

**REGENERATION, CULTURE AND  
ADULT EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2012  
at 6.00 pm in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

**PRESENT:-**

Councillor Tyler (Chair)  
Councillor K Turner (Vice Chair)  
Councillor A Ahmed, Attwood, Blood, Caunt, G. H. Davies, Hale, Herbert,  
Ridney and Wright

**Officers**

Assistant Director Housing Strategy and Private Sector (Lead Officer to the Committee); Director of Corporate Resources; Treasurer; Assistant Director Culture and Leisure, Assistant Director Economic Regeneration, Head of Sport and Physical Activities and Head of Planning (all Directorate of the Urban Environment); Assistant Director Policy and Improvement (Chief Executive's Directorate) and Mr. J. Jablonski (Directorate of Corporate Resources)

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17      **APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Body.

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18      **SUBSTITUTE MEMBER**

It was reported that Councillor Ridney had been appointed as a substitute member for Councillor Body for this meeting of the Committee only.

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19      **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Ridney and Wright declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item 9 – Revision of the Playing Pitch Strategy – in that Councillor Ridney was a member of the IEB The Coseley School and Councillor Wright was a Governor of Ellowes Hall School.

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20      **MINUTES**

With reference to minute 11 regarding the non submission of items to the Committee, reference was made to an e-mail sent on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2012, in respect of the Black Country Library Services Report and Glass Museum

Feasibility Study Report, items due to be submitted to this meeting of the Committee, which outlined the reasons why a report would not be available.

RESOLVED

That the minutes to the meeting of the Committee held on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2012, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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21      PUBLIC FORUM

No matters were raised under this item.

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22      REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY 2013/14

A joint report of officers was submitted on the Revenue Budget Strategy for 2013/14 and on the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Cabinet at its meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2012, had approved the Strategy as a basis for further consultation including consultation with Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Constitution.

The Treasurer in his presentation of the content of the report referred in particular to paragraph 40 of the report, which set out the implications for services covered by the terms of reference of this Scrutiny Committee. The proposed efficiencies and other savings were set out at Appendix A to the report submitted.

Arising from the presentation of the report, members made a number of comments and raised questions with particular reference to the implications for Dudley and the Strategy of a recent Court Judgment on Single Status and Equal Pay Costs Provision; the difficulty in scrutinizing items, for example the Library and Archive Service, the first item on Appendix A to the report given the lack of appropriate level of detail to do so; issues regarding the taking of monies from reserves to support the Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme whilst seeking to reduce benefit staffing in 2015/16; questions regarding the extra income generation from Himley Hall and other public halls, plus the review of management; the exploration of the potential for a transfer to a third party in respect of Broadfield House and whether the figure quoted was feasible; related issues as to the future of the Heritage Glass Collection; efficiencies in connection with Dudley Council Plus; a request for further details in respect of the item Restructure of Human Resources and Organisation Development Division; issues in relation to the item in relation to Credit Card Charges; the percentage reduction in posts indicated by the item Staff Related Savings across all divisions of the Directorate in relation to the Directorate of the Urban Environment and the implications of the reduction in particular for regeneration; the impact of the cuts to the Chief Executive's Directorate and the implications of this in future years all of which were responded to at the meeting.

Arising from the comments and questions raised by Members of the Opposition Group on the Council on the Committee they considered that they could not support the recommendation in the report given that they were so many variables indicated and that details were not available. Given this position it was queried as to how the proposals contained in the report could be scrutinized.

On the recommendation being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED

1. That the Cabinet's Revenue Budget Strategy proposals for 2013/14 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as set out in the report, and Appendix A to the report, submitted be noted and that the Cabinet be informed that there were no specific issues that this Committee would wish to raise.
2. That, arising from the consideration given to the comments made in relation to the Library and Archive Service, the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services be requested to submit a report to the next meeting of this Committee updating the information given in the e-mail referred to earlier in the meeting sent on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2012, in respect of future proposals for this division of her Directorate.

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23      PLANNING APPLICATION P12/0905 – PRIOR APPROVAL UNDER PART 31 FOR DEMOLITION OF 7, STRAITS ROAD, LOWER GORNAL

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the background to, and process of determination of, planning application P12/0905 and the subsequent making of an Article 4 Direction arising from the consideration given to this matter at the last meeting of the Committee.

Arising from the presentation of the content of the report by the Head of Planning Councillor Caunt raised concerns about the way in which the application had been dealt with by Planning Officers and on the events leading up to, and on the signing of, a decision sheet authorising the service of an Article 4 Direction.

He further considered that the action need not have been taken, in the time scale that it had.

Overall he considered that the Council had been misinformed on this matter and requested that Planning Officers discuss the application with the applicant as a matter of urgency so that the site in question could be regenerated.

