

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

Monday, 13th November, 2006 at 6 pm
in Committee Room 3, The Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs Cowell (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Turner (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Ms Harris, James, Kettle, Lowe, Stanley and Tomkinson

Officers

Director of Law and Property (as Lead Officer to the Committee),
Assistant Director of Housing, Senior Assistant Director of Finance,
Head of Public Protection, Head of Street Care, Food and Occupational
Safety Manager (Directorate of the Urban Environment) and Mrs M
Johal (Directorate of Law and Property).

22 **APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

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

23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Ms Harris declared a personal interest, in accordance with
the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda Item No 6 (Update
of the Council's Capital Strategy), in view of her being the Chair of
Dudley Primary Care Trust.

24 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18th
September, 2006, be approved as a correct record and
signed.

25 **PUBLIC FORUM**

There were no issues raised by the public under this Agenda Item.

UPDATE OF THE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL STRATEGY

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

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and in the attached draft Capital Strategy, be supported and that no issues be raised to be taken into account when the strategy was considered by full Council.

QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on the performance of the Council in relation to the activities relating to the terms of reference of this Committee for the first quarter of 2006/07, relating to performance for the period 1st April, 2006 to 30th June, 2006.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member referred to the Decent Homes Standard and queried the number of properties the Council owned and how many of those were still awaiting improvement and how long they had to wait. In responding the Assistant Director of Housing reported that a property could fall into non-decency and that there was not a start and finish point. However, she undertook to circulate the required information to all Members of the Committee together with details on the Council's modernisation programme.

A Member referred to private sector abandoned properties and commented that quite a few of these properties existed around the Borough. It was further commented that these properties were an eyesore and an embarrassment and brought the rest of the neighbourhood down and it was requested that the Council should take action. In responding the Assistant Director of Housing reported that the Assistant Director of Housing (Strategy and Private Sector) was involved in the Empty Homes Strategy and she undertook to provide a response together with the above queries. The Director of Law and Property further reported that there were resource issues and it was sometimes difficult to recover money spent on such properties.

In response to a further query, the Head of Street Care undertook to circulate information to all Members of the Committee in relation to statistics regarding the number of litter enforcement cases in the Borough.

A Member referred to Appendix 5 of the report relating to risk No 1312 regarding failure to achieve appropriate allocations for Local Transportation Services and queried whether the matter was an ongoing issue or whether there was a danger that the Council's scheme would not be achieved due to budget issues. The Head of Public Protection undertook to provide a response to the query.

With regard to risk No 1145 relating to the rising costs of the Metro and the increased financial burden on the Council it was requested that a report be submitted to the Committee detailing progress of the Metro project.

During the ensuing discussion Members complained about the inadequate maintenance and cleaning of gullies, which sometimes caused houses to become flooded. Insurance claims could not be pursued because the Insurance companies informed householders that it was the responsibility of the Council. In response the Head of Street Care commented that a high number of calls in relation to blocked gullies were received after flash floods. However, upon investigation it had been found that the gullies were not blocked but that the structural pipe system could not cope due to the amount of water that had fallen. Upon further discussion it was agreed that a further report detailing resource levels, gully maintenance programmes and the change in water patterns should be submitted to the January meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report and Appendices to the report, submitted on the Quarterly Corporate Performance Management report relating to the performance for the activities relevant to the terms of reference of this Committee for the period 1st April, 2006 to 30th June, 2006, be noted.
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Housing be requested to circulate details to all Members of the Committee on the number of properties owned by the Council and how many were still awaiting improvement up to the Decent Homes Standard including the timescales, together with details of the Council's modernisation programme.
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Housing be requested to provide details to all Members of the Committee in relation to private sector abandoned properties and the Council's Empty Homes Strategy.
- (4) That the Head of Street Care be requested to circulate information to all Members of the Committee in relation to statistics regarding the number of litter enforcement cases in the Borough.

- (5) That the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to provide a response to all Members of the Committee on further details and reasons for risk No 1312 regarding failure to achieve appropriate allocations for Local Transportation Services.
- (6) That the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to submit a report to the Committee in due course detailing progress of the Metro project.
- (7) That the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to submit a report to the January meeting of the Committee relating to the number of gullies in the Borough and detailing resource levels, gully maintenance programmes and the change in water patterns.

28

AN UPDATE ON AIR QUALITY IN DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on an update on the current situation with respect to Air Quality.

Arising from the presentation of the report Members commented on the bad air quality in certain parts of the Borough and on the impact it had to the health of people. It was commented that the source of the matter should be tackled, which was due to too many cars being on the road resulting in traffic congestion and gridlocks. Further comments made included the need to review street parking and the amount and type of developments that took place in the area, which also had a knock on effect.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted be noted and that the advantages of the declaration of a whole Borough Air Quality Management Area be endorsed together with support for such a referral to Cabinet for approval.
- (2) That an Air Quality Strategy for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council be prepared and submitted to the Committee in due course.

29

FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2006/2007

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress with the activities detailed in the Directorate of the Urban Environment Food Service Plan 2006/2007.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on the progress with the delivery of service within the Food Service Plan 2006/2007 at the half-year stage, be noted.

30

CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ENVIRONMENT ACT 2005

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the recommendations of the Select Committee on the Environment (Recycling) Working Group in relation to the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act, 2005.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for the Environment be recommended to submit an appropriate press release advertising the new powers for the local authority under the new Act and that enforcement action would be taken.
- (2) That a further report including details of consistency in Fixed Penalty Notice charges be submitted to a future meeting of the Recycling Working Group.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm.

CHAIRMAN