

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 4th October, 2011 at 6.30 p.m.
In the Council Chamber at the Council House, Priory Road, Dudley

PRESENT: -

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

Councillors Ali, Miss Arshad, Mrs M Aston, Cotterill, Miss J Cowell, M Davis, A Finch, Sparks, Waltho, Ms Wood and Zada; Ms Little, Mrs Oakes and Mr Rodney

OFFICERS:

The Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (as Lead Officer to the Committee), Assistant Director (Environmental Management), the Group Engineer, both Directorate of the Urban Environment; the Policy Analyst for Communities and Resources – Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services; the Area Team Leader for Central and Safe Provision and the Area Youth Worker, both Directorate of Children's Services; the Senior Solicitor and Ms K Farrington – both Directorate of Corporate Resources

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

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

Mr Kieran Larkin, Dudley and Walsall Mental Health NHS Trust – for Agenda Item No. 9

30 Members of the public

23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors J D Davies, Mrs Roberts and Mr Lawley.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

25. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7th June, 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed.

26. YOUTH SERVICE

The Area Team Leader for Central and Safe Provision introduced herself to the Committee and gave an oral update on the restructure of the youth service staff and the changes affecting the Central Dudley area.

She referred, in particular, to the youth provision offered over the summer holidays and reported that despite the reduced budget allocated to the youth services, a wide range of activities had been offered to young people, which included a water world trip, a football competition, drugs awareness sessions, an outdoor activity day, go-karting sessions, a trip to Drayton Manor, a girls day, a console competition, cooking sessions and many other activities.

During the presentation, the Area Team Leader for Central and Safe Provision indicated that the Detached Team was now working three nights a week across the Central Dudley area engaging with a range of groups of young people. She stated that over the summer a new cricket project had been established, with games being played on Buffery Park, which was attracting a large number of new young people to the service. She also indicated that because of the level of interest, a suitable indoor venue was being looked at to continue with the provision over the winter months.

Reference was made to the low level of engagement in the youth provision provided by the Russells Hall Youth Centre. It was reported, however, that the staff at the Centre had been consulting with young people over the summer months to ascertain what activities they would prefer to be provided at the centre and a new programme of activities would be planned around the consultation.

In referring to the new activities that had been offered at Meadow Road Youth Centre, the Area Team Leader for Central and Safe Provision indicated that the Centre had been successful in receiving Youth Opportunities Funding. She stated that the funding had been used to purchase fitness equipment and an instructor course which enabled young people to use the equipment and teach other young people to use the equipment safely. She also indicated that the Centre was planning a residential event in October.

The Area Team Leader for Central and Safe Provision referred to the anticipated re-launch of the Youth Forum later in the year with the hope of setting up member committees at Youth Centres.

In concluding, the Area Team Leader for Central and Safe Provision indicated that the programme of activities to be undertaken in the Borough during the October half term included an event around Black History Month. She stated that copies of the programme of activities would be available for Members following the meeting.

RESOLVED

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

27.

POLICE ISSUES

Sector Inspector Richard Jones of West Midlands Police reported on current police issues in the area of the Committee, with particular reference to crime figures. He indicated that the number of offences committed since April 2011 had considerably reduced in all wards compared to the same period last year.

The Sector Inspector indicated that metal offences were still being committed, particularly in the North of the Borough. However, he reported that the Police were working hard to combat the issue and urged anyone who had any information to contact the Police.

The Sector Inspector then referred to the range of police and partnership activity that was currently being undertaken to reduce anti-social behaviour associated with this time of the year, particularly with the Halloween and Bonfire period approaching. He reported that schools across the Borough were being visited by Police to give advice to children. Signs were being handed out stating "no trick and treat". Partnership working was taking place with the Fire Service and Trading Standards to combat the illegal sale of fireworks and extra resources would be positioned in key locations where high levels of anti-social behaviour was reported last year.

A Member of the Castle and Priory Ward indicated that residents had been complaining about gangs of youths congregating in areas of the ward, particularly street corners and requested extra policing in that area. In responding, the Sector Inspector indicated that he would refer the Member's concerns on to an appropriate Police Officer for investigation.

Members of the Committee then expressed gratitude to the Police in relation to their support with issues previously raised relating to Partnership and Communities Together (PACT) meetings and the issue relating to a retail shop in the St Thomas's ward.

