

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 1st July, 2009, at 6.30 p.m.
at Howley Grange Primary School, Howley Grange Road, Halesowen

PRESENT

Councillors Body, Mrs Faulkner, Hill, James, Ms Nicholls, Ms Partridge, Mrs Shakespeare, Taylor, K Turner, Mrs H Turner Vickers and Woodall.

Officers

Area Liaison Officer, Assistant Director Performance and Partnership, Assistant Director Culture and Community, Head of Policy (Executive and Support), Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery, Group Engineer (Transportation), Quality and Complaints Manager, Project Manager, Healthy Towns, Area Youth Team Leader – Halesowen, Interim Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services and Mrs M Johal (Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources)

Also in Attendance

Mr Phil Towers – West Midlands Fire Authority
Councillor Attwood

Approximately 20 members of the public were in attendance.

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor James be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

(Councillor James thereupon took the Chair)

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

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

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Burston, Crumpton and Mrs Dunn.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made by the following Members in respect of the matters indicated:

Councillor Body declared a personal interest in respect of any reference made to issues regarding Homer Hill Park in view of him being the Chair of Friends of Homer Hill Park.

Councillor Ms Partridge declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 22 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of her being associated with Stourbridge Radio Group and that a funding application had been submitted by them.

Councillor Mrs Turner declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 20 (Healthy Towns Initiative) in view of her being a Member of the Development Control Committee and that there maybe future planning implications in this regard.

Councillor K Turner declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 12 (Emergency Services Issues) in view of him being a Member of the West Midlands Fire Authority.

Councillor K Turner declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 22 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of him being a contributor to Caslon Community Partnership.

Councillor K Turner declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 22 (Delegated Capital Budget) regarding the application for funding from Caslon Community Partnership in view of him being the Director, Vice-Chair and Treasurer of Groundwork Black Country.

Councillor Vickers declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 22 (Delegated Capital Budget) regarding the application for funding from Lye and Wollescote Partnership in view of him being a Committee Member of the Executive.

MINUTES

A Member referred to information about meetings that was issued to libraries and requested that, because documents were sometimes small in size, information be placed in a prominent position, particularly at Halesowen Library.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11th March, 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed.

6 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, and Appendices attached to the report, submitted on the terms of reference and the protocol for Area Committees, be noted.

7 APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the appointment of Co-opted Members to the Committee for the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED

That co-opted Members be not appointed to the Committee for the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

8 APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the appointment of Working Groups of the Committee for the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

The Area Liaison Officer referred to the proposed terms of reference of the Community Renewal Working Group and indicated that the fourth bullet point be deleted.

The Chairman suggested that membership of the Working Groups remain the same as the previous year and that if there were any changes they be notified to the relevant Officer by the end of the week.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Halesowen Area Committee (Halesowen Town Centre Development) Working Group be appointed for the ensuing year, with the following terms of reference:-

- To receive regular progress reports from Officers detailing regeneration and transportation activity (including Halesowen in Bloom) taking place in the Town Centre
- Identify and resolve any constraints to progress on action
- Guide public relations and communication issues
- To report recommendations and findings to the Committee on a regular basis.

And, subject to no changes being received, that the Working Group comprise of the Chairman of the Committee and one Member from each Ward, namely:- Councillors James, Hill, Ms Partridge, Taylor and K Turner.

- (2)(i) That the Halesowen Area Committee (Cradley/Windmill Hill Regeneration Plan Delivery) Working Group be re-appointed for the ensuing year, with the following terms of reference:-

- To receive regular progress reports from the Local Centres Officer
- To agree priorities for action
- To identify and resolve any constraints to plan progress
- Guide public relations and communications for the plan
- To report progress to the Committee on a regular basis
- To review the regeneration plan annually

And, subject to no changes being received, that the Working Group comprise of the Chairman of the Committee and one Ward Member from each of the following Wards: Hayley Green and Cradley South, Cradley and Foxcote and Belle Vale Wards, namely :- Councillors James, K Turner, Ms Partridge and Mrs Dunn.

