

NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 2nd December, 2009 at 6.30 pm
Ellowes Hall School, Stickley Lane, Lower Gornal

PRESENT

Councillor Wright (Chairman)
Councillors Caunt, Evans, G Davies, Mottram, Mrs Ridley, Ryder,
Stanley and 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 of Older People; the Head of Housing Management 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

Inspector V Willis (West Midlands Police), Mr S Vincent – Operations Commander Dudley Borough (West Midlands Fire Service), Mr C Whatling (West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive) together with approximately 40 Members of the public.

50 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Ameson, Mrs Millward and Simms.

51 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mottram declared a personal and prejudicial interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 10 (Delegated Capital Allocations – application by Lake Street Methodist Church), in view of his friendship with the applicant, whom he had worked for previously.

52 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23rd September 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed.

53

PETITIONS

It was reported that a petition had been received, prior to the meeting, by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Libraries and Adult Learning, on behalf of local residents expressing concerns regarding the lack of internal and external modernisation of council owned homes in Townsend Avenue, Sedgley. The residents also expressed concerns that the Avenue was being used as a short cut by motorists to avoid the traffic island in Sedgley. The Petition was referred to the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services and the Director of the Urban Environment for their consideration.

54

YOUTH ISSUES

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

A trip to Drayton Manor Park, a weekend group development residential, participation workshops around Dudley Youth Council and music workshops in a school in Coseley had taken place.

The launch of a website aimed at letting young people know what was going on in their area.

Youth provision continued in other venues, whilst the construction of the new Coseley Youth Centre continued, including the use of the library, a weekly health drop in, use of mobile classroom and football pitches at the Coseley School. Activities would take place up to Christmas and again at February half term.

Coseley Members were planning an event for 20th December aimed at campaigning against vandalism and anti social behaviour in Coseley

The Upper Gornal and Sedgley detached team were working alongside the participation plus team and young people, towards the potential redevelopment of a skatepark.

The Quarry club was still in the development stages and that Members of the steering group had visited the site recently and found that although the venue was suitable for a Youth Club, it was not suitable for a skatepark.

Sedgley Youth Club numbers continued to rise and that it was hoped to develop a Members Committee, with the aim of developing a den in the back office of the centre, to create a safe place where young people could get advice and information on issues affecting young people.

The outreach team would be taking a group from Sedgley go karting and ice skating over Christmas.

The Lower Gornal Youth Academy numbers had also increased, especially on Halloween and Film nights. Between 40 and 50 young people visited the centre each evening. Committee member training had commenced, as a pilot scheme, which could be rolled out for other projects in Dudley.

The Autistic Youth Club had 180 members from across the Borough and the outskirts. The group was staffed by senior member volunteers, who were once members of the Academy. An evening of celebration would take place on 2nd December to mark the second successful year of the Club.

Young people had been given advice from a youth advisor to help them in future action, including involvement in workshops dealing with alcohol and anti social behaviour.

Work was being undertaken with local schools to offer alternative activities for young people, including work with extended schools.

Christmas activities would be offered to all young people in the lead up to Christmas. The clubs would be closed between 23rd December and 4th January.

It was reported that the Area Youth Worker from Lower Gornal Youth Academy had given birth to a little boy, Joshua Robert, and both were doing well.

Ms G Heeley, co-opted Member for Young People, reported orally on issues affecting young people, including that

The Dudley North Youth Forum were working on the editing stages of their promotional DVD, which it was hoped would be delivered to schools in January 2010. It would also be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

The forum had met with other area youth forums for a communication day recently, looking at ideas and building relationships across the borough. It was intended to repeat this event every three months.

She was meeting with young people to discuss the possible location of a new skatepark and invited an Elected Member of the Committee to advise her of any issues which should be raised at that meeting.

A Member of the Committee commented on the activities being undertaken during the building of the new Coseley Youth Centre, which were being well attended.

