

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 8th September, 2009 at 6.30 p.m.
at Saltwells Education Development Centre, Bowling Green Road,
Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT: -

Councillor K Finch (Vice Chairman in the Chair)

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

OFFICERS:

The Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (as Lead Officer to the Committee), Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management), Assistant Director of Children's Services (Ms Porter) and the Area Youth Team Leader for the Central Dudley Area – both Directorate of Children's Services, Head of Housing Management – North Mr Hutchinson (Marketing and Communications, Chief Executive's Directorate), Principal Project Officer, Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services, Principal Solicitor (Mr Clark) and Mr Sanders – both Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Ms J Winpenny – Local Area Liaison Officer, West Midlands Fire Service

14 members of the public.

26 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors J D Davies and J R Davies; Mrs Edwards, Mrs Oakes and Mr Sadiq.

27 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

28 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9th June, 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the amendment of minute 21 (Healthy Towns Initiative) to provide for the extension of the first sentence of the fourth paragraph to reflect that certain wards in the Central Dudley Area, as well as being areas of deprivation, had the highest levels of ill health from heart disease, obesity and child obesity and should therefore have been funded from the allocation; in the first sentence of the fifth paragraph to substitute the words “that were involved with the project” for the words “that would support the project”; and in the first line of the fifth paragraph to substitute the words “healthy hubs” for the words “Health Club”.

29

CO-OPTION

Further to the decision of the Committee, at its last meeting, to request the Head of the Youth Service to seek a nominee to serve as a co-opted youth representative, two young people based at the Claughton Youth Centre who had expressed interest in serving were in attendance. The Area Liaison Officer reported that, rather than have their co-option considered at this meeting, at this stage the young persons had indicated that they would prefer to observe in order to enable them to decide whether or not they would wish co-option to be proceeded with.

In relation to the suggestion that mentoring be offered to the young persons to assist in introducing them to the Council and Committee machinery, the Area Liaison Officer stated that, should they be co-opted, the young persons had indicated that they would wish to take up the offer.

RESOLVED

That the issue of the co-option of the youth representatives be considered further at the next meeting of the Committee.

30

YOUTH SERVICE – INFORMATION REGARDING FACILITIES AVAILABLE AT YOUTH CENTRES AND RELATED MATTERS

A report of the Director of Children’s Services was submitted responding to specific enquiries made at the previous meeting for information regarding the facilities available at Youth Centres and related matters, as referred to in paragraph 2 of the report.

On consideration of the report, a number of questions were asked in relation to the information provided. Questions asked and responses given included the following:-

- On being asked the reason why a reference to Saltwells Youth Centre, which met on Mondays and Wednesdays, had not been included in the report, the Youth Team Leader for the Central Dudley Area indicated that Saltwells was not a Youth Centre provided by the Council and that, therefore, the information was not held by the Youth Service.
- In response to a question on the success of the summer programme at Meadow Road Youth Centre, the Area Youth Team Leader indicated that the figures were not yet available but were currently being worked on. Uptake had been good, however, with an estimated number of 15-20 young people attending the trips.
- In response to a question regarding an incident at Russells Hall Neighbourhood Centre, the Assistant Director of Children's Services gave the current position, indicating that the Directorate was working with the Police on the issue. Both the Assistant Director and the Area Youth Team Leader confirmed that evening sessions at the Centre were open to all young people, with Thursdays being targeted for girls. Tuesdays were being utilised primarily for youth work with persons with disabilities.
- In response to a question regarding the St. Andrew's Summer Scheme, the Area Youth Team Worker indicated that this had been co-ordinated by the St. Andrew's Residents' Trust, rather than the Council, and agreed to obtain the information requested and submit it to the member concerned.
- In response to a question on the numbers of young people who had attended a day project at Meadow Road Youth Centre, the Area Youth Team Leader indicated that on the first date there had been 6 young people and on the subsequent two Sundays numbers had risen to 12 – 15.

