

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 8th February, 2005 at 6.30 pm
at Hillcrest School, Simms Lane, Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Rahman (Chairman)
Councillors Ali, Mrs Aston, Bradney, Cotterill, Mrs Coulter, Ms Craigie,
M Davis, Finch, Hart-Bowman, Johnston, Male, Sparks, and C L Woodall;
Mrs H Edwards and Mrs P Goodyear.

Officers – Director of Social Services as Area Liaison Officer; Director of Law and Property, Assistant Director - Resources and Planning, Active Citizenship Manager (Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning), Assistant Director - Environmental Management Manager, Urban Regeneration Manager, Dudley Town Centre Manager, Senior Engineer (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Dudley Area Manager (Directorate of Housing), Principal Solicitor and Mrs J Rees (Directorate of Law and Property).

IN ATTENDANCE:

Approximately 100 members of the public were in attendance at the meeting, together with representatives of the United Kingdom Young People's Parliament, Lee Thomson, Ben Millward and Dan Horrock.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4th November, 2004, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Members made the following comments arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 4th November, 2004:

Councillor Woodall commented in respect of Minute 46 (c) iii – that a response had not yet been received from the Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation.

Councillor Cotterill commented that he had also raised an issue referred to in Minute 46 (f).

Councillor Male commented in respect of point (c) of the preamble to Minute 49 – that a response had not yet been received from the Directorate of Housing.

These latter issues would be raised later in the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Area Liaison Officer be requested to write to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation regarding the written response requested.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor J Davies and Mrs V Little.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor M Davis declared a prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct in Agenda Item 10 – Responses to Questions - in view of his membership of the Development Control Committee.

Councillor Hart-Bowman declared a personal interest in respect of the petition referred to at Minute 61(c) below, as the land was in her Ward.

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THE STRUCTURE OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN DUDLEY

Three members of the United Kingdom's Young People's Parliament gave a visual and verbal presentation on how young people could become involved in local government. They also gave details of the impending "Have a Say Day" designed to publicise Youth Parliament Elections and informed on events which were planned across schools in the Borough between 21st February, 2005, and 4th March, 2005. Results of the "Have a Say Day" would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman, and Members of the Committee thanked Ben Millward, Lee Thomson and Dan Horrock for the excellent presentation and proffered their support for work with young people in the future.

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RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

The following petitions were submitted by the persons indicated and referred to the officer shown for attention:-

- (a) From Councillor Cotterill, and supported verbally by Councillor Sparks, on behalf of residents of Hill Street, Quarry Bank requesting, immediate clearance of the rubbish tip on land at the entrance of Hill Street, the erection of concrete posts to prevent parking on the land and the provision of a pavement strip to ensure pedestrian safety, the repositioning of the salt hopper back onto the land from the roadway and the installation of double yellow lines at the bottom of Hill Street. Photographs detailing the unkempt state of the land were submitted in support of the petition, by a member of the public, all of which were referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration and written response to Councillor Cotterill.
- (b) From Councillor Ali, and supported by Councillor Woodall, on behalf of the Friends of Buffery Park, requesting that Buffery Park be re-classified as a Town Park, in order to enable additional funding to be sought from the Liveability Project. The petition was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment, the Cabinet and the Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation, for consideration.
- (c) Councillor Ms Craigie, submitted a petition, on behalf of residents in the vicinity of Middlepark Road, requesting immediate action to combat the anti social behaviour arising from people leaving the Old Park Public House late at night and causing noise and litter nuisance, the curtailment of the sale of illegal and/or stolen goods, and drugs in the public house and surrounding area. In support of the petition members of the public expressed concern that no action had been taken by the police when the incidents had been reported. In response to comments regarding the licensing of premises, the Principal Solicitor advised that under changes as to how licences were administered, it may be possible to address problem premises in the future. The petition was referred to Director of Housing, the Director of Law and Property, and the Community Safety Team for consideration and a written response to Councillor Ms Craigie.
- (d) From Councillor Ms Craigie, on behalf of residents of the Russells Hall Estate, requesting a zebra crossing and the installation of safety railings in close proximity to Russells Hall Primary School. The petition was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration and a written response to Councillor Ms Craigie.

CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13 (c) it was

RESOLVED

The order of business be varied to enable Agenda Item 11 to be considered as the next item of business.

WARD ISSUES

Councillor Hart-Bowman raised:

1. Concerns regarding the apparent lack of Community Police Support Officers (CPSO's) in the St James's Ward, particularly on the Russells Hall Estate and requested an update on the current situation regarding the provision of CPSO's in that area.
2. The need for resurfacing of the car park at the Spar Supermarket on Russells Hall Estate. The Dudley Area Housing Manager undertook to investigate and send a written response.
3. A request for the provision of lighting and seating to be erected on the skate park at Russells Hall Estate for safety reasons, was referred to Directorate of the Urban Environment for a written response.
4. A request for the provision of security measures to be introduced at the skate park on Russells Hall Estate, to prevent boy racers using the skate park late at night and causing disturbance to local residents. The request was referred to Director of the Urban Environment for a written response.

