

Central Dudley Area Committee – 9th March, 2010

Report of the Area Liaison Officer

Matters Raised at the Meeting of the Committee held on 19th January, 2010 other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment

Purpose of Report

1. To note progress on issues raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 19th January, 2010, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

Background

2. The issues set out in paragraphs 3 to 11 (inclusive) below were raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 19th January, 2010, progress on which is as follows:
3. **Youth Issues**

The following issues were raised by Members:-

(a) Activities in Wards

A Member requested that the actual activities being carried out in each Ward be included in the report. It was agreed that the Area Liaison Officer would seek to arrange for discussions to take place with Councillor J Martin, The Area Youth Team Leader and Director of Children's Services to clarify the further information being requested by Councillor J Martin

Further to an exchange in correspondence between the Area Liaison Officer and Councillor J Martin, in which Councillor Martin clarified the nature of the information he required, the Director of Children's Services has contacted Councillor Martin in order to make the necessary arrangements to pursue the request further. In addition, it was agreed that the programme offer for the Youth Service will be circulated to Members of the Committee by the Director of Children's Services (separately from this agenda) before the meeting of the Committee.

(b) St Thomas's Network Youth Club

A Member requested further information on St Thomas's Network Youth Club be supplied. The Area Youth Team Leader has responded as follows:-

Since 6th January, 2010 there has been an evening youth club (6.00pm – 9.00pm) operating from the E2E base within the St Thomas's Network building on Beechwood Road, Kate's Hill, Dudley.

This is a once weekly Dudley Youth Service youth club and has arisen as a result of a move from the Sledmere Community. The youth club was moved from there because of very small numbers or no young people were accessing the youth club in Sledmere on a Wednesday. After months of monitoring this, the youth club was moved to the St Thomas's Network. The youth club has been sited at the St Thomas's Network in a partnership arrangement with Janet Hilken.

Now in its 6th week, as the weeks progress, the numbers of the young people accessing this provision is increasing. Currently, there are around ten young people accessing this (aged between 13-19 years old). It is anticipated that as the weeks progress that numbers will continue to increase.

Further to this a short term youth club (initially) has been set up in partnership with West Midlands Police. This arose through a request from the local police community support officers to the Kate's Hill area. As a partnership the PCSOs are now trialing a weekend Police run youth club for an initial period of three months. The youth club has been held every last Sunday of each of the three months from January-March. The youth club runs from Beechwood House, Youth Service building and the opening times are from 1.30pm to 3.30pm.

The youth club is open to young people aged twelve years plus.

At the end of the three-month pilot period, a review will take place in March to evaluate the outcome of this project.

More information in relation to the youth club can be obtained from the lead officer of the project, Sergeant John Chambers who can be contacted at Dudley Police Station.

(c) Meadow Road Youth Centre

A Member queried as to whether Meadow Road Youth Centre was being utilised to its full potential and asked whether more could be done to make the young people more aware of the activities being offered at the youth centre.

The Director of Children's Services has been advised of this view and the matter is being looked into.

(d) Netherton and Woodside

A Member requested additional information in respect of the activities being offered and attendance figures in relation to "Netherton and Woodside". In responding, the Area Youth Team Leader confirmed that the seventeen young

people accessed holiday provision and detached youth work sessions provided by the Netherton and Woodside detached youth work team.

4. **Police Sector Inspectors**

In response to a request from the Committee to be advised of the names of the four Sector Inspectors covering the borough, these are as follows:

Dudley North - Richard Jones
Dudley South - Cary Malpass
Stourbridge - Eddie Boyle
Halesowen - Victoria Willis

5. **Vehicle Arson**

A Member requested information in relation to whether incidents were peculiar to a particular area and whether burnt vehicles ended up at a particular location. In response, Mr M Lawton, Station Commander, West Midlands Fire Services has submitted a tabled document (see below) that related to single incidents while the numbers indicated are to specific property addresses within St James's Ward the Fire Service has dealt with.

