

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

8th November 2001

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Southerd (Chair), Councillor Taylor (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Bambrick, Brooks, Carroll, Pabla, Rose, Shepherd and Whyman.

Conservative Group

Councillors Lemmon (substitute for Councillor Shaw) and Mrs. Walton.

In Attendance

Councillors Bell and Richards (Labour Group).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Bale, Douglas and Shaw (Conservative Group).

DS/18. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 27th September 2001 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

DS/19. **SERVICE PLANS**

The Committee gave consideration to the Service Plans for the Planning Services, Technical Services, Economic Development and Environmental Health Divisions. Service Plans provided an important part of the Council's performance management framework and details were provided of those other elements of this framework. The form and content of Service Plans had been reviewed as part of the Best Value Review of Financial Planning and Control and work on the Corporate Plan. The aim had been to show clearly the scope and nature of the services provided by each division, how resources were used and how performance was to be monitored and measured. Details were provided of the sections contained within each service plan. All plans had been developed on the basis that there would be no change in the level of resources devoted to that service area. Proposals for service developments or reductions would be considered through a separate mechanism and incorporated into the service plan at a later date.

Members were also invited to highlight issues stemming from service plans that might need to be included in the budget process or other proposals for savings or growth on revenue or capital schemes. A Special Meeting would be convened to consider all those proposals submitted and to prioritise them in accordance with the available resources. Members could also bring further proposals and ideas to the attention of the relevant Divisional Manager as part of this process.

Consideration was given to each of the service plans submitted. With regard to Planning Services, there was recognition of the pressures on human resources, the requirement to upgrade information technology systems and the relative priorities of planning enforcement work areas. The conduct of Development Control site visits was currently being reviewed and a policy document being prepared in consultation with the Chairs of the Development Services and Development Control Committees. Other issues raised on this Service Plan concerned the Government Office's revised guidance regarding development on 'brownfield' sites and the likely impact on the Settlement Hierarchy and relevant planning policy guidance notes. It was also felt that dialogue should be maintained with parish councils on developments within their areas. Consideration was given to the Best Value Performance Indicators relating to the changed method of calculation of the planning cost per head of population and the percentage of new homes built on previously developed land.

With regard to the Service Plan for the Technical Services Division, comment was made on the corporate key tasks of improving morale and communication with employees. An update was given on progress with the disposal of Swadlincote Depot. Members questioned current policies regarding the collection of side refuse, bins that were overfull and residents depositing waste in a neighbour's wheeled bin. In response, details were provided of the Council's waste minimisation objectives and the health and safety implications of collecting bins that were overloaded. A service development proposal was submitted for the re-establishment of a budget for maintenance to trees and other shrubs on areas of public open space. Clarification was given on the provision of new leisure facilities in Hilton as part of the Section 106 planning agreement. With regard to the Green Bank Leisure Centre, financial information was provided on those non-controllable costs met by the Council and the income received from the contractor, SLM.

Under the Economic Development Division Service Plan a Member requested a service development proposal for funding towards the Derby and Sandiacre Canal Restoration Proposal. It was noted that this item was the subject of a separate report later on the Agenda. Consideration was also given to the Environmental Health Division Service Plan. Under the service related challenges, it was noted that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had served statutory guidance on all Councils in September 2001, requiring the preparation of an inspection programme and the dedication of sufficient resources to achieve that programme. The HSE had cited South Derbyshire as having a low level of inspection and it was to undertake a two-day audit of the Council in late November 2001. Details were provided of those premises currently not inspected and the sanctions available to the HSE. At present, staff were occupied fully by the Food Hygiene Safety Programme. The Divisional Environmental Health Manager explained proposals to balance these two work areas, but without further resources, some lower risk inspections could not take place. The Chair stressed the need to resolve this problem through the appointment of a suitably qualified officer and felt that the Committee should support this service development as a high priority. These sentiments were shared by the Vice-Chair who echoed the need for additional resources. The Deputy Chief Executive commented on the risk management approach adopted and the proposals submitted to review work priorities. The reallocation of resources could be undertaken as part of the Refocusing and Reprioritising exercise.

Reference was made to the flow charts appended to each service plan. A Member requested that contact details be added to these charts and that they be circulated to Members to provide up-to-date contact information.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Service Plans for Planning Services, Technical Services, Economic Development and Environmental Health be approved as the basis for service delivery over the next 12/18 month period.***
- (2) That those service development variations requested by Members be submitted through the budget process.***

DS/20. **DERBYSHIRE LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL – OUTLINE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2002 TO 2005**

It was reported that the Learning and Skills Councils (LSC) were established in April of this year with a mandate to raise the level of skills, knowledge and understanding for adults and young people. The Derbyshire Learning and Skills Council (DLSC) was responsible for planning and funding all post compulsory learning in the County other than higher education. The DLSC was in the process of producing a strategic plan for the period 2002 to 2005 and had published a consultation document which was appended to the report. A draft strategic plan would be produced in January and the Plan would determine priorities over the three year period, although it would be reviewed annually.

