

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16th November, 2010 at 6.30 p.m.
at Saltwells Education Development Centre, Bowling Green Road,
Netherton

PRESENT: -

Councillor Ahmed (Chairman)
Councillor K Finch (Vice Chairman)

Councillors Ali, Mrs Aston, Cotterill, J R Davies, M Davis, A Finch, J Martin,
Mrs Roberts, Sparks, Waltho, and Ms Wood; Mr Sadiq and Mr Thomas

OFFICERS:

The Assistant Director of Housing (as Acting Lead Officer to the Committee); Assistant Director (Environmental Management), Directorate of the Urban Environment; the Head of Housing Management – North, the Head of Community Renewal and the Social Regeneration Officer – all Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services; the Head of the Youth Service and the Detached Youth and Community Worker for the Central Dudley Area – both Directorate of Children's Services; the Senior Solicitor and Ms K Farrington – both Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Sector Inspector Richard Jones, West Midlands Police – for Agenda Item No. 5

Mr Chris Wood, West Midlands Fire Service – for Agenda Item No. 6

Mr Brian Warwick – Census Area Manager – for Agenda Item No. 11

Mr Alan Black – Applicant – for Agenda Item No. 12

26 Members of the public

44. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors J D Davies and Ms While-Cooper; Ms Little, Mrs Oakes and Mr Robinson.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ahmed declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 13 (Capital Allocations) in relation to Dudley Central Mosque and Muslim Community Centre, in view of the fact that he occasionally worships at the Mosque.

Councillor Ali declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 13 (Capital Allocations) in relation to Dudley Central Mosque and Muslim Community Centre, in view of the fact that he worships at the Mosque.

Mr Sadiq declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 13 (Capital Allocations) and 15(4) (Matters raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 14th September, 2010 other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment) in relation to Dudley Central Mosque and Muslim Community Centre, in view of the fact that he is a Trustee of the Mosque.

Councillors J Martin and Mrs Roberts indicated that as Members of the Development Control Committee, they would play no part in the discussion or voting on Agenda Item No. 12 (Application in respect of land and property owned by the Council – Firs Street, Dudley).

46. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14th September, 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed.

47. YOUTH SERVICE

The Detached Youth and Community Worker gave an oral update on new projects being undertaken by the Youth Service for young people to participate in. She referred, in particular to the activities undertaken by the St Andrews detached youth Partners and Communities Together group (PACT) and their achievement of “Group of the year Award” at the recent Dudley Youth Awards. She also indicated that the Kate’s Hill Youth Club had seen a much stronger attendance of young people on a weekly basis.

She also referred to the Duke of Edinburgh Award, which ran in partnership with Dudley College and indicated that the scheme was now being facilitated at the Claughton Youth Centre in Central Dudley.

During the presentation, the Detached Youth and Community Worker updated the Committee on future projects, which included; a Community Christmas trial that was being organised between various community based organisations and volunteers with Meadow Road Youth Club; working in partnership with Netherton Park Healthy Hub in order to open the Hub with a view to offering young people in the area another venue to access as a youth club; working in partnership with the Friends of the Park in Buffery Park to offer youth provision from the Son's of Rest building with effect from the New Year. She also informed the Committee that from January next year, the Youth Service would also be working in partnership with Cherry Tree Learning Centre offering music projects through Russells Hall Youth Centre.

RESOLVED

That the information, as circulated at the meeting and reported orally, be noted.

48.

POLICE ISSUES

Sector Inspector Richard Jones of West Midlands Police reported on current police issues in the area of the Committee.

During the presentation, the Sector Inspector referred to Operation Kryptonite, which aimed to tackle metal thefts across the Borough to counter the steady increase in such thefts evidenced since the start of 2010. He also stated that an increase in theft of catalytic converters had been identified. He indicated that the Police would be working alongside the Department for Work and Pensions in tackling benefit fraud.

Reference was made to the recent improvements at Dudley Bus Station to help maintain a safer travel system, with particular mention to the permanent police base which was now located at the Bus Station; the recent upgrade of the lighting and CCTV; help buttons that linked directly to the main CCTV viewing base at Sedgley and the alcohol exclusion signs that would shortly be erected in the Bus Station.

Other activities the Sector Inspector reported on included the proactive work undertaken by Community Renewal Officers and Police Community Support Officers in the general clean up and the tackling of illegal substance misuse and drunkenness, particularly in areas such as Edward Street, Nelson Street and Alexandra Street; warrants being executed across the central area, mainly relating to cannabis farms; and Operation Elf, a Christmas initiative targeting and controlling potential seasonal crime and disorder in the Borough. He also updated the Committee on Operation Staysafe and indicated that two staysafe days had been carried out in the last six weeks with another due to be held on 17th December, 2010.

