

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 14th September, 2010 at 6.30 p.m.
at Hillcrest School and Community College, Simms Lane, Netherton

PRESENT: -

Councillor Ahmed (Chairman)
Councillor K Finch (Vice Chairman)

Councillors Ali, Mrs Aston, Cotterill, M Davis, A Finch, J Martin, Sparks,
and Wood; Mr Lawley and Mr Robinson

OFFICERS:

The Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (as Lead Officer to the Committee); Assistant Director (Environmental Management), Directorate of the Urban Environment; the Assistant Director of Libraries, Archives and Adult Learning, the Head of Housing Management – North and the Social Regeneration Officer – All Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services; the Head of the Youth Service and the Area Youth Team Leader for the Central Dudley Area – both Directorate of Children’s Services; the Principal Solicitor and Ms K Farrington – both Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Sector Inspector Richard Jones and Inspector Eddie Boyle, West Midlands Police – for Agenda Item No. 6

Mr Richard Andrews, West Midlands Fire Service – for Agenda Item No. 7

Mr David Ore – Dudley Group of Hospitals – for Agenda Item No. 11

20 Members of the public

25.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman expressed gratitude to Linda Sanders, Area Liaison Officer, for all her hard work and support and wished her all the best in her new appointment.

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| 26. | <p><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors J R Davies, Mrs Roberts, Waltho and While-Cooper; Ms Little, Mrs Oakes and Mr Thomas.</p> |
| 27. | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></p> <p>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.</p> |
| 28. | <p><u>MINUTES</u></p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8th June, 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed.</p> |
| 29. | <p><u>CO-OPTION</u></p> <p>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 2010/11 municipal year to represent young people and the Dudley Association of Governing Bodies.</p> <p>It was indicated that, having attended the previous meeting, Connor Robinson and Mathew Thomas had expressed an interest in serving jointly and now wished their co-option to be proceeded with on this basis.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) That Mr Lawley be co-opted to the Committee as the representative of the Dudley Association of Governing Bodies for the remainder of the 2010/11 municipal year. (2) That Connor Robinson and Mathew Thomas be co-opted to the Committee to serve jointly as youth representatives for the remainder of the 2010/11 municipal year. |

30.

YOUTH SERVICE

The Area Youth Team Leader gave an oral update on new projects being undertaken by the Youth Service for young people to participate in, with particular reference to the summer programme of activities that were offered to young people during the summer holidays. She stated that a range of activities were included in the programme and informed the Committee that target figures were in the process of being completed. She also referred to the football table tournament, arranged by the Central Area Youth Forum, held on 28th June, 2010 as part of the Community Games event for 2010. She indicated that the event had proved successful particularly with young people and families.

During the presentation, the Area Youth Team Leader indicated that there had been an increase in young people accessing Meadow Road Youth Centre following a recent charity fundraiser event in order to raise money for a charity of the young peoples choice. She expressed thanks to Councillors A Finch and K Finch for opening the fundraiser event and for inviting some young people to meet the Mayor.

Other projects included partnership working with the police to support the Staysafe Scheme in Dudley; increased involvement with Dudley College by running both gold and silver Duke of Edinburgh awards alongside Enrichment sessions, 'mentoring' and an 'introduction to working with young people' and working with high schools offering life skills courses and sessions.

Finally the Area Youth Team Leader thanked Connor and Mathew for showing an interest in becoming co-opted members of the Central Dudley Area Committee.

Following the oral update, Members thanked the Area Youth Team Leader for organising the football table tournament and also the organisations who supported the event.

RESOLVED

That the information as circulated at the meeting and reported orally be noted.

31.

POLICE ISSUES

Sector Inspector Richard Jones of West Midlands Police reported on current police issues in the area of the Committee.

During the presentation, an update was given in particular to the recent visit to Dudley from the English Defence League.

