

NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 23rd September, 2009 at 6.30 pm
Roberts Primary School, Robert Street, Lower Gornal

PRESENT

Councillor Wright (Chairman)
Councillors Mrs Ameson, Caunt, Evans, G Davies, Mrs Millward, Mrs
Ridney, Ryder, Stanley and Simms; Miss G Heeley (Co-opted Member
for young people)

Officers

The Interim Director of Law, Property and Human Resources (as Area
Liaison Officer), the Assistant Director of Culture and Leisure, and the
Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety (Directorate of the Urban
Environment), the Assistant Director - Older People, The North Dudley
Area Housing Team Leader and the Community Renewal Officer –
North Dudley (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services),
Head of Youth Services, the Area Youth Worker - Early Years and
Youth Development (Directorate of Children's Services) and Mrs J Rees
(Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Mr C Stone, on behalf of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service;
Inspector V Willis West Midlands Police; Mr S Vincent - Operations
Commander, Dudley Borough (West Midlands Fire Service); Mr D Hill,
the Project Manager for the Healthy Towns Initiative together with
approximately 80 members of the public.

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of
Councillor Mottram.

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs Millward and Wright declared a personal and prejudicial
interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect
of agenda item 11 (Delegated Capital Budget – request by Baggeridge
Social Club for an extension to time for claiming grant), in view of their
appointment by the Council as trustees of the Baggeridge Social Club.

29 MINUTES

NDAC/15

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th June 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the addition of the names of Councillors Ryder and Stanley to the list of attendees.

30 CHANGE OF ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure 13 c) it was

RESOLVED

That Agenda Item 10 (Queens Award – Voluntary Service) be considered as the next item of business.

31 QUEENS AWARD – VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Mr C Stone, on behalf of the Queens Award - Voluntary Service, gave an oral presentation on the Queen's Award, which was established by the Queen in celebration of her Golden Jubilee in 2002. The Award was open to any voluntary Group in the United Kingdom, and, equivalent in status to the MBE. The Award recognised groups of individuals who give their time freely for the benefit of others.

Mr Stone informed of a group in Pedmore, Stourbridge, who had received the Award last year. Information was available at the meeting, and on request, as to how to obtain the Award.

RESOLVED

That Mr Stone be thanked for his oral presentation, the content of which was noted.

32 PETITIONS

A petition was submitted by local residents, requesting that parking facilities for 10 – 15 minutes be allowed for customers at the Gornal Savers Express. The Petition was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration.

33 YOUTH ISSUES

The Area Youth Worker gave an oral report on youth issues affecting the North Dudley area including:

- a) Positive work undertaken at all three youth centres in the area over the summer, including work with the detached team.
- b) A variety of activities, including an area art week delivered from the Dormston art centre.
- c) Open canoeing along the river Severn where young people achieved a national canoe award.
- d) First aid training.
- e) A day trip to London.
- f) A careers event in conjunction with Connexions and community renewal.
- g) Theme park trips.
- h) Music workshops, art workshops sports activities and other educational activities.
- i) The move of the Youth Service from Coseley Youth Centre on 7th September, 2009. An alternative programme of activities had been organised and would be advertised in a newsletter to make young people aware of the new building developments and the alternative programme, until such time as the new Youth Centre was built.
- j) A coffee in the Dark Project was taking place on Friday evenings, to try to address drug and alcohol related anti social behaviour in and around Silver Jubilee Park.
- k) A proposal to offer workshops around democracy and other activities during October half term.

Miss Georgina Heeley, co-opted Member for young people, reported orally on issues affecting young people, advising that the Youth Forum were working on a video, which was expected to be completed by October, 2009. She hoped to be able to show this at the next meeting of the Committee.

Miss Heeley also reported that the Youth Awards would take place in October. She had also been asked to request that when any decision regarding the reestablishment of a skatepark working group had been made, to investigate possible sites for a skatepark in the North Dudley area, young people would be advised of this.

A Member of the Committee responded by stating that a decision had not yet been made. He also commented on a petition regarding consideration of a skatepark to be erected in the area, which may be submitted to the Committee.

