

Central Dudley Area Committee - 8th September, 2009

Report of the Area Liaison Officer

Matters Raised at the Meeting of the Committee held on 9th June, 2009 other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment

Purpose of Report

1. To note progress on issues raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 9th June, 2009, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

Background

2. The issues set out in paragraphs 3 to 5 (inclusive) below were raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 9th June, 2009, progress on which is as follows:

- 3 **Petition regarding Post Office at Russells Hall**

A petition was presented by Councillor M Davis relating to application for a Premises Licence in respect of the above Post Office and which also requested action to be taken regarding allegations of anti-social behaviour by persons congregating in the area of the Post Office.

Insofar as the Premises Licence is concerned, the Licensing Officer has written to Councillor Davis to remind him of an e-mail sent by her to him on 29th April, 2009 stating that the closing date for objections to the application for the Licence was 12th May, 2009. The Licensing Officer indicated further that, as no objections had been received by the closing date, the Licence was issued. The petition has therefore been marked as out of time and a copy retained on file.

The petition also referred to problems of clutter outside the Post Office, and this issue was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for attention. Progress in relation to that issue is being reported in the report of that Director on feedback on the issues raised in respect of concerning the Directorate.

4. **Leaseholders' Management Fee**

Attention to the substantial rise in the Management Fee charged to Leaseholders of Council premises was raised at the last meeting of the Committee. The Head of Housing Management has responded as follows: -

The Council has an obligation as set out in the standard leaseholder agreement to recover a fair proportion of costs and expenses resulting from the management of their leases.

An audit of the leaseholder service in 2007 identified the need to undertake a review of leaseholder charges. DMBC had historically charged 10% of the leaseholder's annual service charge as its management fee and it was apparent from the audit that this income was significantly lower than the cost of providing the service. This meant that Council tenants were effectively subsidising this service through their rent payments.

A review was undertaken in 2008 as recommended by Audit. The identifiable costs of providing services to leaseholders, which includes the costs of collating and processing their invoices, dealing with enquiries and complaints and managing and consulting on maintenance work, was £94,700.

A decision was taken to apportion costs at a flat rate to all leaseholders which has resulted in the £100 management fee that has been applied for 2009/10.

Leaseholders were notified in writing of the proposed changes to the leasehold management fee in February 2009 and the new charges were implemented with effect from April 1 2009.

This charge will be reviewed annually and will be amended to reflect the amount of staff time spent on the management of the service.

5. Anti-Social Behaviour and Under Age Drinking Issues

A comment was made by a Member at the last meeting as plans should be put in place to counter problems of anti-social behaviour and under age drinking. There are, in fact, three Plans currently in operation for this purpose, as follows, and details of the issues being investigated by the Dudley Community Partnership are set out in each respective Plan, copies of which may be obtained on request to Democratic Services in the Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources (attention Richard Sanders on extension 5236 or by e mail to richard.sanders@dudley.gov.uk). The respective Plans relate to the following:

- Public perceptions of anti-social behaviour
- Reducing substance misuse amongst young people
- Young Persons' substance misuse Plan

In identifying four wards in the Borough in 2009 where there were high perceptions or a high number of incidents of anti-social behaviour, St Thomas's was identified as the key area in the Central Dudley area. Crime Reduction Partnership Analysts have undertaken a "simple to start" exercise in each of the four areas identified identifying the prime locations for anti-social behaviour with a youth qualifier and also for litter/rubbish. Locally based problem solving groups will then convene to interpret basic data and to devise a local action plan. Rather than to re-invent the wheel, this will be done through existing Neighbourhood Services Groups on to which other local groups and elected Members can be linked. Crime reduction organisations would convene these but support will be given by the Council's Anti-social Behaviour Unit Manager who will attend

meetings and help organisations to become focussed and running. It is not proposed that personalised data or intelligence will be shared at this stage and strict confidentiality clauses will pertain, as it does to the Joint Advisory Group.

In the case of St Thomas's Ward, the Community Renewal Manager, Sue McGavin, will convene the group and the possibility of a Beat Sweep type initiative within this will be explored.

Finance

6. This report has no direct financial implications.

Law

7. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council is empowered to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or conducive to, or incidental to the discharge of its function.

Equality Impact

8. This report complies with the policies of the Council on Equality and Diversity.
9. Children and young people have not been consulted on the preparation of this report, as report seeks only to note progress on issues raised at its previous meetings.

Recommendations

10. That the information above be noted.



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AREA LIAISON OFFICER

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List of Background Papers