The Area Liaison Officer advised that a Council wide Officer working group had been established to oversee the progress of the new building. He reported that the work was on target for completion early in 2010, and that the roof had already been erected.

RESOLVED

That the oral updates on youth issues be noted.

55

POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Victoria Willis reported orally on Police issues including that

Reported crime figures for the North Dudley area had decreased in October/November.

Joint agency activities, involving the Youth Service, were being undertaken including the Stay Safe Project and the Tranquillity project.

Previous problems concerning Jubilee Park had been addressed and she looked forward to the new Coseley youth centre being opened and working with youth services after Christmas.

The recent open day at Sedgley Police station had been attended by more than 500 visitors. She advised that in future years this event would take place on Sundays to avoid a recurrence of the parking problems which had been created by the large number of visitors.

Plans were being progressed to combat anti social behaviour and drink related incidents over the festive period.

She had been invited to visit London to meet with Gordon Brown in connection with her community work.

A Member of the Committee thanked Inspector Willis for her enthusiasm since her arrival in Dudley.

RESOLVED

That the oral report on Police issues be noted.

56

FIRE ISSUES

The Operations Commander of Dudley Borough (West Midlands Fire Service) reported orally on issues pertaining to the Fire Service as follows, that

There had been fewer incidents relating to the period around 5th November, following joint work between the Fire Service, the Police and Trading Standards Inspectors.

Anti social behaviour problems had increased in the same period, with more reported incidents of fireworks being thrown through letterboxes.

A Young Fire Fighter's Association, was to be established in the New Year.

The next course aimed at youths on the brink of crime, and thanked Members for their support on this. It was hoped that the course would run six times next year.

The need to reduce rubbish was reinforced and that Dudley, and, especially the North Dudley area, had increased their contribution to rubbish reduction considerably.

In wishing those present a safe Christmas, Mr Vincent asked those present to be vigilant and not stint on fire safety over the Christmas period.

The Bluetooth initiative which enabled mobile phone users to receive health and safety advice on video footage from the Fire and Police services was in operation.

RESOLVED

That the oral report on fire issues be noted.

Mr C Whatling of the West Midlands Passenger Transport Service gave an oral update on the situation regarding the plans by CENTRO to install bus shelters along the 558 bus route. Although he was not responsible for such installations he sought to clarify the confusion there appeared to be regarding the installation of bus shelters in the area.

It was, as he understood it, the intention of Centro to provide raised kerbs to enable level boarding of buses by people with disabilities and mothers with pushchairs during this financial year. There was no requirement to consult on these proposals, as they did not affect the environment, and the bus stops already existed outside residential properties.

Mr Whatling reported that there had been requests for 25 bus shelters on the 558 route from Dudley to the Wolverhampton boundary, of which seven had been refused. Following a check on the usage of each stop, the request would be placed on a waiting list, which currently ran at over 100. When a shelter request was to be introduced, consultation would take place at that time only.

In response to comments from Members of the Committee on the lack of consultation with local councillors and residents, Mr Whatling reiterated that no decision had yet been taken on the erection of any bus shelters on the 558 route as he had previously outlined.

A member of the public the location of the bus stop on the bend in Green Street

In response, a Member of the Committee commented that the bus stop had been introduced following the introduction of a one way system, and that which Ward Members had not been consulted.

Mr Whatling advised that he was unable to answer the question, other than to point out that buses could not proceed up the main street at Coseley, following the introduction of the one way system, but had to go round the bypass. He assumed that the Highways agency would have sanctioned the one way system.

Members of the Committee and members of the public expressed concerns regarding:

- * the erection of two bus stops in Wallbrook Street, one of which was surplus to requirements and the wrong bus stop being taken down two years later.

- * concerns regarding the diverting of bus routes following the introduction of a one way system near Green Street, Coseley.

- * why, following a walk about around Green Street area when Centro

had advised that a bus stop could not be put on a bend, was a bus stop later erected on the bend?

