

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Thursday, 4th September, 2003 at 6.00 p.m.
at Sledmere Primary School, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Rahman (Chair)
Councillor J R Davies (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Ali, Mrs Aston, Bradney, Mrs Coulter, Ms Craigie, Darby, Davis, Fletcher, Ms Foster, Ms Hart-Bowman, Lowe, Whitehouse and C L Woodall; Dr Cartwright, Mrs Edwards and Mrs Oakes, together with Ms L Warren (Director of Social Services, as Area Liaison Officer), Dr R Sims (Assistant Director of Housing) (Strategy), Mr M Williams (Assistant Director of the Urban Environment) (Environmental Management), Mr K Edwards (Principal Solicitor) and Mr R Sanders (Assistant Principal Officer (Democratic Services) – both Directorate of Law and Property.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18th June, 2003, be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the addition of reference in minute 8 (Appointment of Working Groups) to the appointment of the Central Dudley Area Committee (Community Plan) Working Group for the ensuing municipal year with its existing terms of reference and a composition of four members of the Labour Group and one member of the Liberal Democrat Group and a membership comprising Councillors Mrs Aston, J R Davies, Davis, Lowe and Rahman and the substitution of the word "all" for the word "some" in the second line of the second paragraph of minute 14 (a) (Public Forum).

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor C L Woodall declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in the subject of item 8(e) on the agenda (St Modwen's Proposals for Dudley Zoo) in view of his membership of the Board of the Black Country Living Museum.

Councillor Davis declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in the subject of item 8(e) in view of his membership of the Development Control Committee. In making his declaration, Councillor Davis indicated that he would not participate in the debate on that item.

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YOUNG PEOPLE'S ISSUES

No issues were raised under this item.

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PETITIONS

The following petitions were received and referred for consideration to relevant officers, as indicated:

- (a) From residents of the Borough, from within the area of the Central Dudley Area Committee, objecting to the proposed bus Red Route scheme from Tipton to Stourbridge.
- (b) From residents of Cole Street and Northfield Road, Netherton, presented by Councillor Lowe, expressing concern that a private property behind Cole Street had been used as a temporary residence for a number of travellers for several weeks; expressing concerns on health and safety and anti-social behaviour grounds; calling upon the Council to instigate actions that would ensure that the full force of the law would be used at the earliest opportunity to alleviate the situation and requesting the Council to investigate the setting up of a Code of Practice dealing with the issues raised and for staff to have clearly identified roles. The petition also called for a meeting to be held between Councillor Lowe and the Chief Executive and residents' representatives from Cole Street.

Councillor C Woodall referred to a petition sent to him by residents of Kates Hill requesting the provision of cycling facilities at Green Park which he proposed to refer to a forthcoming meeting of the Friends of Green Park. In the discussion on this petition, reference was also made to the damage to Green Park which was being caused by the unauthorised use of the park by motorcyclists.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the petitions in respect of the Red Route and the use of the land at Cole Street by travellers be referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for attention.
 - (2) That the Director of the Urban Environment be asked to investigate the unauthorised use of Green Park by motorcyclists.
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APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY
THE COUNCIL

Reports of the Director of Law and Property were submitted regarding land and property within the Committee's area.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Lead Member for Housing be advised to declare the land to the rear of 24/32 Marriott Road, Netherton indicated on the plan now submitted surplus to requirements and that the site be added to the Land Disposals Programme to be sold at the best price reasonably obtainable upon terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.
- (2) That the Lead Member for the Environment be advised that, for the reasons indicated in the report now submitted, the land adjacent to 16 Alton Grove, Kates Hill, as shown on the plan attached to the report, be refused.
- (3) That the Lead Member for Housing be advised that the easement over the section of the entrance to Dudley Wood Sports Ground adjacent to 192 Cradley Road, Netherton, requested by the developer of three houses proposed to be constructed at the rear of 186/192 Cradley Road to route the foul drainage along the verge of the access to the playing fields, be approved on terms and conditions to be agreed and negotiated by the Director of Law and Property.
- (4) That the Lead Member for Housing be recommended that the site of the former Cedar Road Stores at Cedar Road, Kates Hill, as indicated on the plan attached to the report now submitted, be declared surplus to requirements and added to the Land Disposals Programme for sale on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.
- (5) That consideration of the application now submitted for the purchase of land adjacent to 11 Leveson Walk, Dudley, for the construction of a garage and a possible bedroom extension be deferred pending a site visit.