- In response a request sent by e-mail by a member for additional information regarding the manner in which youth activities for the 68 young people in the Netherton, Woodside and St. Andrew's ward had been organised, the Assistant Director of Children's Services referred to an e-mail sent to the member this day by the Interim Director of Children's Services (Early Years, Youth and Education Services) in which the breakdown requested had been provided. In making the point that provision for the young people had not necessarily been made within the Ward itself, the Assistant Director agreed to arrange for the breakdown to be circulated to all Members of the Committee.
- In referring to the figure of 35% of the target required for quarter one, as referred to in paragraph 4 of the report submitted, a member asked to be advised of the total target figure to be achieved in the full 12 month period. The same member also asked for the reasons for the seemingly low uptake on the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme for the St. Thomas' Ward. The Assistant Director of Children's Services agreed to arrange for this information to be sent to the Member.
- The Member who raised the issue of the targets also considered that there might be a lack of awareness in wards as to the facilities on offer and suggested that greater publicity might be appropriate.
- In response to a reference made by a Member to the fact that the report had not included statistical information on youth activities at Youth Centres run by voluntary groups, rather than the Council, the Assistant Director of Children's Services indicated that this information could be included in the reports to be submitted to future meetings in accordance with resolution (2) below.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee and all future meetings setting out activities being undertaken by the Youth Service for young people in each respective ward within the jurisdiction of the Committee.
- (3) That the St. Andrew's Residents' Trust be thanked for their work in the provision of Youth activities in the Netherton, Woodside and St. Andrew's Ward.

A report of the Interim Director of Law, Property and Human Resources was submitted seeking consideration of an appointment of a representative to serve on this body for the residue of the four year period expiring on 31st July 2010, in succession to former Councillor Rahman, and for a further four year period from that date.

RESOLVED

That Councillor Mrs Coulter be appointed as the nominative Trustee of the Council for the residue of the 4 year period expiring on 31st July 2010 and for the further period of four years expiring on 31st July, 2014.

32

PETITIONS

- a) The receipt of a petition from the congregation of the GNSS Sikh Temple objecting to a proposed road scheme at Swancote Street, Dudley; requesting that Swancote Street become a one way highway with its entrance off Wellington Road to Holland Street, and that Maughan Street be left in its existing format, was noted. It was noted further that the petition had been referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention and was currently under consideration.
- b) A petition from 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 was presented by Councillor M Davis and referred to the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services for the matter to be considered further.
- c) A petition requesting the re-instatement of Stone Street Square as a car park, presented by Councillor M Davis, was submitted and referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.

The proprietor of a shop in Stone Street, speaking in support of the petition, drew attention to the adverse impact on town centre businesses of not only the current economic recession but also of certain Council initiatives undertaken in recent years, including the extension of double yellow lines along the highway and the extension of the pavement in Stone Street, and the allocation of a greater number of taxi ranks in the town centre, all of which had served to exacerbate difficulties being encountered by traders in maintaining their businesses. The proprietor's comments were endorsed by both Councillor Davis and a member of the public in attendance who also spoke in support of the petition.

33

PUBLIC FORUM

- a) A member of the public drew attention to a number of issues regarding traffic in Netherton, in the context of safety for pedestrians, the encouragement of children to walk to school, and damage to health from fumes emanating from vehicles. In response, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) acknowledged the problems in Netherton arising from traffic issues and indicated that the Central Dudley Area Committee (Traffic Management in Netherton) Working Group would soon be ready to report to the Committee. Should the proposals of the Working Group be accepted, the Assistant Director envisaged that the problems referred to would be mitigated. The Assistant Director referred also to a public consultation exercise on the proposals, which it was proposed would be held at the Savoy Centre the following week and at which the public would have the opportunity to contribute views with the aim of achieving a sustainable resolution to the various issues.
- b) A resident of Woodside drew attention to 44 properties on the estate which had not been modernized and where bathrooms and toilets were situated adjacent to kitchens. She made the point that modernisation was effected on the estate only when properties became vacant and were re-let. In the discussion, the need for modernisation was supported by members of the Committee. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer, as Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services, referred to the Council's limited resources for Housing, following the ballot on the Council's Housing stock which had resulted in the stock remaining in Council ownership and control, and the implications of the priority of the Council in ensuring that its housing met the Decent Homes Standard. She indicated further that the record of the Council making the best use of its resources in this regard was one of excellence, as judged by the Audit Commission. She indicated, however, that the Government was currently looking at the issue of Housing Revenue Account subsidy and undertook to make the necessary arrangements for careful consideration to be given to the position of the properties in Woodside referred to. In this regard, she accepted an invitation from the member of the public who raised the issue to visit her property.
- c) A member of the public drew attention to vehicular parking at the junction of Stourbridge Road and Holly Street in Holly Hall, which he considered dangerous. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for consideration.
- d) A member of the public drew attention to unlawful parking at Stepping Stone Street where, he alleged, cars were being parked on the pavement outside residential homes. In drawing attention to the matter, he stated that there were two car parks in the street that were not being utilised. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for discussion with the Police.

