

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 21st March, 2012 at 6.30 p.m.
At Cornbow Hall, 10 Hagley Street, Halesowen

PRESENT

Councillor Burston (Chairman)
Councillor Taylor (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Body, Crumpton, Mrs Dunn, Mrs Faulkner, Hill, James, Ms Nicholls, Ms Partridge, Mrs Shakespeare, Mrs H Turner, K Turner, Vickers and J Woodall.

Officers

Area Liaison Officer (Treasurer), Assistant Director of Housing Strategy and Private Sector (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Assistant Director Economic Regeneration and Transportation, Head of Executive Support, Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery, Head of Traffic and Transportation (all Directorate of the Urban Environment), Assistant Director for Quality and Partnership, Youth Area Team Leader (Directorate of Children's Services), Assistant Director Law and Governance and Mrs M Johal (Directorate of Corporate Resources).

Also in Attendance

Inspector Michael Palmer – West Midlands Police
Mr Mark Lawton – Station Commander, West Midlands Fire Service
Ms Julie Winpenny – West Midlands Fire Service

Mr Jon Nicholls – Halesowen Golf Club (For Agenda Item No 6)
Mr Neil Bucktin – Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group (For Agenda Item No 12)

There were approximately 35 members of the public in attendance.

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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 and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 16 (Delegated Capital Budget) relating to the application made by Friends of Homer Hill Park in view of him being the Chair of Homer Hill Friends Group.

Councillor Crumpton declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 16 (Delegated Capital Budget) relating to the application made by Friends of Homer Hill Park in view of him being a Member of Homer Hill Friends Group.

Councillor Taylor declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 16 (Delegated Capital Budget) relating to the application made by the Friends of the Leasowes in view of him being a Member of the Friends of the Leasowes Park Group.

Councillor K Turner declared personal interests in respect of Agenda Item No 7 (Emergency Services Issues) in view of him being a Member of the West Midlands Fire Authority, Agenda Item No 16 ((Delegated Capital Budget) relating to the Hasbury and Cradley Rotary Club in view of him being a Member of the Club and relating to the Halesowen Golf Club application in view of him being an associate of the Principal Professional.

Councillor Vickers declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 16 (Delegated Capital Budget) relating to the application made by the Friends of the Leasowes in view of him being a Member of the Friends of the Leasowes Park Group.

Councillor J Woodall declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 16 (Delegated Capital Budget) relating to the application made by the Friends of the Leasowes in view of him being a Member of the Friends of the Leasowes Park Group.

44 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9th November, 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed subject to an amendment being made to Minute No 34, resolution No (1)(ii) to change the following wording “no waiting 7am – 7 pm Monday to Friday” to “no waiting 8 am – 5 pm Monday to Friday”.

45 PETITIONS

- (a) It was reported that that no petitions had been received since the last meeting.

(b) The following petitions were received at the meeting:-

(i) Closure of Access Way

A petition was submitted by Councillor Vickers on behalf of residents requesting the closure of the access way leading from Western Avenue and Shenstone Avenue to prevent anti social behaviour.

The petition was received and would be submitted to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration.

(ii) Street Lighting on Path

A petition was submitted by Councillor Vickers on behalf of residents requesting street lighting to be installed along the path linking Cloister Drive with Manor Way Primary School, Abbeyfields and Halesowen Town Centre.

The petition was received and would be submitted to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration.

(iii) Complaint in Relation to Poor State of Tanhouse Estate

A petition was submitted on behalf of residents of Tanhouse Estate complaining about the state of the estate alleging problems of litter under trees and hedges, refuse collection issues, dogs fouling and roaming and the overgrowth of trees and shrubbery.

The petition was received and would be submitted to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration.

(iv) Halesowen Flower Club

A petition was submitted by residents protesting about the removal of the stage area and blocks in the Shenstone Theatre at Halesowen Library.

