

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 9th March 2010 at 6.30 p.m.
at Sledmere Primary School, School Drive, Off Buffery Road, Dudley

PRESENT: -

Councillor J R Davies (Chairman)
Councillor K Finch (Vice Chairman)

Councillors Ahmed, Ali, Mrs Aston, Cotterill, M Davis, A Finch, J Martin,
Mrs Roberts, Sparks and Waltho; Ms Little and Mrs Oakes

OFFICERS:

The Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (as Lead Officer to the Committee), Assistant Director (Environmental Management), Assistant Director (Economic Regeneration and Transportation), Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery and the Group Engineer – All Directorate of the Urban Environment, Assistant Director (Strategy and Service Development), Head of the Youth Service and the Area Youth Team Leader for the Central Dudley Area – All Directorate of Children's Services, Head of Housing Management – North, The Head of Community Renewal, the Principal Project Officer and the Social Regeneration Officer – All Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services, the Principal Solicitor, Ms K Farrington and Mr J Jablonski – All Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Ms Savanah Ram and Mr Daniel Willetts of Dudley Youth Council – for Agenda Item No. 4

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

Mr Chris Wood and Ms Julie Winpenny, West Midlands Fire Service – for Agenda Item No. 6

Mr Steve Johnson and Mr Lowell Williams of Dudley College, Mr Matt Harding and Mr Nick Allen of METZ Architects and Mr Bill Kirk, Chief Executive of New Heritage Regeneration Limited - for Agenda Item No. 11

30 Members of the public

80

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

81

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ali declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 14 (Capital Allocations), in view of the fact that he is a Member of St John's Church Preservation Group and a Member of the Steering Group.

Councillor Ali declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 9 (Ward Issues), in view of the fact that he is a Trustee of St Thomas's Network and left the meeting, while the issue raised in relation to this body was under consideration.

Councillor Sparks declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 11 (Dudley Town Centre Regeneration), in view of the fact that he is a Member of the Board of New Heritage Regeneration.

Councillor Sparks declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 11 (Dudley Town Centre Regeneration), in view of the fact that he is the Chairman of Dudley Zoo and Castle Board.

Councillor Waltho declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 14 (Capital Allocations), in view of the fact that he is a Member of St John's Church Preservation Group and a Member of the Steering Group.

82

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th January, 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed.

83

YOUTH SERVICE

The Area Youth Team Leader gave an oral update on new projects being undertaken by the Youth Service for young people to participate in, details of which were included in handouts circulated at the meeting.

Reference was also made to leaflets in relation to Dudley Central Area Youth Forum For You (DC4U), which had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting and commented upon.

Following the oral update by the Area Team Youth Leader, a brief presentation was given by Miss Savannah Ram and Mr Daniel Willetts of Dudley Youth Council on the work and activities undertaken relating to the main focus area of education, media/marketing, feeling safe and health.

Following the presentation the Members of the Dudley Youth Council were thanked for presentation given.

A Member then referred to the forthcoming Community Games and suggested that the Area Team Youth Leader meet with him after the meeting to discuss this matter further with a view to her getting the young people involved in the activities.

In relation to young people indicating that they did not feel safe, a Member suggested that they raise their concerns with Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers in their area.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information as circulated at the meeting and reported orally be noted.
- (2) That the Area Youth Team Leader be requested to circulate the programme of activities for the Easter Holidays to Members directly.

84

POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Chris Downen of West Midlands Police reported on current police issues in the area of the Committee.

During the presentation, he introduced the new Sector Inspector, Mr Richard Jones who would be taking up his post on 6th April, 2010. He then updated the Committee on the new telephony system in response to comments made at the last meeting.

RESOLVED

That the information reported on be received and noted.

85

FIRE SERVICE ISSUES

Mr Wood of the West Midlands Fire Service reported on the number and nature of incidents in the Central Dudley Area, by Ward, for the period from December 2009 to date, and reported that in relation to the overall incidents, arson figures appeared to be lower. He indicated that statistical information was available on request if Members would like a hard copy.

RESOLVED

That the information reported on be received and noted.

