

**WARDS: ALL**

**AGENDA ITEM NO.**

**DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT – 27TH JULY 2004**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT**

**THEMED REVIEW OF MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT**

**1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To consider the improvement actions identified as part of the Themed Review of Maintaining and Improving the Environment.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Local Government Act 1999 requires all Local Authorities to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which they carry out their functions through the delivery of Best Value.
- 2.2 This was initially delivered through the development of a five year programme of service reviews, but was subsequently revised to include more cross cutting themed reviews. In 2001, the Council revised its programme and included in that programme a themed review on maintaining and improving the environment. The initial terms of reference were open ended, but in scoping the review it became clear that most of the areas where improvement could be delivered were in the front line services managed in The Directorate of the Urban Environment.
- 2.3 The review highlights the main issues in relation to the environment, focussing on a service continuous improvement plan by addressing weaknesses identified through the challenge comparison consultation and competition process (four Cs).
- 2.4 Scope
- The initial concept of an environmental maintenance and improvement themed review came from the development of a number of cross cutting Best Value reviews. It was scoped through a sequence of Senior Management meetings in the creation of The Directorate of the Urban Environment, and then subsequently through broader decision conference processes which engaged a much wider range of council officers who were responsible for the development and delivery of front line service improvements. The initial concept was of a Council wide review, however during the initial scoping and development of terms of reference it became clear that the review should focus on the areas of service which would deliver the maximum benefit and improvement in the forms of

outcomes focussed clearly on their impact on customers, residents and the wider stakeholder groups. The various discussion groups and decision conference processes therefore identified six particular areas of service, which should be the main focus of the review. They were:

1. Traffic management
2. Green scene
3. Street furniture
4. Outstanding problem areas related to cleansing
5. Marketing and educational activities
6. Cross cutting issues

## 2.5 Methodology

The methodology for the review was based around the application of the four Cs, challenge, compare, consult and competition. A small team of Officers was created, led by the Assistant Director of Environmental Management within the Directorate of the Urban Environment, supported by Officers from the Chief Executive's Department, a central core team of the Urban Environment Directorate, and the service area managers identified as priority within the scope of the review. A programme was produced identifying the Officers responsible for the particular key elements with the following principles to be adopted:

1. The review was focussed on delivering improvement outcomes to service users and customers.
2. The applications of the four Cs, particularly consultation, was to be guided by existing consultation and planned consultation avoiding, wherever possible, duplication.
3. The review needed to be owned by the workforce and members and to include wider stakeholder involvement.
4. The consultation and challenging process were to seek out best practice in other authorities.

2.6 The Project Team are currently pulling together the draft document and compiling a portfolio of evidence, as it is anticipated that the Audit Commission will wish to inspect the Themed Review, as part of a planned Service Review, in early September. However, in order to secure ownership, it is important that Committee have an opportunity to comment on the key improvement actions, identified so far, detailed in Appendix A.

## 3.0 PROPOSAL

3.1 It is proposed that Committee considers this report, supports the key improvement actions and recommends them to the Lead Member for Transportation.

#### **4.0**      **FINANCE**

4.1      There are no direct financial implications at this stage.

#### **5.0**      **LAW**

5.1      The provisions for Best Value are contained within the Local Government Act 1999.

5.2      Section III of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

#### **6.0**      **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

6.1      In conducting the review, officers have taken account of the Council's policy with regard to Equal Opportunities.

#### **7.0**      **RECOMMENDATION**

7.1      That Committee approve the proposal contained in paragraph 3.1 of this report.

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**J. B. MILLAR – DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT**

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#### **Background documents used in the preparation of this report:-**

1.      Best Value Review – Portfolio of Evidence
2.      Best Value review – Draft Report

## APPENDIX A

### THEMED REVIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### IDENTIFIED KEY IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS

REF	KEY IMPROVEMENT ACTION	PREDICTED OVERALL PERFORMANCE IMPACT
1	Address community safety issues in our local parks	Better utilisation of our local parks and associated facilities, healthier society
2	Introduce 'Managed' tree maintenance	Address fundamental tree safety issues – improved tree maintenance
3	Develop an output specification for grounds maintenance	Well defined Grounds Maintenance Services with accurate measure of cost vs. quality
4	Implement a well defined programme of Green Scene "enhancements"	Improve the 'image' of the Borough by enhancing the Green Scene
5.	Develop a Green Space strategy	Ensure our Green Space is fully utilised and accessible to local communities, empowering stakeholders to become fully engaged in Green Space improvement activities
6	Achieve Street Cleansing LPSA targets	Improve the general cleanliness throughout the Borough, streets, parks and open spaces
7	Develop a consistent approach and level of exposure to education and marketing for all services	Improve public awareness and service participation
8	Provide a single point of contact for all 'environmental' services	Improve access to all 'front line' environmental services
9	Maintain and install all our street furniture to an acceptable standard	Improved street scene and reduction in reactive maintenance
10	Develop a Borough wide street scene strategy	Ensure prescribed standards for design of street furniture giving a 'vision' of what the Dudley street should look like. In addition, provide consistency and uniformity to our street environment
11	Develop a Borough wide Traffic Management strategy	Greater member involvement and a more 'holistic' approach to identifying traffic management priorities which have direct links to national and local corporate priorities
12	Deliver all local safety schemes on time and within budget	All local safety schemes completed, fully operational and paid for by the end of the financial year
13	Ensure all environmental improvements are sustainable and achieve objectives	Help minimise future revenue expenditure by identifying maintenance issues pre-installation. Confirm that completed improvement meets objective
14	Implement Public Convenience Action Plan	Provision of automated facilities via private sector "partner"