

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 20th January, 2009 at 6.30 p.m.
at Saltwells Educational Development Centre,
Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT: -

Councillor J.R. Davies (Chairman)
Councillor K Finch (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Ahmed, Ali, Mrs. Aston, Cotterill, Mrs. Coulter, Davis, J. Finch,
J. Martin, Mrs. Roberts, Sparks and Ms. While-Cooper; Ms Little

OFFICERS:

The Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (as Area Liaison Officer), the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management), the Interim Director of Children's Services (Resources), the Acting Neighbourhood Manager and the Head of Housing Management (Dudley South) (both Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), the Head of the Youth Service and the Area Youth Worker for the Central Dudley Area (both Directorate of Children's Services), the Principal Project Officer (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), the Principal Solicitor (Mr. Clark) and Mr. Sanders (both Directorate of Law and Property).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Inspector Done (West Midlands Police) and 14 members of the public.

48 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors J.D. Davies and Waltho; Mrs. Edwards and Mr. Sadiq.

49 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of a personal or prejudicial interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made at this juncture by any member or officer in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

50 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 5th November, 2008 and the Special Meeting held on the 17th December, 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

51

YOUTH ISSUES

The Head of Youth Services introduced the Central Area Youth Leader, Patrusha Dey, whom would be based at the Meadow Road Youth Centre. Ms Dey would attend meetings of the Committee to report on Youth Activities for the Central Dudley Area with effect from the next meeting.

A request was made for arrangements to be made with schools and School Councils for issues raised by young people to be identified and referred to the Committee for consideration. It was agreed that the Head of the Youth Service would refer the request to the next meeting of Secondary Head Teachers with a view to arrangements being made for the matter to be considered.

52

PETITIONS

A petition applying for the installation of a grit bin on the corner of Bowling Green Road and Field Mews, Netherton, signed by the residents of Field Mews, was presented by Councillor Cotterill and referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

A petition containing an additional 738 signatures to the petition submitted to the Interim Chief Executive previously advocating the imposition of the conditions of a covenant regarding the construction of a mosque on land at Hall Street, Dudley was presented by Councillor Davis and referred to the Interim Chief Executive.

A petition from residents of Scotts Green Close, Dudley, and the surrounding area, objecting to the application for planning consent to the building programme proposed at the Sutton School was presented by Councillor Davis and referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

53

CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT

Further to the adoption of powers by the Council to permit the enforcement of on-street parking restrictions throughout the Borough, under the relevant provisions of the Road Traffic Act, 1991 and the Traffic Management Act, 2004, a report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted, clarifying the powers of the Council in operating Civil Parking Enforcement.

The report explained the reasons for which the Council had decided to adopt the powers, summarised the extent of the powers and explained the meaning of some of the more common waiting restrictions. Reference was also made both in the report and in the discussion on the issue to both the level of penalty charges, their application and the appeals processes.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted, together with the work undertaken by the Council in introducing and administering civil parking enforcement in the Borough.

54

CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the recommendations of the Capital Allocations Working Group, at its meeting held on the 25th November, 2008, with regard to applications made for funding from the Delegated Capital Budget of the Committee for the 2008/09 financial year.

RESOLVED

- (1) That Capital grants be awarded to the organisations below in the sums and for the purposes indicated:-

Netherton, Woodside and St. Andrew's Ward

Ebenezer Baptist Church, Netherton - the sum of £4,900 as a contribution towards the cost of installation of a disabled toilet in a hallwell used by the local community

St. Andrew's Church, Netherton - the sum of £6,500 as a contribution towards repairs to the tower clock, as it is a community facility

- (2) That consideration of the applications below be deferred for the reasons stated and purposes indicated:-

Netherton, Woodside and St. Andrew's Ward

Families of Highgate Parents Teachers Association Management Committee - to enable clarification to be sought from the Head Teacher of Woodside Community School and Children's Centre on the purpose of the grant requested, since no reply has been received from the designated contact persons.

St. James's Ward

Dynamic Time Out - to put in abeyance any further consideration of this grant, pending a resolution to grant issues to be determined between Dynamic Time Out and the Council's Youth Service.

