

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 12th June, 2007 at 6.30 pm
at Saltwells EDC, Bowling Green Road, Dudley

PRESENT: -

Councillors Ahmed, Ali, Mrs. Aston, Cotterill, Ms. Craigie, J davies, A Finch, K Finch, Martin, Rahman, Mrs Roberts, Waltho and Mrs While-Cooper.

OFFICERS:

Director of the Urban Environment (as acting Area Liaison Officer), Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) and Group Engineer – Civil Engineering, (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Principal Project Officer, Area Housing Manager – Dudley and Quality & Complaints Manager (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Assistant Director of Children’s Services (Resources), Ms H Kidd and Mr R Jewkes (Directorate of Law and Property)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Approximately 40 members of the public.

1 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED

That Councillor Rahman be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year.

(Councillor Rahman thereupon took the Chair).

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs. Coulter and Sparks; and Mrs. Edwards and Mrs. Oakes.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Ahmed declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item Number 18 – Highways Minor Works Capital Programme for 2007/08, in that he was a Corporation member of Dudley College.

Councillors Mrs Aston and Cotterill declared a personal interest in respect of a matter to be raised by Councillor Ms Craigie under Agenda Item Number 16 – Ward Issues, in that they were both members of the congregation of a Methodist church.

4 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor J. Davies be appointed Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year.

5 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that: -

- (a) it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 as indicated below; and
- (b) the public interest in disclosing the information is outweighed by the public interest in maintaining the exemption from disclosure.

Description of Item

Relevant Paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A

Request to Extinguish Access Rights

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6 REQUEST TO EXTINGUISH ACCESS RIGHTS

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on a request to extinguish access rights.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to approve the application to extinguish the right of way, as indicated on the plan attached to the report now submitted, on the grounds that the access has been unused for more than ten years, and that the position of the access is inappropriate for modern living.

7 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13th March, 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed.

8 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROTOCOL FOR AREA COMMITTEES

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted, setting out the Terms of Reference and Protocol for Area Committees.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and the appendices to the report submitted, on the Terms of Reference and the Protocol for Area Committees, be noted.

9 CO-OPTED MEMBERS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted seeking consideration of the co-option of members to serve on the Committee for the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED

1. That the following persons be re-appointed as co-opted members of the Committee for the 2007/08 Municipal Year, representing the organisations indicated: -

Miss. V. Little, Dudley Beacon and Castle Primary Care Trust
Ms H. Edwards, Dudley Association of Governing Bodies
Mr. M. Sadiq, Dudley Equality and Diversity Group
Ms J. Oakes, Dudley Town Centre Forum

2. That the Central Dudley Youth Forum also be invited to nominate a Member to attend meetings as a co-optee, whether this be by way of a particular individual or a number of members on an alternate basis.

(Ms Little thereupon joined the members of the Committee)

10 YOUTH ISSUES

No youth issues were raised under this item.

11 APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted seeking consideration of the appointment of Working Groups in the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED

1. That the Central Dudley Area Committee Community Plan Working Group be re-appointed for the ensuing Municipal year, with its existing terms of reference, and that the working group comprise all members of the Committee.
2. That the Central Dudley Area Committee Capital Allocations Working Group be re-appointment for the ensuing municipal year, with its existing terms of reference, and that the Working Group comprise the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, together with Councillors Ahmed, Mrs Aston, Ms Craigie, Cotterill and Mrs Coulter.

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APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the nomination of members of the Committee to serve on outside organisations.

RESOLVED

That the following members be appointed to serve on the organisations indicated for the 2007/08 municipal year or for the term or period otherwise indicated.

