

NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 3rd February 2010 at 6.30 pm
High Arcal School, Arcal Drive, Sedgley

PRESENT

Councillor Wright (Chairman)
Councillors Caunt, Evans, G Davies, Mottram, Mrs Ridley, Ryder,
Simms and Stanley

Officers

The Director of Corporate Resources (as Area Liaison Officer), Assistant Director of Culture and Leisure and Group Engineer – Traffic and Road Safety (Directorate of the Urban Environment), the Assistant Director – Housing Strategy and Private Sector and the Area Community Renewal Officer – Dudley (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services) Head of Youth Services and the Area Youth Worker - Early Years and Youth Development (Directorate of Children's Services) and Mrs J Rees (Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Inspector V Willis (West Midlands Police), Mr C Wood (West Midlands Fire Service), Mr N Smith and Mr N Bryne (Midland Heart) together with approximately 40 Members of the public.

65 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Ameson and G Davies and Miss G Heeley.

66 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Wright declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 11 (Extra Care Housing DVD and Model for Coseley) in view of his being a tenant of the Providers of the Extra Care Housing.

67 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2nd December 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed.

68

PETITIONS

It was reported that a petition had been received, prior to the meeting, by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture, from young people in the Coseley Area, requesting that the decision to close Coseley baths be reconsidered.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture had responded in writing to the petition.

Councillor Mottram submitted a petition, on behalf of local residents of Coseley, objecting to the temporary relocation of the 02 Mast from Coseley Baths to the West Midlands Factory Clearance site in Old Meeting Road. He also indicated that he wished to raise the issue under Ward Issues.

The Petition was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration.

A member of the public submitted a petition behalf of the local residents, requesting that a gulley in Barnesmeadow Place, be closed due to acts of anti social behaviour and nuisance to local residents.

Objectors spoke in support of the petition in the Public Forum.

The petition was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment and the Community Safety Team for consideration.

69

YOUTH ISSUES

The Area Youth Worker gave an oral report on youth issues affecting the Dudley area including that:-

Youth Services had been involved in various successful activities, including ice skating, art projects, a laser quest visit and a go-karting trip.

Lower Gornal Youth Academy were developing their own youth committee and were due to hold their first official committee meeting at the end of February 2010.

Upwards of 70 young people were attending regularly and engaging in work around careers, sexual health and the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

Coseley Youth Centre Committee had run a successful Kill Crime event in Coseley. The young people had chosen the colours for the new walls and flooring at the new youth centre. Work was currently being undertaken to design a new logo for the new centre. It was anticipated that the centre would be handed over at the end of February 2010 and opened for use by the end of March 2010.

Photographs of the new youth centre and progressing work were on display for information during the meeting.

Sedgley Youth Centre had recently reopened following heating issues. Since the reopening the numbers of young people attending had increased. During the recent closure staff had engaged with young people on the streets and in local parks.

North Dudley Youth Service would be running a programme of activities including bowling, ice skating and a residential trip to Wales.

Work was ongoing with schools, targeting 13 – 15 year old under achieving girls.

In the absence of the Co-opted Member the Youth Worker reported on issues affecting young people including that:-

The cancelled meeting of the Dudley North Youth Forum, due to inclement weather, had now been rescheduled for February half term. The Plan for the Forum would be developed at that meeting.

Dudley Youth Council had met on 27th January, 2010, at which the Council proof-read posters being used for the “positive images” campaign. The campaign, commencing in March 2010 would entail posters being shown in cinemas, advertising on busses and bus stops, with images being shown over 150 times per day while running in the cinema.

The Youth Council were taking part in a web-site training day to learn about Dudley Youth Council website and how to edit and update new information.

The Youth Council education sub group had delivered various workshops at various youth centres, working on confidence building. During the workshops a collage of images was made and would be displayed in all Dudley libraries when it had been framed.

Young people were working on an alcohol DVD which, when completed, would be shown to young people in Dudley.

Young people had attended the recent Save the People event, discussing safety issues.

Young people had undertaken a survey questioning young people on public transport and safety. The results of the questionnaire were discussed with Centro, who were developing a questionnaire to cover the whole region on young people's safety on buses.

The next meeting of the Dudley Youth Council would be the annual general meeting, at which a new committee panel would be voted in and old members would leave ready for the new members to be elected on to the council through youth forums and other youth organisations.

