

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26th March 2007

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Lane (Chair) and Councillor Lauro.

Conservative Group

Councillors Atkin, Bladen and Lemmon.

APOLOGY

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Bambrick (Vice Chair).

CYS/46. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th February 2007 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

CYS/47. **CHANGE OF ORDER OF AGENDA**

The Chair, with the consent of the Committee, agreed to change the order of the agenda.

CYS/48. **ACHIEVING TARGETS 2006/09 PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

Members received a verbal report and considered a briefing paper prepared by the Head of Planning Services, regarding the progress made by the Environment and Development Services Committee on achieving targets 2006/09 in respect of planning applications.

Members were advised that the planning service was six months into an eighteen months project regarding the re-engineering of the service. This comprised:-

- The transfer of enquiries to Customer First had commenced and was now progressing, a formal review meeting would take place in April 2007 to establish the progress made.
- The introduction of standard operating procedures for most planning functions was now almost complete.
- The fast tracking of household applications to ensure determination within 6 weeks had commenced on 1st January 2007 and the first quarterly monitoring would be undertaken shortly.

The resources originally designed for the faster tracking of household planning applications had not yet been made available and it was anticipated that the target for the first quarter would not be met. However, determination

times had improved to almost 90 % within 8 weeks and following the transfer to Customer First, it should be possible to achieve the 6 week target for the processing of applications which would then become a Local Performance Indicator.

It was agreed:

- **That the content of the report on achieving targets 2006/09 planning applications be noted.**
- **That a progress report be submitted to this Scrutiny Committee in six months time on achieving targets 2006/09 in respect of planning applications, subject to this matter being agreed for inclusion on the Committee's work programme in the new municipal year 2007/08.**

CYS/49. **URGENT BUSINESS**

Low Frequency Noise

Reason for urgency: The Committee at the request of the Chair, agreed to consider a report on Low Frequency Noise investigations in South Derbyshire which would enable Members to consider the matter before the end of the current municipal year.

Members were advised that currently the Council's Low Frequency Noise database contained details of 14 households affected by Low Frequency Noise (L.F.N.), twelve of which were in the South Derbyshire district, the remaining two in the East Staffordshire district.

The Committee was advised that since the matter was discussed at the Meeting in May 2006 action had been taken in respect of the Drakelow transformers. They would be used in emergencies only to keep noise disturbance to a minimum, and an acoustic enclosure would be used in the next six months to alleviate the problem. Action was taken in respect of the Bombardier Train Maintenance depot at Barton-under-Needwood which had caused L.F.N. problems for a household in Walton-on-Trent. Noise problems had been created by trains left with their engines running overnight. The engines of the majority of trains at the site were now switched off at night, thus reducing noise levels and saving energy.

Officers confirmed that there were currently two households in the district suffering from L.F.N. from an unidentifiable external environmental source. Of the 270 noise complaints received by the Environmental Health Department in the past twelve months, only six had been in relation to L.F.N. It was confirmed that the legislation and guidance relating to the investigation of L.F.N. had not changed since the previous report to the Committee in May 2006. Officers advised should further powers or techniques become available, complainants would be advised and unresolved cases reopened where appropriate.

It was agreed that the content of the report on Low Frequency Noise be noted.

CYS/50. **CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ENVIRONMENT ACT 2005**

Members received a verbal report from the Head of Environmental Services on the powers available under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 and details of the fixed penalty notices issued under the 2005 Act.

The Council's corporate management team had decided that the Environmental Services Section would enforce the powers available under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. Officers would be considering how best to develop a process for the use of enforcement powers available under the legislation and a report on this matter would be submitted to the Environmental and Development Services Committee. Responding to questions from Members, it was confirmed that 8 fixed penalty notices had been issued, relating to dog fouling and littering offences. All of the fines in respect of the notices issued had been paid.

Members indicated that it was important that effective action was taken to ensure the use of enforcement powers relating to dog fouling particularly in parks and public areas in the district, as this was a matter of concern to the public.

It was agreed:-

- **That the information on the arrangements for the exercise of powers available under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 be noted.**
- **That the Committee receives a progress report on the arrangements for the introduction of enforcement policies in respect of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, subject to this matter being included on the Committee's work programme in the new municipal year 2007/08.**

CYS/51. **ACCELERATING THE PROVISION OF RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING SERVICES TO ALL HOUSEHOLDS ACROSS THE DISTRICT**

The Committee considered a report which provided further information on accelerating the provision of recycling and composting services to all households across the district.

