

Central Dudley Area Committee - 9th September, 2008

Report of the Area Liaison Officer

Matters raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 10th June, 2008, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment

Purpose of Report

1. To note progress on issues raised at the meeting of this Committee held on 10th June 2008, other than those relating to the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

Background

2. The issues set out in paragraphs 3 to 7 (inclusive) below were raised at the last meeting of this Committee, progress on which is as follows:
3. Co-option of Member representing the Centre for Equality and Diversity

In determining co-opted members of the Committee for the 2008/09 municipal year, the Committee resolved to invite the Centre for Equality and Diversity to re-appoint a co-optee to the Committee as a non-elected, non-voting member. It was decided further to ask Mr. Sadiq if he wished to continue in this capacity and, subject to his response, to authorise the Director of Law and Property to either appoint him or another person nominated by the Centre to serve.

It has now been confirmed that Mr. Sadiq will continue in office and his appointment to the Committee for the 2008/09 municipal year has been formalised in accordance with the decision.

4. Concerns were expressed at the last meeting by the Ward Members for Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood about an adverse effect on businesses in Quarry Bank High Street in consequence of the closure of the Housing Estate Office. It was recommended that a meeting be held between traders and the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services to discuss the possibility of Quarry Bank library being situated within the Post Office and a telephone line for repairs also being installed there. The intention of this was to mitigate the further decline of businesses in Quarry Bank through local residents who

would normally have remained there to shop from doing so elsewhere as a result of having to utilise council-related services provided in other areas.

Since the meeting:

A public meeting was held on 28th July 2008 and a regeneration plan is going to be developed for the area. The Quarry Bank Library link is to be located in the Quarry Bank Community Centre.

5. Tenants residing at Council Properties

At the last meeting of the Committee, attention was drawn by one member to certain properties let to tenants that were not being utilised by them. A suggestion was made that the Council could use private detectives to collect evidence in relation to this issue.

Having investigated the issue, the Area Housing Manager for Dudley has confirmed that the Council has no plan for this time to use private detectives but that he has contacted the Directorate of Law and Property with a view to reviewing the approach currently taken in seeking possession of abandoned properties.

In responding to the member, the Area Housing Manager has referred to precedents set in case law on the subject which means that it is insufficient simply to prove that a tenant is not living at their address, but that it is also necessary to substantiate that they have no intention to return. While the Council can usually gather sufficient evidence that will demonstrate whether a person is residing at a property and therefore the need to engage private detectives is probably not necessary, the difficulty in most cases is being able to prove whether the person has any intention of returning to their address. However, the Area Housing Manager intends to review the Directorate's approach to these cases in the light of the enquiry to ensure that a sufficiently robust approach is being taken.

6 Access for Disability Scooters

At the last meeting of the Committee, a question was asked by a member on whether assistance could be provided to a resident of a particular property who had requested the installation of a gate to allow access to the rear of the property to store a disability scooter.

The Area Housing Manager for Dudley has responded to the member confirming that it is not the policy of the Council to undertake such improvement work unless it is correct to do so and specially recommended by Disability Services. The Council's resources for repairs and improvements are committed to the delivery of the Descent Homes Standard.

However, since there are other properties in the surrounding area with tenants who may have similar needs, the Area Housing Manager has indicated that the matter will be investigated further with a view to ascertaining whether it

would be appropriate to submit a bid to the Area Housing Panel for Community Safety funding to make similar improvements to the property at issue and other properties in the area. This will need an assessment by the Housing Manager to be carried out into the potential need and impact of such improvements in the area. The opportunity to review the individual needs of the resident on whose behalf the issue was raised will also be taken to determine if there is any further assistance the Council can provide.

7. Multi-Purpose Games Area and “Black Horse” Site at Saltwells

At the last meeting of the Committee, it was advocated by one member that some of the monies the Council will receive under the Play Strategy for Young People be utilised for a Multi-Purpose Games Area at the “Black Horse” Site at Saltwells. Decision making in respect of the scheme will be effected in the Autumn and the member has been contacted by the Head of Development in the Directorate of Children’s Services regarding a meeting to explore the suggestion further.

Finance

8. This report has no direct financial implications.

Law

9. Under 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972, the Council is empowered to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive to, or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

Equality Impact

10. This report complies the policies of the Council on Equality and Diversity
11. Children and Young People have not been consulted in the preparation of this report, as the report seeks only to note progress on issues raised at its previous meeting.

Recommendation

- 12 That the information above be noted.

AREA LIAISON OFFICER

Background Papers

Minutes of the meeting of the Central Area Dudley Committee held on 10th June, 2008.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'L'.

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Linda Sanders
Director of Adult Community and Housing Services

Contact Officer: Richard Sanders – Assistant Principal Officer
(Democratic Services)
Telephone: 01384 815236 (Ext. 5236)
Email: richard.sanders@dudley.gov.uk