

## **NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2005, at 6.30 p.m.  
at Roberts Primary School, Roberts Street, Lower Gornal

### **PRESENT**

Councillors Mrs Ameson, Caunt, Davies, Evans, Mrs Millward, Mottram, Mrs Ridley, Ryder, Stanley and Wright and, following his appointment as a co-opted member, Mr Round, together with the Area Liaison Officer, Section Engineer, Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Culture and Community Services), Assistant Director of Law and Property (Legal and Democratic Services), Head of Policy, Mr S Rice (Directorate of Social Services), and Mrs Holland (Directorate of Law and Property),

Also in attendance were Inspector Bailey and Sergeant Blakemore of West Midlands Police.

Approximately 50 members of the public were in attendance.

### 1 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

#### **RESOLVED**

That Councillor Mrs Ameson be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

(Councillor Mrs Ameson thereupon took the Chair)

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### 2 **MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the apology for absence submitted on behalf of Councillor Caunt being recorded.

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### 3 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Fraser-Macnamara and Councillor Simms.

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4                    DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Davies and Stanley declared a Prejudicial Interest in respect of questions raised at minute no.17 (Land Issues – Land at Brookdale, Lower Gornal), in view of their membership of the Development Control Committee.

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5                    APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor Simms be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

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6                    TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROTOCOL FOR AREA COMMITTEE

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted setting out the terms of reference and protocol for Area Committees.

A revision to the terms of reference of Area Committees had been made at the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 19th May, 2005 removing the specific requirement for Area Committees to produce a separate local community plan but leaving this to the discretion of individual Area Committees.

RESOLVED

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

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7                    PETITIONS

Following the submission of a Petition at the meeting held on 23rd March 2005, a further Petition was submitted to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning objecting to the relocation of the Borough Archives from Coseley to Summerhill School, Kingswinford.

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8                    YOUTH ISSUES

The Area Liaison Officer updated the meeting on current youth issues, reporting as follows:

1. That two young people from Sedgley now served on the Youth Parliament representing young people throughout Dudley.
2. That twenty-eight young people attending Coseley schools had gained their bronze award, and seven young people had gained their silver award, in the Princes' Trust Excel project.
3. That a student support group had been established at Ellowes Hall School and a support worker had been assigned to the group.
4. That thirty-five young people had just completed a Football Association coaching course, which included an introduction to the rules of the game and first aid instruction. In achieving this success the young people had been invited to a day out on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2005 to Liverpool Football Club, where they would be visiting the museum and taking a guided tour of the football stadium.
5. That four young people from the Rainbow Centre had commenced the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award and some had also commenced the Castle Award.
6. That work had begun to establish a Dudley North Youth Forum.
7. That Lower Gornal Youth Centre now offered a Youth Counselling facility and an updating of provision for counselling was being undertaken in Sedgley and Coseley Youth Centres.

## POLICE ISSUES

- Inspector Bailey reported on the formation of crime fighting teams, which represented a change in the style of policing. She reported that a police sergeant led each team and that the teams were targeting vehicle crime, alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour hot spots as their priorities.
- Inspector Bailey asked members of the public to contact her if they were interested in becoming proactive as members of Neighbourhood Watch.
- Inspector Bailey thanked the Committee for the funding received for the purchase of bicycles for use by Officers on the beat.

- In response to a question, Inspector Bailey explained that Sedgley Police Station was still open but only during certain hours of the day.
  - Inspector Bailey introduced Sergeant Blakemore who reported on the specific activities of his own crime fighting team, which was operating in the Coseley/Woodsetton area. Sergeant Blakemore reported that strategies were being developed and it was hoped that initiatives to fight crime could be further developed by the formation of partnerships with organisations working within Youth Services, the Housing Department, etc. He thanked Ms J Foster, Priority Neighbourhood Manager, who was present at the meeting, for her valuable assistance, and he urged the public to attend the police surgeries in Coseley if they had a problem that they wished the Police to deal with.
  - In response to a question from a member of the public Sergeant Blakemore confirmed that police surgeries were held at the Sons of Rest in Coseley.
  - In response to a question from a member of the public regarding a “sub-station” facility, previously identified in the Gornal area, Inspector Bailey stated that the Police would still want to continue to use the facility as a “drop in” centre.
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## CARE HOMES

The Assistant Director of Law and Property (Legal and Democratic Services) updated the meeting on the current situation with regard to the purchase of private dwelling houses for use as care homes. He reported on the current position and on the legal advice received from Counsel.

