

Central Dudley Area Committee - 4th November, 2009

Report of the Area Liaison Officer

Matters Raised at the Meeting of the Committee held on 8th September, 2009 other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment

Purpose of Report

1. To note progress on issues raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 8th September, 2009, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

Background

2. The issues set out in paragraphs 2 to 12 (inclusive) below were raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 8th September, 2009, progress on which is as follows:

- 3 **Youth Issues**

The following issues were raised by Members:-

(a) St Andrew's Summer Scheme

A Member asked about the programme activities provided for under the St Andrew's Summer Scheme, which was co-ordinated by the St Andrew's Residents Trust. These comprised day trips, litter picks on Netherton Park and Bumble Hole, a sponsored walk, an arts day at Netherton Arts Centre, a sports day, a visit to the Space Centre in Leicester and a joint trip with the Pensioners' Group.

(b) Youth Activities for children in Netherton, Woodside and St Andrew's Ward

In response to a request made by a Member for a breakdown of the activities provided for in this ward, details have been circulated to all Members of the Committee, as requested at the last meeting.

(c) Target figure for young people attending venues/uptake of Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme in St Thomas's Ward

Details in respect of this were notified to the member who raised the issue and are included within the report on Youth Issues elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.

(d) Meadow Road Youth Centre

In response to a request made by a Member for a meeting to be arranged with the Assistant Director responsible for Dudley Youth Services and the three Ward Councillors for Castle and Priory to discuss ongoing problems concerning Meadow Road Youth Centre, the Member was advised that a preparatory meeting had taken place on Friday 9th October, 2009 and a meeting would be arranged in the near future to update Councillors on the outcome of that meeting.

4. **Petition regarding Eagle Close Flats**

A petition was presented by Councillor M Davis relating to the tenants of Eagle Close Flats objecting to and opposing the decision of the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services to enforce the dismantling of a garden shelter erected at the residents' expense.

The Tenancy and Estates Manager has visited the lead petitioner and reviewed the decision to instruct residents to remove the shelter they had erected in the communal garden of the flats. It was noted that residents had made some improvements to the structure since the original decision, which have addressed the safety concerns, and subject to some other minor alterations being made and conditions regarding the future maintenance being agreed to by the residents, consent has been given for the structure to remain.

5. **Unmodernised properties on the Woodside Estate**

A member of the public drew the committee's attention to 44 properties on the Woodside Estate which it was indicated had not been modernised and where bathrooms and toilets were situated adjacent to kitchens. The Area Liaison Officer offered to arrange a visit and a site visit has been arranged with the Cabinet Member for the 30th October.

6. **Matters raised at previous meetings**

The Area Liaison Officer undertook to respond to a questioner personally on a number of issues he raised between 2007 and 2009 regarding which he alleged he had not received a substantive response. A letter has been sent to the questioner indicating the following:-

13th March 2007 – Regarding the mosque issue, the Council's Development Control Committee refused the planning application in 2007 for the proposed development. An appeal on behalf of the mosque was subsequently upheld by the Planning Inspectorate and a legal challenge by the Council to the Inspector's decision was later dismissed. The latest position is that a report on the issue has been submitted to the meeting of the Council's Cabinet on 28th October, 2009, a copy of the report has been sent to the questioner.

11th September 2007 and 9th June, 2009 – Regarding Boy Racers on the Dudley Southern Bypass. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) advises that complaints regarding speeding along the Dudley Southern Bypass have been made to the Police regularly and have been investigated and acted upon by them.

22nd January 2008 – Regarding the gap in the central reserve in King Street. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) has advised that the gap in the central reserve in King Street cannot be closed as it is required by the emergency services for access and it is also used by large vehicles to deliver to adjacent stores, however, Dudley Taxi Alliance has warned its members about penalties for hackney carriage drivers if they break the law by driving through the gap.

