

NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 20th September, 2006, at 6.30pm
at Ellowes Hall School Drama Studio, Stickley Lane, Lower Gornal

PRESENT

Councillor Ryder - Chairman
Councillors: Mrs Ameson, G H Davies, Evans, Mrs Millward, Mrs
Ridney, Stanley, Wright and Mr J Millward (Youth Member).

Officers

The Director of Children's Services (as Area Liaison Officer), Assistant
Director of Law and Property (Legal and Democratic Services), the
Senior Engineer (Directorate of the Urban Environment), the Assistant
Director (Culture and Community), Acting Area Team Leader (Youth and
Community), North Dudley Area Housing Manager (Directorate of Adult,
Community and Housing Services) and Mrs Holland (Directorate of Law
and Property)

Also in attendance

Inspector Bailey of West Midlands Police.

Approximately 30 members of the public.

21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Caunt,
Fraser-Macnamara, Mottram and Simms.

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct Councillors Mrs
Ameson and Ryder confirmed that they would not take part in any
debate in that part of Agenda Item No. 9 (Public Consultation on the
Gambling Act 2005 and Draft Policy) as they are Members of the
Licensing and Safety Committee, and Councillors G Davies and Wright
confirmed that they would not take part in any debate in that part of
Agenda Item No.10.2 (relating to land in Vale Street) as they are
Members of the Development Control Committee.

23 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28th June 2006, be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the name of Councillor Evans being added to the list of those members appointed to the Capital Allocations Working Group, as set out in resolution (1) of minute 9.

24

PETITIONS

A petition was submitted by Councillor Davies on behalf of residents living in the vicinity of Richards and Jerome scrap yard, regarding the unsuitable noise level emanating from the scrap yard during the day and at night, which also referred to a planning proposal submitted by the company to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council for the erection of a new building on the site.

It was noted that the petition would be referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for their consideration.

A petition was submitted by Councillor Wright on behalf of residents living near to the Walkway Passage between 322 and 322A from the Himley Road, and 58 and 60 from Central Drive, Gornal Wood, calling for the walkway to be closed because of anti-social behaviour in the Walkway and the damage being sustained.

It was noted that the petition would be referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for their consideration.

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YOUTH ISSUES

Ms Lisa Atkinson introduced herself as Acting Team Leader (Youth and Community) following the recent retirement of Mr G Pomford. She informed the Committee that she would present a full update on activities in the North Dudley area to the November meeting.

Mr Joe Millward updated the meeting on the activities of the Youth Forum.

RESOLVED

That the comments and updates received from Ms Atkinson and Mr Millward, be noted.

POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Bailey of Sedgley Police, was in attendance and updated the meeting on the current issues regarding neighbourhood policing teams, the make-up of the teams and commented that the present four Community Support Officers would be increased to eight.

She also reported on work undertaken with the Princes' Trust and on an event held at Sedgley Police Station involving unemployed youngsters, some of who had offended, who had now gained employment, and that the police had launched a web-site to serve the North Dudley Area.

Inspector Bailey also reported on recent crime figures stating that most of the crime figures were connected with vehicle crime and criminal damage to private property. She warned that satellite navigation systems were particularly vulnerable to theft and stated that a police priority was under-age drinking and that the police had conducted a leaflet drop in Valley Road and Glenn Road.

Inspector Bailey also reported that a fire had occurred on Sedgley Beacon and that the police were working closely with local residents and high profile patrols were taking place. The owners of a building that had been vandalised had also been traced and a meeting had been arranged to ask them to secure the site.

Inspector Bailey then further reported as follows:

the police had responded to incidents involving off-road motorbikes; that only one crime had been committed during a twenty-eight hour period in the Coseley Wood area; that work was being carried out to keep track of offenders who cross Council borders to commit anti-social behaviour in neighbouring Boroughs; that a Search Warrant had been executed in Coseley during which knives were found; that some arrests, in respect of damage to flats in the Wallbrook area had been made and some of those arrested had been charged; that there had been a reduction in crime in Coseley in respect of burglary and criminal damage; that the police were working with the Friends of Jubilee Park in tackling speeding motorbikes and anti-social behaviour in the park; that home visits had been made in respect of the policing of large congregations of youths on street corners and that an Open Day had been organised by the Neighbourhood Forum that had proved to be a great success.