86

PETITIONS

A petition from residents of the flats in Lister Road was submitted requesting that car parking in Lister Road be looked into.

RESOLVED

That the petition be referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration and attention.

87

PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A member of the public drew attention to the ongoing parking problem at the junction at the top of Holly Street and Stourbridge Road despite the white lines being installed. In response, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) acknowledged the problem raised and agreed to re-visit the issue.
- (b) A member of the public referred to the problems of vehicular parking at Overfield Road from visitors to Russells Hall Hospital, which was causing a nuisance to local residents and requested double yellow lines be installed to alleviate the problem. In response, the Chairman suggested that a Working Group involving Members and appropriate officers be set up to look at the whole of the Russells Hall area. In responding, The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to arrange this with a view to the formal appointment of a Working Group in the new municipal year.
- (c) The same member of the public drew attention to the street lighting in Pearce Close and Scott Green Close. In response, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) acknowledged the problem and undertook to investigate the matter and reply to the questioner on the latest position in relation to where lighting for Pearce Close and Scotts Green Close were on the priority list and how long it would take for the work to be carried out.
- (d) Concerns were made by the same member of the public in relation to litter in the Russells Hall area, particularly in respect of the playing fields in Overfield Road. In response, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) acknowledged the problem raised and agreed to arrange for the matter to be investigated.

- (e) The same member of the public referred to infestation of vermin in the Middlepark area, especially around the new development. In response, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to talk to the questioner after the meeting and also raise the matter with the developers direct.
 - (f) A member of the public referred to a recent press article in respect of members allowances backdated to April 2009. In response, the Chairman reported that the decision had been made by an independent body who had assessed the activities undertaken by the Councillors and collated their findings in a report that had been submitted to the Standards Committee with a recommendation to full Council.
 - (g) Further to minute 69 (b) of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th January, 2010, a member of the public referred to the Housing five year capital programme plan, referred to in a recent press article and asked to be advised on whether the properties in the Woodside area would be included in the plan. In responding, the Head of Housing Management - North indicated that the Housing Revenue Budget of £200,000 had been allocated within the Housing 5 year capital programme to undertake bathroom and toilet improvements to properties. He undertook to respond to the questioner on this matter in writing.
 - (h) Further to minute no. 86 above, a member of the public drew attention to the parking problems in Lister Road and suggested that a parking facility be offered to residents of the flats. In response, the Head of Housing Management - North undertook to arrange for the feasibility of a community safety bid to be investigated and for consultation to take place with the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) with a view to alleviating the problem.
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WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillor M Davis drew attention to problems of parking by visitors to Russells Hall Hospital and requested that resident parking permits be considered.
- (b) Councillor M Davis drew attention to dog fouling in the Russells Hall area and requested that large signs prohibiting dog fouling be erected.
- (c) Councillor M Davis made reference to continued anti-social behaviour in Osprey Drive and Falcon Way.

- (d) Councillor M Davis drew attention to household waste being left in gardens when repairs had been carried out to properties and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (e) Councillor Mrs Roberts requested that cleansing of graffiti be undertaken on the centre in Overfield Drive.
- (f) Councillor Mrs Roberts referred to the receipt of a possible petition in relation to traffic calming measures in Russells Hall.
- (g) Councillor Ahmed drew attention to safety issues in Ednam Road and suggested that traffic lights or a pelican crossing be installed.
- (h) Councillor Ahmed drew attention to the potholes in Russell Street and Alexandra Street and requested that these be looked at.
- (i) In referring to the traffic problems in Avenue Road and Holly Hall Road, Councillor J Martin asked that road traffic calming measures at that location be considered and also requested that repairs to the reflectors in Holly Hall Street be carried out.
- (j) Councillor J Martin requested that the ownership of the land parallel to Holly Hall Road be investigated and for fly tipping to be looked at.
- (k) Councillor J Martin drew attention to the missing wooden fencing panels on the Dudley Southern Bypass and requested that the matter be looked at.
- (l) Councillor J Martin referred to the missing/broken railings near Park Head Locks and requested that the railings be removed or a better fencing solution be sought.
- (m) Councillor J Martin drew attention to the indiscriminate parking on the pavement of Holly Hall Road and Wood Street by people using the New Testament Church and requested that the matter be investigated.
- (n) Councillor J Martin referred to unauthorised drop kerbs and requested that the matter be investigated.
- (o) Councillor J Martin referred to the request to formally appoint a Working Group in the next municipal year in relation to traffic issues in the Russells Hall area referred to earlier in the meeting and requested that the Working Group also consider parking and other related vehicular issues.
- (p) Councillor A Finch asked to be advised on the progress made in relation to the Wrens Nest Estate Office, in view of the new development.