- (6) That the Lead Member for Leisure be advised that the freehold title to the Brooke Robinson Suite at Dudley Town Hall, as indicated on the plan attached to the report now submitted, be purchased on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.
- (7) That the Lead Member for Personnel and Legal and Property be advised that the land at Himley Road/Salop Street indicated on the plan attached to the report now submitted be declared surplus to requirements and added to the Land Disposals Programme for sale on terms and conditions to be negotiated and approved by the Director of Law and Property.
- (8) That the Lead Member for Personnel and Law and Property be advised that the application to purchase the freehold of the land at the Royal Brierley Crystal site, Tipton Road, Dudley, indicated on the plan attached, be refused for the reasons indicated in the report now submitted.

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PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) The issue of nuisance to her property arising from a gateway feature situated outside her residence was raised by Mrs J Parker. Mrs Parker indicated that she had raised the matter with the Council but that a response had yet to be received. At the request of the Chair, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) agreed to arrange for a written response to be sent to Mrs Parker within 14 days.
- (b) The issue of the amount of traffic using Blackacre Road and the nature of the vehicles using the road was raised by Mr J Shepherd who advocated the closure of Blackacre Road at one end or the provision of speed ramps. It was agreed that the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) would arrange for a response to be sent.
- (c) A slip was submitted by a Mr T Hayward, who stated that the closure of Blackacre Road and part of Selbourne Road had led to an increase in the volume of traffic in Buffery Road and Lister Road. It was agreed that the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) would arrange a response to be sent.

- (d) A written question submitted by a Mr S Smith asked if the Council would admit a mistake had been made by virtue of the traffic management changes made to King Street. It was agreed that the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) would respond in writing.
- (e) In response to a question by the Chair of the Friends of Priory Park and The Green regarding the current position on the planning application anticipated for the proposed Hospitality and Tourism Academy at Priory Park, the Chair indicated that, as far as he was aware, a planning application had not yet been submitted.
- (f) In expressing his dissatisfaction at the length of time taken to undertake work to his property, the issue of the deployment of Council housing repair staff to undertake refurbishment work on the office accommodation at Forge House and Capstan House was raised by Mr Shakespeare. It was agreed that a written response would be sent by the Director of Housing and that a report back be made to the next meeting of the Committee.
- (g) In response to a question from Professor Holmes regarding the procedure for consideration of Traffic Regulation Orders, the Principal Solicitor, Mr Edwards, stated that the Committee was not specified as a statutory consultee.
- (h) The issue of the proposed Red Route from Tipton to Stourbridge was raised by Mr D Seymour subsequent to the petition on the subject presented by him under agenda item no. 5.

A brief presentation on the issue was given by Mr Seymour in which he indicated the practical implications for residents living along the line of the route should the proposal proceed. In this regard, he emphasised the impact the scheme would have on residents living along the proposed route, referring to an article in the "Evening Mail" newspaper on the penalties imposed on Solihull residents following the introduction of a Red Route Scheme in that authority. Mr Seymour referred particularly to the implications he perceived the scheme would have on shoppers, deliveries, visitors to the sick and elderly and on the financial well being of businesses along the route. He emphasised the strong opposition of residents along the route to the scheme.

A number of members of the Committee empathised with Mr Seymour and the petitioners. One member indicated his intention to speak to the Chief Superintendent of Police regarding the policing implications.

RESOLVED

That the Committee express its disquiet at the proposed Red Route scheme from Tipton to Stourbridge.