- (ii) That the co-option to the Working Group of Mr Kevin Powis, a local resident of Cradley, as a speaking but non-voting member, be also approved.
- (3) That the Halesowen Area Committee (Community Renewal) Working Group be re-appointed for the ensuing year, with the following terms of reference:-

- To regularly review the progress of the Halesowen Area Community Renewal Plan and to make changes and additions, as needed, within the broad framework of the Plan
- To report progress and changes to the Committee on a regular basis
- The Community Renewal Service will keep the Working Group informed about the work of the Community Renewal Steering Group where there is also Member representation and ensure appropriate linkage
- To submit a revised and updated plan to the March 2010 Committee. The Local Community Renewal Plan will need to take into account and cohere with the overall Council Plan and the Dudley Community Plan.

And, subject to no changes being received, that the Working Group comprise of the Chairman of the Committee and one Member from each Ward (with the exception of Wards with representatives from more than one political group where the minority party would also attend the Working Group), namely:- Councillors James, Hill, Ms Nicholls, Ms Partridge, K Turner and Vickers.

- (4) That the appropriate Lead Officer to the Working Groups be requested to submit written reports to this Committee on a regular basis on the work of the Groups.

APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL REPRESENTATIONS TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the appointment of representatives of the Committee to serve on outside organisations for the terms indicated.

RESOLVED

That the following members be appointed to serve for the terms indicated on the organisations shown:

James Grove Sports Ground Recreational Trust – Councillor Ms Partridge – Four Year term from 1st May, 2010
 Cradley Community Association – Councillor Crumpton
 Lutley Community Association – Councillor Burston
 Wollescote Community Association – The Ward Members for the Cradley and Foxcote Ward, namely Councillors Body, Crumpton and Ms Partridge

10

PETITIONS

(a) Residents of Princess Crescent

The Committee noted that a petition had been submitted to the Council from residents of a “mature” block in Princess Crescent, Halesowen making a formal complaint against a tenant.

(b) Residents of Fairfield Drive

A petition was submitted by Councillor Mrs Faulkner on behalf of residents of Fairfield Drive regarding concerns about the number of parked vehicles not belonging to residents in the entrance to the Drive. The petition was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.

11

YOUTH ISSUES

A report of the Director of Children’s Services was submitted on the Youth Service Area Plan for the Halesowen and Cradley Area.

A leaflet on youth provision in Halesowen and Cradley was circulated and two representatives from the Halesowen Youth Forum, Halesowen Youth Council and Dudley’s UK Parliament introduced themselves to the meeting.

RESOLVED

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

12

EMERGENCY SERVICES ISSUES

Mr Phil Towers, West Midlands Fire Authority, was in attendance and briefly explained how the funding previously allocated from the delegated capital budget had been spent. A Digital Video Disc (DVD) about the Young Fire Fighters Association was also played.

Mr Towers also explained about the various courses that were offered to the young by the Fire Authority and indicated that a course was due to commence the following day for eight physically disabled children.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the DVD and verbal report on the Young Fire Fighters Association, be noted.

13

PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A Member of the public complained about flooding of the River Stour allegedly caused by the Wimpey Development and that properties in Fairfield Road and Grange Crescent had been affected. The position allegedly giving rise to this was referred to and several complaints had been made to the Council but apparently no action had been taken.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to investigate the matter and to respond in writing to the questioner.

- (b) A complaint was made about car parking at the junction of Meadowbrook Road and Thornhill Road by people attending the Doctors surgery. The issue had been raised at Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings and a notice had been put in the surgery but the problem persisted. Double yellow lines had been requested to alleviate the problem but no action had been taken.

In responding the Group Engineer (Transportation) advised that the matter had been brought to the attention of the Council a number of years ago and that the work had been added to the Traffic Management list for investigation.

A Member referred to a recent decision that had been approved for proposed waiting restrictions on Old Ham Lane and adjacent streets in Stourbridge and indicated that it had previously been stated that roads could not have restricted hours imposed. It was requested that Meadowbrook, Willow, Holly Bank and Thornhill Roads be reconsidered for proposed waiting restrictions as a matter of urgency.

The Group Engineer (Transportation) undertook to investigate the matter.