Social Inclusion

- | | | |
|----|---|--------|
| a. | Castle and Priory Regeneration Group -
Councillor Mrs. Aston | Annual |
| b. | Wrens Nest Community Centre - Councillor
Mrs. Aston | Annual |
| c. | Withymoor Island Trust – Councillor J Martin | Annual |
| d. | St. Francis Parish Centre - Councillor A Finch | Annual |

Community Centres

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| 2 | Sledmere - Councillor Ali | Annual |
| 3 | Woodside - Councillor Rahman | Annual |
| 4 | Priory - Councillor Mrs. Aston | Annual |
| 5 | Quarry Bank - Councillor Cotterill | Annual |
| | Badley Memorial and Dudley Nursing Charity -
Councillor J.R. Davies | Four year term
from 31.7.07 |

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ELECTED MEMBERS' VISITS TO ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE ESTABLISHMENTS

A joint report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services and the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the progress of visits to Adult and Children's Social Care Establishments undertaken by members of the Committee during 2006/07, and on further nominations for participation in the rota of visits for the 2007/2008 Municipal year.

It was noted that any Members wishing to be involved in the visits would require a full, valid Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

Arising from consideration of this matter, it was

RESOLVED

1. That the information contained in the report, and the appendices attached to the report submitted, on the progress of elected member visits to Adult and Children's Social Care Establishments during 2006/07, be noted.
2. That Councillors Councillors Ali, Mrs Aston, Mrs Coulter, J. Davies, Martin, Rahman, Mrs. Roberts and Waltho be appointed as the nominees of this Committee to undertake rota visits to Adult and Children's Social Care Establishments in the municipal year 2007/08.

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PETITIONS

It was reported that residents of the Sledmere estate had submitted a petition requesting that the Council take action in relation to hazardous and illegal parking in the area surrounding the Warrens Hall Road entrance to Sledmere Primary School. The petition had been referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for consideration and attention.

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

- a. From residents of the Lodge Farm Estate, requesting that the Council consider the feasibility of converting the traffic island outside the properties numbered 55 – 69 Lodge Crescent into parking bays to help ease parking problems on the estate. The petition was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration and attention.

- b. From residents of Abingdon Road, Lombard Avenue and Evesham Rise, requesting that traffic calming measures be implemented in those streets in order to prevent accidents occurring. This petition was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration and attention.
- c. From residents of Quarry Bank, requesting traffic calming measures on Quarry Bank High Street, in order to create safer routes to school for children attending Quarry Bank Primary School.

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PUBLIC FORUM

Consideration was given to written questions submitted. The Chairman advised that further 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 raised a concern in relation to the collection of green waste in the Castle and Priory area, commenting that due to the delay in the distribution of green bins, and the fact that the Council had not collected green waste in the interim period, many residents had now accumulated several bags of waste which were piling up in their streets. Upon contacting the Council regarding the matter, he had been informed that no further collections would be taking place until the green bins had been distributed later in the year. He requested clarification as to when the new green bins would be delivered and also requested that the Council take action to clear the backlog of green waste which had built up.

In responding, the Assistant Director apologised for the delay in the distribution of green bins, and stated that the majority of Dudley residents would receive their bins no later than early July. He also reported that in the meantime the Council would be carrying out a further green collection to remove the backlog of waste which had built up. Residents would be notified of the date for the collection as soon as it was confirmed.

- (2) A Member of the public raised a concern regarding the recent removal of a post box from Dudley High Street. She stated that the box, which had formerly been situated outside Boots the Chemist, had now been moved to outside the new Post Office opposite Barclays bank. This meant that people wishing to post letters would now have to cross a dangerous busy road in order to do so. It was requested that the Council use its influence to request that Royal Mail reinstate the box in its original position in order to reduce the risk of an accident. In responding, Members of the Committee expressed agreement with the questioner's comments and requested that Democratic Services write to Royal Mail on their behalf, requesting that the post box be returned to its former position.
- (3) Several Members of the public raised concerns regarding a land issue which was to be considered later on in the meeting, in relation to a proposed land transfer at Dudley Wood Primary School. Questioners expressed concerns regarding the need to retain the land as public open space, and commented that although the land was to be used by the school for recreation and play purposes, it would be fenced off, meaning that local children and adults would not be able to use it outside of school hours. A Member of the public also expressed concern that residents had not been given adequate opportunity to express their views on the proposal, and requested contact details for the Charity Commission, which would ultimately determine the land exchange proposal.

