

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE

Monday, 27th September, 2010 at 7.00 p.m.
at Stourbridge Town Hall, Crown Centre, Stourbridge

PRESENT:-

Councillor Kettle (Chairman)
Councillors, Attwood, Banks, Barlow, Mrs. Cowell, Hanif, L Jones, Knowles, Lowe, Mrs. P Martin, Mrs. Rogers, A. Turner, Mrs. Walker and C. Wilson; and Mr. R. Owen.

OFFICERS:-

The Director of the Urban Environment (Acting Area Liaison Officer), Assistant Director, Planning and Environmental Health, Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Assistant Director – Libraries, Archives and Adult Learning, Area Community Renewal Officer (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Principal Tax Accountant, Group Accountant (Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement), Area Youth and Community Worker (Directorate of Children's Services), Mr. T. Holder, Solicitor and Mrs. J. Rees (Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources)

Also in attendance:-

Councillor S Waltho, on behalf of the Dudley Group of Hospitals Foundation Trust, Inspector E. Boyle and Sergeant S Boardman (West Midlands Police), Mr C Wood and Ms J Winpenny (West Midlands Fire Service) together with approximately 40 members of the public.

25. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor Adams and Mr. G. Downing, Miss D. Grant and Ms P. Shepherd.

26. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors L Jones, Kettle, Mrs P Martin and C Wilson all declared a personal and prejudicial interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of agenda items 10 (Ernest Stevens Trust – Permission for planning permission to erect a shed in the grounds of the hospice) and 10a (Ernest Stevens Trust – Permission for the erection of a fence and paving repairs in the grounds of the hospice) in view of their membership of the Board of the Mary Stevens Hospice and withdrew from the meeting during their consideration.

Councillor C Wilson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of agenda item 11 (Capital Allocations – application by Stourbridge Radio) in view of his having represented the residents of the Dobbins Oak Flats in their request for the removal of the aerial installed by the Stourbridge Radio Group and withdrew from the meeting during its consideration.

27. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 28th June, 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the following amendments:

- (1) that the name of Councillor Mrs Cowell be substituted for that of Councillor Mrs P Martin in paragraph (2) of Minute No. 14 on page SAC/10.
 - (2) That the word "Control" be deleted and the word "Centre" substituted therefor in resolution 6 of minute no. 15 on page SAC/11 and also in the third line of minute of the preamble to 16.
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28. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

It was reported that the following petitions had been received prior to the meeting.

- (a) Requests by local residents for a crossing patrol site on Heath Farm Road (outside Gig Mill School), referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration, and for a report on the findings to be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.
- (b) Requests from local residents that the sheds at a site in Wollaston be reinstated to Tenants referred to the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services for consideration. Following investigations, tenants had now been advised that the sheds were to be reinstated.
- (c) Objections to the erection of fencing adjacent to fencing along the amenity space in Sorrell Walk, Stourbridge, referred to the Chief Executive for consideration. Following investigations, the fence has been removed and a Working Group has been established to resolve any future issues which may arise.

The following petition was submitted:-

On behalf of the residents of Cobden Street, Wollaston, requesting the introduction of a 20mph speed limit in Cobden Street, due to concerns of safety. The petition was referred to the Petitions Officer.

Ward Members expressed their support for this petition.

29. YOUTH ISSUES

Mr. Owen reported on Youth Issues, expressing thanks to Councillor Knowles and others who had supported and attended a recent Borough wide football match. He advised that the Stourbridge Youth Forum had been renamed the Young People for Stourbridge. Mr Owen also reported on activities that had taken place throughout the summer and those planned for the October half term.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the oral report on Youth Issues, be noted.

30. DUDLEY GROUP OF HOSPITALS FOUNDATION TRUST

Councillor Waltho gave an oral presentation on behalf of the Dudley Group of Hospitals Foundation Trust of which he himself was an Elected Member. A hard copy of the presentation was circulated at the meeting. During the presentation, Councillor Waltho briefly explained what a Foundation Trust was and the category of membership. He described the advantages of becoming a Member of the Trust and gave details as to how to become a Member.

