

NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 3rd December 2008 at 6.30 pm
Ellowes Hall School, Stickley Lane, Upper Gornal

PRESENT

Councillors Ryder (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Ameson (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Caunt, Evans, Mrs Millward, Mottram, Perry, Mrs Ridney,
Simms, Stanley and Wright; Mr J Millward.

Officers

The Director of Children's Services (as Area Liaison Officer), The Interim Director of Law and Property, (Directorate of Law and Property), The Head of Sport and Physical Activity and the Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety (both Directorate of the Urban Environment), The Head of Youth Services, The Area Team Manager of Early Years and Youth Development and the Area Youth Worker (all of Directorate of Children's Services) Interim Director for Older People (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services) and Mrs J Rees (Directorate of Law and Property).

IN ATTENDANCE

Inspector M Sutton and Sergeant R Simpson of West Midlands Police, Mr S Vincent, Operations Commander, Dudley Borough (West Midlands Fire Service) were in attendance together with approximately 20 members of the public.

39 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors G Davies.

40 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No Member declared a personal or prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of any items to be discussed.

41 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th September 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the deletion of Councillor Perry's name in the list of apologies for absence from the meeting.

42 PETITIONS

The following petition was submitted and referred to the Director of the Environment for consideration.

On behalf of residents of Glen Road, Upper Gornal, requesting the installation of road humps or a one way system.

43 YOUTH ISSUES

The Area Team Manger of Early Years and Youth Development gave an oral update on youth issues in the area which included:

- (a) The refurbishment of part of Sedgley Youth Centre and the raising of £550 for Children in Need by a performance at the Dormston Theatre
- (b) The ongoing work between the Detached Youth Worker Team in the North of the Area and the local Police Community Support Officers, to identify hot spots where young people congregate, a short term project on the Connexions bus where youth workers hoped to engage with young people at risk in Gornal and Sedgley areas.
- (c) Introducing Danny Millard, the new Youth Worker at Lower Gornal Youth Academy, who was in attendance at the meeting.
- (d) Recent events at Lower Gornal Youth Academy, including a very successful Halloween discotheque.
- (e) The successful October half term programme at Coseley Youth Club and possible future joint working with Walsall Youth Service.
- (f) A wish for local Councillors to work with the Youth Forum and a Youth Forum leaflet which will be produced in the New Year.

Mr J Millward reported orally on the recent Dudley Youth Awards ceremony. He congratulated young people from the North Dudley Area who had received a large number of awards. He encouraged any young people wishing to join the Dudley Youth Council to contact him outside of the meeting for further details.

One Member of the Committee, supported by another Member of the Committee, expressed concerns regarding the possible loss of youth facilities at the Coseley Youth Centre during the impending work on the Extra Care Housing project on the site of the existing Youth Centre. She fully supported the extra care housing provision, but asked for an assurance that before work commenced on this project, a new venue for the youth centre would be identified to ensure that there was no break in youth centre provision.

The Director of Children's Services undertook to investigate the concerns and respond directly on the proposals for future youth service provision.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the oral report on youth issues be noted.

44

POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Mark Sutton gave an oral presentation on a number of police issues, including anti social behaviour, criminal damage and robbery reports which had been investigated by the Police. On a recent visit to the Clayton Playing fields the Police had been surprised at the very large numbers of youths congregating there. In an attempt to combat robberies and anti social behaviour additional staffing support had been agreed over the Christmas period, although long term measures such as additional security lighting needed to be considered.

A number of concerns were expressed by Members of the Committee including: Parking issues in Clarence Street and Romford Court, and allegations of dangerous parking near Café Casita. The Police undertook to investigate these matters.

In response to concerns regarding dangerous and obstructive parking, Sergeant Rob Simpson advised that the Police regularly patrolled all areas and took action against unlawfully and dangerously parked vehicles, where appropriate. He acknowledged, however, that the Police could not cover all areas twenty four hours per day. He encouraged those present to attend and report incidents of concern to the Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings.

In response to questions as to how many Police officers were on duty at certain times in the evening and at weekends, Inspector Sutton answered that he would be unable to furnish Members with this information, as a large number of factors could affect the number of officers on duty at any one time. During the ensuing discussion Members of the Committee commented on the following items:

- (a) The high cost of providing lighting at Clayton playing fields on account of the cabling costs which had been reported previously.

