

**Central Area Committee - 16th November 2010**

**Report of the Interim Director of Adult Social Services**

**Community Renewal Working Group**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To update the Committee on the progress to date of the Working Group and monitoring of the Central Dudley Area Committee Community Renewal Plan.

**Background**

2. The establishment of the Central Dudley Area Committee Community Renewal Working Group was approved by Central Dudley Area Committee at their meeting in July 2008.
3. The Working Group met on three occasions during the municipal year 2008/09 and three times during 2009/10, to develop and monitor the Area Community Renewal plan for Central Dudley.  
At each of the working group meetings the community renewal plan was considered and noted with further activities added where appropriate  
It was agreed that Central Dudley Neighbourhood Services Group be established to bring service providers together to address issues raised as community priorities in Central area in a more coordinated and effective way.
4. At the Central Dudley Area Committee on 8th June 2010 it was resolved that the Central Dudley Area Committee Community Renewal Working Group be reappointed for the municipal year 2010/11 with its existing terms of reference and that the working group comprise the Chairman, Councillors K. Finch and J. Martin ; Councillors Waltho , Cotteril and M. Davies have since joined the working group
5. The Working Group met on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2010 and again on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010.  
It was resolved that Councillor Ahmed be elected as Chairman of the Working Group for the ensuing 2010/2011 Municipal Year.
6. The area committee did not receive a working group report at its last meeting and an update on community renewal activities from the previous plan was circulated to all members in the form of a briefing note. This is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

**Report from Working Group**

7. In considering the effectiveness of the Area Community Renewal Plan, the Working Group took the preliminary view that, rather than establishing a list of

issues that would be unlikely to be proceeded with, given the level of resources available, the Community Renewal Plan should concentrate on a small number of achievable issues, which could then be developed realistically and implemented.

8. The working group agreed to focus its activities on
  - A co-ordinated approach to derelict and abandoned land sites within neighbourhoods, especially sites of under 0.2 hectares.
  - Working with the Youth Service and partners to develop a youth offer for Central area that meets the needs of its Young People and community
  - Healthy Activities –working with partners to improve the health of people in central area including encouraging physical activity and healthy life style
  - Stronger communities –(1) engaging and involving local people and groups in developing activities to meet the needs of their communities either independently or in a shared way with services. (2) Working with community centres to meet the needs of its communities.
  - Removing the barriers to work and employment and creating the conditions with individuals and communities to enable them to take up economic and enterprising opportunities - the majority of the work on this takes place through the ward based Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Partnerships and the working group agreed to receive updates on activity in this area of work rather than carry out detailed monitoring through the plan.
9. Arising from a discussion about private housing conditions in central area in the Edwards Street, Nelson Road area, it was resolved that the Head of Private Sector Housing be invited to attend the working group to update and inform the working group on the current position regarding private sector housing and the support and advice offered to landlords and tenants
10. The Head of Private Sector Housing outlined the Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme which recognises and promotes good landlords who provide tenants with good quality and safe accommodation. Five training courses had been held so far in Dudley, each for 10-15 landlords. Landlords were strongly advised to attend these training courses with an incentive being that if they were accredited, their properties would be included on the Council's approved lists which were likely to be viewed by prospective tenants. Landlords would also have security and support from the Council's housing advice team in dealing with landlords/tenants law and associated legal issues, for example dealing with anti-social behaviour tenants via the landlord dispute arbitration service. Tenants also had the added benefit of knowing they were renting from an approved landlord and could also take advantage of the advice service offered to tenants.

### **Completions and Activities**

11. Activities undertaken and completed in the previous working group are attached at Appendix 2

## Environment

12.

In St James ward, a residents' survey of the Edwards Street, Nelson Road, Alexander Street area has been carried out by the Area Community Renewal Officer for St James/St Thomas' with a team of Future Jobs Fund trainees and a Graduate Volunteer. The results have been analysed and will be presented to the next meeting of the working group.

