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CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday 10th June, 2008 at 6.30 pm
at Dudley Concert Hall, St. James's Road, Dudley

PRESENT: -

Councillors Ahmed, Ali, Mrs. Aston, Cotterill, J D Davies, J R Davies, Davis, A Finch, K Finch, J Martin, Mrs Roberts, Sparks, Waltho and Ms While-Cooper

OFFICERS:

Director of the Urban Environment (As Area Liaison Officer for this Meeting), Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management), Assistant Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (Policy, Performance and Resources), Principal Project Officer and Area Housing Manger, Dudley (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Principal Solicitor and Mr Sanders (Directorate of Law and Property)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

10 members of the public.

1 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED

That Councillor J R Davies be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

(Councillor J R Davies thereupon took the Chair)

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillor Mrs Coulter, and, subject to their re-appointment as co-opted members of the Committee, Ms Edwards, Ms Little, Mr Nock and Mrs Oakes.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No member declared a personal or prejudicial interest, in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

4 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor K Finch be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

5 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11th March, 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed.

6 MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES IN RELATION TO MINUTE 81 (WARD ISSUES)

Councillor Cotterill reiterated the need for resurfacing of Gloucester Road to be attended to as soon as ever possible.

7 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROTOCOL FOR AREA COMMITTEES

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted setting out the terms of reference and protocol for Area Committees.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, and the appendices to the report, on the terms of reference and the protocol for Area Committees be noted.

8 CO-OPTED MEMBERS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted seeking consideration of the co-optation of Members to serve on the Committee for the 2008/09 municipal year.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the following persons be re-appointed as co-opted members of the Committee for the 2008/09 municipal year, representing the organisations indicated:-

Ms H Edwards, Dudley Association of Governing Bodies
Ms V Little, Dudley Primary Care Trust
Mr T Nock, Central Dudley Youth Forum
Mrs J Oakes, Dudley Town Centre Forum

- (2) That the Dudley Equality and Diversity Group be invited to re-appoint a co-optee to the Committee; that the Director of Law and Property be authorised to ask Mr Sadiq if he wishes to continue in this capacity and, subject to Mr Sadiq's response, to appoint either Mr Sadiq or another person nominated by the Group to serve.

9 YOUTH ISSUES

No youth issues were raised under this item.

10 APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted seeking consideration of the appointment of Working Groups in the 2008/09 municipal year.

RESOLVED

That the Central Dudley Area Committee Capital Allocations Working Group be re-appointed for the ensuing municipal year, with its existing terms and reference, that the Working Group comprise the Chairman of the Committee and Councillors Ahmed, Mrs. Aston, Cotterill, Davis, J Martin and Waltho.

11 APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the nomination of Members of the Committee to serve on outside organisations.

RESOLVED

: That the following Members be appointed to serve on the organisations indicated for the 2008/09 municipal year or for the term or period otherwise indicated:

Social Inclusion

- | | | |
|-----|---|--------|
| (a) | Castle and Priory Regeneration Group -
Councillor Mrs. Aston | Annual |
| (b) | Wrens Nest Community Centre -
Councillor Mrs. Aston | Annual |
| (c) | Withymoore Island Trust – Councillor J.
Martin | Annual |
| (d) | St. Francis Parish Centre – Councillor A.
Finch | Annual |

Community Centres

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|--------|
| (a) | Sledmere – Councillor Waltho | Annual |
| (b) | Woodside – Councillor J. Martin | Annual |
| (c) | Priory – Councillor Mrs. Aston | Annual |
| (d) | Quarry Bank – Councillor Cotterill | Annual |

Castle High School Foundation

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Councillor Ali | Three year
term from
14.07.08 |
| Councillor Davis | Three year
term from
17.09.08 |
| Mr. Sadiq | Three year
term from
17.09.08 |
| Ms. Little | Three year
term from
17.09.08 |

A joint report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services and the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the progress of visits to Adult and Children's Social Care Establishments undertaken by Members of the Committee during 2007/08, and on further nominations for participation in the rota of visits for the 2008/09 municipal year.

It was noted that any Members wishing to be involved in the visits would require a full, valid Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. One member suggested that all Members of the Council should be subject to a CRB check, in response to which the Area Liaison Officer for the meeting agreed to arrange for the matter to be taken up.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted and the appendices attached to the report, on the progress of elected member visits to Adult and Children's Social Care Establishments during 2007/08, be noted.
- (2) That Councillors Mrs. Aston, J.R. Davies, Davis, J. Martin, Mrs. Roberts and Waltho be appointed as the nominees of this Committee to undertake rota visits to Adult and Children's Social Care Establishments in the municipal year 2008/09.

