

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Thursday, 10th March, 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, Mrs Collins, G Davies, Stanley, Tomkinson and
C Wilson

Officers

Director of Law and Property (as Lead Officer to the Committee),
Assistant Director of Housing (Strategy and Private Sector), Assistant
Director of Housing (Building Services), Head of Public Protection,
Head of Waste Care (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Senior
Policy Manager (Directorate of Housing) and Mrs M Johal (Directorate
of Law and Property).

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th
January, 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Banks
and the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Development and
Environmental Protection).

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HOUSING OPTIONS APPRAISAL REPORT

A report of the Director of Housing was submitted seeking the views of
Members on the Directorate's draft Housing Options Appraisal report as
part of the consultation exercise.

During the discussion that followed the presentation of the report, a Member commented that there was a need to be open and transparent and to have a clearer terminology as “non-decent” could mean certain criteria had not been met. It was further commented that it had previously been suggested that a clear, concise letter be sent out to tenants that clearly explained the situation and stated that this was an important issue, and it was queried whether this had been done. It was further queried whether any steps had been taken to address the parts of the Borough that had been referred to as relatively unpopular in paragraph 2.8.10 of the report.

In response, the Assistant Director of Housing (Building Services) advised that the letter had not been sent out. However a wide consultation exercise had been undertaken that included the insertion of information in tenants and home affairs magazines. Following research that had been conducted it had become apparent that people had understood the information. However, it was accepted that communication could always be improved and it was pointed out that communication had been better on this occasion than the previous large scale voluntary transfer proposal and that less resources had been used.

In relation to relatively unpopular areas, the Assistant Director of Housing (Building Services) reported that empty properties in the Borough were at 1%, which was a low figure compared to the West Midlands and national figures. Difficulties had not been encountered in respect of letting flats and it was further stated that a waiting list existed for flats. In respect of unpopular areas, the Assistant Director of Housing (Building Services) advised that there were no specific plans for the relatively unpopular areas, however it was pointed out that demand still exceeded supply in such areas. The outer suburban fringe was a popular area and demand was high and this was due to the generality of the area and not characteristics of a property and it was pointed out that all areas had popular and less popular aspects.

A Member commented and agreed that the current consultation exercise had been far better than the previous time and stated that the tenants had confirmed that they wished to stay with the Council.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the draft Housing Options Appraisal report be noted and that the retention and management of the housing stock by the Council be supported.

A report of the Director of Housing was submitted seeking consideration of the Directorate of Housing's Annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2005/06, attached to the report submitted.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report and attachment to the report now submitted be noted.

41 BEST VALUE SERVICE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLANS (SCIPs)

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

Following the presentation of the report, a Member suggested that a presentation be made to the Committee by the Black Country Waste Management Forum in relation to details of the longer-term strategy of the area. It was further commented that a resident who had wanted bulky items removed had indicated that the level of service that had been received was of a high quality.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the progress on the Waste Management Best Value Service Continuous Improvement Plans (SCIPs), as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted, be noted.
 - (2) That a presentation from the Black Country Waste Management Forum providing details of the longer term strategy of the area be included as an item for the Work Programme of the Committee for 2005/06.
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42 PLASTICS RECYCLING

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted in relation to plastics recycling.

The Head of Waste Care reported that one of the reasons that the Black Country Waste Management Forum had reconvened was due to new legislation that had impacted on the ability of a Local Authority to reduce landfill and so regional alternative waste management strategies had to be considered. A draft report that would include details about economic models and the financial implications would be available shortly and it was expected that the report along with the outcomes of the Black Country Study would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Following the presentation of the report, a Member commented that it was felt that insufficient progress had been made and it was pointed out that, to make Dudley a cleaner and better place for living, recycling should be at the forefront and efforts should be made, in conjunction with the Black Country Waste Management Forum, to reuse as much waste as possible.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report now submitted be noted.
- (2) That a further report with detailed costs of recycling plastic be submitted to a future meeting.

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted seeking consideration of the annual report of the Committee for the 2004/05 year.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report now submitted be noted and referred to the Cabinet and Council.

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OUTLINE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2005/06

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on proposals for the Outline Work Programme of the Committee for 2005/06.

Members commented that the Committee should not consider the review of public conveniences until funding had been predetermined. It was further requested that traffic management should include the decriminalisation of car parking and that affordable housing should also be considered.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme of the Committee for 2005/06 include:-

- (i) Plastics Recycling
- (ii) Choice Based Lettings
- (iii) Tree Management Policy – Replacement of Felled Trees
- (iv) Condition of Public Multi-Storey Car Parks
- (v) Traffic Management (to include decriminalisation of car parking)
- (vi) Air Quality Action Plan – Sedgley
- (vii) Affordable Housing
- (viii) Duplex Properties
- (ix) Black Country Waste Management Forum – Presentation
- (x) Food Service Plan
- (xi) Implementation of Best Value Service Continuous Improvement Plans
- (xii) Update the Council’s Capital Strategy
- (xiii) Equality and Diversity Reports for the Directorate of Housing
- (xiv) Quarterly Reports on Corporate Performance regarding Housing and the Environment

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THANKS TO CHAIRMAN

The Committee thanked the Chairman for the way that meetings had been conducted throughout the 2004/05 Municipal Year.

The meeting ended at 7.40 pm.

CHAIRMAN