

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 15th March, 2011 at 6.30 p.m.
at Sledmere Primary School, School Drive, Off Buffery Road, Netherton

PRESENT: -

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

Councillors Ali, Mrs Aston, Cotterill, J R Davies, M Davis, A Finch, J Martin, Sparks and Waltho; Mr Lawley, Ms Little and, Mrs Oakes

OFFICERS:

The Assistant Director of Housing (as Acting Lead Officer to the Committee); Assistant Director (Environmental Management), Assistant Director of Economic Regeneration and Transportation, the Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery, the Chief Executive of New Heritage Regeneration and the Group Engineer, all Directorate of the Urban Environment; the Assistant Director of Policy Performance and Resources, and the Social Regeneration Officer – both Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services; the Youth Worker for Dudley Youth Service – Directorate of Children's Services; the Senior Solicitor and Ms K Farrington – both Directorate of Corporate Resources

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs Andrea Pope-Smith (Area Liaison Officer designate as an observer for this meeting)

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

Mr John Kempson, West Midlands Fire Service – for Agenda Item No. 6

37 Members of the public

80.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Mrs Roberts, Ms While-Cooper and Ms Wood; Mr Robinson and Mr Thomas.

81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ahmed declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 8 (Dudley Town Centre Regeneration), in view of the fact that he is a Member of Dudley Regeneration Partnership Board.

Councillor Ali declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 8 (Dudley Town Centre Regeneration), in view of the fact that he is a Member of Dudley Regeneration Partnership Board.

Councillor K Finch declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 8 (Dudley Town Centre Regeneration), in view of the fact that he is a Member of Dudley Regeneration Partnership Board.

Ms Little declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 8 (Dudley Town Centre Regeneration), in view of the fact that she is a Member of Dudley Regeneration Partnership Board.

82. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18th January, 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the substitution of the word "Davis" for that of "Davies" in the first lines of paragraphs (l), (m), (o) and (p) in minute no 71 (Ward Issues).

83. YOUTH SERVICE

The Youth Worker gave an oral update on current projects being undertaken by the Youth Service for young people to participate in. He referred, in particular to the success of the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Mentoring course which was currently being run in partnership with Dudley College; progress on the music programme with Cherry Tree Learning Centre, which involved working with a group of young people within the studio at Russells Hall Youth Centre on various activities and the Kick-Ash Project, which involved a group of young people producing a music CD to promote healthy lifestyles via a non-smoking campaign.

During the presentation, the Youth Worker confirmed that the Dudley Central Detached Team had now negotiated the use of the Healthy Hub in Netherton Park and the Old Sons of Rest building in Buffery Park and referred to new projects and activities that would be provided there. He also referred to various training courses that had been provided for young people to participate in.

In concluding, the Youth Worker updated the Committee on the activities that had taken place in the Central Dudley Area during February half term.

In responding to a question regarding the activities offered in the Sledmere area, the Youth Worker indicated that the Community Centre on the Sledmere Estate had closed, however, a number of young people from Sledmere had participated in activities that had been offered at the Cloughton Centre and at the Community Centre in Kates Hill.

RESOLVED

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

84. POLICE ISSUES

Sector Inspector Richard Jones of West Midlands Police reported on current police issues in the area of the Committee.

Particular reference was made to Operation Intrusive, an operation to crack down on acquisitive crime in “hot spot” areas. The Sector Inspector indicated that the operation had been successful and had provided an excellent example of local police working closely with other organisations. He also indicated that the operation would continue until the end of March.

In view of the success of Operation Advent, which had been carried out over the advent period, the Sector Inspector indicated that a similar operation would be carried out throughout the whole of April aimed at combating drug related offences. He stated that the Police would be liaising with the press in the near future to publicise the operation.

A Member of the Committee expressed concern in relation to the impact the budget reduction would have on the services currently provided by the Police. In responding, the Sector Inspector assured the Committee, that the Police Authority was committed to carrying out and protecting the services they provided to the community at the level expected.

