

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 24th January, 2006 at 6.30 p.m.
at Saltwells EDC, Bowling Green Road, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Rahman (Chairman)

Councillors:- Ali, Mrs. Aston, Bradney, Cotterill, Mrs Coulter, Ms. Craigie, J. Davies, M. Davis, Finch, Hart, and Sparks; Ms. H. Edwards and Mrs V Little

OFFICERS:

Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (As Area Liaison Officer), Director of Law and Property, Assistant Director of the Urban Environment, (Environmental Management), Section Engineer; Town Centre Manager (Directorate of the Urban Environment); Principal Project Officer, Area Manager Housing, Dudley, (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services); Assistant Director Community Education Division, (Directorate of Children's Services), Mr. K. Edwards, Principal Solicitor and Mrs. J. Rees (Directorate of Law and Property)

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8th November, 2005 and of the Special Meeting of the Committee held on 12th December, 2005, be approved as correct records and signed

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MATTERS ARISING

Referring to the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8th November, 2005, and of the Special Meeting held on 12th December, 2005, Councillor Ali made the following comments:

- (a) That in respect of paragraph (3) of Minute No 48 he had requested a letter advising him why neither he nor his Ward colleague had been invited to the meeting held on 14th October 2005, to discuss the African Caribbean Cultural Centre; and
- (b) That in respect of paragraph (h) of Minute No. 62 he had referred to the name change of the "Town Hall" and not Concert Hall, as stated in line 8 of that paragraph.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs Aston and Finch declared a personal interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No 9 (Capital Allocations - West Midlands Police Application) in view of their having proposed the application.

Councillor Mrs Coulter declared a prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 8 Appendix e) (Land Issues relating to 110 New Road, Netherton) in view of her friendship with the applicant.

Councillor Mrs Coulter declared a personal and prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 9 Capital Allocations (Netherton and Woodside Partnership application) in view of her friendship with a member of the Partnership.

Councillor J Davies declared a personal interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 9 Capital Allocations (Application by Friends of Green Park) in view of his attending meetings of the Friends of Green Park Group.

Councillor Rahman declared a prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 9 Capital Allocations (Application by Netherton Woodside Partnership) in view of his being Chairman of the Partnership.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Johnston, Male and Woodall, and Mrs Goodyear.

RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

The following petitions were submitted by the persons indicated and referred to the officers shown for attention:-

- (a) A member of the public submitted a petition, on behalf of residents of Dudley, expressing their concern at the proposed increase in hire charges for Dudley Concert Hall, Stourbridge Town Hall and Brierley Hill Civic Hall. The petition had been submitted to the Brierley Hill Area Committee the previous week, where it was requested that the petition also be referred to the other area committees.

The member of the public commented that at the meeting of the Brierley Hill Area Committee, he had been advised by a Member of the Committee, that there would be a scaling down of charges for voluntary groups. However, the petitioners had not been made aware of any scaling down of charges.

A representative of a Dance Band spoke in support of the petition, on behalf of a number of groups using the Halls, whose aim was to fundraise for local charities and good causes. He also commented that there appeared to be differences in the charges being made to individual groups, without any sound reasoning being given for the differences. There did not appear to be a published list of charges. He accepted realistic charges should be made and that such charges should be published and apply to all voluntary groups.

Some Members of the Committee advised that Members of the Central Dudley Area Committee had not been party to the new charges laid down for the use of Halls within the Borough and requested that the Cabinet Member for Leisure be contacted, as a matter of urgency, due to the closeness of some bookings, to clarify the differences in charges for User Groups and also to reconsider his decision regarding the increases in charges. The Area Liaison Officer undertook to investigate the issues and the petition was referred to the Cabinet Member for Leisure and the Director of the Urban Environment for their urgent attention.

- (b) Councillor Ms Craigie submitted a petition on behalf of residents of Quentin Drive, Dudley, requesting that street lighting be brought up to the approved national standard. The petition was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for attention.
- (c) Councillor M Davis submitted a petition on behalf of local residents regarding anti social behaviour in Thornberry Drive and Merryfields Road, requesting that action be taken to protect local elderly residents. The petition was referred to the Anti Social Behaviour Team.
- (d) Councillor M Davis submitted a petition on behalf of local residents, in particular tenants who were single women living alone, expressing concerns regarding anti social behaviour in Osprey Drive and Falcon Way and requesting that the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services be requested to take action against a specific tenant allegedly guilty of extreme anti social behaviour. In response to this petition the Chairman expressed the view that all sections of the Community should be supported.