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DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT – MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE HELD ON 18TH JUNE, 2003

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on various matters raised at the meeting of the Area Committee held on 18th June, 2003 as follows:

(a) Agreement with Wolverhampton City Council – Joint Provision of Household Waste Site at Anchor Lane

The report indicated the nature of an agreement reached provisionally between Dudley MBC and Wolverhampton City Council which would allow Dudley residents the continued use of the Anchor Lane household waste site, free of charge.

Certain members indicated their disagreement with the principle of entering into an agreement with Wolverhampton at a cost to the Council in view of the precedent that this might set. In introducing the report, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) indicated that the formal decision sheet had yet to be completed.

RESOLVED

That a further report on this issue, confirming the arrangements when the decision has been formalised, be submitted to the next meeting.

(b) Submission of a BMX Project

The report referred to the report on this matter being submitted to the Executive on 10th September, 2003 outlining the level of demand from the five Area Committee areas and proposing possible means by which the demands might be met.

The report also indicated that, while the original suggestion from young people had been that a skate facility could be developed on the site of the former bowling green in Priory Park, the Friends of Priory Park and The Green had included the refurbishment of the existing facility in their plans for the park.

In confirming the support of the organisation for the skatepark facility, the Chair of the Friends of Priory Park and The Green indicated that, in view of the very small recreational area that would remain, it was unlikely the facility could be accommodated at Priory Park should the proposed Hospitality and Tourism Academy proceed.

(c) Buffery Park Fun Fair

The report indicated that, following the receipt of the petition submitted to the meeting of the Committee held on 18th June, 2003, the fun fair operator at Buffery Park had been identified and that he would be contacted formally regarding the behaviour of his employees while on site. The operator would not be returning to Buffery Park until 2004 and would be issued with a formal warning to improve the behaviour of his operatives.

The report indicated also that the criteria and guidelines for the operation of fun fairs were being reviewed.

In the discussion on this issue, it was pointed out by one of the petitioners that one of their main objects was to seek action to ensure that the fair was not situated in too close a proximity to the residential area. The Chair expressed the view that the revised guidelines should include what was considered to be an acceptable noise level.

RESOLVED

That the revised guidelines, when completed, be submitted to the Committee for information.

(d) Development of the Former Blowers Green Timber Yard

The report indicated that, further to the issue raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 18th June, 2003, a planning application in relation to this site had been received from a developer. The application had not been accepted, however, as additional information had been requested from the officers. No comment could therefore be made in relation to the developer's proposals until the planning application had been properly accepted.

Reference was made to the impact on wildlife the development of the site might have and the view was expressed by one member that any future planning application should consider and take into account the Tree Preservation Orders relevant to the site. He also expressed the view that ward members should be consulted on the planning application. The resident who raised the initial concerns in the public forum session at the previous meeting, Mr Round, also emphasised that the development of the site would result in Cole Street properties being overlooked by the flats in the event of the ground being regraded.

(e) St Modwen's Proposals for Dudley Zoo

The report indicated that a new planning application from St Modwen's in relation to Dudley Zoo was still awaited.

(f) Various Traffic Issues – Netherton Area

Further to the request made at the meeting of the Committee held on 18th June, 2003, for a traffic strategy for the Netherton Area to be undertaken, and to the issue of the need to reduce and slow down the heavy traffic flow in Cole Street, Netherton, raised at that meeting, the report indicated that Traffic Engineers were looking into the traffic problems in and around Netherton, as requested, and that it was anticipated that a report would be submitted to the Committee later in the year. The report indicated also that the timings of the Cole Street traffic lights had been adjusted.

In the discussion on this item, Mr. Round of Cole Street expressed the view that the timings of the traffic lights remained problematical and were causing pollution to be worsened. He asked for pollution monitors to be installed in some residents' properties.

Members of the Committee reported on other roads in the Netherton area at which traffic problems were being encountered, including at the crossroads at the Golden Cross, where traffic flow was being affected by the closure of the St. Anne's bridge. At this juncture, the Chair emphasised the need for a traffic management strategy for the entire Central Dudley Area to be formulated.

(g) Further to the petition submitted to the meeting of the Committee held on 18th June, 2003, regarding traffic speeding and dangerous driving at Selbourne Road, the report indicated that letters had been sent to the Police asking them to address enforcement issues in the vicinity of Selbourne Road and Blackacre Road.

