

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 5th November 2008, at 6.30 pm
at Sledmere Primary School, School Drive,
Buffery Road, Dudley

PRESENT: -

Councillor J R Davies (Chairman)
Councillor K Finch (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Ahmed, Ali, Mrs Aston, Cotterill, Mrs Coulter, J D Davies, Davis, A Finch, J Martin, Mrs Roberts, Sparks, Waltho and Ms While-Cooper; Mrs Edwards and Ms Little

OFFICERS:

Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (as Area Liaison Officer), Assistant Director of Children's Services (Without Portfolio), Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management), Mr Bennett, Mr Boyle and Mr Collumbell (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Ms Grove and Mr Williams (both Directorate of Children's Services) and Mr Clark and Mr Sanders, (both Directorate of Law and Property)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Inspector C Down – West Midlands Police
6 members of the public.

34 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mr Nock and Mrs Oakes

35 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs Coulter declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in agenda item number 9 (Capital Allocations) in so far as the item related to the application by the Friends of Netherton Park Ltd in view of her attendance at meetings of the body as an observer and her personal friendship with the Chairman.

36 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 9th and 15th September 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

37

YOUTH SERVICE CONSULTATION

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted advising the Committee of the publication of the Youth Service consultation document which had been published on 7th October 2008 and would run until 6th January, 2009.

Further to the presentation made at the previous meeting of the Committee, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Without Portfolio) outlined briefly the proposals in the consultation document regarding the future structuring of the Service.

A discussion ensued, in the course of which comments made by members included the following issues. In referring to the need for the Service to involve and engage young people in order to dissuade them from anti-social behaviour, the delivery of the Youth Service for the St Thomas's ward from the Cloughton site, in consequence of the discontinuation of the youth club at the St Thomas's Network, was questioned. The member who raised this issue also queried the reason why a greater number of youth workers and detached youth workers were proposed to be allocated to the Brierley Hill area than to the Central Dudley area.

Concern was expressed by a member for the Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood ward on the level of Council provision for youth work in that area and the same member referred to particular problems involving youths who came from other areas to congregate at Saltwells and were causing problems. A question was asked by another member on the cover provided for youth workers who were on sick leave. A comment was made that Ward Members needed to be kept informed when changes to youth service provision were made in their areas.

Reference was made by a member from the Netherton, Woodside and St Andrew's ward on complaints received by him from the Police that the latter were having to organise youth engagement activities in that area when this was the responsibility of the Council. The same member also expressed concern that the post of Head of Youth Services had remained vacant since May, 2007.

In referring to the unemployment statistics for the Castle and Priory Ward, the member who raised the issue expressed reservations about the content of the consultation document in so far as it was aimed to address the needs of young people out of work. Reference was made by another member of the circumstances regarding the closure of the Overfield Road Youth Centre in the St James's ward. A further question was asked regarding Meadow Road Youth Centre, to which the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Without Portfolio) reported that the Area Team Leader for the Central Dudley Area would have their office base at the Centre, starting in January, 2009.

In asking all members to submit their comments in writing as requested in the consultation document, the response of the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Without Portfolio) also included the following:-

- That interviews for the Head of Youth Service would be conducted on 7th November 2008. The filling of the post had been delayed owing to budget reductions in 2007/08.
- That the Lead Youth Worker post for the Central Dudley area had been filled. In the event of youth workers being sick, cover would be provided.
- The consultation document was seeking views on the key areas of activity that were proposed to be covered. The budget for the restructured service would not be sufficient to cover all issues. The aim was to deal with support for areas of concern. If the result of consultation demonstrated a greater demand for a particular issue or a specific area of provision, in comparison to another, priority to these would be given.
- Various agencies, in addition to the Council, including the Police and the voluntary sector, now had budgets to provide for youth development work. Community meetings, involving all agencies involved, were to be arranged. Arising from these, If there were issues in central Dudley that presented particular challenges that needed attention, they would be considered in the formulation of the Plan for the ensuing two years.
- The Assistant Director gave an assurance that all councillors would be kept informed of what was happening on youth work in their wards. She also indicated the intention that there would be consultation with Chairmen of Area Committees with a view to agreeing how those Committees would be utilised for this purpose and to monitor youth provision issues in their areas on a regular basis.
- The aim of the consultation exercise was to provide an opportunity to gain views of all concerned and to deal with outcomes subject to the four key areas targeted nationally being addressed. The Assistant Director invited all members of the public present to submit their comments in writing in accordance with the consultation process and assured the Committee that all issues raised would be addressed.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report, consultation document, comments made and responses given be noted.
- (2) That a special meeting of the Committee be arranged for the purpose of consulting with young people on the proposals and to receive their comments.
- (3) That provision be made for updates on current activities and progress in the wards in the central Dudley area on all future agendas for this Committee.

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CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF THE ETHNIC MINORITY ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE – AMENDED OCTOBER, 2008

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the issue of consultation on the future of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) which had been published initially on 8th September, 2008 and amended on 23rd October, 2008, further to the High Court judgement on the judicial review of the Council decision on the budget for the Service.

