

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

27th September 2001

**PRESENT:-**

**Labour Group**

Councillor Taylor (Vice-Chair in the Chair) and Councillors Bambrick, Brooks, Carroll, Pabla, Mrs. Rose (substitute for Councillor Rose), Shepherd and Southern (substitute for Councillor Whyman).

**Conservative Group**

Councillors Bale, Shaw and Mrs. Walton.

**In Attendance**

Councillor Bell (Labour Group).

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Southerd (Chair) and Councillors Rose and Whyman (Labour Group).

DS/12. **MINUTES**

The Open and Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th August 2001 were taken as read, approved as a true records and signed by the Chair.

DS/13. **REPORTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

At its Meeting on 6th September 2001 the Community Scrutiny Committee commended the Best Value Review for Cleansing the Environment to this Committee. (Minute No. CYS/6 refers.)

A report had been included later on the Agenda on this Best Value Review and it was agreed to consider the report from the Scrutiny Committee at that time.

DS/14. **BRETRY CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE**

The Open Minutes of the Bretby Crematorium Joint Committee Scrutiny Panel Meeting held 9th July 2001, attached at Annexe 'A', were received.

**MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE**

DS/15. **PROPOSED DIVERSION OF PUBLIC FOOTPATH NO. 5, PARISH OF ETWALL**

It was reported that a request had been received to divert part of Public Footpath No. 5 in the Parish of Etwall. The Committee was advised of the applicant's reasons for submitting this request, the current definitive line, the proposed diversion and the assessment of the Public Rights of Way Officer. Since the report had been prepared, a number of objections had been received to this proposal and details were provided.

**RESOLVED:-**

***That the Council declines to confirm the diversion of part of Public Footpath No. 5, Parish of Etwall.***

**DS/16. BEST VALUE REVIEW - CLEANSING THE ENVIRONMENT**

It was reported that the “Clean Team” had completed the Best Value Review of Cleansing the Environment. This had culminated in the production of a base-line assessment, consultation summary, a competitiveness study and a final report, including improvement and action plans. Copies of each of these documents were submitted for the Committee’s approval. In particular, agreement was sought to the content of the Improvement Plan, prior to inspection of the Review. The Community Services Committee would also consider the Review’s findings and proposals relating to dog fouling.

The financial implications were reported and the Improvement Plan identified a range of proposals that would need to be explored in greater detail to improve service delivery. In some cases it had been possible to estimate the costs or savings involved and some costs could be met partially from existing budgets. Members were reminded of the savings made in this service area. Should further savings be realised, these could contribute to the costs of service improvements identified within the Best Value Report. Work had been undertaken by the Finance Section to bring the D.S.O. budgets within the Council’s general ledger system as part of the “soft split” arrangements for the Refuse Collection Contract. This might help the identification of further recurring savings to support implementation of the Review.

In conclusion, the report recognised the high importance attached by the community to this service area. Operationally, services had been shown to be cost effective, but high central costs were indicated. An independent survey judged street cleanliness standards as being better than average against a very low cost. The Council’s recycling rate was around the National average at present but would need to accelerate to meet new National targets. The Improvement Plan contained numerous actions, many of which were cost neutral. Overall there was a cost implication of over £100,000 per annum for the essential measures identified to improve services in line with public expectation.

The Chair thanked the Best Value Review Team for the work undertaken and the Deputy Chief Executive conveyed his thanks to Members and Officers of the Review Team. Consideration was given to the improvement plan which intended to improve the services provided to customers in five key areas:-

- (1) The achievement of National waste targets.
- (2) A cleaner and more attractive environment for residents of the District.
- (3) Improved efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.
- (4) Improved service quality.
- (5) Better communication with all stakeholders.

For each key area the Review Team had identified the primary measures to be employed in securing the necessary improvements to service delivery.

Particular comments were made about recycling and the problems experienced with fly-tipping in various wards. Access to civic amenity sites in South Derbyshire and neighbouring districts and charging for the collection of bulky refuse were also discussed. Following negotiations, improved access had been secured to the Bretby Landfill Site. It was understood that operators of Civic amenities' facilities were taking a more stringent approach to prevent the disposal of commercial waste at them. Discussions were ongoing between the Derby City Council and Derbyshire County Council about the use of the Raynesway Civic Amenity Site. Other issues discussed under this heading were a proposal to establish a collection point for the disposal of garden waste at Coton-in-the-Elms and the costs/services provided by private sector waste disposal companies. Consideration was also given to the section on improved efficiency and effectiveness and comments were submitted about the costs of central services levied for this Best Value Review and the recent Review of Sheltered Housing.

Note:- At 7.00 p.m. Councillor Carroll left the meeting.

Members considered the Action Plan for this Best Value Review and took the opportunity to ask further questions. The Plan included proposals to improve response times to complaints of fly-tipping through the establishment of a rapid response "hit squad" at a cost of £40,000 per annum. Members questioned how this would be resourced, the work the team would undertake and whether abandoned vehicles could be included within its remit. The Action Plan included a target for improved weed control and removal. Members explained the problems caused by ragwort and considered proposals to review the use of weedkillers in some instances.

Clarification was sought about highway verge maintenance in terms of the width and frequency of cut. Members discussed the current perceived problems with such maintenance and it was felt that an increase in frequency of grass cutting would improve the quality of finish. The Committee also considered the report from the Community Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 6th September 2001.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the Final Report and Improvement Plan for the Best Value Report of Cleansing the Environment be approved.***
- (2) That the need for additional resources be considered as part of the continuing refocusing and reprioritisation exercise.***

DS/17. **LEVELS OF SERVICE FOR REFUSE COLLECTION**

The Committee received a report which identified the current refuse collection service levels. These levels were reviewed in July 1998 as part of re-tendering the Refuse Collection Contract. Some modifications were made in February 2000 to introduce a charge for the collection of bulky refuse and to withdraw the Saturday Civic Amenity Service, unless it was funded by parish councils.

Records had been kept of the complaints received about service levels. These were considered low and the majority concerned the policy of restricting the size of the wheeled bin provided. There had been an unusually large number of complaints received this year about the Bank Holiday collection service. The present service was to collect bins on the Saturday before the Bank Holiday and complaints were received from residents who had to wait nine days for the next collection. On rare occasions, due to medical circumstances, householders generated more domestic waste than was usual and in such cases the Technical Services Manager had, after consulting the Chair of the Committee, agreed to waive the normal bin size policy.

The Ticknall Ward Members explained the persistent complaints received after Bank Holidays given the current policy not to collect side refuse. Members felt that this could lead to fly-tipping with its associated environmental and health problems as well as the cost of tidying up. It would be feasible to collect side refuse on the Monday after a Bank Holiday and was estimated that this would cost £4,000 per annum. It was suggested that collection days be rotated annually, but an explanation was given of the operational benefits of the current arrangements.

With regard to the collection of bulky refuse, it was felt that this should revert to a free service as any loss of income would be offset by a reduction in the costs of tidying up fly-tipped waste. The Chair explained that research had been undertaken as part of the Best Value Review exercise which had identified no increase in the levels of fly-tipping associated with the introduced charge for the bulky refuse collection service. Waiving this charge would have to be considered as part of the budget process.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the Bank Holiday collection arrangements be amended to reintroduce the collection of side refuse from those properties affected.***
- (2) That the Technical Services Manager, in consultation with the Chair, be authorised to waive the 360 litre refuse bin issue policy on occasions of exceptional needs.***

S. TAYLOR

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 7.45 p.m.