- * the fact that the 270 bus route, which was well used had been removed.

- * The lack of consultation on issues relating to transport with Ward Councillors, which in turn caused problems for them.

Mr Whatling undertook to refer all comments made to his colleagues at Centro.

The Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety, undertook to arrange a meeting between Centro representatives, Ward Councillors and Officers of the Council to attempt to resolve the concerns expressed above. Tipton station had closed for refurbishment. It was also reported that there were road safety issues in Gough Road.

A further Member of the Committee expressed concerns regarding the lack of parking at Coseley station, which had been exacerbated since the closure of Tipton station.

In response to the concerns expressed regarding lack of parking at Coseley Station, the Operations Commander of Dudley undertook to refer the issues to a multi agency scheme, run in consultation with the police, to reduce accidents, to have the matter investigated.

A Member of the Committee commented that lack of parking problems, was a situation caused as a direct result of lack of consultation by Network Rail on their proposal to close Tipton station, which had not allowed any time for alternative provision to be sought.

In response to a query as to a possible alternative site for parking near the station, a Member of the Committee advised that when alternative parking sites were being sought, the owner of the land referred to refused to allow it to be used for parking. Land at the bottom of Darkhouse Lane had been considered by Network Rail to be too far from the station.

RESOLVED

- 1) That Mr Whatling be thanked for his oral presentation on transport issues, the content of which be noted.
- 2) That the Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety be requested to arrange a meeting between representatives of Centro, Ward Councillors and other relevant Officers of the Council to investigate the concerns referred to above.

Before reading questions from the public, the Area Liaison Officer advised that any questions which could not be answered on the evening would be investigated and a written response would be sent to the questioner as soon as possible.

Questions and answers were then given as follows:-

- a) An issue regarding a bus stop on the bend in Roseville Green Road was addressed under Transport Issues.
- b) A member of the public expressed concerns regarding the amount of traffic and the speed at which it travelled using the Ridgeway as a cut through to avoid Sedgley, particularly as the road was used as a route to school.

The Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety advised that the situation had been looked at previously, but undertook to investigate the problem again.

The Operations Commander of Dudley advised that he would report the concerns to the jointly run scheme to investigate the concerns.

Inspector Willis also undertook to investigate the concerns, as part of the drink drive campaign and others aimed at local safety.

- c) A member of the public expressed concerns regarding the speeding traffic through the White City Council Estate. He also advised that walls had been knocked down and the grass verge had been churned up by drivers at night time.

The Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety advised that the matter had been investigated the previous year, but that other localities had been identified as a more in need of traffic calming measures. He undertook to reinvestigate the matter.

A Member of the Committee commented that traffic as a whole in Sedgley needed to be addressed as the area had been identified as being one of the largest areas of high pollution due to the high volume of traffic.

- d) A member of the public questioned whether any parts had been removed from Coseley Baths, and if so, where had they gone.

In response, the Assistant Director, Culture and Leisure advised that working parts, such as boilers had been removed and transferred to schools and other buildings which could make use of the equipment, as part of the decommissioning of the building.

The Area Liaison Officer advised that the removals were for health and safety reasons, which needed to be undertaken before the decommissioning could be completed.

A member of the public asked why the Council were using the provision of a new baths in Bilston, only two miles away, as an excuse to close Coseley baths, when Wolverhampton Council had built new baths in Blakenhall and Wednesfield, both of which were located within two miles of Bilston.

The Assistant Director Culture and Leisure commented that, whilst he could understand residents not looking at Bilston as a replacement for Coseley baths, the adverse effect the new facility at Bilston could have on Coseley Baths had been set out in the report which had been considered by the Cabinet before the decision had been made.

A Member of the Committee commented that he had been advised that Wolverhampton Council did not own the land, which had been identified as the site for the new facility. He also advised that the Bilston facility was more than 4 ½ miles from residents living in the Roseville/Wallbrook area, which he considered unacceptable.