RESOLVED

That the oral updates on youth issues be noted.

70

POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Victoria Willis reported orally on Police issues including that:-

There had been a slight reduction in crime figures, but an increase in reported anti social behaviour problems, particularly associated with throwing of snow balls at buses and elderly people.

A small but regularly occurring cause of Police concern was dwelling burglaries affecting elderly people living on their own. She requested that residents keep a watchful eye on elderly residents to ensure they did not open their doors to bogus visitors.

"Boy racers" were causing a nuisance to local residents and the Police were clamping down in the areas of concern, particularly in the evenings.

There were enforcing issues related to parking in Clarence Street, which prohibited the issues being resolved.

"Operation Steel" was working to address thefts of metal fences.

Police were investigating anti social behaviour incidents in two alley ways, including the one referred to in the Petitions above. However, there was insufficient evidence at present to warrant the gating of the said alley ways.

Additional Police surgeries were being held in the Coseley area, in addition to the Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings.

Work was ongoing at Dormston Youth Club and it was hoped that the Police would work closely with the Healthy Towns Initiative, including having a Police office in the Hub room at Jubilee Park.

More Stay Safe projects were being undertaken with the assistance of the Youth Offending Team and Youth Services.

During half term activities were being offered to address anti social behaviour by young people with time on their hands.

The Paragon Project, a major new organisational change project launched by the Police Force, designed to put the public at the very heart of its service, was scheduled to be operational by April 2010.

Inspector Willis advised that under the new project, she would be moving to a different area. She thanked the Committee and Officers of the Council for their support during her time in Dudley.

Some Members of the Committee expressed their gratitude for Inspector Willis' hard work and dedication during her time in Dudley.

A Member of the Committee expressed regret that Members of the Committee were unable to attend the Coseley PACT meeting which was taking place at the same time as the Area Committee meeting.

Residents, who had submitted the petition requesting that an alleyway be closed, expressed concerns that they had not received support for the closure from the Police. They advised that CCTV footage had been viewed which showed the acts of criminal damage. However, Inspector Willis advised that having seen the footage, it had not been possible to identify anyone causing the damage.

Inspector Willis and Ward Councillors responded that meetings had taken place to address this issue, but that currently not enough evidence had been supplied to support the requested closure. Residents were encouraged to report any further incidents to the Police. The Police would in turn share the information they had on the matter with the Officers of the Council.

Residents complained that when they had reported incidents of bus panels being kicked out in Roseville as well as rubbish bins being emptied, with the litter scattered around the area they had received no response from the Police.

Residents also complained of anti social behaviour in Broad Street and Bridge Street, Coseley, due to youngsters having nowhere to go since the closure of Coseley Baths and the Coseley Youth Centre.

A resident of Old Meeting Road, Coseley raised concerns at the alleged lack of Police response when his windows had been smashed in recently whilst his wife and young child was left alone.

Members of Coseley Ward expressed concerns again regarding the poor street lighting in the area, particularly since the closure of the baths and the youth centre.

Inspector Willis undertook to investigate individual issues outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the oral report on Police issues be noted.
- (2) That a report on Barnesmeadow Place be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.
- (3) That Inspector Willis be thanked for her work during her time at Dudley

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FIRE ISSUES

Mr Wood of the West Midlands Fire Service reported orally on issues pertaining to the Fire Service including that:-

The Fire Service had attended a number of arson incidents since the beginning of the year, including dwelling, grass and non domestic incidents.

Fly tipping continued to be a problem, despite the Fire Service removing fire hazards in areas of concern.

One identified hot spot was proving difficult to address, as it was not possible to close the road due to a public house being situated at the end of the road.

Work was being undertaken with Key Stage 2 and Year 3 pupils. Work with the Healthy Towns Project, Fit for Life and Healthy Lifestyles.

The Young Fire Fighters Association had been established.

Mr Wood informed on the target response vehicle, which was a mini fire engine with three fire fighters which could gain access more easily than the standard fire tender and at a much reduced cost. The new vehicle was a talking point with residents, allowing the Fire Service to engage with the Communities. It was in service 12 hours per day, undertaking home fire safety checks and freeing up the regular size tenders.

In response to a question from a Member of the Committee, Mr Wood gave a breakdown of individual incidents and explained the differences.

