

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 14th March 2006 at 6.30 pm
at Priory Primary School, Cedar Road, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Rahman (Chairman)
Councillors Ali, Mrs Aston, Cotterill, Ms Craigie, M Davis, Finch, Hart,
Johnston, Sparks and Woodall; Mrs P Goodyear

OFFICERS:

Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (As Area Liaison Officer), Assistant Director of the Urban Environment, (Environmental Management), Section Engineer; (Directorate of the Urban Environment); Principal Project Officer, Area Manager Housing, Dudley, Head of Policy and Performance, (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services); Assistant Director Resource and Planning, Area Team Leader, Detached Youth Worker, (Directorate of Children's Services), Partnership Development Officer, Priority Neighbourhood (Chief Executive), Mr K Edwards, Principal Solicitor and Mrs J Rees (Directorate of Law and Property)

ATTENDANCE

Thirteen representatives of the Central Dudley Youth Forum, together with approximately 40 members of the public were also in attendance at the meeting.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th January 2006, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ali declared a personal and prejudicial interest, in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item 9, (Capital Allocations - application by Kates Hill and Sledmere Community Association) in view of his being Chairman of the Association.

Cllr C Woodall declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No9 (Capital Allocations - application by Kates Hill land Sledmere Community Association) in view of his being a member of the Association.

Councillor M Davis declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No 5 (Youth Issues) in view of his two sons being in attendance at the meeting, and in any matters related to Social Services, in view of him being a service user.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bradney, Mrs Coulter, J Davies, and Male; Mrs Edwards and Mrs Little.

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RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

The following petition was submitted by the person indicated and referred to the officer shown for attention:-

- (a) A member of the public, on behalf of residents of Green Road, Dudley, requesting that the road be resurfaced, as a matter of urgency. The petition was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention. The Assistant Director, (Environmental Management) advised that he understood that the repairs to Green Road were scheduled to be included in next Highways Maintenance Programme.
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YOUTH ISSUES

Thirteen young people from Central Dudley Area Youth Forum gave an oral presentation, referring to the time spent the previous weekend, on their residential course. The experience had enabled them to get to know each other and work together on various projects. They highlighted the need for improved facilities for young people in the parks, and also a skate rink for Dudley. They requested that Members of the Committee meet with them, outside of the meeting, to discuss concerns relating to, and expressed by, young people.

Councillor Cotterill commended the work done with the young people of Dudley, but commented on need for similar work with the young people of Quarry Bank. The Area Team Leader advised that work was being undertaken with the young people of Quarry Bank, although it was in its embryonic stage. She envisaged that in the fullness of time, similar projects, to the one started in the Central Dudley area, would be taking place in other areas.

Councillor M Davis indicated that he was already working with the young people in his Ward.

Councillors Rahman, Ali and Hart undertook to meet with the young people on a date to be determined. Other Members of the Committee were welcome to attend the meeting and become actively involved with the young people.

RESOLVED

1. That the young people be thanked for their presentation, the contents of which were noted.
2. That a meeting between members of Central Dudley Youth Forum and Councillors Rahman, Ali and Hart be convened, on a date and at a time to be determined by the Area Team Leader, Directorate of Children's Services, to discuss issues relating to young people.

PUBLIC FORUM

The Chairman advised that questions would be taken from the floor, should there be any time remaining when written questions had been addressed. Questions and answers were then given as follows:-

- (1) A member of the public commented on the need for a football stadium in the Central Dudley area, as a base for Dudley Town Football Club. He referred to a previous request for a written

report to be submitted, informing on possible proposals for a football stadium, and expressed his disappointment that no report had been submitted. He was working with sports coaches to promote the Football Club. The Club was due to forge links with Dudley College in the very near future, and this would enable the Club to be awarded Academy Club status. Once a base was established for the Football Club, funding from external sources could be applied for to build a suitable stadium. It would be of considerable help if the Council could provide an appropriate plot of land, suitable for the purpose.

Councillor Ali, supported by Councillor Woodall, offered his support for the Football Club. Councillor Ali also requested an update on his previous suggestion for a stadium on the site at the former gas works, to be investigated. He expressed disappointed that no further information had been received on the matter from the Cabinet Member for Leisure.

The Assistant Director (Environmental Management) advised that he was aware that officers within his Directorate were working behind the scenes on this prestigious project. He undertook to liaise with the interested members of the public and the Football Club outside of the meeting on this matter.

The Chairman informed that Members of Central Dudley Area Committee had previously supported the idea of a stadium to house the Dudley Town Football Club within the Dudley area.

- (2) A member of the public expressed concerns regarding anti social behaviour by young residents and their visitors in the Alexander Hill, Quarry Bank, duplex flats.

