

NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 23rd March, 2005, at 6.30 p.m.
at Roberts Primary School, Roberts Street, Lower Gornal

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs Ameson (Chairman)
Councillor Simms (Vice Chairman)
Councillors G H Davies, Evans, Fraser-Macnamara, Mrs Millward,
Mottram, Mrs Ridley, Ryder, Stanley and Wright and Mr Round.

Officers

Director of Education and Lifelong Learning (Area Liaison Officer)
Assistant Director, Legal and Democratic Services (Directorate of Law
and Property)
Assistant Director, Culture and Recreation (Directorate of the Urban
Environment)
Mr Butler, Section Engineer (Directorate of the Urban Environment)
Mr Clements, Countryside Manager, Directorate of the Urban
Environment)
Mrs Holland, Democratic Services Officer (Directorate of Law and
Property)
Mr G Pomford (Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning)

Also In Attendance

Two representatives each from West Midlands Police and West
Midlands Fire Service.

Members of the Public

Approximately 180 members of the public were in attendance.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26th
January, 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Davies and Stanley declared a Prejudicial Interest, in
agenda item 8 (Public Forum) and a question put by a member of the
public regarding 29 Pear Tree Lane and agenda item 13 (Proposed

Skatepark, Tenacre Lane, Upper Gornal) in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct in view of the fact that they are Members of the Development Control Committee.

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PETITIONS

A Petition was submitted objecting to the proposed Skatepark being sited at Tenacre Lane, Upper Gornal. The Petition was submitted to the Director of the Urban Environment.

A Petition was submitted objecting to the use of 29 Pear Tree Lane, Coseley, as a Children/Remand Home. The Petition was submitted to the Director of the Urban Environment and the Director of Law and Property.

A Petition was submitted objecting to the relocation of the Borough Archives from Coseley to Summerhill School, Kingswinford. The Petition was submitted to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning.

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YOUTH ISSUES

Mr Pomford (Area Team Leader Dudley North) introduced Ben Millward (a Youth Parliament Member) who updated the Committee on the recent activities of the Youth Parliament and on the recent Youth Parliament Elections. He introduced two newly elected Members who informed the Committee of their aspirations as Members.

In response Councillor Simms stated that he had attended the "Have a Say Day" involving the Youth Parliament, but had been disappointed by the absence of the Press. Councillor Mrs Ridley also reported that she had attended the "Have a Say Day" and congratulated the young people on their success.

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POLICE ISSUES

Two representatives of the West Midlands Police were in attendance at the meeting and updated the Committee on the situation with regard to the anti-social behaviour issues in the Dormston Drive area that had been raised at the meeting held on 26th January 2005. They stated that local residents and police had cooperated well together and new initiatives had been forged to assist in overcoming the problems being experienced. Favourable feedback had been received from local residents.

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PRESENTATION BY WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

Two representatives of the West Midlands Fire Service made a presentation to the Committee regarding proposals in regard to Fire Service shift patterns.

The Station Commander of Dudley Fire Station, and the Assistant Chief Officer of the West Midlands Fire Service, presented the Fire Service proposals to alter their resource allocation, particularly between midnight and 8.00 a.m. It was indicated that more fire prevention and educational work with the public and school children would be undertaken.

The Assistant Chief Officer of the West Midlands Fire Service reported on the decision of the Fire Service Committee in that, as a result of the consultation process, a smaller reduction in the number of available appliances than originally proposed would be effected. He also explained that the impact of new technological equipment, a more efficient deployment of fire fighting personnel and equipment and the use of an integrated risk management plan would result in a more efficient handling of incidents.

Following questions put by Members of the Committee and members of the public, it was

RESOLVED

The Station Commander of Dudley Fire Station and the Assistant Chief Officer of the West Midlands Fire Service be thanked for a very informative presentation, the contents of which were noted.

