



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

## COUNCIL CABINET 27 APRIL 2004

### Report of the Community Regeneration Commission

#### Social Inclusion and the Physical Environment

#### RECOMMENDATION

To reconsider the Council Cabinet response to recommendation 9 in the Commission's report *Social Inclusion and the Physical Environment*.

#### REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 On 16 March 2004 Council Cabinet received comments from the Community Regeneration Commission on Cabinet's response to the Commission's report *Social Inclusion and the Physical Environment*. On 16 March Cabinet resolved to confirm its original response to the Commission's recommendations 9 and 10. However, the offer was made to the Commission to re-examine the issue if specific examples of a lack of joined up working were brought to Cabinet's attention.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 29 March 2004 the Commission agreed to make a further submission. Appendix Two comprises extracts of the evidence from which the topic review report was derived.
- 2.3 Recommendation 9 is that a Physical Environment Committee be created, comprising those portfolio holders responsible for land to achieve a co-ordinated approach and convergence of standards. The Commission believe this is amply justified by Appendix Two below.

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**Background papers:** None

**List of appendices:** 1

Implications 2 The submission

#### Appendix 1

#### IMPLICATIONS

**Financial** None directly from this report.

**Legal** None directly from this report.

**Personnel** None directly from this report.

**Corporate Objectives and Priorities for Change**

The topic review recommendations can help deliver five of the seven *Corporate Objectives*:  
• strong and positive neighbourhoods • protecting and supporting people • a healthy environment • shops, commercial and leisure activities • integrated, cost effective services and six of the ten *Priorities for change*: 1. Minimise increases in Council Tax and increase value for money from Council services. 2. Tackle under-achievement in schools, in particular by helping schools come out of special measures or serious weakness and preventing other schools entering these categories 3. Promote the city as a major force for industry, commerce, culture and tourism throughout the country and as an equal participant within the East Midlands region. 5. Develop an integrated management system of the city and district centres to improve their attractiveness and viability. 8. Enhance the community leadership role of the Council both at strategic and neighbourhood level, through partnership working and listening to, and communicating, with the public. 9. Respond to people's needs appropriately, on time and first time, by developing a customer-focused culture, using new technology and investing in the Council's buildings to provide modern working environments for service delivery and employees.

## Appendix Two

**Joined up working improvement opportunities - the reasoning for recommendation 9 and the related recommendation 10 in the Commission's report *Social Inclusion and the Physical Environment*.**

### Introduction

The Commission wish to emphasise the need for joined up action to keep the Physical Environment clean and tidy. A whole area approach is needed to clear litter, tidy grass verges and shrubberies and clear litter from the banks of any watercourses in public view irrespective of which department owns the particular parcels of land. Examples where members saw this was not happening included the brook at Sunnyhill re-cycling centre, and the Derwent at the River Gardens. The Commission believe this requires continuing political will.

Political ownership might overcome problems with other agencies. For example, in Blagreaves new lamp posts were installed almost a year ago but when Councillor Crosby last checked they were still not connected to the electricity supply. The Council street lighting section is not allowed to do this as only the electricity company can deal with connections.

### Extracts from the evidence.

The page numbers below are to the bundle containing the minutes of proceedings of meetings beginning 8 January to 25 February 2003.

- **The main cause of the recommendation 9 and related recommendation 10**

**8 January 2003 – first scene setting meeting with DCS reps followed by a walking tour of the City Centre**

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“Development and Cultural Services are responsible for the highways, meaning curtilage to curtilage, and for public footpaths but not the land to the sides. Other council owned land is variously the responsibility of parks, housing, education and estates. This division is confusing to the public. Different departments carried out their responsibilities to varying standards. As the EPA is applied equally to all public space that would suggest that areas should be cleaned to the same standards but this is not the case in practice. For example Riverside Gardens are cleaned to lower standards and/or at lower frequency than the adjacent areas for which highways are responsible”.

“Because highways do operate to high standards that can have the effect of making other departments’ areas stand out in contrast. In answer to a question, it was explained that in individual departmental responsibility for their land resulted in highways being restricted in speaking to those departments: such as, there is no supervisory role. Councillor Blanksby commented that it sounded as if an environment authority was needed to pull the strands together. Nigel Shearer responded that the recent Best Value Review had recommended moving to a street care service. Currently different departments cleaned at different times to different standards in the same area, which did not make any sense. The aim should be to have parks, for example, to clear their areas to the same standards as highways. Nigel Shearer added that the CCT regime had had the effect of limiting a service to certain costs and standards. From the public perception however, it was all seen as ‘the Council’.”

