

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 9th June, 2009 at 6.30 p.m.
at Dudley Concert Hall, St. James's Road, Dudley

PRESENT: -

Councillors Ali, Mrs. Aston, Mrs. Coulter, J.D. Davies, J.R. Davies, M. Davis, J. Finch, K. Finch, J. Martin, Mrs. Roberts, Sparks and Waltho.

OFFICERS:

The Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (as Lead Officer to the Committee); the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management), the Interim Assistant Director of Children's Services (Resources), the Head of Housing Management – North, the Tourism Development Officer, the Head of Housing Management, the Principal Project Officer and the Quality and Complaints Manager (All Directorate, of Adult, Community and Housing Services), the Area Youth Team Leader for the Central Dudley Area (Directorate of Children's Services), Mr. Hutchinson (Marketing and Communications, Chief Executive's Directorate), Principal Solicitor (Mr. Clark) and Mr. Sanders (Both Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

The Project Manager for the Healthy Towns Initiative (for agenda item no. 17)

Inspector C. Downen (West Midlands Police)

19 members of the public.

1 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED

That Councillor J.R. Davies be elected Chairman of the Committee for the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

(Councillor J.R. Davies thereupon took the Chair).

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Ahmed, Cotterill and Ms. While-Cooper.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No member made a declaration of interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct at this juncture in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

4 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor K. Finch be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

5 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 10th March, 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the amendment of minute 79(e) to refer to the question asked on whether the covenant in respect of the Mosque Project could be enforced should the High Court Judgment be in favour of the appellants and to the undertaking given by the Chairman that a written response would be sent to the questioner stating the position.

6 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROTOCOL FOR AREA COMMITTEES

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7 CO-OPTED MEMBERS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted seeking consideration of the co-opting of persons to serve as co-opted members of the Committee for the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the following persons be re-appointed as a co-opted members of the Committee for the 2009/10 Municipal Year, representing the organisations indicated:

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

- (2) That, as the youth representative for 2008/09 has not responded to the enquiry made on behalf of the Committee as to whether he would be prepared to serve again in 2009/10, and because of his attendance record in 2008/09, he be not reappointed to serve as a co-opted member and that, instead, the Head of the Youth Service be asked to seek a nominee as a youth representative to serve on the Committee.

(Mrs. Edwards, Ms. Little, Mrs. Oakes and Mr. Sadiq joined the Committee immediately following their co-option for 2009/10).

YOUTH SERVICE AREA PLAN

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted updating the Committee on the Youth Service Area Plan for the Central Dudley Area.

The report referred to the restructuring of the Youth Service and the development of the Youth Offer for the operational delivery of Local Authority Youth Provision for 13-19 year olds. A two year Service Plan had been produced and, in order to ensure that delivery of the Offer was tailored to the needs of young people in respective localities as well as on a borough wide basis, Universal Area Youth Work Plans had been drawn up. The Youth Service Area Plan for the Central Dudley Area was appended to the report now submitted.

In presenting the report, the Area Youth Leader for the Central Dudley Area summarised the content of the Youth Service Area Plan indicating that the Plan had been consulted on in May at the Youth Forum, at which no issues had been raised. She then outlined the Activity Programme for the Central Dudley Area.

In the discussion on the item, a number of members requested specific information to be provided on the activities being undertaken in the respective Wards comprising the Committee, with details of the services available for young people being provided, the information to include timetables, dates, numbers of young people being engaged with per ward. The same information was requested for young people engaging in Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme Initiatives. A question was also asked in relation to the number of schools which participated in Youth Forums, as referred to in the Youth Service Plan, to ensure that young people were actively involved in decision making at all levels.