Sector Inspector Richard Jones also indicated that the police had been working closely with the youth service to identify schemes in which the young people could be involved in, particularly with bonfire night approaching. He also made reference to Operation Staysafe and indicated that funding for the Scheme had now been secured. He highlighted that there had been a 10% reduction in crime in the Dudley area and reported that two new Police Community Support Officers had recently joined the Dudley team.

Eddie Boyle, Sector Inspector for Stourbridge then introduced himself and updated the Committee on issues affecting the Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood areas as requested at the previous meeting. He reported that Inspector McKew had recently taken over from Sergeant Dalton and indicated that he was keen to tackle issues relating to anti-social behaviour and working closely with the neighbourhood to make Dudley a safer place for residents.

Following the presentation, a Member mentioned the problems buses had encountered during the English Defence League demonstrations and queried whether Centro had been included in discussions in the lead up to the protest. In responding, Sector Inspector Richard Jones confirmed that Centro and Dudley College had been included in all discussions that had been held.

RESOLVED

That Sector Inspectors Richard Jones and Eddie Boyle be thanked for their presentations and that the information reported on be received and noted.

32.

FIRE SERVICE ISSUES

Mr Andrews of the West Midlands Fire Service reported orally on the number and nature of incidents in the Central Dudley Area with particular reference to grass and rubbish fires, fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and aspects in relation to void buildings. He indicated that statistical information was available on request if Members would like a hard copy.

In relation to a question raised at the previous Area Committee regarding Saltwells House, Mr Andrews reported that the House had been broken into five times since April 2009 and the Fire Service had attended ten fires. He confirmed that the House was now secure.

In relation to a question also raised at the previous Area Committee regarding the vacant building in Cook Avenue, Mr Andrews reported that the Fire Service had only attended to one fire since 2004 and confirmed that that building was now secure.

Following the presentation, a Member raised concern with regard to the wooden bars that had replaced the windows and doors at the vacant Golden Cross public house building and stated that it was a potential fire hazard. He also referred to the potential fire issues relating to the empty Birch Coppice public house. In responding, Mr Andrews acknowledged the concerns of the Member and undertook to investigate the issues and report back to the Member directly.

A Member then raised concern in relation to a recent newspaper article in relation to the lack of firemen and fire engines and queried whether Dudley would be affected. In responding, Mr Andrews reported that they were committed to ensuring that a quality service continued to be given despite budgetary constraints.

RESOLVED

- (1) That Mr Andrews be thanked for his presentation and that the information reported on be received and noted.
- (2) That Mr Andrews investigate the potential fire risks in relation to the Golden Cross and Birch Coppice public houses and respond to the Member direct.

33.

PETITIONS

A petition from residents of Cradley Road was submitted objecting to the provision of a new pedestrian crossing in the vicinity of the junction with Cradley Park Road. It was noted that the petition had been passed to the Directorate of the Urban Environment and Councillor Adams, Cabinet Member for Transportation for consideration and attention.

A petition from residents of the Borough was submitted requesting that the Council honours its overt pledge to buy back the Hall Street site of the proposed Mosque complex under the terms of a restrictive covenant. The petition organiser, Councillor M Davis addressed the Committee on the petition and it was noted that the petition would be referred to the Petitions Officer for consideration and the outcome would be reported back to the next Area Committee.

A petition was also received from residents, traders and users of Dudley Town Centre in relation to their dismay at the poor state of parking in the town centre. The petition organiser, Mr Roger Scott addressed the Committee on the petition and it was noted that the petition would be referred to the Petitions Officer for consideration and the outcome would be reported back to the next Area Committee.

34.

PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A member of the public drew attention to taxi drivers displaying black ribbons and tassels on their vehicles and reported on the advice he had received on what the ribbons and tassels represented. The questioner informed the Committee that he had raised this issue with the Taxi Licensing Section; however, he stated that no response had been received. In responding, Sector Inspector Richard Jones agreed to make national enquires as to what the black ribbons and tassels represented and respond to the questioner direct.
- (b) A member of the public drew attention to the proposed Dudley Mosque and Community Training and Enterprise Centre and queried why the Local Authority did not uphold the agreement, that if the Mosque was not substantially built by the end of 2008, the land be sold back to the Local Authority. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer undertook to refer the matter to the Director of Corporate Resources and request that a written response be submitted to the questioner.
- (c) A member of the public queried why meetings in relation to the proposed Dudley Mosque and Community Training and Enterprise Centre were always held in private and also made reference to a recent newspaper article which had referred to a meeting that had been held on 6th September, 2010. In response, the Area Liaison Officer stated that the Committee had been unaware of a meeting that had taken place on that date, however, it was quite right and proper that some meetings were held without general public attendance to facilitate ongoing discussions and negotiations between the parties involved. It was reported that the matter would be referred to the Director of Corporate Resources with a request that a written response be submitted to the questioner.
- (d) A member of the public circulated photographs and drew attention to the health and safety implications of replacing a boundary fence with two pieces of wire when a property became vacant. In responding, the Head of Housing Management – North explained the policy on boundary fences, however he stated that health and safety was taken very seriously and undertook to carry out a risk assessment with a view to reviewing their policy.
- (e) A Member of the public requested a written response regarding the legal standing of the restrictive covenant on the Hall Street land. In response, the Legal Adviser undertook to refer this matter back to an appropriate officer in the Directorate of Corporate Resources and request that the questioner be responded to direct.

- (f) A Member of the public drew attention to the volume of speeding vehicles along Oakham Road as a consequence of the work being carried out at Burnt Tree Island and requested that traffic-calming measures be introduced. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) acknowledged that there was a problem and suggested that as a temporary solution to the problems, speed visors, be erected. He also undertook to liaise with the Police with a view to identifying a solution with regard to preventing vehicles using Blackacre Road as a rat run and a written response on the outcome would be submitted to the questioner.

35.

WARD ISSUES

- (a) In referring to the volume and speed of traffic along Oakham Road, Councillor Ali asked that road traffic calming measures at that location be introduced.
- (b) Councillor Ali requested that the yellow lines on the corner of North Street and Hall Street, opposite the Salvation Army be extended.
- (c) Councillor Ali drew attention to the lack of crossing provision in Hall Street and requested that this issue be investigated.
- (d) Councillor Ali reported that there was no room for pedestrians to cross at Trindle Road in the vicinity of Grosvenor Furniture and requested that action be taken in this regard.
- (e) Councillor Ali drew attention to the graffiti on the footbridge on the Southern By-pass and requested that this be removed and for him to be informed of when this would be done.
- (f) Councillor Sparks made reference to his dissatisfaction as to the location of the healthy hub in the Dudley area. He referred to the health hub at Mary Stevens Park and the proposal to appoint park rangers there. He stated that there was adequate provision in Stevens Park, Quarry Bank to accommodate a healthy hub and park rangers.
- (g) Councillor Cotterill drew attention to the fly tipping and rubbish accumulating at the closed garage site in Lea Bank Road and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (h) Councillor Cotterill drew attention to vehicles speeding along Lantern Road, New Village and Dalvine Road and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (i) Councillor Mrs Aston referred to the signage in Paganel Drive and queried why the Local Authority paid money for unnecessary signage.