Another Member of the Committee reported on the final closure of Coseley Youth Centre on 28th August. A social event had been organised to mark the closure. She expressed disappointment that it had not been possible to complete the new Youth Centre building before the necessary closure of the old Centre, but in order to enable the government grant for the extra care housing project to be applied for, it had been necessary to close the old centre earlier than envisaged. She referred to the process involved, but was hopeful that a new Youth Centre would be completed by mid 2010. The Member also expressed concern and regret regarding the recent arson attack at the Coseley Youth Centre, which had upset neighbours of the Centre.

In response to a question from a Member of the Committee regarding whether or not the Coseley Youth Centre building had been decommissioned or not, the Area Liaison Officer advised that at the time of the arson attack, the building was the responsibility of Extra Care Housing, and not the Council.

RESOLVED

That the oral updates on youth issues be noted.

34

POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Victoria Willis introduced herself and reported orally on Police issues including:-

The success of the Coffee in the Dark Project, which it was hoped would assist in combating anti social behaviour.

That the crime figures for the summer period had shown a reduction in all areas. She indicated that the priorities were to tackle anti social behaviour, alcohol and drug related youth issues together with speeding and dangerous obstructive parking.

That the Police would continue to work closely with Youth Service and Community Renewal to divert the energy of young people to useful activities. She reported on the success of the Stay Safe Project which, she advised, in other areas of the country, received government funding.

That she would continue to attend PACT meetings and put measures into place to combat anti social behaviour.

RESOLVED

That the oral report on Police issues be noted.

35

FIRE ISSUES

The Operations Commander of Dudley Borough (West Midlands Fire Service) was delayed therefore it was

RESOLVED

That Agenda Item 7 (Fire Issues) be deferred until such time as Mr Vincent arrived.

36

TRANSPORT ISSUES

Members of the Committee expressed disappointment that again no Centro representative had attended to discuss the issue of the 558 bus route, despite being invited to attend the meeting.

It was reported that a representative of Centro had given an undertaking to attend the next meeting of the Committee on 2nd December, 2009.

37

PUBLIC FORUM

A number of people present at the meeting commented again on issues relating to the closure of Coseley Baths. Comments made included that:-

a) Other leisure centres in Dudley remaining open despite their annual deficit being in excess of those for Coseley Baths.

The Assistant Director of Community and Leisure responded by stating that most leisure activities, including parks, and museums, within the Council ran at a loss and received subsidies from the Council. However, the other facilities in the Borough did not have the major structural problems experienced by Coseley baths that had led to its closure.

b) When would the new complex at Bilston be complete. A member of the public did not think this would ever be built as he believed that Wolverhampton did not own the land.

c) If the baths were not safe, why had the Cabinet Member for Leisure said that the Council was doing the public a favour by allowing them to stay open for a further six months.

In response, a Member of the Committee advised that the baths had been kept open as long as possible, being monitored continuously. The baths had been closed on 31st August, 2009 due to Health and Safety reasons and on the advice of the structural engineer, the repair costs being too costly to rectify. When a structural report had advised that the baths were no longer safe, the decision had to be taken to close the baths.

d) A member of the public commented that an independent structural surveyor had expressed doubts that the Council's figure of £2million to replace the roof was correct.

A Member of the Committee commented that the cost details were available, having been contained in a report to Cabinet. It was noted that the Council had still not had sight of the independent engineer's report commissioned by the Friends Group.

e) Some members of the public expressed their concern that a special meeting of the Committee had not been convened to discuss the issue of Coseley Baths, when in other areas special meetings had been convened, for example in relation to Broadfield House and the glass collection.

The Area Liaison Officer advised that it had not been considered necessary to have a special meeting of this Committee to discuss Coseley Baths, due to the very extensive debate that had already taken place concerning the baths, both at Area Committee meetings and other meetings of the Council.

f) A member of the public questioned why the Council had not applied for funding from the government to repair the roof and refurbish Coseley Baths.

The Leader of the Council responded, by stating that she had discussed the matter at great length with Members of Parliament. Unfortunately, the criteria laid down for applying for a part of the £25 million grant which was available nationally, was not met in the case of Coseley baths and it was considered that any bid was most likely to fail. The Council had in fact applied for part of the grant money for schools projects. The Leader had approached Advantage West Midlands, for funding to repair and refurbish the Baths, but as they had already approved a grant for the Urban Village, which included the pool for Bilston, they would not grant any funding for a leisure facility for Dudley.

g) In response to a question as to when the facility at Bilston would be completed, the Leader of the Council advised that the timescale for the build and matters relating to planning permission fell within the jurisdiction of Wolverhampton Council.

