

NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 1st February 2006, at 6.30 p.m.
at Queen Victoria Primary School, Bilston Street, Sedgley

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs Ameson (Chairman)
Councillors Caunt, G H Davies, Evans, Fraser-Macnamara, Mrs Millward, Mottram, Mrs Ridley, Simms, Stanley and Wright; Mr D Round

Officers

The Director of Childrens' Services (as Area Liaison Officer), Assistant Director (Childrens' Services), Assistant Director of Law and Property (Legal and Democratic Services), and Mrs Holland (Directorate of Law and Property).

Also in attendance were two members of West Midlands Police.

Approximately 60 members of the public were in attendance.

51

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 23 November 2005 and 8 December 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed.

52

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct Councillors G Davies and Stanley declared a Personal and Prejudicial Interest in Agenda Item No. 5 (Park Buildings) in view of the fact that they are Members of the Development Control Committee.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct Councillors Mrs Ameson, Caunt, Evans, Fraser Macnamara, Mrs Millward, Simms, Stanley, and Wright submitted a Personal and Prejudicial Interest in Agenda Item No. 10 (Delegated Capital Allocatons - Gornal Athletic Football Club) in view of the fact that a Trustee of the Club is a Conservative Councillor.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct Councillors G Davies, Mottram and Mrs Ridley declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item No. 10 (Delegated Capital Allocations – Gornal Athletic Football Club) in view of the fact that a Trustee of the Club is a

Conservative Councillor.

53 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Ryder.

54 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that the item involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of that Act, in particular the paragraph of Part 1 of that Schedule indicated below:

Description of Item	Relevant Paragraph of Part 1 Of Schedule 12A
Park Buildings, Park Road, Gornal	7

55 PARK BUILDINGS, PARK ROAD, GORNAL

(Councillors G Davies and Stanley, having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item, left the room and took no part in the discussion.)

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on proposals in respect of this site.

Following consideration of this matter, it was.

RESOLVED

That as the recommendations set out in paragraph 15 of the report submitted were not supported, the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to refuse the proposals in respect of the site at Park Buildings, Park Road, Gornal.

56 PETITIONS

A petition was submitted on behalf of the “Don’t Bring Down the Curtain Campaign” against the increased costs of hiring Dudley Concert Hall, Stourbridge Town Hall, Brierley Hill Civic Hall and Cornbow Hall.

In presenting the Petition, a Mr M Coyle suggested that the increases abolished, particular for those charitable organisations that hired the halls throughout the year to hold fund raising events.

Councillor Fraser Macnamara responded by reminding the Committee that a 20% discount was already available to such organisations but that the increases were inevitable because of the costs the Council would incur in hiring extra staff to steward events in order to comply with a national Governmental health and safety initiative.

RESOLVED

That the petition be acknowledged and forwarded to the Director of Adult, Community Services and Housing for her consideration and response.

57

YOUTH ISSUES

Mr Pomford (Area Team Leader Dudley North, Lower Gornal Youth Centre) reported on the activities of the Local Youth Centres and of the particular difficulties in respect of Coseley Youth Centre. He stated that efforts were underway to recruit a suitably qualified youth worker.

Problems relating to anti social behaviour had been experienced in the vicinity of Coseley Baths and a fence was being erected around Coseley Youth Centre; a new side entrance was being constructed. The Centre had also increased its membership.

Lower Gornal Youth Centre had achieved some success in attracting young people to take part in its programme and partnership working with the Orchard Partnership and MENCAP as part of the “Me Too” initiative, was taking place. Detached youth workers were actively being sought to work borough-wide.

A new youth club had been opened at The Zoar Church supervised by voluntary workers recruited from the congregation. Football coaching was available on Sundays and was attracting the attention of a lot of young people.

The Youth Parliament intended to hold a “Stomp” on 17th February 2006 at Dudley College.

RESOLVED

That the content of the verbal report given on youth issues be

noted.

58

POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Baylie and a colleague based at Sedgley Police Station, were in attendance at the meeting and received the following questions from Members of the Committee and the public.