- (c) A question was asked as to why the regeneration of Cradley/Colley Gate had been put on hold and queried whether the recent announcement of the regeneration of Dudley Town Centre would now be considered as a priority. It was also queried why action was not going to be taken to ease the parking situation on Butchers Lane and Hill Bank Road in Cradley.

In responding the Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery stated that the regeneration of Cradley had not been halted. He indicated that the project was reliant on private sector input and contribution, and given the current economic climate, difficulties had been encountered but that every effort was being made to ensure that the project did move forward.

A response on the parking situation on Butchers Lane and Hill Bank Road, Cradley would be submitted in writing to the questioner.

- (d) A member of the public queried as to why the Council had allowed an established right of way on Oldhall Road in Cradley to be obstructed by a gate that said 'Private Property'.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to investigate the matter.

- (e) A question was asked about progress on the Halesowen Action Plan and reference was made to plans for Zion developments which was to include housing and suggested that the development should be encompassed rather than being an ad-hoc arrangement.

In responding the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) indicated that the Unitary Development Plan dealt with developmental issues and planning policies to determine planning applications and that the Area Action Plan was a Local Development Scheme.

The Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery informed the meeting that a statutory process involving various timescales had to be followed for the Area Action Plan. The first phase involving the preparations had commenced with a view to a plan being adopted in 2011. A consultation exercise would also be undertaken as part of the process.

- (f) Councillor Attwood informed the Committee about a Halesowen Fun Day that was being organised by Stourbridge and Black Country Events at Hurst Green Park on Saturday 18th July between 11.30 am to 5.30 pm and asked for support from Members together with community support.
- (g) A complaint was made about problems with the bus station and the Committee were informed that the enquiry desk was not open, doors were not working and that buses formed queues causing chaos.

The Chairman reported that the issue had been discussed at the Halesowen Area Committee (Halesowen Town Centre Consultation Exercise) Working Group and that Centro had been informed about the complaints.

WARD ISSUES

(a) Councillor Body

Referred to the changing rooms at Homer Hill Park and commented on the costs that had been incurred to run the facility and that it was also costing a considerable amount of money, particularly on security, to keep the Cradley High School site closed.

In responding the Assistant Director Culture and Community informed the meeting that, following the closure of Cradley High School and the use of their changing facilities no longer being made available, temporary changing facilities were based at Homer Hill Park.

RESOLVED:-

That the Director of Children's Services be requested to resolve the matter of the former Cradley School building site as a matter of urgency and support any appropriate action to clear the site for disposal as soon as practically possible.

(b) Councillor K Turner

Referred to the A456 and sought confirmation that the pedestrian crossings would be undertaken as part of the Grange Road Island works as previously discussed.

The Group Engineer (Transportation) indicated that the issue had discussed as part of various other measures and he undertook to investigate the matter.

(c) Councillor Ms Partridge

Mentioned that a meeting of the Cradley Forum had been held the previous day and that traffic and highway matters had been discussed and in particular pollution on the A458 junction of Colley Gate. She also enquired about the position of the speed visor that had been removed on Oldnall Road.

The Chairman stated that Ward Issues were for urgent items and asked that the appropriate channels be pursued for action to be taken. However, if channels were exhausted and the issue had not been resolved it should then be considered by the Area Committee.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING HELD ON 11th MARCH 2009

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted informing the Committee of the written responses made to questions asked at the previous meeting.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) referred to paragraph 4 of the report and gave a verbal update on the Leasowes footpath. It was reported that a meeting had taken place on 29th June to consider options to improve the safety and accessibility of the route. Arising from discussions the following had been recommended:-

- To cut back the overhanging vegetation on the footpath edges
- Coppice the trees on the embankment
- Provide steel tubular handrail on the steps leading from the footpath from Ladypool Close to the lower footpath
- Provide steel fencing on the higher footpath from Ladypool Close to the steps
- Modest resurfacing and drainage improvement of the lower footpath.

The cost for the proposals was estimated to be in the region of £12,000 and it was confirmed that there would be no closure of footpaths.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted, be noted.
- (2) That the proposals with regard to Leasowes footpath as indicated above be supported and funding opportunities be explored to carry out the works.

