

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 7th June, 2011 at 6.30 p.m.
at Saltwells Education Development Centre, Bowling Green Road,
Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT: -

Councillors Ahmed, Ali, Miss Arshad, Mrs Aston, Cotterill, Miss J Cowell, M Davis, A Finch, K Finch, Waltho, Ms Wood and Zada

OFFICERS:

The Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (as Lead Officer to the Committee), Assistant Director (Environmental Management), the Group Engineer, both Directorate of the Urban Environment; the Quality and Complaints Manager, the Improvement and Complaints Consultant, the Social Regeneration Officer, All Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services; the Senior Solicitor and Ms K Farrington – both Directorate of Corporate Resources

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Sector Inspector Richard Jones, West Midlands Police – for Agenda Item No. 9

Mr John Kempson, West Midlands Fire Service – for Agenda Item No. 10

10 Members of the public

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED

That Councillor Ahmed be elected Chairman of the Committee for the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

(Councillor Ahmed thereupon took the Chair).

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors J D Davies, Mrs Roberts and Sparks.

Apologies for absence were also received on behalf of Ms Little, Mrs Oakes and Mr Rodney, who were appointed as co-opted Members for 2011/12 later in the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor K Finch be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15th March, 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROTOCOL FOR AREA COMMITTEES

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the terms of reference and protocol for Area Committees.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7. CO-OPTED MEMBERS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the co-option of persons to serve as co-opted members of the Committee for the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

During the presentation, the Area Liaison Officer reported that Mr Connor Robinson and Mr Matthew Thomas no longer wished to serve jointly as co-opted members to the Committee, however, she undertook to seek a nominee from the Central Dudley Youth Forum to serve in their place for the remainder of the 2011/12 municipal year. Councillors Ali and Waltho, as in previous years, offered to act as mentors to any young persons interested in serving as Co-opted Members, to offer advice and introduce them to the Council and Committee machinery.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the following persons be re-appointed as co-opted members of the Committee for the 2011/12 Municipal Year, representing the organisations indicated:

Mr G Lawley, Dudley Association of Governing Bodies
Ms V Little, Dudley Primary Care Trust.
Mrs J Oakes, Dudley Town Centre Forum
Mr K Rodney, Dudley Centre for Equality and Diversity

- (2) That the Area Liaison Officer be requested to seek a nominee from the Central Dudley Youth Forum for co-option to the Committee.
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8. YOUTH SERVICE

The Area Liaison Officer, in the absence of the Youth Worker, gave an oral update on changes affecting the Central Dudley Area. She indicated that Patrusha Dey, Area Youth Team Leader had now been moved from the Central Dudley area to Brierley Hill and Dudley North areas and stated that as from August 2011, Lisa Atkinson would be the Team Leader representing the Youth Service for the Central Dudley Area. She also indicated that Arshad Parvez, Area Youth Worker, would be based at Russells Hall Youth Centre and Lloyd French, Area Youth Worker, would be based at Meadow Road Youth Centre. It was reported that Kerry Daly, Detached Youth Worker had transferred to the Halesowen area, with one Detached Worker, Karl Hutton, being assigned to the Central Dudley area.

In concluding, the Area Liaison Officer stated that projects previously reported at Area Committees for young people to participate in were still ongoing.

Following the presentation, a Member of the Committee mentioned the recent break-in at Russells Hall Community Centre and the damage caused as a result and queried whether the Centre was now back in use, whether the equipment had now been replaced and how many young people were using the Community Centre. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer indicated that all comments would be reported back to an appropriate officer for a written response to be submitted.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information, as circulated at the meeting and reported orally, be noted.
- (2) That the Area Liaison Officer arrange for a written response to be submitted to the Member in relation to the questions raised above in relation to Russells Hall Community Centre.

9.

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 the extra resources that had recently been assigned to hot spot areas around the Borough and the partnership work carried out with external organisations, as a result of which the number of offences committed had reduced compared to this time last year. The Sector Inspector also indicated that metal offences were still being committed, however, he reported that the Police were working hard to combat the issue.