The advice received confirmed that each case has to be considered on its particular merits and on an individual basis. A letter had been sent to Green Corns asking them to let the Council have information on the proposals they were putting forward and a reply had been received. It was anticipated that further meetings of Council Officers would be held in the near future to produce a response.

With regard to Pear Tree Lane, Coseley, the Assistant Director stated that the Council had invited the owner to submit a planning application which was awaited.

In response to a question about whether some properties did not require planning permission, the Assistant Director replied that there might be circumstances where this would be the case, and it was important to emphasise that such decisions had to be made on pure planning grounds.

In response to a question from a member of the public regarding retrospective planning applications, the Assistant Director stated that these would be considered under the terms already outlined.

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## PUBLIC FORUM

1. A question was raised asking if the public could now request the Council to take action in respect of high trees and hedges. Also, whether the mediators appointed by the Council act for private property owners as well as tenants.

The Assistant Director of Law and Property (Legal and Democratic Services) indicated that the matter would be discussed at agenda item 20.

2. A question was raised by as to why a 30 mph sign and data gathering and had been erected in Bradleys Lane at its border with Sandwell MBC.

In response, the Section Engineer stated that the traffic data retrieved from the camera would be used when planning future improvements to the road.

3. A question was raised as to whether a Warden or similar officer would be appointed to take care of Cotwall End Valley once the Wildspace Officer had left in September 2005.

The funding of the Wildspaces project was due to cease during this year and no spare funding had been identified at present. The Council would need to consider this in tandem with other growth pressures when collating the budget for 2006/2007.

4. A question was raised regarding heavy traffic using The Ridgeway using the road as a short cut from Gornal via The Holloway, Vale Street.

The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Culture and Community Services) indicated that he would ask the appropriate department to respond direct.

5. A question was raised regarding the removal of the archives from Coseley to Summerhill School, Kingswinford, calling for the building in Coseley to be renovated in view of its historical significance and to enable the Archives to remain in Coseley.

The Area Liaison Officer responded that renovating the existing building was not an option due to cost and that the Borough Archive was in danger of losing its accreditation owing to the condition of the building at Coseley. He explained that the proposed archive building at Summerhill needed to be leased back to the Council by the partners involved in the rebuilding of Summerhill School and he anticipated no problems arising from the arrangement.

Councillor Caunt, in response to a call by members of the public for the Council to retain the archive building at Coseley stated that if the Group prepared a business plan covering the renovation and upkeep of the building, they could submit it to him for his consideration.

6. A question was raised asking for the speed limit to be extended in Cotwall End Lane in order to protect the children who used the road and to protect local wildlife from being run over.

In response, the Section Engineer stated that extra signage was due to be installed and he would speak to the questioner after the meeting and clarify any other traffic issues.

## APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the appointment of working groups for the ensuing municipal year.

### RESOLVED

- (1) That the North Dudley Area Committee (Community Plan) Working Group be re-appointed for the ensuing municipal year with its existing terms of reference and that it comprise Councillors Mrs Ameson, Davies, Evans, Ryder and Wright
- (2) That a North Dudley Area Committee (Capital Allocations) Working Group be re-appointed for the ensuing municipal year with its existing terms of reference and that it comprise Councillors Mrs Ameson, G H Davies, Evans, Mrs Ridney, Simms and Stanley, together with any other Member of the Committee with an interest in a particular agenda item.

- (3) That a North Dudley Area Committee Anti-Social Behaviour/Skatepark Working Group be appointed to consider ad hoc issues regarding the Skatewheel Park in the North Dudley area, and that the Working Group comprise any member of this Committee who wishes to serve.