- e) A member of the public indicated that, notwithstanding that he and his wife had received an acknowledgement to a number of questions asked at the Committee at the meeting held in March 2007 and further meetings, substantive responses to the questions had not been made. The Area Liaison Officer agreed to investigate the issue.
 - f) A member of the public indicated that he had not yet received a response to the question he had asked at the meeting of the Committee held in March 2009 on the action the Council would take regarding 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 Area Liaison Officer agreed to arrange for the matter to be followed up.
 - g) A number of questions were asked by a member of the public resident at Sheriff Drive in relation to a meeting held in early 1979 at the former Robin Hood Public House at Merry Hill regarding a development at Sheriff Drive. The member of the public wished to obtain the information in relation to an issue regarding a right of way, the use of which was currently causing difficulties to local residents from vandalism and anti-social behaviour. In view of the number of questions being asked by the member of the public, the Area Liaison Officer agreed to meet him immediately following the meeting to discuss his concerns.
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WARD ISSUES

(In the discussion on item (c) below, Councillor Ahmed declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with Members' Code of Conduct, in view of his being resident in Stepping Stone Street.)

- a) Councillor M Davis drew attention to garages without doors at Langstone Road, which he considered to be an eyesore, and were a magnet for anti-social behaviour. Councillor Davis requested that action be taken on the issue.
- b) Councillor M Davis requested street cleansing to be effected in London Heights, Milking Bank and Russells Hall, with particular reference to Osprey Drive. He also requested that dog fouling on the footpath be attended to.
- c) Councillor Ahmed requested that pot holes in Stepping Stone Street be attended to. He also suggested that the road would benefit from the installation of double yellow lines. Both matters were referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for consideration.

- d) Councillor Ahmed requested that the installation of litter bins in Wellington Road be considered. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.
- e) Councillor Ahmed referred to problems of overgrown bushes and fly tipping at Charlotte Street and Clifford Street. Both issues were referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.
- f) In drawing attention to potential dangers to children from vehicular parking in the vicinity of Milking Bank Primary School, Councillor Mrs Roberts asked for consideration to be given to the matter. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for consideration.
- g) Councillor Mrs Roberts drew attention to the usage of Oldfield Road for vehicular parking by visitors to Russells Hall Hospital, which was causing a nuisance to local residents, and requested the installation of double yellow lines. She also drew attention to the need for speed restriction signs in the area. Both matters were referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for consideration.
- h) Councillor Mrs Roberts referred to the potential dangers to children who ran down Cowley Drive on to a main road in their way to the local park. She requested that consideration be given to the installation of metal barriers at the end of Cowley Drive. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.
- i) Councillor Ali asked to be advised of the outcome of the feasibility study undertaken in relation to Cinder Bank Island some 12 months previously as a result of the vehicular accident at that location. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for a response.
- j) Councillor Waltho referred to a meeting arranged with senior officers to discuss matters arising from the Burnt Tree Island scheme with a view to apprising local residents of what was happening and to mitigate problems. Issues to be raised would include those relating to Bunns Lane and Tividale Road.
- k) Councillor Waltho indicated that officers were giving consideration to the issue of road safety in Bunns Lane, further to the fatal accident involving a bus, which had occurred in 2008.
- l) Councillor Mrs Coulter requested bushes overhanging the footpath in the vicinity of the Hope Public House to be cut back. The matter was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for attention.

- m) Councillor J Martin requested that road safety measures be introduced to reduce speeding traffic through Vale Road, Darby End Road, Thistlegreen Road and Oak Street. Councillor Martin maintained that cars, vans and lorries were using those roads in order to avoid traffic lights at the junction of St. Peter's Road and Cole Street. He asked that the matter be reviewed and improvements considered. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for consideration.
- n) Councillor J Martin referred to a complaint received from a local resident regarding flooding on to her driveway from the public highway. The same resident had also raised with him the issue of overhanging trees from Council owned land, which were damaging her rear garden fence. Both matters were referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.
- o) Councillor J Martin reported a complaint received from a resident of Darby End Road that grass cuttings from neighbouring Council owned and mowed land was being blown across her drive and pathway and requested that the appropriate officer contact the complainant. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.
- p) Councillor J Martin reported complaints received from residents about offensive graffiti at the rear of a property in Darby End Road, Netherton. Councillor Martin requested the removal of the graffiti and the application of anti graffiti paint on the premises. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.
- q) Councillor J Martin reported on a broken padlock on a security gate/barrier at an access point for Council owned garages at Darby End Road. He asked for the situation to be looked at and for a replacement padlock to be installed or other measures to be introduced, as appropriate. The matter was referred to the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services for attention.
- r) Councillor J Martin referred to complaints made to the Council several times by residents of Mousesweet Close requesting the provision of a replacement dog bin, further to the vandalism of the bin previously installed.
- s) Councillor Mrs Aston referred to trees overhanging steps located between Burton Road and the Broadway and requested action to be taken. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.