A second member of the public described recent incidents and expressed concerns that local people were afraid to speak out against the young residents causing the anti social disturbances, for fear of reprisal to their families and property. The same member of public also expressed concern that the reported acts of anti social behaviour were affecting young people's safety, and in particular young vulnerable young people.

Councillors Sparks and Cotterill commented on the need for this matter to be urgently addressed. They were aware that meetings had taken place between Housing Officers and residents to discuss issues, which remained unresolved. They gave assurances that Ward Councillors would continue to monitor the situation.

The Area Housing Manager advised that work was being undertaken regarding these issues, and that he was liaising with residents to attempt to resolve the problems. He was unable to share information regarding the remedial action being taken, in public, but he undertook to speak with residents and Councillors, outside of the meeting, to share some of the relevant information.

The Director of Adult Community and Housing Services advised that all matters concerning anti social behaviour were taken seriously and efforts were made to resolve the problems.

- (3) A member of the public again requested an answer from Councillor Ali regarding Ward Members' non-attendance at a meeting, last year pertaining to the African Caribbean Cultural Centre.

Councillor Ali replied that he had recently received a letter from the Chief Executive, regarding this issue, which he believed, contained some inaccuracies. There appeared to have been confusion regarding the start time of the meeting. As the Chief Executive had advised that the meeting was not of a political nature, Councillor Ali and Councillor Woodall had chosen not to attend the meeting. Councillor Ali said he would contact the Chief Executive to put right inaccuracies contained in the letter which he had received.

- (4) A member of the public expressed concerns regarding anti social behaviour, acts of arson and drug dealing, on the car park of the Duncan Edwards Public House, which was vacant. Security measures at the building appeared to be inadequate. It was suggested that the building be used for community use, should the Brewery not intend to reopen it as a public house.

Councillor Johnston advised that, as a member of the Area Regeneration Board, he was aware that the brewery did not intend to reopen the premises as a public house. He was aware that discussions were ongoing to consider the possibility of reopening the premises, for use for the benefit of the community, with funding from external sources.

The Assistant Director (Environmental Management), undertook to make enquiries into enforcement issues at the premises, and to speak with the police and community safety team, following which he would respond to the questioner.

- (5) A member of the public expressed concerns regarding the consultation process for the North Priory Feasibility Study and who, what and where the relevant information would be available from, and how residents would be kept informed. The Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services advised that the draft report had already been shared with tenants and residents. When the final report was ready, which it was anticipated would be at the end of March, further consultation would take place. The Area Housing Manager confirmed that when the final report was completed, timetables for future consultation would be determined and dates would be circulated to tenants and residents.
- (6) A member of the public commented on the need for Skate Park and other recreational facilities for the Priory Park Estate. Young children should not be expected to travel to Russell's Hall Estate for such facilities. The Assistant Director (Environmental Management), undertook to speak with the questioner outside of the meeting, and send a written response.
- (7) A member of the public again expressed concerns he had raised at previous meetings, regarding traffic problems in Coppice Close, Quarry Bank. The Assistant Director (Environmental Management) advised that he was aware that work had been undertaken at this site. He undertook to speak with his colleague and then respond to the questioner. He also agreed to keep the Ward Councillors informed of progress in this matter.
- (8) A member of the public requested that the trees in Priory Road, particularly those in close proximity to the entrance to Priory Primary School, be pruned, as a matter of urgency. The trees posed a danger to people in wheelchairs and pushchair users, who were unable to pass on footpath. Councillor Mrs Aston confirmed that a request for the pruning of these trees had been made some twelve years previously. The Assistant Director (Environmental Management), undertook to investigate the issues and request that appropriate action be taken, following a site meeting.

The same member of the public, advised that the sign indicating the location of Mons Hill College, appeared to be facing the wrong way, and that the written response regarding his concerns, from the Directorate of the Urban Environment, appeared to have the incorrect address and telephone number printed on them. The Assistant Director (Environmental Management), apologised for the errors and undertook to investigate the issues and have the matters rectified.

WARD ISSUES

Councillor Cotterill raised:

- (1) The need for police checks to be undertaken on residents of the Alexander Hill Duplex flats.
- (2) The high cost of coloured brochures issued to Councillors, especially in the light of the reported lack of funding for drain repairs in the Dudley Wood area.
- (3) The possibility of using Quarry Bank Community Centre for future meetings of the Committee.

Councillor Finch raised:

- (1) Concerns brought to his attention by tenants, that a lot of emphasis was being given to the handbooks, which need to be adhered to.
- (2) He requested that the facilities at Sycamore Green School be used for the Community. There was a need for a community building to be provided for residents on the Old Park Farm Estate.
- (3) He also requested that any agreement be put in writing, relating to the building could be used for community use, including a youth club.

The Assistant Director, Resource and Planning, advised that the Sycamore Green School building would probably continue in use for three to four years, until the new Wrens Nest facility was completed. He confirmed that the building would continue to be used for community use. The building was already used for a number of activities, included extended schools clubs.