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PETITIONS

It was reported that no petitions involving this Committee had been received by the Director of Law and Property since the last meeting.

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PUBLIC FORUM

Consideration was given to written questions submitted. The Chairman advised that further questions would be taken from the floor should there be any time remaining when written questions had been addressed. The following issues were then discussed:

- (a) A question was submitted on behalf of the traders of Quarry Bank raising the issue of an adverse impact on trade suffered by local businesses following the closure of the Housing Estate Office in the High Street. It was agreed to refer the question to the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services for a written response.

At this juncture, one member expressed his concerns on the matter and was asked to raise the issue later on the agenda under Ward Matters.

- (b) A question was asked by a member of the public, on behalf of a local businessman unable to attend the meeting, seeking the provision of alternative accommodation to replace a rented gymnasium shortly to be demolished owing to the redevelopment of Castle Hill. The gymnasium had facilitated training for local children mainly in respect of martial arts. It was agreed to refer the matter to the Directorate of the Urban Environment to ascertain whether there were any properties in the ownership of the Council that might be appropriate for the relocation of the gymnasium.
- (c) A question was asked by the Co-ordinator of the Gervase Drive, Paganel Drive and Woodland Avenue Neighbourhood Watch seeking clarification on assurances the Council could give to residents that adequate steps had been taken to mitigate the likelihood of the severe flooding problems experienced in 2007 from occurring again.

In response, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) referred to flooding as a national issue and summarised the nature of new government guidance on the design of roads and ancillary matters that were aimed at improving drainage in the future. The Assistant Director then reported on the mechanisms within the Council for gully emptying, which involved not only the employment of the Council's direct workforce but also the services of a private company. He indicated further that the policy for gully emptying had been changed so that priority cases were treated immediately, rather than being on a cyclical basis, and referred to the nature of the computer records now being maintained. In relation to the Priory area, full gully cleansing had been undertaken in March, 2007 and the team had been active in other months during that year. Work was being undertaken currently to address the antiquated drainage system at Priory Park.

- (d) A question was asked by the Co-ordinator of the Gervase Drive, Paganel Drive and Woodland Avenue Neighbourhood Watch on the action the Council was taking to ensure that all trees in the Borough were stable and healthy and to fell any unstable and unhealthy trees.

In response, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) indicated that the Council was acting in accordance with guidance received from the Health and Safety Executive, which mainly focused on trees adjacent to schools, highways and parks which might be likely to collapse. There was a routine inspection regime for such trees and results were logged.

The inspection involved an overall survey in which the tree was assessed and scored on the basis of size, location, age and overall wellbeing. In particular cases, a special inspection was made but, because of the lack of resources, it was not possible to inspect all trees in the Borough in that depth. The Assistant Director confirmed, however, that collapsing trees would be considered as high risk and, as such, would be treated. He also stated that, in 2007, the Council had taken remedial action with regard to 600 trees.

In response to a question from a member, the Assistant Director agreed to have investigated a case where a tree was blocking a dropped kerb constructed in front of the drive to the property.

- (e) The Area Liaison Officer for the meeting answered a question asked by a member of the public on the route within the Council by which a complaint about the appropriateness of the employment of a particular Council employee in a post should be directed, and the manner in which this should be done.

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WARD ISSUES

Councillor Waltho raised:

- (1) The engagement of the public in the Dudley Community Games, to be held in June, in relation to which he invited the public to attend and participate. Councillor Ali joined Councillor Waltho in advocating the invitation of as many local organisations as possible.
- (2) The machinery of the Working Group proposed in the report at agenda item No. 17 (Community Renewal Service), in relation to which he advocated that the Group divide into small groups in order to engage the public more directly than a Committee was normally able to do in looking at local issues.

Councillor Ali raised:

- (1) That the traffic calming measures he had requested at Bunns Lane remained unresolved. He reiterated his request for the traffic calming to be provided in the light of the serious road traffic accident that had occurred in Bunns Lane in 2007 and the potential for further major accidents along the road.
- (2) The need for anti-skid measures to be put in place at Watsons Green Road opposite Malcolm's shop, in view of the difficulties caused by patrons parking outside the shop.
- (3) Concern regarding road safety hazards caused by motorists accessing the gap in the road at King Street in the vicinity of Flood Street, at the rear of Beatties Shop.