The Leader of the Council further added that she regretted that there were not sufficient funds to keep Coseley Leisure Centre open.

h) In response to whether the Committee considered that the Council had received a balanced view on the Baths issue, the Chairman and Members of the Committee responded that they considered the views taken into account had been balanced.

i) A member of the public questioned why £7million was being spent on moving the archives when Coseley Baths only required £2million.

A Member of the Committee responded, advising that the building which housed the archives currently was unfit for purpose, and that if the archives were not moved to an appropriate building the Council could lose its accreditation and licence to operate the archives. Therefore a decision had been taken to move the archives into a more acceptable quality building to preserve the archives for future generations.

j) A member of the public expressed dissatisfaction at the standard of a written response that had been received from the Leader of the Council. The Leader of the Council responded that a number of people had written covering essentially the same issues so a uniform response had been sent to all.

k) A member of the public commented that he considered that the leisure facilities in Sandwell were better than in Dudley.

l) A member of the public asked what temporary facilities were to be provided for young people between the closure of Coseley Youth Centre and the opening of the new facility.

In response, the Head of Youth Services, Directorate of Children Services, advised that young people would have the benefit of the same facilities as when the Coseley Youth Centre was open. Arrangements had been made with the Coseley School to use facilities there on three evenings per week after school, including use of the astro-turf.

Various workshop events were also planned for young people at Coseley Library.

m) A member of the public questioned whether the views of the public, made at this meeting would be represented at the next full Council meeting. In response, a Member of the Committee advised that the Council's published Agenda would be followed in the usual manner.

n) Reference was made to a Member of the Committee who was not in attendance and to difficulties in contacting him. The current position was noted.

CHANGE OF ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure 13 c) it was

RESOLVED

That Agenda Item 7 (Fire Issues) be considered as the next item of business.

39

FIRE ISSUES

The Operations Commander of Dudley Borough (West Midlands Fire Service) gave an oral presentation on services in respect of fire issues.

He advised that recently there had been an increase in the number of arson attacks, often as a result of abandoned rubbish. The Fire Service was working with its partners in an attempt to address the problem. He requested that those present be vigilant and report any concerns which could possibly lead to arson attacks, to the Fire Service.

The Fire Service was also working with the Police and Officers of the Council to clear sites of drug and alcohol items. However a difficulty was being experienced removing equipment used by drug users from some areas. He and his colleagues were also trying to combat joy riders, using modern technology to address these problems. He indicated that he would be happy to bring the technology being used to a future meeting to demonstrate how it worked.

In response to a query from a member of the public, Mr Vincent advised that there were no plans to bring back fire appliances to the Sedgley Community Station. He also reported that the Fire Service was now working more on preventative and safety education work.

RESOLVED

That Mr Vincent be thanked for his oral presentation on fire issues, the content of which was noted.

40

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on nine applications for funding from the Committee's delegated capital budget.

In presenting the report, the Area Liaison Officer advised that following consideration of the applications by the Committee's Capital Allocations Working Group, any requested clarification or additional information had been submitted and approved.

The Area Liaison Officer also advised that in respect of the Community Transport (Dudley CDT) application the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services had forwarded a briefing paper requesting that the Area Committee reconsider the recommendation of the Working Group, which was that the application be refused.

The Area Liaison Officer also advised that three applications, previously granted, had now exceeded the timescale within which an organisation was expected to claim the grant; namely Sedgley Councillors for the provision of off-road parking (Dudley Road), for the provision of Christmas lights in Sedgley and Baggeridge Social Club. Baggeridge Social Club, were requesting that the timescale be extended, as work had not yet commenced, due to a misunderstanding on how to claim the funds. The Social Club had confirmed that when completed, the work would be Disability Discrimination Act compliant and that the remainder of the funds required could be met from the Club's own funds.

It was reported that in respect of the off road parking, work would be completed shortly by the Directorate of the Urban Environment and funding would then be requested.

RESOLVED

1. That the following application be refused:

Community Transport Dudley for £1,000 towards the purchase of a second hand minibus.

