

NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 30th January, 2008 at 6.30 pm
Lower Gornal Youth Academy

PRESENT

Councillor Simms (Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs Ameson, Caunt, Evans, Fraser Macnamara, Mrs Millward, Mottram, Mrs Ridley, Ryder, Stanley and Wright; Mr J Millward.

Officers

The Director of Children's Services (as Area Liaison Officer), the Assistant Director of Law and Property (Legal and Democratic Services); the Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety and the Senior Warden – Wren's Nest Nature Reserve (Directorate of the Urban Environment), and Mrs J Rees (Directorate of Law and Property).

IN ATTENDANCE

Police Constable Richard Narrowmore of the West Midlands Police, together with approximately 40 members of the public were in attendance.

60 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor G Davies; Inspector Mark Sutton of the West Midlands Police and Mr C Watling of Centro.

61 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5th December, 2007, be approved as a correct record and signed.

62 **YOUTH ISSUES**

The Area Team Leader, (Directorate of Children's Services) reported on youth activities in the area since the previous meeting of the Committee as follows:

- (a) The Dudley Youth Forum held its first meeting on 16th January, 2008. The group would attend a residential during the Easter school holidays to formalise the group, look at its role, what it wanted to achieve and for the young people to get to know each other and the staff who will be working with them.

- (b) All the youth clubs in the area were working towards the youth service key performance indicator and developing a variety of programmes.
- (c) Work had started on North Dudley skate/wheels park and kick-about pitch at Tenacre Fields. It was hoped that the new facilities would be completed and ready for use in time for the Easter school holidays.
- (d) As part of International Women's Week, a dance project by young women from across the area was scheduled, with the opportunity to take part in workshops and a visit to the Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham.
- (e) Mr J Millward advised that the Youth Parliament Elections had been held and the results would be announced on 9th February, 2008 at the Council House.

Mr Millward informed that, following consideration of a request by this Committee, the Dudley Youth Council, at its recent meeting, had resolved to dedicate the Community (Youth) Award to Rajpal Singh for this year.

- (f) Cllr Mrs Millward expressed concerns that a full time youth leader had still not been appointed at the Lower Gornal Youth Academy. She commended the hard work and dedication of all the staff at the Academy since the death of Rajpal Singh, and hoped that a full time Youth Worker would be appointed as a matter of urgency, to enable all the good work carried out with and for young people to continue.
- (g) In response to concerns expressed by some Members of the Committee that the absence of a full time youth worker had put a strain on the staff working at the Lower Gornal Youth Academy, and concerns that the good work undertaken in the previous twelve months might not be able to continue, the Director of Children's Services acknowledged the hard work and commitment of all the staff at the Academy, particularly over the last few months. He was confident that a full time member of staff would be appointed in the near future.

POLICE ISSUES

In the absence of Inspector Mark Sutton, Inspector Lynda Bailey's replacement, Police Constable Richard Narrowmore reported orally on the work and priorities of the Police Neighbourhood Groups since the last meeting, including:

- (a) Dates for future Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings would be 31 January, 2008, 7th February 2008 and 6th March 2008.

- (b) A General PACT meeting had been held at Gornal village in the week previous to this meeting, where concerns had been expressed relating to anti social behaviour and large numbers of youths congregating in certain areas. At peak times, additional police would be put on duty. He was hopeful that the proposed installation of a CCTV camera in Gornal would help police in addressing anti social and threatening behaviour in the area.
- (c) Police Constable Narrowmore advised that he would be happy to discuss any issues of concerns with members of the public and Members of the Committee outside of the meeting.
- (d) Priorities identified for the area included acts of anti social behaviour due to large numbers of young people congregating and resulting acts of anti social behaviour.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee, Police Constable Narrowmore advised that seven mobile CCTV camera units were currently available within the Borough and these patrolled areas on a regular rolling basis. The mobile camera unit was scheduled to tour Gornal village during the forthcoming week-end. The police welcomed feedback relating to visits of camera units to an area.

A member of the public expressed concerns that large numbers of young people were congregating at the bus station in Gornal and damaging the shutters of the waiting room and putting staff at the bus station at risk.

Councillor Mrs Millward advised that she was aware that large numbers of young people were also strolling into the Library in Gornal. The library was isolated and the two female members of staff were not able to deal with such large numbers of young people. She also expressed the view that the large number of young people were coming into Gornal from neighbouring areas. She suggested that internal CCTV cameras should be installed at the library.

She also advised that when she had tried to contact the police to report large numbers of young people at the library, it had taken over 12 minutes to get through to the Police, which she considered was too long.