Councillor Ms Craigie raised:

1. The need for repairs in the road surface of St James Road, Dudley. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment advised that he was aware that St James's Road was scheduled for carriageway treatment within the next few months.
2. The need for consideration to be given to funding work at the Top Church in Dudley. An application for funding towards this project was to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor M Davis raised:

1. Concerns at the alleged lack of a written response from the Directorate of Housing in respect of concerns previously expressed regarding the points system used to allocate council owned tenancies, which he and others considered inappropriate. A written response had recently been sent to Councillor Davis.

2. The issue of Area Panels and how they were formulated. The Housing Manager advised that the Area Panel was a consultative body set up in accordance with the Constitution. The Director of Law and Property concurred with this and commented that they comprised Members of the Council, tenants and people experienced in Housing matters and that the Panels role was to make recommendations to the Director of Housing and the Cabinet Member of Housing. The Director of Law and Property also advised that the Select Committee for the Environment had the power to scrutinise issues in respect of Housing.
3. The need for road repairs to Walters Row was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for a written response to Councillor Davis.

Councillor Sparks raised:

1. Concerns, which were shared by all Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood Ward Members, regarding their dissatisfaction with the points system used by the Directorate of Housing for allocating council owned properties to residents previously evicted, on account of incidents related to anti social behaviour, and the negative impact this had for existing neighbouring tenants. The concerns were referred to the Director of Housing for a written response.
2. The need for the Cabinet Member and the Director of Housing to review the points system used for the allocation of premises.

Councillor Male raised:

1. The need for the Cabinet Member and the Director of Housing to review the points system used for the allocation of premises to tenants who had previously been evicted, to take into account the community safety for residents already living in council owned properties. The Area Manager of Housing undertook to investigate this matter and send a written response to Councillor Male.
2. The need for the provision of a pedestrian crossing on Saltwells Road, near the Aldi Store and the Halesowen Road, to enable residents to cross safely. The Assistant Director Environmental Management undertook to investigate this matter.
3. The need, as requested at a previous meeting, to clear up the land at Honister Close, Quarry Bank. The Area Manager of Housing undertook to investigate.

Councillor Cotterill reiterated the comments made by his fellow Ward Members in respect of concerns regarding housing issues and raised:

1. The lack of a response and/or action, to his previous request for topsoil for the provision of an informal BMX track in Quarry Bank.

2. The delay in the Directorate of the Urban Environment sending out letters consulting with local residents regarding the use of the land as an informal BMX track.
3. The need for the removal of the graffiti artwork at the Youth Centre in Quarry Bank.
4. The need for additional lighting improvements in Golden Hillock Road.
5. The possibility of converting a grassed piece of land fronting the flats in Copse Road, Saltwells into a car park for residents. The Assistant Director Environmental Management undertook to investigate and send responses to Councillor Cotterill on the issues raised.

Councillor Ali raised:

1. The need for the removal of the side barrier at the footbridge on King Street.
2. A request for an update on the current position and future plans for the land at Blowers Green Road and Yorke Place. The Assistant Director Environmental Management undertook to investigate and send responses to Councillor Ali on the issues raised.

Councillor Woodall raised:

1. The lack of a response and/or action, to a previous request, for the wire mesh fence to be removed from the land in Rowley Road, which was a danger to residents, since it had been physically pulled from the ground and abandoned on the pavement, by local youths.
2. The land at Rowley Road being used for dumping of rubbish and the need for the area to be cleared up. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment advised that the land was privately owned, but that he would investigate the possibility of ensuring the owner cleared up the area, especially the pavement which formed part of the public highway.

Councillor Mrs Coulter raised:

1. A vote of thanks to the Directorates of the Urban Environment and Housing, for the recent provision of lighting recently installed at Lime Road.
2. The need for areas in the Lodge Farm area, including side roads, to be cleared to deter fly tipping and enable litter picking to be carried out more effectively and safely.

Councillor Bradney raised:

1. The need for a strategic plan for the Netherton area to take into account the increased volume of traffic.
2. The need for traffic calming measures to be introduced in order to address problems at Northfield Road and Highfields Road. The Assistant Director Environmental Management undertook to investigate and send a written response to Councillor Bradney.

Councillor Rahman raised:

1. The need for the volume of traffic in Netherton to be addressed and for an update on previous plans for widening the road in Cinderbank.
2. The need for the whole of the Cinderbank, Netherton area, including the side roads to be tidied up.
3. The need for the lights at the junction of Cole Street and the Halesowen Road to be altered to prevent accidents involving traffic wishing to turn right. The Assistant Director Environmental Management undertook to investigate and send a written response to Councillor Bradney.

