

**DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**SELECT COMMITTEE on the ENVIRONMENT– 30<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2005**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT**

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND DECISION MAKING**

**1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 For the Select Committee on the Environment to oversee a programme of research into Sustainable Development in terms of Council decision making

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 One of the key recommendations arising from the Council's initial Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) was to consider how sustainable development was integrated into the Councils service planning and decision making processes.
- 2.2 Officers have already undertaken some work to ensure Directorate strategic and service plans take account of sustainable development issues and therefore the proposal is for this Committee to consider Sustainable Development in the decision making process.
- 2.3 Sustainable Development is a term that could mean many things to many people, however for the purposes of this research programme the following proposed definition will enable the Committee and officers to scrutinise the Councils approach to sustainable development in terms of decision making:

**Proposed Definition:**

**Sustainable Development is about improving people's quality of life both now and in the future without having a detrimental effect on the earth's resources. It means balancing economic, social and environmental objectives**

The key message within this nationally accepted definition is the need to realistically **balance** economic, social and environmental objectives when we are making plans or taking decisions in our day to day service provision or project delivery.

- 2.4 The issue of how to ensure that sustainability objectives are built into key decision making is challenging. It is not as simple as adding a standard paragraph to our key reports and it is likely that some form of workable assessment process(toolkit) may be required to test that decision making is sustainable.

- 2.5 It is not intended at this stage to carry out an in depth programme of work but more to undertake some “light touch” research and analysis based on current knowledge that leads to some realistic recommendations of the Select Committee.
- 2.6 Given the full programme of work topics this committee is already committed to the intention is to bring no more than 3 reports over the next year.

### **National and Local Position**

- 2.7 Under the terms of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) 2004, Local Authorities are already required to take sustainability objectives into account in formulating specific plans and programmes.
- 2.8 Plans include local planning development frameworks, waste management, water management Local Transport plans and tourism plans. Local development frameworks and the Black Country Study are also subject to detailed sustainability appraisals.
- 2.9 The emphasis on mainstreaming sustainability into key initiatives will be increased under the forthcoming Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)
- 2.10 Community Strategies in future will be known as ‘Sustainable Community Strategies’ and should be based on key principles of sustainable development necessary to create areas where people genuinely want to live long term.
- 2.11 Locally to assist the Dudley Community Partnership (DCP) make decisions based on sustainable objectives and as part of the development of the new Community Strategy (formally Community Plan) the Strategic Housing and Environment Partnership (SHEP) themed group supporting the DCP has produced a sustainability appraisal process ( toolkit.)
- 2.12 A future report to this committee will demonstrate this “toolkit” to members

### **Outcomes**

- 2.13 The desired outcomes from incorporating sustainability into decision making may include :
- Adoption of more sustainable initiatives which maximise economic, social and environmental benefits thereby improving the quality of life for Dudley’s citizens
  - A more accountable and transparent decision-making processes
  - Encouraging joint and partnership working and innovative thinking. Contribution to best practice and as a positive contribution to CPA

### **3.0 PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 That the committee agrees to oversee the consideration of sustainability in the Councils decision making processes

3.2 That the Councils Corporate Sustainability Group be tasked to undertake the following:

- i) **Research best practice** that has been used by other local authorities to integrate sustainability into decision making (particularly those that have excellent CPA ratings) e.g. sustainability checklists and appraisal tools.
- ii) **Consider the level of decision-making** that would require sustainability objectives being taken into account.
- iii) **Develop options/tools** to integrate sustainability into decision-making to be presented to the Committee for consideration and to pilot favoured options on behalf of the Committee
- iv) **Report to the Committee** on outcomes from above

#### 4.0 **FINANCE**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of the report

#### 5.0 **LAW**

5.1 The Council has a number of statutory functions regarding the environment, including the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

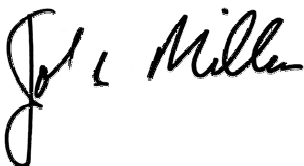
5.2 Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its statutory functions.

#### 6.0 **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

6.1 One of the principles of sustainable development is about achieving equality and a better quality of life for all; therefore by integrating sustainability objectives into decision making should make a positive contribution to delivering equal opportunities within the Borough of Dudley.

#### 7.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

7.1 That the Committee agree to the proposals set out in section 3 of this report.



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**J. B. MILLAR – DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT**

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