In relation to a question raised in relation to crime figures for the Netherton, Woodside and St Andrew's Ward, the Sector Inspector undertook to investigate the matter and respond to the Member direct.

In relation to a query from a Member in relation to the operation, similar to that of Operation Advent, reported at the previous meeting, aimed at combating drug related offences, the Sector Inspector confirmed that the operation was ongoing.

A Member of the Committee indicated that he had received complaints from residents of Netherton, Woodside and St Andrew's ward in relation to the venues for Partnership and Communities Together (PACT) meetings. He stated that residents had been deterred from attending the meetings owing to the travelling involved. In responding, the Sector Inspector indicated that the Police were aware of the issues and undertook to refer the Member's concerns on to an appropriate Police Officer.

RESOLVED

- (1) That Sector Inspector Jones be thanked for his presentation and that the information reported on be received and noted.
- (2) That it be noted that Sector Inspector Jones will arrange for the crime figures for the Netherton, Woodside and St Andrew's ward to be investigated and for a response be submitted to the Member direct.
- (3) That it be noted that Sector Inspector Jones will refer the concerns raised in relation to PACT meetings to an appropriate Police Officer for a written response to be submitted to the Member.

10. 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 and arson fires and confirmed that there had been a slight increase in all wards, except St Thomas's ward, which had shown a slight decrease. He confirmed, however, that a large number of households that had been affected by accidental fires had had smoke alarms fitted.

In concluding, Mr Kempson referred to the success of a recent quiz that had been carried out in which eleven schools had participated and confirmed that youth participation in safety schemes had been exceptional.

RESOLVED

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

11. APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the appointment of Working Groups of the Committee for the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

In response to a query in relation to community renewal activity in consequence of the Council's budget for 2011/12, the Area Liaison Officer indicated that a review of aspects of community renewal, in particular, Community Centres, would be reported to a meeting of the Cabinet in the near future.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Working Groups below be appointed for the 2011/12 Municipal Year with their existing terms of reference and the composition and membership indicated:

Capital Allocations Working Group – the Chairman of the Committee and one member of each of the five wards, the full membership being Councillors Ahmed (Chairman), Mrs Aston (Castle and Priory Ward), Cotterill (Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood Ward), Waltho (St Thomas's Ward), Zada (Netherton, Woodside and St Andrews Ward) and M Davis (St James's Ward).

Russells Hall Traffic Working Group – the Chairman of the Committee, Councillor Ahmed, together with Councillors M Davis and Mrs Roberts (St James's Ward) and Councillors Ms Wood and Zada (Netherton, Woodside and St Andrew's Ward) and that the members of the Council for the Brockmoor and Pensnett ward continue to be invited to attend and speak at meetings of the Working Group.

- (2) That any member appointed above who does not wish to serve in 2011/12 contact Democratic Services in the Directorate of Corporate Resources and that the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, be authorised to approve the appointment of an alternative member.

12. APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the appointment of representatives to serve on outside organisations.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the following persons be appointed to serve on the organisations indicated for the period indicated:

Social Inclusion

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|-----|--|--------------------------------------|
| (a) | Badley Memorial and Dudley Nursing Charity – Councillor Waltho | Period of four years from 01/08/2011 |
| (b) | Castle and Priory Regeneration Group – Councillor Mrs Aston | Annual |
| (c) | Wrens Nest Community Centre – Councillor Mrs Aston | Annual |
| (d) | Withymoore Island Trust – Councillor Zada | Annual |
| (e) | St Francis Parish Centre – Councillor A Finch | Annual |

Community Associations

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|--------|
| (a) | Sledmere – Councillor Waltho | Annual |
| (b) | Woodside – Councillor Zada | Annual |
| (c) | Priory – Councillor Mrs Aston | Annual |

13. PETITIONS

A petition from customers of a mobile hot food seller, Mr Smith, operating as Mr Sizzle, had been submitted protesting about proposals to remove individual units as part of the Market Place redevelopment proposals. 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 was received from residents of Iris Close requesting that the path leading from Bunns Lane into Iris Close be closed off as the path attracted young people causing anti-social behaviour. 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 was received from residents of Oakham Road and surrounding areas requesting that traffic calming measures and improvements be introduced on roads in the Oakham area to make the area safe for local people. 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.

14. PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A member of the public submitted a letter on behalf of the residents of Cinder Bank, Netherton expressing gratitude to the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) and his colleagues for the recent work carried out to resurface Cinder Bank.
- (b) A letter from a member of the public expressing concern at the reduction in the number of Area Committee meetings over the 2011/12 municipal year, as approved at the Annual Council meeting, was received. The grounds of concern were that the opportunity for local residents to express opinions, submit petitions and ask questions was now limited. Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED

That the Council be informed of the view of this Committee that the number of Area Committee meetings held over the year for this and the other Area Committees appointed at the Annual Council meeting in May 2011, should be restored to five.

- (c) A further letter from the same member of the public was received requesting officers of the Directorate of the Urban Environment to review traffic measurement at Cinder Bank, Netherton between Corbett Garage and Champion Church and to consider safety provisions for children crossing Cinder Bank en route to School. A Member of the Committee also expressed concern in relation to the speeding of vehicles along Cinder Bank and to be informed about any measures that were in place to monitor air quality in the Netherton area. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate the issues raised and respond to the questioner and the Member direct.
- (d) A further letter from the same member of the public was received in relation to bin bag collections stating that bin bags had been left on numerous occasions on pavements along Cinder Bank and requesting that action be taken to ensure that all pavements were cleared of any rubbish. A Member of the Committee reported that non-collection of bin bags had been a problem in all wards in the Central Dudley area, mainly owing to rubbish being scattered on foot pavements as a result of bin bags being ripped and also when there had been more than three bin bags required to be collected. He requested that action be taken to ensure that all bin bags were collected. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) acknowledged that there was a problem with bin bags not being collected and assured the Committee that action would be taken.
- (e) A member of the public queried expense of Dudley Council's bid for City status. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer confirmed that only a small number of officers had spent a short time together working on the application and indicated that there were no plans to spend any money on publicity.
- (f) A member of the public queried whether the Council planned to introduce any traffic calming measures on Cinder Bank, Netherton in view of serious accidents, which had occurred recently. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate the matter and respond to the questioner direct.
- (g) A member of the public queried whether Central Dudley Area Committee minutes were still available to download from the Council's website. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer confirmed that all Committee reports and minutes were available on the Committee Management Information System (CMIS) and referred the questioner to the Central Dudley Area Committee agenda for this meeting in which details of how to view documents were included.

- (h) A member of the public requested support from the Area Committee on extending the opening hours of Dudley Leisure Centre from 6.30am to 9.30pm instead of 8.00am to 9.30pm on the grounds that it would enable more residents to use the facility. The Area Committee were in favour of the request and asked the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) to investigate the possibility of extending the Leisure Centre's hours and respond back to the questioner direct.
- (i) A member of the public again raised the issue of Oakham Road and requested evidence that the road was a classified road. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) acknowledged that this matter had been debated extensively in previous meetings, however, he again reported that it was the view of the Council that Oakham Road was a classified road. The Chairman then indicated that the questioner had received an answer to his question and that the position of the Council was that the road was classified. In so doing, he acknowledged the right of the questioner to pursue the issue in other forums should he so wish.

The Chairman then indicated that if any member of the public had an issue that they would like to discuss further with the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Area Liaison Officer, then they contact Democratic Services, details regarding which could be obtained from the front page of the agenda.

15. WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillor M Davis re-iterated his view that a section 106 agreement should have been imposed in relation to the Russells Hall Hospital development.
- (b) Councillor M Davis sought clarification on whether Midland Heart was financing the re-location of the Children's Play area in Russells Hall.

In responding, the Chairman confirmed that it was planned to use the money from Midland Heart to improve the skate park and equipment at the Children's Play area, not to re-locate it. He stated, however, that the residents in the vicinity of the area would be consulted prior to a decision being made.
- (c) Councillor M Davis expressed concern in relation to the petition received regarding the Dudley Town Centre redevelopment proposals and requested that residents of Dudley be given the opportunity to raise issues at consultation stage. He also considered that rents for market traders at the current level were too high and emphasised that if rents were set at a more reasonable level, this would encourage more traders which, in turn, would attract more customers into the Town.

