

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 3rd September 2008 at 7.00 pm
At Redhill School, Junction Road, Stourbridge

PRESENT-

Councillors C Wilson (Chairman)
Councillor A Turner (Vice Chairman)
Councillors: Adams, Attwood, Barlow, Mrs Cowell, Hanif, Jones, Kettle,
Knowles, Lowe and Mrs Rogers.

OFFICERS:-

Director of Law and Property (as Area Liaison Officer), Assistant Director Development and Environmental Protection; Head of Museums, Greenspaces and Bereavement Services; Group Engineer - Traffic and Road Safety (Directorate of the Urban Environment); Head of Community Renewal, Community Renewal Officer - Stourbridge (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services); Assistant Director - Early Years Youth and Community and the Early Years Team Manager (Directorate of Children's Services); Group Accountant (Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement); Head of Buildings (Directorate of Law and Property) and Mrs J Rees (Directorate of Law and Property).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Inspector Sarah Galloway of West Midlands Police, together with approximately 30 members of the public was in attendance at the meeting.

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APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Banks, Mrs Martin Mrs Walker; and Mr Downing and Mr Nokes.

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FORMER COUNCILLOR TERRY POWELL

The Chairman referred to the recent death of former Councillor Terry Powell, following which all present at the meeting stood in silent tribute to his memory. Councillor Jones referred to the valuable and loyal service to the Community given by former Councillor Powell in his capacity as both a Member of the Committee and a senior officer.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Adams, Attwood and Mrs Rogers declared a personal interest,

in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of agenda Item No 15 (Repair to Gates at Mary Stevens Park), in view of their respective membership, Chairmanship and Vice Chairmanship of the Friends of Mary Stevens Park Group.

25 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18th June 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

26 CO-OPTED MEMBERS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the co-option of a Member to serve on the Committee for the 2008/09 municipal year to represent the ethnic minorities.

RESOLVED

- (1) That no appointment of a co-opted member to represent ethnic minority groups be made this year.
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27 POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Sarah Galloway of the West Midlands Police introduced herself as having been designated as responsible for the Stourbridge to Kingswinford Area in March 2008. She reported on a number of changes to policing in Stourbridge since her appointment.

In response to a query from a member of the public as to why the Hawbush area had been allocated one more Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) than the Oldswinford and Pedmore area, Inspector Galloway advised that this was due to a current lack of trained PCSOs. Once a fully trained PCSO was available he or she would be assigned to the Oldswinford/Pedmore area. She also advised that, due to their contracts of employment, PCSOs could not be moved from the area to which they were assigned.

In response to a comment from a member of the public regarding the validity and/or usefulness of police information being made available via the website, Inspector Galloway advised that the Police Website was easily accessible to all and provided a two way exchange of information. The Police could be contacted via the website as well as via the normal telephone numbers.

Inspector Galloway agreed that due to a lack of trained staff the website had not been updated recently, but that following the appointment of a trained member of staff the website information would be regularly updated, and include information regarding the Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings. She also advised the PACT meetings were advertised in the press and via leaflet drops to local residents.

Inspector Galloway advised that she was aware that the structure, venues and timings of PACT meetings, in particular with reference to concerns regarding lack of attendance at meetings, was under review, but she had no information regarding this at the present time.

On the issue of the location of Police Officers, Inspector Galloway advised that she was happy with the situation where Officers policing Stourbridge were based at Kingswinford. She did not think this had any adverse affect on the length of time they were available for duty at Stourbridge. Officers also had to patrol the Kingswinford area.

In response to concerns expressed by a member of the public regarding difficulties in contacting the police by telephone, Inspector Galloway advised that in relation to local calls, officers did their best to be available on the telephone wherever possible. An alternative to the telephone was the website. She could not comment on 999 calls, which were dealt with from a central base.

A Member of the Committee requested that up to date information be provided to Ward Councillors on the structure and shift timetables for the PCSOs.

A Member of the Committee commented that it would be useful to meet with the newly appointed Chief Superintendent.

Inspector Galloway advised that she would pass on to Chief Superintendent Munroe the Committee's wish to meet with him.

RESOLVED

That Inspector Galloway be thanked for her oral presentation on police issues, the contents of which be noted.

The Assistant Director for Early Years Youth and Community (Directorate of Children's Services) gave an oral presentation, on the proposals for the development of the Youth Service, which had been drawn up following an internal peer review and had been linked to national guidance and information provided over the past two years.

