
Halesowen Area Committee – 4th July 2012

Report of the Area Liaison Officer

Responses to Questions Raised at the Halesowen Area Committee Meeting held on 21st March 2012

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Committee of the written responses made to questions asked at the previous meeting.

Background

2. A question was asked about the relocation of Stourbridge College and Horticultural Unit and information on the future of the site was requested. It was also queried whether the Council could give a commitment to ensure that the site continued to remain a part of Leasowes Park. Officers from the Directorate of the Urban Environment have written to the questioner with the following response:-

A meeting was arranged between the College and Council Officers to commence discussions regarding the future of the site. The Council has undertaken an inspection of the site further to ongoing discussions taking place with the College regarding a formal approach and offer to acquire the site being lodged, all subject to the appropriate Council approvals being secured. The College would then consider any Council offer made and compare it with other options that may be available to them and the College Board will ultimately determine how and when the site is disposed.

3. A resident queried about the future plans of the derelict garages at the junction of Hillwood and Stewart Roads and it was commented that the state of the garages were impacting on privately owned properties.

The response from the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services is that Housing Strategy staff within the Directorate are currently working with a number of housing associations to develop this site and there is real interest at present.

4. The future plans for the Holt Farm Primary School site was queried and it was commented that the site was in a poor condition. The Assistant Director for Quality and Partnership reported, at the meeting, that permission from the Secretary of State was awaited to dispose of the site and until the permission was received, action could not be taken. The Assistant Director for Quality and Partnership has provided an update with the following response:-

“We have now obtained the necessary consent to dispose of part of the site from the Department for Education. We will obtain the necessary consent for the remaining part (the playing fields) of the site on completion of arrangements to provide replacement playing fields. This work is scheduled to be completed over the summer so we anticipate the whole site being put on the market in September. We do have developers interested in the site. The Council Buildings and Estates Team monitor the site on a regular basis and

make any necessary arrangements (for example, grounds maintenance – grass cutting and tree pruning/felling). They also deal with any complaints about the site from neighbouring residents.

The Council has had in place for some time now, a weekly visit by Cougar Monitoring Security Services. We receive a report and phone call if there is evidence of damage. On a number of occasions, the Council has also dealt with litter, tree roots, trimming of trees and fixing of fences.”

5. Progress with regard to plans for the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) for Highfield Park was queried and it was also stated that the Park was not the safest place to have this type of facility.

Officers from the Directorate of the Urban Environment advise that progress with the installation of the Highfields MUGA has been delayed due to concerns being raised by certain local residents regarding the impact that this might have on instances of anti-social behaviour in the area. Council Officers have been in liaison with the police to identify the scale of problems being experienced at Highfields Park and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture has requested that a meeting be held with Ward Members to discuss the outcome of this and to agree a way forward.

6. A complaint was made about the increase in fees for the Shenstone Theatre and the immense financial strain on groups using the facilities. In responding the Assistant Director of Housing Strategy and Private Sector had advised that a flat rate increase applied across the Borough. Officers from the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services have written to the questioner advising on the reasons for the increase as follows:-

”My research shows that the increase to the fees and charges at Halesowen Library in 2011 were to fully recover the caretaking costs when the Shenstone Theatre and Caslon room were hired out of normal operating hours. If the library services had not done this it would have had to stop taking bookings for these times, therefore the costs reflect the real and actual cost of providing a caretaker in the evenings.

I would like to take this opportunity of advising you that the fees and charges have been held at the same level for 2012 to 2013.

If groups are finding it difficult to pay they could obviously book the rooms during the times that the library is open. They would then not have to incur these additional costs.”

7. Reference was made to the zebra crossing on the Island at Shell Corner and it was commented that the crossing was very dangerous and that drivers did not stop their cars for people to cross. In responding the Head of Traffic and Transportation stated that there was overall concern about the tendency for people to ignore highways regulations. However, he indicated that he was not aware of accident problems at the said site but he undertook to check the accident records.

Officers from the Directorate of the Urban Environment report that having investigated the accident report from the most recent three year period, 1st January 2009 to 31st December, 2011, it was found that there had been three recorded “slight” personal injury accidents at Shell Corner. Of these only one had involved a pedestrian using the zebra crossing on Long Lane which occurred after the hours of darkness and in wet and slippery conditions.

Finance

8. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

Law

9. Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972 enables the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

Equality Impact

10. The report takes into account the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and there are no direct implications for children and young people in noting the report.

Recommendation

11. That the Committee notes the contents of the report.



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List of Background Papers

Minutes of the Committee held on 21st March 2012