Councillor Mrs Ameson advised that she also had found it difficult to get through to the Police and that often they did not respond. This comment had also been made by a number of residents.

Mr J Millward also expressed concerns at the large number of young people attending the area, but could give no reason for this. He also reported large numbers of youths were congregating at the bus shelter which was threatening for the elderly.

Councillor Mrs Ameson brought to the attention of the police a number of issues including:

- 1) acts of anti social behaviour at the Donkeys Pool.

- 2) lack of police response to telephoned problems relating to youngsters riding quad motorbikes and causing noise nuisance, despite registration numbers being provided by complainants.
- 3) football players at weekends parking inconsiderately and blocking residents' drives and cleaning their boots on residents' driveways.

Police Constable Narrowmore undertook to investigate the issues raised and to send a written response to Councillor Mrs Ameson and the Chairman of the Committee. He advised that often local residents would confide in their Ward Councillors but would not speak to the Police about the issues, which made it difficult for the police to take action.

Councillor Stanley commented that under age drinking was becoming a big problem in the area. He was particularly concerned where young people lit fires to keep warm whilst drinking, which could become a fire hazard. In response, Police Constable Narrowmore advised on a productive meeting between the police neighbourhood watch and licensees, who accepted that the sale of alcohol to under aged young people needed to be discontinued. He also commented that should the alcohol ban for Sedgley town centre be successful, it might be possible in the future to extend the ban, which would give the Police more powers to deal with drink related issues.

64 CHANGE OF ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to council procedure 13 (c) it was

RESOLVED

That agenda item 11 (Wrens Nest Nature Reserve Management Plan) be considered as the next item of business.

65 WRENS NEST NATURE RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve Management Plan 2008-2012. The Committee's support was sought for the publication of the Plan, which had been written following a review, carried out by officers of the Council, of the services provided at the Nature Reserve, and future developments proposed for the site for the next five years.

The Senior Warden, Wrens Nest Nature Reserve, advised that although the recent Black Country Urban Park BIG Lottery bid had not been successful, the Council was working, in conjunction with Natural England, to try and secure alternative funding, in order that the Seven Sisters mines could be reopened to the public in the future.

In response to comments made by Members of the Committee and members of the public, the Senior Warden, Wrens Nest Nature Reserve, undertook to investigate the whereabouts of the kissing gates reported as being missing. She acknowledged that since the Warden's offices and the changing rooms had been burnt down, footballers had nowhere to change and often did so in the bushes, within sight of local residents, which was not acceptable. In an attempt to address concerns regarding noise nuisance related to young persons driving quad bikes over the area, she suggested that local garages be approached by the police, with a view to curtailing the sale of small amounts of petrol, when it was obvious that this was for use with quad bikes.

RESOLVED

1. That the publication of the Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve Management Plan 2008-2012 Revision be supported.
2. That the Cabinet Member for Leisure be recommended to approve the Plan.
3. That the proposal that the Council seek appropriate funding sources to assist with the implementation of the Plan's actions, be endorsed.

66

FIRE SERVICE ISSUES

In the absence of a representative of the West Midlands Fire Service, no issues were considered under this item.

67

PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A member of the public requested that the whereabouts of two Kissing Gates, delivered in 2006, but now gone missing from the Wrens Nest, be investigated. The Senior Warden, Wrens Nest Nature Reserve, undertook to investigate the whereabouts of the gates.
- (b) A member of the public queried why some Ward councillors no longer held local surgeries. In response, Ward Members of Gornal, Sedgley and Upper Gornal and Woodsetton Wards advised that, due to a lack of visitors to surgeries, the practice of holding them had been discontinued. All Members of these Wards were on call and would visit residents in their homes at any reasonable time of the day to discuss issues in private, thus ensuring complete confidentiality. This had proved a more successful practice than holding surgeries in these Wards.

Members of Coseley East Ward advised that they had continued to hold surgeries every two weeks and that, as these were well attended, they would continue to hold the surgeries.

- (c) A member of the public asked whether any planning application had been submitted requesting that land in Cotwall End Valley be changed from green belt to brown field. He had asked this question at the meeting of the Committee in December 2007, and to date had not received a written response. The question was forwarded to the Planning Department of the Directorate of the Urban Environment, with a request that a written response be sent to the questioner. Councillor Fraser Macnamara, as Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture, advised that he was unaware of any changes for the designation of land in that area.
- (d) A member of the public expressed concerns regarding traffic issues in Gospel End Road, Sedgley. The Area Liaison Officer advised that this issue had been raised previously and that the questioner had received a detailed written response. Councillor Evans commented that this was a long standing issue and that anti skid material and safety barriers had been introduced in an attempt to address the concerns
- (e) Some members of the public questioned reported proposals to cut funding for Ethnic Minorities Achievement Services (EMAS). They also asked if an Impact Assessment had been carried out.

