

BRIERLEY HILL AREA COMMITTEE

Thursday 25th March, 2010 at 7.00 p.m.
at the Brier School, Bromley Lane, Kingswinford

PRESENT:-

Councillor Harley (in the Chair)

Councillor Mrs Greenaway (Vice Chairman)

Councillors D Blood, Mrs E Blood, Ms Boleyn, Foster, Mrs D Harley, Ms Harris, Islam, Mrs Jordan, Nottingham, Southall, Tyler and Mrs Wilson.

Officers

The Director of the Urban Environment (as Area Liaison Officer), Section Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety) Head of Sport and Physical Activity, Manager, Executive Support Team and Town Centre Manager (All Directorate of the Urban Environment), Assistant Director of Housing, Area Community Renewal Officer (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Senior Account Manager, Marketing and Communications, (Chief Executive's Directorate), Ms H Kidd, Solicitor and Miss K Fellows (both Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources).

together with Sergeant D Rennison and Inspector Malpass , West Midlands Police, Mr Lewis, West Midlands Fire Service and ten members of the public.

75 **APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Miller.

76 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Ms Boleyn declared a personal interest in Agenda Item Number 8 – Stray and Illegally Grazing Horses – as a member of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

77 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4th February, 2010, be approved as a correct record and signed.

78 **RECEIPT OF PETITIONS**

It was reported that following the last meeting of the Committee a Petition had been received from the residents of Oak Street, Kingswinford in relation to the installation of central heating in their council properties and the Area Liaison Officer referred to the response that had been forwarded to the first named petitioner, making particular reference to the funding available for central heating advising that the date for completion of the installation programme would be 2014.

COMMUNITY RENEWAL/YOUTH ISSUES

The Area Community Renewal Officer referred to the meeting of the Working Group held on 2nd March, 2010, highlighting the ongoing Community Renewal and Youth activities making reference to the City Strategy, which was a worklessness programme for residents of Brierley Hill, Brockmoor and Pensnett wards, which involved other agencies in order to help residents back into employment.

Investigating funding arrangements for a learning mentoring programme was referred to and the joint operations of the Council and the Police would be ongoing, in order to engage with young people to reduce youth related crime and anti social behaviour, together with external funding obtained in order to provide activities for young people at the Dell Stadium and the Wordsley area of the Borough. Further funding had also been obtained in order to provide activities at the Crestwood School for young people, over a ten week period, at the expiry of which further external funding would be investigated in order to continue to provide those activities.

It was stated that the Healthy Towns second stakeholder meeting had taken place and a further multi agency meeting would take place next month, which would focus upon health issues and the Primary Care Trusts development with health plans.

An update was provided in relation to the Hawbush Community Gardens Project whereby particular reference was made to the improvements to the building, further funding that had been obtained, future job fund placements and the work that had taken place towards a full launch of the project on Saturday 3rd April, 2010.

Arising from the presentation Members made suggestions and comments in particular relating to the Hawbush Community Gardens project, suggesting that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee, expressing support and praise for the work completed to date and the way in which it had engaged the local community and encouraging elected members to attend the launch date of the project.

In responding to members questions the Area Community Renewal Officer stated as follows:-

- That the Healthy Towns Stakeholder meeting and multi Agency meeting referred to earlier in the presentation would deal with discussions surrounding the provision of activities in other areas of the Brierley Hill Area Committee area including the possible provision of a community gaming area;
- That the vacancy for a full time Youth Worker at the Nine Locks Community Centre would not be filled and that other full time Youth Workers were being deployed to the Centre to cover the post;

Councillor Islam raised concerns in relation to the decision not to employ a full time Youth Worker at the Centre and the impact this would have upon the young people who attended the Centre.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information reported on at the meeting be noted.
- (2) That the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee relating to the Hawbush Community Gardens Project.
- (3) That the Cabinet Member for Children's Services be advised of the concerns raised by Councillor Islam as outlined above in relation to the decision not to employ a full time Youth Worker at the Nine Locks Community Centre.