Following the presentation, a Member of the Committee queried the penalties involved for growing large quantities of cannabis. In responding, the Sector Inspector undertook to look into the matter and respond to the Member directly.

A further Member of the Committee queried whose responsibility it was to enforce the alcohol ban. In responding, the Sector Inspector confirmed that the Police had the responsibility for enforcement and had the power to confiscate alcohol.

RESOLVED

- (1) That Sector Inspector Richard Jones be thanked for his presentation and that the information reported on be received and noted.
- (2) That Sector Inspector Richard Jones investigate the penalties involved when caught growing large quantities of cannabis and respond to the Member directly.

49. FIRE SERVICE ISSUES

Mr Wood of the West Midlands Fire Service reported orally on the number and nature of incidents in the Central Dudley Area with particular reference to grass and rubbish fires.

During the presentation, Mr Wood highlighted the general risks associated with winter and health and safety and urged people to exercise caution during these months, especially over the festive period. In concluding, he assured the Committee that the Fire Service would continue to carry out the level of service expected from them to ensure the Borough remained a safe place to live.

RESOLVED

That Mr Wood be thanked for his presentation and that the information reported on be received and noted.

50. PETITIONS

A petition from residents of Baptist End Road had been submitted requesting that action be taken to control speeding vehicles along Baptist End Road. It was noted that the petition would be referred to the Petitions Officer for consideration and the outcome would be reported back to a future Area Committee.

A petition had also been received from residents requesting waiting restrictions in Steppingstone Street, Pitfield Street and Greystone Passage, Dudley. It was noted that the petition would be referred to the Petitions Officer for consideration in the first instance and then to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for a report to a future Area Committee.

A petition was also received from residents of Selbourne Road and the surrounding area objecting to the proposed benches on Buffery Park, Netherton. The petition organiser, Mr Wimlett addressed the Committee on the petition and it was noted that the petition would be referred to the Petitions Officer for consideration and the outcome would be reported back to a future Area Committee.

A petition was also received from parents and carers of the children at Woodside Community School and Children's Centre requesting that the Local Authority repair the lower service road leading to the entrance of the school in Bradford Road. The petition organiser, Mr Piddington addressed the Committee on the petition and it was noted that the petition would be referred to the Petitions Officer for consideration and the outcome would be reported back to a future Area Committee.

On behalf of the Chairman of the Quarry Bank Community Association, a Member of the Committee submitted a letter expressing parking concerns associated with Sheffield Road, outside the Quarry Bank Community Centre. It was noted that the letter would be passed on to an appropriate officer in the Directorate of the Urban Environment for consideration and the outcome would be reported back to a future Area Committee.

51.

PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) On behalf of a member of the public, a Member of the Committee drew attention to the ME2 project and requested help in arranging funding to maintain the project. In responding, the Acting Area Liaison Officer undertook to refer the matter to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services with a request that a written response be submitted to the questioner.
- (b) A member of the public drew attention to the unacceptable high volume of traffic, the lack of pedestrian crossing and inappropriate use of Oakham Road, Dudley by large heavy vehicles and asked what measures the Local Authority intended to take to rectify the problems and improve the quality of life and safety of the residents of Oakham Road which he considered intolerable. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) acknowledged the concerns raised and reported that a speed visor had been located and positioned on Oakham Road and assured the questioner that Traffic Engineers would be monitoring the situation. He reported further that they had done as much as they could in the short term in order to control the traffic issues and were looking at solutions to help alleviate traffic congestion in the longer term.

- (c) The same member of the public drew attention to a newspaper article outlining the impending crackdown by Police of traffic using Blackacre Road as a rat run and requested statistics of the number of people who had received a penalty as a result of using Blackacre Road unlawfully since the last Area Committee. In responding, Sector Inspector Richard Jones indicated that a number of penalties had been given but he was unable to provide specific numbers at the meeting. He assured the questioner that the issue raised would be addressed.
- (d) A member of the public drew attention to and circulated photographs of the recent development of Broadmeadow, Russells Hall and raised a number of issues relating to the extra care scheme. In responding, the Acting Area Liaison Officer undertook to refer the matter to an appropriate officer in the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services with a request that a written response be submitted to the questioner.
- (e) A member of the public asked what specific measures were taken to ensure that the qualifications and experience of applicants for positions of officers of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council were properly suited to the requirements and duties of the post and the salary offered. A Member of the Committee gave a comprehensive response to the questioner at the meeting.
- (f) A member of the public referred to the budget reductions to be applied to the Council and queried which department(s) the reductions would affect. In responding, the Acting Area Liaison Officer indicated that consideration of this issue with the Council was ongoing but decisions had got to be made. She assured the questioner, however, that the Local Authority was committed to carrying out and protecting the services they provided to the community at the level expected.
- (g) A member of the public requested that the Local Authority adopt a more appropriate setting than that currently available for dealing with the bereaved, with particular reference to the provision of a more sensitive amenity for registering deaths. She also referred to the practice of the Housing office in contacting bereaved people to discuss issues regarding tenancy with undue immediacy. In responding, the Acting Area Liaison Officer undertook to refer both matters to appropriate officers in the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services with a request that written responses be submitted to the questioner.
- (h) A member of the public queried why larger families were effectively considered to generate lesser waste per person than smaller families or single people in consequence of the new bin bag system and referred in particular to the red sticker system, which he considered offensive. He also raised concerns about the lack of products that could be recycled.