The Director of the Adult Community and Housing Services advised that she took anti social behaviour very seriously, whilst appreciating that it was a difficult issue to resolve. She advised on a Safe Sound Partnership initiative which she hoped would address the issues and would give further consideration to the petition.

Some Members of the Committee proffered support for the petitioners, advising that in their Wards tenants had stated that the Diary Sheets completed by them appeared to have been ignored by Housing Officers.

Councillor Cotterill expressed concern regarding this issue, as Vice-Chairman of the Select Committee on Community Safety. He advised that when the issue had been discussed at a recent meeting of that Select Committee, he had been assured that action would be taken to resolve the problems.

The Chairman commented on the need for anti social behaviour problems to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The petition was referred to the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services and to the Community Safety Team for attention.

- (e) A member of the public submitted a petition on behalf of residents on the Russells Hall Estate, complaining that Centro appeared to have marked out bus stops in inappropriate places and without consultation with local residents, and requesting that the situation be resolved. In support of the petition another member of the public submitted photographs depicting the sites of the marked out bus stops.

Councillor Hart queried why there were eight bus stops on one road, yet on a parallel road there were none at all.

Councillor Cotterill advised of the contact at CENTRO to whom concerns should be addressed. The petition was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment with a request for him to contact CENTRO to address the problem and requesting that copies of the responses be sent to the Chairman and the Area Liaison Officer of the Committee.

- (f) Councillor M Davis submitted a petition on behalf of local residents living in The Broadway, Dudley, on the concerns of residents who believed their privacy and light had been taken away when houses were built in too close a proximity to existing homes. The petition was referred to the Director of the Urban environment for his consideration.

There were no youth issues to be discussed at this meeting.

The Chairman advised that questions would be taken from the floor, should there be any time remaining when written questions had been addressed. Questions and answers were then given as follows:-

- (1) A member of the public, on behalf of a local Residents' Association, expressed concerns regarding traffic issues in the Scotts Green Close area. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environmental (Environmental Management) advised that he understood that a new proposal for a 20 mph restriction was due to be introduced in this area, in the very near future. It was hoped that this would resolve the problems. Councillor M Davis commented that he did not believe this would resolve the problems.
- (2) A member of the public expressed concern regarding his need to be re-housed near to a family relative in the Russells Hall Area, the fact that he appeared to receive no medical points despite a long term illness and that he was lower down the waiting list than he had previously been advised. The Area Housing Manager undertook to investigate and send a written response to the questioner.
- (3) A member of the public asked whether recommendations for Coppice Lane had been introduced following a meeting with the Road Traffic Manager on 13th January 2006. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) advised that following the meeting all proposals had been reviewed.
- (4) A member of the public expressed concern that work did not seem to be progressing on the Babcock Bridge, causing unnecessary problems for traffic travelling along the Birmingham New Road. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate and send a written response to the questioner.
- (5) A member of the public questioned how long it would be before he and his family could be re-housed in suitable accommodation on the Russells Hall Estate. The Area Housing Manager undertook to investigate and send a written response to the questioner.

- (6) A member of the public commented on the proposed sale of land between 132 and 134 Baptist End Road. The matter was deferred for consideration under that agenda item.
- (7) A member of the public queried how long residents would have to wait for a response to their petition, submitted in 2004, requesting action to reduce speeding in Bowling Green Road, and whether it was feasible to have a one way system around Netherbrook School. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) advised that it was anticipated that Bowling Green Road was on the reserve list and work should be commenced at the beginning of 2006.
- (8) A member of the public asked how Children Centres were to operate if staff employed at the centres did not have criminal clearance. The Assistant Director from Children's Services undertook to investigate and send a written response.
- (9) A member of the public spoke in support of the petition previously submitted regarding David Wilson Homes and requested that Ward Councillors visit the site to see for themselves the problems referred to. A second member of the public suggested that the Area Housing Manager be included in the site visit, as some residents were Council tenants.
- (10) A member of the public expressed concern for people living in sheltered accommodation and the lack of support for people being moved into the community, especially people with mental health problems. The Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services undertook to speak with the questioner regarding people with mental health problems.
- (11) In response to a housing query, referred to on behalf of a resident, the Area Housing Manager advised that individual cases could not be discussed at the meeting, but that he undertook to speak with the questioner outside of the meeting to clarify and possibly resolve the concerns regarding housing issues.
- (12) In response to a comment as to why people in sheltered accommodation should have to pay full Council tax, the Chairman advised that any financial matters should be raised with the Director of Finance.
- (13) In response to a query regarding Councillor's Ali's failure to explain his non attendance at a meeting pertaining to the African Caribbean Cultural Centre, Councillor Ali advised that when he received a response to his question as to why he was not invited, he would respond to the questioner. This matter had already been referred to earlier in the meeting.