Consideration was given to the following written/oral questions raised:-

- (a) A written question was submitted in relation to vehicles travelling from the traffic lights in High Street, Brockmoor towards the junction with Pensnett Road and the road signs being inadequate for commercial vehicle drivers to have advance notice of the road closure, causing a hazard when those vehicles were reversing out of the road and the road layout at the traffic lights in High Street, Brockmoor. Photographs of the area were circulated at the meeting - the Section Engineer would provide the questioner with a written response.

Councillor Foster referred to the failure of businesses updating their Satellite Navigation equipment and also asked whether the road remained operational for two-way traffic.

In responding the Section Engineer confirmed that High Street, Brockmoor was a 'No Through Road' for traffic wishing to access Pensnett Road and whilst appropriate signs were already in place to that effect, consideration would be given as to whether additional signing in the area might be helpful in further raising driver awareness of the restrictions ahead.

However in relation to the majority of High Street, it was pointed out that this remained a two-way street and did, therefore, continued to provide both access and egress facilities to the properties in that area.

- (b) A written question was submitted relating to the closure of council owned facilities including Coseley Baths and Pensnett High School and the closures failing to reduce Dudley Council debt and whether the Members were satisfied with their performance during their period of office.

In responding Councillor Blood stated that he did not believe that the Authority was in debt and was proud of Dudley Council's achievements, its continuing service to the residents of the Borough and the fact that it remained a four star authority.

- (c) A member of the public referred to a petition that had been submitted to a previous meeting of the Committee requesting the closure of the pathway leading from Kilburn Drive to Holbeache Lane and Oak Lane, advising that no response had been received from the Police, and raising concerns with the timely response received from the Council.

The Area Liaison Officer responded stating that he had met with the Crime Prevention Officer and Local Police Constables and understood that the Police assess each case upon its own merits; he had been advised that six incidents of disorder in Kilburn Drive and eight in Holbeache Lane had been reported to the Police during the preceding twelve months and the Police wished to encourage residents to report crimes.

It was further reported that the Police had agreed to investigate other measures that could be taken.

It was also suggested that the local residents who had signed the Petition, should be encouraged to report crime in the future; the Council would work with the Police in order to investigate any other measures that could be taken and the Area Liaison Officer would provide the questioner with the Government Guidelines for Gating Orders.

Councillor Tyler referred to his previous request that the Crime Reduction Officer provide him detailed analysis of the incidents of anti social behaviour within a 250 metre radius of Kilburn Drive.

Inspector Malpass indicated that in order to address problems with anti social behaviour, the Police would search their systems in order to implement a repeat caller database, they would also conduct street surveys in order to gather evidence to support such cases.

In responding to a question from a member of the public, the Area Liaison Officer stated that the Council had organised a Glass Feasibility meeting the following week with The Friends of Broadfield House in order to inform them of the latest work of the Consultants.

EMPTY SHOPS GRANT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Government's Empty Shops Grant initiative seeking Member's views on the allocation of funding under this programme.

Arising from the presentation of the report Members made comments and asked questions and in responding the Area Liaison Officer responded as follows:-

- that the match funding sought would be small amounts for shop frontages;
- The Area Committee could endorse the agreed allocation, as in any event the recommendations made by the Committee's Working Group would have to be approved by this Committee;
- Should the match funding be agreed in principle, the Committee's Capital Allocations Working Group could consider how to support the project further;
- Prior to final allocation of the match funding, the relevant Ward Councillors would be consulted further.

Councillor Ms Harris referred to the possibility of a sign posting building in Brierley Hill High Street in order to provide a centre to work with those who were unemployed.

She also suggested that the former Higgs and Sons building be utilised in order to showcase locally made produce in order to inform local people of the produce available in their areas.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Area Committee agree in principle to supporting the empty shops grant initiative with match funding available from the Committee's delegated Allocations Budget for the district and local centres of Kingswinford, Wallheath and

Wordsley, as indicated in paragraph 7 of the report submitted.

- (b) That the Capital Allocations Working Group be authorised to make recommendations on a scheme, by scheme basis in relation to the specific allocation for consideration of the Committee.

STRAY AND ILLEGALLY GRAZING HORSES

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Council's policy and practice with regard to illegally grazing and stray horses. A copy of a letter written to the residents in the Brockmoor, Pensnett and Fens Pools areas was Appended to the report submitted.

