

## **STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE**

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2009, at 7.00p.m.  
at Wollaston Village Hall, Bridgnorth Road, Wollaston

PRESENT:-

Councillor C Wilson (Chairman)

Councillors Adams, Attwood, Banks, Barlow, Mrs Cowell, Hanif, Jones, Knowles, Lowe, Mrs Rogers and Mrs Walker; Mr G Downing and Mr H Mursaleen

Officers:

The Director of Children's Services (Area Liaison Officer), Assistant Director, Planning and Environmental Health; Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety (all of the Directorate of the Urban Environment), Assistant Director, Library's, Archives and Adult Learning; Area Community Renewal Officer, The Area Housing Manager – Stourbridge; (all of the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services) Area Youth Worker, Early Years, Youth and Education (Directorate of Children's Services) Mr T Holder, Solicitor and Mrs J Rees (both of Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources)

In attendance

Inspector B Quiney (West Midlands Police) and Mr Liam Ward (Stourbridge Youth Council), together with approximately 40 Members of the public.

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### 35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

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### 36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs Rogers declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of agenda item number 11 (Issues Raised by Members of the Committee), in view of her Chairmanship of the Friends of Mary Stevens Park, on whose behalf she intended to raise an issue.

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### 37 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to: -

1. the concerns, as set out in paragraph two of Minute No. 7, being amended to read “that it was his opinion that the decision of the Committee to ‘ring fence’ the Stevens Trust and Area Committee capital allocations funds would have a detrimental affect on voluntary organisations seeking support from the Area Committee”
2. That with reference to Minute No. 5, arising from a comment made by a member of the public that the planning permission referred to, should have referred to the change of use from “open space” to an “open classroom”, the Assistant Director Planning and Environmental Health advised that, her understanding was that, if the land was within the courtlier of the Butterfly Centre, planning permission would not be required, however, she would investigate this point.

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#### PETITIONS

A member of the public submitted a petition, on behalf of the residents of Racecourse Lane, Pedmore, Stourbridge, requesting that traffic calming measures be introduced. In presenting the petition, the member of the public stated that the three speed restrictions advertised for Racecourse Lane were confusing to drivers.

#### RESOLVED

That the petition be referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration.

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#### YOUTH MATTERS

Mr H Mursaleen, the co-opted member, gave an oral presentation on issues affecting young people as follows:-

The Stourbridge Youth Council had met on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2009 and were due to meet again before Christmas.

Three candidates had been identified to represent the Stourbridge Area on the Dudley Youth Parliament.

Two new full time workers and a detached worker had now been appointed.

The Area Youth Worker - Early Years, Youth and Education also reported orally on youth matters, advising of the following activities within the area:

Funding had been secured to cover a number youth activities, including boxercise classes, which were being provided by the Youth Service and Police Community Support Officers working jointly.

Youth club activities for the 13 – 19 year olds and another for 8 – 12 year olds on Friday evenings were being offered at the Scout Hut at Wollescote.

Funding had been secured to establish clubs for mixed young people and another for young women at Lye.

In response to a query from a Member of the Committee, the Area Youth Worker - Early Years, Youth and Education advised that the Youth Service had not been engaging greatly with the voluntary sector, due to staffing issues within the team, but once the team was up to strength, they would engage with the voluntary sectors, including those in the Norton, Oldswinford and Amblecote areas.

#### RESOLVED

That the oral reports on youth matters be noted.

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#### PUBLIC FORUM

Before reading questions from the public, the Area Liaison Officer advised that any questions which could not be answered on the evening would be investigated and a written response would be sent to the questioner as soon as possible.

Questions and answers were then given as follows:

1. A member of the public queried whether Housing officers had any plans to investigate the unkempt state of the ground in front of the electric sub station in Walker Avenue, next to the Queensway Public House. The member of the public considered that the problems were due to the gravel overflowing onto the pavement.

The Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety undertook to investigate the issue and send a written response to the questioner.

The Chairman also undertook to visit the area.

2. A member of the public expressed concerns regarding speeding traffic in and around Studley Gate and South Road.

The Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety undertook to investigate the issue and send a written response to the questioner.

On the following issue being raised, Councillors Hanif and A Tuner declared a personal and prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in view of their being on the Executive Committee of the Lye and Wollescote Partnership Group.