A Member of the Committee drew attention to the parking problems on Oakham Road at Turners Hill. In responding, the Sector Inspector indicated that the Police had recently carried out various activities in the vicinity of Oakham Road, with particular reference to Balckacre Road, however he undertook to investigate the matter and respond in writing to the Member direct.

RESOLVED

- (1) That Sector Inspector Richard Jones be thanked for his presentation and that the information reported on be received and noted.

- (2) That the parking problems on the Oakham Road at Turners Hill be investigated and a response be sent to the Member.
-

85. FIRE SERVICE ISSUES

Mr Kempson of the West Midlands Fire Service reported orally on the number and nature of incidents in the Central Dudley Area with particular reference to accidental fires, arson fires and aspects in relation to void buildings and confirmed that there had been a slight increase in relation to dwelling fires.

In relation to the recent activities that had been carried out over the past few months, Mr Kempson referred to, in particular, the number of pupils whom had successfully completed fire programmes and team building exercises and confirmed that these courses would continue to be offered in the future. He indicated that the Young Firefighters Association, run by the Fire Services had been visiting Schools in the Borough with a view to encouraging young people aged between 13 and 17 to join a uniformed organisation based on the fire service. Other activities had included partnership work carried out with the Police to reduce road traffic issues and a number of home safety checks, which had resulted in numerous fire alarms being fitted.

RESOLVED

That Mr Kempson be thanked for his presentation and that the information reported on be received and noted.

86. PETITIONS

A petition from residents had been submitted requesting that the removal of double yellow lines on Bushey Fields Road, Russells Hall on the side of the road where properties were situated and then replaced with no waiting restrictions from 10.00am to 11.00am and 2.00pm to 3.00pm. 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.

A petition had been received from residents in Abbotsford Drive in relation to parking problems and which requested the introduction of a Traffic Regulation Order. 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.

A petition had been received by members of the public seeking the resignation of the Chairman. In submitting the Petition, the Petition Organiser addressed the Committee. Upon receipt of the petition by the Committee, no motion to change the Chairmanship of the Committee was moved by any Member.

A petition was received from residents of Parkway Road and surrounding areas requesting the removal of the one-way system installed in Parkway Road, leading to Himley Road. In submitting the Petition, the Petition Organiser addressed the Committee. 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.

87.

DUDLEY TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on regeneration activity in Dudley Town Centre, in the context of the Dudley Town Centre Area Development Framework (ADF) adopted by the Council in 2005; the delivery of the Framework and the new Black Country Joint Core Strategy.

In presenting the report, the Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery introduced the Chief Executive of New Heritage Regeneration.

A presentation was then given on the regeneration of Dudley Town Centre in relation to which, three design options were explained, all outlined in the public consultation document circulated at the meeting. The aim was to develop a more modern market place while keeping the traditional historic element to the Town Centre. Design images, lighting and the layout of stalls, trees and other features were also explained, together with a virtual tour of the proposed new layout of the market place.

The Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery indicated that the first stage of the public consultation, running for six weeks had commenced on 15th March, 2011 and aimed to obtain the responses of those who used the town centre on a regular basis. In concluding, the Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery confirmed that the sum of £3m had been secured from the European Regional Development Fund for the redevelopment of the Town Centre.

Following the presentation, Members of the Committee expressed various concerns in relation to the proposed re-location of the public toilets and with regard to the maintenance of the trees located around the market place. They also considered that rents for market traders at the current level were too high and had contributed to the decline of the market place. In responding, the Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery assured the Committee that the public toilets would be relocated centrally in the Town Centre; a large number of the trees that would be used had a limited growth level; and in relation to the rent for market traders, there would be a marginal increase in the near future, however, no further increases would be made in relation to the new development.

A general comment from a Member of the Committee was made in that the lighting at Castlegate and Cinder Bank Islands needed investigating.

