

NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 10th October 2012 at 6.30pm
at High Arcal School, High Arcal Drive, Sedgley

PRESENT:-

Councillor G Davies (in the Chair)
Councillor Mrs Ridney (Vice Chair)
Councillors Mrs Ameson, A. Aston, Branwood, Casey, Caunt, Evans, S. Turner, Mrs Westwood and Wright.

Officers

Assistant Director (Housing Strategy & Private Sector) (as acting Area Liaison Officer); Assistant Director, Leisure and Culture and the Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety (Directorate of the Urban Environment); Senior Account Manager (Chief Executive's); Assistant Director, Education Services, Area Team Leader (Youth Service), and Miss J Smith (Youth Service) (all Directorate of Children's Services) and Mrs K Taylor (Directorate of Corporate Resources).

Also in Attendance

Inspector G. Malpass (West Midlands Police); Operations Commander A. Grosvenor and Miss J Winpenny (West Midlands Fire Service), Mrs C Dimbylow (Citizens Advice Bureaux) and Councillor Tyler together with twelve members of the public.

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mottram and Miss Jenkins (Co-opted Member).

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No member declared an interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

27 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th June 2012, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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PETITIONS

No petitions were received at the meeting.

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YOUTH MATTERS

The Area Team Leader for Youth Service gave an oral update on new projects being undertaken by the Youth Service for young people to participate in, details of which were included in handouts circulated at the meeting.

Miss Smith referred to additional activities that had taken place and of the possibility of using a portion of the lottery grant that had been awarded to the Youth Forum to initiate a 'meals on wheels' service for the elderly.

Following the presentation, Members of the Committee expressed appreciation for all the work that had been carried out by the Youth Team to ensure that youth provision was being offered.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on Youth matters be noted.

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POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Malpass reported that there had been a reduction of crime in the area of the Committee, however it was anticipated that there would be a seasonality rise in crime in particular relating to dwellings and sheds.

Inspector Malpass also referred to ongoing anti social behaviour issues in the North Dudley area and informed the Committee that there would be police monitoring to combat the issue of off road vehicles on the Beacon.

In responding to a question by a member of the public in relation to the recent burglaries in the Coseley area, Inspector Malpass confirmed that the police had visited a number of premises and that a number of arrests had been made.

Arising from the comments made, Councillor Mrs. Ridney referred to the metal thefts that had been occurring in the Coseley area, in particular in Churches, and asked for an update of the current position. In response, Inspector Malpass stated that he was aware of the incidents but that it would be difficult to protect buildings overnight. He reported on 'Operation Kryptonite', where Police Officers visited scrap dealers in the Borough to address the issue.

RESOLVED

That the information reported on be noted.

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FIRE ISSUES

Operations Commander, Mr A Grosvenor reported on issues in relation to the Fire Service in particular the number of fire incidents that had occurred and the types of such incidents throughout the four wards comprising the area of the Area Committee. It was noted that the number of incidents had reduced compared to this time last year.

The Operations Commander also made particular reference to fire incidents in kitchens, and that the Fire Service wished to actively engage with the public to inform them of the dangers and safety measures in order to prevent a fire.

RESOLVED

That the information reported on at the meeting on fire issues be noted.

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TRANSPORT ISSUES

No particular transport issues were raised at this juncture.

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PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A member of the public referred to the Coronation Gardens in Sedgley and requested that the restoration of the wrought iron archway and pruning of the trees be undertaken in view of the sixty year anniversary of the Queen's Coronation in 2013. The Assistant Director, Leisure and Culture undertook to pursue the matter.
- (b) The same member of the public requested an update in relation to a piece of land near Sunningdale Road, Sedgley in that a planning application had been previously approved by South Staffordshire Council, however it had since been found that the land was owned by Dudley Council.

The Area Liaison Officer reported that a letter by the Assistant Director, Law and Governance had been circulated to all neighbouring residents informing them that the matter was being addressed.

CITIZEN ADVICE BUREAU UPDATE

Mrs C Dimbylow, Chief Executive, gave an oral presentation on the services provided, details of which were included in handouts circulated at the meeting. During the presentation she explained the background of the organisation and the various locations where the Bureau would be visiting to advise people.

It was noted that 3338 people from the North Dudley area had visited the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Following the presentation given, Councillor Branwood expressed his gratitude for the information presented and referred to the future welfare reform and the impact this would have on the Bureau. In response, Mrs Dimbylow stated that a number of people might find it difficult to understand the new process, however advice would be given in relation to budget management.

In responding to a question by a Member in relation to the affect on the organisation following the closure of the Benefits Shop, Mrs Dimbylow confirmed that demand for the service had increased which had a big impact on the employees. She stated that additional volunteers had been employed to manage the increase.

Reference was made to the need for people to understand what benefits they were entitled to claim. Mrs Dimbylow responded that when people attend the Bureau, a benefits calculation was routinely carried out in order to ascertain the benefits that person was entitled too.

