

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Monday, 19th September, 2005 at 6.00 p.m.
In Committee Room 2, Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs Cowell (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Turner (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Body, Burston, Mrs Collins, Ms Partridge, Stanley,
Tomkinson and C Wilson

Officers

Director of Law and Property (as Lead Officer to the Committee),
Assistant Director of Housing, Assistant Director of the Urban
Environment (Environmental Management), Head of Public Protection,
Head of Waste Care and Mrs M Johal (Directorate of Law and
Property).

12

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30th
June, 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed.

13

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

14

APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE FOR THIS MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

It was reported that Councillor Burston had been appointed to serve as a
substitute for Councillor Banks for this meeting of the Committee only.

15

UPDATE OF THE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL STRATEGY

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on the update of the
Council's Capital Strategy.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and in the attached draft Capital Strategy, be supported and referred to Council.

16

CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted advising Members of a report on Choice Based Lettings (CBL) that was scheduled to go to Cabinet on 21st September, 2005.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member commented that a system did not need to be in place until the year 2010 and it was suggested that the route other local authorities pursued should be closely monitored. Reference was made to the visit that had been undertaken by Members to the Bushbury Hill Estate Management Board in Wolverhampton and it was commented that the properties were of pre-fabricated, reinforced concrete build, which made it difficult for people to acquire houses under the "right to buy" schemes as they could not get mortgages. Members commented that an initial CBL scheme for Dudley should be entered into with caution and it was suggested that a specific area of Dudley should be piloted with the proposed scheme, and if successful, be rolled out to the rest of the Borough.

During the ensuing discussion it was suggested that a further report, together with a detailed work plan and information on timescales, be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee to enable a decision to be made on whether the Committee or a Working Group should oversee the process.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report now submitted, be noted.
- (2) That, subject to approval by Cabinet, the Committee oversee the process of introducing Choice Based Lettings and ultimately agree a final proposal to be submitted to Cabinet in due course.
- (3) That a further report, together with a detailed work plan and information on timescales, be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee to enable a decision to be made on whether the Committee or a Working Group should oversee the process.

**BEST VALUE SERVICE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SCIP)
– WASTE MANAGEMENT**

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the progress of the Best Value Service Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP) – Waste Management.

Arising from the presentation, Members commented about the smell at the Foster Street underpass in Stourbridge that was caused by people urinating on the floor. It was pointed out that the floor was cleaned regularly, but additional cleaning work, was required on the walls, however the walls were never cleaned, as this could impact on the stench that remained. It was requested that officers schedule the walls for cleaning on a more regular basis. In responding the Chairman reported that there were plans to upgrade the underpass and that commencement of the work was awaited. A Member further commented in relation to the subway at Union Street where the same smell occurred owing to people urinating in the gullies and the thoroughfare. He pointed out that, although the area was cleaned regularly, the material on the floor absorbed the smell and cleaning had very little effect. The odour could only be removed by replacing the floor with a surface that did not absorb liquid. It was further pointed out that gullies at the bottom of hills should be identified as a priority on the cleaning programme due to being prone to overspill as they collected the most water.

In response to a query from a Member regarding the differing railings on the subway, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) reported that the whole guardrail associated with the subway was attached to the structure, there were safety implications and owing to changes in standards, a replacement scheme would have to be more robust. A meeting was due to take place in the near future with a view to obtaining additional funding to enable the continuation of the colour scheme for the entire railings.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix attached to the report, now submitted, on progress on the Best Value Service Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP) – Waste Management, be noted.

SALE OF CARS ON HIGHWAYS AND PRIVATE LAND

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on a recommendation from the Brierley Hill Area Committee regarding the sale of cars on highways and private land.

Arising from the presentation of the report it was agreed that the matter be included as part of the work programme of the Committee and that a press release be issued highlighting the seriousness of the matter and pointing out that enforcement action would be taken.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Committee undertakes a review of the regulations and enforcement action available to combat the sale of cars on highway land as part of the Work Programme of the Committee.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for the Environment be recommended to issue a joint press release with the Chairman of this Committee, highlighting the seriousness of the matter and pointing out that enforcement action would be taken.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm.

CHAIRMAN