Members of the public also expressed general concerns in relation to the comments made above and indicated that it was not the market place that was preventing customers from using the town centre, but the number of derelict and empty shops in the Town Centre. The view was expressed that the money to regenerate to the town would be better spent on other aspects of the town centre, for instance, repairing hot holes, refurbishing derelict shops, lowering rent for traders and free parking. In responding, the Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery indicated that the idea of a contemporary design was to restore Dudley Town Centre and to attract more people, make the area more open and accessible for all that work and shop at the market and create flexibility for busy days to add extra stalls and remove them at the end of the day. In relation to the funding for the redevelopment, he stated that this could not be used for any purposes other than the regeneration of the Town Centre.

A general comment from a member of the public was received in relation to the two churches in Dudley, which had not been referred to in the report or presentation, however, it was confirmed by the Chief Executive of New Heritage Regeneration that work was being carried out to develop the churches and identify possible ways to restore them.

The Committee then thanked the Officers for the presentation and welcomed proposals for the regeneration of the Town Centre.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

88.

PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) Questions from two different members of the public were submitted objecting to the proposed Traffic Regulation Orders for Blackacre Road, and expressing fear that the traffic problem would be moved into surrounding streets should any Traffic Regulation Order be introduced. It was suggested that opening King Street to traffic would solve the problem. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) indicated that proposals for Blackacre Road would be discussed later under agenda item number 12. He stated, however, that Blackacre Road had been a high profile road for years and that endeavours to find solutions to alleviate the problems occurring had been ongoing with residents. In relation to the suggestion to open King Street to traffic, he undertook to investigate this matter and respond to the questioner direct.

- (b) A member of the public queried why the two speed visors had been removed from Oakham Road. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) indicated that if speed visors were in place for long periods of time, motorists became aware of the device and in order to get maximum use of the equipment, normal procedure was to move the speed visors around.
- (c) A further question was submitted by a member of the public in relation to Oakham Road, querying whether the road was a classified or unclassified road. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) indicated that it was the view of the Council that Oakham Road was a classified road.
- (d) A member of the public queried whether the motive behind the introduction of the three big bag rule was financial or to encourage recycling. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) confirmed that the decision had been made primarily for reasons of financial economy.
- (e) A member of the public asked to be updated on the progress of the Council's decision to buy back the land at Hall Street in view of the scarcity of media coverage. In responding, the Legal Adviser assured the questioner that he would pass the question to an appropriate officer and request that a written response be submitted to the questioner.
- (f) A member of the public submitted a number of questions in relation to the Tesco redevelopment at the Town Gate Retail Park and the adjacent redevelopment of the Burnt Tree Island road interchange. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environment Assistant) assured the questioner that he would look into these matters and that a response in writing would be submitted.
- (g) A member of the public queried whether the Council intended to comply with the Governments rule on parking on pavements.
- (h) A member of the public also queried why cars were being allowed to park on the footpath at the new Toucan Crossing at the junction of Avenue Road, Stourbridge. She also conveyed her thanks to Councillor J Martin and former Councillor Mrs Coulter for all their help and advice over the past two years, with particular reference to the refurbishment of the properties on the Woodside Estate and wished them every success for the future.

In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) indicated that there were limitations in relation to civic parking enforcement; however, the Council were looking at solutions to alleviate the problems.