The petition organiser, Ms L Ridout, exercised her entitlement under the Petitions Scheme to address the Committee on the subject of the petition for up to three minutes. In doing so, she conveyed the views of the petitioners on the reasons why they considered the stage area in the Shenstone Theatre should not be removed.

The petition was received and would be submitted to the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services for consideration.

46 YOUTH SERVICE

A report of the Acting Director of Children's Services was submitted on the Youth Service provision for the Halesowen Township Area.

A Member expressed concern about the continued reduction in the budget for youth provision and requested that future reports should include a breakdown of the figures and information on the reduction in funding.

In responding the Chairman indicated that Local Authorities had to make significant budget reductions and he thanked the Youth Area Team Leader for continuing to deliver services given the difficult climate.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, on the Youth Service provision for the Halesowen Township Area, be noted and endorsed.

47 PRESENTATION BY THE HALESOWEN GOLF CLUB

Mr Jon Nicholls gave a presentation on the aims and objectives of the Halesowen Golf School Junior Academy and in doing so indicated that sessions for young people were delivered during curriculum time and at after school clubs and that all types of young people from varying backgrounds, abilities and cultures were included.

RESOLVED

That the information given in the verbal presentation on the work of the Halesowen Golf School Junior Academy be received and noted.

48 CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13(c), it was

RESOLVED

That agenda item No 12 be considered as the next item of business.

DUDLEY CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP FOR THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE (NHS)

Mr Neil Bucktin, Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group gave an oral report on the changes proposed to the National Health Service, in which Primary Care Trusts would be discontinued with primary care being provided through Clinical Commissioning Groups and secondary care by hospitals. He also outlined the respective roles of the health agencies involved in terms of commissioning and delivery of services and explained the governance and scrutiny arrangements that would apply to Clinical Commissioning Groups, with particular reference to Dudley. Mr Bucktin indicated that the authorisation process for the Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group was currently underway and that it was expected that the application would be submitted in July 2012 with a view to a decision being announced in October.

A discussion then ensued on the new arrangements, in relation to which differing views were expressed, and in particular it was commented that efforts should be made to reassure the public and in clarifying how the new arrangements would be beneficial to them.

RESOLVED

That the information given in the verbal presentation made by Mr Bucktin, Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group be received and noted.

EMERGENCY SERVICES ISSUES

Mr Mark Wilson, Station Commander, West Midlands Fire Service briefly reported on incidents in Halesowen since the last meeting and also gave an update on the Cradley and Halesowen Fire Station merger. In doing so, he reported that incidents in Halesowen were continuing to reduce and that this was largely due to good policing, however, arson to rubbish and to vehicles was still of concern.

Mr Wilson reported that the Halesowen Fire Station would close on 1st April, 2012 and that the site would be secured by perimeter security fencing. He thanked all Officers at the Halesowen Fire Station for all their work in making a safer community.

RESOLVED

That the information given in the verbal update on emergency services issues be received and noted.

AREA POLICE AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (PACT) ISSUES

A schedule of PACT meetings arranged in the area of the Committee had been included with the agenda for information.

Inspector Michael Palmer briefly reported on crime issues pertinent to the Halesowen area, providing statistical information on crime by category and by ward, in terms of the numbers and percentages of crimes recorded and detection rates. The figures indicated that, overall, there had been fewer crimes and that there was a continued downward trend, however the most serious crimes relating to violence had shown an increase.

Inspector Palmer reported that the Halesowen Police Station would be manned by staff between the hours of 10 am – 6 pm and that Brierley Hill Police Station would be the nearest station that was open 24 hours.

A Member requested that their thanks and appreciation be conveyed to Sergeant Wendy Tyler on the work undertaken in the Hayley Green area and to wish her well on her retirement.

RESOLVED

That the information given in the verbal update on policing issues be received and noted.

PUBLIC FORUM

- (1) A question was asked about the relocation of Stourbridge College and Horticultural Unit and information on the future of the site was requested. It was also queried whether the Council could give a commitment to ensure that the site continued to remain a part of Leasowes Park.