- (d) Councillor Cotterill drew attention to the Council's policy in dealing with anti-social behaviour. He indicated that residents had been deterred from completing appropriate forms to record acts of anti-social behaviour as they considered no action would be taken.
- (e) Councillor Mrs Aston requested that action be taken to replace the fence at the former Duncan Edwards public house site.
- (f) Councillor Ali drew attention to the stolen equipment at the play area in Churchfield Street and requested that the equipment be replaced.
- (g) Councillor Ali drew attention to the petition submitted to a previous meeting of the Area Committee in relation to the benches at Buffery Park and requested an update on the matter.
- (h) Councillor Ali queried which part of the St Thomas's Ward had taken part in the pilot scheme of cardboard and plastic recycling.
- (i) Councillor Ali referred to the potholes in St Thomas's Ward and requested that these be investigated.
- (j) Councillor Miss Arshad referred to a previous rota system whereby Councillors, in turn, had patrolled the streets of St Thomas's Ward to clear them of litter. She requested that a similar exercise be undertaken.
- (k) Councillor Miss Arshad requested that the graffiti on the footbridge on the Southern Bypass be cleared.
- (l) Councillor Zada drew attention to the speeding vehicles along Cinder Bank and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (m) Councillor Zada queried what measures had been put in place to monitor air quality in the Netherton area and when Netherton would be included in the Air Quality Action Plan.
- (n) Councillor Zada requested an update in relation to progress on bringing the houses on the Woodside Estate up to the Decent Homes Standard.
- (o) Councillor Zada requested to be advised of the date on which the Replica Titanic Anchor would be arriving in Netherton Town Centre.
- (p) Councillor Ahmed referred to the potholes in Vauxhall Street and requested that these be investigated.

16. PROGRESS OF ELECTED MEMBER VISITS TO ADULT AND CHILDREN'S ESTABLISHMENTS IN 2009/10 AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2011/12

A joint report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services and the Acting Director of Children's Services was submitted on the progress of visits to Adult and Children's Social Care Establishments undertaken by Members of the Committee during 2010/11, and requesting nominations for participation in the rota visits for the 2011/12 municipal year.

A Member of the Committee indicated that he had experienced difficulties the previous year in finding a partner to carry out visits to Adult and Children's Social Care Establishments and expressed concern that these establishments were not being overseen as a consequence. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer indicated that an appropriate officer in the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services would be available to visit Adult and Children's Social Care Establishments, if any Members were experiencing difficulties in being accompanied.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted and the appendices attached to the report, on the progress of elected member visits to Adult and Children's Social Care establishments during 2010/11, be noted.
- (2) That Councillors Ali, Miss Arshad, M Davis, Ms Wood and Waltho be appointed as nominees of this Committee to undertake rota visits to Adult and Children's Social Care Establishments in the 2011/12 municipal year.

17. HIGHWAYS MINOR WORKS CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2011/12

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the proposed programmes of work for Local Safety Schemes, Safer Routes to School and Pedestrian Crossings within the Central Dudley area for the 2011/12 financial year.

The Group Engineer reported that a number of requests had been received and that the schemes, which had ranked most highly in the Central Dudley area were outlined in the Appendix to the report submitted to the meeting.

In referring to the parking problems in North Street, the traffic problems affecting Oakham Road, issues in relation to Bunns Lane in light of the fatal bus accident that had occurred and the recently approved Traffic Regulation Orders in Blackacre Road, a Member of the Committee indicated that there was no mention of any of these in the Minor Works Capital Programme for 2011/12. In responding, the Group Engineer indicated that the issues affecting North Street and Hollies Street would be included in the Dudley Town Centre Traffic Regulation Order in which it was proposed that double yellow lines would be installed, hopefully this year.