St. Thomas's Ward

347 (Dudley) Squadron Air Training Corps - to enable the Corps to respond to a second request made for more information about their funds.

- (3) That the application now made by the Vicar Street Bible Class for retrospective funding for a stained glass panel commemorating Bert Bissell, MBE, be refused on the grounds that there is already a public memorial to Bert Bissell in Coronation Gardens in Dudley and that the Committee do not normally award retrospective funding, as funding has already been obtained.
- (4) That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to carry out the actions above within the agreed control procedures.

- (a) A question from a resident of Lincoln Road, on behalf of tenants and residents in the Netherton area, complaining about the organisation of the rubbish collections undertaken by the Council in Christmas and New Year was received. In explaining the circumstances surrounding the collections, in the light of difficulties encountered, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) apologised for inconvenience caused and referred to the operational issues involved, drawing attention to the impact of the bad weather over Christmas and New Year which had led to late rubbish collections and suspension of recycling services. The Assistant Director indicated that a review of the arrangements had been conducted and agreed to submit the results of the review to a later meeting of the Committee and to the questioner.

Further to reference by a member of the Committee to the content of the leaflets circulated regarding the intended arrangements, the Assistant Director indicated that this would be reviewed for 2009/10.

- (b) A resident of West Street, Quarry Bank referred to litter problems being encountered in the side streets off Quarry Bank High Street and Saltwells Nature Reserve and at the bottom of Coppice Lane and High Street. He also drew attention to the deposit of litter in the Stour Valley Walk. In response, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) indicated that he would arrange for the area to be inspected within the coming few days. He also stated that arrangements would be made for the member of the public to be contacted with reasons why the litter picker who had served the area previously had not been replaced.
- (c) In response to a question by a member of the public regarding why weed spraying was not being undertaken in Quarry Bank, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) agreed to speak to the questioner outside the meeting to obtain further details.
- (d) A local resident drew attention to the fact that the culvert at Saltwells Nature Reserve, in proximity to Saltwells Public House, had not been replaced. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) agreed to arrange for the matter to be looked into.

At this juncture, Councillor Sparks asked for details of the arrangements for street cleansing to be submitted to the Committee, giving the names of streets, frequency of cleaning, which areas had been cleaned and how often and that the information provided also contain details of these arrangements for all wards, including those in other townships. The Assistant Director was asked to make the necessary arrangements.

- (e) A bidder for the purchase of Saltwells House stated her case for the purchase of the property, indicating the purpose for which she required the property. She also indicated that her proposal would have no adverse implications for the Nature Reserve.

Further to an appeal by the bidder for residents and members to intervene and contribute to the decision making process on her behalf, Councillor Sparks and a number of other members, both at this juncture and later in the meeting, expressed their support for the large number of local residents who had objected to the Council's proposal to dispose of Saltwells House. Councillor Sparks was concerned that assets owned by the Council in Quarry Bank were being sold and capital receipts arising were being directed to other areas.

Councillor Sparks expressed his disagreement with the delegated decision making system introduced by the Council as a result of the modernisation proposals of the Government provided for in accordance with the three alternatives specified in the Local Government Act, 2000.

(f) A local resident drew attention to the following in relation to the Russells Hall Estate:-

- problems with litter and other rubbish on the estate;
- areas of Council-owned property which were becoming unkempt, mainly as a result of derelict cars being situated on driveways;
- brambles growing on pavements;
- problems of stray dogs and dog fouling on the Estate, in respect of which she asked why these issues had not been attended by the dog warden.

These matters were referred to the Head of Housing Management (Dudley North) for consideration and action.

(g) The same member of the public from Russells Hall drew attention to the fact that, notwithstanding the refusal of planning consent, the “jumbrella” and fence at the public house in Corbyns Road had yet to be removed. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) agreed to speak to the resident outside the meeting to investigate and follow up in writing.