10th June 2008 – Regarding the gym at Castle Hill, on behalf of the proprietor of which the questioner made the enquiry, the questioner is being advised that the Council, working with its partners, is committed to the regeneration of Dudley Town Centre, including the Zoo and Castle. While the Council would like to see improvements to the properties on Castle Hill, it has no plans that would mean imminent demolition of the gym. The Head of Property Management in the Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources has suggested that, should he so wish, a meeting with the proprietor be arranged to clear up any misunderstandings there may be, set out for him what the medium and long term proposals for the area are, and discuss with him how the Council may be able to help him maintain the business and the work done with local young people.

7. **Covenant in relation to the Dudley Mosque**

In response to a question asked by a member of the public in relation to the action the Council would be taking in respect of the covenant included in the land sale, should the High Court Case in relation to the Mosque proposals be resolved in favour of the appellant, the questioner had been advised by letter of the report being submitted to the Council's Cabinet on 28th October to decide a way forward on this issue. A copy of the report has been sent to the questioner.

8. **Sherriff Drive, Quarry Bank**

A member of the public raised a question about the historical background to a right of way provided from Robin Hood Road along Sherriff Drive. At the suggestion of the Area Liaison Officer the questioner agreed to submit a request for the action he now considered necessary but, at the time of writing, he has not done so.

9. **Garages in Langstone Road**

In response to a request from a Member regarding action to be taken in relation to the garages without doors at Langstone Road, the member has been advised that a site inspection has identified the site to be in a generally good condition with only one garage boarded up out of the seventeen on the site. He was also advised that some minor damage to the fascia boards of some of the garages and repairs to this and the boarded garage would be arranged to improve the appearance of the site. It was noted that the site was used for pedestrian access

from Langstone Road to the shops on Middlepark Road. The Head of Housing Management North considers that securing the site with fencing and gates might not resolve the issues raised and would block off an important access route for residents on the estate, however, the Housing Manager has undertaken to monitor the site as part of their regular estate inspections and determine if other options need to be explored.

10. **Council owned garages at Darby End Road**

A Member reported on a broken padlock on a security gate/barrier at an access point for Council owned garages at Darby End Road and requested that the situation be looked at. The Member has been advised that the work to repair the security barrier was completed on 14th October, 2009.

11. **Quarry Bank Library**

A Member requested an explanation as to why statistical information regarding user numbers that had been supplied in relation to Quarry Bank Library in relation to its closure were at variance with figures on that same matter supplied further to a Freedom of Information request. The relevant Assistant Director has advised the member that there was a misunderstanding in the interpretation of the figures submitted, they were in fact full year total figures, so should not have been doubled. Whereas the breakdown figures were for only 6 months, so doubling of these was appropriate.

12. **Storage Heaters**

In response to a comment made by a Member in relation to the cost of storage heaters in comparison to central heating, the Head of Neighbourhood Management North invited the Member for a discussion at the end of the meeting concerning a specific case in which satisfaction was expressed as to the reasons why the case had not been accepted for a change of heating system on medical grounds.

The Member was advised that priority for investment was being given on achieving the Decent Homes Standard by 2010, and are on target to achieve this. Replacement of electric night storage heating with a gas fired system is not within the remit of the Decent Homes Standard, but despite this, Dudley recognises its importance and a limited programme was introduced in 2007/8.

It is acknowledged that this is a small programme that will take many years to replace the electric systems that can be replaced but it is in excess of the Decent Homes Standard.

Dudley has also formed a funding partnership with E-On to deliver match funding for the programme under the Government Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT) programme. Dudley have spent around £600,000 over the last two years and are on target to spend around £500,000 this year installing around 150 replacement systems, with around £1.25m planned over the next four years replacing around 375 more systems.

Priority is only given to properties that have a gas supply, and specifically target those systems with the lowest energy rating to maximise impact and current policy targets the oldest installations first, which are generally the most inefficient.

Finance

13. This report has no direct financial implications.

Law

14. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council is empowered to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or conducive to, or incidental to the discharge of its function.

Equality Impact

15. This report complies with the policies of the Council on Equality and Diversity.
16. Children and young people have not been consulted on the preparation of this report, as report seeks only to note progress on issues raised at its previous meetings.

Recommendations

17. That the information above be noted.



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AREA LIAISON OFFICER

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List of Background Papers

Minutes of the meeting of the Central Dudley Area Committee held on 8th September, 2009