

BRIERLEY HILL AREA COMMITTEE

Thursday 3rd April 2008 at 7.00 p.m.
at Brierley Hill Civic Hall

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs Wilson (Chairman);
Councillor Tyler (Vice Chairman);
Councillors D Blood, Mrs Blood, Ms Boleyn, Ms Foster, Harley, Ms Harris, Islam, Mrs Jordan, Lavender, Miller, Nottingham, Southall and Tomkinson.

Officers

The Director of the Urban Environment (as Area Liaison Officer), Section Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety), Head of Sport and Recreation and Manager of the Executive Support Team – (all Directorate of the Urban Environment), Senior Solicitor (Ms Kidd) and Mr Sanders (both Directorate of Law and Property).

In Attendance

The Planning Policy Manager, Urban Planning, and the Principal Conservation Officer/Borough Archaeologist (both Directorate of the Urban Environment) for items numbers 10 and 11 (Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country – Public Consultation) and (Brierley Hill Action Plan – Public Consultation) and Item number 12 (Brierley Hill High Street Conservation Area), respectively.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made by Councillors D Blood, Mrs Blood and Southall in respect of Agenda Item number 14 (Capital Allocations) in so far as the item related to the grant application made by Wordsley Festival Group, as they attend meetings of the Group.

Councillor Ms Boleyn declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item number 15 (matters raised at the meeting of Brierley Hill Area Committee held on 31st January 2008), in so far as the item related to stray horses, in view of her involvement with the RSPCA.

Councillor Miller declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item number 14, in so far as the item related to the grant application made by the Kingswinford Village Association, in view of his Chairmanship of the Association.

Councillor Southall declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Member's Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item number 14, in so far as the item related to Phoenix Youth Football Club, in view of his being a Council Member of the Birmingham County Football Association, to which body the Phoenix Youth Football Club was affiliated.

Councillor Southall declared a prejudicial and personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in relation to Agenda item number 8 (a) (Land issues – land at High Street, Wordsley (former Wordsley Institute)), as the proprietor of the Rose and Crown public house, Wordsley, had approached him and spoken about the possible purchase of the land when it reverted to Council possession. Councillor Southall also made the declaration in view of his membership of the Development Control Committee.

Councillors Southall and Mrs Wilson declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item number 10 (Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country – Public Consultation) in view of their membership of the Development Control Committee and because the strategy identified build options, that had potential for determination at a future date by the Development Control Committee.

Councillors Southall and Mrs Wilson declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item number 11 (Brierley Hill Action Plan – Public Consultation) in view of their membership of the Development Control Committee and because the Action Plan identified build options that had potential for determination at a later date by the Development Control Committee.

Councillors Southall and Mrs Wilson declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item number 12 (Brierley Hill High Street Conservation Area) in view of their membership of the Development Control Committee and because recommendations regarding a Conservation Area Character Appraisal would require consideration by the Development Control Committee.

Councillor Tomkinson declared a prejudicial interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item number 12 in view of her being resident in the proposed Conservation Area.

Councillor Tomkinson declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item number 7 (Public Forum) in view of her governorship of a school which she had been advised would be discussed under that item.

Councillor Tyler declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item number 14, in so far as it related to Lunch on the Run, as he had encouraged the organisers to submit a grant application.

Councillor Tyler declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item number 14, in so far as it related to the grant application made by the Lions Boxing club, since he was a keen supporter of the Boxing Club.

Councillor Tyler declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item number 14, in so far as it related to the Kingswinford Village Association, since he had been involved in the formation of the Association.

Councillor Tyler declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item number 14, in so far as it related to Wall Heath Community Association, in view of his membership of the Management Committee of the Association.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 31st January 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

No petitions were received at this meeting

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BRIERLEY HILL COMMUNITY FORUM - UPDATE

The Chair of the Forum, Mike Mason, presented an update report on the activities of the Forum in March 2008, including reference to major projects with which the Forum was involved, forthcoming major events, partnership working, summer schemes proposed, and initiatives being undertaken regarding children and young people and health and wellbeing activities.