- (q) Councillor K Finch referred to the former site of the Duncan Edwards public house and requested that the owners be contacted regarding their proposals for development in view of the concerns expressed regarding rubbish accumulating on the land.
- (r) Councillor Waltho referred to traffic issues in Bunns Lane and reported that a meeting to discuss this, with a view to resolving the issues, had now been arranged.
- (s) Councillor Waltho reported that meetings had and would be held with residents, Police and Ward Members regarding traffic issues in Blackacre Road.
- (t) Councillor Waltho referred to the road safety improvements, which had been made at the junction of Warrens Hall Road and Four Winds Road, however he drew attention to problems now occurring on an adjacent location and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (u) Councillor Waltho referred to the recent decision to cut funding from St Thomas's Network and formally proposed the following resolution which was seconded by Councillor J R Davies:-

"Dudley Central Area Committee strongly requests that the budget decision to axe funding to St Thomas's Network be removed pending a full impact assessment and thorough democratic review by the appropriate all party Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee."

Following discussion, the resolution was approved.

(In view of him declaring a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of St Thomas's Network, Councillor Ali left the meeting and took no part in the voting on the above resolution. He returned to the meeting once the vote had taken place.)

- (v) Further to minute nos. 86 and 87(h) above, Councillor Ali supported previous comments made and suggested that signage and traffic calming measures be installed on Lister Road.
- (w) Councillor Ali drew attention to fire damage on the children's play area in Buffery Road and requested that the matter be looked at.
- (x) Councillor Sparks drew attention to the potential vandalism problems in relation to Saltwells House and referred to a request by the Police for the Council to arrange for fencing and security at the House, in light of its current condition.
- (y) Councillor Cotterill expressed gratitude for the ramp at Quarry Bank Library.

- (z) Councillor Cotterill expressed hope that the Community Centre would be developed to enable greater use by the community.
- (aa) Councillor Cotterill requested fencing be erected around the Dudley Wood Learning Centre. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer referred to discussions she had had with her Assistant Director and assured Councillor Cotterill that if the proposed plans for the erection of a fence adhered to the planning regulations, funding for the required planning permission would be granted. She undertook to inform Councillor Cotterill of the outcome.
- (ab) Councillor Cotterill referred to the condition of the bridge at the bottom of Bowling Green Road and requested that the matter be investigated.
- (ac) Councillor Cotterill drew attention to the railings at Bowling Green Road and Saltwells Road and requested that the length of the railing be extended.
- (ad) Further to minute no. 69(d) of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th January, 2010, Mrs Oakes asked to be advised on the position in relation to the re-installation of the pillar box in Dudley Town Centre. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer undertook to write to Post Office Limited again requesting that they respond to the original letter.
- (ae) Mrs Little drew attention to the new development in Kates Hill in respect of a new style general practice.

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PROPOSED PROHIBITION OF WAITING ORDER IN PAINT CUP ROW, DUDLEY WOOD

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on proposals for the introduction of a Prohibition of Waiting Order in Paint Cup Row, Dudley Wood.

RESOLVED

That the proposed Prohibition of Waiting Order in Paint Cup Row, Dudley Wood, be supported and that the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended accordingly.

90

DUDLEY TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the regeneration activity in Dudley Town Centre. Two presentations were also given in relation to activities indicated.

