

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Thursday, 2nd September, 2004 at 6.30 pm
at Dudley Concert Hall, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Rahman (Chairman)
Councillors Ali, Mrs Aston, Bradney, Cotterill, Mrs Coulter, Ms Craigie, J Davies, M Davis, Finch, Male, Sparks, and S L Woodall; Ms H Edwards and Mr H Sadiq, together with Mrs L Warren (Director of Social Services and Area Liaison Officer), Mr M Williams (Assistant Director of the Urban Environment), Mr G Whitehouse (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Mr J Boyle (Directorate of Social Services), Ms D Channing and Mr R Murray (Directorate of Housing), Mrs G Breakwell and Mrs J Rees (Directorate of Law and Property).

IN ATTENDANCE:

Approximately fifty members of the public were in attendance at the meeting.

Chief Superintendent Hodson of West Midlands Police was in attendance at the meeting for Agenda Item Nos. 6 and 12.

21

CHAIR'S ADDRESS

The Chair gave a warm welcome to the newly appointed co-opted members as well as the new Members of the Committee, attending as a result of the recent boundary changes.

22

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7th July, 2004, be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the following amendments:-

- (a) The deletion of the words "to refer the concerns to the Police for a written response" in the fifth resolution of Minute No. 12.

- (b) The substitution of the word "refuse" for the word "approve" in the first line of the third resolution of Minute No. 14; and the substitution of the words "for the reasons set out in the report" for the words "on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property", in that resolution.
- (c) The substitution of the words 'parked' for 'abandoned' and 'gas' for 'glass' in the first line of the ninth paragraph of Minute no. 19.

23

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rahman declared a personal interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda item no 8c (land at Oakeywell Street, Dudley) in view of his association with the Applicant.

Councillor M Davis declared a prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda item no 8c (land at Oakeywell Street, Dudley) in view of his membership of the Development Control Committee.

Mr Sadiq declared a personal interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda item no 8c (land at Oakeywell Street, Dudley) in view of his association with the Applicant.

24

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Hart-Bowman and Johnston and Mrs V Little.

25

YOUTH ISSUES

Due to school holidays no issues were raised.

RESOLVED

That the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning be requested to contact all schools covered by the Committee to request that if they have any issues relevant to young people that need to be raised at the Committee, would they contact the Chairman, who would ensure that they were considered.

RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

The following petitions were submitted by the persons indicated and referred to the officers shown for attention.

- (a) From the Friends of Buffery Park, on behalf of (local) residents, requesting lights on the path of the right of way to Buffery Park - referred to the Director of the Urban Environment.
- (b) From Councillor M Davis, on behalf of local residents requesting action regarding the anti-social behaviour around the Community Centre at Waterloo Road, Dudley and also the inconsiderate parking in the same area - referred to the Director of the Urban Environment regarding parking and to the Chief Executive regarding the anti-social behaviour.
- (c) From Councillor Rahman, on behalf of residents of the Bradford Road, Dudley area, requests to modernise properties – referred to Director of Housing.
- (d) From Councillor Rahman, on behalf of young people, requesting a bench and bin to be installed at Netherton Park – referred to the Director of the Urban Environment.

POLICE ISSUES

Chief Superintendent Hodson commented on a number of issues of which he had prior knowledge and those asked at the meeting. His responses to questions were as follows:

- (a) His gratitude to the Council for funding that it had provided for an additional two Police Community Sector Officers within the Dudley Area.
- (b) Officers, when fully trained would be used in areas of most need.
- (c) Police were aware of the need to follow through enforcement of traffic regulations throughout the Borough. Recent exercises had resulted in a large number of cautions and a few fixed penalty notices being issued. The Police intended to consult further with Council Officers to address these problems and a further report would be made to the Committee on the results.
- (d) The Police were powerless to act in respect of parked vehicles offered for sale. This matter needed to be addressed by Officers of the Council, when vehicles were placed on Council owned land.

- (e) Despite rumours to the contrary, there was no intention to withdraw the police station from Dudley Town Centre in the foreseeable future. When the Fire Station was sold by its current owner, there would be a need to review the needs of the police, including the need for the provision of extra cells in the Central Dudley Area.
- (f) It was proposed to introduce Police Community Sector Officers in the Dudley Wood area when they had completed their training.
- (g) It was not possible to provide police cover to all areas at any one given time. Resources would be put into areas in order of priority and need.
- (h) Traffic Wardens had been provided with vehicles to allow them to patrol wider areas to combat illegal parking throughout the Borough. Members of the public were encouraged to report acts of illegal parking to a central number which would relay the information to the mobile wardens to take action.
- (i) Police presence at the Merryhill Centre had been reviewed.
- (j) Reported burglary in the area had decreased.
- (k) Members of the public were encouraged to continue to report acts of crime. 999 calls were recorded and stored and data could be interrogated when necessary.
- (l) Any reports of unsatisfactory action taken by call staff would be addressed by Chief Superintendent Hodson personally.