Mr Mason made particular reference to the Signpost Partnership Initiative, which provided an information and advice facility for local residents and in respect of which clientele had more than doubled over the last year.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

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YOUTH ISSUES

No issues were reported under this item

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PUBLIC FORUM

(On consideration of issue (e) below, Councillor Nottingham declared a personal interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in relation to the issue of the Council's bid under the Building Schools for the Future programme, in view of his Chairmanship of the Select Committee on Children's Services)

- (a) A member of the public requested that public consultation should take place in relation to traffic management proposals for John Street, since not all residents favoured the one-way system currently anticipated.

In confirming that proposals currently being considered, would involve a one-way system, the Section Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety) indicated that this proposal had initially arisen in response to concerns expressed by local residents about traffic problems in the area. The proposed making of a Traffic Regulation Order had not yet been advertised, however, and the Section Engineer summarised the procedure that would be involved, which would include consideration of any objections received. In addition, it was proposed that, as part of the consultation process, a questionnaire would be sent to local residents and, if it was considered there was a need for further consultation following the completion and return of the questionnaires, this would be arranged.

- (b) A further resident expressed concerns about the potential impact that the John Street proposals would have on Bank Street and other nearby roads, in terms of increased congestion anticipated at the Bank Street junction. The Section Engineer confirmed that all comments made in relation to the proposals would be welcomed so that they could then be considered in more detail.
- (c) Councillor Tomkinson expressed concern that the current proposals for the Brierley Hill 'Parallel Route' scheme would require vehicular traffic to turn left from the Bell Street South junction which would then lead to longer journey times and inconvenience for traffic wishing to travel from St Michael's Church towards Stourbridge. She expressed the view that no change should have been made. The Section Engineer agreed to arrange for the matter to be looked at further.
- (d) A letter from the Chair of the Nine Locks Community Association to the Chairman of the Committee of the possible use of land at the top of Hill Street for additional parking, aimed at mitigating the unauthorised use of the Community Centre car park, and for the continued maintenance of the path, was received and referred to the Director of Law and Property for attention.

- (e) A question was asked by a member of the public on when consultation promised at a public meeting held on 24th January 2008, on proposals for the Pensnett/Crestwood Academy would take place. The issue was referred to the Director of Children's Services for a reply.

At this juncture, the Chairman of the Governors of Holly Hall School drew attention to an original intention for pupils at Pensnett School to have the option of attending either of the Academies then proposed at Crestwood or Holly Hall. Since Holly Hall would not now have Academy status, she asked if Pensnett parents had been consulted regarding their preferences. In indicating that parents of Pensnett had not been so asked, the Chairman of the Governors of that school queried what consultation might achieve. It was agreed that these issues be referred to the Director of Children's Services for reply.

Certain members then commented on the Council's bid to the Department for Children, Schools and Families under the Building Schools for the Future programme by expressing the following views and asking the questions indicated:-

- The hope was expressed that pupils would be allocated to their parents' preferred school;
- An allegation was made that formal consultation had not been undertaken;
- A question was asked on the reasons why the Crestwood site had been preferred to Pensnett for the Academy and an assertion made that Pensnett pupils should have an entitlement to attend the Academy;
- Concern that a press release had been issued indicating that Holly Hall school would become an Academy; when it was known it did not meet Government criteria;
- Concern was expressed that there might be a 'domino effect' should pupils displaced from Pensnett, or who could have been allocated places there, not be able to be allocated places at Crestwood or Holly Hall;
- A question on where Pensnett pupils would attend, given that Holly Hall was over-subscribed
- A question was asked on the reasons why Holly Hall School had heard that Academy status would not be forthcoming from a local newspaper, rather than the Council;
- A further questioner asked to be advised of the future use proposed for the Pensnett School site.

It was agreed that that these issues also be referred to the Director of Children's Services.