In responding to the comments made, Councillor Cotterill commented that the land was currently not fit to be used for recreational purposes due to the amount of dog excrement and broken glass which had accumulated on it. It was his view that fencing the area off would ensure that the land could be properly cleaned up and maintained. Furthermore, it was his understanding that should the land exchange be approved, it was the school's intention to make the land available outside of school hours for appropriate recreational and play activities.

In relation to the issue of residents being able to make representations regarding the proposal, it was requested that Democratic Services provide the questioner with contact details for the Charity Commission.

- (4) A member of the public raised a number of issues regarding traffic flow along Cinder Bank, including a request for the results of any traffic counts which had been carried out in the area, clarification as to why a previous proposed scheme to install a traffic island at Cinder Bank had been abandoned, and a timetable for improved public transport including the 'Bus Showcase' route through Netherton and the extension of the Midland Metro. In responding, at the suggestion of the Area Liaison Officer, it was agreed that, in view of the detailed nature of the questions raised, a written response be provided to the questioner.
 - (5) A member of the public raised a concern regarding traffic congestion in the area surrounding Russells Hall Hospital, particularly in relation to queues and parking in Bushey Fields Road. She requested that double yellow lines be put down in the area to prevent parked cars blocking the roads. In responding, the Director of the Urban Environment reported that a number of meetings had been held between Members and officers regarding this problem. The outcome of these discussions had been a scheme proposing the creation of a number of double yellow line zones which had been agreed previously by both the Committee and the Cabinet Member for Transportation. As a result, by the end of July 2007 double yellow lines would be in place in a number of roads in the area. It was hoped that this would reduce queues and ease the flow of traffic.
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WARD ISSUES

Councillor Mrs Aston raised:

- (1) a request that the steps from Burton Road down to the Broadway be cleared as they had become overgrown and litter had accumulated on them.

Councillor K Finch raised:

- (1) concern that although many of the council houses in the Castle and Priory Ward had been painted recently, the rendering on many of them was still in need of repair. He requested that officers look into the possibility of revisiting the houses in question to make the necessary repairs.
- (2) concern that the roots from the trees which lined the roads in the Castle and Priory area were causing severe damage to the public footpath, to the extent that disabled people and parents with pushchairs were having to walk in the road to avoid the cracks in the pavement. He requested that officers investigate the possibility of repairing the damage by undertaking appropriate pruning and/or resurfacing. He also requested a copy of the Council policy, should one be in existence, in relation to tree root damage of public footpaths.

Councillor A Finch raised:

- (1) concern regarding the garages on the Old Park Farm estate. He stated that the garages had become a hot spot for anti-social behaviour and drug abuse, and requested that the Council take action to deal with the problems, for example by selling the site off for development.
- (2) concern regarding potential vandalism at the former Dudley College halls of residence annex building on the Broadway. He commented that as the building was now unoccupied it could become a target for vandalism and anti-social behaviour. He requested that the Council do everything within its power to ensure that the building was kept safe and secure.

Councillor Ali raised:

- (1) concern regarding traffic management in King Street. He commented that on several occasions, he had seen drivers pull out of the opening in the road near to the King Street footbridge, rather than driving round Falcon House as the road markings directed. He requested that officers investigate the possibility of modifying this area of road in order to prevent a serious accident occurring.
- (2) a request that a meeting be arranged between traffic officers and the relevant Ward Members to discuss the recent traffic accident in Bunns Lane and consider the possibilities for improving traffic safety in the area.
- (3) a request that a central refuge area be created to assist pedestrians in using the crossing near to the bus stop on New Rowley Road.

Councillor Waltho raised:

- (1) a request that a pothole which had developed in Watsons Green Road be repaired.
- (2) concern regarding general rubbish in the St. Thomas' Ward, commenting that although the Council had made efforts to clean up rubbish in the past, the problem had always returned. He requested a meeting with the relevant officers to discuss the formulation of a strategy not only for cleaning up the rubbish which had accumulated but also for minimising the problem in future.
- (3) an invitation for members of the public to attend the local Police and Communities Together meetings. He commented that these meetings provided an excellent opportunity to raise issues within the community and promote better understanding.