Concerns were raised by Members in relation to the effect the budget reductions would have on the Police Service. In response, the Sector Inspector indicated that they were committed to protecting the services they provided at the level expected.

RESOLVED

- (1) That Sector Inspector Richard Jones be thanked for his presentation and that the information reported be received and noted.
- (2) That it be noted that Sector Inspector Jones will refer the concerns raised in relation to Castle and Priory Ward to an appropriate Police Officer for a written response to be submitted to the Member concerned.

28. FIRE SERVICE ISSUES

It was reported that the Fire Service had communicated that they were not able to arrange for a representative to attend the meeting.

29. PETITIONS

A petition had been received from residents in relation to tenancy issues. It was noted that the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services had dealt with the petition.

A petition was received from residents of New Road and the Sling, Netherton requesting that a one-way system to New Road from Cinder Bank junction to the Sling be introduced and the Sling be adopted in order that traffic can travel along the Sling to join Cinder Bank. 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.

30. UPDATE ON THE DUDLEY GROUP OF HOSPITALS FOUNDATION TRUST MEMBERSHIP AND ORGAN DONATION

Councillor Waltho gave a brief presentation on the Dudley Group of Hospitals Foundation Trust Membership. He indicated that membership was free and briefly highlighted the benefits of becoming a member, with particular mention being made to the greater financial freedom which allowed the Trust to respond to the needs of patients. There were currently two levels of membership, Passive Membership, which entailed receiving newsletters and keeping up-to-date with activities and Active Membership, which entailed receiving a newsletter and keeping up-to-date with activities, receiving invites to member events, taking part in member surveys or focus groups and having the opportunity to stand for election as a Governor and vote in future elections. The meeting was informed that forms were available for anyone who wished to become a Member.

Councillor Waltho then gave a brief presentation on organ donation and in doing so explained that three people a day died awaiting a transplant. There were over 10,000 people, of which 70 were from the Dudley area, currently awaiting a life-changing transplant. He urged more people to register for organ donation and indicated that forms were available for those who were interested.

RESOLVED

That Councillor Waltho be thanked for the presentation and that the information contained in the presentation on the Dudley Group of Hospitals Foundation Trust Membership and information on Organ Donation, be noted.

31. DUDLEY AND WALSALL MENTAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP NHS TRUST

Mr Kieran Larkin, Head of Communications, gave a presentation on the current application for Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust Foundation status. A copy of the Foundation Trust consultation document was circulated to the Committee. He indicated that becoming a Foundation Trust would increase accountability to local communities and encourage local people to influence and help improve the way NHS services were delivered. He explained what a Foundation Trust was, the benefits of becoming a Foundation Trust, membership proposals, the proposed structure of the Council of Governors, future proposals and indicated that forms were available for anyone who was interested in becoming a member.

Members raised concern in relation to the proposed number of appointed governors for the organisations listed in the presentation and indicated that each Council should have an appointed governor to represent each Borough. In responding, Mr Larkin reported that all comments would be considered as part of the consultation.

Concerns were raised by a Member in relation to the level of service provided to mental health patients and queried bed occupancy. In responding, Mr Larkin assured the Committee that the NHS were committed to protecting the services they provided at the level expected. He also undertook to investigate the issue of bed occupancy and respond to the Member direct.

Particular reference was made to a presentation that had been given at a recent Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee meeting in relation to the application for Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust Foundation status. Members understood that people suffering with dementia would be expected to travel to Walsall for treatment; however, Mr Larkin assured the Committee that each Borough would operate services for people suffering from dementia. He undertook to clarify the matter and respond in writing to the Members direct.

A member of the public then queried why only Dudley and Walsall were forming a partnership. In responding, Mr Larkin confirmed that other Boroughs were consulted, however, only Dudley and Walsall expressed an interest in merging the services and becoming an NHS Foundation Trust. Following further comments, Mr Larkin indicated that he would update Members on the outcome of the consultation.

RESOLVED

- (1) That Mr Kieran Larkin be thanked for the presentation and that the information contained in the presentation on the Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, be noted.
- (2) That the comments made by the Committee, in particular, the comment relating to governor representation, be noted and fed into the consultation process.
- (3) That Mr Larkin be requested to investigate the issue of bed occupancy and respond to the Member direct.
- (4) That Mr Larkin be requested to clarify the position regarding services for people suffering with Dementia in Dudley and respond in writing to the Members direct.
- (5) That Mr Larkin be requested to update Members on the outcome of the consultation.

