

## **STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE**

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2010  
at Hob Green Primary School, Stourbridge

PRESENT:-

Councillor C Wilson (Chairman)

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

### Officers:

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

### In attendance

Mr N Bucktin (Dudley Primary Care Trust), together with approximately 30 members of the public.

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#### 62      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs Martin; Mr G Downing and Ms P Shepherd, and Inspector B Quiney (West Midlands Police).

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#### 63      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Adams and Mrs Rogers declared a personal and prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda Item No. 10 (Stevens Park and Recreation Ground Foundation Trust – Request to Charge at a Spring Day at Mary Stevens Park on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2010) in view of their Honorary Presidency, and Chairmanship of the Friends of Mary Stevens Park Group, respectively.

Councillor Attwood declared a personal and prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 10 (Stevens Park and Recreation Ground Foundation Trust – Request to Charge at a Spring Day at Mary Stevens Park on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2010) in view of his Chairmanship of the Stourbridge and Black Country Events Group, and also being the Event Organiser.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2010, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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YOUTH MATTERS

In the absence of anyone to represent the views of young people, no matters were raised under this item.

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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 advised of a re-use shop project, run by volunteers, in a neighbouring local authority, where large quantities of waste were diverted from landfill and provided an income for a charity. He also questioned the possibility of establishing such a facility for Stourbridge on the car park in Birmingham Road. He also questioned whether this car park was owned by the Council.

In response, the Assistant Director, Planning and Environmental Health advised that currently the Council had a written contract for waste disposal. When the contract terminated, it might be possible to look at other alternatives, including the possibility of establishing a re-use shop. The Assistant Director, Planning and Environmental Health undertook to send more details of the Council's recycling services to the questioner.

2. A member of the public questioned the up to date position regarding the former building in Brierley Hill, owned by Stourbridge College, which was up for sale with vacant possession. He questioned whether equipment and stained glass windows still in the building would be removed and reused elsewhere.

A Member of the Committee, who, at this juncture declared a personal interest in this matter, in view of her being a governor of Dudley College, advised that the building referred to, which was previously the Brierley Hill library, was in fact owned by Dudley College, not

Stourbridge College. A large amount of equipment had been moved to the College's Mons Hill site, when it was found that the building in Brierley Hill was unsafe. The remaining equipment left in the building was old and obsolete and would probably not be worth retrieving. The Member of the Committee undertook to request from the Principal of Dudley College an update on the current situation and bring the information to a future meeting of the Committee.

3. A member of the public asked for the surface of a pathway in Stevens Park, between Belmont Road and Oldswinford, to be repaired, as recently the surface had been reduced to shale, dirt and mud. The Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety undertook to investigate and send a written response to the questioner.
4. A member of the public questioned what would happen to the unspent funds in the Committee's capital allocation budget at the end of the current financial year and questioned how local voluntary groups would be able to access the unallocated funding from the Committee's Capital Allocations fund, in view of the amendments to the criteria for applying for funding.

In response, the Chairman reiterated the reasons for the Committee's amendment to the original criteria for funding, which had been due to the unusually large number of applications at the first meeting of the Committee. The Committee would look again at amending certain aspects of the criteria in the next municipal year, in view of the unique situation the Committee had this year found itself in, in that there would be a large roll over of funding into the next financial year.

It was suggested that perhaps the available funding could be advertised and voluntary groups be encouraged to apply for a maximum one off grant of £1,000, which would not preclude them from applying for further grants within three years.

5. A member of the public requested that information, which he had previously requested from the Directorate of the Urban Environment, under the Freedom of Information Act, regarding health and safety issues relating to a recent accident at the Council's recycling depot, be sent to him.
6. A member of the public questioned the Council's plans for the recycling of plastic.

The Assistant Director, Planning and Environmental Health advised that Dudley Council did not currently recycle plastic and had no plans to do so in the near future. She would arrange for her colleague, from the Recycling Team, to send a written response to the questioner.

A Member of the Committee commented that he understood that it was currently cheaper for Dudley to incinerate plastic with the normal waste as the Council had a waste to energy incinerator rather than transport it to a recycling depot in the north of England.

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67      AREA POLICE AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (PACT) ISSUES

In the absence of a representative from the Police no issues were discussed under this item.

