

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

Monday, 26th January, 2009 at 6.00pm
in Committee Room 2, The Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs. Cowell (in the Chair)
Councillor Mrs. Turner (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Mrs. Blood, Body, P. Harley, James, Mrs. Jordan, Lowe, Stanley
and Waltho

Officers

Interim Director of Law and Property (As Lead Officer to the Committee),
Senior Assistant Director of Finance, Assistant Director, Environmental
Management and Head of Public Protection (both Directorate of the Urban
Environment), Assistant Director, Housing Management and the Head of
Housing Management (South) (both Directorate of Adult, Community and
Housing Services) and Mr. J. Jablonski (Directorate of Law and Property).

34 **APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of
Councillor Hill.

35 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No Member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members'
Code of Conduct.

36 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th
November, 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

37 **PUBLIC FORUM**

No matters were raised under this agenda item.

REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY, 2009/10

A joint report of the Director of the Urban Environment, the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services and Director of Finance was submitted on the Revenue Budget Strategy for 2009/10 and Medium Term Financial Strategy, 2009/10-2011/12.

The Senior Assistant Director of Finance, in his presentation of the report, outlined the proposals contained therein and in the Appendices to the report, submitted for consideration by the Select Committee, in accordance with the Constitution. The implications for services covered by the Terms of Reference of this Committee, commenced at paragraph 31 of the report submitted.

Arising from the presentation given, members asked a number of questions to which responses were given, relating in particular to the additional funding in relation to the Tree Risk Strategy, a matter supported at the September, 2008 meeting of this Committee, aspects of the efficiency and other savings indicated in Appendix B to the report submitted and issues to do with waste disposal and recycling. It was noted that the review of Leisure Facilities referred to in Appendix B was a matter subject to approval by the Cabinet at a future meeting.

A comment was also made that a Cabinet Member should be present at future meetings of Select Committees when the Revenue Budget Strategy was being considered so that appropriate questions could be asked and responded to.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on the Cabinet's Revenue Budget Strategy proposals for 2009/10 and Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2009/10-2011/12, be noted and that the Cabinet be informed that there were no observations that this Select Committee wished to make on the proposals presented.

UPDATE ON AIR QUALITY WITHIN DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on an update on the current situation with respect to air quality within Dudley Metropolitan Borough, addressing areas of work to do with air quality monitoring; areas identified as having poor air quality; Air Quality Management Area and Action Plan progress and Statutory Requirements for 2009.

Arising from the presentation given by the Head of Public Protection to the content of the report, members considered ways in which air quality might be improved in particular locations identified in paragraph 2.4 of the report submitted. It was considered that there was a need for a national and international lead to be taken on such matters, together with the development of new technologies so that the matter could be addressed on a number of fronts.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on progress made with air quality monitoring, be noted and that support be given to continued monitoring in 2009/2010 to assist in furthering understanding and making further improvements to the air quality within the Borough.

40

INTERIM EVALUATION OF THE NORTH DUDLEY GARDENING INITIATIVE

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on an interim evaluation of the North Dudley gardening initiative that had been established as a pilot on 1st July, 2008.

The Head of Housing Management (South), as part of her presentation of the content of the report, circulated photographs of properties that had been the subject of the initiative.

Arising from the presentation given, a request was made that a constituent of one of the members be added to the waiting list for inclusion in the gardening initiative and details of the person concerned were passed to the officer.

Details were also given of the criteria by which people could be included as part of the initiative and it was indicated that these could be re-visited if and when the initiative was introduced to the other parts of the Borough. In this connection it was also noted that the amount of work that could be undertaken would be subject to budgetary constraints.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on an interim evaluation of the North Dudley gardening initiative, established as a pilot on 1st July, 2008, be noted and that a final evaluation report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

41

PROVISION AND CONDITION OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the provision and condition of the Council's public conveniences, together with details of the Council's resource capacity in maintaining the provision in good order and on the Government's Strategic Guide on public toilet provision and its strong encouragement for local authorities to recognise the needs of all those who use public space.

Arising from the presentation given on the content of the report, and Appendix 1 to the report, submitted by the Assistant Director, Environmental Management, members asked a number of questions and made comments on this matter relating, in particular, to provision in The Marketplace, Dudley; Bank Road, Lower Gornal; and Enville Road, Wallheath; and in respect of the latter two sites, it was considered that consideration needed to be given to the refurbishment of the facilities in Bank Road, Lower Gornal and that the Assistant Director would inform Councillor Mrs. Jordan on the latest position regarding the toilets in Enville Road, Wallheath.

Consideration was also given to possible alternative methods of provision and use of additional sources of funding, for example, use of Section 106 monies. In respect of the use of Section 106 monies, it was confirmed that the Council had already investigated, and was using, funding from this source.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on the provision and condition of the Council's public conveniences and related matters, be noted, together with the work undertaken by Environmental Management in managing the Council's Public Convenience provision and the internal and external factors that were adding greater pressure on the capacity of the existing budget to provide and maintain the provision.

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on performance in the second quarter of 2008/09, for the period July to September, 2008 in relation to the activities relating to the Terms of Reference of this Committee.

The Lead Officer to the Committee in his presentation of the report, and report summary in respect of the activities of this Select Committee, referred to a number of issues with particular reference to those issues, where there was an indication that there was below target performance. Members also commented on these and other related matters and particular points were made.

In respect of Performance Indicator HSG HM 050 - the percentage change in the average number of families placed in temporary accommodation - the need to review the target given the current financial climate was referred to. However, it was also considered that regard would need to be had to the views of Government on this matter.

In response to a suggestion made that actual numbers and not percentages should be used in respect of this target, the Assistant Director, Housing Manager, indicated that she would give further consideration to this.

A member also indicated that the work carried out by community groups in community clean up events, should be recognised.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and colour copy of the extracted report circulated separately, on performance in the second quarter of 2008/09, for the period July to September, 2008, in relation to activities relating to the Terms of Reference of this Committee, be noted.

43

RECYCLING WORKING GROUP

A report of the Interim Director of Law and Property was submitted on a proposed work programme for 2008/09 into 2009/10 for the Recycling Working Group of this Committee.

RESOLVED

That approval be given to the Work Programme of the Recycling Working Group for 2008/09 into 2009/10 as set out in paragraph 2 of the report submitted.

The meeting ended at 7.29 pm

CHAIRMAN