In responding the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) indicated that the red sticker system had been introduced so that the bin operatives could identify those families whom had requested an additional bin bag. In responding to the issue of recycling, he referred to the recycling centres located around the borough and suggested that an officer visit the questioner's property with a view to clarifying recycling issues. He stated that their aim was to introduce plastic recycling in the near future which would help alleviate the problem. He also stated that a written response would be submitted to the questioner.

- (i) Another member of the public drew attention to the current Environmental Protection Act and suggested the Council was acting unlawfully by restricting the number of bin bags collected to three; failing to collect bin bags from positions that were not inaccessible or were likely to incur high collection costs and implicitly charging for the collection of household waste through Council Tax. In continuing, he expressed the view that the actions of the Local Authority would be likely to incur substantial financial penalties by failing to meet its contractual targets regarding the quantities of waste to be delivered to external agencies and that these costs might exceed any savings derived from the new bin collection service.

The Assistant Director (Environmental Management) undertook to respond to the questioner in writing.

52. WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillor Ms Wood conveyed her thanks to the Head of Housing Management - North and the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) in relation to the quick response times of queries and with the work carried out in respect of the green space at Worcester Road/Hereford Road.
- (b) Councillor Ms Wood drew attention to the volume of traffic using Griffin Street as a rat run and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (c) Councillor Ms Wood drew attention to the safety issues involved in obstructive parking at Hillcrest School and Community College and requested that this matter be looked at.
- (d) Councillor J Martin asked to be supplied with road traffic statistics for Cinder Bank and Halesowen Road through Netherton to Old Hill, specifically, in relation to the number of road traffic accidents, traffic flows and the volume of traffic at different times of the day.

- (e) Councillor J Martin requested statistics regarding the speed of traffic travelling along Cinder Bank through Netherton and Halesowen Road past Lidl Superstore.
- (f) Councillor J Martin requested details of enforcement action taken by the Police and the Council's parking enforcement officers against speeding traffic and obstructive parking. He also requested details from the GATSO cameras.
- (g) Councillor Waltho referred to the Memorial Service held in St Thomas's Ward on Sunday 14th November, 2010 in respect of the armed forces and expressed his appreciation of the excellent turnout.
- (h) Councillor Waltho conveyed his thanks to officers responsible for carrying out road safety improvements at the rear end of Sledmere Primary School, however he drew attention to the parking problems still occurring and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (i) In referring to the presentation made by a representative of the Dudley Group of Hospitals Foundation Trust Membership at the meeting of the Area Committee held on 14th September, 2010, Councillor Waltho indicated that if any persons were interested in becoming a Member of the Trust, application forms were available and could be collected from him at the end of the meeting.
- (j) Councillor Mrs Aston referred to her disappointment that Ward Councillors had not been consulted in the scheme for the renaming of the Priory North Estate.
- (k) Councillor Mrs Aston drew attention to the missing steps between Burton Road and the Broadway and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (l) Councillor A Finch again drew attention to the potholes in Rosewood Road and Mayfield Road and requested that these be investigated.
- (m) Councillor K Finch referred to his disagreement in introducing fees for the use of Sycamore play area.
- (n) Councillor Sparks drew attention to the obstructive parking by the mini market in Park Road, Quarry Bank and requested an increase in the number of bollards along the grass verges to help alleviate the problem.
- (o) Councillor Sparks drew attention to parking problems at Quarry Bank Primary School as a result from the new building being built and requested that this matter be investigated.