The effect of the referral to the High Court was that it was no longer feasible for the reduction in the EMAS budget to be implemented in the current financial year and consultation therefore was now being undertaken on the issue of the financial support for EMAS for 2009/10. The consultation document had therefore been amended accordingly.

In presenting the proposals, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Without Portfolio) explained the content of the consultation document, which comprised two key elements: the financial support and the configuration of the service. The Assistant Director also referred to an Equality Impact Assessment, which had been carried out to support the consultation.

In the discussion, the viability of the content of the Impact Assessment, with particular reference to its Human Rights implications, was questioned by a member of the public who had been party to the referral of the issue to judicial review. The member of the public indicated that, should the current budgetary position be maintained by the Council, submission for further judicial review would be probable. Concerns were expressed by certain members that the report had not reflected the High Court decision, in response to which the Assistant Director confirmed that the litigants' case had been dismissed; that the Council had put in place the requirements of the High Court and that information arising from consultation would be taken into account. She also pointed out that the High Court had not required the Council to restart the consultation.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be noted.
 - (2) That the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Without Portfolio) arrange for the points made to be included in the evidence arising from consultation.
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PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A question from a resident of Kenilworth Court seeking action on an issue of neighbour nuisance was received and referred to the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services for attention.
 - (b) In expressing dissatisfaction with Council services, but not elaborating on the reasons, a member of the public criticised a perceived lack of attendance by Members of the Council at certain community groups. After some discussion, it was established that the meetings referred to were not formal bodies or Tenants and Residents' Associations but groups to which members of the Council were not usually invited, nor expected, to attend.
 - (c) The same member of the public expressed concerns about parking restrictions applicable in Hall Street, in the vicinity of Dudley Row, and in Porter Street, in response to which the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) was asked to respond to the member of the public with the reasons for their introduction.
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WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillor Davis reported a problem with street lighting at Scotts Green Close, which, he considered, was encouraging anti-social activity. The issue was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.
- (b) Councillor Davis expressed the hope that facilities for young people in the St James's ward would be put into operation as soon as possible.
- (c) Councillor Davis indicated that the tree blocking the light outside the flats at St James's Road, which he had reported to the previous meeting of the Committee, continued to require attention.
- (d) In referring to difficulties encountered by residents of Russells Hall in the proximity of the hospital, with particular regard to the Middlepark Road and Ashenhurst Road area, in their being unable to park in the vicinity of their properties, Councillor Davis requested the introduction of a Traffic Regulation Order providing for residents-only parking in the area.

- (e) Further to having raised the issue at the previous meeting of the Committee, Councillor Mrs Roberts requested action to be taken to restrict the speed of traffic along both carriageways of Aintree Way, Milking Bank.
- (f) Councillor Mrs Roberts requested action to be taken to prevent parking on grass verges at Aintree Way in the vicinity of the school, particularly when nearby pitches were being used for football practice. She asked to be kept informed of measures proposed and undertaken to alleviate the situation and suggested the provision of concrete bollards might be appropriate.
- (g) Councillor Ahmed requested action to be taken to cut back bushes blocking the road sign at Charlotte Street.
- (h) Councillor Ahmed drew attention to potholes and an uneven pavement at Alexander Road, Dudley and requested that action be taken in this regard.
- (i) Councillor Ahmed requested the provision of pedestrian crossing facilities in the vicinity of the Ednam Road/St James's Road junction.
- (j) Councillor A Finch expressed concerns regarding cars driving across the green on the Old Park Farm Estate and requested that action be taken in this regard.
- (k) Councillor A Finch requested that action be taken regarding vehicles travelling along the Broadway, Dudley exceeding the speed limit.
- (l) Councillor Ali requested consideration to be given by the Committee to the consultants' report into the options for a new ground for Dudley Town Football Club.
- (m) Councillor Ms While-Cooper requested that action be taken regarding trees in Crabourne Road.
- (n) Councillor Cotterill advocated the use of the former Windmill Nursery premises by the Dudley Wood play group, further to the nursery premises having been refurbished for use as a training college.
- (o) Councillor Cotterill requested feedback on action to be taken regarding vehicles in Dudley Wood Road and Cradley Road exceeding the speed limit, as reported to the previous meeting of the Committee.