Specific reference was made to the situation at the Meadow Road Youth Club, where, it was alleged, the premises were not being utilised owing to youth workers not attending on safety grounds. The members of the Castle and Priory Ward requested that action be taken to alleviate the situation in order to ensure that the Youth Centre was utilised. A member for the St. James's Ward referred to similar problems at Overfield Road Neighbourhood Centre which had caused the premises not to be manned and requested that appropriate action be taken.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Youth Service Area Plan for the Central Dudley Area be noted but not endorsed.
- (2) That the Director of Children's Services be asked to submit to the next meeting a comprehensive report on the youth activities taking place in the Central Dudley Area per Ward, giving details of the activities on offer, times of operation of youth clubs, dates of activities taking place, numbers of young people attending, details of Duke of Edinburgh Scheme Initiatives and the numbers of young people engaged in them, holiday schemes etc.
- (3) That the Director of Children's Services be asked to draw up a schedule of play schemes on offer at each club and the dates and times these will be held and that this be circulated to members of the Committee.
- (4) That the number of schools participating in Youth Forums, as referred to, be obtained and supplied to Councillor Mrs. Roberts.

An enquiry was made by a member on whether any representatives from the Central Dudley Area had been elected to the Youth Parliament. The Area Youth Leader for the Central Dudley Area indicated that a young person from the Hillcrest School had been elected as a Deputy Member.

RESOLVED

That congratulations of the Committee be extended to the young person concerned.

10 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND UNDER AGE DRINKING BY YOUNG PEOPLE

A member of the Committee referred to the need for a plan to be drawn up to deal with problems of anti-social behaviour and under age drinking perpetrated by young people.

11 APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted seeking consideration of the appointment of Working Groups of the Committee for the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Working Groups below be appointed for the 2009/10 Municipal Year with their existing terms of reference and the composition and membership indicated:

Capital Allocations Working Group – the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee and one member of each of the five wards, the full membership being Councillors J.R. Davies, K. Finch, Ahmed, Mrs. Aston, Cotterill, J. Martin and Waltho.

Community Renewal Working Group – one member from each of the wards in the area of the Central Dudley Area Committee, plus Councillors J.D. Davies and Davis, the full membership being Councillors J.R. Davies (St. Thomas' Ward), J. Finch (Castle and Priory Ward), Mrs Coulter (Netherton, Woodside and St. Andrew's Ward), Mrs. Roberts (St. James's Ward), Ms. While-Cooper (Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood Ward), J.D. Davies and Davis.

Traffic Management in Netherton Working Group – the Chairman of the Committee and the members for Netherton, Woodside and St. Andrews and Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood Wards, the full membership being Councillor J.R. Davies (Chairman) and Mrs. Coulter, J.D. Davies and J. Martin (Netherton, Woodside and St. Andrew's Ward) and Cotterill, Sparks and Ms While-Cooper (Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood Ward).

- (2) That any member appointed above who does not wish to serve in 2009/10 contact Democratic Services in the Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources and that the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, be authorised to approve the appointment of an alternative member.
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12 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 2009/10 municipal year:

Social Inclusion

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

Community Centres

- (a) Sledmere – Councillor Waltho
 - (b) Woodside – Councillor J. Martin
 - (c) Priory – Councillor Mrs. Aston
 - (d) Quarry Bank – Councillor Cotterill
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13 ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED

That, pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13(c), item number 18 on the agenda (Community Renewal Working Group) be considered as the next item of business.

COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

The Head of the Community Renewal Service reported on the activities of this Working Group, at its meeting held on 19th May, 2009.

The Working Group had considered the components of Action Plans for the five wards comprising the Area of the Committee and had received an update on Neighbourhood Employment Skills Plans. The Head of the Community Renewal Service summarised the content of the Action Plans and drew attention to the issues discussed at the meeting, which had included regeneration and community safety issues and alcohol misuse and particular matters such as tidying of gardens, young people's activities and youth service progress. The Head of the Community Renewal Service indicated that the Working Group had now met on four occasions and work to finalise the plan was continuing.

RESOLVED

That the oral report now given be noted.

PROGRESS OF ELECTED MEMBER VISITS TO ADULT AND CHILDREN'S ESTABLISHMENTS IN 2008/09 AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2009/10

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 2008/09, and requesting nominations for participation in the rota visits for the 2009/10 municipal year.