- (p) In referring to Saltwells Nature Reserve, Councillor Sparks drew attention to the imminent demolition of Saltwells House and associated issues.
- (q) Councillor Cotterill queried whose responsibility it was to maintain the clock that was part of the old Quarry Bank Library, as he believed that a condition of sale of the Library was that the Local Authority would continue to maintain the clock. He requested that this matter be investigated.
- (r) Councillor Cotterill drew attention to the overgrown trees in his ward, which were preventing natural light entering people's houses, and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (s) Councillor Cotterill conveyed his thanks for the installation of a pedestrian crossing at Saltwells Road; however, he requested that railings be erected.
- (t) Councillor Mrs Roberts drew attention to the obstructive parking on both kerbs in Dibdale Road and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (u) Councillor Mrs Roberts requested an update on the one-way system on Parkway Road.
- (v) Councillor M Davis requested an urgent update on the parking situation at Russells Hall Road.
- (w) Councillor M Davis asked to be advised when signage would be installed on Pearce Close and Abberton Road.
- (x) Councillor M Davis queried why the bollards in Middlepark Road, Ashenhurst Road and Abbotsford Drive had been taken away.
- (y) Councillor M Davis drew attention to the speed of vehicles using Scotts Green Close and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (z) Councillor Ahmed expressed his thanks to the Community Neighbourhood Team for cleaning up the patch of overgrown land between Alexandra Street and Edward Street.
- (aa) Councillor Ahmed drew attention to the vehicles using Russell Street and requested that a restriction on heavy vehicles be introduced.
- (ab) Councillor Ahmed drew attention to the potholes in Russell Street and requested that this matter be investigated.

53. COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

A report of the Interim Director of Adult Social Services was submitted on the progress to date of the Working Group and monitoring of the Central Dudley Area Committee Community Renewal Plan.

In presenting the report, the Head of Community Renewal updated the Committee on the current key activities outlined in the report, which had been carried out since the last meeting of the Committee.

Following the presentation, a Member of the Committee queried progress with regard to a strip of land next to Green Park Road, Hollyhock Road and Lupin Road, reference to which had not been incorporated in the report. In responding, the Head of Community Renewal indicated that no investigations had been carried out at the locations; however, she assured the Member that the matter was a priority.

RESOLVED

That the information continued in the report submitted to the meeting be received and noted.

54. 2011 CENSUS

Mr Warwick, the Census Area Manager gave an oral presentation on the 2011 Census. A hard copy of the presentation was circulated at the meeting. During the presentation, Mr Warwick briefly explained the need and aims of the Census. He emphasised the importance of completing the questionnaire and urged everyone to complete the form and send it back in the pre-paid envelopment which would be provided.

RESOLVED

That the verbal presentation given by Mr Warwick on the 2011 Census be noted.

55. APPLICATION IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL – FIRS STREET, DUDLEY

A report of the Director of Corporate Resources was submitted on a request by a member of the public to purchase land at Firs Street, Dudley currently controlled by the Council.

The Legal Advisor amplified the information in the report submitted and the applicant, Mr Black, addressed the Committee on his proposals for the land.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the application submitted on a request by a member of the public to purchase land at Firs Street, Dudley currently controlled by the Council, be refused for the reasons indicated in the report.
- (2) That the land be retained in Council ownership and that the Committee recommend that the Cabinet Member for Personnel, Legal and Property appropriate the land for use as open space by the community.

56. CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS – RECOMMENDATION OF THE CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS WORKING GROUP

A report of the Acting Area Liaison Officer was submitted on recommendations made by the Capital Allocations Working Group of the Committee with regard to applications for grant from the Delegated Capital Budget of the Committee for 2010/11.

In referring to the application on behalf of the Quarry Bank Community Centre, a Member of the Committee queried if other applicants were asked to provide a business plan before being considered for a grant allocation. In responding, the Social Regeneration Officer undertook to speak to the Member concerned following the meeting.

RESOLVED

- (1) That a grant to the organisation referred to below for the purpose, and in the sum indicated, be approved:

St Thomas's Ward – the sum of £5,000 to the Dudley Central Mosque and Muslim Community Centre, Birmingham Street, Dudley to fund the installation of fire and smoke alarms and CCTV security equipment at the centre.

- (2) That the Acting Area Liaison Officer be authorised to carry out the recommended action within the agreed control procedures.

57. MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2010 RELATING TO THE DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted updating the Committee on issues raised at the meeting of the Central Dudley Area Committee held on 14th September, 2010, with regard to services provided by the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

In responding to a query raised by a Member of the Committee in relation to Oakham Road, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) undertook to respond to the Member prior to the next Area Committee.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

58. MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2010 OTHER THAN THOSE RELATING TO THE DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

A report of the Acting Area Liaison Officer was submitted on progress on issues raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 14th September, 2010, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

59. SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

The dates of meetings of Select Committees for the remainder of the current municipal year were noted.

60. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE

The dates scheduled for future meetings of the Committee in the current municipal year were noted.

The meeting ended at 8.40pm.

CHAIRMAN