RESOLVED

That the oral report on fire issues be noted.

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TRANSPORT ISSUES

A member of the Committee advised that a meeting of the Transport Users Forum was taking place at the same time as the Area Committee. The issue of the removal of the bus shelter in Stickley Lane would be discussed at that meeting.

RESOLVED

That the oral report on transport issues be noted.

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PUBLIC FORUM

Before reading questions from the public the Area Liaison Officer advised that any questions which could not be answered on the evening would be investigated and a written response would be sent to the questionnaire as soon as possible.

(At this juncture, the Chairman advised that he was Chairman of the Development Control Committee and therefore would not take part in the discussion by expressing any opinion on the O2 telephone mast, which was raised.)

Questions and answers were then given as follows:-

1. In support of the petition submitted earlier some residents of Old Meeting Road queried whether an application had been submitted for a permanent O2 mobile telephone mast in Old Meeting Road, and if so had and the application been approved. The residents questioned why they were not informed of any plans for telephone masts and expressed concerns regarding their health and the adverse affect on the value of their homes being so close to the temporary site of the telephone mast.
2. In response to the queries, the Assistant Director Culture and Recreation advised that the mast operator had been advised of the issues surrounding the Coseley baths building and its impending demolition. To ensure adequate coverage the facility needed to be replaced in the near locality and therefore the operator had invoked their rights under the Town and Country Order 1995 Article 3 which allowed the use of land in an

emergency for a period not exceeding six months to station and operate moveable telecoms apparatus. Under this provision the mast had been erected and therefore did not require any specific planning consent. The mast did not exceed the 15m height regulation. All of the code operators had to comply with the International Commission on Non Ionizing Radiation Protection ICNERP.

The Assistant Director advised that no planning controls were applicable at this juncture, but when a permanent site was sought either a notification of planning or an application would be submitted to the Council for consideration.

In response to concerns expressed from the floor and by Ward Members, the Assistant Director Culture and Leisure advised that:

It would not be in the interest of the Operator to move the mast temporarily for a long period of time.

There was no evidence to suggest that masts had a detrimental affect on the health of residents living in close proximity to a mast, and therefore there would be no grounds to make a claim against the Council.

The Council could not be responsible for the adverse affect on the value of properties by masts and/or other reasons.

A Member of the Committee commented on the fact that the temporary mast was on land designated as "green land", which should mean that no masts could be erected.

Another Member of the Committee requested that the Legal Officer investigate any covenants on the said land, which might prohibit the erection of masts on the land.

Due to the number of concerns raised the Area Liaison Officer advised that he would write to the Operator, on behalf of the Committee and those present at the meeting, expressing all the concerns and requesting that they looked at alternative sites when the six month temporary period expired.

3. A member of the public complained that previously reported remedial work required to repair pot holes in Central Drive, had not been carried out, but smaller pot holes which had not been reported, had been repaired. She requested that the reported holes be repaired as a matter of urgency. A member of the public commented that inconsiderate parking and lack of parking facilities on the Drive were making travelling difficult.
4. Another member of the public suggested that she would be making a claim against the Council to the damage to her vehicle, due to the seriously large pot holes in the area.

A Member of the Committee commented that a number of suggestions for off road parking had been investigated, but not progressed, as residents were not happy with the suggestions.

The Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety undertook to investigate the concerns and send a written response.

5. In response to a query from a member of the public as to whether the Council had commenced demolition of Coseley Baths before a licence had been granted by Natural England, Councillor Stanley, as Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture advised that the work had not commenced before the licence had been granted.
6. In response to whether Natural England were planning to revisit Coseley Baths, on account of alleged photographic evidence and eye witnesses who confirmed that work had commenced before the licence had been granted, Councillor Stanley, as Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture advised that this was not the case. Demolition work had not been carried out, but decommissioning work had been commenced, and this would have commenced with or without the bats having being found in the building.
7. A member of the public stated that local residents in close proximity to Coseley baths had, on 22nd October 2009, heard a tremendous noise and on reporting this, were advised by Council Officers that the noise was probably due to noise from nearby road works, which residents disputed. The residents had witnessed workmen working inside the building on the foundation stone dedicated by former Councillor J.T. Wilson, and alleged that the workers were not wearing hard hats, which was contrary to health and safety.