One member of the public also questioned whether the budget for EMAS was to be reduced twice in the current financial year. In response, Councillor Mrs Millward, as the Cabinet Member for Finance, advised that due to reductions in grants from the Government, it had become necessary for the Council to look at all the services delivered and to provide value for money, whilst delivering the best possible service suited to the 21st Century. There would be a need to prioritise in the forthcoming budget and make decisions on how best to manage it. She stated that the EMAS budget had not been reduced twice, although a reduction in services would be necessary, not just in the EMAS, but other services as well.

In response to comments regarding the proposed savings in the budget, and their affect on children from ethnic groups, the Leader of the Council advised that when faced with a limited budget, choices had to be made and sometimes these were not popular. The Council had no control over the funding provided by the Government, but had to operate within its limits and provide value for money.

The Director of Children's Services advised that whilst the budget might be reduced, a considerable amount of funding was still being spent on EMAS and this would continue for 2008/09.

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on a proposed Designated Order to declare Sedgley Town Centre, a place where the consumption of alcohol would be prohibited.

In presenting the report, the Assistant Director of Law and Property (Legal and Democratic Services) requested that, should the proposal for a Designated Order be approved, the Committee give consideration to the allocation of £4,000 from the 2007/08 capital allocations budget for the Sedgley Ward, to purchase and install the signs, to enable the Order to be progressed.

Police Constable Narrowmore spoke in support of the proposal, which would, if approved, give more powers to the police to take action against under age drinkers and those causing nuisance to local residents by acts of anti social behaviour, related to excess drinking.

In response to a suggestion from Councillor Caunt, that perhaps the Police could match fund the provision of signage to enable the ban to be progressed, Police Constable Narrowmore advised that the matter had been discussed at a recent Tenants and Residents Association meeting and that he would raise the question of funding of the CCTVs at the next PACT meeting, which was scheduled for 31st January, 2008.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the making of a Designated Order for Sedgley Town Centre, as shown in Appendix 1 of the report submitted to the Licensing and Safety Committee on 17th December, 2007, be supported.
- (2) That approval be given for an allocation from the 2007/08 Capital Allocations budget for the Sedgley Ward, for the requisite signage, subject to the Police match funding the total cost of £4,000.

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on two applications received for funding from the capital budget allocation of the Committee.

The Area Liaison Officer advised that, in the absence of a meeting of the Working Group, all Members of the Committee had been consulted on the two applications and had expressed support for both applications.

The Committee were also asked to consider making funding available for the purchase and installation of requisite signs, in order to allow the Designated Order to be progressed.

In referring to the application by the Gornal Business Watch, Councillor Millward expressed gratitude to all local businesses for their support in raising funds towards the installation of the CCTV cameras in Gornal.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee and Ward Councillors, be authorised to determine urgent applications for capital funding.
- (2) That the sums referred to below be allocated to the following organisations for the purposes indicated:-

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount</u>
2132 (Sedgley) Squadron Air Training Corps	Purchase of a new "standard" and the necessary accessories	£431.67
Gornal Business Watch	Purchase and installation of CCTV camera , to be monitored via the CCTV control room at Sedgley Police Station	£5,500
Directorate of the Urban Environment	Subject to the making of the Order referred to in Minute above, the cost of signage supporting the introduction of an Order to ban the consumption of alcohol in Sedgley Town Centre, and subject to the Police match funding the full cost of the signage (£4,000)	£2,000

ST. GEORGE'S DAY PAGEANT IN SEDGLEY TOWN CENTRE

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on proposals to hold a St. George's Day Pageant in Sedgley town centre on Saturday 26th April, 2008.

In presenting the report, the Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety advised that following a traffic safety audit, the West Midlands Fire Service had expressed support for the Pageant, although the Dudley Safety Advisory Group had expressed concerns relating to emergency evacuation, should it become necessary, and also possible delays to bus services.

Members of the Committee expressed their support for the pageant, commenting that, as the parade through Sedgley town centre would take a matter of only 20 minutes, there would be very little inconvenience to members of the public, and these would be far outweighed by the benefits to the Community.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the proposals for a St. George's Day Pageant in Sedgley on Saturday 26th April, 2008, be supported.
 - (2) That the introduction of Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders for the St. George's Day pageant in Sedgley be supported.
 - (3) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be advised to make a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order to enable the St. George's Day Pageant in Sedgley on Saturday 26th April, 2008 to go ahead.
-

71

FORMATION OF THE PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST CHARITY

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted seeking approval of the Committee to rationalise eighteen small "inactive" education charities into one charity for the benefit of children and young people of Dudley by way of awards for educational achievements and to rename the new charity "Putting Children and Young People First".

