

## **SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT**

Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2009 at 6.00pm  
in Committee Room 2, The Council House, Dudley

### **PRESENT:-**

Councillor Mrs Cowell (Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs Turner (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Mrs Blood, Burston, A Finch, Hanif, P Harley, James, J Martin,  
Mrs Shakespeare, and Waltho.

### **Officers**

Interim Director of Law, Property and Human Resources (As Lead Officer to the Committee), Assistant Director Housing Management, Head of Housing Management (North), (Both Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Assistant Director of Planning and Environmental Health, Assistant Director of Environmental Management, (Both Directorate of the Urban Environment), Interim Assistant Director Financial Services and Corporate Finance, (Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement), Head of Policy (Chief Executives Directorate), and Miss K Fellows (Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources).

### 26 **APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Hill.

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### 27 **APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBER**

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

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### 28 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

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### 29 **MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED**

That, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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PUBLIC FORUM

No matters were raised under this agenda item.

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UPDATE OF THE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL STRATEGY

A report of the Interim Director of Finance was submitted on the update of the Council's Capital Strategy. A copy of the Strategy for 2010/2015 was attached as an Appendix to the report submitted.

Arising from the presentation of the report, it was noted that Urban Environment – Culture and Leisure referred to at paragraph eight of the report was not under the remit of this Committee and should be replaced by Regeneration Matters – Urban Environment – Transport as referred to at paragraph 19 of the Strategy.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on the update of the Council's Capital Strategy be noted and that the Cabinet be informed that there were no issues that this Select Committee wished to be taken into account when the strategy was considered by full Council.

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REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the Dudley Borough Challenge Review – 2009/12 Consultation draft 2009 a copy of which had been separately circulated to Members together with details of the headline achievements since 2005 relating to the terms of reference of this Committee.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member raised concerns about the lack of elected Member involvement in preparing the draft Consultation.

In responding to Members questions the Assistant Director Housing Management advised that she would circulate to Members detailed analysis of the number of affordable homes delivered in quarter one and two of 2009.

She also advised that in relation to the loss of the Lighthouse Project which had provided an e-learning facility situated at Andrew Road, Halesowen, a signposting exercise may be undertaken in order to assess which facility would be most beneficial to those members of the Community wishing to utilise this. A business plan and details of funding would also be required from any potential applicant who wished to lease the building.

## RESOLVED

- (a) That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on the Review of the Community Strategy, be noted.
  - (b) That the Assistant Director Housing Management be requested to circulate to Members detailed analysis of the number of affordable homes delivered in quarters one and two of 2009.
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### FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2009/10

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the progress with the activities detailed in the Directorate of the Urban Environment Food Service Plan 2009/10.

Arising from the presentation of the report members asked questions and made comments and the Assistant Director of Planning and Environmental Health responded as follows:-

- In relation to microbiological food sampling, the half yearly target figures referred to in Appendix 1 to the report represented routine food sampling, however additional sampling would be undertaken should, for example, an outbreak of food poisoning occur within a particular area.
- That the food premises that had been prosecuted were a Kebab House in Brierley Hill for food hygiene, a takeaway in High Street, Lye for food hygiene, a takeaway in Lower Gornal for food hygiene and premises in Coseley and Quarry Bank Post Office for the supply of counterfeit vodka.
- In relation to the nature of food complaints, she indicated that the majority related to the discovery of foreign bodies in food.
- In relation to food premises complaints, that these varied from customers being verbally abused should they return food to general food handling practices.
- It was further reported that routine inspections may also reveal hygiene problems at food premises.
- In relation to counterfeit vodka, it was stated that this would be detected by trading standards officers who carried out weights and measures inspections and sampling;
- That Customs and Excise also carried out checks and routine sampling;
- That food hazard warnings were also sent to Local Authorities via the Food Standards Agency.

Members praised the Scores on the Doors Scheme, and the promotion of healthy eating in Schools.

## RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and the Appendix to the report, submitted on the progress with the delivery of service within the Food Service Plan 2009/10 at the half-year stage, be noted.

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### TENANCY AND ESTATE MANAGEMENT

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted updating Members on Tenancy and Estate Management in Housing Services. Tenancy and Estate Management Key Performance Indicators and Case studies of Positive Interventions were appended to the report.

Arising from the presentation of the report, the positive tenancy sustainment scheme was praised together with work of Housing Managers.

In responding to concerns of a Member, relating to gas service checks that were over due for longer than a two year period with no access, the Head of Housing Management North reported that the gas service programme commenced from April each year for a period of ten months during which time referrals were made from the Council's contractors where access to properties was denied, in such cases the Council would pursue enforcement action. He reported that the number of cases with services outstanding for longer than two years were reducing but acknowledged further improvement was required.

A Member recommended that the enforcement action referred to above, should be commenced more timely and raised concerns that a period of two years without a gas service check was excessive.

A Member requested that Tenancy and Estate Management in Housing Services be reported on at a future meeting of the Committee in order that Members could re-evaluate the changes that had been implemented after a further twelve month period.

In responding to a question from a Member the Head of Housing Management North indicated that all housing enquiries would be received by Dudley Council Plus as a first point of contact and addressing ongoing contact with Housing Managers following reports of for instance anti social behaviour problems would continue to be reviewed.

It was further reported that quarterly meetings with Senior Managers take place in order to assess performance and discuss complaints.

A Ward Councillor praised the work of Housing Managers in Lye, Stourbridge and at New Farm.

In responding to a question from Councillor Hanif the Assistant Director Housing Management stated that she would forward to him details of the documentation received by applicants following the submission of an application for housing, and should this information not include details

in relation to Choice Based Lettings, she would ensure that explanatory leaflets were issued in this regard.

A Member repeated a previous request that the possibility of a separate telephone number for elected Members to contact Dudley Council Plus be investigated.

There was general agreement that the first point of contact should be Dudley Council Plus, as this facilitated the navigation of callers to the specific directorate to deal with their enquiries and enabled information to be gathered from one contact point.

A Member indicated that the Housing Officer for the area in question could be contacted in relation to Housing problems.

Members supported the home check visits referred to at paragraph eleven of the report.

In order to clarify the position in relation to the percentage of home check visits over a three year rolling period, the Head of Housing Management North confirmed that this provided a position statement as to how many valid home checks had been carried out thus far, and that checks were conducted every three years upon a rolling basis.

In responding to a question in relation to estate walkabouts it was stated that these were utilised for problem solving rather than problem finding and should Members become aware of problems in particular areas they could contact either the Head of Housing Management North Mr N Collumbell or Mrs M Tebbett, the Head of Housing Management South who would arrange an estate walkabout.

## RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on Tenancy and Estate Management in Housing Services, be noted.
- (2) That the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services be requested to report on Tenancy and Estate Management in Housing at a future meeting of the Committee.
- (3) That the Assistant Director Housing Management be requested to email to Councillor Hanif details of the documentation and information forwarded to applicants following the submission of a Housing Application.

- (4) That the Manager of Dudley Council Plus be requested to contact Councillor Mrs Jordan to advise on the possibility of providing elected Members with a separate telephone number to contact Dudley Council Plus.

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RECYCLING WORKING GROUP.

A report of the Interim Director of Law, Property and Human Resources was submitted on a proposed work programme for 2009/10 for the Recycling Working Group.

RESOLVED

That approval be given to the Work Programme of the Recycling Working Group for 2009/10 as set out in paragraph 2 of the report submitted.

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The meeting ended at 6.50 pm

CHAIRMAN