The report indicated further that traffic engineers were investigating possible traffic calming measures that could be implemented in Selbourne Road to address the concerns of local residents and that it was anticipated that a detailed report would be submitted later in the year. In addition, a new traffic count would be held in Blackacre Road once the holiday period had passed, in order to ascertain the latest position in relation to traffic volume in ordinary conditions.

In expanding on his written submission, Mr. Shepherd asserted that 75% of the users of the Dudley Southern By-Pass were using Blackacre Road as a rat run. He again expressed the view that there was a necessity for one end of Blackacre Road to be stopped or speed humps installed. In expanding on his submission, Mr. Hayward re-stated his view that the restrictions in access to Blackacre Road and the closure of part of Selbourne Road had led to an increase in the volume of traffic at Buffery Road and Lister Road and advocated that a review of traffic management of the whole area, including the re-opening of King Street, should be considered. Members of the Committee and other residents then expressed concerns in relation to the usage of various roads, including Blackacre Road, Cook Avenue, Selbourne Road, School Road and Prospect Row. The view expressed that a comprehensive report on the traffic management of the whole area, including King Street, should be undertaken, was supported.

On consideration of this item and of the preceding two items, it was

RESOLVED

That a comprehensive report on the traffic management of the entire Central Dudley Area, including Netherton, the Blackacre Road/Selbourne Road/Cook Avenue/Bufbery Road/Lister Road area and King Street, be undertaken and that an interim report on the matter be referred to the next meeting of the Committee.

(h) Scotts Green Close Working Group

The report indicated the issues to be included in a scoping study commissioned by the Scotts Green Close Working Group to address the issues raised on this matter.

RESOLVED

That the comprehensive traffic management strategy requested under the previous item include also consideration of the situation at Scotts Green Close.

CLAUGHTON DEVELOPMENT SITE – ACCESS ISLAND

The report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress on the design of the new traffic island proposed to be constructed to provide access to the Cloughton Development Site and seeking the views of the Committee thereon.

The draft development brief for the Cloughton site had been presented to the Central Dudley Area Committee in March, 2002 and had been approved subsequently by the Development Control Committee in October, 2002. At those meetings a number of issues had been raised about the traffic implications arising from the construction of an access island to serve the Cloughton site and it had been agreed that once more detailed proposals had been produced they would be presented for comment. A detailed planning application had now been submitted and a public meeting had been held on 2nd September, 2003, to discuss the proposals.

The design features of the proposed scheme were indicated in paragraph 2.4 of the report now submitted. In the discussion on the item, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) reported that, at the public meeting, local residents had continued to have concerns about the proposed traffic island, these relating to the increased traffic movement likely to result from the development which they considered would exacerbate traffic problems and rat running. The members of the public present had also been concerned that the majority of jobs arising from the development should be filled locally. Some local residents had also questioned the proposed access arrangements and had suggested that traffic lights, rather than a new roundabout, would be more appropriate.

The Assistant Director indicated that, in response, the public meeting had been advised that traffic generation would be monitored; that overspill parking from the development would also be monitored; that it might be appropriate to install environmental traffic management measures; rat running would be monitored; that the roundabout would compel drivers to slow down; and that the roundabout would not be detrimental to the public highway.

In the discussion, the Chair indicated that local residents were not in favour of the scheme and that, while the development was largely supported, residents believed that the current road layout was adequate to serve it. They considered that another roundabout in such close proximity to the traffic island on the Dudley Southern By-Pass would exacerbate problems of traffic congestion. The point was also made that, with the development creating some 700 jobs, there would be a heavy increase in the number of vehicles using the site and that to cross the roundabout would increase road safety problems for children.

Some concerns were also expressed at the possible implications of the construction of a third roundabout at Cinder Bank.

RESOLVED

That the views now expressed together with those expressed at the public meeting, be reported to the Development Control Committee for consideration in connection with the planning application.

