

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Thursday, 4th November, 2004 at 6.30 pm
at Saltwells Education Development Centre, Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Rahman (Chairman)
Councillor J. Davies (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Ali, Mrs Aston, Cotterill, Mrs Coulter, M Davis, Finch,
Hart-Bowman, Johnston, Male, Sparks, and C L Woodall; Mrs H Edwards
and Mrs P Goodyear.
Officers - Mrs L Warren (Director of Social Services and Area Liaison
Officer), Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, Assistant Director
of Education - Access and Inclusion, Mr M Williams, Mr P Boland and Ms
J Pilkington (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Ms D Channings
and Mr N Collumbell (Directorate of Housing), Mr K Edwards and Mr J
Jablonski (Directorate of Law and Property).

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

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WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Pat Goodyear, a newly appointed co-opted
member from DOSTI, to this her first meeting of the Committee.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That, subject to the following amendments the minutes of the
meeting of the Committee held on 2nd September, 2004, be
approved as a correct record and signed:-

- (1) The addition of the words "and requested that a written
report be submitted to the Committee" to minute 30 (c) -
Public Forum.
- (2) The rewording of the second sentence of the second
paragraph of the preamble to minute number 36 - Post
Office Potential Branch Closure - and to the rewording of
the third paragraph to that preamble as follows:-

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

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Sparks declared a prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members’ Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda item no. 9 (Draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Dudley Town Centre proposing a revised town centre conservation area and a revised Castle Hill Conservation Area) in view of his position as Chairman of Dudley Zoo and Castle.

Councillor Mrs Coulter declared a personal interest in accordance with the Members’ Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda item no. 6 (a) (Education Inclusion Strategy) as her son attends a special needs school.

Councillor Rahman declared a personal interest in accordance with the Members’ Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda item no. 11 (Capital Allocations) as Netherton News Group, a recommended recipient for grant, is affiliated with Netherton Woodside Partnership with which he is involved.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bradney and Ms Craigie and Mrs Oakes and Mrs Little.

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YOUTH ISSUES

Councillor Cotterill referred to the long delay in the receipt by a group of tenants and residents of the Saltwells Estate of topsoil, to be used in connection with a BMX track, that had been requested last August. It was also reported that funding was now in place but that the soil had not yet been delivered. A representative from the Directorate of the Urban Environment undertook to investigate this matter and ensure that a response was sent direct to Councillor Cotterill.

In response to a query arising from the last meeting of the Committee, whereby the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning was to be requested to contact all schools covered by the Committee to request that if there are any issues relevant to young people that needed to be raised at the Committee they should contact the Chairman, the Chairman

reported that all schools had been contacted and that a meeting was to be held on 15th November, 2004, so that various issues could be progressed including a mechanism whereby young people could engage with the Committee on youth issues.

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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 residents of the Foxyards Estate, Dudley requesting the closure of a public footpath off Henlow Close, Foxyards Estate, Dudley – referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration and attention.
- (b) From Councillor Sparks on behalf of residents of Bath Road requesting a resumption and improvement of services relating to grass cutting, tree pruning, maintenance of fences, the safety of the lamppost outside number 49 Bath Road and general council duties - referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration and attention in respect of this petition and investigation as to why no action had been taken arising from previous requests made.

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CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13(c) it was

RESOLVED

That Agenda Item number 7 - Public Forum be considered before Agenda Item number 6(b) - Ward Issues.

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INCLUSION STRATEGY ACTION PLAN CONSULTATION

A report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning was submitted on the formal consultation of the Inclusion Strategy Action Plan on the future provision for children with special educational needs. The closing date of the consultation had been extended to enable this Committee to consider the Plan and make comments thereon.