- (f) A letter from a local resident, supported by Councillor Islam, was submitted regarding the adequacy of speed ramps installed in Adelaide Street and surrounding area, in the light of young persons driving at speed and a number of young children being resident in the area. The matter was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for investigation.
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LAND ISSUES

(In view of the Prejudicial Interest declared by him earlier at the meeting, Councillor Southall left the room during consideration of the application for the purchase of the site of the former Wordsley Institute at High Street, Wordsley. Councillor Mrs Wilson declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of all Land Issues under this item, in view of her membership of the Development Control Committee and because the issue of planning consent for the sites referred to in the report submitted to the meeting might be considered by the Development Control Committee at a later stage. She vacated the chair during consideration of this item and the chair was assumed by the Vice Chairman, Councillor Tyler. At the conclusion of all Land Matters under this item, Councillor Mrs Wilson reassumed the chair).).

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on applications received in respect of land and property owned by the Council:-

RESOLVED

- (1) That the application from the adjoining land owner to purchase the site of the former Wordsley Institute, as indicated on the plan attached to the report submitted, be not acceded to but that the Cabinet Member for Personnel, Law and Property be advised to declare the site surplus to requirements and add it to the Land Disposals Programme to be sold on the open market on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.
 - (2) That consideration of the application received to purchase land adjacent to 24 Redfly Lane, Pensnett, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, be deferred, pending a site visit by Members of the Committee.
 - (3) That the application to purchase the land off Albion Street Brierley Hill, as indicated hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, be refused for reasons set out in the comments section of the Appendix to the report.
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THORNS COMMUNITY LEARNING VILLAGE

A presentation on the Learning Village proposed to be established on the sites of the Thorns Secondary School and Community College and Thorns Primary School, was given.

The project would involve the location of not only the Secondary and Primary Schools on the site but also Old Park School. A scale model of the new facilities was included in the presentation and ancillary issues, including access and egress, car parking and play provision for all three schools, were discussed. The presenting officer, Ms Marsters of the Directorate of Children's Services, indicated the timescale for the project, which was scheduled to be completed in 2010. A planning application was to be submitted in the very near future.

RESOLVED

That the presentation be received and noted.

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PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR THE
JOINT CORE STRATEGY FOR THE BLACK COUNTRY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted advising the Committee of the timescale and process for public consultation on the Preferred Options for the Joint Core Strategy Black Country.

In presenting the report, the Principal Policy Manager (Urban Planning) amplified the background to the Strategy and drew attention to the sites where the Consultation Document would be available and the Consultation events that would be held.

In the discussion, one Member questioned the accuracy of some of the maps, in response to which the Principal Policy Manager stated that the maps supplied were for the purpose of Strategic diagrams at this stage, rather than to pinpoint exact areas. The same Member expressed a need for rare marl situated underneath the Oak Lane Caravan Park to be safeguarded under the Strategy, in response to which the Principal Policy Manager confirmed that mineral resources in the ground would be protected.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report and presentation, together with the comments made, be received and noted.

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PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE BRIERLEY HILL AREA ACTION PLAN
PREFERRED OPTIONS

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted advising the Committee of the timescale and process for public consultation on the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan Preferred Options Report.

Particular reference was made in the discussion to the 3600 new homes to be located in the wider Brierley Hill area under the Plan and the hope was expressed that a number of these would be of a quality sufficient to attract new residents able to regenerate the town's retail sector. The Principal Planning Officer (Urban Planning), in presenting the report, confirmed that the range of housing to be included would be stated in the next stage of the planning application.

Particular aspects of the Area Action Plan for Brierley Hill were emphasised and the public urged to contribute to the public consultation.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report, and the presentation, be noted.

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BRIERLEY HILL HIGH STREET CONSERVATION AREA – PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON A DRAFT CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted seeking views on the Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Brierley Hill High Street and in particular upon the boundaries put forward therein in relation to a proposed new Brierley Hill Conservation Area and on whether an area of Victorian/Edwardian terraced housing centred on Bank Street should be considered in future for Conservation Area Designation through the undertaking of a further Conservation Area Character Appraisal for that area.

In presenting the report, the Principal Conservation Officer/Borough Archaeologist gave the background to the Character Appraisal for the High Street and drew attention to the historic nature of some of the buildings situated there, some of which had Listed status.

In the discussion that ensued, one Member requested that consideration be given to the planning process to achieve a greater diversity of retail outlets being provided for in Brierley Hill High Street, particularly in view of the number of hot food takeaway facilities currently located there. The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that this could be looked at, together with issues concerning shop front facades.