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APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on the appointment of representatives of the Committee to serve on outside organisations in the 2005/06 municipal year.

RESOLVED

That the following members be appointed to serve on the organisations below for the period expiring with the Annual Council Meeting in May, 2006:

<u>Name of Organisation</u>	<u>Representatives appointed in the 2005/2006 municipal year</u>	<u>Term of Office</u>
<u>Social Inclusion</u>		
Baggeridge Miners Welfare Club	Councillors Mrs Millward and Councillor Wright	Annual
<u>Community Associations</u>		
(a) Sedgley & District	Councillor Fraser-Macnamara	Annual
(b) Upper Gornal Voluntary Recreational Association	Councillor Ryder	Annual
(c) Northway	Councillor Evans	Annual
(d) Hurst Hill	Councillor G H Davies	Annual
(e) Rainbow (Coseley)	Councillor Mrs Ridney	Annual

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PROGRESS OF ELECTED MEMBER VISITS TO SOCIAL SERVICES ESTABLISHMENTS AND NOMINATION OF MEMBERS FOR 2005/2005

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A report of the Director of Social Services was submitted on the progress of visits to Social Services establishments undertaken by Members, the actions taken in response to those visits and comments made and identifying issues arising from the rota visits.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report and Appendix 3 to the report submitted, be noted.
  - (2) That the protocol concerning Elected Member visits to Social Services Establishments, attached as Appendix 2 to the report submitted, be endorsed.
  - (3) That Councillors Mrs Ameson, Stanley, Ryder and Wright, be nominated as the North Dudley Area Committee representatives to visit Social Services establishments for the 2005/06 year.
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CO-OPTION OF MEMBERS TO THE COMMITTEE 2004/2005

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the appointment of persons to serve as co-opted members of the Committee for the 2005/06 municipal year.

In presenting his report, the Area Liaison Officer asked for the names of nominees for co-option.

RESOLVED

That the following be co-opted to the Committee for the 2005/06 municipal year as representatives of the organisations indicated:

Mr D Round – Dudley Association of Governing Bodies

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DELEGATED CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on applications received for funding from the capital budget allocation of the Committee.



The Area Liaison Officer also reported that a sum of £40,000 had been allocated to the Committee for the 2005/2006 municipal year and that it was proposed the sum of £10,000 would be added to the surplus carried forward from 2004/2005 for each respective Ward.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the allocation of the capital allocation of £40,000 on the basis of £10,000 to each respective ward be approved.
- (2) That the information contained in the report submitted on the financial position relating to the financial position regarding the Committee's capital allocation funding, be noted.
- (3) That the application received from the Senior Citizens Enterprise Woodworking group for the purchase of additional woodworking machinery for the Group's workshop, a sanding machine, mortise machine, planer/thickness machine and an electric wet stone be forwarded for consideration to the Central Dudley Area Committee as the group operate from Meadows Road Youth and Venture site in Wrens Nest Road, which is in the Central Dudley Area.
- (4) That the application received from the Senior Citizens Happy Hour, in the sum of £250 - £400 for the purchase of cups, mugs, plates, spoons, boiler, teapots, coffee pot and micro tea towels, be refused as no estimates as to the costs of the purchases have been forthcoming and because the organisation has already been awarded funding from the Committee for the purchase of similar equipment.
- (5) That the application received from the 1<sup>st</sup> Upper Gornal (St Peter's) Scout Group – Gornal Ward, in the sum of £1,110.38, to purchase a photocopier for sharing with the Guides, Sunday School and Church, be approved.
- (6) That the application received from Age Concern, Sedgley and District, in the sum of a £5,000 contribution towards the replacement of a minibus, be refused, in view of the fact that Age Concern had received funding on a number of occasions in the past.
- (7) That the application received from North Dudley Councillors and Sedgley Police, in the sum of £5,400 for the purchase of bicycles for the use of Beat Police to cover the ground more quickly and be more visible to the public, be approved.