The new structure would support the township based universal services and a needs based targeted service, which would support the Targeted Youth Support Plan. These developments are being supported by the Select Committee Working Group for Young People.

It was the intention of the Directorate for Children's Services to consult on the details of planning and how the services would be delivered to young people over the next two years. The consultation period would commence in early October 2008 and finish at the end of December 2008. The consultation paper would be submitted to the next meeting of the Area Committee.

The Assistant Director for Early Years introduced Martin Smith, the Township Representative for Stourbridge, who would be working with the co-opted member representing young people on the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the content of the oral presentation on the restructuring of Youth Services in Dudley be noted.

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.

Questions and answers were then given as follows:-

1. Comments by a member of the public in respect of Stourbridge Cemetery were deferred until Agenda Item 13 (Issues Raised by Members of the Committee) as Councillor Mrs Cowell advised that she had intended to raise this issue.
2. Concerns by members of the public regarding proposals to close the Post Offices in Pedmore and Oldswinford were addressed by Councillor Jones, who stated that numerous leaflets had been recently distributed to local residents. He advised that anyone wishing to express their views should do so directly to the Post Office by 7th October, 2008.

3. Two questions relating to Agenda Item 12 (Restoration of the Gates at Mary Stevens Park) were deferred for consideration under that agenda item.
4. Concerns expressed by a member of the public regarding nuisance from tall trees in Westwood Avenue and Maynard Avenue were referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for a written response.
5. Concerns were expressed by a member of the Management Committee of Wollaston Village Community Hall, regarding a recent arson attack the previous week-end, which had resulted in approximately £60,000 worth of damage to the Hall. The problem was reportedly considered to have resulted from a number of unauthorised people having access to the master key for the gates, which gave access to the Hall and the playing fields, and the failure to lock the gates at the end of the football matches on the playing fields.

In response to the concerns expressed, Councillors Knowles and Mrs Cowell reported that they had visited the Community Hall following the arson attack. It was noted that the concerns had been discussed with the Assistant Director Leisure and Cultural Services (Directorate of the Urban Environment) who had undertaken to arrange a meeting of all parties concerned to address the problems.

6. A member of the public queried why meetings of the Committee were always held at Hob Green Primary School. In response, the Area Liaison Officer advised that meetings took place at a number of venues around the Stourbridge area, depending on their availability. Any alternative venues suggested would be investigated for availability and suitability.
7. A member of the public expressed disappointment that his application to be a co-opted member of the Committee had not been accepted and disagreed with the decision of the Committee not to appoint a co-opted person to represent ethnic minorities at the present time.
8. The same member of the public expressed a view that he did not consider that the three Ward Councillors for Lye and Wollescote worked together. The Ward Councillors in question, together with other Members of the Committee, disputed this view, advising that in fact the three Ward Councillors worked extremely closely and were in regular contact on Ward issues.

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 to enter into a formal lease of land at Wollescote Hall, Wollescote Road, Stourbridge, to regularise the occupation of a pavilion building erected by the Black Country Bowls Club and Crystal Bowls Club from expenditure partly funded by the Committee. The proposal also related to an additional area on which the Bowls Clubs intended to construct an extension to the premises.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Personnel, Legal and Property be advised to approve the granting of a formal lease of the land referred to, and an additional area to facilitate the proposed extension, to include an extra area of land at Wollescote Hall, Wollescote Road, Stourbridge, both as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.

COMMUNITY RENEWAL SERVICE – ESTABLISHMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUP

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on arrangements proposed for the establishment of and appointment of the Community Renewal Working Group for the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
 - (2) That a Community Renewal Working Group for the Committee be established with the terms of reference identified in Appendix 1 to the report now submitted, membership of the Group for 2008/09 comprising the Chairman, Vice Chairman and one Member from each Ward namely: Councillors Attwood, Barlow, Hanif, A Turner and C Wilson and a Member from the Amblecote Ward to be appointed.
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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 allocations budget.

RESOLVED

That the sum referred to below be allocated to the following organisation for the purpose indicated:-

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Stourbridge Football Club	Replacement window frames at the Club	£1,825

MARY STEVENS PARK – RESTORATION OF GATES

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the restoration of the gates at Mary Stevens Park, Stourbridge.

In presenting the report, the Head of Museums, Greenspaces and Bereavement Services advised that previous applications for funding towards the cost of the restoration work of the gates at Mary Stevens Park had been refused. A visual survey had been undertaken in June 2008 which had identified a schedule of defects and a detailed comprehensive conservation plan. Discussions would take place with local colleges to ascertain if some form of learning opportunity could be accommodated within the tendered contract for the work, the indicative costs for which were £296,000.