- (b) Concerns that anti social behaviour was being orchestrated by young people from outside of the Gornal area.
- (c) Concern that in making reference to areas attending the recent Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meeting, no mention was made of Sandstone Close.

RESOLVED

That Inspector Sutton be thanked for his oral report on police issues, the contents of which be noted.

45

FIRE ISSUES

Mr Steve Vincent of the West Midlands Fire Service gave an oral report on issues relating to West Midlands Fire Service, including an increase in dwelling fires and abandoned vehicles. He reported on a number of recent Police/Fire Service joint initiatives including those in relation to Smoke Cessation education and Road Traffic Collisions, whereby small offences were treated by the giving of advice from Fire Officers, whereas more serious incidents were addressed by the Police through the Court process.

Mr Vincent reported orally on recent Young People courses. He indicated that there were now fewer fireworks being sold and as a result there had been a reduction in anti social behavior associated with fireworks during November.

Mr Vincent encouraged those present to make neighbours aware of the Fire Service's free home checks

Some Members of the Committee expressed appreciation for the recent Young People Course, organised by the West Midlands Fire Service, which Mr Vincent undertook to pass on to the young people involved.

RESOLVED

That Mr Vincent be thanked for his presentation, the contents of which be noted.

46

TRANSPORT ISSUES

One Member of the Committee expressed concerns regarding the need for a double decker bus on the 257 route from Gornal to Stourbridge College in view of large number of students travelling to and from that area in the mornings and afternoons. Concerns were also expressed that the 541 service had failed to show on a number of occasions recently.

A Member of the Committee advised that the services referred to were operated out of the Pensnett garage which did not have any double decker buses and many of the buses available were unreliable. In response to this Members commented that it was not acceptable for the area not to have an adequate service with reliable vehicles.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the transport issues raised be noted.
- (2) That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to request that a representative of CENTRO attend the next meeting of the Committee to answer issues around transport in the North Dudley area.

47

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:-

- (1) A member of the public expressed concerns at the apparent lack of progress in introducing a one way system for Hopyard Lane. The Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety (Directorate of the Urban Environment) advised that currently the problem of the siting of the requisite signage had not yet been resolved. However, a recently approved application for new properties in the area had been granted subject to the installation of a footpath, which could, in future, negate the need for the signage. Following comments from Members of the Committee, the Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety (Directorate of the Urban Environment) agreed to arrange for the decision regarding the introduction of a one way system for Hopyard Lane to be reviewed when the new houses were built at the end of Hopyard Lane.
- (2) A member of the public commented that 40 tonne low loader lorries were also using the lane.

48

CONSULTATION ON THE YOUTH SERVICE

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted advising the Committee of the publication of the Youth Service consultation document which had been published on 7th October 2008 and would run until 6th January, 2009.

In presenting the report the Director of Children's Services welcomed the newly appointed Head of Youth Service, who would be able to answer any questions on the consultation document.

Members of the Committee welcomed the changes to the Youth Service structure which they considered would result in more staff working in the appropriate areas with young people.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report on the restructuring of the Youth Services in Dudley be noted.

49

CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF THE ETHNIC MONORITIES ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EMAS)

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the issue of the consultation on the future of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) which had been published initially on 8th September, 2008 and amended on 23rd October, 2008, further to the High Court judgment on the judicial review of the Council decision on the budget for the Service.

The effect of the referral to the High Court was that it was no longer feasible for the reduction in the EMAS budget to be implemented in the current financial year and consultation therefore was now being undertaken on the issue of the financial support for EMAS for 2009/10. The consultation document had therefore been amended accordingly.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report submitted be noted.

50

CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on three applications received for funding from the capital allocation budget of the Committee considered by the Capital Allocations Working Group, which had met on the 5th November 2008.