REPORT OF HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE WORKING GROUPS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted informing the Committee of issues raised and matters recommended for approval (if any) arising from meetings of the Working Groups.

A Member referred to the LIFT project as discussed by the Cradley/Windmill Hill Working Group and of the disappointment that it would not be going ahead as the footprint was inadequate. However, he referred to a meeting of the Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education and reported that a site visit was to be undertaken to look at various LIFT projects and he suggested that the Area Committee support this work insofar as investigating the provision of LIFT facilities in Dudley, particularly regarding development of Toys Lane to Two Gates in Halesowen.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report and Appendix to the report submitted, be noted.
- (2) That the work to be undertaken by the Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education regarding investigation of LIFT Projects be supported.

17

PROGRESS OF ELECTED MEMBER VISITS TO ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE ESTABLISHMENTS 2008/09

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 during 2008/09, actions taken in response to Member visits and on nominations for Members to carry out visits to Social Care establishments during 2009/10.

In introducing the report the Assistant Director Policy, Performance and Resources thanked Members who had taken part in previous visits. He explained that Members undertaking visits had to be Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted, be noted.
- (2) That Members be requested to submit nominations for the 2009/10 Municipal Year direct to the Assistant Director – Policy, Performance and Resources (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services).

HIGHWAYS MINOR WORKS CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2009/2010

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the proposed programmes of work for Local Safety Schemes, Safer Routes to School and Pedestrian Crossings within the Halesowen area for the 2009/2010 financial year.

Arising from the presentation made Members commented on the need for Rosemary and Dunstall Roads and the pedestrian refuge on Manor Lane to be considered as priorities.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendices attached to the report submitted, be noted and that all the Schemes set out in the Appendices, be supported.

HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress made with regard to physical developments taking place within Halesowen Town Centre together with a verbal update on information discussed at formal and informal meetings relating to Halesowen Town Centre.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) reported that the Working Group discussed the preparation of the action plan for environmental improvements, in particular, to the street scene and further regeneration projects in the town centre. The Action Plan appended to the report included the preparation of proposals for improvements to public realm in and around the town centre, a feasibility study on the opportunity for a 'Halesowen in Bloom' initiative and a series of events with environmental themes.

A feasibility study into 'Halesowen in Bloom' was currently assessing the opportunities, resources and the partnership engagement required for a successful programme. With regard to community engagement it was proposed to carry out a series of community based environmental projects and events over the next twelve months in order to measure the interest and support for an 'in bloom' initiative. The Working Group were keen to see 'in bloom' initiatives as a series of initiatives over a number of years which would add to regeneration activity to make the town centre a better place. A partnership approach was being taken and partners from Sandvik, Asda, Chamber of Commerce and Vale Retail had been invited to meetings of the Working Group to participate and they would form the mechanism to oversee 'Halesowen in Bloom'.

Work was well underway on the proposals in the Action Plan for improvements to the public realms, which included looking at key gateways, town centre lighting and improvements to public spaces.

The Group Engineer (Transportation) referred to points made earlier about problems with the bus station and said that he was of the opinion that the matter had been resolved and he undertook to pursue the matter again. He then explained about the work currently being undertaken in the town centre and in particular to the removal of the concrete blocks and indicated that attempts would be made for the work to be carried out with minimal disruption. It was also reported that work to modify the taxi rank on Church Croft would be undertaken shortly and that an additional taxi rank would be provided outside the old Post Office.

In response to a query from a Member about a Ring and Ride facility outside Wilkinsons store, the Group Engineer (Transportation), undertook to seek clarification as he was of the opinion that it was to be sited at a different location.

A Member raised concerns with regard to refuse and materials being left and asked that sites be cleared and tidied following completion of works.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and the verbal update given on discussions held at formal and informal meetings of Members in relation to Halesowen Town Centre, be noted.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Regeneration be recommended to approve the Action Plan for Environmental improvements.

20

HEALTHY TOWNS INITIATIVE

An updated version of the slides on the Dudley's Healthy Town Programme were circulated at the meeting and a presentation was given by the Project Manager, Healthy Towns.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the updated slides and presentation submitted be noted.