32.

PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A member of the public drew attention to a recent news report, which stated that Dudley Southern Bypass was a dangerous road and requested that speed equipment be installed with a view to preventing “boy racers” using the Bypass on a nightly basis. In responding, the Group Engineer acknowledged the concerns raised and confirmed that the issues affecting the road and Cinder Bank Island were currently being monitored and this would continue until the end of the financial year. The Chairman expressed concern and requested that the Group Engineer look into reducing the monitoring time.
- (b) A member of the public drew attention to Dudley recently topping the league of medium sized towns for empty shops (roughly one in three compared with the national average of one in seven) and asked to be advised on what plans Dudley had to remedy the situation. The same member of the public also referred to the unpopularity of the proposed revamp of the market and the one-way system in the Town Centre. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) undertook to provide a response to the questioner.

Members agreed with the comments made and requested that a further presentation be given at the next meeting of the Area Committee on the Dudley Town Centre Regeneration. The Committee also requested that the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration be invited to answer questions raised by the public.

- (c) A letter from a member of the public was received requesting that, in consultation with residents, Dudley Council review traffic measurement at Cinder Bank between Corbett's Garage and Champion Church and to consider safety provision for children crossing Cinder Bank on route to School. He also suggested that consideration be given to removing a middle refuge by 41 Cinder Bank and facilitating pedestrian crossing by improving the existing middle refuge by Corbett's Garage. In responding, the Group Engineer indicated that the issues relating to traffic measurement at Cinder Bank had been investigated, however, he confirmed that other areas in the Borough had ranked higher and had been included in the Safety Scheme. He undertook to respond to the questioner direct.
- (d) A further letter from the same member of the public was received requesting officers of the Directorate of the Urban Environment to monitor traffic congestion; to install an air quality monitor in the vicinity of 153/154 Cinder Bank and to provide a report to the next Area Committee. In responding, the Group Engineer confirmed that he had spoken to the questioner prior to the meeting and indicated that Cinder Bank would continue to be monitored.
- (e) A letter further from the same member of the public was received again requesting support from the Area Committee to extend the opening hours of Dudley Leisure Centre from 7.00am to 9.30pm on the grounds that it would enable Dudley Leisure Centre to positively engage in competition with private sector leisure facilities. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) agreed to reconsider the request given the fact that the Area Committee supported the extension of hours. He undertook to respond to the questioner direct.
- (f) A further letter from the same member of the public was received requesting that the public toilet in Netherton be reopened and urging the Committee to pass a resolution in relation to the closure of public toilets in the interests of public safety and well being within its area. It was also noted that Dudley Council did not have any offices in Netherton where local residents could raise local issues.

Members then expressed general concerns in relation to the closure of public toilets in the Borough and it was suggested that officers of the Directorate of the Urban Environment investigate the possibility of re-opening these facilities. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) acknowledged the concerns raised and undertook to provide a written response to Members.

- (g) A further letter from the same member of the public was received in relation to an abandoned and derelict property in New Road, Netherton. It was noted that the property belonged to Dudley Council and leased to a Housing Association. The questioner indicated that the property had been boarded up for three years and had been attracting rats and used by people taking illegal drugs. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer undertook to investigate and provide a response to the questioner. The Assistant Director (Environmental Management) also reported that he would arrange for Pest Control to visit the property as a matter of urgency.
- (h) A further letter from the same member of the public was received expressing gratitude to officers in the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services for the recent improvement work carried out to properties on the Woodside Estate.
- (i) A further letter from the same member of the public was received expressing gratitude to the Chairman and Members of the Committee for the decision to approve the grant of £5,000 for the relocation of the Titanic Anchor in Netherton.
- (j) A member of the public requested the Committee to support the formation of an independent advisory panel of relevant volunteers with a brief to offer advice broadly consistent with the philosophy of the Big Society. The questioner also asked the Committee to recommend that full Council support the initiative. No decision was made in response to the request made by the questioner, however, Councillor Ali referred to the existing Dudley Town Centre Regeneration Partnership, of which he was a Member. It was suggested that the Partnership be used to receive comments and suggestions. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) indicated that the question would be referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for a response.
- (k) A member of the public submitted a question in relation to the new pathway into Woodside school from Bradford Road. The questioner suggested that Councillors meet with the school to discuss an alternative way to provide a safe entry into the school from Bradford Road. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer undertook to provide a response to the questioner.