2. That the following applications be deferred for further consideration by the Capital Allocations Working Group:

- a) Coseley Cricket Club for £4,485 towards the purchase of a new artificial wicket

- b) Sedgley Youth for £5,250 towards the purchase of a second hand 12/16 seater minibus

- c) Lake Street Methodist Church for £5,000 towards improved disabled access and toilet facilities

3. That the following applications be approved and that the organisations be awarded the amounts as indicated in the table below:-

<u>Applicant</u>	<u>Purpose of the Grant</u>	<u>Amount</u>
The Coseley School	Purchase of health and fitness equipment to upgrade existing provision at the school	£5,408.97

Beacon Cricket Club	Purchase of various equipment, including training aids and square covers for wicket protection	£2,500 shared equally between the four Wards of the Committee, subject to the remainder of the funding being secured from Sandwell, Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire Councils.
First Gornal Girls Brigade	Purchase of photocopier	£ 425
Summerhill Community Association	For the replacement windows at the front of the premises	£1,600
Sedgley Councillors	Provide lighting “switch” gear at Tenscore Playing field	£1,500

4. That the funding referred to in paragraph 13 of the report submitted, for the provision of off-road parking be released to the Directorate of the Urban Environment upon completion of the work.
5. That the sum of £5,000 which had been allocated for the provision of Christmas lights 2008 at Sedgley Town Centre be returned to the Capital Allocations Budget.
6. That the timescale for claiming the funding allocated to Baggeridge Social Club be extended for a further six months, to enable the work to be undertaken and the grant claimed.

41

CHANGE OF ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure 13 c) it was

RESOLVED

That Agenda Item 13 a) (Petition to North Dudley Area Committee (24th June 2009) 37, 39, 41 and 43 Hartland Avenue), be considered as the next item of business.

42

PETITION TO NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE (24TH JUNE 2009)
37, 39, 41 AND 43 HARTLAND AVENUE

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the action taken in response to receipt of a petition submitted to the meeting of the Committee in June 2009 by her Directorate to address the concerns expressed by residents.

Arising from consideration of the report, residents advised that the issue continued to be a problem, even after the action taken by the Directorate. The Housing Team Manager advised that the area would continue to be monitored on a regular basis.

A Member of the Committee advised that the paint programme, which had been scheduled for next year had been brought forward and was now due to be undertaken in November, 2009. He was hopeful that this would brighten up the area.

The Member of the Committee and the Area Housing Team Manager undertook to speak with the questioner outside of the meeting in order to attempt to address the on-going concerns raised.

RESOLVED

1. That the content of the report submitted be noted.
 2. That the Area Housing Team Manager liaise with the residents, outside of the meeting and advise the Cabinet Member for Housing of developments.
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43

HEALTHY TOWNS PROJECT

Dean Hill, the Project Manager for Healthy Towns, gave an oral presentation on the Healthy Towns Project, giving details of the components of the initiative locally. He indicated that, following the launch of the Project by the Government in June 2008, funding had

been “ring fenced” to lower the levels of childhood obesity, targeted by the Primary Care Trust (PCT). The PCT was working in partnership with the Council to improve the outdoor environment and improve transport links. The programme was a three year programme and only nine applications had been successful. The criteria of the grant for the project was subject to providing activities which would not have been provided otherwise.

He advised that the chosen venue for the North Dudley Area “hub” was Silver Jubilee Park, which he understood had long standing problems relating to drug and alcohol abuse and anti social behaviour.

More detailed information was available on the Primary Care Trust’s website, and information was circulated to Members for their information.

A Member of the Committee questioned whether it was necessary to finance a building at the hub, which would be shut up after dark and would need to be kept safe, particularly in the light of the recent arson attack in Coseley. In response, the Project Manager for the Healthy Towns Project advised that the building was necessary, as, following consultation, three things which members of the public considered essential to encouraging them to become more active outdoors was,

- a) the need for public toilets
- b) the need for a place to go when it was raining
- c) an indoor area where information could be obtained.

All these would be achieved within the Project at Silver Jubilee Park. The Healthy Towns Project Manager confirmed that there would be no cost to the Council for the building.

In order to maintain the building at the end of the three year project, ideas for bringing in revenue, were already being investigated.

A Member of the Committee commented that Silver Jubilee Park was not easily accessible to residents of Coseley. He did not consider that adequate consultation had been undertaken and he doubted whether the project would benefit the elderly. The Member also queried whether the Hub could be better situated. In response, the Project Manager for Healthy Towns advised that there was no available land in the Coseley area on which to base the project. Strong links already existed within the community adjacent to Silver Jubilee Park, and this would be built upon. The Project Manager’s “brief” within the Project was to address obesity in the whole of the Borough.

