

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 13th March, 2007 at 6.30 pm
at Priory Primary School, Limes Road, Dudley

PRESENT: -

Councillor Rahman (Chairman)

Councillors Mrs. Aston, Cotterill, Ms. Craigie, J. Davies, M. Davis, Finch, Johnston, Male, Sparks and Waltho; Ms V Little

OFFICERS:

Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (Area Liaison Officer), Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management), Head of Economic Well Being, Environmental Protection Manager, Principal Policy Officer, and Group Engineer – Civil Engineering, (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Assistant Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (Libraries, Archives and Adult Learning), Principal Project Officer, and Area Housing Manager - Dudley (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Head of Youth and Community Team (Directorate of Children's Services), Principal Solicitor, and Mr R Jewkes (Directorate of Law and Property)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

The Director of the Dudley Community Partnership and approximately 40 members of the public.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ahmed, Ali, Bradney and Mrs. Coulter, and Mrs P Goodyear.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Waltho declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item Numbers 15 – Youth Service Provision in Central Dudley Area, and 17 – Adult and Community Learning in the Central Dudley Area, in that they made reference to the St. Thomas's Network, of which he was a member of the Board of Trustees.

Councillors Mrs Aston and Finch declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item Number 11(b) – Applications in Respect of Land Owned by the Council (Priory Boxing Club) in that they had previously attended meetings with representatives of the Priory Boxing Club.

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EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that: -

- (a) they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 as indicated below; and
- (b) in all the circumstances, the public interest in disclosing the information is outweighed by the public interest in maintaining the exemption from disclosure.

<u>Description of Item</u>	<u>Relevant Paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A</u>
Request to Extinguish Access Rights	1
Title Request to Purchase Freehold Title	3

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REQUEST TO EXTINGUISH ACCESS RIGHTS

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on a request to extinguish access rights.

RESOLVED

That consideration of the matter be deferred to the next meeting of Committee in order that additional information reported on at the meeting might be incorporated into a report to be considered at that meeting.

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REQUEST TO PURCHASE FREEHOLD TITLE

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on a request to purchase a freehold title.

RESOLVED

That, subject to any capital receipts from the sale being ring fenced to finance repairs to the road surface in Walters Row, Dudley, the Cabinet Member for Personnel, Law and Property be recommended to approve the application made, as set out in the report submitted, on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16th January, 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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PETITIONS

It was reported that residents of Saltwells had submitted a petition to the Directorate of the Urban Environment, requesting the provision of safe crossing facilities on the traffic lights at the junction of Saltwells Road and Cradley Road. The petition was being considered by the appropriate officers and a response would be forthcoming in due course.

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YOUTH ISSUES

A presentation was received from members of the Central Dudley Youth Forum, regarding their recent visit to the Houses of Parliament. Eighteen of their members had travelled to London for the visit. They had met with their Member of Parliament, Ian Austin, to discuss education, training, and the provision of youth services, and had also enjoyed a tour of the Houses of Parliament.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked the young people for their presentation and encouraged them to contact either himself or other Members of the Committee should they require any assistance with the work of their Forum or with any other matters.

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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: -

- (1) A Member of the public raised a concern in relation to the site of the former Duncan Edwards public house in Priory Road, Dudley, commenting that the perimeter fence was not being properly maintained and had been repeatedly pulled down. He requested that the Council take action to ensure that a secure fence be installed which was set into the ground in order to ensure that it could not be moved so easily. In responding, the Assistant Director of the Directorate of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) stated that as the site was privately owned, the Council had no powers to intervene in its maintenance unless a public hazard was posed. He undertook to write to the developer who owned the site to once again request that the fence be made more secure, in order

to prevent people walking over the site and creating a health and safety risk.

