

Time commenced - 6.00 pm
Time finished - 8.30 pm

**PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION
2 SEPTEMBER 2004**

Present: Councillor Ahern (in the Chair)
Councillors Baxter, P Berry, Bolton, Jackman, Leeming,
Rehman, Troup and Willitts

13/04 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies.

14/04 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

15/04 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

16/04 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the following amendments:

Work Plan Topics – Minute Number 12/04 refers

To amend the wording of the third bullet point to read ‘trimming of trees and bushes.’

17/04 Call-In

There were no call-ins.

18/04 PFI Funding for Waste Treatment Facilities

The Commission considered a briefing on the use of PFI funding for waste treatment facilities, from Colin Stewart, Contract Development Officer. Colin explained that in 2003/04, the Council dealt with 118,000 tonnes of waste. 9,600 tonnes was from kerbside collections and bank sites that was recycled. Kerbside collections of compost amounted to 1,050 tonnes. The civic amenity site recycled and composted 4,700 tonnes, 55 tonnes was incinerated (clinical waste), rubble amounted to 2,650 tonnes and the total to land fill was 100,400 tonnes. £3.8million was paid for landfill, at a rate of £38 per tonne of which £18/tonne was tax. All landfill was sent to Nottinghamshire as there was no landfill capacity in Southern Derbyshire.

Government targets were to recycle 22% by 2003/04. Derby had achieved 17% - 5% below target. The target for 2005/06 was to recycle 33% of waste. Colin went on to describe Derby's achievements in recycling, including the establishment of a recycling plan and the introduction of re-think rubbish.

The Panel were advised of landfill allowances for the next 15 years which reduced considerably over the period. There would be a significant amount of waste over the next 15 years that needed to be diverted away from landfill.

Colin gave the Commission a forecast of how expensive the treatment of an increasing amount of waste each year would cost to meet the targets set by the government. He explained that the Council had the following choices:

- to collect more separated waste for recycling and composting
- work with our neighbours to effect economies
- let a simple treatment contract that will meet our targets
- find a source of funding – PFI.

He then went on to identify the potential value / drawbacks of a PFI scheme:

- the Council had applied with the County for £30 million of credit
- the annual benefit to the city would be £300,000 a year for 25 years
- the Council would be locked into a contract for 25 years
- it will be difficult and expensive to change
- it would not be responsive to new technology.

Councillor Leeming stated that a 25 year contract seemed a bad idea, as it would be difficult to get out if something went wrong. Colin advised the Commission that this type of project was working in Leicestershire, and it was successful in other councils around the country.

Councillor Baxter commented that the government should investigate reducing the contract length to something more reasonable, as the Council did not want to be stuck with something that was wrong for 25 years.

Councillor Willitts asked why the government did not legislate against the packaging industry, as they were the ones who created this waste and the authority should approach the government on this issue.

Resolved to note the report.

19/04 Street Cleaning Services

The Commission received a briefing on street cleaning services, from Colin Stewart, Contract Development Officer. Colin advised that the current tender for street cleaning services was ten years old, the specification for which was based on a Code of Practice dated 1991. The level of cleaning had been cut substantially in the 1997/98 budgets and the contractor had not been paid the inflation payments to which he was entitled. The Council now needed to comply with the new Code of Practice dated 1999, by reinstating the service cuts to cover leaf fall removal, the correct frequencies of cleaning and the cleaning of 'relevant land'. This would be achieved by a more joined up working between different departments and sections. Colin detailed which aspects of street cleaning were included in the contract and how the work was specified. Colin advised that special services were also included which were gully cleaning, collection of needles, provision of labour for the Neat project, washing multi-storey car parks and washing bus shelters. Issues regarding relevant land needed to be resolved. Relevant land was land owned by the Council but administered by different departments and should be cleaned along with the general highway cleaning.

Councillor Baxter commented that street cleaning was not carried out to an acceptable standard and all services that had been cut should be reinstated as soon as possible. This was supposed to be a combined council and the management had the ability to look at joined up working so that relevant land issues should not come up. Unless departments started working together, the Council would not get anywhere with improving its street cleaning.

