

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 14th September, 2005, at 6.30 p.m.
at Colley Lane Primary School, Colley Lane, Halesowen

PRESENT

Councillor Burston (Vice-Chairman) (in the Chair)

Councillors Body, Crumpton, Mrs Dunn, Mrs Faulkner, Ms Nicholls, Ms Partridge, Mrs Shakespeare, Taylor, Mrs Turner, K Turner and J Woodall

Officers

Area Liaison Officer, Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong Learning (Community Education Division), Head of Policy (Executive and Support), Senior Engineer, Regeneration Manager and Town Centre Manager (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Senior Solicitor (Gary Collins) and Mrs M Johal (Directorate of Law and Property)

Approximately 45 members of the public were in attendance

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22nd June, 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made by the following Members for the reasons indicated:

Councillor Body declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 9 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of him being a Trustee of the Beech Tree Miners Institute

Councillor Burston declared personal interests in respect of Agenda Item No 11 (Earls High School Foundation) in view of him being a Governor of Earls High School and in Agenda Item No 13 A458 Halesowen to Stourbridge Bus Showcase No 9) in view of him being employed by CENTRO.

Councillor Crumpton declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 9 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of him being a Trustee of the Beech Tree Miners Institute.

Councillor Ms Partridge declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 9 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of her being a Trustee of the Beech Tree Miners Institute.

Councillor Mrs Shakespeare declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 11 (Earls High School Foundation) in view of her being a Governor of Earls High School.

Councillor Taylor declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 12 ('School Keep Clear' Markings Traffic Regulation Order (No 3) 2005) in view of him being Chairman of the Governors of Holt Farm Primary School.

Councillor K Turner declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 9 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of him being Vice-Chairman and Trustee for Age Concern.

Councillor Mrs Turner declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 9 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of her being a Trustee for Age Concern.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Body, Jackson and James.

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PETITIONS

- (a) It was reported that a petition from residents in the area of the Saltbrook Trading Estate, objecting to an application by Fish4dogs Limited for a Pollution Prevention and Control Permit, had been submitted to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for consideration.
- (b) A petition was submitted by Councillor Crumpton on behalf of residents of Hill Bank Road and Caslon Road seeking urgent action in relation to the state of the roadsides and pavements that were covered in weeds and were in a very poor state. The petition was referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.
- (c) A petition was submitted by Councillor Crumpton on behalf of residents objecting to the proposed traffic lights outside Providence Methodist Church, Windmill Hill, Colley Gate, which was received and considered in conjunction with agenda item No 13 (A458 Halesowen to Stourbridge Bus Showcase No 9).

- (d) A petition was submitted by Councillor Ms Partridge on behalf of residents supporting the new crossing in Windmill Hill, Halesowen, which was received and considered in conjunction with agenda item No 13 (A458 Halesowen to Stourbridge Bus Showcase No 9).
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PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A member of the public made comments on the proposed Primary School Review and particularly referred to the closure of Holt Farm Primary School, queried the distance given for alternative schools and the impact on the quality of education. A lengthy discussion ensued and the Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong Learning (Community Education Division), suggested that comments should be made at the consultation meetings that were being held.

The Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong Learning (Community Education Division) undertook to respond direct to the member of the public who queried why extra classrooms were proposed for Olive Hill Primary School and the impact on more traffic.

- (b) A complaint was made in relation to the damage to a historical wall in Tenter Drive that had caused stones from the wall to spread onto Bromsgrove Road making the site unsightly. The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to liaise with the Conservation Officer with a view to investigating the matter.
- (c) A resident complained about the inadequate refuse collection service and made particular reference to the difficulties that arose for the elderly and disabled having to take the black bags out, sometimes over steps, to the front for collection and queried why wheelie bins could not be provided. It was further pointed out that the black boxes that were provided for recycling items did not have lids and, if left out over a period of time, they got ruined.

In response the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) commented that the provision of wheelie bins would have significant financial implications, however, the Cabinet Member for the Environment reported that wheelie bins would be trialled next year. She further commented that black recycling boxes were now being offered to all floor level properties within the Borough and providing boxes to other properties such as flats and maisonettes was currently underway. Arrangements could be made to provide lids for recycling boxes where requested and specific help could be provided, on request, to residents who had difficulty in placing boxes or black bags on the front of properties ready for collection.