The Assistant Director, Culture and Leisure responded that as far as he was aware, the land referred to was owned by Advantage West Midlands, who had entered into an agreement with Wolverhampton Council to provide the freehold for the new facility, as part of a new Urban Village, which had received planning permission in March 2009. He was aware that the development of the site and the finalisation of contractual arrangements were complex matters but had no reason to believe that the facility at Bilston would not be built. Any queries regarding the new facility were a matter for Wolverhampton Council.

In response to comments regarding the bat colony and the Council not having a licence to undertake the decommissioning of the building, the Assistant Director, Culture and Leisure advised that the licence had been obtained, and was in fact dated 23rd November 2009 and therefore the Council had the right to continue with the decommissioning and demolition of the building.

In response to a query as to where the funds were to be found to demolish the building, the Area Liaison Officer advised that the costs would be substantially less than the cost of repairs. He was unable to comment further on comments which the residents had put in the hands of a lawyer, until the matter had been responded to.

In response to a query regarding an alternative for a child whose swimming lessons were scheduled to commence on 1st January 2010, the Assistant Director, Culture and Leisure undertook to investigate and send a written response to the questioner.

A member of the public asked why the Council could not look at putting money into the Coseley baths building to make it something for Dudley to be proud of. She also pointed out that residents just wanted a swimming pool, not a leisure centre.

A member of the public questioned what plans the Council had for the land at Coseley. The Chairman advised that at the present time there were no plans for the land.

- f) In response to comments regarding the venues used for meetings of the Committee, it was reported that any venue used must comply with the Disability Discrimination Act, and that any suggested venues could be visited to carry out a risk assessment to judge its viability for use for a meeting of the Committee. It was pointed out that there were very few suitable venues within the area covered by the North Dudley Area Committee and that the main factor in where the meetings were held was the availability of venues, which often were used for after school clubs and other regular activities.
- e) A member of the public requested that an induction loop be provided for future meetings to enable those with a hearing problem to be able to hear the proceedings.

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on seven 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 advised that a letter of thanks had been received from the Coseley Athletic Bowling Club thanking the Committee for the grant, which had enabled them to build a shelter at the Bowling Club. The Secretary, Mr John Bailey, had also offered the use of the facilities at the Bowling Club should members wish to avail themselves of them.

The Area Liaison Officer reported that the application by Priory Park Amateur Boxing Club had also been submitted to the Central Dudley Area Committee for consideration. At the meeting of Central Dudley Area Committee on 4th November 2009, the application had been approved in the sum of £4,850, for the installation of new changing and toilet facilities.

RESOLVED

1. That the following applications for funding be refused:-
 - a) The application by Coseley Cricket Club for £4,485 for the purchase of a new artificial wicket.
 - b) The application by Sedgley Youth for a sum between £5,250 and £7,495 for the purchase of a second-hand minibus.
 - c) The application by Lake Street, Methodist Church for £5,000 towards the redevelopment of the Church Hall, on the grounds that the funding had already been received from an alternative source.
 - d) The application by Priory Park Amateur Boxing Club for £4,850 for the installation of new changing and toilet facilities.
2. That the following applications be approved and that the organisations be awarded the amounts as indicated in the table below:-

<u>The Applicant</u>	<u>Purpose of the Grant</u>	<u>Amount</u>
First Lower Gornal St. James's Rainbows	Purchase of various ICT equipment including a laptop, projector, camera and multifunctional printer.	£1,200
Sedgley Shopkeepers	Purchase and installation of Christmas Lights in Sedgley.	£5,000
Sedgley in Bloom	Installation of improved signage in Sedgley - subject to the purchase and installation of the signs being undertaken by the Directorate of the Urban Environment.	£2,624.55

3. That in respect of the Time Expired grants referred to in paragraph 11 of the report submitted:
 - a) A decision regarding the Upper Gornal Pensioners Club be deferred for confirmation of the status of the works.
 - b) The time allowed for the 1st Lower Gornal Scout Group to claim the grant of £4,200, awarded in April 2009, be extended for a further six months.
 - c) The time allowed for the Coseley Youth Centre to claim the grant for £3,957.16, awarded in April 2009, be extended for a further twelve months.
 - d) That the balance of the funds awarded to the Gornal Community Fun Day in April 2009 of £275.89 left unspent, be returned to the Capital Allocations Budget Fund.
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COMMUNITY RENEWAL

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the progress of the Community Renewal Working Group and the Development of the North Dudley Area Committee Community Renewal Plan.