- (2) A Member of the public expressed concern regarding a number of recent break-ins involving electricity sub-stations on the Priory Estate which had resulted in power cuts, and requested that the Council contact the electricity supplier to request that they improve security at the stations to prevent further danger and inconvenience to residents. In responding, Assistant Director of the Directorate of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) echoed the concerns expressed, and undertook to raise the issue urgently with Central Networks on behalf of the Council and report back to a future meeting of the Committee.
- (3) A Member of the public requested clarification in respect of comments made by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Caunt, which had been reported the Express and Star newspaper on 1st March 2007 in which he had apparently urged the Dudley Muslim Association to consult the Council about another potential site for the proposed Mosque before appealing against the recent refusal by the Development Control Committee of an application to build a facility in Hall Street, Dudley. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer stated that as Councillor Caunt was not a Member of the Committee, she would make arrangements for the question to be forwarded to him.
- (4) A Member of the public raised the question of whether Mr. Khurshid Ahmed, the Chairman of the Dudley Muslim Association and of the Dudley Community Partnership, held any position in, or was a member of, any political party. In responding, the Area Liaison Officer stated that Mr. Ahmed was not a Member of the Committee, or indeed of the Council, and that therefore any political affiliations he possessed were entirely his private business and not that of the Area Committee. She undertook, therefore, to make arrangements for the question to be forwarded to Mr. Ahmed in order that he could respond personally if he so wished.
- (5) A Member of the public raised two issues concerning the administrative arrangements of the Council. The first was a request that the Council publish a list of all pre-planned sales of Council land for 2007 and 2008. This request was made in view of concerns that the Council appeared to be selling large amounts of land whilst increasing staffing levels. The second was a comment that the 'Dudley Council Plus' initiative needed to be re-evaluated, as it appeared to be failing in Dudley, as it seemingly had in other Local Authorities. It was noted that both questions would be referred to the appropriate Council Directorates, who would be requested to respond in writing.

- (6) A Member of the public requested that trees on the pavement in Bluebell Road be removed in order that pedestrians could use the public footpaths without being obstructed. In responding, the Assistant Director of the Directorate of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) stated that officers had proposed several schemes to assist pedestrian access in this area without success, as whilst many residents wanted the trees removed, an equal number wished to retain them. He undertook to continue working to find a solution which satisfied as many people as possible. In response to a further question regarding a tree opposite Priory Park which had been cut down to the root, he advised that although he was not aware of the specific tree, work was being undertaken on trees in that area in view of safety considerations arising from their poor condition.
- (7) A Member of the public raised the issue of the Council's protocol regarding skips, in view of the fact that a full, open skip had now been left in Meadow Road for seven days without any hazard lights or protective barriers being put up. In responding, the Assistant Director of the Directorate of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) stated that a protocol was in place and undertook to look into the matter urgently and take appropriate action.
- (8) A Member of the public raised an issue which had been discussed at the previous meeting of the Committee in relation to Council vehicles ignoring barriers and using a Private Access Road off Woodland Avenue, Quarry Bank as a short cut to access Saltwells valley, rather than using the publicly accessible route, which required them to drive over grass. She commented that the street was privately owned land, rather than simply being unadopted, and stated that she was in possession of legal documents which proved this. It was agreed that these documents would be handed to the Group Engineer - Civil Engineering, who was in attendance at the meeting, in order that the Council could consider the information in a legal context, and take appropriate action.
- (9) A member of the public enquired as to whether the Council had plans to introduce a full recycling scheme. In responding, the Assistant Director of the Directorate of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) advised that although in the long term the Council did envisage the establishment of a full recycling scheme incorporating cardboard and other materials, its top priority at the present time was the rolling out of the green bin service across the Borough, to maximise the amount of green waste which was being recycled.

- (10) A member of the public congratulated the Council on the work it had done on clearing drains in the Priory area, but expressed concern that much of the waste which was being removed ended up being left on the street, as the sweeping machines employed by the Council could not get into small areas to gather it up. In responding, the Assistant Director of the Directorate of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) stated that officers were now carrying out the cleaning works at night and on weekends, in order to try and improve the cleaning service. He undertook to look into the point raised to see what improvements could be made.
 - (11) In relation to green bin collections, a member of the public requested that the Council consider collecting at a later time than 7.30am, which was the current policy, in order that residents could avoid leaving them on the street overnight where they were vulnerable to vandalism. In responding, the Assistant Director of the Directorate of the Urban Environment (Environmental Management) stated that in his experience residents usually preferred an early collection as it meant that by the time they got up, the bins had been emptied. He undertook to monitor the policy and feed back any developments to the Committee.
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WARD ISSUES

Councillor M Davis raised:

- (1) concern that families living near to a blocked drain near Spring Park were all to be proportionally charged for the unblocking of the drain, when the blockage had been caused by a single family's anti social behaviour.
- (2) a request that 'H bars' be put down in front of houses in Waterloo Street, as parked cars were blocking people in on their drives.
- (3) a request that officers check to ensure that the conditions of the latest approved planning application in relation to the Sutton School had been met, particularly as it appeared that a large hedge to the front of the school had been removed, reducing screening of the building from the road.
- (4) concern regarding the anti-social behaviour of a particular family living in a Council property in his ward. He undertook to pass on the details of the case to the relevant officer.

