OPEN

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

3rd January 2002

PRESENT:-

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

Conservative Group
Councillors Bale, Douglas, Shaw and Mrs. Walton.

In Attendance
Councillors Bell, Dunn, Evens, Harrington, Richards, Mrs. Rose, Southern and Stone (Labour Group) and Councillors Mrs. Robbins and Mrs. Wheeler (Conservative Group).

ES/1. **MINUTES**

The Open and Exempt Minutes of the Development Services Committee Meeting held on 8th November 2001 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chair.

ES/2. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND REPORTS – GRITTING OF ROADS**

Following a recent article in a local newspaper, the Chair explained the respective roles of the District and County Councils for winter road maintenance. He outlined the prioritised approach to such maintenance and the need for developers to complete the adoption of highways on private developments before winter maintenance could take place.

ES/3. **REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**

Options for Public Toilets in South Derbyshire

The Committee received the report of the Overview Committee following its investigation into options for public toilet provision in South Derbyshire. Councillor Bell, Chair of the Overview Committee gave a brief outline of the report, a copy of which is included in the Signed Minute Book at Annexe SMB1.

In receiving the report, a number of Members commented on its recommendations. There was support for the proposals to retain the public toilets on the East End Car Park in Swadlincote. With regard to the closed toilets at Willington, some concern was voiced that the alternate facilities in nearby commercial establishments did not provide an appropriate substitute. Consideration was given to a possible partnership arrangement with Willington Parish Council. A Member also commented on the opportunity for income from the disposal of the closed Repton public toilets.

The Overview Committee was thanked for the research undertaken and congratulated on its report.

RESOLVED:-

(1) That the recommendations of the Overview Committee be implemented.

(2) That appropriate parish councils be given one month to confirm their position regarding partnership arrangements.

ES/4. **PROPOSED CHANGE TO SPEED LIMIT CHANGES ON A511**

It was reported that Derbyshire County Council had consulted on proposals to amend the current speed restrictions on the A511. A plan and details of the proposals were appended to the report. Copies of the documents had been circulated to appropriate ward members and the responses received were summarised.

The Woodville Ward Member voiced his opposition to increases in speed limits along this section of the A511 and these sentiments were endorsed. Members were however supportive of those proposals to reduce the maximum speed limit on other sections of this road.

RESOLVED:-

That Derbyshire County Council be advised of the Committee's support for the proposed speed limit reductions on the A511, and of its opposition to those proposals to increase the speed limit on certain sections.

ES/5. **DERBYSHIRE WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY – SOUTH EASTERN DERBYSHIRE WASTE SUB-GROUP CONTRACT WITH BRIGHTSTAR ENVIRONMENTAL**

The Committee received a presentation from John Simpson of Brightstar Environmental about a proposed Solid Waste and Energy Recovery Facility (SWERF) at Sinfin, Derby. Mr. Simpson gave an outline of the Company and the planned project for Derby. The SWERF was designed to meet the refuse disposal needs of the South Eastern Derbyshire sub-area and could ultimately have a capacity of 220,000 tonnes per annum. A description was given of the Sinfin Lane site together with site plans and an artist's impression. Approximately half of the site had been dedicated for community use.

Mr. Simpson spoke about the recycling benefits initially and those in the longer term. He explained the technology processes and a video was presented showing the Company's existing facility at Wollongong in Australia. The presentation also covered the licensing issues, emissions and ensuring compliance with the appropriate European Directives, legislation and codes of practice. The consultation undertaken on this project was also explained.

Members' questions were invited. Information was sought on the proportions of refuse that was likely to be recycled, that to be incinerated to provide energy and the residual waste products to be sent to landfill. Further information was sought about the recyclable materials extracted at the start of the process and the credibility of the markets for recycled products such as mixed glass. The consultation arrangements were questioned and

reference made to the anticipated problems of noise, emissions and traffic congestion. Responses to each of these issues were provided and Mr. Simpson was thanked for the informative presentation.

RESOLVED:-

That the progress being made in implementing the solid waste and energy recovery facility in conjunction with Brightstar Environmental and neighbouring authorities be noted.

ES/6. **TOURISM ACTION PLANS 2001/02 AND 2002/03**

It was reported that a new Tourism Strategy had been produced for the period 2001 to 2005. It aimed to give direction to the Council's departments and to the wider community on the Council's Tourism aims and objectives. The Strategy sought "to increase the contribution of tourism to South Derbyshire's economy, in balance with the protection of the environment and the interests of local communities". The Strategy had five key objectives which were reported. The Tourism Action Plans which complemented the Strategy were submitted and these identified areas of activity which the Council intended to pursue and fund over the coming year. The Plans took into account the recent successful bid to the East Midlands Development Agency (emda) for £15,100 of funding to assist in the recovery from the foot and mouth crisis. The plans were influenced by the proposed partnership approach with neighbouring authorities and the National Forest Company to promote the National Forest as a visitor attraction. Tourism activity across the National Forest had developed at a faster rate than anticipated and the production of a single visitor guide would maintain that momentum. Proposals to produce a joint visitor guide for the area for 2003 was ambitious but seen as a priority and would likely impact on other aspects of tourism. Recent recognition by emda of the National Forest as one of the four strong Regional brands could be built upon for tourism purposes.