Councillor J Davies raised:

- (1) a request that Buffery Park be cleaned up as soon as possible after the fair which was currently operating on there had finished.
- (2) a concern regarding the playground in Buffery Park. He stated that he had received reports that people had been taking dogs into the playground and also that large amounts of broken glass had been left there. He requested that officers investigate these reports and if necessary clean up the playground.
- (3) a request that the Council complete repairs to the garages in Four Winds Road as soon as possible, and inform the residents of the expected completion date, in order that the keys to the garages could be returned to the tenants.

Councillor Rahman raised: -

- (1) concern that although the issue of traffic safety at the junction of Northfield Road and Halesowen Road had been raised several times at meetings of the Committee, a solution had not yet been found. He requested that the Council consider the remodelling of the junction as a priority, in order to prevent an accident occurring.
- (2) a request that traffic officers undertake a site visit with him to view the traffic problems at Cinder Bank Island. He stated that traffic at the island was often gridlocked at peak times and that the congestion was causing serious air pollution in the area, particularly as a large volume of heavy goods vehicles used the junction on a daily basis.
- (3) concern regarding litter in the Woodside area. He commented that although progress had been made in improving the litter situation, a concerted effort was required to clean both the Woodside and Holly Hall areas. He called for people caught littering in the area and elsewhere to be fined accordingly.
- (4) concern regarding the public open space at Cole Street and Worcester Road. He commented that the area had not been well kept and requested that officers investigate the possibility of identifying resources, including monies acquired as a result of Section 106 agreements, to finance improvements to the site.

Councillor Ahmed raised:

- (1) a request for replacement signs to be erected in Spring Parklands in order to inform people of properties situated in streets branching off from that road.
- (2) a request that the traffic calming measures currently in place on the Russells Hall estate be reviewed and more appropriate measures be put in place.

- (3) safety concerns regarding the pelican crossing on Wellington Road. He stated that many cars were refusing to stop at the crossing and requested that officers consider the possibility of converting the crossing to one which incorporated traffic lights, in order to ensure that cars stopped for pedestrians.

Councillor Ms Craigie raised:

- (1) a request that a pedestrian crossing be installed in Overfield Road.
- (2) concern that after installing road humps and imposing a 20 miles per hour speed limit in Scotts Green Close, the Council appeared to be planning to lay anti-skid patching. She suggested that this was unnecessary given the speed limit in the area and requested that a new pedestrian crossing be installed in the area instead.
- (3) a request that a fence be put up outside Dudley Central Methodist Church to protect the parishioners from anti-social behaviour nearby involving homeless people and drug abuse. She requested clarification as to whether or not the Council could assist in this matter and if so which department she should contact.
- (4) concern regarding traffic management in Dudley Town Centre. She stated that she personally had witnessed cars parking illegally on double yellow lines and in disabled spaces. She requested that Stone Square be converted back into a public car park and that an urgent overall assessment of traffic management in the Town Centre be undertaken.
- (5) concern regarding the possibility that Neighbourhood Management Services could be under threat due to an apparent absence of funding. She commented that the section provided a vital service which needed to be preserved and stated that if the service was under threat, a report should be submitted to the Committee in order that the issues could be properly discussed.

Councillor Mrs. Roberts raised:

- (1) a request that trees in Corbyn Road be trimmed back urgently as they were causing inconvenience to residents.

Councillor Cotterill raised:

- (1) concern regarding water from a fresh water spring which had been allowed to accumulate in Heath Road and had now become stagnant. He stated that the Council's legal department were currently dealing with the issue and requested that the Council use all its influence to ensure that Severn Trent water took action quickly to solve the problem and remove the water.

- (2) a request that a plaque commemorating the life of Henry Abbott, a local resident who had been active in the community, be placed in Quarry Bank library. He stated that his original request for a plaque had been refused on the grounds that it would create a precedent, and requested clarification as to how many requests of this nature had been made.
- (3) concern regarding the allocation of secondary school places in central Dudley for the 2007/08 academic year, particularly in relation to between forty and fifty cases where children had been allocated schools which were a two-hour round trip away from their homes, owing to the schools in their locality not having sufficient capacity to meet demand. He commented that this situation was unacceptable and proposed that a special meeting of the Committee be convened as quickly as possible in order that the problems could be discussed and in order that parents of the affected children could ask questions.

