

NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 20th September, 2005, at 6.30 p.m.
at Parkes Hall Study Centre, Woodsetton

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs Ameson Chairman)
Councillors Caunt, G H Davies, Evans, Mrs Millward, Mottram, Ryder,
Stanley and Wright; Mr Round

Officers

The Director of Children's Services (as Area Liaison Officer), the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Culture and Community Services), Assistant Director of Law and Property (Legal and Democratic Services), the Senior Engineer, Directorate of the Urban Environment and Mrs Holland (Directorate of Law and Property),

Also in attendance were Sergeant Hughes and PC Southern of West Midlands Police and PCSOs Cross and Francis.

Approximately 150 members of the public were in attendance.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29th June 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs Ridley.

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PETITIONS

There were no Petitions submitted to the meeting.

YOUTH ISSUES

Mr G Pomford, Lower Gornal Youth Centre, updated the meeting on recent Youth Service projects, as follows:

- Coseley and Lower Gornal Summer Activities; the Committee were informed of the following;
- The Pentathlete event held at Coseley School - at which twenty four out of twenty eight young people had successfully completed the event, and the Kids Orchard Partnership held at Lower Gornal Youth Centre.
- Rainbow Centre Football Project - The Committee was informed of the success of this project which had been organised by the part-time worker (leader in charge).
- Duke of Edinburgh Project at Coseley Youth Centre - the Committee was informed that four young people had achieved their Silver Awards and are working towards their Gold Awards and that staff had started in conjunction with Rainbow Community Centre on developing the Castle Award.
- Coseley Summer Camp - the Committee was informed that twenty young people had attended the camp held at Baggeridge Park.
- Sedgley Youth Centre - the Committee was informed that the numbers attending the Centre had dropped recently and that an Open Evening was planned by staff and young people in an effort to attract new members.
- XL Project - the Committee was informed that twenty eight young people had now completed the Project at bronze level, and that nine had also achieved their silver and were working towards their gold level.
- Cross Border Project - the Committee was informed that the two detached youth workers were still making contact with young people in the Coseley area and were working on projects with Wolverhampton Youth Service and on the Connexions Cyber Bus.

- Connexions Cyber Bus at Coseley - the Committee was informed that in conjunction with other agencies, work on a pilot project had been carried out to provide alternative opportunities in the Coseley area in a bid to tackle anti social behaviour.

Councillor Mrs Millward also informed the Committee of Dudley Youth Council awards and requested its ongoing support for the Youth Council.

In response to a question as to why fewer summer activities had been held this year than in previous years, Mr Pomford cited the limited funding available which had not allowed projects to take place in Sedgley and Upper Gornal.

In response, to a fourth question as to why other local authorities had been able to fund a lot of projects, the Area Liaison Officer explained that Dudley did not qualify for extra funding received by Sandwell and Wolverhampton as those authorities were classified as “deprived areas” and Dudley was not.

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POLICE ISSUES

Sergeant Hughes and PC Southern reported on “Operation Strike Out” which was being conducted during the month of September to combat anti social behaviour and alcohol related crime, particularly in Sedgley and Merry Hill.

A question was raised regarding the issue of why the police did not use the building earmarked for their use at Red Hall School.

Councillor Mrs Millward informed the meeting that she had taken up this matter some three years previously with Inspector Murcott and would be discussing the issue with the new Inspector in the next week. Discussion would also surround the possible use of the caretaker’s old house at Red Hall School as a “drop-in” centre that could be manned by Councillors on a voluntary basis.

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PUBLIC FORUM

1. A question was raised regarding renovation works required on the Beacon Tower.

In response, the Area Liaison Officer informed the questioner that the Directorate of the Urban Environment would investigate and respond direct.

2. A question was raised in respect of 29 Pear Tree Lane. .

In response Mr Tart stated that 29 Pear Tree Lane was not owned by Greencorns, but that the owner still needed to submit a planning application to use the property for the purpose intended. The Social Care Inspectorate had indicated that they would not authorise the use of any property, or register, any proposed care home, until the need for planning permission had been determined.

In response to a question regarding care homes being exempt from the payment of Council Tax, Councillor Mrs Millward stated that exemption was backed by Government legislation.

3. In response to a question on the timescale for the installation of weight and time restriction signs in Bradley's Lane, the Senior Engineer reported his understanding of the situation and agreed to confirm the position in writing to the questioner.

4. A question was asked regarding the cost of moving the Dudley Archive Service from Mount Pleasant School in Coseley to Summerhill School in Kingswinford, and whether it would be more cost effective to renovate the Mount Pleasant School.

A further question was asked as to why no money had been spent on Mount Pleasant School in recent years.

A question was also asked on whether the Area Liaison Officer had responded to a letter he had received from Ian Austin, MP, addressing the matter.

The Area Liaison Officer stated that there had been no capital allocation made for use on Mount Pleasant School in recent years because of the limitations of the budget, except for emergency repairs to the heating system. He confirmed that he had replied to Ian Austin MP's letter.

5. In response to a question expressing concern that the building at Summerhill in which the Archive Service was to be accommodated had once been a theatre and was unsuitable for archive storage, Councillor Fraser Macnamara stated that the building at Summerhill would be adapted for the purpose proposed.

Councillor Caunt stated that the former Mount Pleasant school had been earmarked for demolition in 1980 and had been closed as a school in 1985. Part of the building had been retrieved to house the Archive Service opened in 1992 but the building had been empty for seven years and little work had been carried out. He expressed concerns regarding the damp condition of the building and reiterated his offer at a previous North Dudley Area Committee that if any organisation which wished to save the property submitted a business plan as to how they intended to safeguard it and presented it to him, he would study it.