- The issue was raised by the proprietor of the Beacon Hotel, Sedgley, regarding incidents of anti social behaviour that involved bricks being thrown through the windows of the Hotel. She also informed the Committee that graffiti had been sprawled on the walls and young people had climbed on the top of outbuildings and had also damaged the outside play area.
- The issue was raised regarding gangs of twenty to twenty five youths regularly congregating outside the Spar Supermarket. The large gathering intimidated customers and affected the business. Other Members of the public also raised the issue of gangs of youths committing anti social behaviour in the area.
- Mr D Round (Co-opted Member) raised the issue of young people playing ball games in The Arcade in Sedgley and kicking balls against shop windows, resulting in traders having to erect roller shutter blinds to protect the glass windows. Telephone poles had also been damaged.
- Councillor Stanley raised the of motorbikes and mini motorbikes breaking through fencing to ride mini and ordinary motorbikes on Cotwall End Valley. He also raised the issue of a police leaflet that had been pushed through the letterboxes of local residents (including himself) featuring the picture of a motorbike and advising anyone riding a mini motorbike that they must be in possession of appropriate insurance, road tax, and be displaying number plates and other safety information. He questioned whether the leaflet was aimed to deter or encourage young people to ride mini and other types of motorbikes, and added that he was not aware of any enforcement action that had been taken by the local police to deter the nuisance perpetrated by young people riding mini and scrambler type motorbikes.

In response, Inspector Bailey agreed that the leaflets were delivered to residents last weekend and that traffic officers had visited The Northway, Sedgley Hall Park, Ten Acre Lane and several other areas that had resulted in sixteen people being served with notices and one vehicle being seized. She informed the Committee that another sweep of problem areas was due to take place during the coming weekend.

Councillor Mottram raised the issue of problems with mini and other motorbikes in Martin Close, Jubilee Park and other areas within Coseley East Ward and a member of the public complained of similar incidents in Monument Lane involving many motorbikes.

The issue of similar incidents on Clayton Playing Fields was resulting in the ground becoming rutted and hazardous to footballers who used the field.

In response, Inspector Bailey stated that while young people and their families could buy mini motorbikes from £200, the motorbikes were being sold without any instructions as to the legal documentation required to ride one. She called for the Committee to act with Ian Austen MP and campaign for the sale of such motorbikes to be banned.

The issue was raised in respect of damage by motorbikes on local conservation areas and of them being ridden in pedestrian alleyways.

A question was raised regarding anti social behaviour in Dormston Drive, and of members of the public being unable to contact the Police.

The issue was raised regarding motorbikes breaking down fences to get on to Cotwall End Nature Reserve and whether "Greencare" could mend the fences to prevent intrusion.

In response, Inspector Bailey informed the Committee that the Police were aware of the anti social behaviour in the area, particularly in the vicinity of the Beacon Hotel and pointed out that recent crime figures had shown a decrease in the sector covering Sedgley. She stated that anti social behaviour issues had been raised in respect of Dormston Drive and Beacon Lane and requested confirmation as to the priority to be given to these issues.

In response Councillor Evans commented that the Police had a duty of care to respond to reports of anti social behaviour, particularly if the residents were elderly as in the case of some of the residents of Dormston Drive.

Councillor Stanley also commented that the Police were public servants and, as such, served the community and that prioritisation of incidents was not an acceptable way forward.

Councillor Wright responded by calling for an invitation to be extended to Chief Superintendent Green to attend the next meeting to be held on 23rd March at The Straits Primary School, to answer questions on the issues that have arisen.

Inspector Bailey replied that the issue of gangs of young people of 11 and 12 years of age needed to be dealt with by parents and schools rather than the Police. She stated that the issue was a national issue as well as a local issue and assured the meeting that the issues with regard to Beacon Lane and other issues raised would be addressed.

RESOLVED

That, arising from circulation of the issues raised, Chief Superintendent Green be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee, to be held at Straits Primary School on 23rd March 2006 at 6.30 pm.

59

PUBLIC FORUM

1. Several written questions were submitted regarding the withdrawal of the No. 223 bus service from part of the route through the Beacon Estate.

In response, it was agreed that a letter be written to CENTRO to ascertain the reasons why the 223 bus service had been withdrawn from certain parts of the route.

2. A question was submitted with regard to a property in Pear Tree Lane.

In response Councillor Fraser Macnamara stated that the property had no connection with the Greencorns organisation and there had been no breach of planning regulations. He would however request that Officers revisit the premises.

