

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

BRIERLEY HILL AREA COMMITTEE – 31ST JANUARY, 2008

REPORT OF THE BRIERLEY HILL AREA LIAISON OFFICER

MATTERS RAISED AT THE BRIERLEY HILL AREA COMMITTEE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To update Committee on a number of issues raised at the 6th December, 2007, Brierley Hill Area Committee that relate to services provided by the Council.

BACKGROUND

2. The Council provides a number of services that have considerable impact on local communities.
3. Requests for service and information are received at Area Committee on a regular basis from both members and the general public, relating to a range of services. Few enquiries can be answered immediately, with many prompting further investigation, feasibility studies and public consultation, prior to being reported back to Committee.
4. To keep Committee updated, a progress report is attached.

FINANCE

5. There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report.

LAW

6. Anti-Social Behaviour Orders are largely governed by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
7. Provisions relating to Highways including trees thereon are contained in the Highways Act 1980.
8. Provisions relating to the Council's Housing stock are contained in the Housing Act 1985.

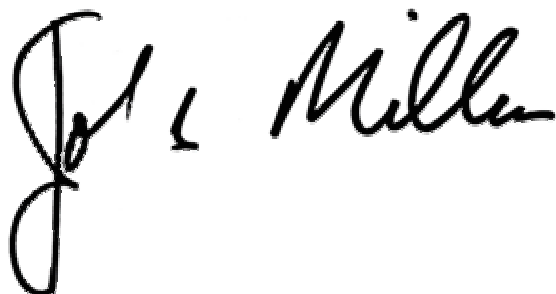
9. Section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 places a duty on the Council as Waste Disposal Authority for its areas to provide places where its residents may deposit their household waste free of charge.
10. Traffic Regulation Orders are made under Section 1 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
11. The Traffic Calming Act 1992 amends the Highways Act 1980 to allow works to be carried out to promote safety and to preserve or improve the environment.
12. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 authorises the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the exercise of any of its functions.
13. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows the Council to do anything that it considers is likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of its area.

EQUALITY IMPACT

13. This report is consistent with the Council's Equality and Diversity policy. There is no direct effect on children or young people.

RECOMMENDATION

14. The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.



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Brierley Hill Area Committee Liaison Officer

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List of Background Papers - See progress report attached

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PUBLIC FORUM

1. A question was asked on action that might be taken to prevent youths congregating on the corner of March Crescent and Quorn Crescent, Wordsley, usually at weekends. The questioner alleged that the youths were engaging in various anti-social activities, including depositing cans, bottles, food packaging and food on the pavement and road and urinating in the street, against garden fences.

Response:

Officers from the Directorate of the Urban Environment have contacted both colleagues in the Council's Community Safety Team and the Stourbridge and Kingswinford Neighbourhood Policing Team. Urban Environment's Street Cleansing Team has responded to, and continues to monitor the litter issue, whilst Community Safety is actively working with the Neighbourhood Police Team to eliminate the anti-social behaviour activities.

2. A question from a resident on the location of schools and other educational establishments proposed to be established/ discontinued in the light of the Building Schools for the Future programme, and the means by which the public would be consulted, was referred to the Director of Children's Services for a response.

Response:

The Assistant Director for Resources for Children's Services, has sent the resident a copy of the Cabinet report 'Investing in the Future – Transforming Secondary Education' dated 12.12.07 and is happy to meet with the resident to discuss the matter further.

WARD ISSUES

1. Councillors Ms Foster and Tomkinson expressed the view that, in many cases, volunteers at Community Centres would benefit from greater administrative and clerical support which they understood was available from the Council. In his capacity as Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Councillor Miller indicated that the matter was currently under consideration and undertook to arrange to report back to the Committee being made.

Response:

The Council supports the appointment of administrative/clerical staff in Community Centres through its normal recruitment and appointment processes. To date, the management of the Community Centres has been with the Children's Services Directorate (CSD) and the Human Resources Team that support them have had responsibility for working with the Community Associations on recruitment matters as well as any wider issue about Community Centres. At present, Community Associations have, therefore, had support from the CSD.

However, discussions are on-going about practical arrangements on the proposal to transfer responsibility for Community Centres to the Directorate of Adult, Community

and Housing Services (DACHS) so that DACHS would then take on responsibility for working with community centres including supporting appropriate administration arrangements as soon as agreements are reached.

2. At the request of Councillor Southall, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration) agreed to arrange for the terms of a letter sent to members regarding Area Committee Bus Review Panels to be clarified.

Response:

The West Midlands Local Transport Plan places a responsibility on Centro-WMPTA to maintain and improve bus patronage. Against a background of falling passenger numbers they have initiated a study; the outcomes of which propose a major shake up of routes in the West Midlands. The operators, who have been closely involved with the development of the proposals, intend to implement them in April and have asked the officers of the Council to assist in facilitating the changes. Due to the short time scale, meetings were set up in December last year where members were invited to pass comment on the changes to enable Centro-WMPTA and the operators to judge their likely success. Issues identified at the meetings have been taken away by both Centro-PTA and the operator TWM and it is expected that their responses will be reported back at a further set of meetings shortly.

3. Councillors Ms Harris and Tomkinson expressed concern about the consultation machinery engaged in by CENTRO regarding changes to bus routes. Various members were dissatisfied on the apparent limited extent of consultation and disagreed particularly with the practice of CENTRO in accepting members' representations only if they had been sent by all three members of an electoral ward.

Response:

The practice of CENTRO requiring three ward members to support an objection to their proposals for bus infrastructure applies to the provision of shelters and bus stops on the highway. Appeals against such proposals will only be considered by CENTRO if supported in writing by the three relevant ward members. Whilst this has caused some concern to members in the past, the system is considered robust and open to scrutiny and has been in operation for some time.

4. Councillor Ms Harris drew attention to the vandalised condition of the youth shelter at Hawbush Road and expressed the need for it to be demolished.

Response:

The shelter in question is located on land under the control of the Directorate of Adult, Community and Adult Services and was originally provided as an externally funded community partnership venture. The Directorate is now identifying the key partners who will jointly decide upon its future, thereby ensuring a joined up approach involving all appropriate stakeholders is maintained.

5. Councillor Ms Harris expressed concern at the length of time the scaffolding at the former bank building at High Street, Brierley Hill had been in place and made the point that it was blocking the access road.

Response:

Planning Application P04/2124 approved the use of the premises as a restaurant and remains valid until December 1st 2009. No outstanding planning issues prevent the change of use progressing. Planning Officers have confirmed that no work has been done at the site since the scaffold was erected. The scaffolding is a licensed and authorised structure on the highway and the Council has no control over how long the refurbishment works should take. The Council took into consideration various matters including obstruction and access and once satisfied with the proposals, the licence was granted. However, the Director of the Urban Environment has asked for an investigation into the granting of the scaffolding licence, building safety and associated timescales.

RECEIPT OF PETITIONS UPDATE

Following the presentation by pupils from St Mary's RC Primary School and the submission of a petition from parents and carers concerning the safety hazards in crossing Mill Street and the need for the provision of a zebra or pelican crossing, the Area Committee requested that the Director of the Urban Environment should submit a report on the issues being raised.

Whilst officers have put forward the site for possible for inclusion in the future programme of works, the process is now subject to consideration by the Cabinet on the 13th February and ratification by the Council on the 25th February.