

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE

Monday 9th March 2009 at 7.00 p.m.
at Hob Green Primary School, Hob Green Road, Stourbridge

PRESENT-

Councillor C Wilson (Chairman)
Councillor A Turner (Vice Chairman)
Councillors: Adams, Attwood, Banks, Barlow, Mrs Cowell, Hanif, Jones, Kettle, Knowles, Lowe, Mrs Rogers, and Mrs Walker, together with Mr G Downing, and Mr R Nokes.

OFFICERS:-

Interim Director of Children's Services (as Area Liaison Officer); Assistant Director Planning and Environmental Health; Traffic Manager (Directorate of the Urban Environment); Area Detached Youth and Community Worker (Directorate of Children's Services); Assistant Director Learning Disabilities and Mental Health; Assistant Director – Libraries, Archives and Adult Learning; Area Community Renewal Officer; Head of Housing Services (Directorate of Adult Community and Housing Services); Senior Principal Accountant (Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement), Mr T Holder, Solicitor and Mrs J Rees (Directorate of Law and Property).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Inspector Sarah Galloway and approximately 40 members of the public.

66 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs Martin and Ms P Shepherd.

67 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Members declared a personal or prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of any matters.

68 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th January, 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed.

69 YOUTH ISSUES

The Co-opted Member for Young People gave an update on work he and other young people had been involved in since the last meeting, including working with Crystal Leisure Centre, Stourbridge to encourage young people to become involved in sporting activities. It was hoped to branch out into other leisure centres and recreation grounds within Stourbridge in the near future, to encourage more participation of young people.

The Stourbridge Area Detached Youth and Community Worker gave an oral update on activities offered by Valley Road Youth Centre, Lye, including half term activities provided at the Centre and a residential, which young people had attended. He also reported that, as a result of the recent youth parliament elections, a new co-opted member to represent young people on the Committee, would be nominated in the new municipal year to replace Ryan Nokes.

The Area Liaison Officer and Members of the Committee thanked Ryan for all his hard work and enthusiasm during his term as a co-opted Member of the Committee.

Inspector Galloway reported on the change in the website address of the Police to www.west-midlands.police.uk and recent updates. Those now wishing to access information regarding their local area and police could key in their postcode to obtain the required information. A member of the public commented that he had found the new website more user friendly.

Inspector Galllowsay also commented that, as a result of a recent government Green paper, the current Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings were to be replaced by monthly Police Surgeries.

A member of the public queried whether there would be any boundary changes when the new system was up and running, to which Inspector Galloway responded that there would be no changes to the existing boundaries. Surgeries would be held in local venues.

In response to a query from a Member of the Committee, Inspector Galloway confirmed that the Dudley South Police Sector had a full compliment of staff. She did however, refer to the fact the two recent staff bereavements, and advised that there were 20 student officers still in training who, upon completion of their training, would be deployed into the appropriate police patches.

A member of the public commented on how well the PACT meetings were attended and on the usefulness of such meetings.

Another member of the public questioned when the public had been consulted on the changes and what benefit the new system would be to the public.

In response to a comment from a member of the public regarding whether Ward Councillors who had previously attended PACT meetings could attend the Police surgeries, the Chairman advised that all Ward Councillors were approachable by telephone, e-mail and/or via their individual Ward surgeries.

In response to the comments made by members of the public, regarding the proposed changes from PACT meetings to Police surgeries, a Member of the Committee, who was a representative of the Police Authority, queried the basis of the comments made by Inspector Galloway and pointed out that the proposals were as a direct result of a government green paper, which had been consulted on previously. The result of the new arrangements was that in future surgeries would be Police led, and members of the public would have a more frequent opportunity to meet and discuss local concerns with the Police.

PUBLIC FORUM

The Area Liaison Officer advised that, as in future questions of general interest would be addressed during the Public Forum session of the meeting it would be useful if questions could be submitted in sufficient time prior to the meeting for a response to be given at the meeting, otherwise a written response would be sent to the questioner after the meeting. Any individual questions submitted prior to the meeting should be addressed to the Clerk to the Committee, whose contact details were on the front cover of the Agenda, to enable a more speedy response.

Questions and answers were then given as follows:

1. A member of the public raised a number of concerns regarding traffic speeding in the Redlake Road, Pedmore area. The Traffic Manager undertook to investigate the matter and send a written response to the questioner.
2. The Area Liaison Officer advised that she was aware that the police had carried out a traffic survey in the area in question, which had ended on the previous day. When the results of the survey were known, the Police would contact the questioner regarding this matter.
3. A member of the public informed on a scheme which would see Pastors being introduced into Stourbridge, initially on Friday and Saturday evenings, to support vulnerable people. A similar scheme had been successfully introduced in a number of other towns throughout the United Kingdom.
4. A member of the public raised concerns regarding the recently reported increase in the council tax. This was referred to the Director of Finance for a written response to the questioner.

5. A member of the public acknowledged receipt of a “transcribed” council report and the original consultant’s survey, regarding the repairs to the gates at Mary Stevens Park, Stourbridge. He also asked who was responsible for putting a council officer in the embarrassing position of handling a project which involved them in obtaining surveys and reports from Construction Companies instead of utilising qualified council officers and tradesmen who have the experience to present a factual survey at no cost to council funds. He further requested the presence of such a person to attend the next meeting of the Committee to explain the reason for this. The Area Liaison Officer undertook to forward the comments made to the Director of the Urban Environment for a written response to the questioner.
6. Questions from three members of the public regarding capital allocations were deferred for consideration under agenda item 8 (Capital Allocations).
7. A question regarding restricted parking proposals for Tall Trees Drive was deferred for consideration under agenda item 9 (Old Ham Lane and Adjacent Street, Pedmore, Stourbridge Proposed Waiting Restrictions).

CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on an application for funding from the Committee’s capital allocations budget from the Stourbridge Youth Committee representative for £500 to fund the cost of I.T. equipment and stationery.

In presenting the report the Area Liaison Officer advised that £200 of the application was for items of a revenue nature and therefore had to be discounted.

The following questions, raised in the Public Forum session, were addressed:

- a) A member of the public suggested that, despite the rules regarding capital allocations, the committee should award the whole amount of the application, or even increase it to £900 to support the work of young people.

It was pointed out that the capital budget could not be spent on revenue items. The granting of £300 towards capital expenditure would not exclude the Youth Committee from putting in a request for further funding for other projects. Some Members of the Committee undertook to donate a ream of paper towards the project.

- b) A member of the public queried why the revenue items had been disallowed when the “running costs” were required in conjunction with the I.T. equipment, to enable the project to be undertaken. The Area Liaison Officer advised that the project would be able to go ahead without the purchase of the revenue items. She also undertook to send a written response to the questioner.
- c) A member of the public asked if the criteria approved by the Committee in November 2008 should be revised, in the light of the fact that not all the capital budget had been spent.

A Member of the Committee responded that the reason behind the amendment to the criteria was made in the light of a large number of applications being received at the beginning of the municipal year, which, had they all been granted, would have resulted in no funding being available for the remainder of the year.

RESOLVED

That the request for funding from the Stourbridge Youth Committee representatives for I.T. equipment from the Area Committee's be approved in the sum of £300.

73

OLD HAM LANE AND ADJACENT STREETS PEDMORE, STOURBRIDGE – PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTIONS

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on proposals to introduce a No Waiting Traffic Regulation Order for Old Ham Lane and adjacent streets in Pedmore, Stourbridge from 8 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday.

Comments from members of the public, raised in the Public Forum session were considered, including the request for discussion on the proposals, as set out in the report submitted.

Some member of the public also objected to the proposals for restricted parking, as set out in the report for Tall Trees Drive. Comments on the proposals included:

If introduced, the proposals would resolve the problem in the immediate area and push it further back into other streets, such as Shaftsbury Avenue and Leys Close.

A number of alternatives were put forward, none of which were acceptable to all parties involved, and including single yellow lines and a reduction in the time of the Traffic Regulation Order, to cover school hours only.

It was pointed out that the problems mostly arose from parents parking across driveways whilst dropping off and picking up children at school times. It was also pointed out that obstructive parking was a criminal offence and should be addressed by the Police.

Ward Councillors indicated that the best way forward, given that there were a number of suggested alternatives, would be for them to canvas local residents on a preferred option and report their findings back to the Director of the Urban Environment.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the content of the report submitted be noted.
- 2) That Ward Councillors be requested
 - (1) to canvas local residents on a preferred option and
 - (2) be authorised, on behalf of the Committee, to report their findings to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration and determination by the Cabinet Member for Transportation.

74

COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on progress made by the Working Group in the development of the Stourbridge Area Community Renewal Plan.

A copy of the Community Renewal Plan for Stourbridge, agreed at a meeting of the Working Group held on the 5th March 2000 was circulated to all Members of the Committee prior to the meeting for their approval.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the content of the report on the Stourbridge Area Community Renewal Plan, as circulated at the meeting be approved.
- 2) That the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services be advised of the Committee's support for the work of the Community Renewal Team to be continued in community locations within the Stourbridge Area.

75

DUDLEY LOCAL IMPROVEMENT FINANCE TRUST (LIFT)

A joint report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services and the Director of Finance were submitted on progress with the Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT) project to develop a new Health and Social Care Centre in Lye in partnership with the LIFT Co and the PCT.

In presenting the report, the Assistant Director, Learning Direct advised that the scheme was in its infancy and no definite financial arrangements had yet been agreed upon. He informed that the preferred site was a site behind the High Street in Lye and that consultation would be undertaken when more definite plans had been drawn up.

Comments on the project included:

- a) Access to G.P. surgeries within the new project should be easily accessible to all.
- b) The site should be in close proximity to local residents
- c) Would charges be made for parking at the new facility?

In response to a query as to who would own the building at the end of the term of the Lease, the Assistant Director, Learning Direct advised that this would be dependent on who was the majority tenant at that time. He also explained that the option to purchase was not obligatory.

The Assistant Director, Learning Direct explained the difference between the terms P.F.I.'s and LIFT for the benefit of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report submitted, on the development of the Health and Social Care Centre in Lye in partnership with the LIFT Company and the Primary Care Trust, be noted.

76 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on written responses sent in respect of questions asked at previous meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted.

77 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor Kettle requested an inventory of all glass items, both on display and in storage, at Broadfield House, Kingswinford to include their origins and where the items came from. He also requested that items from Stourbridge be retained in Stourbridge.

78 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of future meetings of all Select Committees, held at the Council House, Dudley, be advised when determined for the new municipal year.

79

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date and venues of future meetings of the Committee would be advised as and when determined at the Annual Council meeting for the new municipal year.

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm

CHAIRMAN