

NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 9th April, 2008 at 6.30 pm
Cotwall End Primary School

PRESENT

Councillor Simms (Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs Ameson, Caunt, G Davies, Evans, Mrs Millward, Mottram, Mrs Ridley, Ryder, Stanley and Wright; Mr J Millward.

Officers

The Assistant Director of Law and Property (Legal and Democratic Services); the Assistant Director, Culture and Community Services and the Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety (Directorate of the Urban Environment), The North Dudley District Area Housing Manager (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), The Area Team Leader (Children's Services) and Mrs J Rees (Directorate of Law and Property).

IN ATTENDANCE

Sergeant Blakemore of the West Midlands Police, Mr Steve Vincent, Operations Commander, Dudley Borough (West Midlands Fire Service), Mr Clive Watling, Bus Network Manager, Centro, Mr Yasi Mohammed, Volunteer Youth Worker, together with approximately 40 members of the public were in attendance.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs Millward and Wright declared personal and prejudicial interests in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item no. 11,6 (Delegated Capital Allocations - application for funding from Baggeridge Welfare Centre, in view of their being trustees of the Centre.

Councillors Ryder and Stanley declared personal and prejudicial interests in agenda item no. 10,b (Application relating to North Dudley Housing Garage Plot Sites) in view of their renting a garage from the Council.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 30th January, 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

PETITIONS

It was reported that the following petitions had been submitted:

- a) A petition was submitted by Councillor Caunt, on behalf of local residents, requesting traffic calming measures for the Ettymore Road and Ettymore Road West area.

The Director of the Urban Environment had been given prior notice of this petition and the Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety responded, advising that 30 mph warning signs had been installed temporarily for a three month period whilst the situation would be monitored. It was also anticipated that the area would be included in a future Safer Routes to Schools programme. Flashing warning signs would be installed at the end of April, to warn motorists that the area was unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles.

In response to a query from a Member of the Committee regarding the need for delivery vehicles to gain access to premises in that area, the Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety advised that the purpose of the signs was to deter through traffic, and that delivery vehicles would still be allowed to gain access.

- b) It was reported that a petition had previously been submitted to the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services, from residents objecting to the housing of a family in Council owned accommodation, on account of their previous history of anti social behaviour and eviction. The Director of Adult Community and Housing Services was investigating the petition.

YOUTH ISSUES

The Area Team Leader, (Directorate of Children's Services) reported on youth activities in the area since the previous meeting of the Committee as follows:

- (a) The Dudley Youth Forum group had over thirty young people from all wards in the area. The group had recently gone on a very successful residential week to formalise the group and had elected nine members to its management committee. Feedback from the youth forum and their plans for the next few months would be given to the next meeting of the Committee.
- (b) Young women had taken part in an International Women's Week in March, 2008. Activities included workshops based on fashion, dance and inter generational events, together with a visit to the local theatre.

- (c) A one week Easter Scheme had been delivered for young people at the Lower Gornal Youth Academy.
- (d) Mr Millward confirmed that all young people attending the residential referred to previously had thoroughly enjoyed the activities.
- (e) In relation to his membership of the Committee, Mr. Millward indicated that he was in need of support, particularly when his study commitments caused him not be able to attend. He introduced a volunteer youth worker, who was willing to undertake his role in his absence. Mr Millward also commented on the results of the Youth Parliament elections, and on a proposed future visit to the House of Lords. He thanked the Chairman and the Member of Parliament for Stafford for their attendance at the residential.
- (f) Mr Millward also reported on an initiative being undertaken by the Coseley Youth Centre for a project on the environment, which included recycling, turning off lights when not needed and installing bird feeders. He encouraged everyone to follow this example to help the environment and to make the difference.
- (g) Councillor Mrs Millward expressed concern on the difficulties of engaging youth workers on Friday and Saturday evenings. She requested that consideration be given to establishing links with local universities, who could encourage students, undertaking courses in youth work, sport and related matters, to man youth facilities at weekends, as part of their training and to enable much needed services to be available to young people.

Councillor Mrs Ridley supported the suggestion made by Councillor Mrs Millward and suggested that there should be encouragement given to establishing a University in Dudley. This would enable students to live at home whilst studying and thus avoid heavy accommodation costs for living away from home. She also commented on the need for more youth workers and out workers to be employed to engage with young people.

The Chairman advised that he had already commenced discussions with Wolverhampton University regarding the issue of university students helping to run local youth centres.

