

Environment & Regeneration Select Committee

A meeting of Environment & Regeneration Select Committee was held on Monday, 11th September, 2006.

Present: Cllr Mrs J Beaumont (Chairman), Cllr D Cains, Cllr J A Fletcher, Cllr Mrs B Robinson, Cllr F G Salt, Cllr B Woodhead.

Officers: P K Bell, S Connolly (LD); A Bryson, B Buckley, M Robinson (DNS).

Also in attendance: No other persons in attendance.

Apologies: Cllr Larkin, Cllr Leckonby, Cllr Noble, Cllr Mrs Norton, Cllr Smith, Cllr Teasdale and Cllr Walmsley.

581 Minutes of the meetings held on 3rd and 24th July 2006 to be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The minutes of the meetings held on 3rd and 24th July were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

582 Draft minutes of the meeting held on 22nd August 2006.

Consideration was given to the content of the draft minutes from the meeting held on 22nd August 2006.

CONCLUDED that the draft minutes be forwarded to Council for consideration.

583 Review of Street Lighting – To take evidence from the following witness:-

The Chair welcomed Mr A Bryson (Finance Officer - Resources). Mr A Bryson had been invited to attend the Committee to give evidence with regard the finance arrangements for the Authority's Street Lighting. Mr B Buckley and Mr M Robinson were also in attendance at the meeting to help answer any question and to give further background information.

Mr A Bryson outlined that the Street Lighting Service sat within the Engineers and Transportation Division of the Development and Neighbourhood Service Group. The current revenue operational budgets for 2006/07 were detailed by Mr A Bryson and are shown below. The 2005/06 budgets are also shown for comparison purposes

	2005/06	2006/07
Repairs and Maintenance St Lighting	£490,424	£495,328
Repairs and Maintenance Obsolete Columns	£287,747	
£290,624		
Electricity Charges		£730,065
£1,168,065		

In addition to the above revenue budgets there was also a capital allocation of £242,000 in 2006/07 for replacement columns. The funding was from the Local Transport Plan.

Due to the general increase in the cost of electricity Members were informed that from the above figures that electricity charges had budgeted to increase £438,000 (60%) in the 2006/07 financial year. A headroom bid of £400,000 was approved as part of the 2006/07 budget setting process to offset the majority of the increase.

It was also anticipated that electricity charges would further increase by 20% per year compounded for 2007/8 and 2008/9. The current Engineers Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) had electricity budgets of £1,401,678 (2007/8) and £1,682,014 (2008/9). Resources had not yet been identified in the MTFP to cover the additional increase.

A sustainable solution would be required on the future policy regarding the delivery of street lighting services. This could be solved by using different options including;

- 1) Operating Lease
- 2) PFI
- 3) Prudential Borrowing
- 4) Capital / Funding Bids (e.g. NRF)

Full appraisals / business cases would need to be carried out on each of the options to identify which would best achieve the objectives of this review.

Members were informed that the different options would take a lot of work to cost up and Officers would need a decision on the different options before the costing took place.

Mr B Buckley informed Members that a report had been taken to the Cabinet Member to ask for approval for Capital Allocation to renew the oldest and most inefficient lighting columns.

It was outlined that Officers would be commencing a data verification of stock for the Governments Condition Index. Funding through the Local Transport Plan would be assigned on this basis. The funding would be an unknown factor until around December 2007.

With regard the NEDL maintenance it was reported that NEDL would providing a dedicated resource to tackle the backlog in the Stockton area.

Members discussed the issue of turning down/off certain lamps in low residential areas and during hours of low public activity. Members felt that this should be investigated further and that the Scrutiny Officer should try and obtain any evidence from any other Council that had this in place or had trialled similar schemes.

CONCLUDED that the evidence provided by Officers be noted.