

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE

Monday 21st January 2008 at 7.00 pm
at Redhill School, Stourbridge

PRESENT:-

Councillor Adams (Chairman)

Councillors Attwood, Banks, Mrs Collins, Mrs Cowell, Hanif, Jones, Kettle, Knowles, Lowe, Mrs Martin, Mrs Rogers, A Turner, Mrs Walker and C Wilson; Mr J Downing.

OFFICERS:-

Director of Law and Property (As Area Liaison Officer); Assistant Director, Development and Environmental Protection and the Group Engineer - Traffic and Road Safety, (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Group Accountant and the Principal Tax Accountant (Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement), Assistant Director of Adult Community and Housing Services (Libraries Archives and Adult Learning), Assistant Director of Children's Services (Early Years and Youth Education), Area Youth and Community Worker (Directorate of Children's Services), Marketing and Communications Officer (Chief Executive's) and Mrs J Rees (Directorate of Law and Property)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Sergeant T Osborne, of the West Midlands Police and Mr Ryan Nokes were in attendance at the meeting, together with approximately 50 members of the public.

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APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Mr I Green and Ms P Shepherd.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Adams, Attwood and Mrs Rogers declared personal and prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 10 (Stevens Park and Recreation Ground Foundation Trusts – Applications for Grants), in view of their membership, Chairmanship and Vice Chairmanship respectively of the Friends of Mary Stevens Park Group.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th November, 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the inclusion of Mr I Green in the list of attendees.

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RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

A petition from residents of Worcester Lane Pedmore, Stourbridge, requesting consideration of the introduction of traffic calming measures for that area was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment and the Police for their consideration and attention.

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YOUTH ISSUES

Mr Ryan Nokes, a member of the Stourbridge Young People's Area Committee advised that the Young People's Committee had now been established and that once their roles and powers had been set out the Group would be in a position to look at issues affecting young people. He would be willing to act as a co-opted member of the Stourbridge Area Committee, representing young people, if the Committee so wished.

The Chairman advised that Ryan, on behalf of young people, was very welcome at the meeting and the Committee looked forward to receiving regular updates relating to youth issues in the future.

RESOLVED

That consideration be given to co-opting a young person to represent the youth of the area at the next meeting of the Committee.

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PUBLIC FORUM

Before reading questions from the public, the Area Liaison Officer stated that any questions which were not addressed at the meeting would receive a written response from the appropriate officer.

The Area Liaison Officer advised that some of the questions which would be referred to had been submitted at the previous meeting, but due to lack of time, could not be addressed at that time.

Questions and answers were then given as follows:

- a) A member of the public referred to the high cost of translation services for the country, the National Health Service and Local Councils. He requested that the practice of translating documents, particularly area committee agendas, be stopped. In response, the Area Liaison Officer advised that the government had issued guidance recommending that translation services be reviewed, and that this was now taking place.
- b) A member of the public requested information on the regeneration of Lye, in response to which the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Development and Environmental Protection), advised that the implementation of the Lye Area Action Plan had been started. Investment and delivery were dependant on good partnership working and this is actively pursued involving all stakeholders.
- c) A member of the public queried whether any action could still be taken regarding the alleged incorrect information supplied by a Councillor in a neighbouring authority in respect of a recent planning application for a premises in Lye. The Area Liaison Officer advised that if any member of a council breached the Members' Code of Conduct, they could be reported to the Standards Committee. In the incident referred to, the Development Control Committee had taken a differing view to that of the questioner and therefore no action would be taken by the Council. However if the questioner wished to refer the matter to the Standards Committee herself, she was entitled to do so, and the Area Liaison Officer offered to provide a copy of guidance from the Standards Board if requested by the questioner.
- d) A member of the public requested information regarding the frequency of street litter cleaning for Mount Street and Sandyacre Way, Stourbridge, in response to which the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Development and Environmental Protection) undertook to have the matter investigated and a written response sent to the questioner.
- e) A member of the public, unable to attend the meeting, had written to express gratitude to the Street Cleansing Team on its recent Association of Public Service Award acknowledging the work of the team in cleansing the footpaths and pathways in the Withymoor area on a fortnightly basis. He had also suggested that the Council Directorate responsible for maintaining the National Cycle Pathway should contact Sustrans for a grant to assist in the remedial work required on the existing cycleway in various areas.