3. A question was submitted with regard to a site in Bradleys Lane requesting that the Council clean up the site and make it safe.

In response, Councillor Fraser Macnamara explained that notices had to be served on the owner of the property and that the owner could not be traced. He asked for a report be submitted to the next meeting to update the Committee.

4. A question was submitted on the erection of weight restriction signs in Bradleys Lane affixed to the NETTO Supermarket wall that were only 2' x 2' in size. Signs of this size were considered to be unreadable to drivers until they were almost upon them. A request was submitted asking for speed cameras to be installed.

5. A question was submitted on behalf of the shopkeepers in the Arcade in Sedgley asking when the Council intended to repair the gates.

6. A question was raised regarding anti social behaviour in a garage complex in the Sedgley area.

In response the Chairman stated that a site meeting had been arranged for Members to meet with Mr Lowndes (Assistant Director Culture and Recreation).

7. A question was raised by a spokesperson for the Friends of Mount Pleasant regarding the proposed move of the Dudley Archives to Summerhill School.

In response, Councillor Evans stated that the Friends had been asked to compile a Business Plan for consideration by the Leader of the Council, but that no such Plan had been received.

Also in response, the Area Liaison Officer reiterated comments he had made on previous occasions, that the Council could not afford to renovate the buildings in which the archives were currently held.

DELEGATED CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

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

Following discussion by the Committee, it was

RESOLVED

(a) That the application in respect of the moving of a British Telecom (BT) telephone box in Bridge Street, Coseley, in the sum of £3,000, be deferred to allow further discussions to take place with BT with regard to funding and to investigate the possibility of acquiring some of the funding from the Community Safety budget.

(b) That the application in respect of Lower Gornal Youth Centre to make safe the rear entrance with roller shutter doors following a recent arson attack, be approved in the sum of £1,650.

(c) That the application in respect of Senior Bowlers for the purchase of a short mat, fittings and a replacement cover for the present mat, be approved in the sum of £382.

(d) That the application in respect of the Oval and Tudor Managed Neighbourhood, towards the costs of fencing in Tenacre Lane,

be approved in the sum of £580.

- (e) That the application in respect of Gornal Athletic Football Club, in the sum of £30,000, for the replacement of concrete terracing, security fencing and for the erection of a new toilet block be refused and that the Club be recommended to seek funding from other organisations, for example Sport England and, if successful, reapply to the Area Committee.
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61 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted to heighten public awareness of the existence of the Code

RESOLVED

That information contained in the report and Appendix to the report, submitted be noted.

62 APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted regarding land and property within the Committee's area.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the application in respect of 9 Bayer Street, to declare the site surplus to requirements and added to the land disposals programme, be deferred for further investigations to ascertain whether or not it is a building that is of historic interest.
- (b) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to agree to the declaration of the land situated at 37/39 and 41/43 Hartland Avenue, Coseley, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report, as surplus to requirements and to the land being sold on the open market by the Director of Law and Property.
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63 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

RESOLVED

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

WARD ISSUES

1. Councillor Mrs Ridney raised the issue of the junction of Harding Street/Skidmore Road asking if one end of Islip Road could be blocked to prevent it becoming a "rabbit run".
2. Councillor Evans requested that a strong letter be written to the Prime Minister, on behalf of the Committee, with regard to a total ban being imposed on the sale of mini motorbikes until appropriate legislation in respect of their use had been put in place.
3. Councillor Millward raised the successful outcome of the Green Corns Care Homes matter and indicated that she had spoken to John Parker, a leading public campaigner, who wished to pass on his gratitude for all the efforts of Councillors and Officers, particularly Philip Tart, Assistant Director Law and Property, in resolving the problem. This, together with the efforts of the public, had been an excellent example of effective team work.
4. Councillor Wright requested that "slow down" signs and a red anti skid surface be installed in Fiddlers Bank, following a recent serious accident.
5. Councillor Wright raised the issued of a letter received from a member of the public with regard to the erosion to the banks at the side of the road in Himley Lane/Mount Lane and requested that Officers investigate the situation.

DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the last meeting of the Committee in this municipal year should be held on 23 March 2006 at 6.30 pm at the Straits Primary School

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.

CHAIRMAN