Arising from a presentation made by Sharon Menghini - Assistant Director of Education - Access and Inclusion - Members made a number of comments and raised queries regarding the proposals with particular reference to:

- (a) Concerns that the specialised teaching skills available in special schools would be lost; the difficulties in recruiting such teachers and related professional staff and that mainstream schools would not be able to provide the same support.
- (b) That there was a need to reinforce the important safeguards referred to in paragraph 15 of the report submitted.
- (c) That there was a need to consider other models of provision given the level of concern expressed and the perception that the proposals were being rushed through.
- (d) The need for pilot studies to be undertaken to assess how the proposals would operate in practice.
- (e) It was queried whether the consultation process had been sufficiently wide to encompass all those involved.
- (f) Whether the proposals would meet the needs of all children and not lead to them being isolated in mainstream provision.
- (g) The need for more information and clarity as to what was being proposed including how many children from special schools it was proposed should receive an education in mainstream provision and whether the resources were available to achieve this.
- (h) That there was a need for an impact assessment to be carried out by an independent university body not previously involved.
- (i) That the costs of training in specialist skills could be prohibitive to schools.
- (j) That the experiences of other authorities in undertaking a similar Plan should be ascertained so that they could inform the final version of Dudley's Plan.

Following responses from Sharon Menghini and the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to the points made it was:-

RESOLVED

That the foregoing comments of this Committee be submitted to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning as the response of this Committee to the consultation of the Inclusion Strategy Action Plan.

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. Questions and answers were then given as follows:-

- (a) Concerns expressed over a recent fatality in King Street and the need for safety measures to prevent another fatality were referred to a representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment for response direct to the questioner.

Concerns were also expressed about the need for an improved/valid link between the Flood Street car park and the town centre with an improved, safe and secure crossing.

- (b) Arising from the petition referred to earlier in the meeting regarding a request to close the public footpath off Henlow Close, Foxyards Estate and related anti-social behaviour issues, further questions were asked in particular regarding the timescale involved before action was taken; the action that could be taken and the implications of moving the problem to Oxford Way together with general comments on the anti-social behaviour that was occurring in the area. In response a representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment reported that he would request a speedy review and consideration of the situation.

- (c) It was noted that comments expressed about tenants re-housed to Cromwell Street and the alleged reluctance of the Council to introduce and uphold the Tenants Agreement would be considered as part of Agenda Item 10 - Anti-Social Behaviour.

- (d) It was reported that a response to the question asked as to whether this area was to lose its Community Support Officers would be referred to the Chief Executive's Directorate for response direct to the questioner.

- (e) Issues raised in respect of traffic calming measures in Bowling Green Road and about lighting problems in Field Mews were referred to a representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment for investigation and response direct to the questioner. Such response to include further consideration to be given to the issues raised in a petition submitted by Councillor Male to the July 2004 meeting of this Committee requesting traffic calming measures in the Bowling Green Estate area.

- (f) It was noted that the issue raised of a replacement fence at flats on Corporation Road/Highfield Road would be dealt with under the Ward Issues Item on the agenda.
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WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillor M Davis requested that the issue of King Street be looked at again, mentioning in particular the situation where an express bus lane had been provided and then ramps had been put in to slow down traffic. A representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment agreed to look at the matter again and arrange for a response direct to Councillor Davis.
- (b) Councillor C L Woodall requested that developers be approached to remove wire mesh barriers at land at Rowley Road in view of the hazards they were now posing. A representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment agreed to pass on the concerns expressed to the developers who were responsible for maintaining this site.
- (c) Councillor Ali
- (i) Requested that a meeting be arranged between the three Ward Councillors and officers so as to prevent any further injuries in King Street. A representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment undertook to action this matter.
- (ii) Requested that consideration be given to the possible use of land at Peartree Lane/Blowers Green Road for use as a civic amenity site by people of central Dudley. A representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment would arrange for a response on this matter to be sent direct to Councillor Ali.
- (iii) Arising from further consideration given to the recent name change of the former Dudley Town Hall, it was agreed that the Area Liaison Officer write to the Lead Member for Culture and Recreation, with a copy to the Leader of the Council, requesting that he reconsider the renaming of Dudley Concert Hall with a view to changing it back to Dudley Town Hall and that he be asked to respond in writing with a copy of his response being sent to all Members of the Committee.
- (d) Councillor J Davies referred to the issue previously raised regarding fencing at Corporation Road. A representative from the Directorate of Housing reported that monies for the fencing were now available and that currently a contractor was being sought to carry out the works. The representative undertook to inform Councillor Davies as to when the work would be carried out and respond direct to the questioner.