The core priorities had been determined by the National LSC. These included extended participation in education and training, increased engagement of employers, raising achievement of young people and adults, and the quality of education and training.

The consultation included a number of questions which had stemmed from initial liaison with main service providers and these related mainly to service provision. Key conflicting issues had been identified concerning accreditation, service provision through competition, managed colleges and the co-ordination role of the DLSC. Opinions on partnership working were sought. The DLSC proposed to develop joint planning activities as a basis for partnership working. The priority would be to develop such partnerships with service providers and input at a local level via local learning partnerships. Members were mindful that the Council was seeking to establish a local strategic partnership in the near future. It was hoped that the DLSC would be a key partner in this partnership and concern was expressed at proposals to establish a further partnership. Members reviewed the document and considered a number of the questions difficult to respond to. It was questioned how this body could assist with the retraining of individuals affected by redundancy following the recent announcement of job losses at Woodville Polymer. Other issues raised were the development of the training infrastructure to enhance accessibility and measuring the benefits of training.

RESOLVED:-

That Members' comments on the Outline Strategic Plan for 2002 to 2005 be submitted to the Derbyshire Learning and Skills Council.

DS/21. DERBY AND SANDIACRE CANAL RESTORATION PROPOSAL

It was reported that this matter had been considered by the Finance and Management Committee at its Meeting on 11th October 2001 (Minute No. FM/43 refers). The Development Services Committee had been asked to determine a request for further funding of the Derby and Sandiacre Canal Project Officer post. Details were provided of the previous financial assistance provided by this Council and that provided by other authorities. The four local authorities had been requested to provide further financial support for the Project Officer post in the current year. Erewash Borough Council continued to provide an office and related facilities whilst Derbyshire County Council had contributed £4,625 and Derbyshire City Council had made budgetary provision for a contribution of £4,000.

At the request of the local authorities involved, the Canal Trust had presented its Business Plan earlier this year to demonstrate the practical feasibility of the scheme. However, the Chief Executive of Derby City Council, had since expressed serious concerns that the capital funding for the project had not been properly addressed. In response the Canal Trust had commissioned a Funding Report by the Waterways Trust.

The financial, corporate and community implications were reported. It was anticipated that a contribution of at least £4,000 would be sought by the Canal Trust. Proportionally, it was felt that a contribution in the order of £1,000 might be more appropriate. As there was no budget for this purpose, there would be an opportunity cost for any contribution agreed. It was anticipated that further requests for funding the Project Officer's post were likely to be received in the coming years.

A Member spoke in support of this proposal and explained that the Waterways Trust Funding Plan had been completed. The Trust had formed a number of committees to look at different aspects of the canal restoration project. He felt that the Council had a responsibility to the Trust and sought a contribution of £1,000 at this stage with further funding made available towards the end of the financial year, if resources permitted. The Member also sought a budget allocation of £5,000 for the next financial year.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Council offers financial support of £1,000 to the Derbyshire and Sandiacre Restoration at this time.***
- (2) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to make a further contribution to this project at the end of the current financial year, subject to the availability of resources.***

DS/22. SWADLINCOTE WALKING STRATEGY CONSULTATION

It was reported that the Swadlincote Walking Strategy was approved for public consultation by the former Planning and Economic Development Committee at its Meeting on 19th April 2001 (Minute No. PED/80 refers). The Strategy was made available for comment with copies sent to approximately one hundred consultees, copies placed on deposit and

publicity through a press release and posters at various locations. A total of four representations were received, which were summarised in an annexe to the report, together with officer responses and proposed changes to the document.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee endorses the proposed changes, adopts the amended document as supplementary planning guidance for the purposes of development control and that the complete document be made available at a price of £10 per copy.

DS/23. **BURTON – LEICESTER NATIONAL CYCLING ROUTE**

It was reported that detailed proposals had been prepared for a National Cycle Network link to pass through part of South Derbyshire. The Network was being promoted by Sustrans and comprised a series of on and off road cycle routes throughout the United Kingdom. Three routes already passed through South Derbyshire and the current proposal was identified as part of the core network for the County in the Derbyshire Local Transport Plan.

Sustrans had sought to direct routes through town centres and this proposal sought to pass through the pedestrianised area of Swadlincote Town Centre. No change was proposed to the Traffic Orders operating in this area and cyclists would therefore be expected to dismount and to wheel their bicycles through the Town Centre during the hours of restricted access. Two alternate routes were being considered from The Delph area, either along West Street and Alexandra Road or the High Street and Coppice Side, Swadlincote. Minimal signage would be required and no other physical changes to the pedestrianised area were proposed. The County Council was also to provide improved cycle parking facilities in front of the Swadlincote Library.

In considering the proposal, Members were mindful that the current traffic orders provided for a single direction of traffic flow. The National Cycle Network would permit cyclists to travel in either direction, conflicting with the current traffic orders and presenting possible safety concerns.