Another Member of the Committee questioned what other areas of concern, such as teenage pregnancy, healthy eating and smoking would be addressed by the Project. In response, the Project Manager for Healthy Towns advised that the remit for the Healthy Towns Project was to tackle childhood obesity and nothing else.

As some Members of the Committee had other concerns relating to the Project, it was suggested that the issues be discussed outside of the meeting.

The Co-opted Member for young people expressed concerns that young people might not like to exercise in front of others. In response, the Project Manager for Healthy Towns advised that the scheme was a Pilot scheme, and that the “gym” should not be considered as the usual type of gym, a play area involving adults, young people and children alike. He confirmed that a trampoline would not be included as part of the project.

RESOLVED

1. That the Project Manager for Healthy Towns Project be thanked for his oral presentation, the content of which was noted.
2. That the Project Manager for Healthy Towns Project meet with Members of the Committee to discuss their outstanding concerns regarding the Project.

COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the work to date of the Community Renewal Working Group to develop the Plan.

In presenting the report, the Area Community Renewal Officer informed on progress to date of the Community Renewal Working Group, which had met on two occasions since the beginning of the municipal year. Work undertaken included the re-establishment of the Community Forum, which had met but not agreed its terms of reference. Once a Chairman had been elected to the Community Forum, he or she would be invited as a co-opted member, to attend meetings of the Community Renewal Working Group. The Community Renewal Officer had worked with numerous groups in the area, including Summerhill Community Centre and hard to reach groups in the Community.

The Area Community Renewal Officer advised that the Gornal Fun Day held in July had been an outstanding success, with over one thousand people attending.

The Chairman of the Community Renewal Working Group pointed out that Community Renewal had limited precious resources, namely one member of staff, to cover the whole of North Dudley area. As a result of this, when a group was established and sustainable, the Community Renewal Officer would be withdrawn and moved to another area in need of support. The Chairman added that, as the Oval and Tudor area had its own association up and running, the Community Renewal Officer would no longer be working with that group, but moving on to work with groups in the Wallbrook and Grosvenor areas.

A Member of the Committee, on behalf of the Oval and Tudor Group thanked the Community Renewal Officer for all her work with that area.

Another Member of the Committee congratulated the Oval and Tudor Residents' Association on their very successful Newsletter, which had been produced, as a result of working with the Community Renewal Officer. The Newsletter team have been nominated to Dudley Council for Voluntary Service for an award.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the content of the report submitted be noted.
- 2) That the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services be advised by the Committee's support for the continuation of the work of the Community Renewal Team in Community localities.

46

WARD ISSUES

Councillor Mrs Ridley

1. Requested that the areas around Wallbrook House, Coseley Baths and the Youth Centre be patrolled to ensure the safety of residents living in that vicinity, following the recent arson attack on the Coseley Youth Centre.
2. Expressed concerns regarding the hazards to the elderly and people with disabilities caused by tree roots extending onto the pavement in Brookland Road.

Councillor Mrs Millward requested that the concrete column in Temple Street Lower Gornal be attended to.

Councillors Mrs Millward and Stanley requested that the flashing speed signs near to Redhall School be investigated.

47

SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

Information was given regarding the dates of future meetings of all Select Committees, which were held at the Council House, Dudley. Members of the public were invited and welcome to attend such meetings.

RESOLVED

That the information given in respect of the dates of future meetings of Select Committees be noted.

48

DECISION MAKING PROCESS AT DUDLEY COUNCIL

The Area Liaison Officer advised of a change in legislation which required the Council to consider changes to its executive arrangement. Two options were to be considered.

A leaflet giving details of the changes was circulated and those present were advised that should they wish to make their views known they should fill in the form and return it to the Interim Director of Law, Property and Human Resources by 16th November 2009.

49

DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of future meetings be noted as follows:-

2nd December 2009 at 6.30 p.m. at Ellowes Hall School, Stickley Lane, Lower Gornal, Dudley, DY3 2JH.

3rd February 2010 at 6.30 p.m. at High Arcal School, Arcal Drive, Sedgley, Dudley, DY3 1BP.

29th March 2010 at 6.30 p.m. at Lower Gornal Youth Academy, Temple Street, Lower Gornal, Dudley.

The meeting ended at 8.35pm

CHAIRMAN