

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 11th November 2009 at 6.30 p.m.
At Earls High School, Furnace Lane, Halesowen

PRESENT

Councillor James (Chairman)
Councillor Burston (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Crumpton, Mrs Dunn, Mrs Faulkner, Ms Nicholls, Ms Partridge, Mrs Shakespeare, Taylor, K Turner, Vickers and J Woodall.

Officers

Area Liaison Officer (Interim Director of Finance), Assistant Director of Housing Strategy and Private Sector, Head of Executive Support, Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery, Group Engineer (Transportation) (all Directorate of the Urban Environment), Area Community Renewal Officer (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services) Area Youth Team Leader for Halesowen (Directorate of Children's Services) and the Interim Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services and Mrs M Johal – (both Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources).

Also in Attendance

Inspector H Khatkar – West Midlands Police
Mr P Towers – West Midlands Fire Service

There were approximately 35 members of the public in attendance.

40

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON DUDLEY COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE DECISION MAKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chairman announced that under changes in legislation, the Council had to consider its decision-making arrangements, which were introduced under the Local Government Act, 2000.

The Council had to make a decision on its future executive arrangements by the end of 2009 and the only two options available to it in the future were:-

- A Leader and Cabinet Executive (which was the Council's current system with some modifications), or
- A directly elected Mayor and Cabinet Executive.

Before making a final decision the Council was carrying out a consultation exercise and forms giving more details on this were available at the meeting. Further information was also available on the Council's website.

41

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman announced that the following additional items would be considered following consideration of Agenda Item No 8 (Public Forum):-

- Eritrean Tigre Welfare Association
 - Dudley Borough Local Access Forum
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42

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Body, Hill and Mrs Turner.

43

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made by the following Members in respect of the matters indicated:

Councillor Burston declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 14 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of him being the Area Committee Nominee for Lutley Community Centre Committee.

Councillor Mrs Faulkner declared personal and prejudicial interests in respect of Agenda Item No 14 (Delegated Capital Budget) in respect of bids from Hope Street Friends Group, as she worked closely with them and St Paul's Blackheath Parish Church in view of her being the Independent Referee for Awards For All Scheme.

Councillor Mrs Shakespeare declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 14 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of her having an association with Members of Hope Street Friends Group.

Councillor K Turner declared personal and prejudicial interests in respect of Agenda Item No 14 (Delegated Capital Budget) in respect of bids from Caslon Community Partnership, in view of him being a contributor to the Partnership and Director, Vice-Chair and Treasurer of Groundwork Black Country and the Rotary Club of Halesowen and Rowley Regis in view of him being a Member.

Councillor K Turner declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 6 (Emergency Services Issues) in view of him being a nominee of the Council for the West Midlands Fire Service, the Chair of Audit of that body and a Chartered Assessor.

Councillor Vickers declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 14 (Delegated Capital Budget) regarding the application for funding from Lye and Wollescote Partnership in view of him being a Member of the Executive Committee.

44 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3rd September, 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed.

45 PETITIONS

(1) Residents of Leaffield Gardens

The receipt of a petition from residents of Leaffield Gardens complaining about alleged excessive noise made by a company was reported. It was indicated that the Directorate of the Urban Environment were investigating the complaint.

(2) Regeneration of Colley Gate

A petition was submitted by Councillor Ms Partridge on behalf of residents requesting the regeneration of Colley Gate. It was reported that the petition would be submitted to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.

46 YOUTH SERVICE AREA REPORT

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted, on Youth Service provision in the Halesowen and Cradley Area.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on Youth Service provision in the Halesowen and Cradley Area, be noted.

47 EMERGENCY SERVICES ISSUES

Mr P Towers, West Midlands Fire Service indicated that it was proposed to submit a written report to Members prior to the Area Committee meeting in the future.