RESOLVED

That the oral report regarding youth issues be noted.

Pursuant to Council Procedure 13 (c) it was

RESOLVED

That agenda item 7 (Fire Service Issues) be considered as the next item of business.

81 FIRE SERVICE ISSUES

The West Midlands Fire Service Operations Commander gave an oral report on the changing role of the fire service, together with that of the Police, to compliment youth work and engage with young people.

He also reported on a recent five day course aimed at youths on the brink of crime, which had been extremely successful. He advised that he would be applying for funding from all the Area Committees, to enable this work to be extended. He thanked Councillors Caunt, Ryder and Stanley for their participation in the course.

He indicated that the incidents of fires in the area covered by the North Dudley Area Committee had reduced.

In response to comments regarding the types of batteries used in smoke alarms the Operations Commander advised that the West Midlands Fire Service fitted smoke alarms with batteries which could not be taken out, and had a life of ten years. He encouraged anyone who had concerns regarding smoke alarms to contact their local fire station for a free home check. In response to concerns expressed by a member of the public relating to a number of fires which had recently taken place in close proximity to the newly opened skatepark on Tenacre Field, the Operations Commander undertook to speak with him regarding the issue outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the oral report given regarding Fire Service issues be noted.

82 POLICE ISSUES

In the absence of Inspector Mark Sutton, Sergeant Blakemore reported orally on the work and priorities of the Police Neighbourhood Groups since the last meeting. Sergeant Blakemore reported that for the last two weeks there had been no house burglary in this Sector. Both he and his colleagues were aware of anti social behaviour instances and its adverse effect on local residents. He

encouraged those present to contact the police to report incidents, but agreed that they were not always able to respond, owing to other commitments. He encouraged people to attend the Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings to alert the Police of areas of concern. He concurred with the view for the need for youth facilities to be provided on Friday nights as this was the Police's busiest night and young people wanted somewhere to go. The Police worked in close liaison with the Area Team Leader, but support at an official level was required because if the Police were in attendance in Youth Centres, they could not be out on the street or responding to other calls.

He reported on the newly introduced bottle watch initiative, whereby the owners of local off licenses voluntarily agreed to put labels on all their alcohol sold, which enabled the police to trace the origin of alcohol if picked from under age drinkers.

In response to comments from a Member of the Committee regarding issues raised at the previous meeting of the Committee, Sergeant Blakemore advised that he was unable to comment on the Donkey Pool area, as this fell under the remit of Dudley Police Station.

In response to comments relating to the lack of response from the Police, on certain occasions, he advised that sometimes officers had only limited resources and had to divide this and prioritise work in the localities to provide the best possible service.

A member of the public expressed concerns relating to inconsiderate parking of football clubs and residents being unable to access their property, due to cars parked across their drives. He was concerned that emergency vehicles would be unable to gain access, due to the inconsiderate parking. He also referred to incidents of persons using the football pitch urinating in trees in front of his house. Sergeant Blakemore undertook to speak with the questioner outside of the meeting to clarify the complaint and investigate.

In response to a number of other individual concerns expressed, Sergeant Blakemore advised that he could not discuss individual cases, but would speak to residents outside of the meeting to ascertain if any issues could be addressed.

In response to a query from a Member of the Committee, as to whether the newly appointed Inspector would attend meetings, Sergeant Blakemore advised that the Inspector was on leave at the present time, but time permitting, he would attend future meetings of the Committee.

Dates and venues of Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings were given as follows:

Gornal - on 17th April at 10 am at the Fire Station.

Sedgley – on 24th April at 10 am at the Sedgley Congregational Church

Woodsetton and Coseley – on 7th May at 6.30 pm at the Bramford School.

Some members of the Committee commented that PACT meetings being held on weekday mornings could prevent people in full time employment from attending.

A member of the public commented that when PACT meetings were held in an evening there had been difficulties in Council Officers attending. It was pointed out that the PACT meetings were multi agency meetings between Police, Councillors and the public. It had never been intended for Council Officers to service or attend meetings in an official capacity.

RESOLVED

That the oral report given regarding police issues in the area be noted.

83 TRANSPORT ISSUES

Mr Clive Watling of Centro gave an oral presentation on the revision of bus services throughout the area covered by the North Dudley Area Committee to ensure a better service throughout the area. He explained that 90% of journeys in the West Midlands area were operated by commercial owners of vehicles. The role of Centro was to monitor all bus services and to ensure that services on non commercial routes were provided. Leaflets describing the proposed changes were circulated. Consultation events were scheduled to take place at Merry Hill, Russell's Hall Hospital, Dudley Market and Stourbridge.