- (p) Councillor Cotterill enquired about the allocation of responsibility regarding the removal of abandoned vehicles, in the light of a instance which he reported but where neither the Council, nor any other agencies, including Police and Fire, had taken action.
- (q) In expressing the view that traffic flow in the central Netherton area had reached a position where a Traffic Regulation Order would be necessary, Councillor J Martin advocated the appointment of a working group of the Committee to consider action that was needed and to recommend the Committee accordingly.
- (r) Councillor J Martin requested the provision of statistical information on road traffic enforcement measures in the central Dudley area, the information to include how often Traffic Enforcement Officers presented themselves in the central Netherton area, their powers, and the action they were taking.
- (s) Councillor J D Davies questioned the fencing off of a fire damaged derelict property at 7 Baptist End Road which, he considered, had been left in a dangerous condition, with a view to preventing children from gaining access.
- (t) Councillor J R Davies requested the sweeping of Blackacre Road - Paradise Road.
- (u) Councillor J R Davies requested the provision of secure fencing at the old railway bridge at the corner of St Peter's Road and Windsor Crescent as a safety measure to prevent children gaining access to the former railway land adjacent and thereby risking falling from the lip of the old railway tunnel.
- (v) A number of members expressed extreme concerns at the decision of the Cabinet, at its last meeting, not to proceed with an expression of interest for the Wave 7 bid for Building Schools for the Future monies. The following specific issues were raised in this connection:
 - a request for clarification on whether the proposals for the Thorns Campus would be proceeded with, as currently envisaged, and what the timescale would be.
 - a request for information about the implications of the decision for the building schemes proposed for Holly Hall School, the upgrade of facilities at Hillcrest Community College and the transfer of the Northfield Road Primary School to the Hillcrest site.

RESOLVED

That a Working Group comprising the Chairman of the Committee and the members for the Netherton, Woodside and St Andrew's and Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood wards be appointed to consider traffic regulation issues relating to central Netherton and to report back to the Committee.

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CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the recommendations of the Capital Allocations Working Group, at its meeting held on 1st October 2008, with regard to applications made for funding from the delegated capital budget of the Committee for the 2008/09 financial year.

RESOLVED

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

Castle and Priory Ward

Dudley Sea Cadets – the sum of £5000 as a contribution towards the purchase of a new mini bus

Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood Ward

Quarry Bank Darby and Joan Club – a grant of £579 for the purchase of a new bingo machine and microphone.

St John Evangelist Church – the sum of £5000 as a contribution towards the installation of new windows in the Church Hall, which is widely used by the local community.

First Quarry Bank Scout Group – the sum of £3000 as a contribution to the installation of a new path, new drains and a disabled ramp, subject to the condition in resolution (2) below.

Castle and Priory, St James's and St Thomas's Wards jointly

Dudley Borough Crime Business Partnership – the sum of £1500, this being met equally from the capital allocations for the three wards above, as a contribution to the purchase of hand held radios to enable communication between the members of the Dudley Pub Watch Scheme, subject to the condition set out in resolution (3) below.

- (2) That the making of the grant to the First Quarry Bank Scout Group be subject to the Group raising themselves the residue of £9000 required to undertake the work.

- (3) That the making of the grant to the Dudley Borough Crime Business Partnership be subject to the Partnership themselves raising the residue of the funding required of £1800 for the purchase of the radios.
- (4) That the application by the Families at Highgate (PTA Management Committee) now referred to be deferred pending the receipt of more specific information on the purposes for which they require a grant.
- (5) That the application by the Friends of Netherton Park Ltd for the funding of a 'Netherton Gateway' sign be refused, on the grounds that a sign will have no significant benefit to the wider community and that the funding required could provide more direct help to the wider community should it be used for other purposes.
- (6) That the application by the Quarry Bank Labour Club for the funding of the installation of a disabled toilet be refused, on the grounds that the Labour Club is a business with substantial funds of its own, and not a community or voluntary organisation.
- (7) That the application by Dynamic Time Out for the purchase of three computers, a printer, sports equipment and an alarm system be deferred pending further information in respect of the operation of the body being obtained by the Area Liaison Officer.
- (8) That the application by Dynamic Time Out for funding for the purchase of a mini bus be refused on the grounds that the allocation for the St James's ward cannot afford a single grant of that size and must conserve its remaining funds for the remainder of the year.
- (9) That the application by the 347 (Dudley) Squadron Air Training Corps be deferred for more information about the funding of the Corps.
- (10) That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to carry out the actions above within the agreed control procedures.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

43 MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE HELD ON 9TH SEPTEMBER 2008, OTHER THAN THOSE RELATING TO THE DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted indicating progress on issues raised at the meeting of the Central Dudley Area Committee held on 9th September, 2008, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

An addendum to the report giving an overview of the recycling initiatives undertaken within the Building Services Division of the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services, in response to the issue having been raised at the previous meeting of the Committee, had been circulated in advance of the meeting. In reply to a question, the methodology involved in waste segregation was explained by Mr Bennett of the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services.

A question was asked on whether the waste segregation scheme was now applicable in the St Thomas's ward, in response to which Mr Bennett indicated that it now operated across the Borough.

In relation to the issue of the tree in Queen Street referred to in the report, Councillor Cotterill expressed his concern that the tree could not be removed.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report and the addendum thereto be received and noted.
 - (2) That, with regard to the tree in Queen Street, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) be asked to consider the issue and report back.
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44 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

The dates of forthcoming meetings of Select Committees were noted.

45 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

The dates and venues of future meetings scheduled for the Committee were noted.

The meeting ended at 8.05 p.m.

CHAIRMAN