

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE – 14TH JUNE 2005

REPORT OF THE AREA LIAISON OFFICER

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 To report the responses to questions asked under the public forum item at the meeting of the Central Dudley Area Committee held on 31st March 2005.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Responses to the questions asked under the public forum item at the last meeting of the Committee are summarised below:-

(a) Housing Issues

2.1.1 In response to assurances sought from a resident on certain issues regarding the eviction of a tenant from an address in Kates Hill and matters associated therewith, the Area Housing Manager for Dudley by writing to the questioner, confirming that the tenant referred to was due to be evicted from the property because of anti-social behaviour. The District Housing Manager confirmed with the questioner that it is Council policy to exclude further people who have been evicted for anti social behaviour from waiting lists for Council accommodation, until such time as it is reasonable to do so.

2.1.2 In response to a question from a resident regarding the policy of housing young people, some on drug rehabilitation schemes, at flats at Upton Street occupied largely by older residents, the Area Housing Manager for Dudley by writing to the questioner, asking to discuss the issues raised further in order that he may then review the lettings and management policy and procedures for the block of flats concerned, with a view to minimising the possibility of future problems for the questioner and her neighbours.

(b) Urban Environment Issues

2.1.3 Questions in relation to litter and trolley dumping allegedly originating from the Tesco Supermarket at Burnt Tree, Dudley; the effect on road widening proposals at Cinder Bank and the way residents affected would be notified; and a request made for regular street cleaning to be undertaken at Brettell Street and Gammage Street, Dudley, were referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment. Responses in respect of these matters are set out in the report of the Director of the Urban

Environment on matters arising at the meeting (of the Central Dudley Area Committee) placed elsewhere on this Agenda.

(c) Dudley Black Regeneration Council

- 2.1.4 Requests were received from the Dudley Black Regeneration Council for measures to be put in place to ensure adequate funding for the African Caribbean Voluntary Sector and for such groups as the Dudley Black Regeneration Council and the African Caribbean Faith Groups to be invited to have an input into the Community Plan for the Central Dudley Committee. In addition, a petition from members of the Dudley Afro Caribbean community in respect of the latter and also requesting the provision of land and an appropriate building to establish a Cultural Centre was submitted to the meeting.

Regarding the Community Plan, in response, the Area Liaison Officer has clarified involvement in Community Plans by distinguishing between the Dudley Borough Challenge and the development of the local Community Plan for the Central Dudley Area. Responsibility for implementing and reviewing the Borough-wide Dudley Community Plan lies with the Dudley Community Partnership, with the Council being a partner in the process, and the Area Liaison Officer has urged the Dudley African Caribbean Cultural Centre Action Group to work with Dudley's local community empowerment network, DOSHI, in this regard. The letter confirms that DOSHI have invited the participation of the Dudley Black Regeneration Council in the "visioning" of events held in 2004/05 alongside other black and minority ethnic community groups and all other participating groups and partners. Details regarding a web site which has been set up were also confirmed to the Action Group.

In relation to the local Community Plan for Central Dudley, the response confirmed that the Chairman of the Area Committee wants to consider how members can consult appropriately on the Plan and the initial consideration will be given to this by the Community Plan Working Group of the Committee at a meeting later in the year. The letter indicated that members of the Working Group will need to consider what is achievable within the resources available, but will certainly want to ensure that they have done all they can in relation to consultation. The response confirmed that the petition submitted would be taken into account as part of the consultation with the African Caribbean community in Central Dudley.

On the issue of the provision of suitable land and premises for an African Caribbean Cultural Centre, the response referred to discussions being undertaken between the Chief Executive and the Dudley Caribbean and Friends Association with a view to making the Claughton Centre more useful to the community. Consideration is also being given in the discussions to whether, in the longer term, a better location in the form of a redundant school building could be realised once the review of primary and secondary schools has been concluded.

(d) Proposals regarding a new Mosque and Community Centre at land at Oakeywell Street, Dudley

2.1.5 A number of written questions were submitted by residents regarding the proposals for the provision of a Mosque and Community Centre in Central Dudley. Except for two questions on specific issues, (see below), these related to the principle of the construction of the Mosque at the location proposed and the issue of the exchange of land with the Council that had enabled the Dudley Muslim Association to secure the proposed development site.

In response, a letter was sent to each questioner, explaining the current situation regarding the ownership of the land and the history regarding the exchange. This situation was as follows:-

The Muslim Association own the freehold of the land, having previously held it on a 99 year Lease. The development site was exchanged for land at Trindle Road/Claughton Road for value in accordance with the Council's powers under the Local Government Act 1972. In return for the freehold of the land at Trindle Road, the Council granted the Dudley Muslim Association a 99 year Lease of land at Hall Street. It is normal for such leases to be at a peppercorn (nominal) rent because the value that the Council received in return was the land at Trindle Road. The 99 year Lease was subject to an option, which enabled the Association to buy the freehold of the Hall Street site for value, and the option has recently been exercised by the Muslim Association.

In response to further questions asked on monies allocated to the Dudley Muslim Association by the Dudley Community Partnership, the response indicated that, of £1.52 million pounds in both 2004/05 and 2005/06 available to the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund for allocation on themes such as jobs, education and skills, health and wellbeing, community safety, environment, access to services, community cohesion, community empowerment, children and young people and infrastructure, relating to the Dudley Community Partnership, a total of £150,000 over two years had been allocated for the Community Centre bid. The monies had been allocated in accordance with the community cohesion theme.

The response also indicated that, while the planning application originally proposed for submission to Development Control Committee at its meeting on 25th April 2005, had been withdrawn, any resident wishing to object should continue to do so by submitting their representations to the Development Control Section of the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

2.1.6 In response to a question asked on the disposal of the land at Hall Street/Oakeywell Street to the Dudley Muslim Association, the Principal Property Surveyor by writing to the questioner indicating that the land comprised three parcels acquired between 1992 and 1997 under the terms of the Dudley Southern Bypass Compulsory Purchase Order 1992 which, following completion of the Bypass Scheme, had been surplus to requirements and added to the Land Disposals Programme, in August 2000. The land had therefore been open to offers from that date and, shortly afterwards, an expression of interest had been received from the Dudley Muslim Community Association which had led to the negotiations and an agreement for its disposal.

2.1.7 In response to a further question, the names of the members of the Central Dudley Area Committee at the meeting at which it was resolved to advise the Head of Highways to approve the land exchange on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed with the Director of Law and Property, were supplied to the questioner.

3.0 PROPOSAL

3.1 That the information above be noted.

4.0 FINANCE

4.1 There are no direct financial implications.

5.0 LAW

5.1 Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

6.1 This report accords with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That the proposals set out in Section 3 above be approved.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Pink questionnaire slips handed in at the meeting of the Central Dudley Area Committee held on 21st March 2005.

Written responses sent to the questioners.



.....
AREA LIAISON OFFICER

Contact Officer: Richard Sanders
Assistant Principal Officer (Democratic Services)
Ext. 5236