RESOLVED

That the information presented to the meeting be noted.

DELEGATED REVENUE BUDGET

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on standing authorisations and procedures for distributing funds delegated to this Area Committee and in respect of five applications that had been received for an allocation. Appendix A to the report set out the criteria for capital bids / allocations.

During the consideration of the application received from Gornal Business Watch, Councillor Branwood commented that planning permission had been granted for the flagpole and that the three primary schools involved were Roberts Primary; Redhall Primary and the Straits Primary. He further stated that it was the intention of the Royal British Legion to incorporate the flag in to their yearly ceremony.

Concerns were raised by a number of Members in relation to the Gornal Business Watch not supplying the requested documentation to support the application.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the arrangements for considering funding allocations made to this Area Committee, as set out in paragraphs 2 and 3 and Appendix A to the report submitted, be approved.
- (2) That the action of the Area Liaison Officer under delegated authority and after consultation with Members of the Committee, in determining the following application for funding, be approved, as follows:-
 - (i) An application from The Royal British Legion (Gornal) in the sum of £2,486 to purchase an automatic bugle, IT equipment and a Union Flag.
 - (ii) An application from the Darby and Joan Club (Gornal) in the sum of £6,275 for the installation of security fencing around the club building.
 - (iii) An application from the Gorge Road Allotments (Sedgley) in the sum of £5,000 for the installation of security fencing.
 - (iv) An application from Age Concern Dudley (All Wards) in the sum of £740 towards the replacement of IT equipment to support the administration at the Age UK Head Office in Netherton.
- (3) That the application by the Gornal Business Watch (Gornal) for £1,389.92 for the manufacture of a Gornal Flag be approved.

AREA COMMITTEE REVIEW

A report of Scrutiny Chairs was submitted on the proposals for a review of Area Committees. It was noted that the proposals were subject to a consultation period from 1st October to 9th November, 2012 with recommendations submitted to the Cabinet and Council in November, 2012.

The proposals would see nine new forums meeting five times throughout the year focusing on issues raised by the public, making it easier and accessible for people to report and discuss issues with the Council and elected members.

Following a brief presentation by Councillor Tyler a number of issues were raised in relation to the proposals set out in the report submitted to the meeting.

A member of the public raised concerns as to how the new forums would be publicised. In responding, Councillor Tyler reported that the Council would be using a number of social media sites to advertise the Forums such as Twitter, Facebook, media releases and also relying on Ward Members to promote the meetings. Councillor Ridney further commented that Ward Members would be actively seeking members of the public to attend the Forums.

A member of the public commented that when questions were asked at the Area Committee there was not an opportunity to discuss the matter further, and requested that questions asked at the Forum be answered immediately. In response, Councillor Tyler confirmed that in some instances a question might not be able to be responded to on the night, however a response would be sent within forty-eight hours.

A member of the public referred to the 'Coseley Grapevine' Newsletter, and stated that it would be a good avenue to publicise the Community Forum dates and Ward Councillors details for Coseley.

A member of the public queried whether additional meetings were required, and that the need for quicker action should be the priority. He commented that the Area Committee was a good decision making meeting, but that they needed to be less confrontational, and that he considered that the Community Forms would place extra pressure on members of the public to attend.

RESOLVED

- (1) That comments on developing the proposals in the report submitted to the meeting on the review of Area Committees be submitted to the Director of Corporate Resources by the deadline of 9th November, 2012.
- (2) That comments and views received during the consultation period be collated and considered by the Cabinet and Council during November, 2012.

- (a) Councillor Wright raised concerns regarding the issue of parking in Boundary Crescent. The Group Engineer - Traffic and Road Safety stated that he had recently attended a meeting with residents to discuss the matter further.

- (b) Councillor A Aston referred to a letter he had received from the Old Park Road Tenants and Resident's Association in relation to a drainage issue as a result of heavy rain, and that it appeared that the drainage cleaning vehicles did not visit the estate. The Assistant Director, Leisure and Culture undertook to pursue the matter.
 - (c) Councillor Branwood reported that the Foundation Stage Unit had been completed during the Summer at Redhall Primary School, and that the Mayor had agreed to formally open the site on Friday 7th December, 2012.
 - (d) Councillor Ridney raised concerns regarding the issue of parking surrounding the Clayton Playing Fields, in particular cars parking in Old Meeting Road, and asked for any alternative suggestions for parking during the busy football season. The Assistant Director, Leisure and Culture undertook to pursue the matter.
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SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

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

RESOLVED

That the information given in respect of the dates of meetings of Scrutiny Committees, be noted.

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SCHEDULED DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that whilst the next scheduled meeting date and venue was Wednesday 30th January 2013 at 6.30 p.m. at The Dance Studio, Ellowes Hall School, Stickley Lane, Lower Gornal, this was subject to the review of area committees referred to earlier in the meeting.

The meeting ended at 7.55 p.m.

CHAIR