

MINUTES of the SPECIAL MEETING of the  
SOUTH DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL  
held at Civic Offices, Civic Way,  
Swadlincote on 15th December 2005  
at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT:-**

**Labour Group**

Councillor Jones (Chair), Councillor Lauro (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Bambrick, Bell, Carroll, Dunn, Harrington, Isham, Lane, Mrs. Mead, Murphy, Pabla, Richards, Shepherd, Southerd, Southern, Stone, Taylor, Whyman, M.B.E. and Wilkins.

**Conservative Group**

Councillors Bale, Bladen, Ford, Harrison, Mrs. Hood, Hood, Mrs. Littlejohn, Nalty, Mrs. Renwick, Shaw and Mrs. Wheeler.

**Independent Member**

Councillor Mrs. Walton.

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Mulgrew (Labour Group) and Councillors Atkin, Mrs. Hall and Lemmon (Conservative Group).

CL/108. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair advised Members of several events he had recently attended, making particular reference to the Remembrance Day Parades attended by both himself and the Vice-Chair of the Council and the Bonny Prince Charlie Re-enactment at Swarkestone. The Chair publicised forthcoming events and advised that his recent Prize Draw had raised £1,200 in aid of the South Derbyshire Music Centre. The Chair recorded his best wishes to Andrea McCaskie, the Council's Head of Legal and Democratic Services who would shortly commence maternity leave. He reminded of a Members' Reception for Keith Barsby, the Chair's Chauffeur, who would retire the following week.

CL/109. **LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader announced the results of the Comprehensive Performance Assessments completed for Derbyshire County Council and Derby City Council. The County had been assessed at four stars and improving strongly, whilst Derby City Council had also received a four star rating and was improving well. It was agreed to write expressing this Council's congratulations to both authorities.

CL/110. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chief Executive advised of the thanks received following assistance with the elections for the Guru Arjan Dev Gurdwara (Sikh) Temple. He recorded

his thanks to staff for their assistance and hoped that this role could be repeated for other minority groups.

CL/111. **PRESENTATION ON STRATEGIC PLANNING PROJECT**

Note: The Chair had agreed the inclusion of this item, as the Strategic Planning Review provided an important, timely framework for the decisions that needed to be made on the Corporate Plan 2006/09, in terms of the process of finalising priorities and actions and the delivery of the Consultation Programme.

The Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee introduced this item and a presentation was made to Members on the Strategic Planning Project. He took Members through a number of presentation slides on the chronology for this review, gave detail about the Corporate Plan, current practice and the role of Finance. Councillor Bladen provided information on the consultation undertaken, why change was important and this Council's response to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. A further slide showed a proposal and the links between the Council's vision and service delivery. Councillor Lane concluded the presentation, explaining the process completed, how to change what was currently done and keeping on track.

Questions were invited and Councillor Mrs. Wheeler asked about the next steps with this project. Councillor Lane replied that Council was asked to note the report and to look at its recommendations. He felt that some of the report's recommendations might already have been achieved and was sure that policy committees would wish to consider the remaining issues, including those cross cutting issues. Councillor Mrs. Wheeler raised the deferral of this item by the Finance and Management Committee and she asked whether Council would be asked to determine the recommendations submitted.

The Leader reflected on the comments made by the Scrutiny Members and this review had already provided useful information. The Council was doing well, but it constantly strived to improve. Whilst he would not necessarily agree with all of the report's findings, he proposed that it be noted and be considered appropriately to inform strategic planning. He took the opportunity to thank those involved for the work undertaken in providing this report and this Motion was duly seconded.

Councillor Mrs. Wheeler referred to the recommendations regarding Member support and assumed that this would be need to be considered as part of the current budget round. Councillor Murphy provided further information on the objective of this proposal to give Officer support for Members to develop their own policies. He felt there were several ways in which this could be achieved and as an example, made reference to the external support provided in developing the Corporate Plan. The Leader's proposal would provide time for discussion of the recommendations within the report. The Leader noted that there was a period of three months to respond to this Scrutiny Committee report. He felt the way forward proposed was proper and considered. Councillor Ford requested a copy of the report. Councillor Wilkins spoke about that part of the presentation concerning "process" and the time that would be required to consider this review properly.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the presentation from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee be received and that the Strategic Planning Review be noted.***

CL/112. **DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN – “OPTIONS FOR CHANGE – REVIEW OF THE EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL PLAN TO 2026”**

Note: At 6.50 p.m. Councillors Taylor and Murphy left the Meeting.