Councillor Cotterill raised:

- (1) Extreme concerns at the adverse effect on businesses in Quarry Bank High Street that the closure of the Housing Estate Office had had. Councillor Cotterill recommended that a high level meeting be held between traders and the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services to discuss the possibility of the Library being situated within the Post Office and a telephone line for repairs being installed there, in order to mitigate the further decline of businesses in Quarry Bank through local residents who would normally have remained in Quarry Bank to shop from doing so elsewhere as a result of having to utilise Council-related services provided in other areas .
- (2) Concern regarding three Council owned properties which, he alleged, were not being occupied by their tenants. Councillor Cotterill suggested that private investigators be engaged to explore the situation and report, with a view to the properties ultimately being reallocated.
- (3) Concern that, whereas he had been advised initially that the upgrading of the BMX track at Dudley Wood would be completed by Easter, he had now been advised that completion would not be effected until September at the earliest.
- (4) The issue of monies the Council would receive under the Play Strategy for Young People, advocating that some of the funding be utilised to provide a multi purpose games area at the "Black Horse" site at Saltwells.
- (5) A request that trees growing over the footpath at Marlow Close be trimmed.

Councillor Ms. While Cooper raised:

- (1) Concern that the recently revised bus services were affecting trade in Quarry Bank High Street adversely. She also supported Councillor Cotterill in his concerns regarding the adverse impact of the removal of the Housing Estate Office from Quarry Bank had had on local businesses.

Councillor Sparks raised:

- (1) Concern expressed at a Partnership and Communities Together meeting that the alleyway between Park Road and Moor Street, Quarry Bank, which served no useful purpose, was providing a focus for the deposit of litter and other anti-social activities.

- (2) Problems reported to a meeting of Partnerships and Communities Together regarding vehicular parking in Lawnswood Road, Saltwells. Land off Lawnswood Road was used by the community for the playing of sports and parking on the road by users of the land was leaving little room for manoeuvre for passing vehicles. Councillor Sparks advocated, therefore, that the large grass verge alongside the road be authorised for vehicular parking, in order to enable the highway itself to be utilised more easily as a thoroughfare.
- (3) The same concerns as Councillors Cotterill and Ms. While Cooper regarding the impact that the closure of the Housing Estate Office in Quarry Bank had had on businesses in Quarry Bank High Street. He advocated that the capital receipts arising from the disposal of the Estate Office and Library be allocated towards the Quarry Bank area for the purposes of regeneration.

Councillor J.R. Davies raised:

- (1) A request that an inspection of Buffery Park be made further to the holding of the fair at that location. Councillor Davies was concerned that any reinstatement be implemented before the start of the new football season. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) agreed to follow up the matter.

Councillor Mrs. Aston raised:

- (1) A request for a progress report on the programme for tree maintenance agreed for the Priory Estate some 4 years previously.

Councillor A. Finch raised:

- (1) Concern about the increasing incidence of arson on the Priory Estate. In this regard, he advocated greater vigilance in relation to anti-social behaviour in the area.

Councillor K. Finch raised:

- (1) His appreciation of the organisation of the Duncan Edwards Fun Day and, in so doing, congratulated participants and thanked the Community Police for their assistance. It was agreed that a letter of thanks be sent to the Organisers and sponsors.

Councillor J.D. Davies raised:

- (1) A request for the provision of traffic calming measures to be installed along Worcester Road and Darby Road to alleviate problems caused by boy racers. The matter was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for investigation.
- (2) A request for litter bins to be installed at MousesweetClose.

Councillor Ahmed raised:

- (1) The issue of potential dangers from vehicles backing into Scotts Green Close from Holly Hall School. He asked for attention to be given to this potential road hazard.
- (2) A request for the installation of a pelican crossing along Wellington Road outside the Sikh Temple, in place of the zebra crossing located there, which he considered to be inadequate in terms of road safety.
- (3) Complaints received from the public regarding the safety of the new zebra crossing installed in Tower Street at its junction with Stone Street. He reported that the Police had concerns about the location of the crossing.

Councillor Mrs. Roberts raised:

- (1) The need for clarification on whether or not there was an age restriction on the play facilities on the Milking Bank Estate and, if so, whether current signage was fit for purpose. Councillor Mrs. Roberts understood that the Police also considered better signage would be useful.

