

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

Wednesday, 26th September, 2007 at 6 pm
in Committee Room 2, The Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs Cowell (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Turner (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Ms Craigie, Islam, James, Kettle, Lowe, Waltho and C
Wilson

Officers

Director of Law and Property (as Lead Officer to the Committee),
Assistant Director (Environmental Management), Assistant Director
(Development and Environmental Protection), Team Manager - Asset
Management and Mrs M Johal (Directorate of Law and Property).

13 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of
Councillors Stanley and Ms While-Cooper.

14 **APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBER**

It was reported that Councillor C Wilson had been appointed as a
substitute member for Councillor Stanley for this meeting of the
Committee only.

15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

16 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26th
June, 2007, be approved as a correct record and signed.

17 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE TO COUNCIL

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on the annual report of the Committee for the 2006/07 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED

That the annual report of the Select Committee for 2006/07, as now submitted, be approved for referral to Council.

18 REQUEST FOR RECYCLING FACILITIES AT YOUTH CENTRES AND SCHOOLS WITHIN NORTH DUDLEY AREA

A report of the Area Liaison Officer for North Dudley Area Committee was submitted requesting consideration be given to the provision of recycling facilities at youth centres and schools within the area covered by North Dudley Area Committee.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member commented that although he supported the provision of recycling facilities being made at schools, he was not of the view that the same should apply to youth centres. It was felt that litter problems could escalate due to youths congregating outside youth centres. Another Member commented that young people should be involved and encouraged to recycle and facilities should be provided to them but alternative methods to safeguard the facilities could be investigated. Members also felt that educating children at a young age was vital to help tackle the problem.

Following further debate it was agreed that the matter should be referred to the Select Committee on the Environment (Recycling) Working Group for consideration and that provision of facilities should be explored on a Borough wide perspective. It was also agreed that the Working Group should consider the concerns as expressed by Members, particularly the impact of providing recycling facilities at youth centres.

RESOLVED

That the matter be referred to the Select Committee on the Environment (Recycling) Working Group for consideration.

19 CROSS BORDER WORKING

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the issues surrounding cross border working between neighbouring Councils in relation to public protection matters.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on cross border issues, be noted.

20

FIXED PENALTIES

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on recommendations of the Select Committee on the Environment (Recycling) Working Group on the level of Fixed Penalties to be adopted following the introduction of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005).

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member requested that further statistics detailing information about the number of fines that had been imposed on a yearly basis and information on the categories of fines that had been imposed should be provided. In responding the Assistant Director – Environmental Management undertook to provide a comprehensive breakdown on enforcement work undertaken in the past three years. He further commented that attempts were being made to make an example of people and that these were brought to the attention of the media to send out a clear message to deter offences.

During the ensuing discussion a Member expressed the view that the fines as set out in the Appendix were too low and further indicated that there was insufficient enforcement. Another Member commented that during a visit to Birmingham he had seen a huge notice that warned people that the last person that had been caught fly tipping at that location had been fined £5000. He indicated that the same should be displayed and advertised in the Dudley Borough and people should be warned that they would be prosecuted. In responding the Assistant Director – Environmental Management stated that discussions were currently taking place with Birmingham City Council regarding their publicity campaign with a view to having something similar in Dudley.

A Member acknowledged that there were laws to deal with littering but he reiterated the need to educate people. Another Member also asked that litter hotspots, such as Coronation Gardens, should be identified and action taken appropriately. Regarding Coronation Gardens he stated that the area was a particular problem and referred to activities carried on by young people from the College. It was indicated that the College should be approached with a view to raising awareness and that signs should be displayed around the area and at the College. The Chairman agreed that the area needed attention and further reported that the litter had attracted rats. In responding the Assistant Director – Environmental Management said that he was aware of the problems in that particular area and stated that the litter operative attended early in the morning but by lunchtime further litter had appeared. He undertook to reschedule the rounds of the operative to possibly include another blitz after lunchtime. He further reported that he was also aware of the problem with rats and bait had been laid and he undertook to monitor the situation.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for the Environment be recommended to approve the Fixed Penalties as set out in the Appendix to the report submitted.
- (2) That the Assistant Director – Environmental Management be requested to provide Members with further detailed information about the number of fines and categories of fines that had been imposed.

21

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Council's responsibilities in respect of highway maintenance, outlining the Council's resource capacity in the delivery of the service and on new legislation regarding the management of the Council's highway assets and new network control in planning and co-ordination of works on the highway.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member referred to unadopted roads in her Ward and the increasing number of new estates and queried how roads were adopted. She also referred to paragraph 18 of the report and asked whether a schedule of road works existed and, if so, whether copies could be provided to enable Members to answer queries from residents. In responding the Assistant Director – Environmental Management acknowledged that there were problems with new estates and unadopted roads. He indicated that work was undertaken to work with the developer during construction and Council Officers visited the site regularly but he stated that the Council only adopted roads that met the required standards. With regard to a programme of works the Assistant Director – Environmental Management indicated that there was a programme related to gullies on primary routes and attempts were made to clean them on a yearly basis but he reported that not all were cleaned on a regular basis. He explained that due to the acquisition of another gully tanker, cleaning had improved but because of the need to react to recent flash floods the programme had not been adhered to and delays had occurred. He indicated that climate change was a matter that had to be considered seriously and appropriate action taken for the future. The Assistant Director – Environmental Management further reported that work was currently being undertaken with a view to producing a register to include all scheduled highway work.

During the ensuing discussion Members indicated that there was a need to spend more time in scrutinising specific and major issues, such as maintenance of roads and that adequate time should be given to enable detailed discussions to be held. Members acknowledged the need to reduce the Work Programme for next year to enable bigger issues to be properly scrutinised and appropriate recommendations made. Regarding this year's Work Programme it was suggested that the report on highway maintenance be included as a background document for information with the air quality report to be considered in January, 2008.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the work undertaken by the Council's Street Care Section in respect of managing and maintaining the Borough's highway assets be noted.
- (2) That the internal and external factors that are adding greater pressure on the capacity of the existing budget to deliver an adequate maintenance programme be noted.
- (3) That the impact of new legislation regarding the introduction and ongoing management of a Highway Asset Management Plan, the impact on resources and new control measures for work on the highway brought about by the Traffic Management Act, be noted.
- (4) That the reduced Local Transport Plan settlement for Highway Maintenance for 2007/8 and its impact on maintaining the condition of the Borough's public highways be noted.
- (5) That the report on highway maintenance be included as a background document for information with the air quality report to be considered in January, 2008.

The meeting ended at 7.30 pm.

CHAIRMAN