The same member of the public had requested an update regarding the extension of the Dudley Canal Conservation Area from the Black Delph Bridge to Bowens Bridge and had asked if agreement had been reached with British Waterways regarding the maintenance of the towpath and canal edge. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Development and Environmental Protection), undertook to have the matter investigated and to send a written response to the questioner.

- f) Some members of the public raised a number of concerns and objections to a proposal to reduce the funding for the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Service. The Assistant Director of Children's Services (Early Years, Youth and Education Services), addressed all of the issues raised, firstly explaining the work of the Service, and how it was funded, and stating that despite previous cuts in funding from the Government, the level of service had been maintained until 2006/2007. In 2007/2008 a £100,000 reduction had been made and it was with regret that the Council was now considering a further reduction. She further advised that the reductions referred to were only a recommendation at this stage and no decision on the matter had yet been taken. All services had been reviewed and risks identified and an Impact Assessment would be produced. If and when a decision was made for a reduction in funding, the Director of Children's Services would consult with parties concerned prior to making any changes in the service. Consideration would be given to developing and meeting the needs of all children within the Borough, whilst working within the budget allocated to Children's Services.
- g) A member of the public expressed concerns at the confusion as to the exact date when a report on the Stourbridge Local History Collection was to be submitted to the Committee by the Directorate of Adult Community and Housing Services. He also commented that no consultation had yet taken place with Local History Societies on this matter.

In response, the Assistant Director of Adult Community and Housing Services (Libraries Archives and Adult Learning) advised that until work at an appropriately identified site and the necessary work to protect the collections had been carried out, it would not be possible to report. She confirmed that at a more relevant stage, consultation with interested parties would be carried out and the consultations would include the local history societies.

The Chairman requested that a report on progress be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

Another member of the public queried whether items of local interest to Stourbridge currently held at Worcester could be returned to Stourbridge. The Assistant Director advised that normal practice in respect of local archives of interest to neighbouring local authorities was to offer the relevant archive material to the area. To date Worcestershire County Council had not offered Dudley Library Services any items of historical interest.

- h) A member of the public expressed concern that a leaning wall on the right hand side of Redhill, Stourbridge was a danger to children walking to and from school, in that if they walked in the road to avoid the wall they were at risk from traffic, but that if the wall collapsed, they could be seriously injured.

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

- i) Comments relating to Agenda Item No. 7a (Application to purchase land at the rear of 45 Lady Grey's Walk, Wollaston) were deferred for consideration under that agenda item.
- j) Comments relating to Agenda Item 12 (Cranbourne Road and Adjacent Streets, Stourbridge: Proposal for Waiting Prohibitions) were deferred for consideration under that agenda item.

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APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on a request for the purchase of land and property controlled by the Council.

The applicant, who had requested the right to speak on this matter during the Public Forum session, advised that his request to purchase the land was to provide an off road parking area for his own vehicle, a safe area for his children and perhaps a garage in the future. He also requested views from the Committee as to whether, his application would be considered more favourably, if he requested a smaller area of land. The Area Liaison Officer advised that any amendment to the application would need to be discussed with Housing Services and a consequential report submitted to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

After careful consideration of the comments in the report and those made by the applicant, it was

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Housing be advised to refuse the application to purchase land to the rear of 45 Lady Grey's Walk, Wollaston, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, for the reasons set out in the report.

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CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on an application for funding from the Committee's capital allocation budget.

In response to a query from a Member of the Committee, as to the quality and suitability of a lap top computer and printer, given the small amount of grant requested, the applicant advised that, as the Club Secretary did not have a computer or printer and the group were in urgent need of the equipment to carry out their work, the group would be happy to be awarded the sum requested.

RESOLVED

That the application by the Autism Black Country (ABC) Social Club, Stourbridge for £461 to purchase a lap top computer and a colour printer, to assist with administration of the club, be approved.