Arising from the presentation given, Councillor Waltho undertook to pass on to the Trust, comments made at the meeting.

RESOLVED

That Councillor Waltho be thanked for the oral presentation given on the Dudley Group of Hospitals Foundation Trust, the content of which was noted.

31. PUBLIC FORUM

- (1) Concerns were expressed by members of the public regarding the large amounts of money spent on upgrading local parks and on the new glass exhibition in Wordsley, when there was a lack of funding for the voluntary sector, which meant that Centres and services for vulnerable people and those with mental health problems were struggling to stay open, particularly The What? Centre, Stourbridge.

In response, the Area Liaison Officer explained that the funding referred to which had been spent on parks and potential future funding of the glass exhibition, was match funding whereby the Council used small amounts of funding to obtain large grants from external sources, and which could not be used for other purposes.

A Member of the Committee expressed concerns at the lack of funding available to enable Centres, such as The What? Centre to remain open and the resulting impact on vulnerable people and those with mental health problems.

- (2) A member of the public questioned the impact of the discontinuation of Service Level Agreements.

In response, a Member of the Committee advised that, whilst it was regrettable that there was a lack of funding, the Service Level Agreements had come to a natural end and were not being extended due to the lack of funding available. She expressed regret that the services provided were not eligible for external funding grants, as in the cases of regeneration projects.

Another Member of the Committee commented that, following investigations to identify the best possible accommodation for the glass collection, if, when the costs for this were known, the Council could not attract sufficient external funding, the project would not be able to go ahead.

- (3) A member of the public expressed concerns, on behalf of residents of Withymoor Village, that they did not think it was reasonable for a nearby Council owned housing estate to have maintenance of pathways, car parks and roads kept in a good state of repair, whilst the privately owned properties in the vicinity did not receive the same level of service and maintenance.

In response, the Area Liaison Officer advised that funding for the maintenance of Council owned land and properties and that for privately owned land and properties was differently sourced and therefore differently administered.

He also advised that the condition of the highways was independently assessed and undertaken in order of priority. He did acknowledge that there funding was severely restricted for all repairs in the Borough, particularly, after the harsh winter which had resulted in holes, which had been repaired previously, requiring further repair.

- (4) A question was asked as to what measures were being taken to prevent dangerous and inconsiderate parking outside of the school in Gayfield Avenue. The Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety advised that the matter was under investigation and that a report on the findings would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.
- (5) Another member of the public raised concerns regarding the need for resident only parking in Brook Road, Stourbridge to prevent drivers parking across residents' driveways. In response, the Chairman advised that the matter had been investigated.

32. POLICE MATTERS

Inspector Boyle introduced Sergeant S Boardman, the Sector Deputy, who would attend future meetings, if he himself was unable to attend.

He reported orally on Police Matters in the Stourbridge area including changes in staffing, as a result of promotions. He also reported on the Paragon Project, which had commenced in April 2010, and on vehicle crime in Stourbridge, which had reduced considerably recently.

Inspector Boyle requested that drivers be more vigilant to ensure that they did not leave valuables on view in their cars, as this attracted thieves. He also requested that householders be more vigilant with home safety, particularly now that the evenings were getting darker earlier.

Joint working with the West Midlands Fire Service was also ongoing, including the Staysafe Projects reported.

Dates of future meetings of the Staysafe Project would be sent directly to Members of the Committee and details of dates of future Partners And Communities Together (PACT) meetings were available on the Police website

Metal theft was also increasing, due to the increased cost of metal.

Police Community Support Officers had recently been given added responsibilities and a full range of powers to assist Police Officers in tackling crime.

In response to a comment from a member of the public, Inspector Boyle advised that Police Officers were being encouraged to use mountain bikes for travel in the area.