8. A member of the public queried why capital allocation grants for the Coseley area were refused, when those for Sedgley were approved. She also questioned whether facilities for a cricket club should be considered more important than Christmas lights in Sedgley. She also commented that no Christmas lights were provided in Coseley.

In response, a Member of the Committee commented that the capital allocation budget for the North Dudley Area Committee was divided equally between the four Wards and it was for Ward Councillors to decide how best funding allocated to their Ward was spent. Sedgley Ward Members had chosen to build up the number of Christmas tree lights in Sedgley over a number of years. He also advised that no Ward Members would oppose applications from outside of their own Ward.

A Member of the Committee responded that a large number of applications had been granted to groups in the Coseley Ward. In respect of the Cricket Club this application had been refused, as Ward Members had not considered that the information contained within the application indicated that the club was for the benefit of the wider community. However, if the Club wished to reapply indicating how the club benefited the wider community, the application would be reconsidered.

The same Member advised that when the possibility of Christmas lights for Coseley town centre had been investigated the Environmental Health Officer had advised that there was nowhere from which to suspend Christmas lights.

8. A member of the public requested information on the criteria required to apply for funding from the Committee's Capital Allocations budget and it was agreed that an application form and a copy of the criteria would be forwarded to the questioner.

The Area Liaison Officer suggested that if anyone needed help with an application they should contact their Ward Councillor who would be able to assist.

9. A member of the public queried what the rental for the O2 mast was spent on. In response the Assistant Director of Culture and Recreation advised that the money had gone into the overall budget for Coseley baths to offset its running costs. If a telephone mast was erected in another area the income from it would go to the owner of the land on which it was sited.

(At this juncture Councillors Mrs Millward and Wright declared a personal and prejudicial interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of an issue relating to Ellowes Hall School, in view of their governorship of the school and withdrew from the meeting during the discussion.)

10. A member of the public queried whether the Council's application for funding for the upgrade of the pool at Ellowes Hall School, had been a publicity stunt to detract from the closure of Coseley baths.

In response, a Member of the Committee advised that the application for government funding had been a genuine application, that the Council had submitted to the funding body. Work to the pool at Ellowes Hall School had been commenced and was due for completion by the end of the financial year.

11. The same member of the public commented on the whereabouts of a Ward member, and was informed by the Area Liaison officer that the Member had resigned from the Council.
12. A member of the public questioned whether the Halesowen baths, which had a flat roof, had ever been repaired and if so what the cost had been.

In response the Assistant Director Culture and Recreation undertook to investigate and send a written response to the questioner.

13. A member of the public asked why Cavendish House had been left empty for so long without being demolished and yet Coseley baths was being demolished much more quickly. He also queried who owned the building.

A Member of the Committee advised that Cavendish House had been previously owned by the Government, not the Council. Therefore the Council had no power to demolish it. The building had been sold a number of times and the current owners had not decided on a use for the building.

In response to a query as to the ownership of Cavendish House and whether a compulsory purchase order could be placed on the building, the Area Liaison Officer undertook to send a written response to the questioner.

14. A member of the public asked what could be done about people hunting with dogs and air rifles in Cotwall End Valley, following two incidents where dogs had been attacked and shot through the eye by the rifle as a result of which the owner had incurred expensive vet bills.

A Member of the Committee advised that the Council could do nothing about such incidents, but referred the incident to Inspector Willis, who undertook to speak with the questioner outside of the meeting to obtain details and undertake an investigation into the incidents.

15. DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on an application for funding from the Committee's Capital Budget by the Darby and Joan Club, Lower Gornal.

In presenting the report, the Area Liaison Officer advised that in the absence of a meeting of the Capital Allocations Working Group, the application and associated information had been circulated to all Members of the Committee for consideration prior to the meeting. The view of Members was that the application should be supported but at the lower figure of £2,080.

The Area Liaison Officer also advised that the current position of the capital allocations budget was as set out in paragraph 7 of the report submitted.

RESOLVED

That the Darby and Joan Club, Lower Gornal be awarded the sum of £2,080 only towards the rebuilding of the disabled ramp at the side of the club and for the installation of a new hand rail, which had been vandalised.