At the same juncture, Councillor Lowe declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in view of his involvement at meetings of the Lye and Wollescote Partnership Group.

3. A member of the public questioned whether the Committee were going to reconsider their decision to refuse the application by the Lye and Wollescote Partnership Group for the "Story Chair" project, in view of the fact that Halesowen Area Committee had approved the same application.

The Chairman responded, firstly clarifying that the application referred to was for £1,500 towards the cost of the Story Chair Project situated at the Children's Centre on the Ring Road at Lye. The application had been considered and approved by the Halesowen Area Committee in September 2009, to the value of £850. The Stourbridge Area Committee, at its meeting in September had refused the application and had no plans to reconsider their decision.

4. A member of the public queried what the Committee would consider "exceptional circumstances", in view of their having previously resolved to continue the restraints on the capital allocations unless "exceptional circumstances" arose.

Members of the Committee responded, stating that it was difficult to define "exceptional circumstances", but that the Committee would consider each application on its own individual merit.

The Area Liaison Officer advised of a change in legislation, which required the Council to consider changes to its executive arrangement. Two options were to be considered.

A leaflet giving details of the changes was available and those present were advised that should they wish to make their views known, they should fill in the form and return it to the Interim Director of Law, Property and Human Resources as soon as possible or return them at the end of the meeting.

Inspector B Quiney, from the West Midlands Police reported orally on police issues in the Stourbridge area including:

That good progress had been made in addressing concerns relating to boy racers in and around Mill Race Lane and the Crystal Leisure Centre with the number of incidents reported being reduced.

A recent Halloween event at Mary Stevens Park, organised by the Police Community Support Officers had been very well attended.

The Police would be putting into place measures to address the nighttime economy in Stourbridge Town Centre, leading up to Christmas, particularly on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings and in particular, in and around the taxi ranks.

Additional Officers were being put into the area to address parking concerns in Studley Gate, Swanpool Park and High Park, particularly on Saturdays and Sundays.

Funding had been secured to provide skatepark facilities at Mill Race Lane.

Members of the Committee welcomed Inspector Quiney to the Stourbridge Area, thanking him for his enthusiasm and looked forward to working in partnership with him and his colleagues in the future.

Some Members of the Committee also requested that their gratitude be passed on to the Police Community Support Officers for the sterling work they were doing in the area, and in particular the Amblecote area and also for the successful Halloween Event at Mary Stevens Park.

In response to concerns expressed by Members of the Committee and members of the public, Inspector Quiney advised:

That no Police Officers were taken from the periphery of Stourbridge Town Centre to address the nighttime economy in Stourbridge Town Centre and those peripheral areas did not suffer as a result of activities in the Town Centre.

That he was aware of the anti social behaviour problems in Bowling Green Road and Officers were working to address the issues.

That the Police were working in partnership with licensees and the Council's Licensing Officer, to combat the supply of alcohol to under age drinkers.

That the Police would be objecting to the application for licensed premises on the site of the Old Yorkshire Bank in Stourbridge High Street.

That the shifts for the Police Community Support Officers ended at 12 midnight.

**RESOLVED**

That Inspector Quiney be thanked for his oral report on Police issues, the content of which be noted.

## CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on three applications for funding from the Committee's Capital Allocation budget.

In presenting the report the Area Liaison Officer advised that, since the report had been written, he had received a written request from the Friends of Norton Covert for a donation towards the cost of the adaptation to the kissing gates at the Covert to enable disabled access. The conversion had cost £215.63 which their current Chairman had paid.

He also reported that the Committee had given a donation of £2,500 in March 2008 towards the installation of the kissing gate and the second phase of planting behind a new fence at the Covert. The Committee had also given a grant of £500 in 2006 towards the cost of replacement fencing and hedging to deter motorcyclists and off road vehicles from entering and further damaging the wood at the Covert.

With regard to the application by Community Transport Dudley, the Area Liaison Officer advised that Halesowen Area Committee had now approved the application.

Members of the Committee expressed concerns that an organisation with £140,000 surplus were seeking funding from the Area Committee Capital Allocation budget.

