

Information/Discussion Paper

Social & Community Overview & Scrutiny - 11th July 2005

Strategy for contaminated land inspection

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 In common with other local authorities in UK, Cheltenham has a variety of sites where there is residual pollution of land from previous uses. The council has had a duty since 2001 to investigate such contaminated land. Due to the large amount of brownfield land redevelopment taking place in Cheltenham, work to investigate other sites has not kept to the initial prediction of completion by December 2005.

2. Summary of the Issue

- 2.1 Cheltenham Borough Council adopted a "Strategy for contaminated land inspection" in 2001 and uses a risk-based approach to the identification and clean up of land where contamination poses an unacceptable risk to human health or the environment. Cheltenham has an estimated 615 sites that have been identified in the borough where there may be land contamination.

3. Summary of evidence/information

- 3.1 "Contaminated land" is a term used to describe land that is or may be polluted by unnatural substances remaining from previous use. Such sites are addressed by redevelopment to a new use or by survey work to assess if there is a residual pollution risk.
- 3.2 When the council's contaminated land strategy was published in 2001, it envisaged that this survey work would be completed by December 2005. Given the large numbers of brownfield sites since redeveloped in town, the reality has been that most of the contaminated land officer's time has been taken up with such redevelopment work. This is desirable for sustainable development as brownfield sites are reused and developers bear the costs of any necessary remediation
- 3.3 This redevelopment demand however has eroded the officer's capacity to progress the parallel survey work. At present we have completed the assessment of 60 sites in town and anticipate doing a further 50 in the next year. National guidance is that the most problematic sites are examined first as they represent the largest risk to the environment. We follow this guidance, but these sites are the most time consuming. In due course, less problematic sites should be resolved more quickly. Considering the workload and resources available, the revised estimate is that survey work

should be completed by December 2010.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1** A recommendation will be taken to Cabinet that the council's "Strategy for contaminated land inspection 2001" be amended so that the inspection and assessment of all potentially contaminated sites be rescheduled for completion by December 2010.

Background Papers	"Strategy for contaminated land inspection 2001"
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