Councillor Sparks raised:

- (1) thanks to officers who had arranged the replacement of the dog bin at the entrance to Stevens Park.

- (2) a request that litter which had accumulated at the bottom of Bower Lane be cleaned up.
- (3) concern that the Council appeared to be taking no action to remove squatters who had settled in an open space on the junction between Hill Street and Bower Lane.

Councillor Cotterill raised:

- (1) concern that residents of a Council property in Quarry Bank were having to sleep downstairs due to their leaking roof. He requested that officers take action to ensure that the roof was replaced.
- (2) concern that grass at the bottom of Alexander Hill had been severely damaged where Transco had dug some areas up and stored pipes on other patches. He requested that the Council take steps to re-seed the areas, as had been done when a similar problem occurred at Milking Bank.
- (3) a request that traffic calming measures be taken to prevent youths from using Belle View Road as a racetrack.
- (4) a request that officers provide him with a written appraisal of the cost to the taxpayer of repairs which had been carried out to a particular address in his ward, all of which had been required due to anti-social behaviour. Details of the address were passed to officers at the meeting.

Councillor Male raised:

- (1) a request for clarification as to whether a speed camera which had been installed on Bowling Green Road was fully operational.
- (2) a request that officers confirm a date on which remedial work to trees in Honister Close would commence.

Councillor Waltho raised:

- (1) a request that the Council investigate the possibility of pooling monies obtained from property developers via Section 106 funding, in order that Councillors could work with community groups in their areas to assist them in financing projects.
- (2) a request that officers visit the traffic lights at the junction between King Street and the Southern Bypass to investigate reports from residents that the sequencing of the lights and of the pedestrian crossing was inappropriate and causing both pedestrians and motorists to wait for long periods.

Councillor J Davies raised:

- (1) a request that the footpath at the bottom of Banklands Road be resurfaced, as the shale which had been put down previously had now grown muddy.
- (2) a request that a speed camera be erected in Buffery Road.
- (3) a request that a pothole which had re-appeared in New Road be filled in again.
- (4) a request that a skip which had been left on Bean Road be removed, as it was currently blocking up one side of the road and causing congestion.
- (5) a request that the shrubs on the embankment in Aston Road be cut back and the litter in the area be removed.

Councillor Rahman raised: -

- (1) concern regarding road safety at the junction between Northfield Road and Halesowen Road. He requested that officers investigate measures which could be taken to make this area less dangerous both for pedestrians and motorists.
- (2) a request that the speed camera on Cinder Bank be repositioned, as it was now having very little effect on motorists' speeds in the area.
- (3) a request that a wider review of traffic issues in Cinder Bank be undertaken, particularly in view of the air pollution high volumes of traffic were currently causing in the area.
- (4) a request that officers arrange for repairs to be undertaken to the streetlight at the junction of Marriott and Church Road.
- (5) a request that a more prominent 'Access Only' sign be erected in Arch Hill Street, Netherton, in order to deter parents from parking their cars there and blocking up residents' drives when collecting their children from the nearby Children's Centre.

Councillor Mrs Aston raised:

- (1) a request that in future, when incidents like the recent starting of a fire and burning of a cat by youths in Bluebell Road occurred, the Council consider reviewing the tenancy agreements of those people involved, and where appropriate evicting them.

Councillor Finch raised:

- (1) a request for information from the Police as to what action they would be taking in the coming summer months to combat gangs and anti-social behaviour on the Wrens Nest and Priory Estates.

Councillor Ms. Craigie raised:

- (1) a request for an update as to when the newly installed street lighting columns in Quentin Drive would be switched on.
- (2) a request that officers investigate reports that streetlights in Spring Park were not working properly.
- (3) a request that a new pedestrian crossing be installed outside Russells Hall School.
- (4) a request that potholes on Trinity Road and Corncrake Road be filled in.
- (5) concern regarding trees in Ashenhurst Road, one of which had recently fallen down. She requested that action be taken either to carry out works on the remaining trees in the area to ensure that they were safe, or to stabilize the land beneath the trees which was currently unstable.