In response to a question from a local trader, the Principal Conservation Area Officer/Borough Archaeologist confirmed that conservation would not cause regeneration to cease and indicated that Advantage West Midlands and Westfield were keen to support regeneration proposals for the High Street.

The Director of the Urban Environment indicated that traders in Brierley Hill would be fully engaged on regeneration issues. The public and members of the Committee were urged to complete and return the questionnaire contained in the consultation paper on the issue, copies of which were available at the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the report, presentation and comments made be received and noted.

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HIGHWAYS SAFETY SCHEMES CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2008/2009

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted seeking the support of the Committee for the proposed programmes of work for the Local Safety Schemes, pedestrian crossings and Safer Routes to Schools within the Brierley Hill area for the 2008/2009 financial year.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be informed that the Committee support the Local Safety Schemes, Pedestrian Crossings and Safer Routes to Schools initiatives outlined in the Appendices to the report now submitted.

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CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the recommendations of the Capital Allocations Working Group on applications for funding from the Capital Allocations Budget of the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the application submitted on behalf of the Wordsley Festival Group for the sum of £1887 (inclusive of Value Added Tax) for the funding for marquee tents and a computer and printer referred to in the application be approved, subject to confirmation in writing being received from the organisers that this equipment and the equipment previously acquired by the Group from funding approved by this Committee earlier will be made available to other community groups in the Brierley Hill area.

- (2) That the application submitted on behalf of Lunch on the Run for funding of £4,418 (inclusive of Value Added Tax) for the refurbishment of their disabled toilet, the replacement of the cold service counter, the purchase of a heated food unit and to replace various items of equipment for use in their training/catering kitchen, be approved.
- (3) That the application submitted on behalf of the Phoenix Youth Football Club in the sum of £2,078 for the purchase of items of football equipment and for a set of floodlights, be approved.
- (4) That the application submitted on behalf of the Lions Boxing Club for the grant of a further £400 in addition to the grant awarded previously by the Committee for the erection of steel palisade perimeter fencing to secure the premises be approved, the additional sum being awarded in recognition of an increase in the price of steel nationally.
- (5) That the application submitted on behalf of the Kingswinford Village Association for the sum of £4,000 to part-finance Christmas lights be deferred, pending the submission of the details of the Association's financial position, its constitution and detailed quotations in relation to the items of equipment subject to the application.
- (6) That the application submitted on behalf of Wall Heath Community Centre in the sum of £4,400 (inclusive of Value Added Tax) for the replacement of the existing kitchen, be approved.

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MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 31ST JANUARY 2008

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted updating the Committee on issues raised at its meeting held on 31st January 2008.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be received.
- (2) That the Director of the Urban Environment arrange a meeting between the appropriate officers of the Directorate, the RSPCA and Councillor Ms Boleyn to discuss the matter of stray horses and report back and that the Ward Members for Brockmoor and Pensnett be also invited to the meeting.

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WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillor Lavender indicated his disappointment at the withdrawal of the number 261 bus service from Wallheath to Dudley via Russells Hall Hospital and asked if the Council could attempt to dissuade Centro from withdrawal. The matter was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for attention.
 - (b) Councillor Mrs Jordan requested the provision of a lay-by for parking in the vicinity of the junction of High Street, Pensnett with Pensnett Road, in view of the impact to local residents of double yellow lines installed in the vicinity. The matter was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for investigation.
 - (c) Councillor Harley drew attention to a large pothole at Council garages at Portway Close. The matter was referred to the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services for attention.
 - (d) Councillor Harley requested an update on the position regarding the shops at Beech Road, Kingswinford. The matter was referred to the Director of Law and Property.
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THANKS

This being the last meeting of the Committee in 2008/2009, the Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their service over the year. This also being the last meeting of the Committee Councillor Tomkinson would be attending, given her impending retirement from the Council, the Chairman also paid particular tribute to Councillor Tomkinson's outstanding service to the community over the years.

Members, in turn, thanked the Chairman for her able Chairmanship.

The meeting ended at 9.10 p.m.

CHAIRMAN