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APPOINTMENT OF NOMINATIVE TRUSTEES TO CASTLE HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted seeking consideration of the appointment of nominative trustees to serve on the Castle High School Foundation, arising from the resignation of two former members.

A nomination to fill one of the vacancies was made on behalf of Councillor Davis.

RESOLVED

That consideration of this matter be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee and that the nomination of Councillor Davis be considered at that juncture.

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WARD ISSUES

- (a) The issue of a case of anti-social behaviour at Middlepark Road, Russells Hall Estate, Dudley was reported by Councillor Ms. Hart-Bowman, in response to which the Director of Housing was asked to investigate and take appropriate action.

It was indicated in the discussion that the Select Committee on the Environment would be reviewing the Housing Lettings Policy at its meeting in October.

- (b) In referring to examples of anti-social behaviour, Councillor Davis expressed concern that a community policeman had not been allocated to the St. James's Ward. He also expressed consideration that the Community Safety Unit should be represented at meetings of this Area Committee.
- (c) Incidents of aggressive begging and drug use at Westley Street were reported by Councillor Ms. Craigie, in response to which the Director of Housing agreed to investigate.
- (d) The need for speed cameras to be installed along Buffery Road was advocated by Councillor J.R. Davis, in response to which the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Mangement) agreed to investigate.
- (e) A request by residents of Windsor Crescent and adjoining roads for the installation of traffic calming measures was reported by Councillor J.R. Davies, in response to which the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Mangement) agreed to investigate.
- (f) A question was asked by Councillor Ali in relation to the current position regarding the lighting of Castlegate Island, to which the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) agreed to respond in writing.
- (g) An issue regarding the St. Thomas' Ward, reported to the Police but not yet responded to, was raised by Councillor C.L. Woodall. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) agreed to follow up the matter with the Police.
- (h) In relation to problems of anti-social behaviour, Councillor Whitehouse advocated an increase in the reward of £100 for reporting on vandalism at Local Nature Reserves to be increased to £250.
- The work being undertaken by officers in the Directorate of Housing, including those in the Estate Management Office, which had led to a reduction in anti-social behaviour at Lodge Farm was commended by Councillor Whitehouse.
- (i) In referring to problems at Molyneux Road, Councillor Whitehouse reported on work being undertaken in conjunction with Sandwell M.B.C. to alleviate the problems and suggested that one officer from the relevant department be appointed as Dudley's representative.

- (k) In response to the unauthorised use of off road motorcycles at Wrens Nest Nature Reserve, reported by Councillor Fletcher, it was agreed that a letter be sent to the Police asking them to exercise their powers to secure the cessation of the practice.
- (l) Councillor Mrs. Aston reported that fly tipping was taking place on the site of the flats at Wrens Nest Road demolished some three years previously. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) agreed to investigate.
- (m) Councillor Darby expressed his continued opposition to the proposed siting of the Hospitality and Tourism Academy at Priory Park.
- (n) Councillor Darby reported on opposition within the Castle and Priory Ward to the proposed development on Peggy's Meadows.
- (o) Councillor Darby expressed concern at the involvement of the Dudley Racial Equality Council in enabling asylum seekers to receive assistance with gardening while elderly indigenous residents received no such assistance. Councillor Darby questioned why tenants of Council houses were held to the tenancy agreements in instances where the Council failed to meet its own obligations.
- (q) Councillor Rahman asked to be advised of the timescale for the development of any new roundabout at Cinder Bank, in response to which the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) agreed to respond.
- (r) Councillor Rahman advocated a co-ordinated response between the various agencies involved, including the relevant Council departments, local residents, business people and the Police, in combating anti-social behaviour, which he considered to be widespread.

RESOLVED

That the date and venues of future meetings of the Committee, as follows, be noted:

Monday, 27th October, 2003 at Dudley Town Hall
Thursday, 27th November, 2003 at Hillcrest School and
Community College
Thursday, 5th February, 2004 at Saltwells Educational
Development Centre
Monday, 22nd March, 2004 at a venue to be determined

The meeting ended at 8.55 p.m.

CHAIR

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