21

RAISING THE STANDARD – A FLAG FOR HALESOWEN?

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on a proposal to adopt and have made a flag for Halesowen.

The Chairman commented that the flag was a good idea and suggested that the matter be pursued in the form of a competition that would be open to all schools and Colleges across Halesowen and that the best flag would be adopted.

The Committee thanked Mr Tibbetts for submitting the design of the flag and indicated that it would be used as part of the competition entries.

RESOLVED

That the Halesowen Area Committee (Halesowen Town Centre Development) Working Group be requested to organise and oversee a competition open to pupils of schools and Colleges in Halesowen to design a flag with a view to it being formally adopted for Halesowen in due course following a recommendation by the Committee to the Council for formal adoption of the flag.

22

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on requests for funding from the Delegated Capital Budget.

The Area Liaison Officer indicated that he had written to applicants that had outstanding grants to confirm their position and that if they did not respond within a certain time, grants would be withdrawn.

(Having previously declared personal and prejudicial interests Councillors K Turner, Ms Partridge and Vickers left the meeting during the consideration of decisions for respective interests as indicated above).

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and a representative from the Opposition Group, be authorised to consider and agree, where appropriate, requests for funding from community and voluntary groups for small grants, up to a maximum of £2000, and that the criteria against which all bids/allocations should be considered be as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted.
- (2) That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to take appropriate action to promote the availability of funding for 2009/10, as indicated in paragraph 4 of the report now submitted.
- (3) That, subject to a further allocation of £50,000 being approved by Council, grants, as indicated below be considered.

- (4) That consideration of a grant of up to £2500 to Loaves 'n' Fishes towards a replacement delivery van be deferred pending further information to clarify statistics and activity in Halesowen.
- (5) That approval of a grant of up to £737.50 to Huntingtree Senior's Leisure Centre to have electric water heaters installed in the toilet and kitchen area, be noted.
- (6) That approval be given to a grant of up to £1439 to Overend Methodist Mission towards replacement chairs and hanging trolleys for use by community groups.
- (7) That approval be given to a grant of up to £1500 to Haleoswen Cycling Club towards a new Trackside Shelter.
- (8) That approval be given to a grant of up to £5000 to Hurst Green Methodist Church for wheelchair access to the church main hall.
- (9) That approval be given to a full grant of up to £5000 to Caslon Parent and Toddler Group towards the cost of installing a secure covered area for storage of prams and buggies.
- (10) That approval be given to a grant of up to £2500 to Caslon Community Partnership Group towards secure fencing around the "Community Garden Project", subject to planning permission and funding to clear overgrowth.
- (11) That approval be given to a grant of up to £5000 to Abbey Road Allotment Association towards the costs of converting a toilet suitable for the disabled, installation of a water supply on the site, timber to erect raised beds and polytunnels.
- (12) That a grant of up to £2500 to Stourbridge Community Radio Group for an intruder alarm system and security lighting, but not a full Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system, be refused as it was considered that there was not sufficient coverage in Halesowen.
- (13) That approval be given to a grant of up to £2800 for the purchase of replacement indoor bowls equipment to be stored at the Cornbow Hall, for the Over 50s Indoor Bowls Group.

- (14) That approval be given to a grant of up to £850 towards the 'story-telling chair' community artwork for Lye & Wollescote Partnership, subject to £1500 being approved by Stourbridge Area Committee and the £1000 shortfall being funded in due course.
- (15) That the unspent allocations identified in Appendix 2 amounting to £14,513 be brought back to the central capital pot for reallocation to other groups in due course.
- (16) That a report be submitted to a future meeting with regard to the position on funding with regard to Shell Corner Partnership.

23

DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of future meetings of the Committee be noted as follows:-

3rd September, 2009 – Colley Lane Primary School
11th November, 2009 – Earls High School
14th January, 2010 – Hurst Green Primary School
10th March, 2010 – Lutley Community Centre

24

SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

As a way of giving additional publicity to meetings of the Council's Select Committees, details of Select Committee meetings had been included on the agendas of meetings of Area Committees.

The information given in respect of publicity for future meetings of Select Committees was noted.

The meeting ended at 9 pm.

CHAIRMAN