## Stronger Communities

13. In St Thomas' the Area Community Renewal Officer and the Neighbourhood Resource Centre through the West Midlands Regional Improvement and Efficiency partnership has held several community based meetings to gauge the issues about community engagement and involvement in the St Thomas' ward . A residents survey of St Thomas' has also been undertaken. The findings of the report will be presented to the working group
14. Several community fun days and events have taken place across the central area where community groups and individuals have been encouraged and supported to be involved in and to organise them. These include Netherton Funday ( Friends of Netherton Park), the Titanic Anchor parade ( DMBC project team and community volunteers from Netherton Regeneration group) , the Netherton Victorious Day (Savoy Centre and community volunteers from the Netherton Regeneration Group).
15. The connecting to communities programme in Castle and Priory has held a further participatory budgeting event enabling community groups and local people to decide on the priorities for spend to assist groups in their area- an evaluation and report on the events are available from the Community Renewal team on request.
16. A local assembly for Castle and Priory was held as a pilot for the borough. A full evaluation is currently underway and will be considered by the Corporate board in November. The first indications from feedback are that the event was useful and a success. The event was hosted by the Castle and Priory Area Regeneration Board and opened by the leader of the Council and attended by approximately 60 residents including 20 young people, the local ward members and the cabinet member with responsibility for community renewal. The community renewal team facilitated the workshops together with some selected partners. A small number of service providers from the Police, Children's Services, Environmental Services, Housing and Health, also took part to support and advise residents
17. A residents' survey of Lodge Farm has also been completed and a programme of activities established to address residents issues.

## 18. Community Centres

The Council's Cabinet approved a Report on "Shaping Community Centres For the Future" on 22nd September 2010. The Report proposed a positive vision for Community Centres as *"A network of local community hubs and resources meeting the needs and aspirations of local communities"* and principles for engagement. Engagement with the Community Centres and any interested party

was approved by the Cabinet and an Engagement Plan has been developed. Arrangements have been made for the Plan to be sent to Community Centres and e-mailed to Elected Members. The Plan briefly sets out arrangements for engagement over the next eight months with:

- Community Centre members and any other interested parties including the Community Centres Support Group;
- Elected Members through the routine Area Committee Community Renewal Plan up-date Report as well as the Select Committee on Community Safety and Community Services prior to submission of a concluding Report to Cabinet in summer/autumn 2011;
- Voluntary and Community Sector engagement being organised by the DCVS.

19. The Central Area Committee will be kept informed of progress routinely through this Report and any comments that Members wish to make about making the vision for Community Centres a reality in the Area Committee area at this stage will be gratefully accepted.

### **Finance**

20. The Community Renewal team deliver the aims of localism by coordinating services within area committee areas to improve the effectiveness of service delivery in meeting community needs and so achieve better value for money and reduce wasted resources. Through better coordination and focussing onto the communities concerned, the community renewal team enables services to be more effective in delivery and thus achieve greater value for money and social benefit.

The Area Committee Community Renewal Plan is developed in line with the overall Council Plan and priorities whilst encouraging innovation in the commissioning of activities from a variety of partners which will add value and achieve objectives for their area.

### **Law**

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The Sustainable Communities Act 2007 gives local councils and communities the opportunity to put forward new thinking on how best to improve quality of life and wellbeing in their local areas. The act provides a statutory framework for councils working with community groups and local people to put forward proposals on sustainable improvements to economic, environmental and social wellbeing.

The Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on local authorities to establish a Local Strategic Partnership to address collaborative working and develop a community strategy and local neighbourhood renewal strategy. Community Renewal is part of that approach.

Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1980 enables the Council to do anything which is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well being of the area.

### **Equality Impact**

22. One of the objectives of Community Renewal is to promote inclusion and social cohesion. The Community Renewal strategy targets those most in need in terms

of social and economic inequality.

23. Community Renewal officers coordinate the service delivery to communities as they affect a geographical place and in particular enable plans to come together in a more effective way for a local community. The Area Committee Community Plan is developed in line with the overall Borough Community Plan and priorities; in meeting the needs of areas the partners and Communities are encouraged and supported to co-deliver activities which will achieve objectives and add value to both service objectives and community needs.
24. Communities themselves are involved in deciding issues and in contributing to the delivery of activities to address issues. Where children and young people are involved they are directly consulted frequently design and deliver the response to local issues.

25. **Recommendation**

That Committee Members note the report and continue to support the work of the Community Renewal team in community localities.

*Richard Carter*

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**Interim Director of Adult Social Care**

Contact Officer: Susan McGavin  
Telephone: 01384 813713  
Email: [susan.mcgavin@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:susan.mcgavin@dudley.gov.uk)

**List of Background Papers**

*Community Renewal Strategy*

*Appendix 1 Central Area Community Renewal update July 2010*

*Appendix 2 Completions and Achievements template*

*Appendix 3 Central Dudley Area Committee Community Renewal Plan*