

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

BRIERLEY HILL AREA COMMITTEE – 29th MARCH, 2007

REPORT OF THE BRIERLEY HILL AREA LIAISON OFFICER

MATTERS RAISED AT THE BRIERLEY HILL AREA COMMITTEE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To update Committee on a number of issues raised at the Brierley Hill Area Committee held on the 1st February, 2007, that relate to services provided by the Council.

BACKGROUND

2. The Council provides a number of services that have considerable impact on local communities.
3. Requests for service and information are received at Area Committee on a regular basis from both members and the general public, relating to a range of services. Few enquiries can be answered immediately, with many prompting further investigation, feasibility studies and public consultation, prior to being reported back to Committee.
4. To keep Committee updated, a progress report is attached.

FINANCE

5. There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report.

LAW

6. Anti-Social Behaviour Orders are largely governed by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
7. Provisions relating to Highways including trees thereon are contained in the Highways Act 1980.
8. Provisions relating to the Council's Housing stock are contained in the Housing Act 1985.

9. Section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 places a duty on the Council as Waste Disposal Authority for its areas to provide places where its residents may deposit their household waste free of charge.
10. Traffic Regulation Orders are made under Section 1 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
11. The Traffic Calming Act 1992 amends the Highways Act 1980 to allow works to be carried out to promote safety and to preserve or improve the environment.
12. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 authorises the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the exercise of any of its functions.

EQUALITY IMPACT

13. This report is consistent with the Council's Equality and Diversity policy. There is no direct effect on children or young people.

RECOMMENDATION

14. The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.



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Brierley Hill Area Committee Liaison Officer

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List of Background Papers

See progress report attached

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REPORT OF THE AREA LIAISON OFFICER

PETITION

A petition was received at the previous meeting of the Area Committee from residents of the Chapel Street Flats, mainly from Chapel Court, but also from Dean Court and Brickiln Court requesting the provision of CCTV cameras in the lifts and the employment of a security guard to protect frail and elderly persons from undesirable persons gaining entry to the flats. As an alternative course of action to alleviate the problem, the petition also requested action to be taken to evict tenants who allowed the access to the flat and called upon the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services to respond accordingly.

Response:

The following actions have been considered by officers within the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services as a pro-active measure to address the issues raised in the petition:

- Interviews with residents who signed the petition in order to collect information on recent events.
- Checks with Police, estate staff and other professionals involved with either the perpetrators of the nuisance or the tenants they may be visiting.

This work will be undertaken forthwith following which, legal advice will be sought to consider possible injunctions/evictions.

In addition to the measures set out above, the Area Housing Manager has arranged for some random security patrols to be carried out in order to deter the nuisance and/or to collect evidence for future action.

The Directorate will also be arranging for the provision of CCTV cameras to be costed with a view to submitting a bid for consideration within the Community Safety Programme 2007/08.

BRIERLEY HILL SUSTAINABLE ACCESS NETWORK

Following consideration of the report to the last meeting of the Area Committee, Members requested that on-going progress reports on this scheme (sometimes referred to as 'The Parallel Route') be submitted to future meetings.

At the time of producing this report, the scheduled commencement of the scheme in mid to late April 2007 is still several weeks away therefore, at this stage, there is very little to add that has not been previously reported. Notwithstanding this, officers will give a verbal update on the latest position during the course of the meeting.

WARD ISSUES

a) Councillor Harris drew attention to concerns expressed by residents of Parkes Street in relation to vehicular parking problems caused by non-residents of that street who parked there in consequence of the introduction of charging at the car parks at the Moor Centre.

Response:

Whereas a specific problem of obstructive parking has been identified in Parkes Street as a result of the introduction of parking charges at the nearby Moor Centre, it is unlikely that any proposals or options to address this kind of issue so close to a town centre can be resolved in isolation without having some knock-on effect elsewhere. With this in mind, it is intended that this particular matter will now be considered as part of the larger scale Brierley Hill Traffic Regulation Order proposals that relate to the new Brierley Hill Strategic Access Network Scheme.

b) Councillor Tompkinson drew attention to problems arising from the grazing of horses at Bryce Road. She was particularly concerned at the danger to local residents and to road users.