Mr Towers then gave a verbal report, and in doing so, made the following points:-

- The Fire Service were currently tackling void and derelict buildings to reduce arson
- Broadstone Public House was insecure and discussions were being held with the Directorate of the Urban Environment with a view to boarding up
- Smiths Arms continued to be monitored
- Foxcote Farm had been boarded up
- There had been eight reported fires and those properties were in the process of having Fire Safety Checks
- There had been a slight increase in vehicle arson but attempts were being made to mitigate this
- Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) methods were being used with regard to road traffic collision incidents

A Member commended Mr Towers for his recent diligent work and praised Greenwatch for the rescue operation that had been undertaken, which had resulted in the lives of children being saved. He also reported that a team from the West Midlands Fire Service Technical Rescue Unit had won a competition at an event held in Namur, Belgium. It was suggested that a letter be written to the West Midlands Fire Service to congratulate them on their efforts.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, asked Mr Towers to convey their congratulations to the Team.

RESOLVED

That the information given in the verbal update, on the work of the West Midlands Fire Service, be noted.

AREA POLICE AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (PACT) ISSUES

A schedule of PACT meetings arranged in the area of the Committee had been included with the agenda for information.

Inspector Khatkar reported that crime continued to reduce. She referred to Programme Paragon and indicated that the new plans under this operation would come into effect from 1st April, 2010. It was reported that the Police were moving away from being performance driven to concentrating on service delivery.

Inspector Khatkar further reported on the Social Responsibility Scheme that had been implemented in Dudley following concerns from residents regarding alcohol related anti-social behaviour. It was a joint initiative with Trading Standards to sign off-licences up to a trading agreement, while also giving them support and training for staff in refusing sales to underage customers.

In concluding, Inspector Khatkar informed the meeting that she would be moving onto a new role and that she was being replaced by Inspector Gary Malpass.

The Group Engineer (Transportation) undertook to provide a written response to the Member concerned about the queries raised regarding the speed camera on the A456, the suitability of its location and the results of readings.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Inspector Khatkar for the work that she had undertaken in Halesowen and wished her well in her new role.

RESOLVED

That the information given in the verbal update, on the policing issues indicated, be noted.

49

PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) Reference was made to the question raised at the previous meeting about a missing official document relating to the raised ground levels for the Grange Crescent area and it was queried as to why the document had still not been located. The statement about the ground levels being potentially lower than those approved via the planning condition was also queried and it was stated that the levels were much higher.

In responding the Head of Executive Support indicated the issue of the missing letter had been dealt with in the Head of Planning's letter to the questioner dated 5th November, 2009. The Head of Executive Support informed the meeting that the Chief Executive had received a letter raising a number of issues in this regard and that the matter was being dealt with as a Freedom of Information request. The Chief Executive had also referred the matter to the Director of the Urban Environment requesting that the issues raised be investigated.

RESOLVED

That the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee detailing the findings of the investigation as indicated above.

- (b) It was queried why, in view of the fact that Asda had not made any financial capital contribution to Cornbow and the bus station re-development, had permission been granted for Asda signs declaring Halesowen as "Asda Town" in bright green.

In responding the Head of Executive Support indicated that Vale Retail had submitted the application for Asda and that Vale Retail had made a contribution via a Section 106 Agreement. It was also stated that there had been no objections when planning permission had been granted.

- (c) A complaint was made about the changes made to Halesowen library and it was stated that there was no longer a reference library and only a reference section. The section had missing reference material, there was no table for the public to use and the library stock had been decimated. The amount spent on the scheme, in the region of £48,000, was questioned, as it was considered that the library was worse than before. It was also stated that there was no spare capacity for small meetings to be held and organisations that used the building had to find alternative facilities.

A Member commented that there had been no consultation with Ward Members regarding the changes to the library and that they had only been made aware when they had been inundated with complaints from residents. It was also stated that the building was not suitable for the Social Services section that had moved to the library, as there was no privacy.

RESOLVED

That the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services be requested to consider the complaints, with regard to Halesowen Library, as indicated above and that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

50 ERITREAN TIGRE WELFARE ASSOCIATION

It was noted that as there was no representative in attendance at the meeting for this item, no further consideration be given to this matter at this meeting.