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Committee, as Trustees for Dudley education charities, approve in principle the rationalisation of eighteen education charities into one new charity named "Putting Children and Young People First",
 - (2) That approval be given to the issuing of a public consultation document, to include the proposals, as set out in paragraph 13 of the report submitted.
-

72

SEVERN TRENT WATER DISPERSAL MAIN WORKS IN SEDGLEY AND GORNAL

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on Severn Trent Water's proposals for a new water dispersal main at the Company's local Centre at Wombourne to take place in the Spring of 2008. Severn Trent Water had indicated that they were hopeful that the work in Sedgley town centre would be completed prior to the St George's Day Pageant on Saturday 26th April, 2008.

In response to comments from Members of the Committee requesting that assurances be obtained from Severn Trent Water that the work be completed prior to the St George's Day pageant, the Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety advised that no assurances could be given, but that the matter would be closely monitored. He undertook to convey Members' concern in respect of the Pageant on Saturday 26th April, 2008, to Severn Trent Water Authority.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report submitted be noted.

73

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT PREVIOUS MEETINGS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the current status of responses made to questions posed at previous meetings of the Committee.

In response to the second paragraph on page 37, of the agenda pages, Councillor Mrs Ridney expressed thanks for the response to her query, but suggested that the Assistant Director Libraries, Archives and Adult Education (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services) be advised to apply for funding from the Area Committee budget for industrial shredders.

Councillor Evans, commented that although shredders could be considered from the capital allocations budget, funding for the emptying and maintaining of the shredders would not be considered as capital expenditure and would therefore need to be found from revenue library funding. However, there was no funding available within the libraries' budget for such a service at the present time.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report now submitted, and the appendix thereto be noted.

57

WARD ISSUES

- (1) On behalf of Councillor G Davies, who was in attendance at another meeting, Councillor Mrs Ridney expressed concern that an officer from the Directorate of the Urban Environment had not attended to answer questions relating to length of time path closures and responses to petitions relating to path closures were taking to determine and that a written report on the issue had not been submitted.

In response the Area Liaison Officer advised that, as stated in his letter to Members dated 4th January, 2008, the matter of pathway closures had been referred to the Select Committee for Community Safety and Community Services for consideration at its next meeting in March 2008. A report on the outcome of that meeting would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

- (2) Councillor Mottram expressed thanks to Mr Peter Vangeersdaele for installing bollards at Dimmocks Avenue.
- (3) Councillor Mrs Ameson indicated that she had no issues to raise, other than those expressed previously and which the Police had undertaken to investigate.
- (4) Councillor Simms raised concerns regarding inconsiderate parking near the Bramford School where residents' driveways were blocked by parents delivering and collecting children from school. The Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety undertook to investigate.
- (5) Councillor Mrs Ridney requested confirmation as to whether or not the area at Clayton playing fields was on the regular maintenance programme, as she had been given differing information on this. The Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety undertook to investigate and send a written response to Councillor Mrs Rydney.
- (6) Councillor Mrs Millward raised:
 - (1) The need for an urgent meeting with a representative from the Directorate of the Urban Environment, residents and local Councillors to resolve the traffic problems at Hopyard Road. The Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety undertook to arrange such a meeting.
 - (2) Requested that a vote of thanks be sent to the Cabinet Member for Housing for the speedy solution of an extremely difficult problem immediately prior to the Christmas period.
- (7) Councillor Mrs Ryder expressed:

Thanks to Mr Peter Vangeersdaele for his swift action taken at Turley Street, Upper Gornal.

 - (1) Thanks to the Green Care Team for the work carried out at Club Row.
- (8) Councillor Stanley advised that there were to be changes to some bus routes, but that overall services for the Sedgley area would be improved, particularly in relation to the provision of a direct link between Sedgley and Russells Hall Hospital and the Merry Hill Centre. He also advised that the frequency of the service to Gornal Village would be amended to 15 minute intervals instead of the current 20 minutes.

Information was given regarding the dates for future meetings of all Select Committees, which were to be held at the Council House, Dudley. Members of the public were welcome to attend such meetings.

RESOLVED

That the information given in respect of the dates of future meetings of Select Committees be noted.

75

DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

It was noted that the date and venue of the next meeting of the Committee would be 9th April, 2008 at Cotwall End Primary School, Cotwall End Road, Sedgley DY3 3YG.

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm.

CHAIRMAN