- (14) In response to concerns expressed by a member of the public regarding the unsafe fencing and dumping of rubbish on the land on the former Selborne Public House, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment undertook to investigate and send a written response to the questioner.
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WARD ISSUES

Councillor Cotterill raised

- (1) The need for a disabled ramp at the Community Centre in Quarry Bank, and whose responsibility it was to provide such a ramp, as the Centre was in the ownership of the Council although managed by volunteers.
- (2) The need for the lights in Church Street, Quarry Bank to be brought up to an acceptable standard. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate.
- (3) The need for the Black Country Ground Force project in Saltwells Road to be sanctioned. The Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services advised that the project had now been sanctioned.

Councillor Cotterill, on behalf of Councillor Male raised:-

- (1) The need for the grass verge where Bath Street meets Saltwells Road to be replaced with paving to prevent traffic ruining the grass verge. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate.
- (2) The need for a pedestrian crossing near Bowling Green Road, to allow residents to cross the road safely. This issue had been raised some time ago. The increased volume of traffic was making it extremely difficult for pedestrians to cross the road safely. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate.
- (3) The need for the sequence of the lights at Coppice Lane and Pedmore Road, and the lights for the filter lane turning left to be investigated and rectified. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate.

- (4) Councillor Sparks requested that the Directorate of the Urban Environment review its policy so that in future it would be possible to reintroduce the previous custom of lighting up the yew tree growing in the Church Yard at the top of Quarry Bank High Street at Christmas, rather than, as happened recently, the use of a Christmas tree which was erected and lit, using the power point previously used to light the yew tree. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate this matter.

Councillor Finch raised

- (1) The start date for the commencement of the painting programme on the Priory Estate. The Area Housing Officer advised that the painting programme was due to commence in April, although an exact date for the Priory estate was not yet known, but that he would advise of the dates when available.
- (2) An update on the feasibility study recently started.

The Director of Adult Community and Housing Services advised that she had arranged a separate meeting to discuss the progress of the feasibility study.

Councillor Hart raised:

- (1) The issue of her request for the list of schools previously closed in Dudley, and relevant information, requested at a previous meeting. The Assistant Director from Children's Services undertook to supply the information to Councillor Hart.
- (2) The need for a final solution to the longstanding problems at Scotts Green Close. She advised that the Head Teacher of the Holly Hall School had indicated that he would be willing to enter into discussions with appropriate officers regarding using some land in front of the School to relieve the problems of parking. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to pass this information on to his colleagues in Traffic.
- (3) Concerns at the lack of an obstruction to prevent bikers vandalising the turn on the skatepark at Russells Hall Estate. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate this matter.
- (4) The need for a long term solution to Centro introducing new bus stops in areas without prior consultation with local residents. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate this matter.

- (5) Situations where fencing had remained unfinished due to a change in policy. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate.

Councillor Ms Craigie raised:

- (1) Concern regarding the issue of anti social behaviour diary sheets and the discrepancy regarding the length of time by which they should be completed. She also expressed concern at difficulties in making contact with an appropriate Legal officer to discuss these issues. In response, the Legal Advisor undertook to arrange for an Officer from the Legal Section to contact Ms Councillor Craigie regarding this matter.
- (2) Concerns regarding the need to provide adequate fencing to protect children and the elderly in council owned properties. The Area Housing Manager undertook to investigate and send a written response.
- (3) The need to remove the signage, advising of the repair work, which had been carried out in St James ' Road Dudley, in November 2005. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to have the signs removed.