RESOLVED:-

That support be expressed in principle for the development of the Scheme as proposed.

DS/24. **CLEANSING THE ENVIRONMENT BEST VALUE REVIEW**

Under Minute No. DS/16 of 27th September 2001, the Committee approved the final report and improvement plan for Cleansing the Environment Best Value Review. The final section of the report contained the detailed action plan to bring the required improvements into effect.

The Review's findings and proposals were considered by the Best Value Inspectorate during the week of 8th October 2001. Inspectors gave feedback on their findings, sought supplementary information and undertook a focus group of service users. As a result of the focus group, it was recommended that the Council should consider the early implementation of a Cleansing

“Hit Squad”. Prior to completion of the inspection, discussions took place on the use of existing financial savings to make the Hit Squad operational by December. With the Chair’s approval, the Inspectors were advised of a revised programme and given the amended Action Plan to confirm these proposals. Details were provided of the other amendments made to the Action Plan and the revised pages were appended to the report. It was intended that the Hit Squad would deal with complaints about fly-tipping, litter, dog fouling, graffiti, as well as placing legal notices on abandoned vehicles. Details were provided of the proposals for temporary hire of a vehicle, the publicity arrangements and the recruitment process being undertaken to appoint employees to the Hit Squad.

The financial implications were reported and the Hit Squad would be funded from savings on the budgets for refuse, cleansing and grounds maintenance amounting to some £40,000.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approves the revised action plan arising out of the Cleansing the Environment Review and endorses the proposal to introduce the ‘Hit Squad’ from December 2001.

DS/25. **PUBLIC TOILETS**

It was reported that early in 2000, the Council closed five of its public toilets to make cost savings as part of the response to the serious financial position. In April 2001, the former Housing and Environment Committee received a position statement and a copy of that report was submitted for Members information. Further background information was provided with a summary of the main issues and conclusions arising out of the April report and a summary of the decisions made at that Meeting.

Since that time, further approaches have been made by a number of parish councils. Etwall Parish Council had requested the retention of its toilet facilities and wished to be consulted prior to any proposals to close them. Overseal Parish Council sought to enter into a partnership arrangement with the Council and Woodville Parish Council had asked for information regarding the costs of such a partnership arrangement. The refurbishment of The Delph toilets had been completed at the end of October 2001 but the required, improved maintenance was not yet being provided. The issue of charging for toilet facilities had been investigated and the results of a survey undertaken were appended to the report. Alternative means of cleansing toilets in Swadlincote Town Centre and at Ticknall had also been investigated and details were provided.

The current budget provision would allow for retention of three Council-run toilets and the existing two partnership arrangements. Resources were not available for the additional cleansing required at The Delph toilets or the costs of the anticipated pump replacement at the East End toilets in Swadlincote. Should the partnership agreement be pursued with Overseal Parish Council, there would be additional costs of £750 per annum for service costs and additional building maintenance works. Detailed financial information was appended to the report.

The Chair explained his reasons for requesting an update on public toilet provision in South Derbyshire. He clarified that he was not seeking any further toilet closures or to vary any of the existing partnerships with Parish Councils. However, he was mindful of the wider tourism needs for toilet facilities throughout South Derbyshire. Members discussed the financial implications associated with this service area, particularly relating to the maintenance and cleansing costs for public toilets. Clarification was provided on those costs recharged by the Direct Services Organisation and some concerns were voiced by Members of parished areas where respective Parish Councils contributed towards the maintenance costs through partnership arrangements.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the current levels of service provision for toilets be maintained at present and those existing arrangements with Etwall and Melbourne Parish Councils be continued.***
- (2) That the proposed partnership arrangement with Overseal Parish Council be pursued and a Service Development Proposal be considered as part of the budgetary process for the Council's contribution to this scheme.***
- (3) That the relevant Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider the financial aspects of this report relating to variations in service provision for public toilets.***

Note: At 8:20 p.m. Councillor Shepherd left the Meeting.

DS/26. **REFUSE COLLECTION ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHRISTMAS 2001 AND NEW YEAR/BANK HOLIDAYS 2002**

The Committee was asked to consider refuse collection arrangements for the forthcoming Christmas and New Year period and Bank Holidays throughout 2002. Details were appended to the report of the dates involved and suggested alternate collections.

RESOLVED:-

That Members adopt the refuse collection arrangements proposed for Christmas 2001 and New Year/Bank Holidays in 2002.

DS/27. **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.

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS (18(C) – WRITE-OFFS (Paragraph 7)

This item was withdrawn.

CONTRACT FOR THE SUPPLY OF TEMPORARY STAFF (Paragraph 10)

The Committee approved the procurement arrangements submitted and the selection of suitable tenders.

CLEANSING THE ENVIRONMENT BEST VALUE REVIEW (Paragraph 9)

The Committee agreed a response to the Interim Challenge presented by the Best Value Inspectorate to the Cleansing of the Environment Review.

T. SOUTHERD

CHAIR