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

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted and the appendices attached to the report, on the progress of elected member visits to Adult and Children's Social Care establishments during 2008/09, be noted.
 - (2) That Councillors Ali, J.D. Davies, J. Martin, Mrs. Roberts and Waltho be appointed as nominees of this Committee to undertake rota visits to Adult and Children's Social Care Establishments in the 2009/10 municipal year.
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PETITIONS

(On consideration of the petition regarding the Post Office at Russells Hall, referred to below, Councillors Mrs Aston, Mrs Coulter and J Finch declared a Personal and Prejudicial Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, on the petition in so far as it related to an objection to an application for a liquor license, in view of their membership of the Licensing and Safety Committee, and left the meeting room during consideration of the petition.)

The following petitions were received:

A petition from local residents and parents and pupils of Holly Hall School requesting the provision of pedestrian operated crossings in the location of two respective areas on Stourbridge Road, these being adjacent to Avenue Road and in the vicinity of Cochrane Road, in the light of a serious accident involving a school child.

A petition from the residents of Russells Hall, presented by Councillor Davis, requesting that the Council preserve the good, tidy, village like environment of the estate; seeking action regarding the clutter surrounding the Post Office; and objecting to a liquor license application by the proprietor of the Post Office.

At this juncture, Councillor Davis indicated that he had been informed that it was unlawful for members of the Council to be notified of liquor license applications and to object. In responding that liquor license applications were published in the local press, the Principal Solicitor agreed to provide a written response to Councillor Davis.

A petition from residents of Walters Row, an unadopted road, presented by Councillor Davis, requesting the Council to improve the surface of the road and asking that the Council refrain from using the frontages of the properties in the road for parking until the damage to the surface was repaired. Members of the public in attendance spoke in support of the petition, except for one member of the public, who preferred the road to remain in its current condition as he considered that, because of this, vehicular traffic was deterred from using the road.

Under this item, attention was drawn by Ms Little to advice on cancer survival issues with particular regard to screening facilities available for breast cancer and bowel cancer. She also drew attention to healthy eating advice regarding the consumption of fruit and vegetables. She urged that the public take advantage of the screening facilities referred to and heeded the advice on healthy eating.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the petition requesting the provision of pedestrian crossings along Stourbridge Road be supported by the Committee and referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for consideration and that the sender, Miss Case and the child the victim of the road traffic accident referred to be kept informed of progress.
 - (b) That the petition regarding the Post Office at Russells Hall be referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment in relation to the issue of the clutter and the allegation in the petition regarding the blocking of the open walkway and that the petition also be referred to the Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources for consideration as an objection against the liquor license application.
 - (c) That the petition regarding Walters Row be referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for consideration.
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PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) The issue of Walters Row was raised again at this juncture, residents referring to potholes, some 3 inches deep, which caused difficulties for users, with particular reference to wheelchair users. In discussing this issue, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management), indicated that it would be useful if residents could allow him to view the deeds of properties, in relation to ownership issues, in response to which it was indicated that nearby Council houses had been constructed in 1966 and that relevant documentation should still be available to the Council to peruse.
- (b) A member of the public drew attention to the time of 10.00 p.m. to 10.45 p.m. allocated to child members of the Brierley Hill Swimming Club for swimming sessions at Dudley Leisure Centre. A member of the public considered the time allocated to be totally inappropriate, given the ages of the swimmers. The Leader of the Labour Group indicated that the sentiments expressed by the member of the public were supported by that Group.
- (c) A member of the public, an official of a local junior football club, expressed his extreme dissatisfaction with the condition of the pitch at Sledmere allocated to his team, drawing attention to its poor maintenance, the length of the grass and ruts in the pitch which caused it to be dangerous. In view of the condition of the pitch, the team had been forced to play at away grounds. In referring to the yearly fee of £418 the official strongly expressed the view that value for money was not being obtained. The official had raised the issue with the Council but, to date, had received no reply.

It was agreed that the matter be referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.