In responding the Head of Executive Support indicated that he was unaware of the move and undertook to investigate the matter and to provide a written response to the questioner concerned.

- (2) A resident queried about the future plans of the derelict garages at the junction of Hillwood and Stewart Roads and it was commented that the state of the garages were impacting on privately owned properties.

The Assistant Director of Housing Strategy and Private Sector undertook to investigate the matter and to provide a written response to the questioner concerned.

- (3) The future plans for the Holt Farm Primary School site was queried and it was commented that the site was in a poor condition.

A Member indicated that since the school had closed down she had addressed complaints from residents regarding litter and that insofar as anti social behaviour was concerned only four calls had been made to the police since 2009.

The Assistant Director for Quality and Partnership reported that permission from the Secretary of State was awaited to dispose of the site and until the permission was received, action could not be taken. He indicated that he was not aware of the state of the building but he undertook to enquire as to whether any action could be taken and to provide a written response to the questioner concerned.

- (4) A resident complained about the condition of the defunct part of the old James Grove and Sons button factory and queried the future plans for the site.

In responding a Member indicated that she had been pursuing the matter and commented that the Council had boarded up the premises to make them secure within the legal powers available to them. Officers had recently written to the agents with regard to the general appearance of the building requesting that the owners took measures to improve the site. However this request was of an informal nature as there were no legal powers available to the Council beyond those already used, as the condition of the site did not meet the criteria for formal action.

The Head of Executive and Support indicated that the situation would continue to be monitored.

- (5) Progress with regard to plans for the Multi Use Games Area for Highfield Park was queried and it was also stated that the Park was not the safest place to have this type of facility.

The Head of Executive and Support undertook to investigate the matter with a view to providing a written response to the questioner concerned.

- (6) A complaint was made about the increase in fees for the Shenstone Theatre and the immense financial strain on groups using the facilities.

In responding the Assistant Director of Housing Strategy and Private Sector indicated that a flat rate increase applied across the Borough but he undertook to provide a written response to the questioner concerned about the reasons for the increase.

- (7) Reference was made to the zebra crossing on the Island at Shell Corner and it was commented that the crossing was very dangerous and that drivers did not stop their cars for people to cross.

In responding the Head of Traffic and Transportation stated that there was overall concern about the tendency for people to ignore highways regulations. However, he indicated that he was not aware of accident problems at the said site but he undertook to check the accident records.

53 WARD ISSUES

(a) Councillor Body

Referred to an event held at Homer Hill Park in September of last year and thanked everyone involved in raising over £3000. Half of the money raised would be spent on works on the Park and the other half would be donated to the Help for Heroes Charity Fund.

(b) Councillor Crumpton

- (i) Referred to a response received relating to plans for the self service installation at the Cradley Library and suggested that plans for the staff room, which is currently used for meetings and surgeries should be put on hold, as it was a room greatly used by the community.
- (ii) Stated that numerous accidents had occurred on Oldnall Road particularly in the last couple of months. He informed the meeting that accident victims were looking for recompense from the Council as it had come to light that brake fluid was being held and staying in the road, resulting in the accidents.

(c) Councillor Ms Partridge

- (i) Referred to the Walkathon event at Homer Hill Park and asked that thanks be placed on record to Lye Green Nursery for their efforts in raising over £1000. She also apologised for the naming of the incorrect nursery in an annual report.
- (ii) Referred to a request made in the year 2010 for a crossing at the bottom of Brook Holloway and indicated that the response received had been that the road was not dangerous and therefore would not be included in the Highways Safety Programme Scheme. It was requested that a report on criteria and information on how roads were determined as being dangerous be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.
- (iii) It was requested that consideration be given to the inclusion of Hill Street, Wollescote in the Road Traffic Safety Scheme, as it was a highly congested street. It was also requested that consideration be given to a traffic management scheme, possibly a 20 mph zone in the vicinity of Wollescote School.