Councillor Caunt requested that consideration be given to providing additional transport, possibly in the form of a double decker vehicle, during the busy rush hour in the morning, to accommodate students of King Edwards College travelling from Gornal, as normally the current single decker bus was full with workers from LCP trading estate. Mr Watling undertook to take this request back to Centro for consideration.

RESOLVED

That Mr Watling be thanked for his oral presentation regarding the revision of bus services, the contents of which were noted.

84 PUBLIC FORUM

Before reading questions from the public, the Area Liaison Officer stated that any questions which were not addressed at the meeting would receive a written response from the appropriate officer. Questions and responses were then given as follows:-

- a) A question regarding concerns regarding people using the football pitch and parking inconsiderately at Dawlish Road had been dealt with under Police issues.

- b) A member of the public, who was unable to attend the meeting, questioned whether the Council would cancel the proposed balloon launch as part of the St George's Day celebrations, as she considered that the balloons were a danger to wildlife and could create litter problems. The Assistant Director of Law and Property advised that the Chief Executive's representative had written to the questioner advising that the Council would consider the comments made and would be mindful of creating problems with the release of the balloons. Following the event the Sedgley Area would be litter picked and all waste collected in domestic and trade refuse by Dudley MBC was incinerated and the energy produced by this fed into the National Grid.
- c) The same member of the public had asked when the Council would act to prevent motorcyclists using the local nature reserves, particularly at week ends. In response the Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety advised that this was a matter for the Police and Sergeant Blakemore undertook to investigate the issue.
- d) A member of the public thanked the Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety for his assistance in arranging for the diversion of heavy goods vehicles away from Moden Hill. However, he expressed concerns regarding an increase in traffic flow at Moden Hill, due to the bottle neck near the Sedgley traffic lights and on the resultant difficulties for residents to gain access to their own driveways, because of drivers taking short cuts to avoid the queuing traffic from Gornal village. The Group engineer, Traffic and Road Safety stated that he had met with the Police who were carrying out observations in the area and would take appropriate action if necessary.

Councillor Evans commented that Sedgley was not built for the amount of Traffic currently travelling in and out of the area.

- e) A member of the public raised concerns related to cars parked on double yellow lines in Castle Street, Roseville, and the lack of Traffic Wardens to take appropriate action on this. Councillor Caunt responded that on 7th July, 2008 the Council would take over control of vehicle parking enforcements, at which time the Council would employ additional wardens for the purpose of enforcement. Action would be taken in response to unlawful parking and the congestion in Castle Street should be investigated.
- f) A member of the public commented on the lack of parking facilities at recent venues for meetings of the Committee, which he alleged could account for the reduced attendance. The Assistant Director of Law and Property advised that Democratic Services would investigate this matter.

- g) The same member of the public also expressed concerns regarding the reduction in collection of green waste bins in 2008. Councillor Mrs Millward advised that the late start in the green collection was due to the land fill site used by the Council no longer being available and the resultant longer distance vehicles were having to travel to dispose of the waste safely, which meant lorries were unable to carry out as many visits as they had done previously. The Chairman advised that he would pass the comments on to the Cabinet Member for the Environment for a written response.
- h) A representative of Cotwall End School raised concerns that as part of a road safety measure implemented at the bottom of the school drive, a large sign to alert passers by of the school entrance was still required. The Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety advised that the School would have to pay for the cost of erecting such signage. He would be happy to speak to the school on this issue, outside of the meeting.
- i) A member of the public expressed concern that he had not received a reply from a Gornal Ward Councillor regarding an issue he had raised with her. Councillor Mrs Millward advised that she and her colleagues had visited the area to which the questioner referred, but that as yet she was not in receipt of the full information needed to enable her to reply. As soon as such information was received she would respond.
- j) A member of the public expressed concerns that the list of recent Civic Awards had not included an award to a person with disabilities. In response, Councillors Caunt and Stanley advised that the judging Panel could only consider and make awards to persons who had either applied for an award or were nominated for one. The scheme was open to all.

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APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on reports relating to land and property controlled by the Council.

Owing to a number of issues raised regarding each application it was

RESOLVED

- a) That consideration of the application to purchase the site at the rear of 10 Norton Crescent, Coseley, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, be deferred to allow the possible exploration of the sale of a smaller site.
- b) That consideration of the application to declare garage sites in the North Dudley Area, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, be deferred to allow consultation with Ward members and garage users.