In presenting the report, the Area Liaison Officer advised that at the meeting of the Capital Allocations Working Group Members had expressed concerns regarding the amount of available funding remaining in the Capital Allocations budget for local voluntary groups, and recommended that the availability of funding be advertised in the local press.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee and Ward Councillors, be authorised to determine urgent applications for funding.
 - (2) That consideration of the applications received from the Brierley Hill Amateur Swimming Club be deferred to allow further information to be sought regarding the application.
 - (3) That the application by the West Midlands Police be refused in view of the fact that the need for financial support has not been demonstrated.
 - (4) That the application by the North Dudley Detached Team be deferred pending the restructuring of the Youth Service, in order to enable further information to be obtained and to give further consideration to a partial contribution being made towards the costs.
 - (5) That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to publish the availability of funding for voluntary and local organisations from the Committee's Capital Allocations Budget.
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51

COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the measures being taken to develop a local Community Renewal Plan for the North Dudley Area.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the contents of the report on the Community Renewal Working Group be noted.
 - (2) That the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services be advised of the Committee's request that a representative of the Community Renewal Team attend future meetings when a report of the Renewal Working Group was on the agenda.
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52

NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE SKATEPARK WORKING GROUP

Councillor Simms gave an oral presentation on the findings of the Skatepark Working Group which had met to discuss ways of how to address concerns that had been expressed by some local residents, regarding anti social behaviour at the Skatepark at Ten Acre Field, Sedgley.

After discussion and liaison with local people, the Police, Youth Services and other interested parties the Working Group had concluded that the anti social behaviour at the site had been exhibited since before the Skatepark had been installed. Councillor Simms reported the Group's recommendations to the Committee as follows:

- (1) that the Skatepark Working Group be wound up with immediate effect, but that another be established with a remit to look at anti social behaviour in the North Dudley Area, including Tenacre Field and to consider ways to address the problems.
- (2) that the same members and partners as were on the Skatepark Working Group be invited to attend future meetings of the new working group, and
- (3) that Mr D Allen be co-opted to the new Working Group, to represent the local residents.

The need for a body to look at anti social issues was accepted but the view was expressed that this could be added to the remit of the Community Renewal Working Group.

The Station Commander of the West Midlands Fire Service agreed that if the remit of the group was broadened it could look at anti social behaviour and perhaps broaden the public's understanding of what anti social behaviour actually was.

Some Members of the Committee commented that it was unfair for young people using the skatepark to be blamed for anti social behaviour which had nothing to do with them. It was also considered unacceptable that some partners working with the Council did not attend certain areas for fear of their personal safety as was now alleged.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the contents of the oral presentation on the Skatepark Working Group be noted.
- (2) That the Skatepark Working Group be wound up and that the work relating to addressing anti social behaviour issues in the North Dudley Area, including that at Tenacre Field, be added to the remit of the Community Renewal Working Group.
- (3) That the same members and Officers as those who attended the Skatepark Working Group be invited to attend the Community Renewal Working Group for the purpose of the consideration of anti social behaviour issues.

- (4) That Mr D Allen be co-opted to the Community Renewal Working Group.
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53 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on written responses sent in respect of questions asked at previous meetings.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted.

54 WARD ISSUES

Councillor Simms expressed thanks for the fencing repairs undertaken in Tipton Road.

Councillor Mrs Ridney expressed concerns regarding street lamps which were not working near the Coseley School in the vicinity of Canal Road. The Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety undertook to investigate the matter.

Councillor Evans expressed:

- (1) thanks to the Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety for addressing issues at the Priory, the crossing at Gospel End and Gospel End Street.
- (2) concerns that no additional Christmas lights had been installed in Sedgley, despite a grant of £5,000 having been awarded from the Committee from the Capital Allocations budget.

Councillor Mrs Millward wished all present a safe festive season, but reminded everyone to ensure their own safety by ensuring that windows and doors were locked.

Councillor Stanley reminded everyone to drive carefully along Stickley Lane upon leaving the meeting.

Councillor Caunt thanked Mr John Freeman for all his work as Area Liaison Officer to the Committee. The Committee joined Councillor Caunt in wishing Mr Freeman well for the future.

55 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

The dates for future meetings of all Select Committees in the 2008/09 municipal year were noted.

Councillor Mrs Ridney encouraged those present to attend the Select Committee on Health and Adult Social Care.

56 DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

The dates and venues of future meetings of the Committee for the remainder of the 2008/09 municipal year were noted as follows:-

Wednesday 28th January 2009 – Dormston Sports Hall, Mill Bank, Sedgley.
Wednesday 8th April 2009 – High Arcal School, Arcal Drive, Sedgley.

The meeting ended at 7.45pm.

CHAIRMAN