Two alternative options were put forward for consideration, as detailed in paragraph 23 of the report, for the preparation of a funding package of sources available and to instigate repairs to the main gates and pillars at the park, or to prepare a Heritage Lottery Application for submission in 2009 to undertake works at the park, to implement the Friends Group's master plan to include the refurbishment of all ironwork at the park. The Head of Museums, Greenspaces and Bereavement Services advised that Option B was the preferred option.

Some Members of the Committee expressed doubts regarding the practical achievability of securing funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), in the light of the forthcoming Olympic games in London in 2012 and suggested that consideration be given to a third option, in case HLF funding should be refused, to ensure the restoration of the gates and fencing at the park was completed within five years.

A member of the public questioned whether the Heritage Lottery had supplied closing dates for receipt of applications. In response the Area Liaison Officer advised that 28th February 2009 was the closing date for Stage 1 and 31st August 2009 for Stage 2.

A member of the public, unable to attend the meeting, had sent in written issues of concern stating that in his opinion the Council had missed an opportunity to have utilised the most cost effective and economical method of the repair to the Heath Lane Gates. Other comments he made included whether or not Dudley Council employed people with specialised

craftsmanship. He considered that the Grade II listings for the gates would provide no problems for qualified craftsmen employed by the Council. He suggested that the repairs to the gates could be carried out in-situ and that obtaining existing paint would be unnecessary as the white and lead based paint used originally when the gates were installed had since been painted over with whatever paint was available, so long as it matched the colour. He believed mature and Final Year students should have the ability to undertake such remedial work required to repair the gates. He also believed that lottery funding during the forthcoming lead up to the 2012 Olympics would be given, as a priority, to creating new parks and new towns and East London Developments. His comments were referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration.

A member of the public questioned the ownership of the gates. The Chairman advised that the Ernest Stevens Trust owned the park and therefore the gates.

A member of the Stourbridge Township Council circulated small fragments of the gates, which he had collected on a recent visit to the park, to indicate the seriousness of the urgent need for the gates to be repaired. He did not consider it reasonable to await the outcome of the lottery application, particularly in the light of the Olympics which were due to be staged in London in 2012.

Another member of the public suggested that the funds in the Ernest Stevens Trust be used to repair the fence and gates.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the contents of the report submitted be noted.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture be advised of the Committee's support for Option B contained within the report, to enable a Heritage Lottery application to be submitted in 2009 to enable works at Mary Stevens Park to implement the Friends Group's master plan to include the refurbishment of all work at the Park.
- (3) That the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Culture be advised of the Committee's support for a third option whereby, should Heritage Lottery Funding not be secured, an alternative plan be instigated for the completion of the restoration work within 5 years.
- (4) That the Committee give consideration to allocating funding from the Stevens Trust fund towards the project, when the exact costs are known.

ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor Mrs Cowell raised a previously reported concern, regarding the changes to the entrance and egress at the Stourbridge Cemetery.

A question raised earlier in Public Forum referred to the same matter.

Previously Councillor Mrs Cowell had been advised that the new entrance was to be improved over a 2 year period, but this had still not taken place.

The Assistant Director Development and Environmental Protection undertook to refer Councillor Mrs Cowell's concerns to the Head of Bereavement Services and request that, following investigation, a progress report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee

Councillor Knowles reported that:

- a) the Town Hall Working Group had recently re-convened, with a view to progressing projects for the Town Hall, including the refurbishment of the Amblecote Room, the Foyer and the floodlighting of the Town Hall. The Working Group would report regularly to future meetings of the Committee.
- b) Modus, who were developing the Crown Centre, Stourbridge, would resubmit a revised planning application for the development of a hotel at the Crown Centre. He had been assured that this would not delay the commencement of the redevelopment.

SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

Information was given regarding the dates for future meetings of all Select Committees, which were 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.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates and venues of future meetings of the Committee were noted as follows:-

17th November, 2008 at 7.00 pm – Hob Green Primary School, Hob Green Road, Stourbridge

19th January, 2009 at 7.00 pm – Hob Green Primary School, Hob Green Road, Stourbridge

9th March, 2009 at 7.00 pm – Hob Green Primary School, Hob Green Road, Stourbridge

The meeting ended at 8.55 p.m.

CHAIRMAN