilley and Wilkins (substitute for Councillor Southerd).

**In Attendance**

Councillor Lane (Labour Group) and Councillor Mrs. Brown (Independent Member).

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Ford (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Mrs. Hood and Timms (Conservative Group) and Councillor Southerd (Labour Group).

**MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE**

EDS/1. **SERVICE PLANS 2007-2010**

It was reported that Service Plans were an important part of the performance management framework, acting as an important link between high-level plans and strategies, such as the Corporate Plan, and personal performance objectives established through the Employee Review and Development Scheme.

Last year, the form and content of Service Plans was reviewed in the light of the 'Achieving More' Performance Management Framework. Minor changes had been made to this year's Plans, following the Audit Commission's review of the Council's performance management arrangements. The Committee was reminded of the contents of each Service Plan. They covered a three-year period, although in practice they would be reviewed and rolled forward annually. Monitoring reports would also be made to Members on a quarterly basis. The Service Plans reflected the early draft proposals within the Corporate Plan and Improvement Plan. They would be revised in consultation with the Chairman, to reflect the final versions of those documents.

Consideration was given to the Planning Service Plan and the Head of the Division gave an update on the appointments of an urban designer and the replacement Senior Enforcement Officer. Councillor Taylor was pleased to note the progress on the appointment of the urban designer, which he considered to be a key post. There was no doubt that the District was booming, given its pace of growth. He considered that young people were being disenfranchised, as there were limited quality employment

opportunities and also housing issues. He spoke of Planning's role, particularly to bring forward affordable housing. The Head of Planning Services explained that the Local Development Framework would guide the core housing policies. The Planning Service worked in conjunction with the Housing Division and registered social landlords, to guide the provision of affordable housing in the interim. Further information was provided on the role of the urban designer and affordable housing should not be of a poorer quality. The Chairman added that surveys were undertaken before house building commenced, to determine the requirements for affordable accommodation.

Councillor Lemmon sought comment from Officers on the Government White Paper on Planning. There were a number of current consultation documents, which would be reviewed and reported to Members as appropriate. The Head of Service explained proposals for the expansion of permitted development rights, which in one sense would reduce the number of planning applications, but was also likely to increase the number of enquiries on whether planning consent was needed.

Councillor Richards felt the Service Plan needed to recognise the affordable housing requirements. Officers restated that the Local Development Framework needed to be followed. There would be thorough studies to inform policies within the core strategies and then these would be cascaded through to the Service Plan. The Deputy Chief Executive added that the revised Corporate Plan would be circulated to Members within a few weeks. Corporate Plan targets would be included within the Service Plan, for example relating to affordable housing. It was accepted that further clarification was needed.

Councillor Richards also reminded that the use of jargon should be avoided and this point was acknowledged. The Head of Service advised that further detailed training would be arranged for Members on the detail of the planning process. Councillor Richards then referred to the opportunities and challenges section of the Service Plan, questioning how Officers could maintain or improve against Best Value Performance Indicators. Through business process re-engineering, Officers would seek to achieve the stated targets and a comparison was drawn to the targets set by other authorities.

The Committee then discussed the Service Plan for the Environmental Health Division. Councillor Taylor noted that the profile of this Division had been raised significantly over recent years, promoting the Council's "Cleaner and Greener" objectives. This progress had been the result of investment and there was a need to continue this direction of travel. In particular, he felt that the Council should establish the environmental management system.

Councillor Bale sought confirmation of the Council's policy in relation to the removal of fly tipping from land in private ownership and this was duly provided. He then referred to recycling and in the North-West Ward there was a perception that the composting service would suffer, because of the other initiatives that were being undertaken. He asked what assurances could be given to the public that the service would not be affected, particularly given previous problems during the summer months. The Head of Service explained that this year would see the distribution of composting bins to the remainder of the District. Those joining the scheme would have their compostable waste processed using an "in vessel" system and so food

waste could be included. Residents could dispose of food waste in either bin, but they would be encouraged to use biodegradable bags and then to use the brown compost bin rather than the refuse bin. The issue of bin cleansing was then discussed. The Head of Service reminded of a Scrutiny Committee report on this issue and the decision to research and promote reputable companies. The Officer agreed to investigate progress and would ensure that information was placed on the Council's website.

