

## SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

Monday, 24th January, 2011 at 6.00pm  
in Committee Room 2, The Council House, Dudley

### PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs Cowell (Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs Turner (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Mrs Blood, A Finch, Hill, Islam, James, J Jones, Jordan, Mrs Shakespeare and Waltho.

### Officers

Director of Corporate Resources (As Lead Officer to the Committee), Assistant Director of Planning and Environmental Health, Assistant Director of Environmental Management, Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards and Group Engineer (All Directorate of the Urban Environment), Assistant Director Housing Management, Head of Housing Options and Construction Manager (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Head of Corporate Policy and Research and Senior Account Manager (Chief Executive's Directorate), Treasurer, Head of Accountancy and Miss K Fellows (Directorate of Corporate Resources).

### Also in Attendance

Councillors Simms and Stanley, Cabinet Members for Housing, Libraries and Adult Learning and Environment and Culture respectively.

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### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Islam declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item No 6 – Consideration of Petitions (If Any) Referred to the Committee by the Petitions Officer. Petition – Opposing the introduction of double yellow lines at Board School Gardens, Upper Gornal as the Petitioner and her family were regular clients at a pharmacy where he worked in Great Bridge and left the meeting for the consideration of this item.

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### MINUTES

#### RESOLVED

That, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8th September, 2010, be approved as a correct record and signed.

No matters were raised under this agenda item.

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CONSIDERATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY) REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY THE PETITIONS OFFICER.  
PETITION OPPOSING THE INTRODUCTION OF DOUBLE YELLOW LINES AT BOARD SCHOOL GARDENS, UPPER GORNAL.

A report of the Director of Corporate Resources was submitted on the decision of the Cabinet Member for Transportation to introduce double yellow lines at Board School Gardens, Upper Gornal.

In presenting the report and Appendices to the report submitted, the Director of Corporate Resources advised that Councillor Simms as Ward Member would speak upon the issue for three minutes.

He also reported that the decision had previously been reviewed by the North Dudley Area Committee who had wholly supported the local residents.

The Petitioner Mrs Begum stated that although the double yellow lines were outside her business premises in Clarence Street, Upper Gornal when she had purchased them she believed that by working with the Council they would have allowed parking for a limited period of time outside her premises.

Mrs Begum also stated that visitors to her business premises would only require parking for a few minutes and requested that a waiting limit be applied outside the premises.

Councillor Simms stated that the local residents had been supported by Ward Members as they had experienced problems with customers blocking their driveways.

He also stated that a previous meeting had taken place with the local residents, the Council and the Police when it had been agreed that the Council owned car park opposite the above business premises could be utilised for Mrs Begum's customer parking.

Following further discussion the Group Engineer confirmed that the Council could erect a sign on the car park referred to above stating parking for customers only.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be advised that there were no recommendations that the Select Committee wished to make regarding the introduction of double yellow lines at Board School Gardens, Upper Gornal.
- (2) That the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to erect a “customer only parking sign” on the Council owned car park in Clarence Street, Upper Gornal.

## REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY 2011/12

A joint report of the Chief Executive, Treasurer and the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the proposed Revenue Budget Strategy for 2011/12 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/12 – 2013/14.

Following the presentation of the content of the report, and its appendices Members asked questions and made comments in particular relating to:-

- The closure of the ageing toilet blocks in smaller shopping centres and the impact that would have upon the elderly population within the Borough;
- Whether the Council would participate in Stourbridge in Bloom given the proposed reduction in bedding plants from some locations and removal of hanging baskets from civic buildings;
- Difficulties with scrutinising the contents of the report submitted, given the lack of detail in particular relating to the surplus on Treasury Management operations, the one-off VAT refunds and the review of earmarked reserves referred to in paragraph seven of the report submitted, and the proposed reduction in management and back office costs within the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services;
- Congratulations to the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services in relation to their proposals relating to unoccupied properties;
- Details of the increases in Bereavement Services fees;
- Details of the efficiency savings referred to in relation to the Directorate of the Urban Environment;
- The impact that the review and re-provision of supporting people contracts and other service efficiencies would have upon the Council, in particular relating to the re-provision of Midland Heart’s direct access hostel accommodation at Gibbs Road.