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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 Personnel, Law and Property be recommended to refuse the application to purchase land within the Abberley Street ICT Training Centre, Abberley Street, Dudley, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, for the reasons indicated in the report submitted.
- (b) That, in relation to the application by Priory Boxing Club to lease land adjacent to that club from the Council, the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to approve, subject to planning permission being granted, both the application for the lease of the additional land requested, and a licence to use car parking facilities at the Priory Hall Training and Conference Centre, as indicated on the plan attached to the report submitted, on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.
- (c) That the following recommendations be made: -
 - (1) That the Cabinet Member for Personnel, Law and Property be recommended to approve: -

- a. the appropriation of the area of land that is the site of the Darby End Senior Citizens and Social Club as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, from the purposes of the Housing Act 1957 to that of Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 for community use.
- b. the appropriation of the land held for housing purposes between Worcester Road and Bourne Hill Close, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, to the purposes of the Open Spaces Act 1906, for the creation of a play area and to maintain as public open space.

(2) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to: -

- a. Approve the lease to the Darby End Senior Citizens and Social Club.
- b. Declare the land to the rear of 13, 15, 19 and 21 Worcester Road surplus to requirements, for sale for social housing in conjunction with land forming part of 17 Worcester Road, on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.
- c. Refuse the application by the owner of 39 Cole Street to purchase land, or for vehicular access across land, in Worcester Road.

(d) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to declare the site at Douglas Road/Dando Road, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, surplus to requirements, to be sold on the open market on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Law and Property.

TO SEEK SUPPORT FOR A BOROUGH WIDE AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA FOR DUDLEY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on a proposal to declare the whole of the Borough an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The report was being considered by all Area Committees for consultation purposes prior to a report being submitted to Cabinet in July, 2007.

Arising from consideration of the report, several Members of the Committee made reference to areas within their Wards in which they felt air quality was of particular concern, and expressed general support for the overall proposed strategy. Comments focussed particularly on the health inequalities which existed in the Dudley Borough which resulted from poor quality air.

RESOLVED

That the proposed declaration of a whole Borough Air Quality Management Area, following a period of consultation as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report submitted, be supported, together with the reporting of such a declaration to Cabinet in July 2007, insofar as this Committee were concerned.

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PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE JOINT CORE STRATEGY FOR THE BLACK COUNTRY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the preparation and progress of the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country, including the consultation events undertaken in the Dudley Borough in relation to the Strategy.

Arising from consideration of the report, Members expressed concern that the report had been submitted for their attention after the consultation events had all already taken place, which meant that it was of limited use in terms of notifying Members of those events. In responding, the Principal Policy Officer, Directorate of the Urban Environment, stated that the report was intended to keep Members of the Committee up to date in respect of the current progress with regard to the Joint Core Strategy. He also advised that as the consultation did not close until the end of March, both Members of the Committee and the public could submit any comments they had in relation to the strategy up until that date.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the issues which had been highlighted so far in the consultation, the Principal Policy Officer, Directorate of the Urban Environment, reported that the consultation responses from the Dudley event had so far focussed mainly on transport, with opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport all being raised repeatedly.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on the preparation and progress of the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country including the local consultation events undertaken in the Borough, be noted.

78

CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the recommendations of the Capital Allocations Working Group regarding applications made for funding from the capital budget of the Committee. In addition to these, a supplementary report was submitted in relation to a late application which had been received from 1st Quarry Bank Scouts Group.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the following amounts be awarded to the organisations stated:

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount</u>
<u>Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood Ward</u>		
Saltwells Tenants and Residents Association	Games equipment for use by new Youth Club	£2,067.00
1 st Quarry Bank Scouts Group	Replacement of security fencing	£5476.00
<u>St James's Ward</u>		
Impact Training	Installation of disabled toilets	£3574.64
<u>All Wards</u>		
Black Country Boating Festivals Ltd.	Contribution to purchase of storage containers, an alarm system and tables and chairs	£1667.00

- (2) That the applications submitted by Wrens Nest Community Centre and the Limes Road Club be deferred pending the receipt of requested information on the detail of the proposed expenditure.
- (3) That the two applications submitted by Age Concern Dudley and the application submitted by Netherton News Group be deferred to the first meeting of the Working Group in the 2007/08 financial year, when new funding would be available for allocation in the Netherton, Woodside and St. Andrews Ward.