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APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

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

Upon consideration of the report and comments made, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) That consideration of the request to purchase land at 18 Vauxhall Gardens, Dudley be withdrawn, as the owner of 18 Vauxhall Gardens no longer wished to proceed with the application, but that, in view of the possible future interest from other parties, a site visit be arranged to enable Members to assess the area and make an informed decision in the event of a future application.
- (b) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be advised to refuse the application for the release of a restrictive covenant on land adjacent to 37 Yew Tree Road, Netherton, for the reasons set out in the report submitted.

- (c) That consideration of the application to purchase the land at Gads Green, Netherton, for vehicular access across the said land be deferred, on account of the withdrawal of interest by one of the applicants, but that, in view of comments made by the second applicant, a site visit be arranged to enable Members to assess the area and consider the comments submitted to the meeting by the second applicant.
 - (d) That the Cabinet Member for the Environment be advised to approve the granting of a licence to occupy the Council owned land at the rear of 123 and 125 Ivanhoe Street, Dudley, on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.
 - (e) That the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning be advised to approve the exchange of Council owned land between the Trustees of Jesson's C of E Primary School and the Council, on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.
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PUBLIC FORUM

The Chairman advised that questions would be taken from the floor, should there be any time remaining when written questions had been addressed.

The Area Liaison Officer summarised adverse comments submitted by eighteen members of the public indicating concerns at the suggestion of the building of a mosque and community centre on land at Oakeywell Street, which would be referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration. Some members of the public voiced their strong objections to such a proposal. In response to the comments made, the Assistant Director Environmental Management advised that no firm planning application for the land had been received and that no Council funding was to be provided towards the building of a mosque. The Chairman advised that the request for an exchange of the said land had been considered in accordance with the usual procedures in 2001. A member of the public encouraged people to make their views known to the Director of the Urban Environment, in writing, to enable them to become part of the consultation process, should an application be submitted at a future date. Other written questions and answers were as follows:

1. A request for the Kates Hill Area to be included in the Council's Dog Fouling Restrictions Programme, was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration and a written response to the questioner.

2. A request for an update on the current situation regarding the Claughton Development Site, was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for investigation and a written response to the questioner.
3. In response to a request for the 1960's Scheme for a Netherton bypass to be reinvestigated, the Assistant Director Environmental Management undertook to investigate and send a written to the questioner.
4. Questions relating to the ban of alcohol consumption were deferred for consideration under the agenda item relating to alcohol consumption in public places - Dudley Town Centre.
5. Representatives of the Friends of Buffery Park Group requested support for the reclassification of Buffery Park as a Town Park. This was referred to the Cabinet and the Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation for consideration.
6. A request was made for the Director of Housing to clarify the situation regarding what had happened to alleged funding for resurfacing work of the service road on Russells Hall Estate in 2001. The request was referred to the Director of Housing for consideration and a written response to Councillor M Davis.
7. In response to concerns regarding the alleged sale of drugs and stolen goods, both inside and outside the public house in Selbourne Road, the Assistant Director Environmental Management undertook to investigate.
8. Concerns expressed regarding litter problems in Watsons Green Road area were referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for investigation and a written response to be sent to the questioner.
9. A young person commented on the need for funding for repairs to a Church on the Hill in Netherton and arising from a comment made that the Council had made a contribution towards the building of a mosque was advised that the Council was not providing any funding to the Muslim community towards the building of any mosque and/or community centre.

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on a proposal to ban the consumption of alcohol in Dudley Town Centre.

Members of the Committee, and members of the public, expressed support for the ban, in principle but expressed the view that there was a need for an alcohol ban for the whole of the area covered by the Central Dudley area. The Director of Law and Property explained that this was not feasible, due to lack of police evidence to support a wider ban on the grounds that anti social behaviour incidents reported within the Dudley Area, did not appear to be alcohol related. If evidence became available at a later stage to support the need for the area covered by the ban to be extended, this could be investigated.

Members of the Committee and members of the public expressed their dismay at the lack of police evidence of alcohol related anti-social behaviour.

The Director of Law and Property requested the Committee to consider allocating £12,000 from its capital allocations budget to cover the cost of providing and erecting the necessary signage.

RESOLVED

That the Licensing and Safety Committee be advised of the Committee's support in principle, for an Order to ban the consumption of alcohol in public places within Dudley, and that the funding of signage costs from the Committee's capital allocations budget would only be considered if the Order covered the whole of the Central Dudley Area, and then only if the funding could not be identified from existing Council funds, and that any request for funding should be on an official capital allocations application form.

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DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT - MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THIS COMMITTEE HELD ON 4TH NOVEMBER 2004

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on responses to a number of issues raised at the meeting of this Committee held on 4th November, 2004, 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, and appendices to the report, submitted be noted.

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on written responses to questions raised at previous meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted be noted.

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DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of next meeting of the Committee would be as follows:

31 March, 2005 at Holly Hall School, Scotts Green Close, Russells Hall Estate, Dudley

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm.

CHAIRMAN