It was reported that a consultation had been received from the East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA), predominantly concerned with the future scale and distribution of housing in the region in the period to 2026. The consultation drew on recent work on housing market areas. There were nine broad options for housing growth and distribution, including three growth options and three distribution options. The consultation provided a description of EMRA's assessment of the likely implications of each option and it included indicative annual housing requirements for each Council area. In South Derbyshire this suggested that the District could expect an annual requirement in the range of 470-500 dwellings per annum, under the “below trend” growth option and in the “above trend” scenario the equivalent range might be between 700 and 750 dwellings per annum.

The report included Officer observations on this consultation. It was concluded that a trend growth scenario might be appropriate for the region as a whole and the “three cities sub-area”. However, the continuation of past trends in South Derbyshire would infer a disproportionately high housing requirement, attributable mainly to land constraints elsewhere. This trend should not be presumed to continue in the future by default. A limited growth option that related most closely to the needs of South Derbyshire should be pursued in this District and possibly the wider area. It was recommended that an “Urban Concentration Plus Regeneration” option be pursued in terms of redistribution and that consideration be given to classifying Swadlincote as a sub-regional centre. Work on sub-regional strategies would be important, including a green belt review to the east of Derby, to establish whether the District Council's preferred approach was feasible and was capable of delivering housing balanced with employment development and essential services and infrastructure. A definitive response to EMRA on growth/distribution options was therefore not possible at this stage. In this regard, the Draft document was lacking as housing issues should be considered alongside other linked issues such as the provision of employment land, transport, education and other community facilities.

Councillor Southerd reflected on the previous policy for housing growth within the urban core and in villages such as Hilton. Previously, this Council could lobby at a County level and it appeared that such representation would now have to be made at a higher spatial level. If the current trends continued then South Derbyshire could expect higher housing allocations for the future. It was questioned how the Council could influence this process positively before the allocations were finalised. With regard to the proposal for a sub-region for the Swadlincote area, there was no doubt this would be beneficial. It could indeed help the argument for infrastructure improvements.

Councillor Dunn spoke of the need to have infrastructure in place before further new building was permitted. Councillor Ford was disappointed that

the decision on allocations was being taken remotely by individuals without an understanding of South Derbyshire. The Leader posed questions about why the Council would be so concerned about future growth and whether South Derbyshire would lose out if growth was limited too severely. He referred to the recommendations within the report and noted the concerns about the rate of future house building. He referred to a further section of the report and the predictions from EMRA regarding higher growth in development. He welcomed the report, but was not sure that the right balance was provided.

Councillor Mrs. Wheeler commented that the regional assembly did not have a detailed knowledge of the South Derbyshire area and yet it was responsible for determining allocations. She made a comparison to the allocation for Lincolnshire, spoke about the demographics of the South Derbyshire area and felt that housing allocations could not be considered in isolation. She felt it was right to seek classification of Swadlincote as a sub-regional centre and noted that this would result in the loss of its market town status. She expressed views regarding retention of the green belt and spoke about car parking space allocations for new housing development in particular.

Officers responded to the views raised by Members, particularly on how the Council could influence the allocations for South Derbyshire. Councillor Wilkins shared the views expressed that it was irrational to consider housing allocations in isolation. Councillor Harrison noted there was no mention of the Nottingham East Midlands Airport within the consultation. The Airport's 20 year Master Plan was due to be published shortly and it was likely to indicate dramatic growth with an associated impact on housing need. He hoped that the Council would consider this document carefully. Councillor Harrison also voiced concern about the impact of development on secondary schools. The Leader reminded that education was a County Council function and no doubt the responsible authority would be responding to the consultation. The Leader then reported statistics on the anticipated population growths to 2010 for South Derbyshire and the comparative percentage increases in population elsewhere over that period. Population density statistics were also reported and the Leader commented on the disproportionate increases in housing allocations for South Derbyshire.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the issues set out within the report and those raised by Members be submitted to the East Midlands Regional Assembly in response to the consultation document on the Draft Regional Plan.***

CL/113. **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Further to Minute No. CL/84 of 22nd September 2005, it was reported that the Statement of Community Involvement had been submitted to the Secretary of State and subjected to a further six-week public consultation period. Representations were received from 19 respondents, of which eight sought further changes to the document. The changes related generally to providing further clarity to the text and where practical, it was recommended that these be accepted. In some cases, Officers had recommended that the document was not changed, primarily because of procedural or resource implications.

As none of the objectors sought to have their objections heard in person, an Inspector had been appointed to carry out an examination of all the written evidence. Those who sought changes to the Plan now had until 6th January 2006 to submit any further material in support of their objection. The Council then had until 20th January 2006 to respond to the new material. Because of the short timescale, delegated authority was sought to respond to any additional supporting information received.