Arising from the presentation of the report submitted Councillor Ms Boleyn circulated photographs of illegally grazing and stray horses, and expressed concerns relating to the safety of the general public and the welfare of the horses concerned. It was suggested that the Council adapt an approach of appropriate action in conjunction with the Police and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. A request was made that a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee updating members on the position in relation to Illegally grazing and stray horses.

In responding to the concerns raised and suggestions made, the Area Liaison Officer confirmed that he would arrange a multi agency meeting in order to investigate the practicalities of dealing with the problem of illegally grazing and stray horses.

He also indicated that good practice of other Local Authorities would be examined and confirmed that the Ward Councillors for Brierley Hill and Brockmoor and Pensnett together with the Committee's Legal Advisor would be invited to attend the above meeting.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the Report, submitted on the Council's policy and practice with regard to illegally grazing and stray horses, be noted.
- (2) That the Area Liaison Officer be requested to organise a multi agency meeting with representatives of West Midlands Police, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to

Animals, the Committees' Legal Advisor and the Ward Councillors for Brierley Hill and Brockmoor and Pensnett in order to develop a Policy to deal with illegally grazing and stray horses for consideration by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture.

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CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted with particular reference to the interim arrangements for dealing with Capital Allocation applications for the period between the Annual Council meeting and the election of a Chairman at the first meeting of the Area Committee in the new municipal year.

In presenting the report it was noted that there were no applications for Capital Allocations to be considered at this meeting.

RESOLVED

That, in the period between the Annual Council Meeting and the election of a Chairman at the first meeting of the Area Committee in the new municipal year, the Lead Officer, in consultation with a representative from each political group on the Committee, be authorised to consider and determine any application received for capital funding and that the decisions made, be reported to the first meeting of the Committee in the new municipal year.

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MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE BRIERLEY HILL AREA COMMITTEE ON 4TH FEBRUARY, 2010

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted updating the Committee on a number of issues raised at the meeting of Brierley Hill Area Committee on 4th February, 2010.

In presenting the report the Area Liaison Officer also referred to the one-way traffic system in Victoria Street, Bent Street and John Street, Brierley Hill, advising that EON had confirmed that the signage would become active between the 6th and 8th April, 2010.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the Report submitted be noted.

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WARD ISSUES

Written responses to the Ward issues raised by Members in advance of the meeting were circulated to Members and the public present at the meeting prior to the start of the meeting. The questions received and responses given were as follows:-

- (a) In response to a question raised by Councillor Southall requesting that the following updated information be made available following the issue of the collapsed Wordsley Park wall having been raised by him at the last meeting?

Issue 1

Progress to date regarding plans for the reconstruction of the perimeter boundary between Bells Lane and the children's playground on Wordsley Park. This to include information as to whether a decision had been taken in respect of either a wall re-build or a replacement metal fence and if the latter, would this be for the damaged area only or along the whole length of Bells Lane?

Response

DPC's Senior Building Surveyor has held discussions with structural engineers to seek their professional advice as to the most appropriate way forward. Initial observations point to a new redesigned wall but subsequent investigations regarding the very close proximity of large sewers that run alongside and underneath the wall and the mature trees that would need the foundations designing around the root systems, may favour a fencing option from a financial perspective. Whilst a wall would look aesthetically pleasing, this would need to be balanced with cost.

It is the considered opinion of the surveyors and engineers given its current condition that the whole wall would need to be replaced so as to avoid the potential danger of a further collapse next winter.

Surveyors have taken the precaution of having temporary fencing erected along the park side of the wall for 70 metres and also alongside the play area to allow that facility to be reopened.

Issue 2

An estimate of the respective costs of the alternative remedial solutions.

Response

It is considered that the estimated costs for the fencing option would be in the region of £30,000 and a new redesigned wall could well cost over £100,000. These figures apply to the whole of the boundary length on Bells Lane from the gate up to the Lawnswood Road junction.

Issue 3

Time scale for the works start / completion.

Response

Extensive investigative works will need to be carried out prior to a decision being taken in relation to a final design structure and associated timescale. Ward members will be updated as soon as possible on the progress and timescale once the outline scope of the works have been determined.