- (8) That the application received from Sedgley Councillors, in the sum of £2,400, for an extension to the Christmas Lights - festoon lights in trees in the old graveyard alongside the main road, be approved.
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APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

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(Having previously declared a prejudicial interest in this item, Councillor G H Davies and Stanley withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the item).

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted regarding land and property within the Committee's area.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to take no action regarding the previous decision made in decision sheet DOH/035/2004 which proposed the retention of all of the land fronting 45 – 75 Brookdale, Lower Gornal, in Council ownership, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted and that consideration of the issue be deferred to allow further investigations to be made.

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT PREVIOUS MEETING

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the current status of responses to questions posed at previous meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and appendix to the report, submitted on the current status of responses to questions posed at previous meetings of the Committee, be noted.

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DUDLEY BOROUGH CHALLENGE

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted, updating Members on the progress of the Dudley Borough Challenge and proposals for consultation on the draft strategy document.

In presenting the report the Head of Policy explained that the new Borough Strategy was the vision of “Stronger Communities” and the aspiration was to achieve the five key themes set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report submitted, namely, making Dudley a safe and peaceful place to live; promoting good health and well-being for all; creating a prosperous and attractive borough; a learning community, and safeguarding and improving the environment.

RESOLVED

- (1) That Members forward any comments to Mr A Wright, Chief Executive’s Directorate.
- (2) That the information contained in the report submitted, be noted.

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HIGH TREES AND HEDGES

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted, informing the Committee of the background to the implementation of High Hedges legislation and the process of dealing with complaints.

In presenting the report, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Culture and Community Services) stated that he would be able to report further on fees once the Decision Sheet in this regard had been signed and published.

In response to a question from a member of the public as to whether the role of the two mediation officers reported on in the Press would cover disputes arising from high trees and hedges, the Assistant Director of Law and Property (Legal and Democratic Services) stated that he would explore the issue further and report back verbally to the next meeting.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report now submitted and the appendix to the report, informing the Committee of the background to the implementation of High Hedges legislation and the process of dealing with complaints, be noted.

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WARD ISSUES

1. Councillor Mrs Ridley raised the issue of Henwood Gardens, off Avenue Road, and the difficulty experienced by emergency services in particular and other utilities in general, in locating its whereabouts and also its poor accessibility due to poor signage.

2. Councillor Mottram raised the issue of Bradleys Lane, stating that the signage should be in place during July..
3. Councillor G H Davies called on the Council to repair the numerous footpaths that had become hazardous to pedestrians in Coseley and to carry out a drain cleaning exercise following the problems experienced due to the recent heavy storms.

Councillor Stanley spoke in support of Councillor Davies' comments and stated that cleaning of drains and gullies needed to be carried out urgently in the northern part of the borough.

4. Councillor Stanley raised the issue of horses grazing in Sandstone Close, Lower Gornal. He stated that the fence had fallen down and the horses had become a nuisance to local residents. He asked whether it could be determined whether grazing rights had been applied for.
5. Councillor Evans, speaking on behalf of the Sedgley Ward Councillors, expressed concern regarding the demolition of bus shelters in the area by CENTRO and the subsequent erection of larger bus shelters in unsuitable locations.

Councillor Mrs Millward stated that a problem had been experienced with a large shelter being erected in Stickley Lane, Gornal, as a result of which the three Ward Councillors had written a letter to CENTRO regarding the issue and hoped that the shelter would be removed shortly.

6. Councillor Mrs Millward raised the issue of Cotwall End Nature Reserve and praised the work of the organisation, Friends of Cotwall End. Efforts were underway to rid the area of quad bikers and the matter had been reported to the police.
7. Councillor Caunt reported on the issue of the Doctor's surgery in Sedgley stating that although a suitable site for the surgery had been found, he had now received a letter from the architects advising that they no longer wished to proceed with the building of a surgery.
8. Councillor Wright called for street lighting to be upgraded at the top of Church Street, Gornal, particularly as this was the business area of the village.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.

CHAIRMAN

NDAC/12