- (i) The same member of the public drew attention to safety issues along Cochrane Road and requested that safety measures be introduced. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate the matter and respond to the questioner direct.
- (j) A member of the public asked to be advised on progress in relation to the Parkway Road closure and the knock on effect of traffic around the surrounding road. In responding, it was noted that a petition on Parkway Road had been received and would be dealt with in accordance with the Petition Scheme.
- (k) A member of the public submitted a number of questions in relation to the Russells Hall Estate. Particular mention was made with regard to the Children's play area, which had been flooded due to bad drainage and the parking problems in Overfield Road. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) indicated that he would look into the matters raised and that a written response would be submitted to the questioner. Regarding the query in relation to parking in Overfield Road, the Chairman stated that a report in relation to the main problems occurring in Russells Hall would be discussed later in the meeting under agenda item number 13.
- (l) In commenting on the recent budget reductions, a member of the public queried what the Council's chances would be of recovering the reported £1.2m rent arrears. In responding, the Acting Area Liaison Officer referred to the policy on rent arrears and assured the questioner that the Council would continue to look at ways to improve their services to address issues of debt.
- (m) A member of the public drew attention to the amount of pot holes in St Thomas's Ward. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environment Management) indicated that the Council was aware of the problems in relation to this matter and confirmed that a programme of works for the year was in the process of being put together.
- (n) A member of the public requested an update on the proposed benches on the Buffery Park opposite Selbourne Road. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) confirmed that negotiations with the Friends of the Park were ongoing and indicated that a written response would be submitted to the questioner.
- (o) In referring to traffic problems on the Oakham Road, a member of the public raised concern that no pedestrian crossing facilities were provided for along the entire length of the Road. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) undertook to consider the matter further.

- (p) A member of the public requested an update of the position regarding stray horses. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) confirmed that the Director of the Urban Environment was working closely with the Police and other agencies to ascertain a solution to address the problem.
-

89.

WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillor Ali referred to the pot holes in St Thomas's Ward and requested that these be investigated.
- (b) Councillor Ali reported on the potential changes to the Governing Body at Castle High School.
- (c) Councillor Sparks reported that the new bench located in the park in Quarry Bank was pushed over regularly and requested that Officers arrange for the bench to be secured to rectify the problem.
- (d) In referring to Saltwells Nature Reserve, Councillor Cotterill drew attention to tyre marks on the grass caused by Severn Trent. He indicated that he had been informed that the Environment Agency had been considering constructing a road in that area and queried whether this proposal was going ahead.
- (e) Councillor Cotterill drew attention to the lack of warden control at Saltwells Nature Reserve and requested that extra wardens be considered.
- (f) Councillor M Davis drew attention to the lack of lighting in Scotts Green Close and Pearce Close and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (g) Councillor M Davis requested that a zebra crossing on Himley Road in the region of the Hilly House public house be considered.
- (h) Councillor M Davis commented on section 106 agreements and stated that Russells Hospital had never contributed to a section 106 agreement to his knowledge.
- (i) Mr Lawley expressed concern regarding the Local Education Services and requested that the Council be diligent when allocating funding to schools.
- (j) In commenting on the proposals for Blackacre Road, Mr Lawley suggested that other roads in the Central area were also experiencing the same problems.
- (k) Councillor Ahmed requested that a parking restriction on Dibdale Street be investigated.

90. COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

An oral presentation was given by the Assistant Director of Policy Performance and Resources on next steps in connection with the community renewal activity in consequence of the Council's budget for 2011/12.

He conveyed his thanks to the Community Renewal Team for the hard work that had been carried out until the discontinuation.

Members of the Committee conveyed their thanks for all the work carried out by the Community Renewal Team, and dismay was expressed about the decision to discontinue the Community Renewal Team.

RESOLVED

That the information received be noted.

91. PETITION – BLACKACRE ROAD, DUDLEY: PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted seeking the support for the introduction of Traffic Regulation Orders in the Blackacre Road area to support an existing "no driving except for access to properties" Order and which sets out alternative proposals in this regard. Plans showing original and amended proposals were attached to the report.

On consideration of the report, the organiser of the petition referred to in minute number 86 above and addressed the Committee on the contents of his petition and associated documentation, which he had submitted to the Members of the Committee prior to the meeting advocating that no Traffic Regulation Orders be taken in the Blackacre Road area in addition to those already in place. His particular concerns included:-

- The impact the proposals would have on surrounding roads;
- The Council failed to consult residents in the surrounding area prior to the proposals being drawn up.

Ward Members also addressed the Committee on the petition.

