

Central Dudley Area Committee – 31st January, 2012

Report of the Area Liaison Officer

Matters raised at the Meeting of the Committee held on 4th October, 2011 other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment

Purpose of Report

1. To note progress on issues raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 4th October, 2011, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

Background

2. The issues set out in paragraphs 3 to 11 (inclusive) below were raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 4th October, 2011, progress on which is as follows:

3. **Various Police Matters**

Members of the Committee raised various police issues affecting the Central Dudley area. The Police have responded to the Members direct.

- Complaints had been received in relation to gangs of youths congregating in areas of the Castle and Priory Ward, particularly on street corners. In response, it was reported that the Police were looking into the possibility of introducing an Alcohol Restriction Zone and Dispersal Order in the area.
- The unauthorised parking outside St Joseph's Catholic Primary School. In response, it was reported that the St Thomas's Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) would be made aware of the issue and target the area as part of their patrol strategies and take positive action against any drivers committing any offences. It was also reported that the Police would liaise with the School and request that letters be sent out warning parents of the parking issues and problems caused to local residents.
- The speeding vehicles using Warrens Hall Road with particular mention to the sharp bend. In response, it was reported that PCSOs would carry out a Community Speedwatch event in the first instance and if that did not alleviate the problem, the Police would liaise with the Force Traffic department with a view to arranging for speed traffic management officers to be stationed at the location to prosecute offending drivers.

- The potential problems with youths parking on Flood Street Car Park. In response, it was reported that the Police had not been aware of any previous issues or problems with vehicles gathering on the car park, however, the area would be included in their patrol strategies.

4. **Bed Occupancy at Bushey Fields Hospital**

Concerns were raised by a Member in relation to the bed occupancy at Bushey Fields Hospital. The Communications and Experience Manager at Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust responded as follows:-

“The average bed occupancy rate between April and September, 2011 was 79.5%.

Care Quality Commission good practice guidelines suggest that bed occupancy levels should be no higher than 85% to allow for flexibility to receive new admissions or re-admissions.”

5. **Services for people suffering with Dementia in Dudley**

Particular reference was made to a presentation that had been given at a recent Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee meeting in relation to the application for Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust Foundation status. Members understood that people suffering with dementia would be expected to travel to Walsall for treatment.

In clarifying the issue, the Chief Executive Officer of Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust responded in writing to all Members of the Central Dudley Area Committee.

6. **Abandoned and Derelict Property in New Road, Netherton**

A letter from a member of the public was received in relation to an abandoned and derelict property in New Road, Netherton. It was noted that the property belonged to Dudley Council and leased to a Housing Association. The questioner indicated that the property had been boarded up for three years and had been attracting rats and used by people taking illegal drugs. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer indicated that the issue has been investigated and that:-

- 110 New Road was no longer leased to a Housing Association.
- The lease had expired and as the Housing Association did not want to renew, the property was back in full ownership of Dudley MBC.
- Consultation is under way on a decision to sell the property.

7. **New pathway into Woodside School from Bradford Road**

A member of the public submitted a question in relation to the new pathway into Woodside School from Bradford Road. The questioner suggested that Councillors meet with the school to discuss an alternative way to provide a safe entry into the school from Bradford Road. The Area Liaison Officer has responded that:-

There are a number of different groups of people using the entrance to the school which is leading to problems, that including:-

1. Residents have access to their homes both on foot and by car.
2. The school entrance is used by teachers to access on site parking and delivery vehicles during the teaching day.
3. Children are dropped off by parents who may indeed park their car and accompany their child into school.

The proposed way forward and currently what officers are working on is to bring the access to a standard whereby it could be adopted by highways and the site could then be better managed in relation to traffic and access using Highway powers as necessary.

8. **Allocation of Section 106 Monies – Middlepark Road, Russells Hall**

A member of the public referred to the new Housing Development in Middlepark Road, Russells Hall (Broadmeadow) and asked to be advised on how the development was proceeding and how the allocated Section 106 monies were being utilised. The following advice has been received from the Directorate of the Urban Environment:-

“£125,706.24 – Open Space, Sport and Recreation - Allocated to the provision of upgraded Skatepark facilities on the open space adjacent to the Middlepark Road Extra Care Development. This has been through Ward and Cabinet Member consultation and will be submitted to Cabinet for inclusion in the capital programme in due course. (As per the S106 Agreement the Council has 10 years from date of payment to spend these monies).

£62,804.28 – Public Realm - No monies yet allocated. (As per the S106 Agreement the Council has 10 years from date of payment to spend these monies).

£12,053.81 – Transport Infrastructure Improvements – No monies formally allocated but scheme identified as follows: Brierley Hill Active Travel Partnership Local Sustainable Transport Fund Project which seeks to improve walk & cycle opportunities between Brierley Hill and the surrounding communities. This particular funding would be focused on improving connections towards and within the Russells Hall Estate. Consultation with Ward Members anticipated early in the New Year. (As per the S106 Agreement the Council has 5 years from date of payment to spend these monies).

£86,356.25 – Nature Conservation Mitigation - No monies yet allocated. (As per the S106 Agreement the Council has 5 years from date of payment to spend these monies).”