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“The officers favoured having one inspector to look at a street scene, avoiding the ‘imaginary fence’ attitude of ‘that’s housing land, so nothing to do with me’. They hoped that approval could be worked in through the regeneration agenda”.

“There had not been sufficient integrated thinking about improving local environments. A street might have been resurfaced but the local residents say ‘it is still terrible here’. The current year’s underspend was therefore being directed toward a whole street scene approach. Effectively telling local people that the Council does care about the area”.

#### **14 January 2003 – minibus tour: whole write up**

Page 6 to 7

“At Hartington Street, Members were taken to the rear access of buildings on both sides of the road. At one location were a sizeable number of hypodermic needles used by drug takers; officers explained that several hundred had on one occasion been removed from locations off Hartington Street. There were also sites where rubbish and/or furniture had been fly-tipped on the alleyways or were left within the curtilage of the property. Unlike disused white goods, for which there was a free collection service, there was a charge for removal of old furniture this may be a contributory factor to such dumping or abandonment.

At Sinfin, Members walked around part of the newer estate and saw varying levels of litter in gardens, on communal areas and adjacent to the main pathways. There were instances where solid make litter bins discouraged use because paintwork had eroded and/or verdigris was apparent. At an underpass it was noted that murals tend to discourage graffiti. A local community shop looked to be successful but was protected by high levels of security, which therefore, made the surrounding area appear insecure.

At Sunnyhill post office and bus pull-in, glass was missing from the bus shelter; the remaining sheets had a name graffitied on them. The brook to the rear had considerable litter on both the banks and in the water itself, a number of objects had also been thrown into the brook. There are recycling bins at the location and Richard Winter confirmed that when replaced the contractors should tidy the area to remove loose rubbish etc.

The journey back toward the city centre included a visit to a location in Sinfin Lane which is regularly the scene of fly-tipping; the Browning Circle on the Austin Estate suffered from abandoned cars and the number of closed shop premises was notable.

At the city centre, Members visited the headquarters of the highways and waste functions at Saxon house. The Administration Manager, Sue Baker, explained the public hotline system for reporting problems. Sue Baker described the process by which problems are dealt with to completion, or as appropriate, referred to other departments. Sue Baker, Nigel Shearer and Richard Winters answered a number of questions posed by Members”.

- **Other information**

## **21 Jan 2003 – interview with a resident of Old Sinfin**

Page 8

“Cllr Blanksby opened the meeting by explaining that the Commission were gathering information about Social Inclusion and the Physical Environment. He asked Mrs Mainwaring what problems she had encountered on her estate.

Mrs Mainwaring reported that two cars were abandoned a few weeks ago. The back window was smashed and the tyres were let down before it was taken away. She has been living in the local estate since 1973 and she has seen it go downhill in that time. She thinks it is due to the kind of people who have moved in. The new tenants do not look after their gardens today especially the younger ones. H Street is one of the worst streets in the local estate as there is more litter there.

Mrs Mainwaring reported that a number of bus shelters had been smashed a few times in the past. She thinks the damage has been done by older teenagers when they are coming home from the pub. The Council keep trying to keep the area tidy”.

Page 8 and 9

“Cllr Blanksby asked her if she had seen any graffiti in the area. Mrs Mainwaring said that she had seen graffiti in the new part of the local estate. Cllr Blanksby asked her if people knew where to go to report problems such as litter, breakages or graffiti and Mrs Mainwaring said she did not think that people know where to go to report things. There was a burnt out car outside the ‘Modern’ Centre and it was there a long time.

Cllr Crosby asked her if she thought a leaflet telling people where to report problems would be a good idea. Mrs Mainwaring said that she thought it would be a good idea”.

Page 9 and 10

“Cllr Blanksby asked her if large items, such as fridges, cookers etc were left in gardens. Mrs Mainwaring said that it would be helpful if there was a scheme to take these items

away because at the moment it costs £5 to take one item away and £15 to take a few items away. She is not sure whether there is a concession for people on benefits. Mrs Mainwaring said that her daughter was a single parent with five children and she cannot afford to pay for large items to be taken away”.

## **28 Jan 2003 – Ethnic minority reps #1**

Page 17

“In the Cavendish area there have been burnt out cars left in the streets car parks. Things like old beds are being left in these places. Bins are being left full of rubbish. These topics cover all areas and not just the poorer areas. Everybody has the same needs and everybody wants the environment looking after. He [one of the witnesses] has never seen anyone on drugs in Mackworth but he does hear of it”.