Resolved to note the report.

20/04 Contaminated Land Strategy

The Commission received a briefing from Julian de Mowbray, Group Leader – Pollution Control, about the Contaminated Land Strategy. The Commission were advised that contaminated land was land where substances in or under the land meant that it was actually or potentially hazardous to health or the environment. Land was contaminated through industry, agriculture, atmospheric pollutants and landfills. Contaminated land was a hazard to land users, it damaged vegetation, polluted water courses, caused corrosion and there could be a risk of explosion or fire. The Council inspected areas from time to time to identify any land that fit the trigger for the definition of contaminated land. The Council published a contaminated land strategy and it was the Council's role to ensure that any land identified as contaminated land was remediated. So far, there were no sites listed on the public register. 1,450 potentially contaminated sites had been identified and were recorded on the GIS database. The database would be completed by the end of 2004. The Council would continue to work with developers to ensure site remediation through the planning process. Sites on the database would be prioritised for further detailed investigation.

Resolved to note the report.

21/04 Grass Cutting

The Commission received an update on grass cutting following the Commission's Topic Review of Grass Cutting in Derby. Ian Wheatley, Grounds Maintenance Manager, advised the Commission that the Council had produced a grass cutting service explanatory leaflet that had been available since April 2004 and was available in all Council buildings. A grass cutting hotline was set up in April 2004 and publicised in the leaflet. Calls were logged and an analysis was carried out – the main complaint being that grass was not cut properly due to poor reinstatement work by utility / ground work contractors, or on lands that had not been adopted by the Council for example.

Councillor Ahern stated that an enormous amount of work had gone into this year and last and wish to thank Geoff Hall and his team for their hard work.

22/04 Environmental Policy Workshop

Andy Hills, Environmental Co-ordinator, advised the Commission that the Environmental Policy was first adopted in 1998 and provided a starting point for Environmental Standards. The policy was being reviewed, as there had been many changes in environmental issues and legislation since the policy was adopted. The draft policy would be available in October for consultation and the policy would be formerly adopted in the new year.

Councillor Ahern stated that the Commission were in full support of the review of the environmental policy and suggested forming a working group to look at the issues in more detail.

Resolved to arrange a meeting for 6pm on Thursday 16 September to discuss the environmental policy in more detail.

23/04 Forward Plan

Members identified the following items from the Council Cabinet Forward Plan for consideration at a future meeting:

Ref	Decision Matter
177/03	Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance City Scope - update

Matters referred to the Commission by Council Cabinet

24/04 Development Control Action Plan

The Commission considered a report on the Development Control Action Plan considered by Council Cabinet on 10 August 2004. Mike Kaye, Assistant Director –

Development, advised the Commission that Development Control operated mainly through professional staff in the Development Control and Land Searches section of Development and Cultural Services. Meeting government targets with Planning Authority Performance and the criteria in which the planning delivery grant was and would be based, involved other aspects of the development division and a host of internal customers and stakeholders throughout the Council. Service had improved in a range of areas including teams dealing with the local development frameworks design policy, heritage protection and transportation advice. For the early stages of the planning delivery grant, they concentrated on raising the performance of existing staff, with some effect on performance figures, but with some areas still behind government targets. Mike advised the Commission that there would shortly be two new Case Officers and one Customer Care Officer joining the Planning Team. He also advised that by the end of December they would have completed 80% of the work for e-delivery. Councillor Ahern asked if the increase in staff would be sufficient to deal with the increased workload. Mike responded that it would make more sense to report back to a future meeting to let the Commission know how the improvements were developing.

Resolved:

- 1. To note the report.**
- 2. To request an update report in a years time.**

25/04 Work Plan

The Commission received scoping reports on the two review topics for 2004/05. The first being the Review of Enforcement of the Dog Fouling Legislation and the second, a Review of the Tree Management Policy. David Romaine suggested that the Commission may want to consider the Tree Management Policy because of the increased risk posed to trees by gales in the winter months. The Commission agreed to this recommendation.

Resolved to note the scoping reports.

Minutes End