54 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE
HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE HELD ON 9TH NOVEMBER 2011

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

Arising from the presentation of the report, a Member referred to paragraph 4 of the report and stated that water on the bridge at the bottom of Mogul Lane was building up again and that it happened on a regular basis.

RESOLVED

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

55 CRADLEY/WINDMILL HILL – AIR QUALITY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on air quality issues in Cradley/Windmill Hill.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member commented that there was no evidence to indicate that air quality was improving and it was requested that information showing this evidence be circulated to Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report on air quality issues in the Cradley/Windmill Hill area, be noted.

56 REVIEW OF BUS LANES IN HALESOWEN

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the findings of a review of bus lanes in Bromsgrove Road and Queensway in Halesowen.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to consider the removal of bus lanes on Bromsgrove Road and Queensway (West or bus station bound) and the bus lane on Queensway (East or Birmingham bound).

57 HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress with regard to physical developments taking place in and around Halesowen Town Centre.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member referred to meetings of the Halesowen Area Committee being held at the Cornbow Hall and it was reported that the lift was not in operation after 7.30 pm, making it difficult for the disabled and those in wheelchairs. It was requested that consideration be given to future meetings being held at other venues.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on progress in respect of the physical developments taking place in and around the Halesowen Town Centre, be noted.

58

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on requests for grants from the Delegated Capital Budget. A supplementary paper on an additional grant that had been received was also circulated prior to the meeting.

In presenting the report, the Area Liaison Officer indicated that bids that had been submitted, and if approved, would exceed the current available funding. However, it was reported that the Committee could allocate funding from next years allocation in advance.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the action taken by the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Opposition Spokesperson, in approving a grant of £229.96 to Access in Dudley for the purchase of two digital cameras, be noted.
- (2) That the action taken by the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Opposition Spokesperson, in approving a grant of £1010 to Hawne Recreation Ground for the purchase of two metal litter bins, be noted.
- (3) That approval be given to a grant of £1900 being made to Hasbury and Cradley Rotary Club for the purchase of a marquee.
- (4) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 being made to Friends of the Leasowes for the renovation of the kitchen area.
- (5) That approval be given to a grant of up to £514 being made to Tuesday Bowls for the purchase of an additional bowling mat subject to consideration being given to the feasibility of the Council acquiring the mat.

- (6) That approval, in principle, be given to a grant of up to £1380 being made to Halesowen/Dudley Yemeni Community Association for the purchase of two personal computers pending further investigations on whether the computers could be purchased for a lesser price.
- (7) That a grant of up to £299 being made to Rage Arts for the purchase of an amplifier, be deferred and that Rage Arts be requested to attend the next meeting of the Committee with a view to giving a presentation on their work.
- (8) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 being made to the Halesowen Golf Club towards the total cost of purchasing golfing equipment.
- (9) That the application for a grant of up to £2000 to Lutley Community Association towards the total cost of installing Closed Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV's) and associated equipment be refused as several grants had been made to the Association in the past.

(Having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following application, Councillors Body and Crumpton left the meeting and re-joined the meeting following its consideration).

- (10) That a grant of £3350 being made to the Friends of Homer Hill Park towards the total cost of installing two metal bench and table sets with disability access overhang into a new children's play area in Homer Hill Park, Cradley, be deferred pending further information.

59 DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that dates of future meetings of the Area Committee would be determined at the Annual Council Meeting on 17th May, 2012.

60 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

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

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

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman reported that Mr Bernard Meade, Head of Executive Support, Directorate of the Urban Environment, would be retiring shortly and thanked him, on behalf of the Committee for the work he had undertaken in relation to the work of the Committee. He also reported that this would be the last meeting of the Area Committee that Councillor Mrs Faulkner would be attending and he thanked her, on behalf of the Committee, for the work she had undertaken for the Council.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm.

CHAIRMAN