- (e) Councillor Mrs Coulter referred to the checking of lighting including public rights of way and in response a representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment undertook to liaise with her on this matter.
- (f) A request was also made for the right of way in Golden Hillock Road, which has been reported to the Directorate of Housing, to be investigated. In response it was noted that a representative from the Directorate of the Urban Environment/Directorate of Housing would investigate this matter and take the appropriate action.
- (g) Councillor Sparks requested that land at the top of Quarry Bank High Street (Old High Street) had been subject to fly tipping and requested that action be taken in respect of this land. A representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment undertook to arrange for the appropriate action to be taken and for a response direct to Councillor Sparks.
- (h) Councillor Johnston
- (i) Requested that a full time park warden be provided for Priory Park arising from concerns expressed by the Friends of Priory Park. In view of the restructuring of such provision that was being carried out a representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment undertook to report back to a future meeting of the Committee on the provision of park wardens, and respond to Councillor Johnston.
- (ii) Queried the position regarding the sum of up to £50,000 that it had previously been reported would be available for use in the Priory North Housing Area. A representative of the Directorate of Housing undertook to investigate this matter and respond direct to Councillor Johnston.
- (i) Councillor Mrs Aston
- (i) Requested the provision of a two metre high metal fence and a gate for land at the rear of Forest Road and also referred to fly tipping at Castle Mill Road. A representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment undertook to arrange for a response to be sent to Councillor Mrs Aston on these matters.
- (ii) Queried the position regarding land at Wrens Nest Road, the site of former flats. A representative of the Directorate of Housing undertook to investigate this matter and respond direct to Councillor Mrs Aston

- (j) Councillor Rahman
- (i) Requested a reduction in the speed limit to 20 mph in respect of Northfield Road, Netherton between Netherton and Old Hill and also requested a pelican crossing in Northfield Road. A representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment undertook to arrange for these matters to be investigated and for a response to be sent to Councillor Rahman.
 - (ii) Requested that the issue of litter in Cinder Bank Road/Southern By Pass be investigated and the appropriate action taken. A representative of the Directorate of the Urban Environment undertook to investigate, take the appropriate action and respond direct to Councillor Rahman on this matter.
 - (iii) Raised the question of access to Newland Grove in view of anti-social behaviour that was occurring with a view to means of preventing access being provided. A representative of the Directorate of Housing undertook to investigate this matter and respond direct to Councillor Rahman.

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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

- (1) That consideration of the request for the release of covenants relating to land adjacent to 37 Yew Tree Road, Netherton, be deferred to a future meeting of the Committee pending the holding of a site visit.
- (2) That further consideration of the request received for the release of a restrictive covenant in respect of land at Hillside Road, Dudley, be deferred for consideration at a future meeting in view of the land having been sold to another developer who had different proposals in respect of the land.

- (3) That consideration of the request from the owner of 123 Ivanhoe Street, Dudley, to occupy land to the rear of the property be deferred pending receipt of further information regarding a similar request made by the owner of 125 Ivanhoe Street, Dudley.

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DRAFT CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL FOR DUDLEY TOWN CENTRE PROPOSING A NEW DUDLEY TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA AND A REVISED CASTLE HILL CONSERVATION AREA

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted seeking views on the draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Dudley Town Centre, as shown on figure 1 attached to the report submitted.

Pete Boland, Directorate of the Urban Environment, gave a presentation on this matter. Arising from the presentation given and comments made by members it was

RESOLVED

That the draft Dudley Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal and the new conservation area boundaries proposed therein, be endorsed by this Committee.

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ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

A report of the Director of Housing was submitted on the options available to the Directorate of Housing in combating anti-social behaviour, arising from consideration of a report at the last meeting of the committee on police checks.

Diane Channings, an Assistant Director of Housing, gave a presentation on the content of the report submitted.

Arising from the presentation given members made a number of comments and queries relating in particular to

- (a) The need for the actions the Council can take to combat anti-social behaviour to be emphasised and drawn up so that the lives of the majority of tenants could be enhanced.