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CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13(c), it was

RESOLVED

That agenda item 13, Proposed Skatepark, Tenacre Lane, Upper Gornal, be considered as the next item of business.

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PROPOSED SKATEPARK, TENACRE LANE, UPPER GORNAL

(Having previously declared a prejudicial interest, Councillors Davies and Stanley withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the matter).

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the results of the public consultation carried out in respect of the proposed skatepark at Tenacre Lane, Upper Gornal and to seek the Committee's support for the siting of the skatepark,

In presenting the report Mr Lowndes explained the background to the initiative and the proposal contained in the report submitted, in that, following several Working Group meetings, the Committee supported the construction of a skatepark at Tenacre Lane, and that the costs of constructing the skatepark and associated works be established. A request would then be made to the Cabinet to include this within the Council's Capital Programme.

A Petition against the use of the proposed site at Tenacre Lane had been handed in earlier in the meeting and a representative from a local Residents' Association stated that they did not consider the proposed site was suitable for use as a skatepark and that there were safer areas where one could be sited. Written questions submitted were also considered in connection with this matter.

A deputation of pupils, accompanied by a teacher from Ellowes Hall School spoke in support of the proposal. A spokesperson stated that he understood the concerns raised by members of the public with regard to the remoteness of the site, but that the initiative to build a skatepark was welcomed generally by young people.

The Head teacher of a local secondary school also voiced support for the construction of a skatepark, stating that the issue of anti-social behaviour needed to be tackled for the long term and that the provision of a skatepark was a step forward.

A member of the Youth Parliament spoke in support of providing more facilities for young people. He expressed the opinion that young people were being "labelled" even when they were not involved in committing anti-social behaviour .

A member of the public representing local residents of Green Lane and Tenacre Lane stated that residents were concerned that the skatepark would be situated immediately behind their homes; they were already experiencing incidents of anti-social behaviour and motorbikes using the proposed site were also a source of nuisance; windows had been broken and trees had been set on fire and local residents were worried that the siting of a skatepark at Tenacre Lane would only increase the incidences of anti-social behaviour and increase the feeling of intimidation felt by the more elderly residents.

Concerns with regard to the traffic situation and a perceived increase in risk posed to the children and young people using the skatepark via Green Lane, particularly in view of the blind bend in Green Lane and the absence of a footpath in part of Green Lane, were also voiced.

Mr Lowndes stated that the issue of anti-social behaviour could not be addressed without the provision of recreational facilities to prevent young people from committing anti-social behaviour and that the skateboard park proposal was one step forward in the provision of such facilities. He explained the process that had been followed in that the Working Group had held meetings, sites had been identified and the suitability of different sites explored; ultimately, public consultation had taken place, culminating in the report submitted.

Councillor Evans spoke in support of the proposal and indicated his surprise at some of the comments put forward by members of the public. He stated that a skatepark would help alleviate anti-social behaviour, not exacerbate it.

Following a further short discussion, it was

RESOLVED

- (1) That support be given to the construction of a skate park at Site A at Tenacre Lane, Upper Gornal.
- (2) That the costs of constructing the skate park and any associated works be established.
- (3) That the matter be submitted for consideration to the Development Control Committee and that a request be made to the Cabinet to include this scheme within the Council's Capital Programme.

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PUBLIC FORUM

(Having previously declared a prejudicial interest in the matter of 29 Pear Tree Lane, Councillors Davies and Stanley withdrew from the during the duration of the discussion).

1. Questions were raised by several members of the public protesting against the proposal to use a property situated at 29 Pear Tree Lane, Coseley as a Children/Remand home.

Mr P Tart (Assistant Director Directorate of Law and Property) responded that in view of the complex nature of the issue Dudley Council had sought legal opinion from a Barrister whose expertise was in the area of Planning Legislation and that a response was awaited.

Councillor Fraser-Macnamara, as Deputy Leader, stated that if a case could be maintained legally for a planning application then the Council would require that a planning application be submitted to them. Representations would also be made to the Registration Authority in respect of the unsuitability of the building for the purpose.

