

ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

14th November 2002

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

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

Conservative Group

Councillors Bale, Shaw and Mrs. Walton.

In Attendance

Councillor Harrington (Labour Group).

APOLOGY

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Douglas (Conservative Group).

EDS/39. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 3rd October 2002 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

EDS/40. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND REPORTS - EUREKA LODGE**

The Leader of the Council reported the concerns of a local group and the need to safeguard the future of this property. Officers had researched this matter and unfortunately the property could not be afforded statutory protection. Its significance was recognised and the property was included on the Council's own local list. It was requested that a report be submitted to the Development Control Committee to consider this matter further. The Chair of that Committee hoped it could be supportive and seek to protect the property.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

EDS/41. **2002/03 SERVICE PLANS - MONITORING REPORTS**

The Committee received the Service Plan Monitoring Reports for the Planning Services, Economic Development, Technical Services and Environmental Health Divisions. It was noted that the Technical Services and Environmental Health Service Plans included matters that were the responsibility of the Housing and Community Services Committee. Similarly, the Economic Development Service Plan included matters which were the responsibility of the Finance and Management Committee.

Service Plans provided an important part of the Council's performance management framework. The current Service Plans had been approved in November 2001 as the basis for service delivery throughout the current financial year. The Monitoring Reports charted progress that had been made in the first six months of this year. Details were provided of the sections

contained within each Service Plan. A second round of Monitoring Reports would be submitted to the Committee in May after the end of the Service Planning period.

Members were invited to comment on individual Service Plans or to review the documents and submit comments as part of the budgetary review process.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee receives the Service Plan Monitoring Reports for the Planning Services, Economic Development, Technical Services and Environmental Health Divisions.

EDS/42. **2003/04 SERVICE PLANS**

The Committee gave consideration to the 2003/04 Service Plans for the Planning Services, Economic Development, Technical Services and Environmental Health Divisions. As with the previous report, it was noted that some elements of the Technical Services, Environmental Health and Economic Development Service Plans were the responsibilities of other Committees.

Service Plans provided an important part of the Council's performance management framework and details were given of those other elements within this framework. The form and content of Service Plans had been developed as part of the Best Value Review of Financial Planning and Control. The aim was to show the scope and nature of the service 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 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 meeting of the Services and Financial Planning Working Panel would be held on 11th December to consider all of the proposals and to prioritise them in line with the Council's available resources for 2003/04. Members could also bring proposals and ideas to the attention of the relevant divisional manager as part of this process.

Each divisional manager was invited to highlight key issues within their Service Plan. The Planning Services Manager spoke of the increasing workload for the Development Control Section and the difficulties in maintaining an efficient and effective service. Members acknowledged the growth in this service area and the opportunity to submit a service development proposal for additional resources.

The Economic Development Manager explained that his Division was now responsible for the Footpaths Agency. Members discussed the service related challenges and the value of the tourism function.

The Technical Services Manager explained that the Division's Service Plan stemmed from the Best Value Review of Cleansing the Environment. He spoke of recent staffing appointments, which would enable the Section to move forward with the Action Plan for this Review. A Member questioned whether delays with the Brightstar Recycling Plant would impact on the Council's recycling outputs. It was confirmed that the availability of this Plant had not been included within the Council's Action Plan and the targets should be met through other means. The Leader of the Council expressed the gratitude of Hatton residents for the improvements made to flood defence measures in that Village. In particular, he thanked the Deputy Chief Executive, the Technical Services Manager and Mr. C. Payne, recognising the co-ordinated approach with the other agencies involved.

The Environmental Health Manager spoke of the challenges faced by this Division, particularly regarding the proposed transfer of liquor licensing and increasing numbers of abandoned vehicles. The Committee's views were sought on proposed local performance indicators, which were included within the Service Plan. The Chair welcomed this encouraging report and spoke of recent successful prosecutions.

The Chair invited service development proposals for the budgetary process. The Leader of the Council recognised a common element, that Divisions were under-resourced. He voiced Members appreciation to the staff for their efforts and the determination of Members to address staffing shortfalls.