The Leader suggested that, in granting the delegated authority to the Chief Executive, this should be in conjunction with the Chairs of the Environmental and Development Services and Development Control Committees.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the Council notes the representations made to the submission version of the Statement of Community Involvement.***
- (2) That the responses to those representations seeking changes, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed.***
- (3) That delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairs of the Environmental and Development Services and Development Control Committees, to agree during the course of the examination by the Inspector, changes to the document that have no fundamental implications for the strategy or its meaning.***

CL/114. **DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN – CONSULTATION AND NEXT STEPS**

It was reported that the Draft Corporate Plan was approved by the Finance and Management Committee on 20th October 2005, as a basis for consultation with local people and other stakeholders, about priorities and areas for action. A report was submitted to outline the results of the consultation programme and to make recommendations for taking the Plan forward. The report comprised seven sections:-

- (1) Introduction
- (2) The consultation programme
- (3) Responses
- (4) Priorities
- (5) Action Areas
- (6) The next stage
- (7) The second consultation programme

The document had a number of detailed appendices, which contained responses to the questionnaire, written comments, feedback from the urban area focus group and comments made at the various meetings. The consultation report included a number of key messages and a summary was provided within the covering report. The timetable for the next stage in the development of the Corporate Plan was fairly tight and meant it would be necessary to undertake a technical/financial appraisal of the proposals, alongside the consultation programme and to reconcile the outcomes towards the end of the process. In receiving the report, the Leader commented on the

need to listen to the public and to translate their priorities into those of the Council.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the Draft Corporate Plan 2006/09 Report of Consultation be approved and that feedback be provided to local people and other stakeholders.***
- (2) That the specific recommendations contained within the Consultation Report be approved.***
- (3) That the timetable set out within the report be noted.***

CL/115. **COUNCIL REVIEW WORKING PANEL – REVIEW OF FULL COUNCIL MEETING**

A report was submitted on the review of how the Council Meeting operated, it made policies and took decisions. It put forward proposals to make Council meetings more effective by introducing changes to the order and conduct of business, with a view to making best use of questions and Motions and ensuring that the Agenda was structured in such a way to facilitate public involvement.

A background was provided to the review, which stemmed from a 2005 Corporate Plan Milestone. Member Working Panels were created to undertake such reviews for each of the three policy committees. In August 2005, Council was invited to take part in a project and the report represented the conclusions of that work.

The Working Panel comprised the Leader and Deputy Leader of both Groups, together with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council. The Panel met on three occasions. Its first task was to produce a questionnaire, which was circulated to all Members of the Council. A copy of the questionnaire was appended to the report and details were given of the responses including an analysis of the questionnaire feedback. The report then gave an analysis of the workload of the Council Meeting.

The Working Panel took the opportunity to consider the Council's Rules of Procedure. It was suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules be amended to strengthen and reinforce the rule that no Member might be involved in scrutinising a decision in which he or she had been directly involved. It appeared that there had in the past been adherence to ad-hoc advice that Members of scrutiny committees should not sit as substitute Members on the corresponding policy committee. It was felt that the Constitution should specifically address this issue. Members were reminded that there were six dedicated scrutineers that made up the Overview Committee and who were specifically prohibited from sitting on any policy committee. The proposed change to the Constitution would only affect other Members of scrutiny committees.

Councillor Wilkins referred to the report's recommendations, particularly about strengthening the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules. He was also in favour of public speaking at committees, but felt there was a need to ensure public attendance first. There was a discussion about the time limit



for questions and the mechanisms for responding to such questions. The recommendation to have a maximum of one presentation at each Council Meeting was also discussed. It was noted that a presentation would be made to the next Council Meeting about ambulance services, following discussions with the Primary Care Trust. The Leader gave an outline of the issues discussed by the Panel, including the Council Chamber environment, whether there was a need to install microphones and how to make Council Meetings less daunting for the public. In response to a question from Councillor Bale, the Chief Executive provided further information about Points of Order.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the mechanism for the public to ask questions at Full Council be publicised by:-***
  - ***raising awareness at Area Meetings***
  - ***placing an article in the Corporate Newsletter***
  - ***giving guidance on the Council's website.***
- (2) That there should only be one presentation per Full Council Meeting.***
- (3) That presentations be heard at the commencement of Full Council Meetings and that Motions on Notice be dealt with prior to the consideration of Committee Reports.***
- (4) That the physical environment of the Council Chamber be reviewed if funding becomes available.***
- (5) That the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules be amended to reflect that a Member of Corporate Scrutiny cannot sit on Finance and Management Committee and a Member of Community Scrutiny cannot sit on Environmental and Development Services Committee and/or Housing and Community Services Committee.***

R. JONES

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 7.50 p.m.