- (d) A member of the public expressed concern in relation to a long-term dispute with the Council in relation to the need for a fence, due to health and safety reasons, alongside a public highway in Hightown, which bordered residential properties. The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) agreed to meet the resident on site with a view to resolving the situation.
- (e) A question was received querying whether the Council were contemplating dissolving the Trust governing Bernard Oakley Memorial Park, and if so, what would happen to the funds of the Trust.

The Area Liaison Officer undertook to respond in writing direct to the questioner.

- (f) A written question was submitted querying why the Iron Work in Colman Hill, particularly the one opposite the bus stop had not been replaced.

The Area Liaison Officer undertook to refer the matter to the relevant officer for a response in writing direct to the questioner.

- (g) A written question had been submitted in advance of the meeting asking for an explanation of the £100 million overspend on upgrading Dudley's National Health Service (NHS) and its consequences for the local health budget and services.

The Area Liaison Officer reported that he had received a statement from the NHS and briefly confirmed that the cost of providing the building was £100m in excess of the level of cost provided for in the contract. The builders and the Trust were currently in discussions with a view to resolving the issue and, as mediation had commenced, and due to legal implications, the Trust were currently reluctant to report any further on the matter.

The Area Liaison Officer undertook to write direct to the questioner concerned with a full response.

- (h) A further written question had been submitted in advance of the meeting in relation to the inclusion of Grazebrook Park, Dudley as part of government plans to recycle brownfield land and expressing concern over the future of Highfields Park.

The Area Liaison Officer undertook to respond in writing direct to the questioner.

- (i) Thanked Inspector Ludwig and the Police for the regular patrolling of Huntingtree Park to deter vandalism, however commented that Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) at the park would still be of greater benefit.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) advised that a response in respect of CCTV at Huntingtree Park had been sent to Councillor Turner indicating that there were cost implications, however the matter would be kept under review with a view to encompassing other methods to combat anti-social behaviour.

- (ii) Referred to the rumble strips placed on Rosemary Road and Dunstall Road and commented that they had not had the desired effect. It was further reported that, to avoid Stourbridge Road, motorists were rat running through smaller roads and further commented that the proposed junction at Belle Vale would further exacerbate the problem. Reference was also made to several near miss incidents that had occurred in the vicinity of the area in the last six months and it was requested that urgent attention be given to the traffic calming and speed management activity in the area.
- (iii) Queried why the citizens of Cradley and he, as a Member and representative of the Hayley Green and Cradley South area were not sent invitations to attend the Cradley Forum.

The Area Liaison Officer briefly explained the background and history of the Cradley Forum and offered to submit a report to the next meeting for further discussion.

- (iv) Referred to the protest and proposed fuel blockades and suggested that the Committee should send a letter to the Chancellor objecting to the amount of tax placed on fuel. It was further suggested that the Committee should avoid using their cars and not fill up with petrol as a means of expressing their support.

The Area Liaison Officer suggested that this was a matter that might more appropriately be referred to the next Council meeting.

(b) Councillor Crumpton

- (i) Made further reference to the petition previously submitted on behalf of residents of Hill Bank Road and Caslon Road requesting the removal of weeds on pavements.

- (ii) Referred to the petition in relation to Fish4dogs Ltd that objected to the application for a Pollution Prevention and Control Permit and further reported that residents had complained to employers on Saltbrook Road in relation to the smell and an improvement was still awaited.
- (iii) Commented that Cradley Forum offered a well-supported opportunity for consultation with local residents on local issues. It was further commented that attendance by the three Cradley and Foxcote Members was for historical reasons, however this could be extended to include other Members.

(c) Councillor Ms Partridge

Raised a query on behalf of a resident that related to the need for a safety crossing on Colley Lane to access the Church of England School and requested that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

(d) Councillor Taylor

- (i) Complained about the state of the roads and footpaths on Abbeyfields Estate since the relaying of the tarmac and commented that the tarmac had splattered onto the walls and also that weeds were growing through the new surface.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to investigate the matter.