Councillor Finch also raised:

- (4) The need for the footpath and roads on the Foxyards estate to be included in the Highways repairs programme.
- (5) The issue of housing voids and the length of time it took for rubbish to be cleared from these properties, and the lack of response to complaints regarding this matter.

Councillor Hart raised:

- (1) Gratitude for the new Police Community Support Officers who were working well in her Ward.

- (2) The drainage problems at the Russells Hall Skate park.
- (3) The need for a gate or bollards, to prevent bikes entering and vandalising the skate park at Russell's Hall.

Councillor Woodall raised:

- (1) Concerns regarding vacant pub buildings and associated problems which appear common to all areas. In his view, if premises were left empty the owners should be requested to make the area secure, and deter people from dumping rubbish. If there were no plans to reuse the buildings, they should be demolished.
- (2) The need for information to be made available regarding the vacant Pub in Rowley Road, Dudley.
- (3) He was pleased that St James' Ward Members were happy with their new Police Community Support Officers, but as these officers had been withdrawn from the St Thomas' Ward, he requested that support be put back into St. Thomas' Ward.

Councillor Ali raised:

- (1) The fact that the Selbourne Homes site was now boarded up.
- (2) The need for an urgent update report on a possible site for football stadium and the fact that the next meeting, possibly in June, was too far away for such information to be shared. He requested a meeting between the nominated Lead Officer and Ward Councillors to discuss the matter further.
- (3) The need for an area in Hall Street immediately after the vacated fish and chip shop to be cleared and boarded up to prevent any further litter being dumped.
- (4) The need for area near New Mill Street to be cleared and boarded up.
- (5) The need for resurfacing of Bunns Lane, Watsons Green Road and Firs Street.
- (6) An expression of gratitude was expressed for the clearing of dog fouling reported at the last meeting. He request that clearing of dog fouling in the Sledmere Road area be undertaken.

Councillor Rahman raised:

- (1) Concern that the previously reported inadequate facilities at 50 homes in the Woodside area had still not been addressed. There was a need to identify what action could be taken to rectify the situation and then to identify possible avenues for obtaining funding for the work to be carried out.
- (2) The need for facilities for pre school children in the Netherton and Woodside area.
- (3) The need for a public meeting to discuss the traffic and air quality problems of the Netherton Cinderbank area.

Councillor Sparks raised:

The need for the completion of road alterations to the Lincoln Road cul de sac.

Councillor Ms Craigie raised:

- (1) The fact that St James' Ward had the highest number of Housing referrals in respect of alcohol related anti social behaviour problems and the fact that she had had to collect evidence herself to prove the immensity of the problem.
- (2) The need for repairs to driveways in Osprey Drive and Middlepark Road, which have been requested since 2003.
- (3) Concerns regarding verbal abuse and acts of anti social behaviour against herself and residents, by a tenant, despite the fact that the tenant was supposedly banned from the area in question.

Councillor M Davis raised:

- (1) Concerns regarding the process used for repairs allocations.
- (2) Dissatisfaction at the lack of repairs for elderly tenants homes. He circulated photographs of one particular case, to highlight the problems.
- (3) Concern over the criteria used for the allocation of Council owned properties and the number of properties left empty for asylum seekers, when local residents were in need of housing.
- (4) The issue of the name of a resident referred to on page 44 paragraph 5 of the previous agenda having been spelt incorrectly and that it should read Mrs Moseley.
- (5) Concerns that Travel Companies should not be allowed to introduce parking areas for buses in front of residents homes.

- (6) The question of the response to his previous query regarding Russells Hall Road, and advised that in his opinion more accidents had occurred than had been reported.
- (7) His dissatisfaction in respect of Delegated Decisions regarding housing issues delegated to the Cabinet Member for Housing.

Councillor Mrs Aston raised:

- (1) The need for repairs to the drains in Laurel Road, Marigold Crescent and Charlescote Drive.

Councillor Johnston raised:

- (1) The large amounts of rubbish dumped on banks near Birmingham New Road and Pine Road Foxyards.
- (2) The danger from drivers of “off road” bikes, particularly around Forest Road and on the woodland behind Forest Road. He also expressed concern that when these incidents were reported, the police did not attend. Action was needed to prevent the “off road” bikes causing nuisance.

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APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

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

Upon consideration of the report and comments made thereon, it was

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Leisure be advised to refuse the application to purchase land adjacent to 114 Baptist End Road, Netherton, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, for the reasons set out in the report.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be advised to retain the land adjacent to 132 and 134 Baptist End Road, Netherton, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, and to plant the land to defer further acts of anti social behaviour.