2. Questions were raised by members of the public regarding a house situated at 4 Mount Lane, Upper Gornal, that had also been purchased for use as a Children/Remand Home.

In response, Councillor Mrs Millward stated that after being made aware of the proposed purchase she had since ascertained that the Company might be involved in further purchases of property in the area for similar purposes and considered that the purchases were being pursued without the knowledge of the Council or local residents.

3. A question was raised by business owners situated in "The Arcade", Kent Street, Sedgley, stating that the general area would benefit from a good clean and called for the deployment of a road sweeper. They also stated that flowerbeds needed to be tended and repairs carried out on paintwork, the service road and pathways.

The business owners also expressed their concern regarding incidents of anti social behaviour in the area, particularly during the evening, with youths congregating on the street corners. It was stated that the poor lighting in The Arcade needed to be addressed and that CCTV and gates at the bottom of the stairs in The Arcade, needed to be installed. They also requested that something be done to improve the situation with regard to the old corner shop.

4. A question was raised by a member of the public regarding the reasons behind the lopping of two oak trees in Tennyson Road, Sedgley, and the felling of a further tree covered by a Tree Preservation Order.

In response the representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment stated that he would ask the appropriate department to respond direct.

5. Written questions were submitted regarding the proposal to demolish the Straits House.

In response the representative from the Directorate of the Urban Environment stated that he would ask the appropriate department to respond direct.

6. A written question was submitted asking when the signage relating to the Heavy Goods Vehicle curfew during the hours of darkness imposed on Bradleys Lane, would be erected.
7. A question was submitted regarding feedback on the outcome of the new High Trees and Hedges Legislation.

In response Mr Tart indicated that the final legislation was still awaited and that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister had recently informed the Directorate of Law and Property that the regulations were almost finalised.

8. A question was submitted stating that residents of Bradleys Lane should not be put into a higher Council Tax banding because of the inconvenience they continue to suffer from parked cars from people dropping off and picking up from the school and the heavy traffic that continues to use the road. The question was submitted to the appropriate department for a direct response.
9. Written questions were submitted regarding the relocation of the Borough Archives, currently based in Coseley, to the Summerhill School, Lodge Lane, Kingswinford and asking why the Council had not spent the money to keep the Coseley site in good order. It was also queried why people who had a WV postcode area were complaining about moving Dudley Borough Archives to an area that had a DY postcode.

In response the Area Liaison Officer stated that he would ask the appropriate department to respond directly.

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ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

Following the debate that took place under agenda item 8 (Public Forum), the Committee

RESOLVED

That the meeting stand adjourned for a period of five minutes to allow some members of the public to leave.

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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

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to agree to the declaration of land rear of 34-36 Bird Street, Lower Gornal, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report, as surplus to requirements and to the offering of the land by the Director of Law and Property for sale to adjoining properties as garden extensions, for sale on terms and conditions to be agreed by him, subject to any fencing costs incurred in partitioning the land being borne by the purchasers and not the Council.
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DELEGATED CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

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

In presenting his report, the Area Liaison Officer sought the Committee's agreement to the recommendations of the Working Group at their meeting held on 3rd March 2005.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the application received from Beacon Centre for the Blind for the purchase of an industrial food mixer, a commercial dishwasher and a commercial refrigerator, be approved in the sum of £4,152.34, and that in recognition of the Centre's support to residents across the Borough, the cost be equally split between all four North Dudley Wards.
- (2) That the application received from Coseley Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme for the purchase of equipment for use by young people taking part in the Scheme, be approved in the sum of £2,783.34 and that in recognition of the Borough-wide coverage of the Award Scheme the cost be equally split across all four North Dudley Wards.
- (3) That the application received from Gornal Athletic Football Club for the purchase of administrative and training equipment to include a tractor mower, roller, goal posts and nets, be approved in the sum of £3,098.14.
- (4) That, the application from Upper Gornal Kids Club for the purchase of a laptop computer, printer and incidental supplies, be approved in the sum of £1,223.93 on condition that the equipment is returned in the event that the Club ceased to operate.