In receiving the report, Members complemented staff for the work undertaken and acknowledged the benefits tourism brought to the District. The proportion of costs met by the Council was questioned and reference made to the private sector advertising included in publications. A specific comment was made that the Trent and Mersey Canal had been omitted from a recent publication and it was explained that a section on 'watery pursuits' was proposed for subsequent guides.

RESOLVED:-

That the Tourism Action Plans for 2001/02 and 2002/03 be approved as the basis of the Council's activity for these financial years.

ES/7. **GENERAL FUND BUDGETS 2001/02 AND 2002/03**

The Committee was asked to consider the General Fund Budgets for 2001/02 and 2002/03. The probable estimate for 2001/02 showed total net expenditure of £2,864,090 which was a decrease of approximately £122,000 when compared to the original cash limit estimate. The reasons for this decrease were due largely to internal charges relating to pension costs, depreciation of assets and a number of "controllable" elements which were reported. The total base budget for 2002/03 was £2,831,390. This

represented a further decrease of approximately £33,000 on the probable out-turn for 2001/02 and the main variances were reported.

Members also considered the following appendices:-

- Appendix 1 – a summary of each cost centre under the responsibility of each Divisional Manager, showing the build-up to a "bottom line" total net expenditure for the Committee overall.
- Appendices 2 and 3 – an analysis detailing the major variances.
- Appendix 4 – a summary of the proposed budget reductions for 2002/03.
- Appendix 5 – a summary of the proposed service developments for 2002/03.
- Appendix 6 – a schedule showing the proposed fees and charges for the Committee's Services for 2002/03.

The budget for 2002/03 had initially been compiled at November 2001 prices. An allowance for inflation had been included where it was considered unavoidable to calculate the cash limit estimate for 2002/03. Details were provided of those assumptions built into the estimates. The Council's overall financial position was reported showing the probable level of spending and projected balances for the current financial year to 2004/05. Key points to note for the medium term financial strategy were also submitted.

A Service and Financial Management Working Group had met to consider the budget proposals initially. It had provided indicators and guidance for the Policy Committees in determining their respective budgets. The Working Group had identified possible additional expenditure of £232,532, of which £37,782 was for 2002/03 only. Against this increased spending, the Working Group had identified potential savings of some £165,965. The assumed level of Council Tax increases for the next three year period was also reported together with the overall impact on balances for the period to 2004/05.

The budget reduction proposals had been split into three categories dependent upon the effect on service delivery. The proposals of the Working Group were reported insofar as they affected this Committee's areas of responsibility. Service development proposals for 2002/03 were also reported and these had been scored against criteria approved by the Finance and Management Committee. An appendix showed those proposals relevant to this Committee and the schemes suggested by the Working Group for inclusion.

The final appendix provided a Schedule of the Proposed Fees and Charges to operate from 1st April 2002, together with a comparison of the existing charges. A summary of the main changes was reported.

***RESOLVED*:-**

(1) That the estimates of income and expenditure for 2001/02 and 2002/03 for the Committee's services be approved and referred to the Finance and Management Committee.

(2) That the proposals for budget reductions and service developments for 2002/03 be approved as submitted and referred to the Finance and Management Committee.

(3) That the proposed fees and charges for 2002/03 be approved as submitted.

ES/8. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2002/03**

The Committee was asked to consider proposed capital schemes for 2002/03 and to comment on the relative priorities of each scheme. This was the first year that the Government would make a general capital allocation to local authorities known as the "Single Capital Pot". It provided local authorities a degree of freedom to determine how to allocate resources between housing and general fund schemes. Last year the Government had introduced the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA), a separate allowance to pay for major works to housing properties. Previously this work had been financed by the Housing Capital Allocation, which had reduced accordingly. The net impact of the MRA was positive and for 2002/03 was expected to be approximately £1.977m.

Under the new arrangements, each authority was required to produce a Capital Strategy. It required councils to set a framework for investing in new Capital Schemes and generating the resources to fund them. Key principles for the South Derbyshire Strategy were reported. It included a detailed Action Plan setting out how the Council would adopt a more co-ordinated approach to Capital Programme Management and Investment. Another key aspect of the Action Plan was the introduction of a five year capital programme to set out funding priorities in the medium term.

At the outset, the Council would not have all the funds necessary to meet the whole programme, but it was an essential tool for prioritising schemes so that bidding efforts were directed appropriately. The Capital Strategy would also influence the amount of resources allocated to each local authority. For the current year 5% of resources were allocated based on the quality of capital strategies and asset management plans produced. For South Derbyshire, it was expected that extra capital resources of £100,000 would be received.