The report highlighted the following areas:-

- Recycling
- Composting
- Waste minimisation
- Publicity/ branding
- Wheeled bin washing
- Contributions from developers
- Provision of civic amenity sites in the district

Members were advised that the tendering process for the new recycling contract had commenced. Tenders would be submitted for evaluation by the end of June 2007, the contract would be awarded in August 2007 and would commence in April 2008.

The Committee was informed that it was intended to implement the composting plan for “in vessel” composting across the whole of the district in four phases between March 2007 and May 2008. The details were as follows:-

Date	Area	Households
May 2007	North of the district.	3,000
September 2007	Urban core.	11,000
March 2008	Convert households from “open windrow” to “in vessel” scheme.	18,000
May 2008	Netherseal, Overseal and other areas not yet on the compost scheme.	3,000

The waste collected would then be processed at the new “in vessel” composting facility at Etwall. The “in vessel” composting scheme would operate for 48 weeks of the year, with a closure period of four weeks during the Christmas/New Year period.

Members were advised that it was intended to review the Council’s policy in respect of waste minimisation, with particular regards to closed bin lids once the integrated waste collection service had been implemented across the whole of the district in May 2007. It was confirmed that the Council intended to assist residents in the cleaning of wheeled bins by providing a list of preferred suppliers that met the Environmental Agency’s requirements and that a discounted price would be provided to residents who used them. It was planned to implement this scheme in September 2007.

It was confirmed that the Head of Planning Services had been requested to investigate the scope of contributions requested from planning developers towards the cost of waste management and that a policy on the matter would be considered as part of the Council’s Local Development Framework. Derbyshire County Council, as the authority responsible for civic amenity Sites in Derbyshire, had been requested to increase the number of such sites available in South Derbyshire.

Members expressed concern about the containers provided for recycling and asked whether they were fit for purpose. The Direct Services Manager said that this was a significant issue as it was important that consumer friendly containers were provided. A number of contractors had been requested to provide information on this matter.

Members asked questions regarding recycling facilities in the district, particularly arrangements for older people who had difficulties carrying green boxes for collection from the edge of their property and the arrangements for the disposal of bulky household waste. The Committee discussed the possibility of a site visit to the “in vessel” composting facility at Etwall to assess its operation and any associated highway implications.

It was agreed:-

- **That the content of the report on Accelerating the Provision of Recycling and Composting Services to all households across the district be noted.**

- **That Officers be requested to ensure that publicity arrangements are in place to enable information advising that shredded paper can be placed into blue bags is made available to the public.**
- **That a progress report be submitted to this Scrutiny Committee in six months time on the arrangements for the provision of recycling and composting services to all households across the district subject to this matter being agreed for inclusion in the Committee's work programme in the new municipal year 2007/08.**
- **That a site visit be arranged to the "in vessel" composting facility at Etwall to enable Members to view the operation of the facility and consider any relevant highway implications that its operation may create.**
- **That the Head of Planning Services be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on the range of contributions which may be received from developers towards the cost of waste management in the district.**

CYS/52. **PROGRESS REPORT ON ARRANGEMENTS TO IMPROVE HOMELESSNESS SERVICES**

The Committee considered a report which provided information on Homelessness Service provision, particularly performance indicators BVPI 183a and BVPI 183b.

Members were advised that BVPI 183a measured the length of stay in bed & breakfast accommodation of households that were unintentionally homeless and were in priority need. BVPI 183b measured the average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households that were unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Targets for the above two measures for the out turn to the end of 2005 had been set at 4 weeks for BVPI 183a and 0 weeks for BVPI 183b. The actual out turn for these two indicators was as follows:-

- BVPI 183a 5 weeks
- BVPI 183b 0 weeks

The Council's homelessness provision had been remodelled in April 2006. This involved additional resources as a result of a service development bid and support from a Housing Options Advisor. In addition, the Housing Options Team had reviewed its internal procedures and documentation to ensure that members of the public were better informed of their right to remain, thereby reducing unnecessary homelessness. The Housing Options Team were scheduled to meet BVPI 183a and BVPI 183b targets in 2006/07.

It was agreed:

- **That the content of the progress report on arrangements to improve Homelessness Services be noted.**
- **That a progress report on arrangements to improve Homelessness Services be submitted to this Scrutiny Committee in six months**

time, subject to the matter being agreed for inclusion in the Committee's work programme in the new municipal year 2007/08.