In responding to questions raised the Assistant Director of Environmental Management reported that the majority of the toilet stock was beyond its useful life and the Council would have to invest a considerable amount to improve the stock. He advised that work would be undertaken with local traders and public houses in relation to providing a framework of facilities.

He gave some indication of the number of toilet blocks that would be affected.

In relation to the efficiency savings within the Directorate of the Urban Environment, he advised that the vast majority related to reclassification of funds as there was no longer a requirement for new measures to be undertaken in relation to the disposal of bottom ash.

In relation to Bereavement Services, as fees did not fall within the remit of this Committee, the Assistant Director of Environmental Management reported that he would arrange for details in respect of fees to be forwarded to Councillor Mrs Jordan.

In relation to the detail contained within the report, the Director of Corporate Resources advised that Members could request from the various Directorates direct for further detailed information in relation to savings.

The Treasurer also advised that he would provide Councillor Waltho with more detail on the transfer from earmarked reserves.

The Assistant Director of Housing advised that the accommodation at Gibbs Road was poor and the re-provision of the accommodation was required.

She also advised that a meeting would take place with the Labour Group Spokesperson for Housing, Libraries and Adult Learning in relation to the review and re-provision of supporting people contracts and other service efficiencies.

A Member advised that funds were raised locally via a charitable organisation in relation to the Stourbridge in Bloom event.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet's Revenue Budget Strategy proposals for 2011/12 and Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2011/12 – 2013/14, as set out in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted be noted and that the Cabinet be informed that there were no observations that this Select Committee wished to make on the proposals.
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Environmental Management be requested to arrange for an email to be sent to Councillor Mrs Jordan detailing increases in Bereavement Services fees.

- (3) That the Treasurer be requested to provide Councillor Waltho with more detailed information on the transfer from earmarked reserves.

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AN UPDATE ON AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT 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 the Borough, addressing areas of work to do with air quality monitoring; areas identified as having air quality issues; Air Quality Action Plan progress and monitoring and Statutory Requirements for 2011.

In responding to a question from a Member arising from the presentation of the report submitted, the Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards advised that the air quality monitoring equipment was in the Wordsley area of the Borough in close proximity to the Cat Public House.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on progress made with air quality monitoring and compliance with the Air Quality Action Plan, be noted and that support be given to continued monitoring in 2011/12 together with continued work to reduce air pollution in accordance with the aims of the Air Quality Action Plan.

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PROGRESS REPORT FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2010/11

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the progress with the activities detailed in the Directorate of the Urban Environment Food Service Plan 2010/11.

Arising from the presentation of the report submitted, a Member praised the work in relation to Halal foods.

A Member also praised the work of the Food Service Team and the content of the report submitted.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on the progress with the delivery of service within the Food Service Plan 2010/11 at the half-year stage be noted.

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RECYCLING WORKING GROUP

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the current work of the Recycling Working Group.

Arising from the presentation of the report, and Appendix relating to the Recycling Trial Collection Scheme Members praised the work of the refuse collectors during the adverse weather conditions.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on the current work of the Recycling Working Group be noted.

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HIGH COST VOIDS.

A report of the Assistant Director of Housing was submitted on the current position with High Cost Voids and proposed actions to deal with these, and to seek support for a series of recommendations to be made to the Cabinet Member which had been formulated through the work of officers and the Housing Working Group.

Arising from the presentation of the report submitted Members raised concerns that problems with High Cost Voids would re-occur in the future should the Council fail to implement a policy whereby they were allowed to enter properties as Landlords, should tenants fail to comply with requests of the Council to carry out major repairs to their properties.

In responding the Head of Housing Options advised that a more robust approach would be adopted in relation to tenants who refused major repairs in the future, however it was not possible for the Council to adopt a policy whereby they could force their way into tenants homes, as this was unlawful.

She also reported that new Applications and Void Management Procedures would commence the following week.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on High Cost Voids be noted and that the recommendations set out in paragraph 22 of the report be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Libraries and Adult Learning for determination.

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QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on Performance in the second quarter of 2010/11, for the period July to September, 2010 in relation to the activities relating to the Terms of Reference of this Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and colour copy of the extracted report circulated separately, on performance in the second quarter of 2010/11, for the period July to September, 2010, in relation to the activities relating to the Terms of Reference of this Committee, be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.15pm

CHAIRMAN