The estimated capital resources for 2002/03 were £1,126,000. This included an estimate for the Supplementary Credit Approval for Disabled Facilities Grants. If the Council took up the whole allocation, it would need to identify capital resources of £233,000 for matched funding.

All capital schemes had been assessed against criteria included in the Capital Strategy and agreed by the Finance and Management Committee. The results of the scoring exercise and suggested schemes for the Committee were appended to the report. The total indicative capital resources for the Committee were £110,000.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approves the indicative priorities for Capital Schemes as suggested by the Service and Financial Planning Working Group.

ES/9. **SOUTH DERBYSHIRE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW**

It was reported that in February 2000, Members agreed ten objectives that the Local Plan should seek to achieve. Details were provided of the work undertaken since that time and how the subsequent proposed policies and allocations in the reviewed Local Plan would achieve these objectives. Environmental policies sought to protect the best of the natural and built local environment. The environmental policies in the Plan set the scene and were the main backdrop against which the locational policies and allocations were assessed.

Existing allocations that had not yet fully been implemented were carried forward from the current local plan. The proposed major new allocations for housing and employment to meet the Structure Plan requirements were located in and on the edge of the Swadlincote urban area and on the edge of Woodville, Willington and Derby (Boulton Moor). Where possible, the use of 'brownfield' land had been made. The character of the rural area was maintained and the needs of rural residents met via a sustainable settlement hierarchy of large villages that provided a range of existing services and facilities. An emphasis was also placed on the need to redevelop redundant rural buildings for employment uses to assist the viability of the rural economy.

Existing recreational and community facilities were protected. Major leisure and shopping development was directed in the first instance to Swadlincote Town Centre by the identification of sites suitable for redevelopment that would make better use of land and improve the Centre's image. Leisure and tourism facilities were also directed to the National Forest. The Plan would ensure that new residential developments in particular, met the needs of residents in terms of open space, educational and health facilities. Transport policies sought to ensure that new developments could be accessed by all and by a variety of transport modes. It was intended to place the draft Plan on formal first deposit for public consultation by the end of January 2002.

The Chair reminded Members that this was the start of the Local Plan review process. If the document was approved, it would initially be subjected to a period of six weeks public consultation. The Local Plans Manager reviewed each of the main issues for the Swadlincote and Derby sub-areas and gave an outline of the process to be undertaken. Comments and questions were invited from Members and responses provided by the Local Plans Manager. In particular, Members discussed the policies to prevent development on flood plains or to present owners of listed buildings letting the properties deteriorate. With regard to the settlement hierarchy, a Member voiced reservations about the removal of village confines in relation to non-sustainable villages. An explanation of the settlement hierarchy was requested for the Committee, which was duly provided. A definition was sought of 'affordable housing' and it was questioned how such housing would remain affordable if it was in private ownership. With regard to Boulton Moor, a Member voiced strong support on the suitability of this site to protect northern villages from undue development and satisfy current plan needs, whilst being in line with Government thinking and ideal from a sustainability viewpoint. He expressed an opinion that the establishment of a bund along the Derby spur road at this time would be advantageous to allow landscaping to become well established. With regard to Section 106 planning gain agreements, a view was expressed that the Council should maximise its

returns for the benefit of the community as a whole. Reference was made to a recent DTLR consultation paper on reforming planning obligations and proposals to require a high percentage of affordable housing. It was felt this would reduce considerably the resources available for other essential community needs.

Comments were submitted about the definition of boundaries for Local Plan purposes and it was felt that formal comment should be submitted through the consultation process so that suggestions could be taken on board.

Note: At 8.45 p.m. Councillors Bell, Richards, Southern and Harrington left the Meeting.

Reference was made to a forthcoming review of planning legislation. It was questioned how this might affect the Local Plan and the Planning Services Manager felt the Council was well placed to meet the strategic approach expected from this review. He felt the Local Plan could be adapted to meet the Green Paper's proposals.

With regard to the proposed residential development of the former Willington power station site, Members voiced concerns over sustainability and particularly traffic congestion problems in the centre of that village. The site had also been identified for industrial use and the local Ward Member felt that the sites earmarked for industrial and residential use should be reversed. With regard to affordable housing issues, it was suggested that provision should be spread across a number of settlements rather than concentrated on a particular site. It was questioned whether building regulations required new properties to be suitable for persons with disabilities to avoid the need for public expenditure on adaptations. Reference was made to the provision of community facilities, schools and new health facilities. It was felt the Plan should include a specific reference for the provision of nursing homes to provide residential care.

***RESOLVED*:-**

(1) That the first deposit draft of the reviewed South Derbyshire Local Plan be approved together with the written statement and proposals map for the purposes of public consultation at the earliest opportunity.

(2) That the decision to charge a fee of £20 for copies of the written statement requested in connection with this Committee report be endorsed.

(3) That a charge of £30 per copy be agreed for the Formal Consultation version of the document.

T. SOUTHERD

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 9.10 p.m.