- (b) Instances of anti-social behaviour needing to be dealt with quicker than was presently the case given the legal and procedural processes currently in place. It was noted that Anti-Social Behaviour Courts were being piloted by the Government with judges specialising in anti-social behaviour and so better able to understand the issues. Evaluation of the pilots would be monitored by the Directorate of Housing.
- (c) People the subject of anti-social behaviour orders should not be grouped together in the same areas.
- (d) Other provision, for example, of youth services that should be expanded to help in combating anti-social behaviour.
- (e) The further consideration that should be given to the dispersal of large families grouped on particular estates. Leicester City Council was given as an example of best practice in this regard.
- (f) It was noted that the law allows secure tenants to take in lodgers without the permission of the Council and therefore someone evicted due to anti-social behaviour could go and lodge with another tenant in the area. Members considered that the law was inappropriate and should be changed.
- (g) The need for people who were prepared to act as witnesses to understand the type of evidence that was needed and that they should be supported by officers.
- (h) Greater emphasis being placed on the enforcement of tenancy conditions particularly with Introductory and Demoted Tenancies.
- (i) The need for appropriate protection to be given by all agencies to witnesses who fear reprisals.
- (j) A review of the work of anti-social behaviour teams that had recently been completed and that their work was being redirected to witness support and would deal with both private and public housing sectors. A report on this matter could be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.
- (k) The need for arrangements to be entered into with private sector landlords so as to prevent, as far as was possible, evicted local authority tenants returning to an area as private sector tenants.
- (l) A review of the current letting arrangements by the Select Committee on the Environment and that a choice based lettings scheme was being investigated.

Arising from the comments and queries raised and the responses given by Diane Channings it was

RESOLVED

- (1) That the foregoing concerns of this Committee be referred to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Community Safety with a view to their inclusion within the work programme of that Committee.
- (2) That, as the combating of anti-social behaviour was considered to be a national issue, the Executive be recommended to agree to the submission of a letter to the Home Office requesting changes in the law so that Local Housing Authorities could be granted the powers to deal with more effectively and more quickly tenants displaying anti-social behaviour.
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Housing be requested to arrange for all members of the Council to be contacted regarding the current review of the lettings policy so that members could have the opportunity to make representations.

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CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted setting out the recommendations of the Capital Allocations Working Group made at a meeting held on 28th September, 2004.

RESOLVED

That the sums below be allocated to the following organisations for the purposes indicated.

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Priory Tenants and Residents Association	Purchase of a laptop computer	£700
Netherton News Group	Contribution towards the purchase of a colour copier	£2,000
Cole Street Methodist Church	Provision of disabled toilet facilities	£1,900

Age Concern Dudley	Purchase of new furniture and equipment for the Nightingale Activity Centre	£2,015
The Brook Club	Purchase of a large capacity boiler, teapot and kettle	£175
Russells Hall Neighbourhood Centre	Contribution towards the cost of a music and recording facility for young people and the community	£2,000
St Barnabas Church Hall	Contribution towards the cost of new windows in the hall	£2,000
Dynamic Time Out	Purchase of new furniture and equipment and improvements to flooring	£1,063.55
Directorate of the Urban Environment	Contribution towards the cost of providing an extension to the skate park at Russells Hall Open Space	£2,000
Kates Hill Darby and Joan Club	Purchase of two tea trolleys, tables and a bingo machine	£300

That it be noted that applications from the Dudley Caribbean and Friends Association, Dudley Asian Women's Centre and Hellier Street Youth and Community Association have been deferred to the next meeting of the Working Group.

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WRENS NEST NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE AND BLUEBELL PARK - WOODLAND GRANT SCHEME

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Wrens Nest National Nature Reserve and Bluebell Park Woodland Grant Scheme.

RESOLVED

That the Lead Member for the Environment be advised of the support of this Committee for the scheme.

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LOCAL SAFETY SCHEMES 2004/05 - SALTWELLS ESTATE,
NETHERTON

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on a proposed Local Safety Scheme on the Saltwells Estate, Netherton, as set out in Appendices A and B of the report submitted.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Lead Member for Transportation be advised of the support of this Committee for the modified local safety scheme for the Saltwells Estate, Netherton as set out in Appendix B to the report submitted.
- (2) That the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to inform Councillor Male as to when the scheme would be implemented and about proposals as to when the remainder of the Saltwells Estate would be considered under this scheme.

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DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT - MATTERS RAISED
AT THE MEETING OF THIS COMMITTEE HELD ON 2ND SEPTEMBER
2004

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on a number of issues raised at the meeting of this Committee held on 2nd September, 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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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the dates of future meetings of the Committee would be as follows:

8th February, 2005 at Hillcrest School and Community College, Simms Lane, Netherton

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

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm

CHAIRMAN

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