The Ward Members also referred to the need to install traffic calming measures in Oakham Road to control the volume of traffic and speeding of vehicles. In relation to a comment made regarding the Council not consulting the residents in surrounding areas on proposals, it was confirmed that the petition organiser had arranged a meeting at the Sons of Rest building, which Ward Members had attended at which proposals and concerns had been discussed. In concluding, a suggestion was made in relation to traffic lights in the Central area at King Street should be synchronized at the right hand turn from King Street to Hall Street re-introduced.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended that the first proposal in the tabulation at paragraph 13 of the report now submitted be approved, together with the introduction of a “no left turn” prohibition from Rollaston Road into Paradise.

92. RUSSELLS HALL TRAFFIC WORKING GROUP UPDATE

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on investigations and progress in relation to traffic issues in the streets surrounding Russells Hall Hospital, by the Working Group.

The Group Engineer indicated that various options had been investigated, however the Working Group concluded that the introduction of a variety of Traffic Regulations Orders, all of which were outlined in the report submitted to the meeting, for the Russells Hall area would be the most acceptable option to residents.

In concluding, the Group Engineer confirmed that the proposals were currently being advertised in the Express and Star, on-street notices and on the Council's website in order to seek observations from the Community.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted.

93. CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS – RECOMMENDATION OF THE CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS WORKING GROUP

A report of the Acting 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 2010/11.

RESOLVED

- (1) That grants to the organisations indicated below for the purposes, and in the sums indicated, be approved:
- (a) Netherton, Woodside and St Andrews Ward
- (i) The award of a grant of £2,558.78 to Friends of Netherton Park for the provision of a secure storage unit and equipment, including table and chairs to further the groups work in running the Netherton Park Fun Day.
- (ii) The award of a grant of £1,340.57 to St Augustine's Lunch Club for the provision of a new range cooker and water boiler for the Lunch Club to provide hot meals and a place to meet friends which is open to all members of the community. This sum to be met from the capital allocations of Netherton, Woodside and St Andrew's Ward (£610.03) and St James's Ward (£730.54).
- (iii) The award of a grant of £500 to Holly Hall and Woodside Tenants and Residents Association to contribute towards the cost of two laptop computers, printer/scanner and projector to improve communication between the committee and the membership.
- (b) Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood Ward
- (i) The award of a grant of £406.71 to the 5th Cradley Heath Brownies for the provision of a lockable storage cupboard, catering urn and mini oven along with various toys and games to promote physical activity and life skills.
- (c) St Thomas's Ward
- (i) The award of a grant of £2,159.83 to Friends and Residents of Buffery Park to contribute towards a boiler and heating system within the Sons of Rest Building as part of the long term plan to bring the building back to viable use as a community facility.
- (2) That, at the written request of the applicant, the capital allocation offered to Woodside Community Association in January 2011 for £653.38 to contribute towards the purchase of a sand/grit spreader and janitorial trolley, be withdrawn.
- (3) That the Area Liaison Officer in consultation with the Chairman and relevant Ward Member of the current Capital Allocations Working Group be authorised to determine applications received from the date of this meeting until the end of the current municipal year.

- (4) That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to carry out the recommended actions within the agreed control procedures.
-

94. MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 18TH JANUARY, 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 18th January, 2011, with regard to services provided by the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

In referring to paragraph 6 (Oakham Road Traffic Problems) on page 38 of the report submitted to the meeting, a Member of the Committee asked that investigations be carried out to establish whether Oakham Road was classified or unclassified road and if the road was confirmed to be classified, he requested that a pelican crossing or alternative road traffic measures be put in place to control speeding vehicles.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

95. MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 18TH JANUARY, 2011 OTHER THAN THOSE RELATING TO THE DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

A report of the Acting Area Liaison Officer was submitted on progress on issues raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 18th January, 2011, 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.

98.

COMMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN

In view of Councillors J R Davies and J Martin not seeking re-election in May, the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, conveyed his thanks to both Members for their hard work and determination and wished them both every success in the future. He also thanked Diane Channings for her help and support during her period as Acting Area Liaison Officer.

The meeting ended at 8.55pm

CHAIRMAN