

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

Monday, 12th November, 2007 at 6 pm
in Committee Room 2, The Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

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

Officers

Director of Law and Property (as Lead Officer to the Committee),
Assistant Director (Environmental Management), Assistant Director
(Housing Management), Head of Public Protection, Food and
Occupational Safety Manager, Technical Accountant and Mrs M Johal
(Directorate of Law and Property).

22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

24 MINUTES

RESOLVED

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

25 PUBLIC FORUM

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

UPDATE OF THE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL STRATEGY

A report of Director of Finance was submitted on an update of the Council's Capital Strategy. A copy of the Capital Strategy 2008-2013 was attached as an Appendix to the report submitted.

In introducing the content of the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted the Technical Accountant referred Members to the items contained in paragraphs 14, 17 and 19 of the Appendix relating to the terms of reference of this Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on the Update of the Council's Capital Strategy 2008-2013, be noted and that the Cabinet be informed that there are no issues that the Committee wished to be taken into account when the Strategy is considered by full Council.

CHOICE BASED LETTINGS PLAN

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the revised Choice Based Lettings Plan.

Arising from the presentation of the report some Members raised concern about the shortened timescales and it was suggested that the timescales be extended with a view to the pilot scheme running for longer to ensure that a proper evaluation could be made so that a quality scheme could be rolled out across the Borough. A Member also expressed concern that some people could be disadvantaged if the points scheme were to be changed and the impact on the elderly wanting bungalows.

In responding the Assistant Director (Housing Management) explained that the pilot scheme would involve advertising properties with a view to getting people to bid on them and to evaluate accessibility. The next stage would be to review the existing points system and Members had already stated that they wanted to consider a simplified points scheme and bandings. The Assistant Director (Housing Management) reiterated that Choice Based Lettings was a process and it would not increase the number of homes to be let. Voids were reducing and the current figure was 1.23% as at 2nd November and she indicated that an average of 2% was recommended to ensure sufficient properties were available. With regard to the availability of properties for the elderly, Members were advised of the intention to develop extra care housing specifically aimed at the elderly.

During the ensuing discussion and in response to a query regarding investigating systems other local authorities used, the Assistant Director (Housing Management) commented that a number of systems were online and indicated that Members could visit various websites and view the system, although as they would not be registered they would not be able to use the site. In response to a further query regarding how vulnerable people would be identified and targeted, the Assistant Director (Housing Management) reported that there were typical groups including the elderly and people with learning difficulties and she pointed out that work had been undertaken with various agencies including social services and support groups with a view to reaching various people. She also indicated that the choice based lettings system that was to be used had a language option that would help some people.

The Assistant Director (Housing Management) acknowledged the concerns as raised by Members but suggested that the timescales should remain. However, when the report was submitted to the Committee in March if Members still had concerns then the report could be withdrawn from the Cabinet agenda.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on the revised timescales for the Choice Based Lettings Plan, be noted.

28

FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2007/2008

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress with the activities detailed in the Director of the Urban Environment Food Service Plan 2007/2008.

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 2007/2008 at the half-year stage, be noted.

29

UPDATE ON THE OPERATION OF THE GREEN WASTE
COMPOSTING FACILITY AT IVERLEY PARK FARM, NORTON

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the current situation with respect to the operation of the green waste composting facility operated at Iverley Park Farm, Norton, with particular reference to the emissions of odour which are adversely affecting local residents.

The Head of Public Protection updated the Committee on events since the circulation of the report and reported that Simpro Limited had had their exemption from the requirement to hold a Waste Management Licence from the Environment Agency withdrawn and could no longer operate. He further informed Members that the facility had closed and the Environment Agency had asked that the site be cleared by 10th December 2007. In response to a query the Head of Public Protection indicated that the company could reapply for an exemption provided that they complied with conditions. The company could also apply for a full Waste Management Licence but it was pointed out that they would need to apply for full planning permission to do this. Currently Simpro Limited only had temporary planning permission until November 2009.

A Member queried the position with regard to recycling green waste as the Council had used the facility at the site. In responding the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) reported that green waste was now being transported to a site in Coven that was also operated by Simpro. However, they had indicated that the site was nearing its capacity and therefore an alternative facility in Telford had been offered at the same charge although there were problems with haulage due to the distance.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and the verbal report, submitted be noted and that continued monitoring of the matter be supported.

30

QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
REPORT

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on performance in the first quarter of 2007/08, for the period 1st April, 2007 to 30th June, 2007, in relation to the activities relating to the terms of reference of this Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on performance in the first quarter of 2007/08, for the period 1st April to 30th June, 2007, in relation to activities relating to the terms of reference of this Committee, be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.15 pm.

CHAIRMAN

SE/15