In presenting the report, the Area Community Renewal Officer advised that the Working Group had last met in November 2009 and discussed activities undertaken by her with organisations in the area, including work with the Community Renewal Forum, who had met and adopted their terms of reference, but not yet elected a Chairman to represent the forum on the Community Renewal Working Group. The Community Renewal Forum had undertaken to investigate the possibility of using land near Coseley Station for additional parking.

Various workshops had taken place in Sedgley in preparation for the Sedgley Lantern project which had conducted a parade through Sedgley on 22nd October, 2009 and which had been well attended.

In the Coseley area an information event had been organised at Roseville Day Centre, giving people attending the opportunity to gain information regarding employment, training, adult learning and voluntary work.

A newsletter, produced by the Oval and Tudor Residents Association, had been awarded the Local Awareness Award at a ceremony on 15th October, 2009.

The Area Community Renewal Officer had undertaken an estate walkabout with the Housing Manager to identify problems and issues on the Grosvenor Estate. Concerns had been expressed regarding lifestyle clashes between older residents and younger tenants of the flats. Work would be undertaken to address these concerns.

With reference to information contained within paragraph 7.5 of the report, a Member of the Committee reported that the land in question was in private ownership and that previously the owner had refused to co-operate with the Council over any plans to tidy up the land. Any efforts to tidy up the derelict land therefore needed to be undertaken in consultation with the owner of the land.

The Area Community Renewal Officer undertook to liaise with the land owner, and to keep Ward Members aware of progress.

The Operations Commander Dudley - Borough (West Midlands Fire Service) suggested that the Area Community Renewal Officer discuss future regeneration issues with the Fire and Probation Services.

The Chairman of the Community Renewal Working Group advised that since the North Dudley Community Renewal Forum had not yet appointed a Chairman to represent the Forum on the Working Group, the representative of the Tudor and Oval Residents' Association be co-opted on to the Working Group until such time as the Community Renewal Forum appoint a Chairman, in order to keep contact with voluntary organisations in that area.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the content of the report submitted on the work of the Community Renewal Team working in community locations be noted.
- 2) That Mr David Allen, representative of the Oval and Tudor Residents' Association be co-opted to the North Dudley Area Committee Community Renewal Working Group, until such time as the North Dudley Area Community Renewal Forum appoint a chairman to sit on the Working Group.

Councillor G Davies expressed concerns regarding the removal of fencing around the grassed area of land at Central Drive and the unlawful use of the land for racing and truckers. He requested that the fencing be re-erected. The Assistant Director Culture and Leisure undertook to investigate this matter.

Councillor Evans expressed concerns regarding the need for a crossing on Gospel End Street, Sedgley, which was the access point for four schools in the area. Councillor Evans stated that when the matter had previously been investigated and that it had been stated that the gradient of the road made it impossible for a crossing to be installed. However, he had noted that there had been a crossing installed recently, not far away, which was on an equally steep road.

The Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety undertook to investigate the matter.

Councillor Stanley raised concerns regarding traffic congestion on Ellowes Road, in view of two bus stops being sited exactly opposite each other. He requested that Mr Whatling report the concerns back to Centro.

The Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety undertook to investigate.

62 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on responses to questions from the previous meetings.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report and responses to questions be noted.

63 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

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

RESOLVED

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

64 DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

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

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 8.25 pm

CHAIRMAN