Sunday	01:52	Sept 09	2
Monday	22:44	May 08	7
Friday	02:06	Dec 09	32
Friday	23:20	May 08	63
Friday	19:26	Dec 09	201

6. **Decent Homes Standard**

A member of the public asked to be advised in relation to what would be considered as "decent" in 2011. The Head of Housing Management – North has responded to the questioner indicating that there are four main elements to the decent homes standard which are summarised below:-

1. Properties must meet the current statutory minimum standards. These standards are set out by the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) within the Housing Act 2004.
2. Properties must be in a reasonable standard of repair. This part of the standard deals with the condition of components of the property such as the walls, roof, heating systems, plumbing and electrics.
3. The property must have reasonably modern facilities. For a property to fail the standard it must fail to meet three or more of the following items:
 - a. Have a reasonably modern kitchen (described as 20 years old or less).
 - b. Have a kitchen with adequate space & layout.
 - c. Have a reasonably modern bathroom (described as 30 years old or less).
 - d. Have an appropriately located bathroom and toilet. The detailed guidance states a property may fail on this element of the standard if a toilet without a wash hand basin opens on to a kitchen in an inappropriate area e.g. next to a food preparation area.

- e. Have adequate insulation against external noise (where noise is a problem)
 - f. Have adequate size and layout of common areas for blocks of flats
- 4 The property must provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

More detailed definitions of the decent homes standard are available at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/decenthomes .

The location of a bathroom next to a kitchen will not on its own mean that a property fails the decent homes standard. We acknowledge the decent homes standard falls short of the aspirations of many of our tenants, however, our current spending priorities are targeted at addressing our properties that do not meet this minimum standard.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services visited the Woodside Estate on the 30th October last year to see some properties where requests have been made for bathrooms to be relocated. The Cabinet Member advised following this visit that we will look at putting a programme in place in the next 2-3 years to address the concerns raised at this visit.

7. **Unmodernised properties on the Woodside Estate**

A Member of the public asked for clarification on the letter sent following a visit to her property by the Area Liaison Officer and Housing Officers on 30th October, 2009. The Area Liaison Officer clarified the content of the letter at the meeting.

8. **Re-instatement of the pillar box in Dudley Town Centre**

A member of the committee asked to be advised on the progress made following a question asked at the Area Committee on 10th March, 2009 in relation to the re-instatement of the pillar box in Dudley Town Centre in the vicinity of the Market.

Further to the meeting in March, 2009, a letter making the request was duly sent to Post Office Limited, in response to which a meeting on site was held between a representative from the Post Office and Richard Sanders, Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources. The outcome was that the Post Office representative was optimistic that a second pillar box could be installed at the Market Place in the vicinity of its junction with Churchill Precinct, while leaving in situ the pillar box at the junction of Union Street and High Street. The representative of the Post Office indicated that he would arrange for the issue to be explored further, having regard to the location of underground services in the area concerned.

Since then, no further communication has been received from the Post Office and, following the matter having been raised again at the meeting of the Committee held on 19th January, 2010, a letter chasing progress has been sent to the Post Office. No response has yet been received.

9. **Newsletter – Partners and Communities Together meetings**

A member of the public referred to the Partners and Communities Together meetings, which had taken place in September and October and queried the late circulation of leaflets. In response, Inspector Downen has asked that the Local Neighbourhood Sargeant and his Team to arrange to visit Mr Day to discuss the issue.

10. **Communications Problems with Police Community Support Officers**

The Chairman of a local Partners and Communities Together meeting and Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator raised concerns in relation to tackling anti-social behaviour and the communication difficulties they had experienced with the Police since the Police Community Support Officers had had their mobile phones removed. In relation to this issues, information provided by the Police has been circulated to Members of the Committee.

11. **Meetings with Local Authority, Police and Holly Hall School**

A Member asked to be advised on whether regular meetings between the Local Authority, Police and Holly Hall School were held to discuss common issues such as pupils causing anti-social behaviour. The Police have responded as follows and the questioner has been advised accordingly:-

There are two dedicated Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who run the Early Intervention Programme at the Holly Hall School. The PCSOs visit the School once a week to speak to the staff and exchange information concerning pupils, anti-social behaviour in the Community and issues at the School. In addition to the weekly meetings, Inspector James Harrison attends several meeting each term with Mr Lloyd, the Headteacher, to discuss various issues concerning the School, which include anti-social behaviour.

Finance

12. This report has no direct financial implications.

Law

13. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council is empowered to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or conducive to, or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

Equality Impact

14. This report complies with the policies of the Council on Equality and Diversity.

15. Children and young people have not been consulted on the preparation of this report, as report seeks only to note progress on issues raised at its previous meetings.

Recommendations

16. That the information above be noted.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'L'.

AREA LIAISON OFFICER

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List of Background Papers

Minutes of the meeting of the Central Dudley Area Committee held on 19th January, 2010