In response to a question from Councillor Stanley, Inspector Bailey advised him to write down the registration of any vehicle he saw where the driver was on his/her mobile 'phone whilst driving. The police could then trace the driver and take action.

TRANSPORT ISSUES

The Area Liaison Officer informed the meeting of the contents of a letter received from the Network Manager of CENTRO, advising of the reasons he was unable to attend the meeting to respond to questions regarding the withdrawal of bus services in the North Dudley area, particularly the 223 bus service.

The Chairman stated that the matter was first raised at an Area Committee meeting some eighteen months ago and that he was keen to find a resolution to the matter.

Councillor Davies reported on the outcome of a meeting held on 6th September 2006, that representatives from CENTRO had attended, together with Council Officers and local residents. He suggested that, in order to resolve the issue, Councillor Bateman, a Councillor with Wolverhampton City Council, who had had some considerable input to CENTRO's decision to withdraw the 223 bus, be invited to the next meeting of the Committee to explain why he had been in favour of the withdrawal of the service contrary to the wishes of the members of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the Area Liaison Officer be requested to write to the Network Manager of CENTRO and Councillor Bateman of Wolverhampton City Council, inviting them to the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 28th November 2006, to discuss the issues raised by this Committee and by members of the public at previous meetings of the Committee.

Councillor Mrs Ridney expressed concern in respect of reports in the Press regarding the withdrawal of the contract that allows Central Trains to operate locally via Coseley to Birmingham, Coventry and other local stations. She explained that the trains were used extensively by students travelling to and from College or University and by workers travelling to their workplace.

RESOLVED

That the Area Liaison Officer be requested to write to the Director of Central Trains requesting that a representative from Central Trains attend the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 28th November 2006, to answer questions put by members of the public in attendance, regarding the future of Central Trains.

PUBLIC FORUM

1. A written question was submitted querying police response times, in particular with regard to an incident when workmen in the Wallbrook area were bombarded with stones being thrown at them by local teenagers.

Inspector Bailey agreed to meet with the questioner after the meeting.

2. A written question was submitted asking whether funding was available towards the building of a sports hall for Ellowes Hall School.

The Area Liaison Officer responded verbally to the questioner.

3. A question was raised asking the Committee whether the Committee welcomed the formation of Coseley Civic Trust.

The Committee stated that they were in favour of the formation of the Trust, but Councillor Evans cautioned that the Trust needed to ensure that the projects they intended to support were viable.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE GAMBLING ACT 2005
AND DRAFT POLICY

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on the draft Statement of Licensing Policy produced in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005.

The report was presented by the Assistant Director, Legal and Democratic Services, who explained that the Gambling Act 2005 created a new system of licensing and regulation for commercial gambling that vests the Council with new and extended responsibilities for licensing premises for gambling.

Councillor Ridney expressed the hope that church halls and similar organisations would not be prejudiced in terms of fees. Mr Tart confirmed that the Council would be as flexible as possible in accord with the new legislation.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and the Appendix to the report, submitted on the draft statement of Licensing Policy produced in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005, be noted.

APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted regarding land and property within the Committee's area.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the information contained in the report submitted, regarding the declaration of Bayer Street, Coseley, as surplus to requirements for the reasons indicated in the report and on the signing of a decision sheet by the Cabinet Member for Personnel, Law and Property authorising its demolition, be noted.
 - (ii) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be requested to refuse the application received from the owners of land off Moden Close/Vale Street, Upper Gornal, for the purchase of three areas of Council owned land, as marked on the plan attached to the report submitted for the reasons set out in the report and at the meeting.
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DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on applications received for funding from the capital budget allocation of the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the application from Lower Gornal Youth Centre in the sum of £4,418.66 for the provision of a sensory room for young children, be approved in the light of the assurances given by the Area Liaison Officer that the majority of children and young people who use Lower Gornal Youth Centre came from the North Dudley area.
 - (b) That the application received from Age Concern in the sum of £1,472.50 for the upgrading of safety and security at the Day Centre in Ettymore Road, be refused in view of the fact that Age Concern had already received funding from the Committee in the recent past.
 - (c) That the request received from the Beacon Hill Tenants and Residents' Association, that a computer previously funded by the Committee for use at Swan Village Tenants and Residents' Association be transferred to their Association, be approved.
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SEDGLEY BEACON, BEACON LANE, SEDGLEY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the existing condition and use of Sedgley Beacon and on a proposed course of action that would lead to the future improvement and enhancement of Sedgley Beacon.