- (d) A member of the public requested the Council consider action that could be taken to mitigate regular problems of usage of the Dudley Southern By-Pass by “boy racers”. In this regard, the member of the public referred to the road traffic speed limit of 40mph and advocated the installation of average speed cameras along the by-pass and the approach roads. It was agreed that the issue be referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.

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WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillor J. Martin requested the submission of a report on air quality in the Central Netherton area over the previous 12 months.
- (b) Councillor A. Finch requested the undertaking of a survey on the storm drains in the Castle and Priory Wards.
- (c) Councillor Mrs. Aston requested an update on the current position regarding the plan for the maintenance of trees on the Priory Estate.
- (d) Councillor Waltho referred to unlawful parking by parents on double yellow lines in the vicinity of the Sledmere School and requested that the Council’s Parking Enforcement Officers investigate and, if necessary, maintain a presence.
- (e) Councillor Waltho expressed the view that action taken by Parking Enforcement Officers in the issue of parking tickets in the area of the Dudley Central Mosque, when large functions were held at the venue, were being issued disproportionately in comparison to other areas.
- (f) Councillor Waltho drew attention to the number of members of the public who were members of the Dudley Hospital Trust and invited persons who might be interested in joining the Trust to obtain an application form from him.
- (g) Councillor Ali requested the replacement of lights at the footbridge along Dudley Southern By-Pass.
- (h) Councillor Ali welcomed a meeting being arranged with Council Officers for the introduction of road safety measures on Bunns Lane, further to the fatal accident along the road, and in relation to the remodeling of Burnt Tree Island.
- (i) Councillors Davis and Mrs. Roberts requested an upgrade in street lighting at Scotts Green Close.

- (j) Councillor Davis reported on a telephone kiosk at Russells Hall, which, he alleged, was being used by drug dealers.
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- (k) Councillor Davis reported on problems of youths congregating outside the Spa shop.
- (l) Councillor Davis drew attention to the need for re-provision of white lines along the entrance to the High Street in Dudley in the vicinity of Netto.
- (m) Councillor Davis expressed his concern that parking enforcement by the Council's Parking Enforcement Officers in the vicinity of the Bottom Church in Dudley, was being carried out disproportionately in relation to the extent of any problems of unlawful parking.
- (n) Councillor Davis drew attention to anti-social behaviour being perpetrated at the rear of the Spa shop and in the walkway situated in the garage area opposite the Spa shop.
- (o) Councillor Davis requested the instigation of a litter pick at Vicarage Prospect.
- (p) Councillor Davis drew attention to problems for residents of bungalows at Merlin Close, caused by residents of Osprey Drive letting out their dogs along the unfenced gardens of the bungalows.
- (q) Councillor Davis expressed his concern regarding the time allocated at Dudley Leisure Centre to children from the Brierley Hill Swimming Club for swimming sessions and expressed the view that a more reasonable time should be allocated.
- (r) Councillor J.R. Davies referred to the recent increase in the administrative charge to leaseholders for the Council's flats and maisonettes that had been raised from approximately £5-£10 to £100. Councillor Davies requested a full report to be submitted on the manner in which the costings had been calculated and the exact services each respective tenant was afforded.
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A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted updating the Committee on the progress of the "Ripples Through Time" project and which gave details of the proposals for the enhancement of access to the Nature Reserve and the education and interpretation facilities which were to be provided under the project.

The report indicated that consultation on the revised design proposals being carried out currently, with a planned submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund being made in late June, 2009. A Stage 2 approval from the Heritage Lottery Fund was expected in September, 2009, with work programmed to begin on site in March, 2010.

In the discussion on the project, the Tourism Development Officer referred to the arrangements made for interface with the public on the project, which included open days and working groups involving the Council and its partners. While accepting that the project was aimed at a national, rather than local audience, the members for the Castle and Priory Ward requested that they be kept more closely informed of developments in order that the local community could be kept advised. The Tourism Development Officer indicated that open days and meetings were being held on a monthly basis.