Councillor J Davies raised

- (1) The issue of why a bus stop situated in New Rowley Road for over forty years was to be replaced by a shelter. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) Undertook to investigate.
- (2) How Centro dealt with complaints. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to speak with Councillor J Davies outside of the meeting, regarding this matter.
- (3) The need to take enforcement action against acts of dog fouling in the New Rowley Road area. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate.

Councillor Mrs Coulter raised:

- (1) The need for "H" markings near the day nursery in Walker Street, Netherton and at Swan Street to be introduced. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) advised that the sign in Walker Street was scheduled for the next financial year and that he would investigate the situation regarding Swan Street.

- (2) The need for Ward Councillors to be advised when “Zone workers” were working in their respective areas. The Area Housing Manager undertook to advise Councillors when dates were known.
- (3) Concern at being unable to contact a Housing Officer in an emergency. Other Councillors agreed that this was a problem in other areas. The Area Housing Manager advised that he was aware of problems and was consulting with customers to rectify this problem.

Councillor Bradney raised:

- (1) Concerns regarding information contained in the report of the Director of the Urban Environment at agenda item no. 12. In response the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to clarify the information outside of the meeting.
- (2) Concern that accidents were to be monitored rather than action taken to prevent them, as indicated in paragraph 15 of the report of the Director of the Urban Environment referred to at (1) above.
- (3) The need for a pedestrian crossing between Holly Hall and Level Street, Brierley Hill and signage advising of speed limits along the stretch of busy road. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate.
- (4) The request by Hillcrest Board of Governors for a pedestrian crossing outside of Hillcrest School, and the increase in traffic since the introduction of the bypass. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate.

Councillor Ali raised:

- (1) The need for traffic lights on the junction of Oakham Road and Dixons Green Road. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate.
- (2) The need for enforcement action to be taken against acts of dog fouling in the Cornwall Drive area. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate.
- (3) His disappointment at the lack of a joint directorate report submitted to this Committee regarding his proposals, made at a previous meeting, for a football club stadium facility in Dudley.

RESOLVED

That the Central Dudley Area Committee support the provision of a Dudley Town Football Stadium in Dudley, and request that the Cabinet Member for Leisure identify an Officer to investigate and identify a suitable site for such a facility and work with the Dudley Football Club and Ward Members regarding funding and progressing of the proposal.

The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) then read out a statement advising of a planning briefing which the Directorate of the Urban Environment had issued in respect of identifying a suitable site for a Dudley Town Football Club stadium, or other similar facility within the Dudley area and that a progress report would be submitted to a future meeting of the committee.

Councillor M Davis raised

- (1) Why some tenants, living over shops in New Street Dudley were having to live with the inconvenience of licences granted under the new liquor licensing. The Legal Advisor undertook to investigate and respond to Councillor M Davis.
- (2) The issue of why some groups using the Community Centre in Overfield Road on the Russells Hall estate, were being charged more than others. The Assistant Director from Children's Services undertook to investigate and respond to Councillor M Davis.
- (3) The chicanes on the Russells Hall Estate which he considered were causing more accidents than previously. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate and respond to Councillor M Davis.
- (4) The hope that Officers would take up all the comments made at the meeting regarding anti social behaviour.
- (5) The issue of lack of adequate appropriate housing for local Dudley residents. The Area Housing Manager undertook to investigate.
- (6) The issue of housing repairs at a certain property not being properly carried out but considered to be appropriate by Housing Services and the Chief Executive. The Area Housing Manager undertook to investigate.

Councillor Rahman raised:

- (1) The need for the provision of adequate washing facilities in some of the council owned properties in the Woodside Area of Netherton. The Area Housing Manager undertook to investigate.
- (2) Concerns regarding the volume of traffic and resultant air quality in the Cinderbank area. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate.
- (3) The poor state of the road immediately outside the Hillcrest School, Netherton. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate.
- (4) The need for the developers working in the Halesowen Road/Blowers Green Road, Dudley area to be requested to comply with the conditions laid down when planning permission was granted for the development regarding road improvements in close proximity to the site.

Councillor Mrs Aston raised:

The issue of whose responsibility it was to collect the remaining waste left following the green collections. At present no one seems to accept responsibility. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) undertook to investigate.

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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.