Following a presentation of the report by the Assistant Director (Culture and Community) Councillor Evans welcomed the report and gave his support to the sentiments contained therein.

A member of the local history society advised the Committee of recent events in the immediate area of Donkey Pool and of efforts being made to obtain funding to restore the Beacon tower through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Councillor Stanley emphasised that it was important that proper consultation be undertaken with owners of any land affected that was not under Council control.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, be noted and that the establishment of a Friends Group for Sedgley Beacon and the subsequent production of a Management and Development Plan to cover the future management and enhancement of Beacon Hill and Tower be supported.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT PREVIOUS MEETINGS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the current status of responses to questions posed at previous meetings of the Committee.

In response to a question from Councillor Davies, the Senior Engineer confirmed that a sign would be erected at Jack Newall Court within the next four weeks.

Councillor Mrs Millward requested that a "home-made" sign in Tansey Green Road be investigated.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and the Appendix to the report, submitted, be noted together with the comments received from Councillors Mrs Millward and Davies.

WARD ISSUES

- (1) Councillor Mrs Ridney raised the issue of a piece of land in Broad Street adjacent to Bridge Street, known locally as the "Park" that was, in fact a piece of land used for anti-social behaviour, drug-taking and under-age drinking. The Directorate of the Urban Environment had responded to calls for the land to be cleared, but had only cut down a few trees; the land required complete clearance and for the fences to be moved.

The Senior Engineer agreed to investigate and respond direct to Councillor Mrs Ridney.

- (2) Councillor Mrs Ridney raised the issue of the land to the rear of the flats in Whitegates Road to be disposed of by the Council for development in view of maintenance difficulties.
- (3) Councillor Mrs Ridney questioned why only forty people at a time were being allowed to use Coseley Baths, and questioned whether this was due to a fault with the lighting.

In response, the Assistant Director (Culture and Community) explained that in order to repair the lighting scaffolding needed to be erected and Health and Safety authorisation required and that this had not yet been obtained. As soon as permission was granted the lighting would be repaired and other improvements made.

- (4) Councillor Mrs Ridney reported on the mini motorbike nuisance being experienced around the access to Salcombe Grove and Legge Lane, a conservation area that once belonged to Christchurch School. She requested clarification as to which Council Directorate controlled the land.

The Area Liaison Officer agreed to investigate and respond to Councillor Mrs Ridney.

- (5) Councillor Evans reported that the new "Super Loo's" were due to be opened in Sedgley on September 21st 2006.
- (6) Councillor Mrs Ridney raised the issue of the proposed skate park facility for the North Dudley Area and requested that the Assistant Director (Culture and Community) provide an update to the next meeting of the Committee.
- (7) Councillor Wright expressed his concern at the proposals to convert Deepdale Lane into a one-way traffic system and also expressed concern on the affect this would have on the traffic that passed Roberts Street School.

- (8) Councillor Mrs Ridney asked for clarification on whether Hopyard Lane was a right-of-way particularly as old Ordnance Survey Maps had indicated that it was.
 - (9) Councillor Mrs Millward requested confirmation as to when The Straits House would become a listed building.
 - (10) Councillor Stanley requested that officers consult with Ward Councillors prior to any traffic regulation being imposed.
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35 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

As a way of giving additional publicity to meetings of the Council's Select Committees, details of Select Committee meetings had been included on the agendas of meetings of Area Committees.

The information given in respect of publicity for future meetings of Select committees was noted.

36 FUTURE DATES AND VENUES OF MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

It was noted that future meetings of the Committee would be held on the dates shown and at the venues indicated, as follows:

28th November 2006 – Dormston Sports Hall
7th February 2006 – Wallbrook Primary School
28th March 2006 – Roberts Primary School

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.

CHAIRMAN