Members of the Committee agreed unanimously with the proposal in (3) above and it was

RESOLVED

That a special meeting of the Committee be convened at Saltwells Education Development Centre as soon as possible to consider issues arising from the allocation of secondary school places in the central Dudley area for the 2007/08 academic year, particularly in relation to children being offered schools which were an unacceptable distance from their homes.

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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.

(During the consideration of Item 17(b) – Land adjacent to Dudley Wood Primary School, the Committee's discussion turned to planning matters associated with the proposal. Prior to these matters being discussed, Councillor K Finch declared a personal and prejudicial interest in any matters relating to planning, in view of his membership of the Development Control Committee, and left the meeting for the remainder of the Committee's consideration of the matter)

RESOLVED

- (a) That consideration of the application by INC Design Associates Limited, on behalf of the Westfield Group, to exchange land within the Saltwells Nature Reserve, Netherton for the Council owned land at Hurst Lane, Brierley Hill, be deferred pending a site visit to address concerns expressed by Members, and the receipt of further information in respect of the applicants' plans for the land in Hurst Lane.
- (b) That consideration of the request for control of the land to the rear of Dudley Wood Primary School to be transferred from the Directorate of the Urban Environment to the school itself be deferred pending a site visit to address concerns expressed by Members.

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HIGHWAYS MINOR WORKS CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2007/08

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 central Dudley area for the 2007/08 financial year. Details of the proposed works for 2007/08 were appended to the report.

Arising from consideration of the report, a Member stated that the development of Safer Routes to School travel plans formed a specific target within Dudley's Local Area Agreement (LAA), and commented that the Local Authority would need to focus its efforts to ensure that this target was met. In view of this, she requested that a report providing additional information in relation to the progress of the Safer Routes to School initiative be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

1. That the proposed Local Safety Schemes, Pedestrian Crossings and Safer Routes to School initiatives within the central Dudley area for the 2007/08 financial year, as set out in the report submitted, be endorsed.
2. That a report providing further detail in respect of the progress of the Safer Routes to School initiative in Dudley be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

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CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted seeking consideration of the process for the allocation of expenditure under the Committee's delegated capital budget for the 2007/08 municipal year.

Arising from consideration of the report, Members suggested that the process for allocating funds should be re-modelled in order to maximise the benefit to the local community. It was felt that this could be done by extending the scheme to enable groups to apply for funding for revenue purposes, as well as for capital projects. A Member also commented that the amount of funding available, which had remained at £50,000 per annum since Area Committees were first established, should be increased to take account of inflation.

RESOLVED

1. That the process for awarding capital allocations from the Capital Allocations budget, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted, be approved for implementation in the 2007/08 Municipal year.
2. That the application of the two sets of criteria used in 2006/2007, as set out in Appendices 2 and 3 to the report submitted, be approved.
3. That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to carry out the recommended actions set out above.

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URBAN ENVIRONMENT - MATTERS RAISED AT CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE – 13th MARCH, 2007

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 the Committee held on 13th March 2007.

RESOLVED

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

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on written responses made to questions raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 13th March, 2007.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, be noted.

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SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

Information was given regarding the dates for future meetings of all Select Committees, which were held at the Council House, Dudley. Members of the public were welcome to attend such meetings.

RESOLVED

That the information given in respect of the dates of future meetings of Select Committees, be noted.

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DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of future meetings of this Committee, as follows, be noted: -

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| 11 th September 2007 | – | Dudley Concert Hall, St James' Road, Dudley |
| 7 th November 2007 | – | (Venue to be confirmed) |
| 22 nd January 2008 | – | Dudley Concert Hall, St James' Road, Dudley |
| 11 th March 2008 | – | Saltwells Education Development Centre, Bowling Green Road, Dudley |

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

CHAIRMAN