6. Questions were asked regarding the proposed closure of Highfields and Sycamore Green schools and on the length of the consultation period. A view was expressed that at least a twelve week period was required. The Committee was asked for its support in requesting a longer consultation period and appeals were made for Highfields and Sycamore Green schools to be saved from closure.

In response the Area Liaison Officer explained that the projected birth rate for Dudley indicated a downward trend and had dropped by 20% in the last twelve years. It was estimated that there would be five thousand surplus places by 2010. Consultations on the proposed school closures would continue up to 21st October 2005 and written responses were required or could be given by attending public meetings convened for the purpose. The results would be fed back to the Cabinet for formal consultation. After that, the proposals of the Cabinet together with any objections received would be referred to the independent School Organisation Committee for determination in January 2006.

The Area Liaison Officer stated that while general responses could be made at this meeting, specific meetings for parents had been called as part of the consultation process at each of the schools concerned, and that written responses to the consultation document would also be taken into account.

In view of the intensity of the debate on the issue of the Primary Schools Review, and the numbers of members of the public arriving to join the meeting, the Chairman adjourned the meeting for ten minutes to allow the room to be cleared.

DELEGATED CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on applications received for funding from the capital budget allocation of the Committee.

Following discussion by the Committee, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) That the application received from Access in Dudley in the sum of £1,541.65 to purchase a laptop computer and ancillary items, be deferred for clarification on where the computer would be stored, the full operating address of the organisation and receipt of up-to-date accounts and other supporting information.
- (b) That the action of the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and the Ward Members in approving the application Silveroaks Bowling Club in the sum of £1,633.00 for the purchase of two indoor bowling mats, six pairs of indoor bowls, two jacks, cover mats and scoreboard, be confirmed.
- (c) That the application received from Gornal Athletic Football Club in the sum of a £30,000 as a contribution towards proposed major capital works, to include replacement of concrete terracing and seating, the building of a disabled entrance, the replacement of security fencing and provision of a new toilet block and changing rooms, be deferred, pending further discussions with the applicants and for the Football Club to be advised that if any contribution were to be made to the project, then the balance of funding would first need to be secured from other parties before any payment could be made.
- (d)
 - (i) That the summary of unspent commitments as at August 2005, in the sum of £3,401, be added back to the overall balance for redistribution and that further clarification be sought on three schemes where no payment has been made and the matter be considered further at the next Working Group meeting.
 - (ii) That the availability of capital funding be promoted through the production of leaflets and posters.

- (e) In response to a request by Councillor G Davies, the Committee agreed that the application received from the Senior Citizens Enterprise Working Group for the purchase of additional woodworking machinery for the Group's workshop, a sanding machine, mortise machine, planer/thickness machine and an electric wet stone, that was considered by the at the meeting and subsequently refused by the Committee at the meeting held on 29th June 2005, be resubmitted to the next meeting of the Working Group for further consideration.

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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.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to release an area of land adjacent to 85 Bilston Street, Sedgley, for addition to the Land Disposal Programme, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, subject to comments from the Highways Division.
- (b) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to release an area of land adjacent to 13 The Vista, Sedgley, for addition to the Land Disposal Programme, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, subject to the satisfactory resolution of the sewer issue referred to in the report now submitted and to planning and building regulations.
- (c) That the application in respect of Spouthouse Farm House, Cotwall End Road, Sedgley, be deferred pending receipt of further information with regard to the application.

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT PREVIOUS MEETING

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the current status of responses to questions posed at previous meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and the appendix to the report, submitted on the current status of responses to questions posed at previous meetings of the Committee, be noted.

**'SCHOOL KEEP CLEAR' MARKINGS
TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER – (NO.3) 2005**

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment seeking the Committee's support for the third proposed Traffic Regulation Order for 'School Keep Clear' markings for the current year for locations within the Committee's area.

In presenting the report, the Senior Engineer, stated that the effect of the Order would be to prohibit stopping between 8.00 am and 5.00 pm Monday to Friday outside Straits Primary School and St Chad's RC Primary School.

Following a short discussion, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Committee agree, note and support the provision of a Traffic Regulation Order to Prohibit Stopping on School Entrance Markings at the locations indicated in Appendix A to the report submitted, subject to further investigation as to the current status of road markings in Longfellow Road.
- (b) That the Senior Engineer ascertain the current status of road markings in Longfellow Road and respond direct to Councillors Wright, Stanley and Mrs Millward in respect of the issues raised by them.

OBJECTION TO DISABLED PARKING PLACE – PROGRAMME H

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted, informing the Committee on the objection received to an application in their area for a disabled parking place in programme H of the On Street Disabled Parking Places Scheme.

In presenting the report, the Senior Engineer, confirmed that the objector was not an immediate neighbour to the applicant

Following a short discussion, it was

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to approve the application in respect of the provision of a disabled parking space in respect of 63 Viewfield Crescent, Sedgley and that the application be introduced as advertised.

WARD ISSUES

1. Councillor Mrs Millward raised the issue of the provision of a dropped kerb to be sited at the top of Bull Street, Lower Gornal, for use by wheelchair users.
2. Councillor D Stanley raised the issue of incidents of vandalism in Cotwall End Valley and called for funding to support the provision of a warden to be provided.

In response Councillor Fraser Macnamara stated that both he and the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Culture and Community Services) were actively pursuing avenues for funding for this proposal.

3. Councillor Mottram raised the issue of a gully on the ring road at Roseville that had become blocked with weeds and was inaccessible to Highways Agency vehicles, thus causing problems. He asked for it to be cleared.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm.

CHAIRMAN