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STEVENS PARK AND RECREATION GROUND FOUNDATION TRUSTS – FINAL ACCOUNTS

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on the accounts of the individual Trusts comprising the Ernest Stevens Bequests, for the year ended 31st March, 2007, as indicated in the report submitted.

In presenting the report, the Group Accountant drew attention to the fact that pages 15 –19 of the agenda had been placed incorrectly placed. He also advised that the market value of investments referred to in line three of the first paragraph on page 21 should read £345,780.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the audited final accounts of the Ernest Stevens Trust for the year ended 31st March, 2007, as attached to the report submitted, be approved.
- (2) That the Chairman be authorised to sign the accounts and annual returns for the year ended 31st March, 2007, on behalf of this Committee.

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STEVENS PARK AND RECREATION GROUND FOUNDATION TRUSTS GRANT APPLICATION

(Having previously declared prejudicial interests in the application by the Friends of Mary Stevens Park, Councillors Adams, Attwood and Mrs Rogers withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the application). Councillor Mrs Cowell took the Chair during consideration of that item.

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on two applications for funding from the Trust.

The first was an application by the Stourbridge Cyberbus Project for a grant of £5,000, towards the revenue expenditure of the driver's cost totalling £9,750, to enable the Cyberbus to operate three nights per week.

Some members questioned the appropriateness of allowing funding for revenue expenditure. In response, the Area Liaison Officer advised, that although in the past grants had only been awarded for capital items, it was within the discretion of the Trust to allocate a grant for a revenue purpose, should they think fit.

A number of Members of the Committee commented on the exceptional good work undertaken by the Cyberbus and of their disappointment that lack of funding had resulted in the valuable service for young people only being available one evening per week. The Committee was agreeable to the grant being made on the condition that the applicant understood that this was a one off grant which could not be repeated. They suggested that the applicant be advised to seek alternative methods of funding to enable the cyberbus to continue its good work.

A late, second application, by the Friends of Mary Stevens Park was received for £2,000 towards the cost of marquees and signage for an open day in Mary Stevens Park on Monday 5th May 2008. The event was being organised jointly by The Friends of Mary Stevens Park and the Stourbridge and Black Country Events, with a view to raising funds for a café within the park. There was an intention to charge an entrance fee to the park on that day.

In view of a lack of information, which could only be provided by the applicant, Councillor Attwood, on behalf of the Friends of Mary Stevens Park, was recalled to the meeting and answered questions on all aspects of the application. Councillor Attwood then left the meeting whilst the Committee considered the application.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the application by the Stourbridge Cyberbus Project for £5,000, towards the revenue expenditure of the driver's cost, be approved, as a one off grant, subject to the Project organiser being requested to seek alternative sources of funding for driver's costs for the future.
- (2) That consideration of the application by the Friends of Mary Stevens Park for £2,000 towards the cost of provision of marquees and signage for the proposal for a Family Fun Day at Mary Stevens Park on Monday 5th May 2008, and also for permission to allow a charge to be made for entrance to the park for that event, be deferred until the next meeting, to enable a more detailed report relating to the event to be provided.

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted seeking approval of the Committee to rationalise eighteen small "inactive" education charities into one charity for the benefit of children and young people of Dudley by way of awards for educational achievements and to rename the new charity "Putting Children and Young People First".

Some Members of the Committee suggested that, as a point of clarification, the benefactors of the charity be defined as children and young people who reside in the Borough of Dudley.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Committee, as Trustees for Dudley education charities, approve in principle the rationalisation of eighteen education charities into one new charity named "Putting Children and Young People First", subject to the re-definition of the benefactors of the charity as children and young people who reside in the Borough of Dudley.
- (2) That approval be given to the issuing of a public consultation document, to include the proposals as set out in paragraph 13 of the report submitted.

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CRANBOURNE ROAD AND ADJACENT STREETS, STOURBRIDGE – PROPOSED PROHIBITION OF WAITING ORDER

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the making of a Prohibition of Waiting Order in Cranbourne Road, Stourbridge and adjacent streets, after the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement and on amended waiting restrictions in Red Hill.