RESOLVED

That the Chief Superintendent Hodson be thanked for his presentation, the contents of which are noted.

28

CHANGE OF ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13 (c) it was

RESOLVED

That Agenda Item No. 12 (Police Checks) be considered as the next item on the Agenda in view of the link with the previous Agenda Item.

POLICE CHECKS

A report to the Director of Housing was submitted on the Directorate's Policy on police checks.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms Channing and Mr Murray explained that legislation prohibited blanket exclusions and therefore police checks could not be operated across the Borough. The scheme currently operated in Chapel was to be extended to Arley and Compton Courts at the request of the police and to tackle drug issues. The system of Police Checks had been reviewed and re-housing of the individual would involve a number of agencies other than the police as appropriate.

Some members of the public and members of the Committee felt that insufficient action was being taken to tackle the anti-social behaviour of tenants who adversely affected the lives of their neighbours. They questioned why any applicants with a history of drugs, ASB or having a criminal conviction should be re-housed at all. It seemed that the lettings policy penalised young couples and families who could not secure re-housing in favour of homeless families.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the comments made be referred to the Director of Housing for consideration and attention.
- (2) That the Director of Housing be requested to submit a report to a future meeting on proposals to enable the issues raised at the meeting to be addressed.

PUBLIC FORUM

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

- (a) Concerns expressed by members of the public relating to drivers disregarding the traffic regulations in Blackacre Road were addressed by Chief Superintendent Hodson.
- (b) Comments relating to what action was being taken to address a reported deficit in the Council pension fund and the whether residents would have to pay increased taxes to cover such deficit were referred to the Director of Finance for a written response.

- (c) Members of the public and Members of the Committee expressed their opposition to the decision to change the name of Dudley Town Hall and the apparent lack of consultation on the proposal.

RESOLVED

That the Lead Member for Leisure be requested to:

- (1) Change the name of the Concert Hall back to the Town Hall.
 - (2) Give a written response to the Committee on the reasons for the change of name of the venue.
 - (3) Ensure that appropriate consultation on the name change was undertaken if there was a valid reason for the change of name.
- (d) Comments concerning the resulting effect on residents of the sale of land at Oakwell Street, Dudley were dealt with under that agenda item.
- (e) Some members of the public expressed concern that Buffery Park was in need of improvement and that it had only a couple of benches and no flowers. They also expressed concern relating to how funding from the Liveability Project was being allocated, and the view that Buffery Park was being left out. People who were not members of a Friends of the Park Group expressed a view that individuals should be entitled to comment on how parks in their areas should be improved. Mr Williams undertook to refer comments made to the appropriate Officers. Mr Williams also undertook to investigate the current situation regarding a proposal to install fencing at Buffery Park.
- (f) In response to Councillor Woodall request as to where the refunded overpaid tax on Leisure would be spent, Mr Williams undertook to investigate and send a written response to Councillor Woodall.
- (g) In response to comments regarding the enforcement of traffic restrictions in Blackacre Road Dudley, Road Mr Williams advised that restrictions were in place and that Officers of the Council were working closely with the Police to address the problems.

- (i) In response to comments relating to the alleged effects of acts of anti social behaviour on visitors and elderly residents living at Russell Court Elderly People's Home in Overfield Road, the Director of Social Services undertook to investigate concerns and send a written response to the questioner.
- (j) Comments relating to the Inclusion Strategy were deferred for discussion under that agenda item.
- (k) Concerns relating to anti social behaviour at Arley/Compton area were addressed by Chief Superintendent Hodson.

31

APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

Councillor M Davis advised that as a Member of the Development Control Committee he was unable to speak on any items which could at a later date be submitted for consideration by that Committee.

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

Members of the Committee had visited the site at 22 Wavell Road, Quarry Bank, with Officers of the Council, as a result of which Members of the Committee considered that it would be appropriate to recommend approval of the vehicular access to the site.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Lead Member for Housing be advised to approve the application for vehicular access to land at 22 Wavell Road, Quarry Bank, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, subject to the exact route of access to the site being agreed in order to preserve the tree located on the site.
- (2) That the Lead Member for Housing be advised to refuse the applications to purchase the land adjoining 20 Clarence Road, Dudley, as shown on the plan attached to the report, submitted for the reasons outlined in the report submitted.
- (3) That consideration of the request to purchase land at Oakeywell Street Dudley be deferred to enable a site visit, during peak times, to take place by all Members of the Committee, together with representatives from the Directorate of the Urban Environment and the Directorate of Law and Property.