51 DUDLEY BOROUGH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Mr Mick Freer was in attendance for this item and he informed the meeting about the Dudley Borough Local Access Forum.

Mr Freer stated that the Forum had been in existence for six years and that it was a statutory body founded in 2003, as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Forum advised Dudley Council and others in matters relating to public access for the purpose of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. He indicated that the Council were required by law to have regard to relevant advice from the Forum in carrying out its functions. Members of the Forum were appointed by Dudley Council for a period of three years and it was indicated that most of the memberships had lapsed in August of this year. Mr Freer asked that members of the Forum be invited to participate in presentations that were to be given to all Area Committees.

The Head of Executive Support informed the meeting that a report on membership of the Forum would be submitted to the Committee at its January 2010 meeting.

RESOLVED

That the verbal report given on the work of the Dudley Borough Local Access Forum be noted.

52

WARD ISSUES

(a) Councillor Crumpton

- (i) Referred to the enormous turnout in commemorating Remembrance Sunday and thanked all Members of the Royal British Legion.
- (ii) Complained about traffic problems, the lack of parking for residents and in particular the need to install a speed camera on Butchers Lane in Cradley. It was reported that there were three blind bends on that road and that there had been a number of accidents.

The Group Engineer (Transportation) indicated that siting speed cameras was the responsibility of the Safety Camera Partnership and he undertook to bring it to their attention. He also undertook to refer the matter to the Group Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety) with a view to consideration being given for a speed visor as part of the Local Safety Scheme.

Mr P Towers also undertook to speak to the Police with a view to discussing a joint operation.

(b) Councillor Ms Partridge

Complained on behalf of residents about the poor surface conditions on Foredraft Street.

Several residents were in attendance and they complained about the problems that were being incurred. It was also stated that the road had been opened up by the Council to allow access.

The Interim Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services informed the meeting that the road was a private street and therefore could not be maintained at public expense.

53 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE
HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE HELD ON 3RD SEPTEMBER
2009

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted informing the Committee of the written responses made to questions asked at the previous meeting.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, be noted.

54 REPORT OF HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE WORKING GROUPS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on issues arising from meetings of the Working Group.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted, be noted.

55 EARLS WAY ISLAND IMPROVEMENTS

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the proposed improvements to Earls Way Island.

RESOLVED

That the Earls Way Island improvement scheme be supported and that the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to approve the scheme.

56 HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress with regard to physical developments taking place in and around Halesowen Town Centre, together with a verbal update on the work of the Halesowen Town Centre Development Working Group.

In presenting the report the Head of Executive Support referred to the Grange Road Roundabout and informed the meeting that the Working Group had considered some proposed artwork for the roundabout. The proposed artwork included a durable glass covering of the roundabout in Dudley colours and it was indicated that the proposal was on display in the hall, together with questionnaires for comments. It was reported that the proposals would formally be on display at Halesowen Library from 1st December, 2009 for six weeks.

The Head of Executive Support informed the meeting that the 'Flag for Halesowen' competition had been running since early September; that the closing date for the competition was on Saturday, 14th November and that submissions should be sent to Mary Stevens Park. The World Rivers Week had taken place during half term with various activities and one of the highlights was a film shown at the Zion Centre at which 176 children attended to watch "Ice Age 3".

A public realm study had been carried out which looked at sketch proposals in two locations for improvements both to the physical environment and to prepare a basis for 'in bloom' activity. The two locations were between the Huskey Dog and Somers Square and also Church Square, opposite the entrance to St John's Church at the top of the High Street. The proposals were at an early stage and Members of the Working Group had raised a number of points and requested that a detailed action plan with costs and management arrangements be submitted to the next meeting of the Working Group. That plan would be submitted to the Committee meeting in January 2010 for approval.

A Member referred to the speed camera on Rosemary Road and requested that the issue be referred to the Safety Camera Partnership with a view to consideration being given for its relocation.

