

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

Thursday, 6th March, 2008 at 6.00pm
in Committee Room 3, The Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs. Cowell (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs. Turner (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Harley, Islam, James, Lowe, Stanley and Waltho.

Officers

Director of Law and Property (As Lead Officer to the Committee), Assistant Director of Finance (Revenues and Benefits), Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Development and Environmental Protection), Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management), Assistant Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (Housing Management), Project Manager - Choice Based Lettings and Area Manager (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services) and the Democratic Services Manager (Directorate of Law and Property).

44 **APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

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

45 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

46 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28th January, 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

47 **PUBLIC FORUM**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

48

DIRECTORATE OF FINANCE, ICT AND PROCUREMENT EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2008/09

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on the Annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2008/09 for the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement. In response to a question from a Member, the Assistant Director of Finance outlined the consultation process used in the production of the Plan.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report and Appendices attached to the report, submitted on the Action Plan for the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement, be noted.

49

THE HEALTH ACT 2006 : PROGRESS WITH SMOKE FREE ENFORCEMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress with the enforcement of the "smoke free" regulations made under the Health Act 2006.

Members commented on the implications of the legislation in a national and local context, including issues of individual choice, the overall health benefits for the wider population, the impact on local public houses and businesses and problems that had occurred in some instances with increased noise and nuisance from external smoking areas.

The Committee welcomed and supported the approach that had been taken in Dudley, including increased publicity for the Smoking Cessation Service, the provision of associated training and support, the implementation of positive actions to tackle health inequalities in the Borough and the use of enforcement powers and prosecutions in appropriate circumstances.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on progress made with delivery of the smoke free enforcement service be noted.

50

RECYCLING WORKING GROUP

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the progress of issues considered by the Recycling Working Group. The report included the review of the draft Waste Enforcement Policy and a range of ongoing initiatives to improve and develop recycling facilities.

The Committee viewed a video of the operation of a major Materials Recycling facility, following a recent visit to such a facility in Milton Keynes. Members were informed of ongoing work to develop similar facilities for Dudley, potentially on a joint basis with a neighbouring authority. The Council had received a Waste Infrastructure grant of £1.27m, over a three-year period in the Capital Programme, commencing in 2008/09. The Committee supported the commencement of improvements, as outlined at the meeting, and ongoing initiatives to extend the Borough's recycling infrastructure.

The Select Committee extended thanks to all Members and Officers involved with the Recycling Working Group for their ongoing work to progress these initiatives.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, on progress made by the Recycling Working Group, be noted.

51

DUDLEY AT HOME (CHOICE BASED LETTINGS) UPDATE AND EVALUATION

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the Dudley at Home pilot for properties in Halesowen and Stourbridge. The Select Committee was requested to consider the recommendations of a cross-party working group with regard to this matter.

The Committee supported the principle of extending choice to residents. Members still wanted reassurance on continuing access for all sectors of the community. The Assistant Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (Housing Management) reported that work was ongoing to ensure that access to the scheme was fairly promoted and the needs of vulnerable persons were properly taken into account. The aim being, in conjunction with Officers from Adult Services, to produce a vulnerable persons strategy.

The Committee noted that an impact assessment was being undertaken as part of the pilot to ensure that all sections of the community were able to use the service. Improvements to the scheme would be considered in the light of operational experience to ensure fairness and equal access for all potential service users. In respect of people with disabilities, the new system would enable properties to be advertised which had been adapted or which were capable of being adapted. This would extend the element of choice for people with disabilities, whilst ensuring that residents were matched to properties suited to their needs.

The Committee was invited to make a recommendation to the Cabinet on the future roll-out of the scheme. The Choice Based Lettings Working Group would continue to meet to scrutinise the progress and address any ongoing concerns.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the recommendation of the Choice Based Lettings Working Group to roll out 'Dudley at Home' to the rest of the Borough in summer 2008 be supported and referred to Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 19th March, 2008 for approval.
- (2) That the Choice Based Lettings Working Group continue to meet and scrutinise the process and that regular progress reports be submitted to the Select Committee.

52

REVIEW OF HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on proposals for the future of the Council's housing allocations policy and the recommendations of the Choice Based Lettings Working Group.

The Committee noted that the Choice Based Lettings Working Group had expressed a preference for the introduction of a banding scheme, which would lead to greater transparency. Further detailed development and modelling work would be necessary to develop this proposal. Any proposals would be the subject of full public consultation and the approval of the Cabinet prior to the formal introduction of a new allocations policy/procedure.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the recommendation of the Choice Based Lettings Working Group that the banding model should be taken forward with the intention of it replacing the points scheme, subject to full testing and public consultation, be supported and referred to Cabinet for approval.
- (2) That Cabinet be recommended to approve the continuation of the Select Committee in its role of overseeing the work and that the item be included in the Select Committee's Work Programme for 2008/09.
- (3) That the thanks of the Select Committee be extended to all Members and Officers involved with the Choice Based Lettings Working Group for their work in developing the recommendations.

OUTLINE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2008/09

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on proposals for the Outline Work Programme of the Committee for the 2008/09 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the following Outline Work Programme for 2008/09 be considered by the Select Committee at its first meeting to be held in the next Municipal Year:-
 - Choice Based Lettings
 - Recycling
 - Housing Allocations Scheme
 - Food Service Plan - June 2008
 - Aids and Adaptations – June 2008
 - Enforcement of Tenancy Conditions – June 2008
 - Annual Report of the Committee to Council - September 2008
 - Food Service Plan Progress - November 2008
 - Update of the Council's Capital Strategy - November 2008
 - Air Quality Management Progress - January 2009
 - Proposed Revenue Budget 2009/10 - January 2009
 - Provision and Condition of Public Conveniences – January 2009
 - Outline Work Programme 2009/10 - March 2009
 - Equality and Diversity Report for the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement - March 2009
 - Patchworking – March 2009
 - Quarterly Corporate Performance Management Reports - June and November 2008 and January and March 2009
- (2) That the “Review of Housing Repairs” be deleted from the Committee’s outline work programme and referred to the Area Housing Panels with a request that the Chairmen of those Panels report their observations to the Select Committee in due course.

54

VOTE OF THANKS

RESOLVED

That the thanks of the Committee be extended to the Chairman for the able and courteous manner in which she has conducted the business of the Committee during the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

The meeting ended at 7.22pm

CHAIRMAN