

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Monday, 20th September, 2004 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs Cowell (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Turner (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Banks, Body, Mrs Collins, Mrs Coulter, G Davies, Stanley and C Wilson together with the Director of Law and Property (as Lead Officer to the Committee), Director of Finance, Assistant Director of Housing, Assistant Director of Housing (Building Services), Ms S Evans and Mr I Gardner (Directorate of Housing) and Mrs M Johal (Directorate of Law and Property).

14

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27th July, 2004, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor G Davies declared a prejudicial interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item no 6 (Housing Repairs (Zonal Work) in view of the fact that he had a close relative who worked in the Directorate of Housing.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor Tomkinson, the Director of Housing and the Assistant Director of Urban Environment.

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SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

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

18

UPDATE OF THE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL STRATEGY

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

A Member queried the volume of work that would be involved in relation to the drainage works that were to be carried out in Pennett. In response, the Director of Finance agreed to provide details direct to the Member concerned.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report be received and noted.

19

HOUSING REPAIRS (ZONAL WORK)

A report of the Director of Housing on the system of Zonal working for the carrying out of non-urgent repairs was submitted.

(Having previously declared a Prejudicial Interest in this matter, Councillor G Davies left the room during consideration of the item).

The Assistant Director of Housing (Building Services) circulated a list of completed and outstanding works for 2004/05. He reported that works relating to window repairs were not included on the list but he informed Members that window repairs would commence in approximately two years.

In response to a query, the Assistant Director of Housing (Building Services) confirmed that the figures contained in the list were those relating to the original Area Committee boundaries. However, he reported that the budget that had been allocated to each Ward would be adjusted following the change in boundaries.

A Member expressed concern in relation to work not being completed in certain areas and queried the position regarding urgent work that needed to be undertaken outside the zonal area. In response, the Assistant Director of Housing (Building Services), informed Members that under the previous system, there had been a problem with short cycle times and with workers arriving late and leaving early. However this was not the case with zonal working and he anticipated criticisms would abate with the new system. In relation to urgent repair works, the Assistant Director of Housing (Building Services) commented that assessing urgent work was difficult. However visits to properties would be undertaken quicker, which would result in damage being identified earlier. He confirmed that repairs to exceptionally urgent problems identified outside the zonal area would be carried out as a priority.
RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report now submitted be noted.

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HOUSING LETTINGS POLICY AND ALLOCATIONS PROCESS

A report of the Director of Housing apprising new Members of work already in progress and providing further information was submitted.

A Member commented that there was a shortage of approximately 10,000 properties to meet demand in Dudley and that each property that became available generated approximately 10-15 enquiries. He agreed that there was a need to improve the points system. However the issue with attracting certain types of people to certain estates was not being addressed.

The Director of Law and Property confirmed that the demand for Council housing in Dudley did exceed supply. He pointed out that the proposal in the report did not identify the objectives of choice based lettings in Dudley and he suggested that the visits to other local authorities, as referred to in paragraph 6.4 of the report, should be undertaken prior to the making of any decision.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report now submitted be received and noted.
- (2) That a visit to Manchester City Council or Sheffield City Council be undertaken.

The meeting ended at 7.25 p.m.

CHAIRMAN