75 THE EXTRA CARE HOUSING DVD AND MODEL FOR COSELEY

The Assistant Director Housing Strategy and Private Sector reported orally on the Extra Care Housing Provision for Coseley. Representatives of Midland Heart gave a visual presentation of the project, which was one of five to be opened in the Borough over the next few years. The scheme would comprised 72 two bedroomed apartments and would attract a large amount of Section 106 funding, which would be used in the Coseley area.

Models of the proposed schemes for Coseley and Dudley together with written information were on display during the meeting.

A Member of the Committee apologised that residents from Coseley had left the meeting before hearing the benefit the scheme would bring to the Coseley area.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee, Mr Smith from Midland Heart advised that:

The scheme was open to those aged over 55.

In response to questions from a member of the public, Mr Smith advised that:

The extra care home scheme was not a replacement for the council care system, rather a safe area for people wishing for independent living, with assistance available, should they so require. It was anticipated that residents would comprise a cross section of people ranging from approximately one third who required no care at all, a third requiring limited care and another third requiring substantial care. The scheme would provide domiciliary care but not nursing care.

Local traders would be encouraged to open franchises in the scheme, which could be run by volunteers living in the scheme.

There would not be a detrimental affect on local businesses, as facilities would only be available to residents and residents would be free to use facilities outside of the scheme, if they so wished. In areas where similar schemes had already opened, there had been no evidence to indicate that local businesses had been adversely affected by the scheme.

Residents would be free to come and go as they wished.

Most properties would be available to rent, although a small number would be available to purchase.

Costs for facilities and services within the scheme would be comparable to those in the village and surrounding towns.

Members of the Committee who had visited a similar scheme recently, had been impressed by the scheme, which they welcomed for people wanting independent living.

Councillor Simms, as Cabinet Member for Housing, advised that he was working with Midland Heart on similar projects for other areas in the Borough.

RESOLVED

That the oral and visual presentations submitted be noted.

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COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the work of the Community Renewal Officer – Dudley and the progress of the Community Renewal Working Group together with the further development of the North Dudley Area Committee Community Renewal plan. In presenting the report, the Area Community Renewal Officer advised that the working group had met in December 2009 and January 2010 and discussed activities undertaken by herself with local organisations in the area, including work with the Youth Service, the Community Renewal Forum and the Police. She also reported on various workshops that had taken place.

The Community Renewal Forum had elected Mr David Allen to represent them on the Area Committee Community Renewal Working Group.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report submitted on the work of the Community Renewal Team working in Community locations be noted.

77

DUDLEY BOROUGH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the work of the Dudley Borough Local Access Forum and invitations for members of the public to join the Forum.

In presenting the report the Assistant Director Culture and Recreation indicated that membership of the Forum was open to all members of the public with an interest in local green spaces such as walkers, horse riders or cyclists and other people interested in conservation of the wildlife, geology or heritage of the Borough.

Previously members of the Forum came predominantly from the South of the Borough and this was an opportunity to redress the balance.

It was suggested that a representative of the Friends of Cotwall End might consider applying for membership of the Forum. Also that the Community Renewal Officer encourage local groups to apply to join.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the content of the report submitted be noted.

- 2) That Members of the public be invited to apply for membership of the Local Access Forum before the 14th February 2010.
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78

WARD ISSUES

Councillor Mottram raised:

- (1) The recent speed visor introduced at Yew Tree Lane needed to be revised. The Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety undertook to investigate.
- (2) The bus stop on the Ring Road needed to be repositioned by Centro. The Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety undertook to investigate, but advised that any changes to bus routes, including the siting of bus stops needed to be considered by the Regional Bus Representative.
- (3) The Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety also advised that problems on the 581/584 route from Roseville to Russells Hall Hospital had been resolved and diversions cancelled.

Councillor Mrs Ridley raised concerns regarding dangers from speeding traffic in Rainbow Street, Harding Street and Roundhill Road and requested that traffic calming measures be introduced.

The Group Engineer – Traffic and Road Safety advised that this would be investigated for inclusion in the local safety routes to schools project in the next financial year.

79

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on responses to questions from the previous meetings.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report and responses to questions be noted.

80

SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

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

RESOLVED

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

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DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date and venue of the next meeting of the Committee be noted as follows:-

29th March 2010 at 6.30 p.m. at Lower Gornal Youth Academy, Temple Street, Lower Gornal, Dudley.

The meeting ended at 8.35 pm

CHAIRMAN