- (l) A member of the public referred to the new Housing Development in Middlepark Road, Russells Hall (Broadmeadow) and asked to be advised on how the development was proceeding and how the allocated Section 106 monies were being utilised. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer undertook to investigate the matter and respond to the questioner direct.
- (m) The same member of the public submitted a question in relation to the bus stop in Brierley Hill High Street. In responding, the Group Engineer indicated that he would arrange for a new yellow bus stop bay to be introduced at that location.
- (n) A member of the public referred to a letter and two subsequent letters he had sent to the Chief Executive and queried the standard guidelines for an officer response. In responding, the Chairman indicated that the matter would be referred to the Chief Executive.

33.

WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillors Waltho and Miss Arshad drew attention to unauthorised parking outside St Joseph's RC Primary School and requested that the matter be investigated.
- (b) Councillor Ali drew attention to speeding vehicles using Warrens Hall Road with particular mention to the sharp bend and requested that the matter be investigated.
- (c) Councillor Ali referred to Oakham Road and requested that in the short term signage be improved to alert drivers to slow down and that officers investigate the possibility of installing a pedestrian crossing in the vicinity of Tansley Hill Road in the longer term.
- (d) Councillor Ali referred to the Traffic Survey recently carried out on the Dudley Southern Bypass in the vicinity of Cinder Bank; the number of accidents that had occurred on that stretch of road and requested that measures be put in place to stop speeding vehicles.
- (e) Councillor Ali drew attention to the potential problems with youths parking on Flood Street Car Park and requested that the matter be investigated.
- (f) Councillor Ali referred to the traffic signals at Burnt Tree and indicated that although the new system was working well, he expressed concern at how quickly the signals were changing on Bunns Lane and Tividale Road. He requested that the signals be adjusted accordingly.
- (g) Councillor Miss Arshad drew attention to unauthorised parking on Oakham Road and requested that the matter be investigated.

- (h) Councillor K Finch referred to the partnership project with E-on to upgrade loft insulation in the Borough to help minimise heating bills. He expressed great concern that elderly/disabled people were being refused loft insulation because loft space had not been cleared. He requested that officers consider clearing the area, in such circumstances, in order that elderly/disabled people were not disadvantaged.
- (i) Councillor Mrs Aston referred to anti-social behaviour affecting Castle and Priory Ward and requested that the matter be investigated.
- (j) Councillor Mrs Aston referred to the regular house checks carried out by officers and requested that gardens also be inspected.
- (k) Councillor Zada drew attention to nuisance caused by trees and indicated that when trees were reported as being a nuisance, officers be requested to carry out an inspection as a matter of urgency.
- (l) Councillors Zada and Ms Wood raised concerns regarding Woodside Day Centre and requested that the following questions be answered, as he was not content with the initial response:-
- Clarify actual refurbishment costs and what they were used for
 - When the estimated cost was undertaken
 - Whether an alternative venue had been found and any relocation costs
 - Why people would be reassessed and why a service would not be provided in the future
 - What would be the implications and future support
- (m) Councillor Zada referred to the area of land between Newland Grove and Woodside Road and suggested that the area be fenced off.
- (n) Councillor Zada referred to the poor road surfacing on Buxton Road, Holly Hall and requested that the matter be investigated.
- (o) Councillor M Davis referred to the footpath in Overfield Road and requested that officers narrow the path, as it was currently wide enough to drive a car through.
- (p) Councillor M Davis referred to the new Housing Development in Middlepark Road, Russells Hall (Broadmeadow) and requested that the area be cleared.
- (q) Councillor M Davis referred to the lighting in Pearce Close and Scotts Green Close and again requested that the matter be investigated.

- (r) Councillor M Davis referred to a complaint he had received in relation to the condition of the pavements on the London Heights Estate and requested that the matter be investigated.
 - (s) Councillor Cotterill asked to be advised on how the new development on Thorns Road was proceeding and how the allocated Section 106 monies were being utilised.