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

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

RESOLVED

- (1) That, in the period between the Annual Council Meeting and the election of a Chairman at the first meeting of the Area Committee in the new municipal year, the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Leaders of all political groups represented on the Council be authorised to determine urgent applications for capital funding.
- (2) That, subject to paragraph (1) above, the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee and the Opposition spokesperson(s), be authorised to determine urgent applications for capital funding.
- (3) That consideration of the application received from the Bayer Street Allotment Association be deferred to the next meeting of the Working Group, to allow additional information requested to be obtained, including the submission of additional quotes, to include one from Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council.
- (4) That consideration of the application by Baggeridge Social Welfare Centre be deferred to allow further investigations relating to the Centre to be undertaken.
- (5) That the sums referred to below be allocated to the following organisations for the purposes indicated:-

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Directorate of the Urban Environment	Cost of additional signage required to support the introduction of an Order to ban the consumption of alcohol in Sedgley Town Centre, and subject to the Police match funding the cost of £1,250	£650.00
Sedgley & District Age Concern	Purchase of a multi function copier, scanner, printer and fax	£460.48

JOINT CORE STRATEGY FOR THE BLACK COUNTRY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the timescale and process for public consultation on the Preferred Options for the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country. The report also invited the Committee to submit its response to the consultation on the Strategy.

In presenting the report, the Senior Planning Officer advised that consultation on the preferred options for the Strategy would end on 29th April, 2008, and not the 28th as stated in the report submitted. Copies of the proposed strategy were available for information on the Dudley Council's website, in local libraries, Council Plus and 3 St James' Road, Dudley. He encouraged those in attendance to speak with Officers present outside of the meeting to make their views known. All comments would be taken into consideration before the proposed strategy was taken to the Secretary of State for approval.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the contents of the report, including the timescale for consultation, be noted.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration be advised of the Committee's support for the Joint Core Strategy, as set out in the report submitted.

HIGHWAY MINOR WORKS CAPITAL PROGRAMME, 2008/09

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the proposed programmes of work for Pedestrian Crossings and Safer Routes to Schools within the area covered by North Dudley Area Committee for the 2008/2009 financial year, as set out in the appendices attached to the report.

In presenting the report, the Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety advised that there were no specific Local Safety Schemes for the North Dudley Area for 2008/09.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be advised of the Committee's support for:

- a) a new pelican crossing at Gospel End Road, Sedgley, near to Netherby Drive

- b) improved footpath links at Alder Coppice Primary School, Padarn Close, Sedgley and
- c) the inclusion of the Foxyards Primary School on the reserve list for schemes to be implemented subject to the necessary funding becoming available.

89 PRICES ROAD AND PROSPECT ROAD, GORNAL WOOD - PROPOSALS FOR ONE WAY TRAFFIC FLOW

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on proposals to introduce a reduced one-way traffic system in Prices Road and Prospect Road, Gornal Wood, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, following objections to the original proposal for Prices Road, and taking into account the views of Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That consideration of the report on proposals for a one way traffic flow at Prices Road and Prospect Road, Gornal Wood be deferred to allow further information to be sought.

90 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

Councillor Mottram raised concerns relating to information contained within the report submitted, regarding a previously requested pathway closure. The Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, responded and highlighted particularly that the overall procedure followed and performance of the relevant Directorate and Officers had been scrutinised by the Select Committee for Community Safety and Community Services in March 2008. Copies of the Select Committee report and relevant Minute would be forwarded to Members for their consideration. If Members, having read the information in the report and relevant Minute, considered that they wished to have any further action taken, they were invited to advise the Chairman of this and he would discuss the matter with the Area Liaison Officer.

Councillor G Davies expressed reservations about the Directorate of the Urban Environment's interpretation of certain legislation, which he considered to be contrary to that of the Secretary of State.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report now submitted, and the appendix thereto be noted.

91 WARD ISSUES

Councillor Wright raised the issue of anti social behaviour in the alleyway between Himley Road/Central Drive. Despite residents having erected a new fence they were still suffering from youngsters throwing stones at the windows. These incidents had been reported to the Police.

92 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

It was noted that the dates of future meetings of Select Committees would be advised when determined in the next municipal year.

93 DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

It was noted that the date and venue of the future meetings of the Committee would be advised when determined in the new municipal year.

The meeting ended at 9.05 p.m.

CHAIRMAN