Response:

For a number of years it has been the practice of irresponsible horse owners in the Borough to keep their horses on Council owned/controlled amenity land without permission or legal standing. These horses have caused problems to local people by depriving them of the use of the land, have been responsible for attacks on the public using the land and have caused a number of serious road traffic accidents. The Council does have a duty of care to safeguard the public who use open spaces for recreational means. Contact number for the Council on horse issues is: 01384 812345.

The public should not under any circumstances take or confine straying horses on their property. Horses that have strayed onto private land or domestic residences are a matter for the landowner concerned.

The Council does not employ staff who can impound horses and does not have a horse pound. In the past the Council has engaged a number of local horse bailiffs to impound straying and illegally grazing horses, this has provided a short-term solution at considerable cost, but has never solved the problem.

West Midlands Police have also experienced considerable problems as a consequence of these horses. As a result of the irresponsible actions of these horse owners both the Police and the council have received increasing levels of public complaints. The Police and the Council in partnership, have agreed that a company be retained as the Council's Agent to manage the situation and impound selected horses. The Agent is very experienced in controlling and removing horses and has assisted the Police, Councils and Government Departments nationwide.

Prior to the removal/impoundment of horses, known owners will have received letters of intention and notices will have been placed at various sites where horses are illegally grazing. These notices and letters advise owners that horses will be impounded if not removed. In addition, notices of intent will appear in the press.

The horse bailiff is not a reactive service able to deal immediately with stray horses that are on council owned land. Members of the public should report any incidents of this nature to our Parks Development Team. The information is logged and reported to the horse bailiff.

The horse bailiff however, is not an agent who can be called out to deal with horses straying on public roads etc. This is a matter that should be reported to the Brierley Hill Police.

The bailiff service is retained by the Council to deal with the root cause of the problem by stopping the illegal grazing of horses on public land. Past experience shows that this robust approach results in a long-term solution.

Reported incidents to both police and Council have reduced but there is still a consistent level of reporting. This will partly be due to demand for legal grazing sites outstripping availability. These reductions are also in part due to the adjoining authorities taking similar action.

The Council has a number of legal grazing sites throughout the Borough and anyone who would like to add their name to the waiting list should contact the Parks Development Team.

The current situation across the Borough is significantly less than 10 years ago. The way in which the Council manages the process has greatly reduced the overall problem, helped by the fact that the same approach towards dealing with the problem is mirrored by our neighbouring authorities.

c) Councillor Harley requested to be advised of the reasons for which an application for the tenancy of a shop in Beech Road, Kingswinford for a bakery had been refused.

Response:

Despite details of the applicant being provided, no record can be found of a specific enquiry being made. It is suspected that the applicant may have telephoned the Council and been advised that the future of the shops is under consideration, which is the case.

Consultants (Tribal CHC) have recently started work on appraising the site and input from ward members (Cllrs Harley, Blood and Miller) has been invited. The Consultants are due to report back by around June 2007 with options for the site, including whether revitalising the shops is an option.

Corporate Estate Services would welcome proposals from anyone with an interest in buying or leasing any of the shop premises.

d) Parking problems in Mill Street, Woodley Close, and Corbett Road anticipated by a member of the public, in consequence of the forthcoming introduction of parking charges at Merry Hill were discussed.

Response:

This particular enquiry relates to a perceived problem that may or may not actually arise and it would therefore, be premature at this stage to pre-empt this position. However, in due course, if the current situation should change and obstructive on-street parking did arise as a result of car parking charges at the Merry Hill Centre, it would still be possible to consider proposals to introduce appropriate Traffic Regulation Orders to address this problem.