Councillor Davis raised:

- (1) Extreme concerns that unauthorised vehicular parking at Russells Hall in the vicinity of the hospital was becoming worse, notwithstanding the parking restrictions in force. Councillor Davis advocated the introduction of residents only parking in the area of the hospital.
- (2) Concern at the lack of public toilet facilities in Dudley Town Centre, at the top end of the town.
- (3) An allegation of sharp practice engaged in by vehicular clamping firms, together with a lack of explicit signage in that regard, at the top end of Dudley Town Centre, which had led to a number of drivers being clamped. Councillor Davis asked for the matter to be investigated.
- (4) The need for access for electric scooters to the rear of properties at Merlin Close to be explored.
- (5) The need for the installation of a BMX track for children in Dudley.
- (6) The issue of dog fouling on Milking Bank, action in respect of which he requested.
- (7) Concern regarding cars speeding along Dibdale Road.

BRITISH TELECOM – CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED PUBLIC PAY PHONES REMOVALS

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on notice received from British Telecom that, owing to changes in the communications culture in recent years, mainly through the increase in mobile phone ownership, they proposed to remove a number of public pay phones in the Borough, five of which were located in the area of this Committee.

In addition, British Telecom had pointed out that they no longer had a requirement to consult on the removal of a public pay phone which had another pay phone within 400 metres. Out of courtesy, however, they had advised the Council that there were a number of pay phones in that category within the Borough that they would be addressing over the forthcoming months.

The purpose of the notice was to provide for consultation, in respect of which British Telecom had indicated that OFCOM had placed responsibility on local authorities to initiate their own consultation processes and canvass the views of the local community with the Local Authority.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the proposals regarding the public pay phones proposed for the removal in the area of the Committee be noted and that no comments be made for submission to British Telecom.
- (2) That the position of British Telecom that they no longer have a requirement to consult on the removal of a public pay phone which has another public pay phone within 400 metres and that there are a number of such pay phones within the Borough that will be addressed over the forthcoming months, be noted.

CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted seeking consideration of the process for the allocation of expenditure under the Committee's delegated budget for the 2008/09 municipal year.

One application for capital funding was considered under this item.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the process for awarding Capital Allocations from the Capital Allocations Budget, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted, be approved for implementation in the 2008/09 municipal year.
- (2) That the application of the two sets of criteria used in 2007/08, as set out in Appendices 2 and 3 to the report submitted, be noted and implemented for 2008/09.
- (3) That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to carry out the recommended actions set out above.
- (4) That the application now submitted from the West Midlands Fire Service, in the sum of £1613.00, towards the capital costs associated with a Fire Reparation Intervention Education Project under the auspices of the Dudley Children and Young People's Trust, be approved, the sum to be met by a contribution of £322.60 from each ward in the area of the Committee.

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COMMUNITY RENEWAL SERVICE

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted updating the Committee on the new arrangements implemented for the Community Renewal Service.

The report indicated the structure of the service, as well as reporting on the current position with regard to the development of a Community Renewal Strategy by the Community Renewal Steering Group. The report also described the role of Area Community Renewal Officers, for the purpose of the Local Community Renewal Plan, the objectives of the Plan and the accountability arrangements proposed for the service and the role of Area Committees, local task groups and partnerships.

In relation to the latter issue, the report referred to the role of an Area Committee as being to address key issues in communities in order to bring some clarity to the delivery of services in complex areas such as health and equalities, community safety or social exclusion and stated the need for different communities and interests within the area to have a mechanism which enabled them to articulate their needs. It was being suggested to Area Committees, therefore, that each set up of a Working Party to consider their draft plan more closely and amend it as needed to take account of member influence, working with all agencies and sectors of the community.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the Working Group of the Committee be set up to engage with a further development of the draft local community renewal plan, supported by the Area Community Relations Officer and the Head of the Community Renewal Service, and that the Working Group comprise Councillor Davis and one member from each Ward, the names of the members to be submitted to the Assistant Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (Policy, Performance and Resources).
- (3) That, in order to take account of various needs and communities and interest, the Committee consider the co-option of representatives from local neighbourhood partnerships or NESP Groups which can be determined by the Working Group with the support of the Area Community Renewal Officer.

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URBAN ENVIRONMENT - MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE HELD ON 11TH MARCH, 2008

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on matters relating to the Directorate raised at the meeting of the Central Dudley Area Committee held on 11th March, 2008.

In relation to the Central Dudley Area Community Games, 2010, Councillor Ali asked that the matter be considered further, in response to which he was advised that a decision on the issue would be made by the Cabinet.

Regarding the issue of the resurfacing of Gloucester Road and Bowling Green Road, while noting that Bowling Green Road had been attended to, Councillor Cotterill reminded the Committee that Gloucester Road still needed to be dealt with.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

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SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

The dates of forthcoming meetings of Select Committees was noted.

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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

The dates and venues of future meetings scheduled for the Committee were noted.

The meeting ended at 7.50 p.m.

CHAIRMAN