- **That the Committee notes that the Head of Housing Services will email a response to Councillor Atkin in respect of his question relating to how many homelessness people the Council had dealt with in the last year.**

CYS/53. AUDIT COMMISSION INSPECTION OF THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE

The Committee considered a report which detailed progress made following the Audit Commission inspection of the Council's Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service in 2005. This matter had been considered by the Scrutiny Committee who had submitted a report to the Housing and Community Services Committee in October 2006. The progress report highlighted improvements in the following areas:-

- Publication in May 2007 of a new tenants' handbook which contained advice and information relating to tenants' obligations and general safety information relating to asbestos.
- Progress on the Sheltered Housing "Vision & Standards" which had been reported to the Housing and Community Services Committee on 8th February 2007.
- Information on pre and post inspection targets.
- Assessment by the repair service and a new schedule of rates commencing in April 2007 which was nationally recognised and which provided a benchmark system against similar housing providers.
- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG's). Partnership work which enabled improvements to the delivery of the physical improvements/works and in the administrative process. It was noted that major adaptations to Council properties in South Derbyshire were now completed within 38 weeks.
- A review of housing services opening hours.
- The Council's housing repairs service now achieved a medium to upper quartile rating and there was now a realistic prospect that this could increase income for the repairs service.
- To ensure the continuous improvement and demonstrate external validation an independent assessment of the Council's housing repairs and maintenance service would be commissioned as recommended by this Scrutiny Committee.

Responding to concerns expressed by Members, the Head of Housing Services gave an undertaking that he would seek to ensure that Disability Facilities Grants for improvements/adaptations to properties in respect of people who were particularly vulnerable would be undertaken as soon as

possible. He confirmed that this improvement would need to be managed carefully.

It was agreed:

- **That the report detailing progress made following the Audit Commission inspection of the Council's Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service be noted.**
- **That a report detailing progress made on the implementation of the recommendations of this Scrutiny Committee following the Audit Commission inspection of the Council's Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service be submitted in six months time, subject to this item being agreed for inclusion on the Committee's work programme in the new municipal year 2007/08.**

CYS/54. FEEDBACK: DELIVERY OF COUNCIL SERVICES VIA THE POST OFFICE NETWORK

The Chair referred to a covering letter and a set of minutes of a meeting held between the South Derbyshire Citizens Advice Bureau and the South Derbyshire CVS when the delivery of Council Services via the Post Office network was considered. The Policy Officer advised Members of the discussions at the Officer Working Group held on 22nd February 2007 to discuss further options for the delivery of Council services via the Post Office network.

The Chair circulated to all Members present at the Meeting a copy of a Local Government Association briefing paper entitled "Special Delivery: The Role of Local Authorities in the Future of Post Office Services". The Committee was advised that the details of the progress made at the Officer Working Group and discussions with the Council's partners would be reported to the Meeting of the Council on 19th April 2007.

It was agreed that officers be requested to arrange a meeting between the South Derbyshire Citizens Advice Bureau, the South Derbyshire CVS and the Officer Working Group to discuss the progress made relating to the delivery of Council services via the Post Office network.

CYS/55. DERBYSHIRE PCT

The Chair of the Committee gave a verbal report on the meeting held between himself, Councillor Taylor, the District Council's Chief Executive and the Chief Executive of the Derbyshire County PCT on 22nd February 2007. The Chair advised that not all of the senior members of the Derbyshire County PCT team had yet been appointed. Councillor Lane stressed that the PCT had been advised that this Scrutiny Committee was keen to establish the details of health provision for the residents of South Derbyshire and how this provision would be monitored by the PCT.

The Chair circulated to all Members present a copy of a letter received from the Burton Hospital NHS Trust in respect of consultation arrangements on Foundation Trust Status.

It was agreed:-

- **That the verbal report provided by the Chair of the Committee on the meeting held between himself, the Chief Executive of the District Council Councillor Taylor and the Chief Executive of the Derbyshire County PCT on 22nd February 2007 be noted.**
- **That officers be requested to acknowledge the letter from the Burton Hospital NHS Trust dated 21st March 2007 in respect of consultation on Foundation Trust Status, confirming that the Committee would respond to the letter in detail in the new municipal year 2007/08.**

CYS/56. **DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2006/07**

The Committee considered its draft Annual Report which would be submitted to the Council at its Meeting on 19th April 2007. Members were advised that the following areas of work considered by the Committee during this municipal year were covered in the Annual Report:

- Audit Commission inspection of the Council's Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service.
- Achieving targets 2006/09 – planning applications and waste management.
- Arrangements for improving homelessness services – BVPI 183a and BVPI 183b.
- Delivery of Council Services via the Post Office Network.
- Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.
- Low Frequency Noise.
- 'Street Scene' Review.
- Primary Care Trust/Health Issues.

It was agreed that the Community Scrutiny Committee's section of the Annual Report 2006/07 be approved for submission to the Council at its Meeting on 19th April 2007.

R. LANE

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 6.15 p.m.