A Member referred to the previous meeting where it had been requested that a letter be sent to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education confirming the support of the Committee for the wholesale regeneration of the land between Two Gates and Toys Lane. It was suggested that a letter also be written to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration requesting that a feasibility study and detailed analysis be undertaken for the regeneration of Cradley and wholesale regeneration of Toys Lane. In responding the Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery indicated that consideration was being given to a feasibility study being undertaken to enable the matter to progress.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, on progress with regard to developments in and around Halesowen Town Centre, be noted.

- (2) That, subject to funding being made available, the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to include the four crossings to the West of Hayley Green Island plus the two further crossings to the east of Grange Road within the Grange Island Scheme.

57

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on requests for funding from the Delegated Capital Budget.

A Member referred to several comments made in the report about "Officer colleagues" and asked that, in future, further information with details of who the Officers were and what supporting comments were made, be included in the report.

(Having previously declared personal and prejudicial interests in certain applications, Councillors Mrs Faulkner, Mrs Shakespeare, K Turner and Vickers left the meeting during consideration of respective applications and rejoined the meeting following its consideration).

RESOLVED

- (1) That, subject to the remaining shortfall being raised, approval be given to a grant of up to £850 to Lye and Wollescote Partnership (approved in July 2009) towards the 'story-telling chair' community artwork.
- (2) That approval be given to a grant of up to £1714 to the Halesowen Asian Elderly Association towards the cost of additional seating, an air conditioning unit and a concertina screen.
- (3) That approval be given to a grant of up to £1250 to the Zion Christian Centre towards the setting up of a Food Bank.
- (4) That the bids for a grant from Holy Trinity Church Old Hill be refused, as the Church is based outside of the Borough in Sandwell.
- (5) That the application for a grant from TOTSAREUS be refused, as the organisation is based outside of the Borough in Sandwell.
- (6) That approval be given to a grant of up to £1000 to Community Transport, towards a replacement minibus.
- (7) That approval be given to a grant of up to £3913 to the Lutley Community Association towards a project to upgrade facilities at the Centre.

- (8) That the application for a grant of up to £5000 to the Women's Awareness Association towards various items of Information Technology (IT) equipment and sewing/overlocker machines be deferred pending further information about the storage and security.
- (9) That approval be given to a grant of up to £2500 to Hasbury Scout Group towards the cost of replacing their existing heating system.
- (10) That a grant to the Arab Women and Children Association towards the cost of various items be refused, due to the questionable arrangements for Members' meetings and the lack of security proposed for the requested items.
- (11) That, subject to the remainder of the funds being raised, or invoices/receipts to the value of up to £2000 being supplied, approval be given to a grant of up to £2000 to the Cyber Bus Project for the purchase of specific items towards refitting and equipping a replacement Cyber Bus.
- (12) That, following receipt of additional information regarding further match-funding bids, approval be given to an additional grant of £2500 to Caslon Community Partnership towards the cost of fencing off the southern perimeter of the site to the rear of Beeches View Avenue which will be turned into a community garden.
- (13) That approval be given to a grant of up to £5000 to St Paul's Blackheath Parish Church towards the cost of double glazing, cavity wall insulation and light fittings to further improve the facilities available for community use.
- (14) That approval be given to a grant of up to £5000 to Hope Street Friends Group towards two additional pieces of play equipment aimed at 0-8 year olds.
- (15) That approval be given to a grant of up to £4,513.75 to The Rotary Club of Halesowen and Rowley Regis to enable them to arrange for the supply and construction of a purpose built promotional display trailer for static and street collections raising finance for charitable community needs.

That the dates and venues of future meetings of the Committee be noted as follows:-

14th January, 2010 – Hurst Green Primary School
10th March, 2010 – Lutley Community Centre

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SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

As a way of giving additional publicity to meetings of the Council's Select Committees, details of Select Committee meetings had been included on the agendas of meetings of Area Committees.

The information given in respect of publicity for future meetings of Select Committees was noted.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm.

CHAIRMAN