In welcoming the report, one Ward Member referred with extreme regret to the current proposal to in-fill the Cathedral Cavern as a safety measure and strongly advocated that, if possible, an alternative remedy should be found in order to preserve Dudley's heritage.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Committee record its support for the "Ripples Through Time" project and recommends the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture to make arrangements for the submission of the Stage 2 Heritage Lottery Fund application.
- (2) That the Committee support the active promotion of the project to local communities to engage in the activities, events and learning opportunity through the "Ripples Through Time" project would bring to the National Nature Reserve.

CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted seeking consideration of proposals for the allocation of expenditure from the delegated capital budget of the Committee for the 2009/10 municipal year.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the process for the awarding capital allocations from the capital allocations budget, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted, be approved for implementation in the 2009/10 municipal year.
- (2) That the criteria for awarding capital allocations, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report submitted, be approved for implementation in the 2009/10 municipal year.

- (3) That the accounts criteria for new organisations, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report submitted, be approved for implementation in the 2009/10 municipal year.
 - (4) That the residue from the 2008/09 municipal year of £33,404.75 be noted and that the allocation of the residue, carried forward into 2009/10, as indicated in paragraph 10 of the report submitted, be approved.
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HEALTHY TOWNS INITIATIVE

A presentation on this issue was given by the Project Manager for Healthy Towns, Dean Hill.

The Project Manager gave details of the components of the Healthy Hubs locally. He indicated the nature of the component parts of the project, which included a number of initiatives aimed at enabling the public to engage in a more healthy lifestyle, including the utilisation of cyclepaths, children's play areas, outdoor gymnasiums, park leader walks and encouragement towards healthy diets.

The project would be evaluated through Worcester University and the Project Manager summarised how this would be achieved.

In the discussion, the members of the Labour Group present reiterated their consideration that the initiative, and its funding, should have been directed on the basis of deprivation, rather than on a borough wide basis. In response, the Director of Public Health of Dudley MBC and the Dudley Primary Care Trust emphasised that obesity and healthy lifestyle issues were not confined to deprived areas and urged members to support the initiative for the benefit of the whole of the Borough.

In welcoming the Health Club proposed for Netherton, one of the members for the Netherton, Woodside and St. Andrew's Ward expressed the wish that he would be advised of how Woodside would be brought into the initiative, in response to which the Project Manager referred to the Central Hubs in the Netherton Area that would be provided. He referred also to engagement with the Chairs of the Friends of Parks that would support the project. Reference was made to the need for members of the Council to be kept advised of how matters within the initiative were progressing and the Director of Public Health agreed to ensure that consultation with members of the Council was maintained.

At the request of a member, it was agreed that the presentation documentation would be circulated to all members of the Committee in hard copy. A further request was made for a report to be submitted giving a breakdown of how the facilities provided related to deprivation in the Borough.

RESOLVED

That the presentation be noted.

22 HIGHWAYS MINOR WORKS CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2009/10

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted seeking the support of the Committee for the proposed programmes of work for local safety schemes, safer routes to school and pedestrian crossing within the Central Dudley Area for the 2009/10 financial year.

RESOLVED

- (1) That, subject to resolutions (2) and (3) below, the proposed local safety schemes, safer routes to school and pedestrian crossing initiatives outlined in Appendices A, B and C of the report now submitted, be supported.
 - (2) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be asked to take back for further consideration the issue for pedestrian crossings to be provided along Stourbridge Road in the light of the support of the Committee for the petition for pelican crossings received earlier at the meeting.
 - (3) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be asked to consider the possible amendment of the Local Safety Scheme proposed at Burton Road, The Broadway, Dudley as referred to in Appendix A to the report now submitted.
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23 MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE HELD ON 10TH MARCH, 2009

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted updating the Committee on issues raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 10th March, 2009.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

24 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

The dates of meetings of the Council's Select Committees in 2009/10 were noted.

25 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

The dates of meetings of the Committee arranged for 2009/10 were noted, together with the venues arranged to date.

The meeting ended at 9.05 p.m.

CHAIRMAN