56

WARD ISSUES

(In reporting the issue in minute 56(h) below, Councillor Ahmed declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members’ Code of Conduct, in view of his being a resident of Steppingstone Street)

- (a) Councillor Davis made a general point that he disagreed with the principle of young families being moved into blocks of Council-owned properties where older people were situated.
- (b) Councillor Davis drew attention to Council House repairs necessary at Russells Hall, which had not been attended to after six months.

- (c) Further to his presentation of the petition from local residents from Scotts Green Close and the surrounding area, objecting to the building proposals at the Sutton School, Councillor Davis expressed his support for the petitioners.
- (d) In empathising with sentiments expressed by Councillor Sparks regarding Saltwells House, insofar as they related to the disposal of heritage sites in the Borough, Councillor Davis expressed his concern that the fountain in the Market Square, Dudley, which had been presented to the Borough by the Earl of Dudley in the 19th century, had not been mentioned in a pamphlet produced on places of heritage in Dudley.
- (e) Councillor Mrs Roberts reported a conversation she had had with the husband of the bidder for Saltwells House referred to in minute 55(e) above in which she had suggested that the bidder might wish to attend the meeting of the Committee this day to indicate the purpose for which he wished to acquire the property.
- (f) Councillor Mrs. Roberts asked for the clearing of the pavement at the junction of Hurleys Fold and Dibdale Street where ivy was over-growing.
- (g) Councillor Mrs. Roberts questioned the safety and reliability of a local bus company in the light of a complaint made to her by a passenger about alleged excessive speed on a particular bus journey.
- (h) Councillor Ahmed asked that attention be given to a number of potholes in Stepping Stone Street, Dudley, expressing the view that the road probably needed resurfacing.
- (i) Councillor Ahmed expressed his concerns about the proposed development of the Sutton School on the grounds of increased traffic that might result and the adequacy of the infrastructure to manage additional traffic.
- (j) Councillor Ali requested the submission to the Committee of the report commissioned from external consultants about the options available regarding the relocation of Dudley Town Football Club to the Central Dudley Area.
- (k) Councillor Ali requested that attention be given to graffiti on the footbridge spanning King Street.
- (l) Councillor Ali asked for interim road safety signage to be introduced in Bunns Lane, pending consideration being given to a traffic calming scheme.

- (m) Councillor Ali asked for a report to be made to the Committee on progress on the Healthy Towns Initiative with a view to consideration being given as to the manner in which members of the Council could be involved. Ms. Little referred to arrangements being made for a package of materials to be put together about how the initiative was to be progressed with a focus on obesity and childhood obesity issues. Regarding outdoor activity, the package would include reference to working arrangements with parks and the Friends of Parks.
- (n) Councillor Cotterill reported the receipt of a letter from a local resident regarding trees on footpaths in Dudley Wood Road that were causing an obstruction. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.
- (o) Councillor Cotterill asked to be advised of any proposals being considered in relation to the Dudley Wood Learning Centre and, in so doing, advocated the retention of the facility for community purposes in the light of the lack of such facilities in the Dudley Wood area. The Area Liaison Officer agreed to follow the matter up with Councillor Cotterill.
- (p) Councillor Cotterill referred to further consultation being undertaken regarding the BMX track at Saltwells, the provision of which he understood had already been approved. Councillor Cotterill strongly urged that the track be installed without delay.
- (q) Councillor Cotterill requested the expeditious installation of the gate outside the Dudley Wood Learning Centre at Saltwells Road, for which funding had been agreed.
- (r) Councillor Sparks requested information to be presented to the Committee regarding the graveyard at Victoria Road, Quarry Bank, containing information on the following:- the ownership of the graveyard; details of responsibility for its maintenance and security; and access and egress to the graveyard and the legislative framework for these issues.
- In so doing, Councillor Sparks referred to a habitat survey undertaken by the Council some 20 years previously, under which issues regarding all graveyards in the Borough had been covered. Councillor Sparks asked that the report back provide the information in respect of all graveyards in Central Dudley, in addition to Victoria Road, where issues regarding ownership and maintenance applied.
- (s) Councillor K. Finch expressed his support for the sentiments expressed by Councillor Ali regarding the need for a sports area in Central Dudley and suggested that the Mons Hill site might be appropriate.