- (j) Councillor K Finch drew attention to the overgrown trees in Castle and Priory Ward, which prevented persons such as the disabled and people using prams from using the footpath and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (k) Councillor K Finch referred to the blocked pavement laid at the new development site in Summer Road and drew attention to local youths throwing bricks through windows.
- (l) Councillor K Finch referred to the drains on the Castle and Priory Ward and requested that these be looked at.
- (m) Councillor J Martin drew attention to the speeding vehicles along Yew Tree Hills and Hockley Lane, Netherton and requested that Highways Officers investigate and consider appropriate traffic calming measures.
- (n) Councillor J Martin queried the possibility of extinguishing the right access off Darby End Road to land in between houses in Darby End Road and Vale Road, Netherton. The land was formerly used for garages that had since been removed and now attracted anti-social behaviour.
- (o) Councillor J Martin requested that the overgrown land at the top of Vale Road near the bridge on St Peter's Road be cleared.
- (p) Councillor J Martin requested that the long grass on grass banks throughout Netherton, Woodside and St Andrew's ward be cut back on all housing department owned land where there was a contractual requirement for this to be done.
- (q) Councillor J Martin registered his opposition and dissatisfaction at the Council's decision to abandon its responsibilities and not to cut grass banks on council owned land.
- (r) Councillor J Martin requested that the pavement at the corner of Baptist End Road and Halesowen Road, Netherton outside Joe's Café be inspected and repaired.
- (s) Further to a request made at the previous Area Committee held on 8th June, 2010, Councillor J Martin again requested that bollards be introduced on the pavement immediately outside the Netherton Arts Centre to prevent parking on the pavement and pedestrian crossing.
- (t) Councillor J Martin drew attention to the problems wheelchair users were experiencing getting to Netherton Health Centre on the Halesowen Road and requested that appropriate officers investigate the height of dropped kerbs and wheelchair accessibility at both ends of Crossley Street, Netherton.

- (u) Councillor J Martin expressed thanks to the Friends of Netherton Park Group who continued to do a magnificent job caring for the park all year round and for organising the Netherton Park Fun day.
- (v) Councillor J Martin expressed thanks to Dudley Council's Highways Officers for their hard work and patience in connection with the working group on the proposed Traffic Regulation Order for Central Netherton and also for their work and assistance on the road safety schemes on Highgate Road and Stourbridge Road, Woodside.
- (w) Councillor Wood requested clarification on the Council's fencing policy.
- In responding, the Head of Housing Management – North indicated that boundary fences were normally the responsibility of residents, however, there were some exceptions. He agreed to respond to Councillor Wood direct.
- (x) Councillor Wood drew attention to a lack of appropriate response from Council Officers and requested clarification on the Council's procedures for responding to queries.
- In responding, the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) apologised on behalf of the officers who had not responded to such queries and confirmed that normal practice was that queries were responded to within five working days, even if that response was an acknowledgement. The Head of Housing Management – North re-iterated comments made by the Assistant Director (Environmental Management) and confirmed that a review would be taking place.
- (y) Councillor Wood requested more information in respect of turning the green space at Worcester Road/Hereford Road into a play area.
- (z) Councillor M Davis drew attention to the blocked drains and the amount of rubbish accumulating on the Middlepark Road development and requested that this be investigated.
- (aa) Councillor M Davis referred to some discarded hypodermic needles which he had reported to the police and which had not been removed and requested that these needles be disposed of as a matter of urgency.
- (ab) Mr Lawley drew attention to the parking problems on the Oakham Road and requested that this matter be investigated.
- (ac) Councillor Ahmed drew attention to the urgent need for Stepping Stone Street to be resurfaced and requested clarification on when the work would be carried out.

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| <p>36.</p> | <p><u>DUDLEY GROUP OF HOSPITALS FOUNDATION TRUST MEMBERSHIP</u></p> <p>Mr David Ore, on behalf of The Dudley Group of Hospitals, gave a verbal presentation on the Dudley Group of Hospitals Foundation Trust Membership. A hard copy of the presentation was circulated at the meeting. During the presentation, Mr Ore briefly explained what a Foundation Trust was and gave statistics of patients that had been treated the previous year. He also described the advantages of becoming a Member of the Trust and gave details of how to go about becoming a Member.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) That the verbal presentation given by Mr Ore on behalf of the Foundation Trust Membership be noted. (2) That any Member or member of the public interested in becoming a Member of the Trust be requested to complete the Membership application form circulated and return it to the Dudley Group of Hospitals. |
| <p>37.</p> | <p><u>CENTRAL DUDLEY LIBRARY LOCALITY PANEL</u></p> <p>A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the planned establishment of the Central Dudley Library Locality Panel as one of five panels across the borough as part of the ongoing engagement and consultation for Dudley Libraries. The report also requested the Committee to nominate Councillors to become members of the panel, subject to the pilot scheme being successful in the Halesowen Area.</p> <p>Following the presentation, Members expressed concern in relation to paragraph 4.2.3 under the heading Councillors outlined in Appendix 1 and suggested that that paragraph be reviewed. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer agreed to review the paragraph further.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) That the report be noted. (2) That the Area Liaison Officer be requested to review paragraph 4.2.3 under the heading Councillors outlined in Appendix 1. (3) That Councillors J Martin and Ahmed be appointed as Council representatives on the Central Dudley Library Locality Panel. |