- (ii) Commented that the bus lanes in Halesowen were rarely used and that buses often used traffic lanes and in light of this and the anticipated reduction of buses it was requested that the bus lane order should be revoked.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to investigate the matter in respect of revocation, however it was pointed out that investigations would include research in the context of the amount of buses, journey times, regularity and usage of bus lanes.

(e) Councillor Mrs Faulkner

- (i) Thanked Inspector Ludwig and the Police for their assistance in combating the problems with anti social behaviour.
- (ii) Requested an update in relation to the request for road safety measures on Mucklow Hill.

The Senior Engineer advised that proposals were being considered to introduce safety schemes in Mucklow Hill and he undertook to provide an update in writing direct to the Member.

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING HELD ON 22ND JUNE, 2005

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 now submitted, be noted.

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YOUTH ISSUES

A representative from the Halesowen Youth Centre thanked the Committee for approving funding to buy new equipment for the under 18's disco and, in doing so, presented the Chairman with a framed 'Thank You' Certificate.

The representative from the Halesowen Youth Centre then briefly updated the Committee on issues that had been discussed and referred to:-

- The need for the Youth Issues agenda item to be considered earlier in the meeting to enable young children attending the meeting to leave early to get home
- The need for signs to be updated and changed to Halesowen Youth Centre
- Issues such as where youths congregated after they have been dispersed by the police needing to be identified as the problem was just moved from one place to another
- The status of youths in relation to Marketing and Communications and Connexions and being informed
- The need to include youths in all aspects so that their opinions could be considered and valued and that efforts should be made by Officers to meet youths on site

Arising from the comments made the Senior Engineer undertook to arrange to meet Councillor Nicholls and youths on site. A Member further requested that an invitation should be sent to the Greenhill Youth Club with a view to representatives attending a future meeting of the Committee to explain their achievements.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the presentation be received and noted.
- (2) That the item on Youth Issues be considered as the first item of business on all future agendas.
- (3) That a letter be sent to Greenhill Youth Club extending an invitation to representatives to attend a future meeting of the Committee with a view to explaining their achievements and future plans.

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DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

Having previously declared a prejudicial interest in this matter, Councillors Body, Ms Partridge, Crumpton, K Turner and Mrs Turner withdrew from the meeting at the consideration of this item and re-joined the meeting following its consideration.

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted, together with a further late report circulated at the meeting, on requests for funding from the Delegated Capital Budget.

A Member commented in relation to the request from the Halesowen Chamber of Trade (HCT) for funding towards the cost of Christmas lights in the Town Centre and said that it would be reasonable to seek contributions from Asda and Vale Retail due to the profits they would be making from the redevelopment.

In response the Area Liaison Officer advised that the full cost of the lights, to include installation and adaptation, was approximately £17,000 and that £6,000 was the contribution sought from the Committee. It was further commented by Members that the lights were for the Town Centre and that Vale Retail were only responsible for developments of the Cornbow Centre.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the actions of the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Body, in approving a grant of £2,000 to Halesowen Youth Centre to help towards improving the quality of the facilities at the centre and £1,204.95 to the Caslon Community Partnership Group for financial support towards the purchase of a microwave, replacement flooring of the community room and two fold-away tables, be noted.
- (2) That approval be given to a grant of £5,210 to Halesowen Age Concern for the items as set out in paragraph 7 of the report now submitted.

- (3) That the request from the Caslon Primary School for funding to purchase equipment for a Day Nursery Unit be deferred pending the receipt of further information.
 - (4) That the request from the Beech Tree Miners Welfare Institute, for retrospective funding of £5,000 for the building of dedicated disabled facilities at the Institute, be refused in view of the application being a retrospective application.
 - (5) That approval be given to a grant of £6,000 to the Halesowen Chamber of Trade (HCT) for funding towards the cost of Christmas lights in the Town Centre.
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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 regarding land and property within the Committee's area.