RESOLVED:-

That the Service Plans for the Planning Services, Economic Development, Technical Services and Environmental Health Divisions be approved as the basis for service delivery for 2003/04.

EDS/43. **UPDATE ON THE STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH DOG FOULING WITHIN SOUTH DERBYSHIRE**

It was reported that the Dog Fouling Strategy had been reviewed in October 2001, to respond to concerns raised during the Best Value Review of Cleansing the Environment. The revised strategy proposed a number of activities, including a review of problem areas, enforcement patrols, improved publicity and educational/training work.

An outline was given of the activities and outcomes undertaken over the past year. The review of problem areas involved consultation with District Councillors and Parish Councils. It had resulted in more than forty sites being identified. Each site was surveyed and given a rating dependent upon the extent of dog fouling. The assessment was repeated in September 2002 to identify any improvements. Appended to the report were the rating scores for each site and it highlighted the significant improvements in the areas surveyed.

An enforcement programme was prepared and visits were undertaken by the Dog Warden. Whilst the majority of dog owners responsibly removed their animal's faeces, two fixed penalty notices had been served. There was a successful prosecution in the Swadlincote Magistrates Court together with appropriate publicity to provide a deterrent. Statistics were submitted of the

number of complaints investigated by the Dog Warden and the responsive service provided by the Clean Team.

Improved publicity had been provided through press releases, use of the Council's publicity caravan and customer surveys. Information packs had been circulated to primary schools throughout South Derbyshire to provide education for young people, promoting responsible pet ownership and highlighting the health implications of dog fouling. The Dog Warden had attended a number of training courses throughout the year.

As a way forward, it was proposed to concentrate efforts on the enforcement and educational activities. A proposed action plan was submitted for the Committee's consideration and further reports would be provided through the Service Plan reporting mechanisms.

The Chair felt that enforcement was a key aspect and he enquired about the service of fixed penalty notices. With appropriate training, it might be possible for other officers or the Clean Team to issue the fixed penalty notices and a further report was requested on this idea. Clarification was provided on the exact location of one known problem area. It was noted that Members or parish councils could advise the Department of other known problem areas. Members then discussed the scoring criteria applied and were disappointed at the number of recreation grounds listed as being susceptible to dog fouling. The Chair sought press publicity to encourage members of the public to report irresponsible dog owners in order that enforcement action could take place.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee notes the progress made in implementing the strategy for dealing with dog fouling within South Derbyshire.***
- (2) That approval be given to the revised action plan detailed within the report.***
- (3) That a further report be submitted to a future Meeting of the Committee regarding the Service of fixed penalty notices.***

EDS/44. **BEST VALUE REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT CONTROL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN PROCESS**

The Committee received an update on implementation of the Action Plan following the Best Value Review for Development Control. This service had been judged to be fair, but not going to improve. An Implementation Plan had been prepared, based on the Inspector's recommendations and it had formed the basis for development activity since that time. The Audit Commission had advised of its intention to make a follow-up visit to review progress with implementation of its recommendations.

Reports had been prepared to address the main issues of concern and these were submitted for the Committee's consideration. They detailed actions taken to implement the recommendations of the Inspectors. They also demonstrated that the service met, to a large extent, the Performance Indicators required by the Government.

Comparisons with other Councils and the experience gained through staff vacancies had shown that the service needed more staff to reliably deliver the Government's Best Value requirements and standards. In particular, affording the public better access to decision making and being able to address the Committee in person lacked adequate resources at present. If this was introduced, it would create an administrative burden, lengthen Committee duration significantly and require rigorous control to ensure equity. The Chair of the Development Control Committee shared this view, speaking of the arrangements in place at another authority and the implications of allowing the public to speak at Committee. He praised the Development Control staff and this was echoed by the Planning Services Manager and the Hilton Ward Member who spoke of the enormity of development in that Parish. The Leader of the Council complimented the informative progress report.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee notes the progress made in implementing the Action Plan following the inspection of this Best Value Review.

EDS/45. **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.

MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 3rd October 2002 were received.

T. SOUTHERD

CHAIR