During the ensuing discussions regarding the applications, a representative of the Stourbridge Cricket Club spoke in support of the Club's application, advising that the building was over 100 years old and in need of major refurbishment work. The electrics needed replacing urgently as they had been deemed unsafe from a health and safety point of view. Previous money raised by the Club, towards the possible match funding for the project, had been spent on ground equipment and new toilet facilities, including facilities for the disabled.

The Club was used to bring families together. The Club also engaged with groups of both boys and girls of all ages.

Some Members of the Committee spoke in support of the application, stating that, in their opinion, due to the work undertaken by the Club for the benefit of the Community, the application should be considered as a "special case".

In response to questioning by Members of the Committee, the representative of the Club confirmed that since submitting the application, the Club had continued to fundraise towards the project, but still required £7,300.

Some Members of the Committee commented that, again, as a “special case”, the application by the Stourbridge Scouts and Guides be increased to the full amount required to enable them to carry out the upgrade to the electrical installation at the Club, and in view of the fact that there would be many other calls on the Group’s funds.

A Member of the Committee commented on the reasons why the Committee had determined new criteria for the allocation of capital funding and suggested that, in view of the fact that fewer applications than expected had been received since the making of the decision, that at a future date the criteria and process be reconsidered.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the Stourbridge Cricket Club be awarded the sum of £7,300 towards the cost of improving health and safety aspects and the security of the Pavilion.
  2. That the Stourbridge Scout and Guides Headquarters Management Committee be awarded the sum of £2,750 towards the cost of upgrading works to the electrical installation at the club headquarters.
  3. That the application by Community Transport for £1,000 towards the purchase of a second hand mini bus be refused
  4. That the request by the Friends of Norton Covert for a donation towards the cost of the adaptation to the kissing gates at the Covert to enable disabled access be approved in the sum of £215.63.
  5. That the criteria for the allocation of funding from the Committee’s Capital Allocations be reconsidered in the new municipal year.
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#### APPOINTMENT TO THOMAS HILL EDUCATION FOUNDATION

A report of the Interim Director of Law, Property and Human Resources was submitted seeking consideration of a representative to serve on the Thomas Hill Education Foundation, to fill the vacancy left by the recent death of Honorary Alderman John Simpson, for the period until 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2012.

#### RESOLVED

That Councillor A Turner be appointed as a representative Trustee to the Thomas Hill Education Foundation for the remainder of the three year period ending 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2012.

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44      RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

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

RESOLVED

That the content of the report submitted be noted.

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45      ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor C Wilson referred to the success of Stourbridge Football Club, who had played for the first time in the F.A. Cup against Walsall Football Club. He requested that a letter of congratulations be sent to the Club on behalf of the Committee and wishing them well next season.

Councillor Mrs Rogers reported on concerns expressed by the Friends of Mary Stevens Park, regarding the Healthy Towns Initiative, as part of which Mary Stevens Park had been identified as 1 of 5 parks within Dudley to have a “hub”, including an outdoor gym. At a meeting of the Friends of the Park Group held on 11<sup>th</sup> November, the Friends Group had resolved not to agree with the proposed site identified from a choice of three, for the gym at Mary Stevens Park in view of the fact that the chosen site was on a prime grassed area, which visitors to the park used as a picnic area and a place from which to view their children playing on the playground. The other two sites had been turned down as residents had objected on the grounds that they were too near to the road. Councillor Mrs Rogers expressed concerns that residents opposite the park had not been consulted on a planning application to extend the pavilion, which if approved, would result in the pavilion being open until 10.30pm, when the gates of the park were currently closed at 8 pm. She also considered that the by laws of the park had been ignored. She encouraged those present to make representations to the Project Manager, if they had any concerns.

Some other Members of the Committee expressed concerns at how the consultation on the project had been dealt with.

The Assistant Director, Planning and Environmental Health undertook to report the concerns expressed to the Director of the Urban Environment, who was working closely with the Primary Care Trust on this project.

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46      SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

RESOLVED



That the date and venues of future meetings of all Select Committees held at the Council House, Dudley be noted.

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DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

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

**18<sup>th</sup> January 2010 at 7.00 pm at Redhill School, Junction Road, Stourbridge**

**8<sup>th</sup> March 2010 at 7.00pm at Hob Green Primary School, Hob Green Road, Stourbridge, West Midlands**

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

CHAIRMAN