- t) Councillor J Finch referred to the untidy condition of the sites of the former Duncan Edwards and Washington Arms public houses and asked to be advised of the position. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention and for a report to be made to Councillor Finch.
- u) In reporting his understanding that Saltwells House appeared to have been sold for residential purposes, Councillor Sparks referred to a meeting on the future of the property at which he and the Saltwells Action Group had been assured that any development would be compatible with the Saltwells Nature Reserve. Councillor Sparks expressed concern that there had been no consultation on the issue of disposal and advised the meeting of the strong opposition to any scheme for residential development that did not meet the terms of the assurance given. Reporting on the matter, Councillor Sparks indicated that regular meetings of the Action Group had been held and had been attended by Council Officers.
- v) Councillor Cotterill referred to an undertaken given, further to the closure of Quarry Bank Library, that a ramp at the front steps would be provided at the link library for mothers and disabled people but drew attention to the fact that these had not been provided. The Area Liaison Officer, as Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services, indicated that a ramp had not been constructed since access sufficient for the purpose described was available from the rear of the property.
- w) Councillor Cotterill reported that 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 the same matter supplied further to a Freedom of Information request. He wished to be apprised of the reason for the difference. The matter was referred to the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services for attention.
- x) Councillor Cotterill reported on the lack of a public toilet provision in Quarry Bank High Street since the sale of the Library premises and requested the installation of a new facility. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.
- y) Councillor Cotterill requested the provision of a pedestrian crossing along Cradley Road, further to a site meeting at which such a facility had been promised. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.
- z) Councillor Cotterill requested the removal of build outs in Victoria Road. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.

- aa) Councillor Cotterill referred to a family within his ward whose property contained storage heaters, rather than central heating and which, he had been advised by the family, were too expensive to use. In response, the Area Liaison Officer, as Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services, indicated that the evidence of the Directorate was that storage heaters were no more expensive to operate than central heating but that she would be happy for the matter to be looked at further.
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35 COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

Since the meeting of the Community Renewal Working Group had been deferred until October, 2009, and no other meeting had been held since the previous meeting of the Committee, a progress report was not submitted.

In relation to the issue of membership, it was

RESOLVED

That Councillor Mrs Aston be appointed as a member of the Working Group in place of Councillor J Finch.

36 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT IN NETHERTON WORKING GROUP

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the activities of this Working Group since the last meeting of the Committee, with particular reference to the meeting held on 23rd July, 2009.

Reference was made to the public consultation exercise that it was proposed would be held the following week on the issues set out in paragraph 24 of the report.

In the discussion, Councillor Ali requested he be supplied with a copy of the feasibility study into the Cinder Bank Island by the end of the current week.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to approve the proposed Netherton Town Centre public consultation exercise and include in the public consultation the proposals to remove obstructive parking to improve safety and ease congestion at the following locations:-

- Arch Hill Street junction with Halesowen Road
- Cradley Road junction with Marriott Road
- Cradley Road junction with Halesowen Road
- Cradley Road junction with Griffin Street
- Northfield Road junction with Recreation Street
- Northfield Road junction with Halesowen Road

37

URBAN ENVIRONMENT – MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE HELD ON 9TH JUNE, 2009

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 that related to services provided by the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

In the discussion, Councillor Mrs Coulter requested that Councillors be kept updated on progress on the petition for the installation of two separate pedestrian crossings at Stourbridge Road, Holly Hall. In response, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) confirmed that consideration was being given to the matter within the Directorate and it was proposed that the matter would be submitted for public consultation within the next two months.

In relation to the replacement of lights and the removal of graffiti on the footbridge at the Dudley Southern By-pass, in response to a question from Councillor Ali, the Assistant Director indicated that a maintenance scheme would be drawn up shortly to include the issues of the cleansing of the footbridge and the repair of the optics.

In relation to the issue of the storm drains survey for the Castle and Priory Ward, Councillor Mrs Aston indicated that she was now in a position to provide the Assistant Director with the list referred to in the report.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

38

MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 9TH JUNE 2009 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 9th June, 2009, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

39 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

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

40 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 8.15 p.m.

CHAIRMAN