Issue 4

Can an answer be provided as to the precise amount of 106 monies the Authority has at its disposal for exclusive use in Wordsley?

Response

Current indications suggest that there is approximately £55,000 of 106 money provisionally allocated to King George V Park which could, subject to formal process, be allocated to new fencing.

The Area Liaison Officer confirmed that £55,000 had been provisionally earmarked for spending within King George V Park, with work being completed in relation to costs options, confirming that the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture and Ward Councillors would be involved in the process.

- (b) **Issue 1** - In response to a question raised by Councillor Mrs Jordan that there was still a major problem with vehicles, especially heavy goods vehicles driving up the stretch of Brockmoor High Street from the traffic lights up to junction with Pensnett Road. Although signage has been put up, she had been asked if markings could be put on the actual road saying access only.

Response

Appropriate signs have already been erected to indicate that the section of High Street from the traffic lights towards Pensnett Road is a 'No Through Road' but unfortunately the use of "Access only" road markings on the carriageway is not a permitted road marking prescribed by The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions.

It is perhaps worth noting that some local residents have commented that a significant number of the heavy goods vehicles in question are being driven by foreign drivers who appear to be using Satellite Navigation and this could suggest that the introduction of additional signing would not negate this particular issue.

Therefore, providing suitable locations can be found, the possibility of installing an additional small additional informatory sign will be given further consideration.

Issue 2

A continuing problem with vehicles parked on the pavement outside Pagebet and Fletchers off licence in Brockmoor High Street which forces pedestrians to walk in the road. Can officers please look into this matter?

Response

There are double yellow lines and zig-zag markings on that side of the road outside Pagebet and Fletchers with limited parking provision on the opposite side of the road.

The inconsiderate action of parking on the pavement is not condoned or encouraged and consideration has already been given to the introduction of a pedestrian guardrail in front of the premises. Unfortunately, at that time, it was decided not to proceed because it was felt that the adjoining forecourt space in front of these properties, which does not form part of the public highway, would still provide sufficient opportunity for delivery vehicles to access the area and still park on the public footway behind the guardrailing.

However, providing access can still be maintained to provide legitimate access to driveways. Consideration will be given once more during 2010/11 to the introduction of short sections of pedestrian guardrailing at the front of the public footway near to these two businesses.

The issues raised about unauthorized parking and obstruction of the footway have also been referred to both the Police and the Council's Parking Enforcement Manager.

Following a further request of Councillor Mrs Jordan, the Area Liaison Officer confirmed that he would request the Assistant Director of Environmental Management to request the Council's Parking Enforcement Officers to target the area during evenings weekends being the most problematic periods.

- (c) Councillor Ms Harris raised concerns in relation to public convenience facilities in Brierley Hill, requesting improvements to the facilities including lighting and cleaning.

The Chairman indicated that he would discuss the above with the relevant Council Officers.

- (d) Councillor Ms Boleyn referred to the removal of the Notice Board from Kingswinford Library requesting that this be reinstated on the outside of the building.

The Assistant Director of Housing confirmed that she would investigate current position and the possibility of re-instating the Notice Board.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Area Liaison Officer be requested to liaise with the Assistant Director of Environmental Management as to the possibility of the Council's Parking Enforcement Officers patrolling the area outside Pagebet and Fletchers Off Licence, Brockmoor High Street, Brierley Hill during evenings and weekends.
- (2) The Assistant Director of Housing be requested to investigate the possibility of reinstating the outside notice board at Kingswinford Library.
- (3) That the Area Liaison Officer investigate the possibility of improvements being carried out to the public convenience facilities in Brierley Hill.

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DATES OF FUTURE AREA COMMITTEE MEETINGS

It was noted that the dates of meetings of the Committee in 2010/11 would be determined at the Annual Meeting of Council in May, 2010.

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CLOSING REMARKS OF THE CHAIRMAN

This being the last meeting of the Committee during this municipal year, the Chairman thanked Officers and Members of the Public who had attended the Area Committee Meetings during the last municipal year and on behalf of the Committee thanked Councillor Nottingham for his service and wished him well for his retirement.

The meeting ended at 8.35 p.m.

CHAIRMAN