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68      EMPTY SHOPS GRANT

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

Comments from Members of the Committee included that:

- a) the amount involved was very small, even with the addition of match funding for the grant for smaller towns should the Committee chose to match fund.
- b) unused premises could be used to advertise local information,
- c) Could Lye receive more than the £790 mentioned in the report?
- d) Displays could be put up in empty shops in the Ryemarket.
- e) There was a need for clarification on two different amounts stated within the content of the report.
- f) Funds could perhaps be used to purchase display boards and/or other equipment which could then be used in various venues.
- g) Parties interested in becoming involved in the Stourbridge town centre schemes could contact the Town Centre Manager, and those interested in the small towns could contact the Area Liaison Officer.
- h) Agreement that the three small town centres receive £790 from the Committee's capital allocation budget to match fund the full amount of the grant provided.

RESOLVED

1. That the Area Committee agree to match fund the small towns grant of £790 for each of the local centres, of Amblecote, Lye and Wollaston in the area covered by the Stourbridge Area Committee.
  2. That the Area Committee agree in principle to supporting the empty shops grant initiative available from the Committees delegated Allocations Budget for the district and local centres.
  3. That the Area Liaison Officer in consultation with the Chairman be authorised to consider and approve specific allocations on a scheme by scheme basis up to an agreed maximum.
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#### CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on an application by the Humaara Project for £5,000 towards the cost of purchasing items for use at the centre.

Some Members of the Committee expressed concerns regarding whether the project fulfilled the criteria for social inclusion.

Some Members of the Committee commented that perhaps those attending the Group should be encouraged to integrate their activities with those already provided by the Council within the community.

A Member of the Committee suggested that in future applicants should be requested to provide more detailed information in the application form, to include a business plan and information to show how the project could make a difference to the Community.

#### RESOLVED

That consideration of the application be deferred to enable the applicant to provide further information regarding their business plan and how the scheme could make a difference to the whole of the community it served.

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#### ERNEST STEVENS PARK AND RECREATION GROUND FOUNDATION TRUST – REQUEST TO MAKE A CHARGE FOR A SPRING DAY AT MARY STEVENS PARK ON 22<sup>ND</sup> MAY 2010

(Having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillors Adams, Attwood and Mrs Rogers withdrew from the meeting whilst the matter was discussed).

The Area Liaison Officer reported orally on a request by a Member of the Committee, on behalf of the Stourbridge and Black Country Events Group to make a charge for a Spring Party in Mark Stevens Park on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2010. The charges would be £3 per person, £1 for children under a metre high, babies free and family concessions to apply. The event took place at South Road Playing Fields in 2009. An official application form had been submitted to the Council's Events Team at Himley, who would ensure that aspects such as appropriate levels of public liability insurance, management of security arrangements and first aid were in place for the event.

RESOLVED

- (1) That, subject to resolution (2) below, the Committee, as Trustees of the Ernest Stevens Park and Recreation Ground Foundation Trust, grant permission for the Stourbridge and Black Country Events Group to hold and make a charge for a Spring Party at Mary Stevens Park on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2010.
- (2) To recommend that the Director of the Urban Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture, close Mary Stevens Park for the whole of the day on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2010, to enable the event referred to in resolution 1 above, to take place, subject to the satisfactory submission of the information referred to above,

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71      COMMUNITY RENEWAL

RESOLVED

That, in the absence of a representative from the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services to speak on this item, the item be deferred.

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72      RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

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

RESOLVED

That the content of the report submitted be noted.

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73      ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor Knowles reported on the work of the Stourbridge Town Hall Working Group, which had last met on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2010. Councillor Knowles advised on a number of successes of the Working Group, including the provision of tiered seating for the town hall, renovation of the flagpole and a new flag for Stourbridge.

The Group had discussed at length the need for the main front entrance of the Stourbridge Town Hall to be renovated and reopened, but were at a loss to know how best to move the project forward.

The Working Group were concerned that when the Crown Centre was redeveloped, the current entrance to the town hall may not be available.

RESOLVED

That the information reported on be noted.

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74      SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

RESOLVED

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

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75      DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of future meetings of the Committee in the next municipal year be advised once determined at Annual Council in May 2010.

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm

CHAIRMAN