

Central Dudley Area Committee – 15th March, 2011

Report of the Acting Area Liaison Officer

Matters raised at the Meeting of the Committee held on 18th January, 2011 other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment

Purpose of Report

1. To note progress on issues raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 18th January, 2011, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

Background

2. The issues set out in paragraphs 3 to 11 (inclusive) below were raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 18th January, 2011, progress on which is as follows:

3. **Anti-Social Behaviour**

A member of the public and a Member of the Committee drew attention to anti-social behaviour problems experienced and alleged lack of support from the local authority in providing alternative housing for the questioners family or investigating solutions to deal with the issue raised. The Head of Housing Management – North discussed the issue with the questioner concerned following the meeting and further investigations are being made.

4. **Free Nursery Provision – Russells Hall Area**

A member of the public drew attention to a lack of free nursery provision in the Russells Hall area. In responding, the Acting Area Liaison Officer stated that she had spoken to the Childcare Strategy Manager and the Children's Centre Manager at Woodside who responded as follows:-

The records show that there are currently 10 childminders; 4 day nurseries; 1 holiday play scheme; 2 out of school clubs and 1 pre-school club operating within the Russells Hall area and the wider area defined as the St James's Ward. From within this provision there are 230 places providing 15 hours of free nursery entitlement a week.

In addition, there are 119 places on offer in the Netherton, Woodside and St Andrews Ward and 130 further places available within the Castle and Priory Ward.

With 624 children within the 3-5 year age range within the 3 wards mentioned above and with a total of 479 places available, we would consider that this, under the guidelines we work to, represents acceptable provision.

We do appreciate that, where demand for childcare provision is highest, this may sometimes result in parents and carers not always being able to access childcare most nearest to their home or work address. However, we do all that we can, short of financial incentives, to encourage new providers into areas where we perceive gaps in childcare provision exist.

5. **Planning Application – Middlepark Road area**

Two questions from two different members of the public were submitted in relation to a planning application giving notice of the proposed erection of 22 No. Dwellings and 14 Bed Sheltered Accommodation in the Middlepark Road area. The Acting Area Liaison Officer responded as follows:-

The closeness of the development to properties on the Russells Hall Estate – The development was subject to planning permission and regulation and the development complies with planning requirements.

Planning application P10/1535 – erection of 22 dwellings (houses and bungalows) and a sheltered scheme. The development will provide 100% affordable housing through the West Mercia Housing Group. In terms of public consultation, notification letters were sent to homes in close proximity, site notices were erected and there was advertisement in the local press. The closing date for objections was 2nd February, 2011 (one objection was received). The request for planning permission was heard at the Development Control meeting held on 31st January, 2011. In approving the scheme it was noted that the development is supported by the Council's current Local Investment Plan and will serve an identified need by delivering the Borough's strategic housing requirements.

6. **Responses from Members to questions asked at Committee**

Further to the comments made in respect of this matter, a written response from the Chief Executive was sent to the questioner.

7. **Post Office**

In referring to an article in a magazine in relation to Sheffield City Council and the Post Office working together to alleviate postal problems, a Member of the Committee suggested that Dudley Council make enquiries and carry out a similar approach to resolve the postal problems occurring in the Borough. Following investigations, the Acting Area Liaison Officer indicated that government had approved the partnership working and that Sheffield City Council had been able to access funding that would not impact on the Council's budgets. It is initially a twelve-month pilot and she has assured the Member that if there were lessons that Dudley Council could learn that would improve services and engage the community at limited or no cost, the Council would consider them.

8. **Duncan Edward and The Fountain Statues – Dudley Town Centre**

A Member of the Committee drew attention to the current condition of the Duncan Edwards and the Fountain statues at Dudley Market Place and requested that they be cleaned up. In responding, the Head of Building Surveying confirmed that the Duncan Edwards Statue would be cleaned on Sunday 13th February, 2011. The clean up of the Fountain statue was to be included in a proposal for the regeneration of the Town Centre.

9. **Dudley Council Plus – Bereaved Services**

A Member of the Committee queried whether the measures outlined in paragraph 6 of the report submitted to the meeting held on 18th January, 2011 had been put in place. In responding, the Acting Area Liaison Officer indicated that she had been advised that staff try and deter people from approaching the area unless they have specific business with the registrars. In addition to being mindful of, and taking action regarding issues such as noise levels and children running around, action had also been taken to ensure that the movable dividers surrounding and cushioning the waiting area used by registrars were in place at all times.

She also indicated that Dudley Council Plus would be re-located as part of the Town Centre redevelopment and had been assured that options would be considered at that time to have a more secluded and totally separate waiting area to that of other customers.

Due to time restrictions, the following two questions were not dealt with at the meeting, however, responses have been sent direct to the questioners.

10. **Woodside Estate**

A Member of the public queried whether the modernisation of the houses on the Woodside Estate was still planned in view of the budget reductions. In responding, the Acting Area Liaison Officer indicated that a Manager from Building Services together with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Libraries and Adult Learning attended a Tenants and Residents meeting to update people on the issue of moving bathrooms situated directly off the kitchen to the upstairs of the property. Undertakings had been given to replace/resite the bathrooms on a programmed basis. The works are funded from Housing resources and not the general fund and are therefore unaffected by the efficiency savings that the Council overall is having to make.

11. **Dudley Mosque and Community Training and Enterprise Centre**

A Member of the public asked a question in relation to the Council's decision to enforce the Covenant on the Dudley Mosque. The written response sent to the questioner indicated that the Council did not issue the legal proceedings until November 2010, as it has been in discussions with the Dudley Muslim Association to try and identify an alternative site, which would have avoided the costs of this action to both parties. However, and whilst these discussions are still ongoing with the Dudley Muslim Association, the Council decided that it would not be in the Council's best interests to delay the action any further and

proceeded to issue the proceedings in the High Court in London. We now await a date for the hearing.

Finance

12. This report has no direct financial implications.

Law

13. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council is empowered to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or conducive to, or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

Equality Impact

14. This report complies with the policies of the Council on Equality and Diversity.
15. Children and young people have not been consulted on the preparation of this report, as report seeks only to note progress on issues raised at its previous meetings.

Recommendation

16. That the report be noted.



DIANE CHANNINGS
ACTING AREA LIAISON OFFICER

Contact Officer: Karen Farrington – Democratic Services Officer
(Democratic Services)
Telephone: 01384 818219
Email: Karen.Farrington@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers Minutes of the meeting of the Central Dudley Area Committee held on 18th January, 2011