Next, Councillor Bale asked about the action taken against those using the compost bin incorrectly. Officers explained the preparatory work undertaken when implementing the scheme and the efforts to inform residents. However, there was a need to be firm and Members were reminded of a survey undertaken when the "in vessel" scheme was introduced in Findern. This had shown that up to 60% of waste in the refuse bin could still have been recycled. Where contamination took place, this might result in compostable materials having to be sent to landfill. The Recycling Officers helped to inform residents, but ultimately the Council did have to take action in such circumstances. It might be possible to use fixed penalty notices in the future, but a policy would need to be considered by Members.

Councillor Watson explained the public's misconception that the brown bin was only to be used for garden waste. He felt an advertising campaign might be useful to correct this view. There were still concerns about the fortnightly collection of food waste. Members were reminded that there were two systems in operation currently and publicity would be particularly useful as these services were harmonised.

Councillor Wheeler referred to the "green box" scheme for dry recyclable items. Given the capacity of these boxes, some residents still had to take additional items to recycling centres and he noted the economic and environmental implications of doing this. The Officer explained that this contract was due for renewal and flexibility was being built into the tender documents to address such issues for the future.

Councillor Richards referred to the section of the report on key tasks and particularly targeted news items and publicity on the Safer Neighbourhood Warden patrols. He referred to the withdrawal of the Council's newspaper and asked how publicity would now be undertaken, particularly questioning the costs associated with advertising. The Leader of the Council replied that there would be a revamped Community Strategy. She stated why "The News" had been withdrawn and explained that the new Community Strategy would be innovative. Publicity would be undertaken at a lower cost and in an improved way.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Service Plans for the Planning Services and Environmental Services Divisions be approved as the basis for service delivery for the period to 2010.***

EDS/2. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2007- 2012**

It was reported that the South Derbyshire Economic Development Strategy had expired. A Project Brief for a new Strategy was approved in June 2006 and an outline was given of the work undertaken since that time. A number

of events had been held to inform Members about current economic development issues and to gather their views on priorities. Business and partner consultation had also been undertaken through a questionnaire-based survey. This was conducted predominantly by telephone and a broad cross-section of respondent businesses had been received. Businesses were then invited to a well-attended workshop to discuss the issues arising.

Following analysis of the results and consultations, draft proposals were prepared. Two events were held in November, to which all interested parties were invited. A presentation was also made to the Vibrant Economy Group of the South Derbyshire Local Strategic Partnership. The findings were then analysed and a review of the policy context undertaken. The draft Strategy had been circulated and the Committee was reminded of its vision and its three key themes:-

- Raising Productivity (business development);
- Ensuring Sustainability (business infrastructure); and
- Achieving Equality (people and communities).

The report then outlined the nine objectives and ambitions under these three key themes.

The Deputy Chief Executive gave a perspective on the difference between this document and previous economic development strategies. This time, the majority of issues arising from the consultation were people issues. There was a need to develop the local workforce, to give the competencies that higher quality employers needed when moving into South Derbyshire. Officers were conscious of the work already undertaken on this Strategy, but mindful of the change of control and new membership.

Councillor Lemmon welcomed aspects of the report, but felt the Strategy needed strengthening in terms of rail development. He referred to the amount of commercial vehicles on the road and the potential to increase use of the existing rail network, highlighting two large employment sites particularly. There was a need to develop existing infrastructure and he asked Officers to look at this issue in finalising the Strategy. The Chairman agreed, reminding of the area's history and the transport corridors in place. It was proposed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee meet with the Deputy Chief Executive, to agree final amendments to the Strategy. Councillor Taylor also referred to the National Forest rail line and the previous difficulties in negotiating with Leicestershire County Council on extensions to this route. Perhaps, as part of the discussions this issue could be looked at further.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, be authorised to agree final amendments to the South Derbyshire Economic Development Strategy 2007 – 2012.***

EDS/3. **EAST MIDLANDS AIRPORT MASTER PLAN**

It was reported that the East Midlands Airport had written to the Council, following its representations on the Airport's Master Plan. The Airport had

offered to hold a meeting with the Council, to clarify any matters that were considered to be outstanding with regard to that document.

The Leader of the Council added that Mr. Froggatt, the Airport's Director of Planning and Development had been present at the recent Civic Council Meeting. An invitation had been extended to all Members of the Council to tour the Airport and it was agreed that such a tour be arranged.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the following Members be nominated to meet with representatives of the East Midlands Airport, to clarify the Airport's position in relation to its Master Plan:-***

**Conservative Group**

***The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, plus a local ward Member.***

**Labour Group**

***Councillor Taylor.***

J. BLADEN

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 7.05 p.m.