9. **Partnership project with E-on to upgrade loft insulation in the Borough**

A Member of the Committee referred to the partnership project with E-on to upgrade loft insulation in the Borough to help minimise heating bills. He expressed great concern that elderly/disabled people were being refused loft insulation because loft space had not been cleared.

The Partnership Manager has responded that discussions on the progress of the lofts have taken place with site staff. Assurances have been sought from the contractor that they will now proceed with a number of lofts where elderly and disabled residents are unable to empty their own lofts. At the moment, this totals 13 properties.

The contractor has a full time site based Tenant Liaison Officer, who is able to identify residents that genuinely require assistance. There remain a few other residents who are refusing to empty their lofts, and these will be omitted from the works.

The Partnership Manager pointed out that it has never been Council policy to empty lofts to allow insulation works to take place, and that a resident also has the right to refuse the work. However, in this case, as the scheme is attracting external funding, the Council will opt to pay additional costs to remove items in cases such as these. An instruction will therefore be issued to the contractor to undertake loft clearance in the 13 lofts and this is currently being attended to.

The emptying of lofts and disposal of items also opens the contractor to risk, and the contractor has insisted on drafting a disclaimer, which will be presented to the residents for signature prior to removal of items, as the contractor will not accept liability for any items removed from a loft on the tenant's behalf.

For the remainder of the scheme the Liaison Officer will continue to identify any other residents who may need assistance and we will continue to instruct the contractor.”

10. **Woodside Day Centre**

Members of the Committee raised various concerns regarding Woodside Day Centre. The Area Liaison Officer responded as follows in relation to the points raised:-

Clarify actual refurbishment costs and what for

Dudley MBC's Property Team has identified that significant refurbishment is required as follows:-

- Replacement of the retaining wall at costs ranging from £127,000 to £300,000 depending on the nature of the works undertaken.
- Replacement of the central heating system at a cost of £170,000, which includes boiler and distribution systems. Decisions on this depend on the overall decision about continued use of the Woodside Centre.

Be clear about when these estimates were undertaken

The estimates for the boiler/central heating was done early in the summer of 2011.

The estimate for the wall arrived in September 2011.

Has an alternative venue been found and what is the cost of the relocation

Suitable alternative premises have not yet been identified. The preferred site would be used as the Dudley day centre in Stafford Street, which will be vacated by Age Concern during the autumn, but this option is not yet confirmed. There may be different options arising from the closure of other day centre facilities elsewhere in the Borough.

The cost of possible re-location is being worked on at the moment and is not yet complete. Any decision on the continued use of Woodside would have to take into account the possible cost of relocation.

Set out why it states that people will be reassessed and will not receive a service in future

Re-assessing the needs of any person using social care services is important because a person's needs can change over time i.e. the person's situation may have improved, deteriorated or remain the same. Services are provided according to that assessment or re-assessment.

Where a person's needs have improved and they need less service, it is important to act on that as soon as possible so that resources can be re-directed to others with more pressing needs at the time. This is why people need to be re-assessed and this needs to be done in line with the Fair Access to Care criteria which should be applied in all circumstances for Council-arranged services.

As such, re-assessment is a routine part of ordinary professional practice and the Dudley-Walsall Mental Health Trust have been asked to review all the clients who currently attend Woodside. In re-assessing people concerned, it is possible that some may no longer meet the Fair Access to Care eligibility criteria. In those cases, people would no longer be eligible for the assessed service so some people with lower-level needs may lose their service or may receive a reduced service following these reviews.

However, it is important to remember that the policy for clients to access services via personal budgets as is already happening in other services such as learning disability remains and reviews would be necessary even if the centre does not move. In this way, services will become less buildings-based over time. In other words, the assessment of people's needs is not linked to the continued use or otherwise of the Woodside Day Centre building.

What are the implications of that and what support will people be offered

Where people are assessed as eligible for a personal budget, they will have choice about how they spend that budget to meet their needs. They may wish to do so in a number of ways and this may not include attendance at a day centre. For instance, they may prefer to have help with participating in extending their ability in everyday life such as shopping or learning a new skill through attendance at college or some other way.

Where people no longer need a service, then they will continue to live their lives in the same way that anybody else who does not receive a social service will.

They may already have relation, friends, neighbours or wider social networks in which they spend time. In all circumstances the risks to the person concerned would be assessed.

11. **New Development on Thorns Road**

A Member of the Committee asked to be advised on how the new development on Thorns Road was proceeding and how the allocated Section 106 monies were being utilised. The Area Liaison Officer had been advised that a breakdown of spend for Section 106 receipts in the Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood Ward had been sent direct to the Member.

Finance

12. This report has no direct financial implications.

Law

13. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council is empowered to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or conducive to, or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

Equality Impact

14. This report complies with the policies of the Council on Equality and Diversity.

15. Children and young people have not been consulted on the preparation of this report, as report seeks only to note progress on issues raised at its previous meetings.

Recommendation

16. That the report be noted.



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List of Background Papers Minutes of the meeting of the Central Dudley Area Committee held on 4th October, 2011