Page 21

“Canon Macdonald [co-opted member] said that sadly the West Indian community have been subject to racial harassment for many years. He asked what in your experience has made things better?

Mr Hussain said that it has to be a multi agency responsibility. Young people need to be educated at an early age. That is the way forward. At the moment the multi agencies do not respond and do not communicate with each other”.

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“Councillor Dhamrait said he lives in Burton Road which is a brilliant area. He used to live in Allenton where people knock on doors and do it for fun. They burnt the bus shelter and telephone boxes. They need to be more educated while they are in school. There is a lack of amenities and facilities for young people. The Youth Club may not start until 8 o’clock. It is difficult to please young people. The police response is very poor especially on robberies. They do not come until the next day. There should be some support.”

Page 25

“Councillor Crosby said she agreed with Mr Kazmi about there being a lack of resources for young people. They are criticised for skate boarding in the city centre so why don’t they provide a skate boarding area on Bass Recreation ground where they can skate board legitimately? When I was young there was a roller skating rink. Now we have a roller skating rink but it is a long way out of town and difficult to get to. Mr Mighty said you ask the young people what they want and they tell you but the council do not do anything about it. Mr Kevric said that some of the activities available are expensive. Councillor Crosby said the facilities should be free or that should be a minimal charge.”

## **18 February 2003 – Ethnic minority reps #2**

Page 36

“Councillor Dhamrait stated that he used to live in Normanton and had recently moved to Burton Road. He reported that he knew of a broken bus shelter in Littleover and suspected that there were bored youths everywhere.

Mr Khan said that Mickleover, Littleover and Allestree were not deprived and that the major problem is in deprived areas.

Councillor Blanksby then asked about the physical environment. Area the Council are keeping clean and re-cycling.

Mr Guru said that the recent introduction for collection of big items was helpful but was only available for residential owners, it should also be made available for commercial properties as well. Streets and roads are a lot better than they were but not up to standard. Asylum seekers are not following the rules and regulations of this country and are not keeping up their properties to standard. Rubbish is in bags in the streets which should be clean. The car park is full of rubbish at the Indian Community Centre. Dog sh\*t is everywhere and this practice should be stopped and need special attention. The streets are not up to standard; dog owners should take a bag for the mess. Street cleaning is needed. There is graffiti at the Indian Community Centre and swear words on buildings and many places including bus stops and bus stands. Who is stopping this? He knows the Police cannot be there 24 hours a day."

Page 37

"Mr Kazmi [co-opted member] then raised the question of unoccupied houses.

Mr Khan said that asylum seekers are coming into Peartree and Normanton from all ends and surprised the Community. All vacant houses are occupied under a Home Office scheme. There are hostels in the area where there are people just out of prison who are taking drugs. We need to be aware of who is living in the community who is there e.g. sex offender. There needs to be a Neighbourhood Watch. Also there is Walbrook Housing Association with unknown occupants."

## **18 February 2003 – Youth Service**

Page 45

"Mr Kazmi referred back to the taxi-stand near the Space Youth centre. As the current placing of taxi rank was causing problems he suggested that it be moved to nearer the DRI. The problem is that most taxi drivers are Asians and in consequence Asian youths and girls are reluctant to use the Club."

### **Extracts from the report to Council Cabinet.**

Page 39 to 41 – the whole of paragraphs 15.7 to 15.13 are reproduced to give necessary context. **Key phrases are highlighted.**

15.7 The allocation of a council house for a local community base in Earl Shilton caused members to consider the current use and potential scope for similar uses in Derby. **A number have been given over to organisations but as they are concentrated on one area this suggests that there is no strategy for doing so.** The leasers include statutory or training agencies and, currently, there is no replication by officialdom of the Earl Shilton model. On 25 March Cllr Blanksby visited two such (ex-)council houses and then a local estate office.