PROPOSED ROAD CLOSURE AT MONTROSE DRIVE, RUSSELLS HALL

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the introduction of a road closure on Montrose Drive on the Russells Hall Estate, Dudley.

The Scotts Green Working Group had met on the 4th August, 2004, to discuss the consequences of the objections to the making of the Prohibition Order.

Mr Williams advised that the recommendation of the Working Group was that the making of a Prohibition of Driving Order to Scotts Green Close and Montrose Drive should not be proceeded with. The Directorate of the Urban Environment had also been charged with investigating the possibility of an alternative parallel road from Dudley to Kingswinford and the installation of a one way system in Scotts Green Close.

Comments from members of the public and Ward Councillors included:

Failure to achieve an agreeable solution to problems experienced by residents for the past twenty years.

The breakdown of communications during the last meeting of the Working Group.

Residents inability of access their property due to inconsiderate parking.

Concern by certain residents who were unaware of the existence of the Working Group, and how it was established.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted be noted.
- (2) That the Lead Member for Transportation be advised not to proceed with the making of the Prohibition of Driving Order to Scotts Green Close and Montrose Drive, Dudley for the reasons set out in the report.
- (3) That the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to conduct a feasibility study into the possible making of an Order to make Scotts Green Close and Montrose Drive a one-way system and investigate a possible alternative route from Dudley to Kingswinford.

- (4) That the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to carry out a further consultation with the members of the Working Group in order to reach an acceptable solution.
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33

URBAN ENVIRONMENT - MATTERS RAISED AT THE CENTRAL
DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE - 7TH JULY 2004

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on a number of issues raised at the 7th July 2004 Central Dudley Area Committee meeting relating to services provided by the Directorate of the Urban Environment, and to which the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment had responded.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted be noted.

34

PROPOSALS FOR DISABLED PARKING PLACES - PROGRAMME F

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on proposals for on-street disabled parking places - Programme F - as indicated in the Appendices to the report submitted.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Lead Member for Transportation be advised that the schemes as detailed in Appendix A of the report submitted should be introduced as advertised as they have not been objected to.
 - (2) That the Lead Member for Transportation be advised that the site as set out in Appendix B of the report submitted should not be proceeded with.
 - (3) That the Lead Member for Transportation be advised that the sites as shown in Appendix C of the report submitted should be revoked for the reasons set out in the report.
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35

INCLUSION STRATEGY ACTION PLAN CONSULTATION

A report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning was submitted on the Council consultation on the Inclusion Strategy action plan on the future provision for children with special educational needs to which Council responses were invited.

In the absence of a representative from the Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning and the fact that a large number of the public had left the meeting, the Area Liaison Officer undertook to request that the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning

- (a) Extend the consultation period to allow discussion of the Inclusion Strategy at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 4th November 2004.
- (b) Ensure that the content of the report to be submitted to the meeting on 4th November 2004 be more detailed and relevant to the area covered by the Central Dudley Area Committee.
- (c) To send a senior member of staff of the Inclusion Team to the meeting to answer any issues raised at the meeting.

36

POST OFFICE POTENTIAL BRANCH CLOSURE

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on proposals to close three of the Post Office branches within the Central Dudley Area Committee, namely:-

- (a) 29 Wellington Road, Dudley
- (b) 91-93 Watsons Green, Kates Hill
- (c) 93 Priory Road, Dudley

Members of the Committee and members of the public were strongly opposed to the proposed closures. A representative of the Castle and Priory Credit Union commented that the Credit Union would wish to discuss with the Post Office the feasibility of operating an combined office from the Priory Road Post Office.

A representative of residents of the Castle and Priory Estate commented on why the Estate has lost so many services including the Health Clinic.

The Committee was concerned that the elderly and more vulnerable people would not make individual representations but would be adversely affected by the proposed closures and unable to travel to the suggested alternatives.

RESOLVED

That the Area Liaison Officer be requested to inform the Post Office that the Committee are totally opposed to the closure of Post Office Branches at 29 Wellington Road, Dudley; 91-93 Watsons Green, Kates Hill and 93 Priory Road, Dudley.

The time of 9.30 pm having been reached, pursuant to Council Procedure Rule number 6.2, the meeting was adjourned by the Chairman and all outstanding items were deferred to the next meeting.

CHAIRMAN

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