The Head of Planning responded to the points made and refuted comments made. She indicated the discussions that had taken place with the applicant and also with colleagues on the process outlined. She further stated that the Notice had not been illegally served and that the decision sheet had been signed on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2012.

Further questions were then raised by Councillor Wright and responded to.

Arising from the comments made the Head of Planning undertook to personally oversee the future process in relation to the application.

## RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on the background to, and process of determination of, planning application P12/0905 and the subsequent making of an Article 4 Direction be noted and that the proposed process improvements as set out in paragraphs 20 and 21 of the report submitted be supported.

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## 24 UPDATE ON DUDLEY'S HEALTHY TOWN PROGRAMME

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted updating the Committee on progress made with the implementation of the Borough's Healthy Town programme, with specific reference to the Recreational element.

Following a presentation by the Assistant Director Culture and Leisure of the content of the report submitted a number of points were raised and questions asked relating in particular to:-

- Problems at Silver Jubilee Park, Coseley which, although it was considered to be very successful, had issues with dogs being allowed to roam on the park without a lead and owners of dogs not picking up dog faeces and in respect of the top gate at Mason Street being open but the gates on the Birmingham New Road being locked. An undertaking was given that the matters referred to would be looked into.
- Reference was made to a similar situation at Huntingtree Park regarding dog faeces.
- There was a need to advertise healthy living activities happening at Silver Jubilee Park, Coseley as currently there did not appear to be any means of making sessions known to users at the park. The possible extension of some health classes was also referred to.

To concerns that given the popularity of the healthy hubs there may not currently be enough rangers in position to ensure that the hubs were fully used.

- In response to a query regarding maintaining the level of performance when funding ceased in 2014/15 for part of the costs of the rangers it was reported that other ways of achieving the current levels of provision would be looked at for example possibly bringing in external sources to supplement what the Council currently does. It was also considered that there was a need to spread the provision from existing hubs to other areas which whilst diluting the provision would ensure that the Council got full value from the project.
- Regarding the Olympics/Para Olympics impact on the hubs in particular whether the disabled could use the equipment provided comments were made regarding the events held for the games for example the Community Games which would continue and for meeting specific needs for the disabled at the hubs. There was also an issue with the provision of equipment specifically for young people so that overall the opportunity to build on the momentum from the games would continue.

Overall it was considered that the hubs were a success in that thousands of people were now taking part in the activities being provided and were more involved with the parks.

## RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, updating the Committee on progress made with the implementation of the Borough's Healthy Town programme, with specific reference to the Recreational element, be noted together with the comments made at the meeting for action, as appropriate.

## REVISION OF THE PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on an outline of the approach to be adopted in revising the Playing Pitch Strategy.

The Head of Sport and Physical Activities commented on the content of the report submitted and in particular commented that when the draft documentation was available a further report would be submitted to the Committee detailing how the priorities contained in the report had been translated into actual provision.

Arising from the presentation given members asked a number of questions and made comments relating in particular to:-

- The difficulties residents of Avenue Road and Old Meeting Road, Coseley were experiencing when football matches were played on a Saturday and Sunday on the Clayton Playing Fields and the request that the facility be withdrawn until the issue of parking had been resolved. In response it was reported that this was a common problem and that the matter would be referred to the Football Forum with a view to agreement being sought.
- In respect of the reduction in grounds maintenance over the next 3 years, as referred to in the budget report, it was reported that the impact on the pitch strategy would be looked at in line with the budget process.
- That the number of sports clubs with playing pitches on the Borough's periphery as indicated in table 2 of the report submitted was seen as a good thing given the level and quality of facilities that they were able to provide and that there was considered to be no land in Dudley Borough itself for new pitches. Given the situation it was considered that every encouragement should be given to the provision of facilities on the Borough's periphery.
- In view of the introduction of revised regulations regarding the size of pitches it was considered that this could enable land in Dudley currently unused to be used for this purpose.
- It was disappointing that there had been no improvement in the quality of the pitches or the facilities offered in the Borough.
- Queries were raised over the ability of football teams to access in particular school pitches and it was considered that this situation might have been exacerbated by the increase in the number of schools becoming academies.

It was also considered that a lot of school pitches were not in regular use and that work should be undertaken to identify the school pitches that were available together with the number and the usage so that further work could be done to encourage the use of these currently underutilised facilities. It was requested that a report be brought back to a future meeting on this matter.

- It was considered that the facilities at Wallbrook School could possibly be an alternative provision to those of Clayton Playing Fields and it was requested that this be looked into.

It was noted that discussions would be held directly with schools in the Borough and also with the Dudley Association of Governing Bodies and that teams would be asked where they currently played and where they had tried to play matches.

Arising from the comments and questions raised it was

## RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted be noted and that the comments made at the meeting, as outlined above, be referred, as appropriate, to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture for her consideration when considering the approach to be adopted in revising the Playing Pitch Strategy.

The meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.

CHAIRMAN