A Member of the Committee thanked Inspector Boyle for the prompt Police assistance given to Amblecote Church, following the recent theft.

In response to a question from a Member of the Committee, Inspector Boyle advised that a Dispersal Order for Stourbridge town centre had expired in July 2010. He advised that the Police were working with young people to deal with incidents of anti social behaviour.

RESOLVED

That the oral report on Police Matters be noted.

33. COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on progress to date of the Working Group and monitoring of the Stourbridge Area Committee Community Renewal Plan.

In presenting the report, the Area Community Renewal Officer advised that a meeting of the Community Renewal Working Group had recently taken place where Terms of Reference and Protocols had been approved.

The Community Renewal Officer would be based at the Stourbridge Children's Centre Wollaston, whilst also working in Lye Community Centre and Hob Green School and would be working with Members of the Committee, communities and local residents to address local issues.

RESOLVED

That the report, and Appendix attached to the report, submitted be noted.

34. MARY STEVENS TRUST - REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO ERECT A SHED IN THE HOSPICE GROUNDS

Having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this and the following agenda item, Councillor Kettle withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the next two items of business)

Arising from this, Councillor Mrs Cowell, Vice Chairman assumed the Chair.

(Councillor Mrs Cowell in the Chair)

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on a request to erect a shed in the grounds of the Mary Stevens Maternity Home and Public Park Charity.

In presenting the report, the Area Liaison Officer advised that the planning application had been approved under delegated authority.

RESOLVED

That the request by the Mary Stevens Hospice to erect a shed in the Hospice Grounds be approved, subject to the shed complying with the terms of the planning permission granted.

35. MARY STEVENS TRUST - REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO ERECT A FENCE AND UNDERTAKE PAVING REPAIRS AT MARY STEVENS HOSPICE

The Area Liaison Officer reported that a late application, which had been circulated, had been received to consider a request to erect a fence and undertake certain works in the garden at Mary Stevens Hospice, in order to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and to secure the garden area for patients and their families.

Inspector Boyle undertook to investigate allegations of criminality and trespass in the grounds of the Hospice.

RESOLVED

That the request made by the Mary Stevens Hospice to erect a fence around the hospice garden and carry out certain works in the garden, be approved in principle, subject to the potential need for planning permission more detailed information regarding the exact location of the fence, being submitted to the Area Liaison Officer and the Committee.

(At the conclusion of these items Councillor Kettle resumed the Chair).

36. STEVENS PARK RECREATION GROUND FOUNDATION TRUSTS – APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS

A report of the Treasurer was submitted on the following applications for funding from the Stevens Park Recreation Ground Foundation Trusts:

- (a) Lye Cricket Club requested the release of the £5,000.00 agreed by the Committee previously for a joint project, in partnership with the Lye Cricket Club, and to build a Club House on the football club side of the Lye Sports Ground following a fire. The project, had now been completed, although not within the terms of the original application and the Club were requesting the release of the funds, despite the deviation from the original request.
- (b) Wollescote St. Andrew's Scout Group were seeking £4,947 towards the cost of dismantling unsafe garages and converting them into storage areas to be used by the Scout Group.

In commenting on the first application, Members of the Committee were of the view that, as a result of the fire when the Club House had been burnt to the ground, rewiring of the Clubhouse was essential to the safety of those attending. They also acknowledged that the Club engaged with a large number of young people as well as other members of the community.

In commenting on the second application, Members of the Committee expressed a view that the Scout group worked with large numbers of the younger age group. They also considered that the garage site, in its current state, required attention and the work would address all safety issues.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the application by Lye Cricket Club for the release of the £5,000 for the total re-wire of the club buildings, be approved.
- (2) That the application by the Wollescote St. Andrew's Scout Group for £4,947.00 towards the dismantling and converting into storage areas, of six garages to be used by the Scout Group, be approved, as the Committee considered that the application was of exceptional circumstances, on account of the safety issues surrounding the site and the exceptional amount of work undertaken with younger people.

37. CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

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

In presenting the report, the Acting Area Liaison Officer reported orally on a late application by Valley Road Youth Centre for £3,972 for the purchase and installation of a pair of adjustable basketball goals to enable the basketball activity to be accessible to users of the Centre, including those in wheelchairs.

Members of the Committee expressed concerns regarding the differences in the detailed costs of some of the items contained within the application by the Humaara Project. A representative of the Project gave a brief outline of the work carried out by the group and sought to explain the differences referred to. In view of the financial concerns expressed, Members requested that attention to detail be given to the receipt of invoices for equipment prior to payment.

The Acting Area Liaison Officer also reported on letters of thanks received from the Oldswinford Cricket Club and the Stourbridge District Chamber of Commerce.

Members of the Committee commented on the usefulness of the "tick box" summary for each application, contained within the report submitted and requested that the summary be included in future reports.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Area Liaison Officer be requested to include the "tick box" summary for each application in future reports submitted.
- (2) That the following applications be approved in the sums indicated for the purposes indicated.

Organisation	Reason for the Grant	Amount
Stourbridge Radio	Funding of a studio and a box for outside broadcasting facilities	£5,000
Peoples Link Community Group	Purchase of new goal posts and ground sockets and a white line pitch marker	£491
St. Thomas's Guides and Scouts	Refurbishment of the Youth Rooms including roof repairs, new carpets, tables, chairs and blinds	£5,000

The Humaara Project	The purchase of equipment	£5,000 * *subject to attention to detail being given to the receipt of invoices for equipment prior to payment
The Withymoor Colts Football Club	Purchase of five sets of 6 x 4 ft goal posts	£420
Wollescote St. Andrew's Scout Group	Construction and equipping of a rest area and external water supply in the community garden	£895
Valley Road Youth Centre	Purchase of portable goals for use at the Centre as well as at other venues, and by other organisations	£3,972

38. STOURBRIDGE LIBRARY LOCALITY PANEL

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the planned establishment of a Stourbridge Locality Library Panel, as one of five Panels across the Borough, as part of an on-going engagement in consultation for Dudley Libraries, following a pilot scheme to be undertaken in the Halesowen area.

RESOLVED

That consideration of the report be deferred until the results of the Halesowen Pilot scheme have been reported to this Committee.

39. RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

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

RESOLVED

That the content of the report submitted be noted.

40. ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor Kettle requested that a letter of congratulations be sent to Mr D Harcourt and the Stourbridge In Bloom team for achieving the gold award in the recent Heart of England In Bloom competition.

Councillor Banks expressed concern at the decision of the Inspectorate in Bristol to overturn the Council's recent refusal of a planning application for the installation of a telephone mast in Lye.

Councillor A Turner requested that:

- (a) a letter be sent to the Inspectorate advising of the affects of their decision on local residents.
- (b) the War Memorial in Lye town Centre be tidied up.

The Area Liaison Officer advised that plans were under way for a low pressure washer to be used for this.

Councillor Knowles expressed concerns that the government's Empty Shops grant had not yet been utilised to brighten up empty shop fronts in Stourbridge town centre. The Area Liaison Officer undertook to investigate the up to date situation regarding this matter and submit a report to the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Hanif expressed concerns regarding new proposals for refuse collections and its impact on disabled and vulnerable people in the Lye area.

The Area Liaison Officer reported that he was committed to working with the elderly and vulnerable residents to ensure that they were given any assistance required. The aim of the new scheme was to encourage recycling.

41. SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

RESOLVED

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

42. DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

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

15th November, 2010 at 7.00 p.m. at Wollaston Village Hall, Bridgnorth Road, Stourbridge

17th January, 2011 at 7.00 p.m. at Redhill School, Junction Road, Stourbridge; and

8th March, 2011 at 7.00 p.m. at Hob Green Primary School, Hob Green
Road, Pedmore Fields, Stourbridge

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm

CHAIRMAN