

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY
AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Thursday, 8th January, 2009 6.00 pm
in Committee Room 2, Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Vickers (Chairman)
Councillors Mrs. Aston, Barlow, A. Finch, Ms. Foster, Jones, Kettle,
J. Martin, Mrs. P. Martin, Nottingham and Ryder

OFFICERS

Assistant Director of Finance (Revenue, Benefits and Management Support) (Lead Officer to the Committee), Director of Finance, Assistant Director Housing Strategy and Private Sector, Head of Community Safety, Principal Solicitor and Mr. J. Jablonski (Directorate of Law and Property)

Also in attendance:

Inspector C. Downen - West Midlands Police and
Mr. S. Vincent, Operational Commander - West Midlands Fire Service
(for Agenda Item 7 only)

37 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Burston, Cotterill and P. Harley.

38 **SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

It was reported that Councillors Mrs. Aston, Barlow and Kettle had been appointed as substitute members for Councillors Cotterill, P. Harley and Burston, respectively, for this meeting of the Committee only.

39 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No member made a declaration in accordance with Members' Code of Conduct in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

40 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 6th November, 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

41 PUBLIC FORUM

No matters were raised under this agenda item.

42 REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY 2009/10

A joint report of the Interim Chief Executive, Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services and Director of Finance was submitted on the proposed Revenue Budget Strategy for 2009/10 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2009/10 - 2011/12.

The Director of Finance in his presentation of the report informed the Committee that the Cabinet at its meeting held on 7th January, 2009, had approved the Revenue Budget Strategy proposals for 2009/10 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2009/10 - 2011/12 for further consultation, including consultation with Select Committees.

The implications for services covered by the Terms of Reference of this Select Committee commenced at paragraph 31 of the report submitted and, arising from the consideration given to the report, the Director of Finance, in response to a question asked, indicated that he would feedback comments made regarding consultation with young people.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on the Cabinet's Revenue Budget Strategy proposals for 2009/10 and Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2009/10 - 2011/12, be noted and that the Cabinet be informed that there were no observations that this Select Committee wished to make on the proposals presented.

43 CRIME AND DISORDER ON THE NORTH PRIORY ESTATE

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the crime and disorder risks on the North Priory Estate in response to concerns raised at a previous meeting of the Committee.

The Assistant Director Housing Strategy and Private Sector, in his introduction and presentation of the content of the report, outlined work that had been undertaken to address the concerns expressed by all those involved working in partnership. He also paid tribute to the work of the police and fire services in this regard and representatives of those services were present at the meeting and spoke about their involvement in this matter.

Particular emphasis was made by all three speakers about the strong partnership working that had been carried out involving the Local Authority through its various officers, the Police, West Midlands Fire Service, local schools, residents and the community in general. Reference was also made to the work of the North Priory Project Board.

Whilst the partnership working that had been carried out was being used as good practice for use elsewhere, comments were also made on the various issues that still remained despite all the good work that had been carried out for which those involved were thanked.

In response to certain of the comments made, it was reported that the Council, given concerns over community safety, had made arrangements for the commencement of demolition of the properties involved on the estate from approximately February/March, 2009 and such works would be carried out over a six month period.

It was also noted that between January, 2007 and December, 2008, there had been a reduction in the crime figures from 253 to 112.

One of the concluding comments made was that this was only the first stage in the process regarding the estate and that the demolition and subsequent redevelopment of the estate would also be challenging ventures, however, with the strong partnership that had been developed, it was considered that any problems arising would be mitigated.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, and as reported at the meeting, regarding crime and disorder on the North Priory Estate, be noted.

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on the performance of the Council in relation to the activities relating to the Terms of Reference of this Committee for the second quarter of 2008/09, July to September, 2008.

Arising from the introduction given to this matter by the Lead Officer to the Committee, Members made a number of comments, with particular reference to the lack of data available in respect of performance indicator CEXNI40 - number of drug users recorded as being in effective treatment. The Head of Community Safety undertook to investigate this matter and arrange for details to be circulated to members of the Committee.

In response to a further query regarding information in respect of the number of sanctioned detections for domestic violence crime incidents - reference SSC01.1ciii - the Head of Community Safety undertook to circulate to members of the Committee, a note on this matter.

A response would also be circulated on the issue raised by a Member in respect of domestic abuse.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on the Council's quarterly performance for the second quarter of 2008/09, on the activities relating to the Terms of Reference of this Committee, be noted.

45

DUDLEY COUNCIL PLUS - PROGRESS REPORT

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on progress in developing Dudley Council Plus since managerial responsibility for the service transferred to the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement.

The Director of Finance in his presentation of the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted commented on the background to the development of Dudley Council Plus since its opening in 2005 and events leading to the transfer of responsibility for Dudley Council Plus to his Directorate with effect from December, 2007.

Since December, 2007, a number of changes had been made for example in respect of service transfers, including that of housing non-repair telephone calls from 1st April, 2008, that had helped to reduce the budget deficit of the service. Further service transfers were expected and the expectation was that the deficit would further reduce.

Reference was also made to the formation of a corporate Officer Steering Group that it was considered had assisted with the development of the service and in its relationship to other directorates of the Council.

Overall, whilst improvements had been made, there was still considered to be scope for further improvement.

Reference was also made to performance data collected and the reasons giving rise to variations in such data. Whilst performance had improved in some areas in other areas it had not and the reasons for this could possibly be reviewed.

The Director also paid tribute to the operational manager, Sean Beckett, and the Assistant Director of Finance (Revenue, Benefits and Management Support) - Lead Officer to this Committee - for the work that they had done to bring about the improvements to date over the last twelve months.

In response to questions raised by members, the Director referred, in particular, to the approximate halving of the current deficit in respect of Dudley Council Plus as a result of the arrangements currently in place. Reference was also made to contingency arrangements in the light of perceived service demand and the implications this had for the operation of the service generally.

Arising from comments made by a member who had used the facilities at Dudley Council Plus and had also toured the premises, he indicated that he had been very impressed with the facilities and wished to place on record his thanks to the staff for their efforts in improving the situation at the service.

The Director of Finance in response commented on the desire and commitment of staff at Dudley Council Plus to try and achieve a successful venture and their contribution to the current position of the service.

Should any member of the Committee wish to have a tour of the premises, they were asked to contact the Lead Officer so that appropriate arrangements could be made.

In response to a further comment made, it was reported that paying-in machines at Dudley Council Plus had recently been replaced and, therefore, an improved service should be available from these facilities.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted be noted, together with the comments made at the meeting on progress in developing Dudley Council Plus since managerial responsibility for the service transferred to the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement.

The Chairman reported that this would be the last meeting of the Committee at which Mike Williams, Director of Finance, would be in attendance, given that he would be taking early retirement with effect from 31st March, 2009.

The Chairman also referred to the service, over the last sixteen years, given by Mike to Dudley and took the opportunity to thank him for all the work that he had done and wished him well in his retirement.

Mike thanked the Chairman for the sentiments expressed.

The meeting ended at 8.00 p.m.

CHAIRMAN