The first presentation was given by Mr Lowell Williams, principal of Dudley College and Mr Nick Allen of METZ Architects, who outlined Dudley College's plans and proposals for the major redevelopment in the town centre. Mr Williams reported that they planned to develop two new buildings on two separate sites within close proximity of the college's main campus on The Broadway. He stated that the first of the two building would be a Vocational Centre on the Tower Street West site supporting 1,500 students providing facilities such as hair and beauty salons, sports hall, gymnasium and fitness suite, public services facilities, drama auditorium, dance studios, creative art rooms and workshops.

Mr Williams then reported that the proposed second building would be a new Sixth Form Centre on the Priory Road site, to be developed in partnership with local schools, to include classrooms and laboratories, to support 500 plus A level students. An Higher Education Centre attached to the Sixth Form Centre was also proposed to be developed with the University of Wolverhampton, to include classrooms and resource based learning facilities to support 600 plus higher education students. He further stated that it was expected that the Sixth Form Centre would be open by December 2011 and the Vocational Centre by September 2012.

Following the presentation, Mr Williams indicated that if any Member requested further information in relation to the proposed re-developments of the town centre, that they contact him following the meeting.

The second presentation was given by Mr Andrew Ogg of Leslie Jones Architects, acting on behalf of the Council, who outlined the plans and proposals offered for the Tower Street East site. He reported that the project proposed to deliver a 6,000 sq m food store and 400 space car park, with a high quality of design to respect both the frontage onto Castle Street and the backdrop to Dudley Castle. The Committee were informed that a specialist development team had been assembled and proposals were currently being prepared which, after market testing with selected foodstore operators, would be subject of a planning application which would seek to increase developer confidence and fix the design quality from an early stage.

Following the presentation, Mr Ogg indicated that if any Member requested further information in relation to the proposed re-development of Tower Street East, that they contact him following the meeting.

Following the presentation given, Councillor K Finch and Mrs Roberts indicated that as Members of the Development Control Committee, they would not be taking part in the discussion on this matter or in any voting as the issue might be the subject of a future planning application to be considered at a meeting of the Development Control Committee and therefore, they would not wish it to be considered that they had predetermined the matter and so would make them ineligible to speak on any such application.

It was noted that reference made to Church Street in the presentation should have been Castle Street.

The Committee then thanked the presenters for the presentations and welcomed proposals for the regeneration of the Town Centre.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

91 EMPTY SHOPS GRANT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Government's Empty Shops Grant initiative and to seek views on the allocation of funding under the programme.

Following consideration of the proposals, it was

RESOLVED

That the recommendations set out in the report submitted to the meeting, be refused.

92 COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the progress to date of the Working Group and development 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, which had been discussed at the Working Group held on 23rd February, 2010.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

93 CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS WORKING GROUP

A report of the 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 2009/10.

RESOLVED

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

The award of a grant of £3,595 to St James's Church to help upgrade the kitchen facilities for community use.
 - (b) Netherton, Woodside and St Andrews Ward

The award of a grant of £1,562.68 to Age Concern Dudley for the purchase of a range of multi-media equipment for their 'At Home' visiting service.
 - (c) St James's Ward

The award of a grant of £1,304 to Impact Training for the purchase of a window shutter for the shop.
 - (d) St Thomas's Ward
 - (i) The award of a grant of £4,000 to Redhill Allotment Society to match fund the purchase of a composting toilet.
 - (ii) The award of a grant of £5,000 to St John's Church Preservation Group to contribute to the cost of replacing the lightening conductor on the tower.
- (2) That the applications for Black Country Boxing and the Cyber Bus Project be deferred to enable more precise information to be obtained.
- (3) That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to carry out the recommended actions within the agreed control procedures.

At this juncture, the Chairman thanked Mr John Boyle for his assistance and hard work in relation to capital allocations in view of his impending retirement.

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 19th January, 2010, that related to services provided by the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

95 MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON
19TH JANUARY, 2010 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 19th January, 2010, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

96 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

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

97 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE

It was noted that future meeting dates for the Committee would be determined at the annual meeting of the Council in May.

The meeting ended at 8.40pm.

CHAIRMAN