- (t) Councillor J. Finch asked for feedback from officers on the current position regarding the derelict sites of the former Duncan Edwards and Washington Arms Public Houses.
- (u) On behalf of the Priory Tenants and Residents Association, Councillor Mrs. Aston requested the unblocking of drains on the Priory Estate.
- (v) Councillor Mrs. Coulter requested that attention be given to addressing potholes at Pedmore Road in the vicinity of its junction with Peartree Lane and in Peartree Lane itself.
- (w) Councillor J. Martin asked that Ward Councillors in Netherton be provided with an update on the rebuilding proposals for the Northfield Road Primary School and on the option appraisal in connection therewith.
- (x) Councillor J. Martin requested that potholes at Cole Street near the junction with the shop and the Gate Hangs Well Public House be attended to.
- (y) Councillor J. Martin requested that potholes in Crossley Street be considered for inclusion in the annual schedule of maintenance works.
- (z) Ms. Little reported on the opening of a community pharmacy at the North Priory Estate. She also made a plea that residents over the age of 65 arrange for influenza vaccinations.

RESOLVED

That, in relation to paragraph (m) above, Ms. Little be asked to arrange for a report of the Primary Care Trust on the Healthy Towns initiative to be presented to the next meeting.

COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

A report on the activities of this Working Group, at its meeting held on 16th December, 2008, was submitted. The Working Group had also agreed draft Terms of Reference for consideration by the Committee for adoption and these were attached to the report now submitted.

The Acting Neighbourhood Manager reported orally on the work undertaken at a second meeting of the Working Group held on the 14th January, 2009, at which priorities for inclusion in the Community Renewal Plan had been agreed provisionally in the areas of Youth Provision, Environment, Health and Learning.

In the discussion of this item, Councillor Cotterill again made the point that he wished the BMX track at Saltwells to be installed without delay.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Terms of Reference of the Community Renewal Working Group of the Committee, as attached to the report now submitted, be adopted.
- (2) That progress on the meetings of the Working Group, as set out in the report and as stated in the oral report by the Acting Neighbourhood Manager, be noted.

58

NETHERTON TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ISSUES WORKING GROUP

The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) reported orally on the activities of this Group, at a meeting held on the 19th January, 2009. In this regard, a number of signaling, traffic regulation and other traffic issues had been identified and officers had been asked to prepare draft proposals for submission to a further meeting of the Working Group in due course. After proposals had been agreed by the Working Group, they would be referred to the Committee for approval in principle, for the purpose of wider consultation.

RESOLVED

That the progress report on the activities of the Traffic Management Working Group, as made orally by the Assistant Director, be noted.

59

MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 5TH NOVEMBER, 2008 RELATING TO THE DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted indicating progress on issues raised at the meeting of the Central Dudley Area Committee held on the 5th November, 2008 in relation to services provided by the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

In relation to the issue of speeding vehicles in Dudley Wood Road and Cradley Road, Councillor Cotterill reported that problems continued to subsist, in response to which the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) agreed to investigate and report to Councillor Cotterill. Regarding the issue of street lighting at Scotts Green Close, Councillor Davis considered that this continued to be inadequate and the Assistant Director agreed to investigate and report back to Councillor Davis.

RESOLVED

That, subject to the above matters, the report be received and accepted.

60 MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 5TH NOVEMBER, 2008 IN RELATION TO MATTERS RELATING TO DIRECTORATES OTHER THAN THE DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted indicating progress on issues raised at the meeting of the Central Dudley Area Committee held on the 5th November, 2008, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

In relation to the school proposals for the Thorns Campus, Councillor Sparks asked to be advised of the exact items that would be provided in the Phase 1 Scheme. On consideration of this issue, the Committee

RESOLVED:

That the Committee regrets the failure of the Council to take up the offer of Government monies to replace the schools within the area of the Committee

(Ms. Little requested that her abstention from the voting on this issue be recorded).

61 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

Dates of forthcoming meetings of Select Committees were noted.

62 DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

The date and venue of the last meeting scheduled for the Committee for 2008/09 municipal year was noted.

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm

CHAIRMAN