- (3) That the Chairman and Ward Councillors be authorised to give further consideration to the application to purchase land at the rear of 34 Harcourt Drive, Lower Gornal and that their recommendation then be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Transportation and to members of the Committee for information.
 - (4) That the Cabinet Member for Transport be advised:
 - a) to approve the disposal of land at 2 and 6 The Sling and 130 and 134 New Road, Netherton, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, on terms and conditions to be negotiated and approved by the Director of Law and Property and
 - b) to retain the land at 110 New Road, Netherton, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, and to renew the Lease on the property, on terms and conditions to be negotiated and approved by the Director of Law and Property.
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CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

(Councillors Ali and Woodall withdrew from the meeting whilst applications for a capital allocation were considered.)

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the recommendations of the Capital Allocations Working Group regarding applications made for funding from the capital budget of the Committee, including two applications deferred from the previous meeting of the Working Group, and also setting out the balances remaining for each Ward for the remainder of the municipal year.

The Principal Project Officer referred to the application by the Kates Hill and Sledmere Community Association and advised that they were no longer able to proceed with their application. The application had been passed to the Friends and Residents of Buffery Park, for the same purposes.

With reference to the application by the West Midlands Police, the Principal Project Officer advised that the Police had confirmed their agreement to the bikes being used in the St James' Ward, should the application be successful.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the following amounts be awarded to the organisations stated:

<u>Name of Organisation</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount</u>
West Midlands Police, Dudley Office	Two mountain bikes and equipment, subject to the proviso that they be mainly used in the St James's Ward.	£1,200
Exalt (Part of the Saltmine Trust)	New lighting/equipment for theatre work with young people.	£2,000
Friends of Green Park	Security cameras and CCTV around Green Park Sports Complex and building.	£3,488.35
Friends of Netherton Park	Installation of six benches with hardstanding.	£7,000
Directorate of the Urban Environment	Installation of BMX track and gates at Dudley Wood Youth Centre.	£2,000
Friends and Residents of Buffery Park	Sports equipment for Schools & Community Olympic Event.	£3,000
(2)	That the application by Hellier Street Youth and Community Association be refused, for the reasons stated in the report.	
(3)	That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to carry out the recommended actions.	

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA LOCAL COMMUNITY PLAN

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the draft Local Community Plan (LCP) for the Central Dudley Area.

Some Members of the Committee commented on the fact that individual projects in their particular Wards were not mentioned in the Draft Plan. In response to this the Chairman, advised that the Working Party had decided not to specify particular areas as the issues were common to all but this would not prevent projects from being undertaken and actioned. All Wards would have similar projects and problems, which would need to be addressed at local level, by local groups.

The Chairman advised that he was anxious that the plan was actioned as soon as possible and that it would be reviewed on a regular basis.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the draft Local Community Plan attached to the report submitted be approved.
- (2) That the Local Community Plan be shared with relevant agencies such as Corporate Board, PCT Board, Police, Dudley College etc.
- (3) That the Local Community Plan be published, following advice and production by the Council's Marketing and Communications Service
- (4) That implementation of the Local Community Plan be through a meeting of an Local Community Plan Working Party four times in 2006-07 to monitor the themes of the Plan through consultation with relevant agencies focussing on two themes of the Plan at each meeting.
- (5) That the Local Community Plan content and process be reviewed at the final meeting of the Working Party in February 2007 and referred to the Central Dudley Area Committee in its last meeting in 2007.

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HIGHWAYS MINOR WORKS CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2006/2007

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on proposed programmes of work for Local Safety Schemes, Pedestrian Crossings and Safer Routes to Schools within the Central Dudley area for 2006/07 financial year.

A member of the public expressed concern that the Hillcrest School was not included in programme. The Assistant Director (Environmental Health) advised that he was aware that his colleagues in Traffic were investigating safety issues in Simms Lane, following a request by Councillor Bradney.

RESOLVED

That the proposed programmes of work, as set out in the respective appendices to the report now submitted, be supported and recommended to the Cabinet Member for Transportation.

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OBJECTION TO DISABLED PARKING PLACE - PROGRAMME J

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the objections received to applications for disabled parking places in Programme J of the on-street disabled parking places scheme.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be advised that

- (1) The objection to 28 Montgomery Crescent should be overruled only if agreement on a location can be reached through mediation
- (2) The objections to 9 Bournebrook Close should be upheld and that the application should not succeed.

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DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT – MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THIS COMMITTEE HELD ON 24TH JANUARY 2006

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on a number of issues relating to that Directorate, raised at the meeting of this Committee held on 24th January 2006.

RESOLVED

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

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted detailing the responses to questions asked at previous meetings

RESOLVED

That the content of the report submitted be noted.

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DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of future meetings of the Committee be advised when determined in the new municipal year.

The meeting ended at 8.35 pm.

CHAIRMAN

CDAC/82