

Stourbridge Area Committee - 15th June 2009

Report of the Area Liaison Officer

Responses to Questions

Purpose of Report

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

Background

2. At a meeting of this Committee held on 9th March 2009, it was indicated that written replies would be sent to the questioners on the following questions:
3. A member of the public raised concerns regarding speeding issues in the Redlake Road, Pedmore area. The Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety has written to the questioner advising that the current speed restriction of 40 mph was introduced in 1968. The police speed survey referred to at the meeting of the Committee had been completed and would be discussed in the near future. Following these discussions investigations would be undertaken to determine the justification for introducing speed visors in Redlake Road, in comparison with all other requests for such service, as part of a future year's annual Local Safety Scheme programme.
4. A member of the public raised concerns regarding obstructive parking in Tall Trees Drive, Pedmore. The Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety has written to the questioner confirming that the Ward Councillors had undertaken to visit residents in their homes to determine their views on acceptable waiting restrictions.
5. A member of the public expressed concerns regarding the proposed increase in the Council tax. The Interim Director of Finance has written to the questioner advising that a number of factors influence the level of Council Tax in any one year and that the Council was facing significant and increasing cost pressures as a result of a number of things within the community. The Interim Director advised that it had not been possible to spend on all the priorities identified in a recent survey. He also explained that the Council's finances had been affected by the recession and falling interest on investments. The Council had identified a total of £14.7m of savings over the next three years, to reduce the burden on local council

tax payers. He also pointed out that the Council tax for Dudley was lower than neighbouring local authorities. The council tax increase would be less than £1 per week for most households.

6. In relation to the questioner's comments regarding pensions, the Interim Director of Finance advised that the Council has no discretion to the funding of pensions, because this is covered by Government legislation. The long term intention of the Council is to regenerate Brierley Hill and Dudley towns, which will increase the general economic wealth of the Borough.
7. A member of the public questioned why the Area Liaison Officer had disallowed £200 of the Claim by the Stourbridge Youth Committee, as he considered that stationery was required in conjunction with I.T. equipment. In response, the Area Liaison Officer has written to the questioner advising that stationery was a revenue expenditure item. She also explained that part of the criteria to define the difference between capital and revenue would be to ascertain that the object had a 'useful life'. Paper and other stationery items would be classed as consumables and hence did not have a 'useful life'. Using the analogy of buying a car, the paper was more like petrol than tyres.
8. A member of the public provided a summary of grants made and commented on the application by the Youth Service Committee, proffering the view that the application could be approved under the special circumstances of "in the public interest". The Area Liaison Officer has written to the member of the public advising that the Committee had resolved to support the application for the capital element of the bid. The young people would be supported to make a further application for capital funding, as appropriate. The Area Liaison Officer also advised that she would ensure that the Head of the Youth Service support the group, firstly in understanding the bidding process for revenue funding and on possible organisations that they could apply to for additional resources. She confirmed that it was important to value young people and advised that the Council did this by providing a detailed programme of activities of support for young people and encouraging them to become good citizens for the future.
9. A member of the public queried the unallocated balance of the Committee's Capital Allocations budget for 2008/09 and asked whether the criteria introduced in June 2008 should be removed. The Area Liaison Officer has written to the questioner advising of the indicative amount of the budget for 2009/10, which would not be approved until the June meeting of the Cabinet. She also set out the unallocated budget amount for 2008/09, the indicative 2009/10 budget, the amount allocated for the park gates in 2009/10 and the total capital allocation funding available for 2009/10.

Finance

10. There are no direct financial consequences arising from this report.

Law

11. 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

9. The report takes into account the Council's Policies on equality and diversity.

Recommendation

10. The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.



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AREA LIAISON OFFICER

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List of Background Papers:

Question slips handed in at previous meetings of the Stourbridge Area Committee.
Correspondence sent in response by Council Officers.