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| <p>38.</p> | <p><u>PROPOSED TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER TO CONTROL MOVING, WAITING AND LOADING IN THE NETHERTON AREA</u></p> <p>A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on proposals for the introduction of a Traffic Regulation Order to control moving traffic, waiting and loading in Netherton.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>That support be given to the proposals to control moving, waiting and loading in the Netherton area as shown in appendices A and B to the report submitted and that the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended accordingly.</p> |
| <p>39.</p> | <p><u>CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS WORKING GROUP</u></p> <p>A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on recommendations made by the Capital Allocations Working Group of the Committee with regard to applications for grant from the Delegated Capital Budget of the Committee for 2010/11.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>(1) That grants to the organisations indicated below for the purposes, and in the sums indicated, be approved:</p> <p>(a) Castle and Priory Ward</p> <p>(i) The award of a grant of £1,300 to Wrens Nest Community Action Group for the renovation of the Wrens Nest Community Centre's floor.</p> <p>(ii) The award of a grant of £1,800 to Castle High School – Gardening Club for the purchase of a greenhouse, shed and associated gardening equipment.</p> <p>(b) Netherton, Woodside and St Andrews Ward</p> <p>(i) The award of a grant of £2,500 to Netherton Strategic Regeneration Group as a contribution towards the purchase of new computers at the Savoy Centre, Netherton.</p> <p>(ii) The award of a grant of £5,000 to First Netherton Scout Group as a contribution towards the replacement of the roof.</p> |

(c) Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood Ward

Subject to the provision of a business plan acceptable to the Area Liaison Officer to cover all associated revenue costs including installation and electricity, the award of a grant of £1,000 to Friends of Quarry Bank Communities Facilities to purchase adaptation equipment to existing lamp standards to accommodate festive lighting equipment already purchased in 2009.

(d) St James's Ward

(i) The award of a grant of £3,000 to Black Country Boxing Club as a contribution towards the cost of a new boxing ring.

(ii) The award of a grant of £1,000 to Revival Fires as a contribution towards the purchase of a television, DVD player and tables.

(2) That consideration of the application submitted on behalf of the New Testament Welfare Association be deferred to enable additional information to be obtained.

(3) That, as no further information had been received, despite numerous requests, the application submitted on behalf of the Cyber Bus Project be not proceeded with and that should the applicant wish to pursue the application, given the amount of time that had elapsed, they be required to submit a new application.

(4) That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to carry out the recommended actions within the agreed control procedures.

40.

MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 8TH JUNE, 2010 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 8th June, 2010, that related to services provided by the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

Councillor A Finch referred to the traffic and parking problems at Sycamore Green Pupil Referral Centre and indicated that he was still receiving complaints from residents and suggested that the nearby garage site be used for an overspill car park for the Centre. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environment Management) undertook to liaise with officers in the Directorate of Children's Services with a view to ascertaining a solution to the problem.

Councillor Mrs Aston then requested an update on the issue regarding the former Duncan Edwards public house site. In responding, the Assistant Director (Environment Management) indicated that the proprietor had now been identified and written to requesting that if action had not been taken to clean up the site to an acceptable standard, legal action would be taken. He confirmed that following receipt of the letter, the owners of the land had contacted his office and requested a list of contractors and gave assurances that the site would be cleaned up.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

41.

MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 8TH JUNE, 2010 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 8th June, 2010, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

42.

SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

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

43.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE

The dates scheduled for future meetings of the Committee in the current municipal year were noted.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm.

CHAIRMAN