- (5) That, the application from the Turls Hill Residents Association in the sum of £1,114.00 towards the reproduction of DVDs and Videos to promote the work of the Residents Association, be refused as the application did not qualify as capital expenditure.
- (6) That, the application from Dudley MBC Housing Services to fit and supply gates to provide secure parking to an area adjacent to 2 – 8 Whitehouse Street, Coseley, to reduce vandalism and emergency vehicle access, be approved in the sum of £1,370.00.

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT PREVIOUS MEETINGS

A representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment reported verbally on the current status of responses to questions asked at previous meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information as now reported, be noted.

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DECLARATION OF BARROW HILL LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the declaration of Barrow Hill as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

In presenting the report Mr K Clements, Countryside Manager, Directorate of the Urban Environment, stated that the purpose of LNR's was to preserve wildlife and geology of special interest and to provide people with opportunities for contact with nature. He also reported on efforts being made to secure external funding and partnership working.

During consideration of this matter a member of the public questioned why a part of Barrow Hill had been fenced off, preventing her horses from grazing. Mr Clements indicated that he would speak to the person concerned after the meeting. Following questions regarding funding of the type of project being discussed, it was

RESOLVED

That the Declaration of Barrow Hill as a Local Nature Reserve be supported together with further efforts to secure external funding for LNR management and enhancement.

HIGHWAY MINOR WORKS CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2005/2006

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the proposed programmes of work for Local Safety Schemes, Pedestrian Crossings and Safer Routes to School within the North Dudley Area for the 2005/2006 financial year.

RESOLVED

That the proposed Local Safety Schemes, Pedestrian Crossings and Safer Routes to School initiatives, outlined in Appendices A, B, and C to the report submitted and as shown on the attached plans be supported.

WARD ISSUES

1. Councillor Davies indicated that he supported the efforts being made for the Borough Archives to be retained in Coseley.
2. Councillor Mrs Ridney expressed support for the Petition submitted earlier in the meeting by Friends of Mount Pleasant, calling for the Borough Archives to be retained at Coseley.

In response Councillor Fraser-Macnamara stated that the decision to re-locate the Borough Archives to Summerhill School, Kingswinford, had been made in June and July 2004 and was subject to a "call-in". The Select Committee had approved the proposals following which it was submitted to full Council who also approved the proposals.

3. Councillor Evans called for Priory Lane to be opened to traffic as members of the public were unable to access Vicar Street and were using The Priory as an alternative route to the detriment of pedestrian safety.
4. Councillor Evans raised the issue of anti-social behaviour being experienced in Millbank, stating that windows had been broken in the area. He stated that he had contacted the local police and a good working relationship had been established between residents and the police in exploring ways to address the situation and solve the issue.
5. Councillor Wright raised the issue of incidents of anti-social behaviour reported in Gornal and called for street lighting to be installed/upgraded throughout Gornal, and for it to be extended in particular to Church Street, Temple Street, Zoar Street, Abbey Street, Louise Street and Bull Street, in an effort to combat anti social behaviour and crime.

6. Councillor Mrs Millward raised the issue of vehicles being driven from Hopyard Lane into Himley Road, contrary to the prohibition of driving order currently in place.
7. Councillor Stanley raised the issue of combating crime and anti-social behaviour in the Gornal area and requested that more resources, particularly police resources, be deployed in the area.
8. Councillor Evans raised the issue of the provision of a car park in Lower Gornal to permit the introduction of the “on street waiting” restrictions and installation of the signage.

In response, Councillor Fraser-Macnamara called for the Directorate of the Urban Environment to look again at the provision of a car park for Lower Gornal.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm

CHAIRMAN