Councillor K Finch then explained the background to Section 106 Agreements and indicated that Members should receive an account on aspects relating to Section 106 monies for projects within their wards.
 - (t) Ms Little referred to the flu vaccination and urged all persons eligible to be vaccinated.
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34. PROPOSED TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER MOVING, WAITING AND LOADING RESTRICTIONS IN RUSSELLS HALL AREA

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the proposed introduction of Traffic Regulation Orders to control moving traffic, waiting and loading in streets around Russells Hall Hospital. Copies of the maps outlining the proposals were outlined in Appendix F to the report.

The Group Engineer confirmed that the correct notice of all proposals had been given to all parties.

The Group Engineer reported that three petitions had been received and were being dealt with accordingly under the Petitions Scheme. It was noted that a representative, on behalf of the Petition Organiser, was present at the meeting to address the Area Committee on the petition objecting to parking in Abbotsford Drive.

The nominee of the Petition Organiser addressed the Committee and confirmed that she was satisfied with the proposal regarding Prohibition of Driving except for access in Abbotsford Drive.

Concerns were raised by a Ward Member in relation to the proposal of a Restriction of Waiting Monday – Friday 10.00am – 11.00am and 2.00pm – 3.00pm on Middlepark Road, The Oval and Ashenhurst Drive and he stated that he was not in attendance at the Russells Hall Traffic Working Group meeting when the proposals were agreed.

Members considered that a Residents Parking Scheme would be the best solution to alleviate the problems associated with parking in the Russells Hall area in the long term, however, it was agreed that the proposals set out in Appendix F would be the best possible solution in the short term.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to approve the introduction of Traffic Regulation Orders to control moving traffic, waiting and loading in streets around Russells Hall Hospital, as set out in Appendix F to the report now submitted, in so far as they related to the Central Dudley Area Committee.

35. CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on proposals for the allocation of expenditure from the delegated capital budget of the Committee for the 2011/12 municipal year.

RESOLVED

- (1) That grants to the organisations indicated below for the purposes, and in the sums indicated, be approved:

(a) CASTLE AND PRIORY WARD

(i) Meadow Road Youth Centre

The sum of £1,029.02 to fund the purchase and installation of a plasma TV, bracket and security screen at the youth centre.

(b) QUARRY BANK AND DUDLEY WOOD WARD

(i) St Andrew's Residents Trust Ltd

The sum of £1,433.94 to fund the purchase of tools and other associated equipment to support a local gardening project for young people during the school holidays and out of school for the benefit of local elderly and disabled residents.

(c) NETHERTON, WOODSIDE AND ST ANDREW'S WARD

(i) Woodside Community Association

The sum of £1,487.27 to fund the purchase of a digital projector and mobile screen for use by a number of groups using the centre.

- (2) That the application submitted on behalf of Dudley Counselling Centre/Dudley Christian Fellowship be deferred to enable additional information to be obtained and to avoid any further delay, the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman, be authorised to determine the application in the event of the additional information providing the necessary clarification to the satisfaction of the Area Liaison Officer.

- (3) That the urgent action taken by the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman, in approving the application in relation to the Netherton Regeneration Strategic Group in the sum of £5,000 to fund the purchase of steel plates and columns to accommodate the Netherton Anchor, be noted.
 - (4) That the Woodside Community Association be requested to report to the next meeting of the Capital Allocations Working Group on the benefits achieved from the grant now allocated and from the grants made previously by the Committee.
 - (5) That the St Andrew's Residents Trust Limited be requested to report to the next meeting of the Capital Allocations Working Group on the benefits achieved from the grant now allocated and from the grants made previously by the Committee.
 - (6) That the Area Liaison Officer for the Central Dudley Area Committee be authorised to implement the above actions in accordance with the agreed control procedures.
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36. MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 7TH JUNE, 2011 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 7th June, 2011, with regard to services provided by the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

A Member of the Committee referred to the new proposals, which had been approved by the Friends of Buffery Park and the organiser of the petition in relation to the park benches and confirmed that all Ward Members agreed with the new proposals.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

37. MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 7TH JUNE, 2011 OTHER THAN THOSE RELATING TO THE DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on progress on issues raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 7th June, 2011, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

38. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

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

39. DATE OF FUTURE MEETING OF THIS COMMITTEE

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was 31st January, 2012 at 6.30pm and that it would be held at Castle High School, St James's Road, Dudley.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm.

CHAIRMAN