In responding to a question from a Member of the Committee, the Group Engineer confirmed that all comments from Members of the Area Committee would be considered by the Cabinet Member and Shadow Cabinet Member for Transportation, together with senior officers in the next stage of the process and welcomed suggestions from Members for further initiatives, which had not been included in the programme hitherto.

Further comments from Members included proposals for monitoring the air quality in the Netherton area owing to the volume of traffic and minor traffic calming measures in Aintree Way, in the vicinity of Milking Bank Primary School and the nearby double bend, which had allegedly been promised to be included in 2011/12 programme. In responding, the Group Engineer undertook to report the matters above back to the Cabinet Member for Transportation for consideration.

RESOLVED

- (1) That, the proposed Local Safety Schemes, Safer Routes to School and Pedestrian Crossings initiatives outlined in Appendix of the report now submitted, be supported.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be asked to consider the possibility of including proposals to alleviate parking problems affecting North Street, in the Minor Works Programme 2011/12.
- (3) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be asked to consider the possibility of including proposals to alleviate traffic problems on the Oakham Road, in the Minor Works Programme 2011/12.
- (4) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be asked to consider the possibility of including proposals to alleviate traffic problems on the Oakham Road and Bunns Lane, in the Minor Works Programme 2011/12.
- (5) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be asked to consider the possibility of including proposals to monitor the air quality in the Netherton area due to the volume of traffic in the Minor Works Programme 2011/12.

- (6) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be asked to consider the possibility of including proposals to alleviate safety issues affecting Aintree Way, in the vicinity of Milking Bank Primary School and the nearby double bend, in the Minor Works Programme 2011/12.
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18

CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on proposals for the allocation of expenditure from the delegated capital budget of the Committee for the 2011/12 municipal year.

In referring to the Council's decision to reduce the number of Area Committees to three per year, the Social Regeneration Officer indicated that as a consequence of the decision, there could be a delay in the Area Committee approving capital allocations to various organisations in the Central Dudley area. In view of this, Member were requested to consider three options, referred to in paragraph 16 to 18 (inclusive) of the report submitted.

Members of the Committee expressed reservations in relation to the provision proposed in the criteria and draft form, which would require a business plan to be submitted by organisations prior to capital allocations being considered, which they considered unnecessary and that the requirement could discourage organisations, particularly voluntary, from applying for a capital grant. They considered that the remaining criteria and information requested in the form was sufficient. Although it was noted that the Social Regeneration Officer had offered advice and support to organisations in producing a business plan, the concern of the Committee was that organisations that needed advice and help on producing a business plan were disadvantaged as they could be waiting a long time for their grant to be considered.

It was suggested that Option 3, paragraph 18 of the report submitted be approved, however a rider to be included to state that only "urgent" capital grants would be considered under delegated authority.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the process for the awarding of capital allocations from the capital allocations budget, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report submitted, be approved for implementation in the 2011/12 municipal year, subject to its being acknowledged that a business plan is not compulsory for this Committee.
- (2) That the criteria for awarding capital allocations, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted, be approved for implementation in the 2011/12 municipal year, subject to its being acknowledged that a business plan is not compulsory for this Committee.

- (3) That the changes being applied to capital allocations across all Area Committee for the 2011/12 municipal year, as outlined in paragraphs 8 – 11 (inclusive) of the report submitted be noted, subject to the Committee being of the opinion that a business plan need not be required, subject to its being acknowledged that a business plan is not compulsory for this Committee.
- (4) That the Area Liaison Officer in consultation with the Chairman and relevant Ward Members of the Capital Allocations Working Group be authorised to determine “urgent applications only” received during the 2011/12 municipal year, as outlined in Option 3 of paragraph 18 of the report submitted.
- (5) That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to carry out the recommended actions.

19. MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 15TH MARCH, 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 15th March, 2011, with regard to services provided by the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

20. MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 15TH MARCH, 2011 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 15th March, 2011, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

21. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

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

22.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE

The dates of meetings of the Committee arranged for 2011/12 were noted, together with the venues arranged to date.

The meeting ended at 7.55pm.

CHAIRMAN