#### **Box 6: The Vice Chair's tour**

Osmaston Community Association, a longstanding local residents group, ran the first house visited by Councillor Blanksby. The group's volunteers gave advice and assistance to individuals over a diverse range of issues, including dealings with both the Benefits Agency and the City Council's housing benefits section. The two stalwarts seemed quite stoical about the recently received news that the organisation's modest grant of £2,500 (approximately) toward running costs was to cease. Councillor Blanksby heard this was not because the group had been judged to fail the new quality standards but, instead, because the application documents had been lost so could not be processed in time. Without having the benefits of the more direct links to officialdom created for Earl Shilton, this Osmaston group seemed to carry the trust of the local community. As regards anti-social behaviour this trust may well have prevented the area from declining to the extent experienced elsewhere. Councillor Blanksby considered this an "excellent" drop-in centre

The second visit was to St Bartholomew's Community Initiative that had one (ex-)council house as an office base and had also acquired a pair of semi-detached council houses for activities. The mainstay was the local vicar who had been in post for 25 years. He and the stalwarts from Osmaston shared a longevity of living in their areas and also shared a very similar scepticism, born of experience, about local residents missing out on some area-funded schemes and not actually benefiting from the successful bids. The shared feeling was that locals did not get many of the newly created jobs and that the outside people and agencies left as soon as the funding dried up. There was also the example cited, at Osmaston, of a long-standing summer play scheme being lost by the sudden availability of external funds to another group because the latter could afford to pay higher rental charges.

The above suggests a lack of *embedding* in the local community by agencies whose activities are the results of external bidding *and a lack of co-ordination and communication with the permanent agencies/groups*. A further example of this arose during the visit to the Old Sinfin housing office. A leased out council house had the proud banner of a local regeneration trust but, it was learned, despite being equipped with computers in the autumn it had been unused since the turn of the year. *Only vague reasons had been given to the estate office and local police officer*. Perhaps low expectations by local people are warranted and avoid disappointment.

- 15.8 The final strand to Cllr Blanksby's tour was to the Old Sinfin local housing office where he met Wendy Jessop and PC Letti Ramwell, both of whose names had come up during the 21 January interview with a resident from Old Sinfin. Close working by the housing manager and the local constable over 18 months was clearly turning the area around. The number of burglaries, abandoned cars, incidents of graffiti and other anti-social behaviour had plummeted. New brighter streetlights had ended the gloom and compromised the freedom of burglars and vandals to act undetected. New fencing was overcoming a particular estate design problem that had aided burglaries. Anti-social behaviour now resulted in warnings and a joint visit from the estate manager and police officer. There was the back up of sanctions, ultimately including the prospect of eviction for recidivism.
- 15.9 The "carrots" were equally part of the turn round, with a new prestige play area shortly to be installed and mayoral recognition for local school children's' choir. This model offers a variant to Earl Shilton in that community engagement and ownership is seen as a dividend not a prerequisite. Without wanting to detract from what is being achieved in Old Sinfin, it clearly revolves around the personality and commitment of the two key individuals.
- 15.10 To use that new addition to the public sector lexicon, the need is to mainstream these types of approaches so that good work survives the changes in personnel that come through eg promotion and retirement and is instigated in the other neighbourhoods for the benefit of residents. This will only be achieved if there is, firstly, organisational commitment, given from the apex of the management structure of a function. Secondly, for all posts at the interface between a particular public service and the public it exists to serve, the necessary skills need to be specified as essential qualifications for appointment. Such a change in orientation probably means an insufficient supply of appropriately skilled junior and middle managers, so the need is to grow our own through in-house training and encourage other linked agencies to do the same.
- 15.11 The Commission believes that the successful examples of working described in this section need adopting, or adapting for, elsewhere in Derby.
- 15.12 Readers of this report may think that that Box 6 appears to stray from the problems covered by the review into commentary on wider regeneration issues. The link is about tackling the causes of anti-social behaviour by recreation of pride in a locality, such that its residents feel motivated to demand anti-social behaviour should cease. Engendering that pride is not helped if external agencies fail to demonstrate loyalty to the residents in the only way that matters – by delivering during the life of the funding stream on the promises made. There is also evidence of alienation caused by the withdrawal of agencies upon the funding stream ceasing. The Commission therefore consider that an exit strategy needs to be thought through at the outset of time-limited area funding. This should identify i) the elements that will become self-sustaining by the end of the scheme, ii) the sources of alternative funding for the long term aspects not likely to be self sustaining and iii) transparency about the elements that will cease with the funding.
- 15.13 The narrative at Box 6 shows a worrying lack of communication between community groups, regeneration agencies and local council functions. Local co-ordination therefore also needs to improve the information loop. A connected recommendation has been made at paragraph 10.5 [this and the whole of Chapter 10 was reproduced in the Commission's report to 16 March 2004 meeting of Council Cabinet].