- (4) That the application by the Stourbridge Cyber Bus Project be deferred to the first meeting of the Working Group in the 2007/08 financial year, when new funding would be available for allocation in the Netherton, Woodside and St. Andrews Ward, and in order that a Ward Member from the Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood Ward could be in attendance to consider the application.

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YOUTH SERVICE PROVISION IN CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on youth work provision in Central Dudley. Details of the various centres which provided youth services across the area, the level of staffing, and the type of services available, were included in the report for the Committee's information.

In considering the report, Members commented that in order to engage more young people in youth activities, the Council needed to provide more diverse services, particularly in the more deprived areas of Central Dudley, for example in Netherton which currently had no youth centre at all.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on the present position regarding youth work provision in Central Dudley, be noted.

80

DUDLEY COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP, AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL SPEND IN CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA

A report of the Director of the Dudley Community Partnership (DCP) was submitted on the role of the Partnership and the funding which had been allocated in support of regeneration projects in the Central Dudley Area between 2004 and 2007.

It was reported that the DCP was the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for the Dudley Borough. An LSP was a non-statutory body which brought together local public, private, community and voluntary sectors to create a multi agency partnership, with the aim of improving services for the wider community. In this regard, a key role of the LSP was to distribute Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF). Details of the amounts of NRF Dudley had received since 2004, and of how these monies had been allocated within Dudley, were appended to the report for Members' information.

Members expressed concern regarding the process for distribution of NRF, commenting that in their experience the funds seemed to be very difficult for local community groups to access, although certain minorities appeared able to access large amounts of funding. In responding, the Director of the Dudley Community Partnership stated that NRF monies were awarded on an evidence basis according to the identified needs in any particular service area.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report and Appendix to the report, submitted on the role of the Dudley Community Partnership and funding spent to support regeneration in the Central Dudley area between 2004 and 2007, be noted.

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ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING IN THE CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the jobs and training opportunities provided within the Central Dudley Area through both Adult and Community Learning and the St. Thomas's Community Network. The report contained details of the various centres at which adult and community education was provided, and of the range of courses available. Statistics detailing the take up rates of courses managed by the Adult and Community Learning Team, and by the St. Thomas's Community Network, were appended to the report.

In considering the report, the Chairman raised a question regarding the management of the Savoy Centre in Netherton. In responding, the Assistant Director of the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services (Libraries, Archives and Adult Learning), advised that the Centre was currently administered by a local management committee chaired by the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Partnership and Children's Trust). It was intended however that eventually the management of the Centre would be handed over to a community group made up local residents.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and the Appendix to the report, submitted on the role and activities of Adult Community Learning and the St. Thomas's Community Network in the Central Dudley area, be noted.

82

FUTURE SKILLS DUDLEY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the work of Future Skills Dudley (FSD) and the training opportunities provided within the Central Dudley area.

It was reported that the role of FSD was to assist Dudley's long-term unemployed in obtaining the necessary skills and confidence to get into work. The organisation administered several training centres, a number of which were in the Central Dudley area, and provided practical courses, for example in construction related skills, as well as literacy, numeracy and 'life skills' classes. The initiative was funded on a contractual basis by various agencies including Job Centre Plus, Advantage West Midlands and the Learning and Skills Council, and FSD staff were currently working with more than 3000 unemployed people in Dudley, with the aim of helping them obtain jobs.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, submitted on the work of Future Skills Dudley and the training opportunities provided in the Central Dudley area, be noted.

83 URBAN ENVIRONMENT - MATTERS RAISED AT CENTRAL DUDLEY
AREA COMMITTEE – 16th JANUARY, 2007

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on a number of issues relating to that Directorate raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 16th January 2007.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and the Appendix to the report submitted, be noted.

84 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on written responses made to questions raised at the meeting of the Committee held on 16th January, 2007.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, be noted.

85 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

Information was given regarding the dates for future meetings of all Select Committees, which were held at the Council House, Dudley. Members of the public were welcome to attend such meetings.

RESOLVED

That the information given in respect of the dates of future meetings of Select Committees, be noted.

DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the dates and venues of future meetings would be published when determined in the new municipal year.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

CHAIRMAN