A number of concerns were expressed relating to the proposals, as set out in the report submitted, including:

- a) the suggestion from a member of the public, during the public forum session, that the times of the Waiting Order for Cranbourne Road be extended until 8 pm Monday to Friday, as night classes at Stourbridge College commenced at 7 pm which meant students were still parking after 7 pm.
- b) Comments from residents of Heathlands that pupils also parked at the Heathlands and that if they could not park in Cranbourne Road the problem of parking would just move to alternative streets.

A Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) commented that following the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement, the PCSO's would still have the power to "move on" motorists illegally and inconsiderately parked.

One member of the public suggested that the off centre central line be moved to reduced space available for drivers.

Some members of the public and the Committee expressed concern that restrictions in Red Hill need to be introduced sooner rather than later, to ensure the safety of children and young people travelling to the school.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to make a reduced Traffic Regulation Order, as shown on plan number TM2566B, attached to the report submitted, but with No Waiting between 9 am and 8 pm Monday to Friday.
 - (2) That a report on traffic calming measures for Red Hill be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.
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THE OLD QUARTER STOURBRIDGE – TRAFFIC MATTERS

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the results of an investigation into previous requests by the Committee for a 20 mph speed limit in the Old Quarter, Stourbridge.

In presenting the report, the Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety advised that following thorough investigations there was insufficient evidence to warrant the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit at the present time. He advised that as a result of the investigations, the footway at junction of Green Street and Albert Street, as indicated on Drawing No. TM2611, attached to the report, was scheduled for extension during the next financial year. He also advised that should a proposed government initiative for the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit be implemented, such a project would be considered again at that time.

In commenting on the report, some Members advised that, whilst appreciating the difficulty Officers of the Council were experiencing, they still considered that 20 mph speed limits for the Old Quarter of Stourbridge were appropriate, to ensure the safety of local residents, particularly in view of the fact that streets in that area were very narrow, and that a survey of local residents had indicated that the majority of residents considered a 20 mph speed limit to be appropriate.

It was suggested that any incidents of speeding were a police matter and, as such, should be reported to the police for appropriate action to be taken against the offending motorist.

Some Members considered that moveable advisory signs suggesting a 20 mph speed limit to alert drivers could be used in this area, as they had been successfully used in other parts of the Borough.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.

- (2) That the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to consider erecting advisory 20 mph speed limit signs and to submit a more detailed report on traffic matters in the Old Quarter, Stourbridge to a future meeting.
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ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

- a) Councillor Hanif requested that should a decision to cut funding for EMAS be approved, any cuts be kept to a minimum.
 - b) Councillor Mrs Collins commented on the new local Stourbridge Radio station which had recently been established. In response, the Chairman congratulated all involved and wished them every success for the future.
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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on written responses to questions sent since the meeting of this Committee in September 2007.

In referring to the report, a member of the public made reference to paragraph 7 of the report and asked whether a written response had been received from Centro regarding transport facilities around the Vicarage Road/Amblecote High Street area. The Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety advised that no written response had been received from Centro, but that the Bus Network Manager Centro had indicated that he was satisfied with the distances visitors to the hospital, including those with disabilities and/or pushchairs, had to walk from the bus stop to the hospital. In response to a request from the Chairman, the Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety undertook to contact Centro again to request a written response.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the content of the report submitted be noted.
- (2) That the Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety to contact Centro to request a written response to questions relating to travel to and from the hospital at Vicarage Road, Amblecote.

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SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICATION

Information was given regarding the dates for future meetings of all Select Committees, which were to be held at the Council House, Dudley. Members of the public were welcome to attend such meetings.

RESOLVED

That the information given in respect of the dates of future meetings of Select Committees, be noted.

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DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date and venue of the next meeting of the Committee, was noted as follows:

10th March 2008 at 7.00 pm at Hob Green Primary School, Hob Green Road, Stourbridge.

The meeting ended at 9.25pm.

CHAIRMAN