Upon consideration of the report and comments made thereon, it was

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be advised to approve the application to dispose of the land at 141/142 Pedmore Road, Netherton, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, on terms and conditions to be negotiated and approved by the Director of Law and Property.
- (2) That consideration of the request to purchase land at the rear of 43 Harcourt Drive, Lower Gornal, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, be deferred for further consultation with Ward Members.

- (3) That the Cabinet Member for Personnel, Legal and Property be advised to approve the leasing of the additional land at the rear of the Black Country Museum, Tipton Road, Dudley, as shown cross-hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, to the Black Country Museum Trust, on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.
 - (4) That consideration of the request to purchase the land adjacent to 134 Baptist End Road, Netherton as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, be deferred to allow a site visit by Ward Councillors to take place.
 - (5) That consideration of the request to purchase land at 2 and 6 The Sling and 110, 130 and 134 New Road, Netherton, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, be deferred to allow further clarification and a site visit to take place.
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CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

(Councillors Mrs Aston, Mrs. Coulter, Finch and Rahman withdrew from the meeting whilst applications for a capital allocation were considered.)

In the absence of the Chairman, The Vice-Chairman took the Chair.

(Councillor J Davies - in the Chair)

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the recommendations of the Capital Allocations Working Group regarding applications made for funding from the capital budget of the Committee, including two applications deferred from the previous meeting of the Working Group, and also setting out the balances remaining for each Ward, should all the recommendations be approved. In response to a previous request from the Committee to re-consider the policy concerning the maximum amounts for grants, the Working Group recommended that the current policy should be more flexible and that the amount of £2,000 need only be treated as a guideline. Therefore each Ward could recommend the amount that they considered appropriate in each circumstance, as long as they had the funds available

In response to comments from Councillor Hart, the Principal Project Officer explained that, if the Committee accepted this recommendation, there would be no formal maximum amount and each Ward would be able to recommend any amount at their discretion

Upon consideration of the report, and comments made thereon, it was

RESOLVED

- (1) That a more flexible approach be taken regarding the amount awarded to an applicant organization, so that, where Ward Members deem it to be appropriate, the amount awarded could exceed £2,000.
- (2) That the Netherton Woodside Partnership be considered as a special case and be granted £12,000 towards the cost of providing a gardening and decorating project across the Ward subject to the submission of satisfactory evidence that sufficient revenue funds were available to properly utilise the additional grant.
- (3) That the following amounts be awarded to the organisations stated:

<u>Name of Organisation</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount</u>
West Midlands Police, Dudley Office	Two mountain bikes and equipment	£1,200
New Testament Welfare Association, Holly hall	Refurbishment of toilet facilities	£3,760
Black Carers' Group, Claughton Youth and Community Centre	New kitchen equipment	£2,000
Oscar Dudley – St Thomas's Network	New computer equipment	£2,000

- (4) That the following applications be deferred to the next meeting of the Working Group.
 - (a) Friends of Green Park.
 - (b) Hellier Street Youth and Community Association.
- (5) That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to carry out the recommended actions.

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted to heighten public awareness of the existence of the code.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted.

75 “SCHOOL KEEP CLEAR” MARKINGS TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER - (NO 3) 2005

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the introduction of the third proposed Traffic Regulation Order for ‘School Keep Clear’ markings for the current year at locations within the area covered by the Committee.

It was suggested by a member of the public that the times for the Traffic Regulation Order be amended in the case of the Wrens Nest School, to take into account the changing hours from 6 am to 5 pm to allow for the new nursery unit which currently operates on the site.

Upon consideration of the report and comments made thereon it was

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted and that the Cabinet Member for Transportation be advised of the Committee’s support for the provision of a Traffic Regulation Order to prohibit stopping on school entrance markings at the locations set out in Appendix A of the report, including an amendment to the times of the Order in respect of Wrens Nest School.

76 DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT – MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THIS COMMITTEE HELD ON 8TH NOVEMBER 2005

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on a number of issues relating to that Directorate, raised at the meeting of this Committee held on 8th November 2005.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted be noted.

77 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted detailing the responses to questions asked at previous meetings

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted.

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DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date and venue of the next meeting of the Committee be noted, as follows:-

14th March, 2006 - Priory Primary School, Cedar Road, Dudley

The meeting ended at 8.50 p.m.

CHAIRMAN