Concern was expressed about the construction work on the town centre and the impact on shoppers, owners and neighbouring residents during the proposed development, and in particular, impact of any temporary change to the Andrews Road car park.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning be recommended to refuse the application to purchase land adjoining 1C Colley Lane, Cradley, Halesowen, in the light of the objections referred to in the report submitted.
- (2) That the application to purchase land in Maple Road, Halesowen, be deferred pending a report to a future meeting, to include pictures of the site, from the Directorate of the Urban Environment highlighting recommendations and plans for the area.
- (3) That it be noted that the application to purchase/exchange land at Birmingham, Street, Halesowen, had been withdrawn at this stage.
- (4) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to approve the application to purchase the freehold of The Cornbow Centre, Halesowen, subject to any necessary application for the closure of the parts of the public highway identified in this report being undertaken by, and, at the expense of Vale Retail Limited.

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EARLS HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on a request from the Governors of the Earls High School for a grant of £4,000 from the Trust towards the cost of funding a proposed visit to Baltimore, United States of America.

RESOLVED

That approval be given to the application for funding towards the balance of the cost of the proposed visit to Baltimore, United States of America during October 2005 from the funds of the Trust.

33

'SCHOOL KEEP CLEAR' MARKINGS TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER – (NO 3) 2005

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the third proposed Traffic Regulation Order for 'School Keep Clear' markings for the current year for locations within the area of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the provision of a Traffic Regulation Order to Prohibit Stopping on School Entrance Markings at the locations as detailed in Appendix A to the report now submitted, be supported.

34

A458 HALESOWEN TO STOURBRIDGE BUS SHOWCASE ROUTE NO 9

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the results of the public consultation and on a number of proposals along the A458 Bus Showcase route.

Members commented that, due to the petitions submitted earlier and given the immense problems that arose around Windmill Hill, further consideration should be given and not abandoned as suggested.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the findings of the public consultation be noted and the implementation of the Richmond Street Junction Improvement, as shown in Appendix A, Drawing No T20r1, attached to the report, now submitted, be supported.

- (2) That the implementation of the pedestrian refuge in Stourbridge Road, near Foxhollies Drive, as shown in Appendix B, Drawing No T10, attached to the report, now submitted, be supported.
 - (3) That approval be given to the Cabinet Member for Transportation, in consultation with the Director of the Urban Environment, to implement the above proposals and to resolve any unmet concerns,
 - (4) That, given the problems and concerns identified through the consultation exercise, and the difficulties of siting the crossing close to the actual desire line for pedestrians, the provision of a zebra crossing in Windmill Hill, as shown in Appendix C, Drawing No T11r1, attached to the report, now submitted, be abandoned, however further consideration be given with a view to identifying a possible solution to the problem in the future.
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TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted updating the Committee on the activities of the Town Centre Development Team in relation to Halesowen.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) reported that the planning application from Centro had still not been lodged and certain issues still needed to be resolved.

The Town Centre Manager advised that the application to hold a French Market in Halesowen was to be considered by Licensing Sub-Committee on Friday of this week and undertook to write to all Members of the Committee with the outcome. He also referred to an omission in the report in relation to entertainment in the town centre and said that the 60th Anniversary Celebration for the end of World War Two held on the 20th August, 2005 should have been included.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member referred to the problems experienced with the surface on Somers Square and queried whether a sealant could be used to protect the surface. The Town Centre Manager advised that he was currently in discussions with Officers with a view to getting the surface sealed, however cost was an implication.

The Regeneration Manager reported that there was no budget to hold events in the Town Centre, however consideration was being given to additional funding for this purpose in the next financial year.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report and the verbal update be noted.

36

OBJECTIONS TO DISABLED PARKING PLACES – PROGRAMME H

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted informing the Committee of the objections received to applications in the area of the Committee for disabled parking places in Programme H of the on-street disabled parking places scheme.

The applicant in respect of Nimmings Road was in attendance and responded to the comments made in the report.

RESOLVED

That a decision in respect of disabled spaces at Nimmings Road and Long Innage be deferred pending a site visit to include Officers and Members of the Ward.

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EARLS HIGH SCHOOL PLAYING FIELDS

RESOLVED

That an update report be submitted to the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 9 pm.

CHAIRMAN