

**Action Notes of the Castle and Priory, St James's and St Thomas's
Community Forum**

Wednesday 18th March, 2015 at 6.30 pm
at St. Barnabas' C of E Church, Middlepark Road, Russells Hall, Dudley.

Present:

Councillor K Finch (Chair)
Councillor A Ahmed (Vice-Chair)
Councillors M Aston, K Ahmed, S Ali, A Finch and M Roberts

Officers:

S Norman (Chief Executive), S Griffiths (Lead Officer to the Forum) (Democratic Services Manager) and M Johal (Democratic Services Officer)

Together with 15 members of the public.

28 **Apologies for Absence**

Councillors S Arshad and S Waltho.

29 **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Council's Chief Executive. Councillors and Officers introduced themselves.

30 **Listening to you – Questions and Comments from Local Residents**

Subject

Action

Referring to the procurement process it was queried whether the Council received a guarantee against goods that were supplied by contractors.

The Lead Officer gave a verbal response and this would be confirmed in writing.

Reference made to an article regarding the QEII Playing Fields and that around £55,000 funding had been earmarked for work to the football pitch to include installation of a pipe drainage system. It was queried whether some resources could also be allocated towards a children's play area at Russells Hall Park.

Councillor K Ahmed reported that funding for the pitch had been secured through Section 106 and the Land Tax Community Fund. With regard to other amenities and facilities he urged that a Friends of Park be formed as this group would then be able to apply for various other funding initiatives.

Councillor M Roberts, in conjunction with residents, undertook to pursue arrangements for the setting up of a Friends of Park Group.

Ongoing parking issues on Russells Hall Estate. Vehicles continued to park on pavements, particularly on Bushey Fields, Overfield and Middlepark Roads.

Referred for a response.

The pavement to the left hand side of the parade down to the High Street was uneven and trees were too close to each other which caused obstruction to people trying to pass, particularly those in wheelchairs.

The Chair acknowledged the problems caused by trees. Problems were also experienced in the Castle and Priory area. A response would be submitted on potential solutions.

Licensing conditions applied to the supermarket on Middlepark Road, Russells Hall for the provision of adequate car parking spaces. Concerns raised that a sign stating customer parking only was still not in place and that cars were parking on the pavement.

Referred for a response.

As reported at the previous meeting, a particular light on Oakham Road had been illuminated, however it was queried when remaining lights on that Road would be activated; there were still concerns regarding congestion and traffic at Oakham Road and it was queried whether National Express had been contacted regarding their vehicles travelling along the road when alternative routes were available.

Referred for a response.

It was considered that Dudley market had opened too early as both traders and members of the public were experiencing varying problems. The legal position was questioned as traders had to endure dust and dirt from ongoing works. Traders were also complaining about dust falling onto their produce; the stall roofline being too high and not level; the floor laid with inconsistent material and that there was nowhere for traders to hang their items. Health and safety issues were raised covering the surrounding area.

Clarification was also sought on the owners of the market.

Comment made that it was unacceptable that the men's toilets had been closed for twenty minutes to allow for cleaning.

Further request for public toilets in Dudley Town Centre to be open on Sundays, particularly during trading hours, to assist with the regeneration of the Town and to attract tourism.

Following discussion on the matter it was queried whether an application could be made for funding from the Community Forum grant to cover the cost of opening the toilets on Sundays.

Given the budgetary pressures it was queried whether the increase in Councillors' allowances was acceptable.

Councillor K Ahmed acknowledged the problems and stated that he would offer his assistance and support to the traders to alleviate the situation.

Councillor K Ahmed stated that the Council continued to own the market although traders would be given the opportunity to manage it.

Negotiations were taking place with regard to early evening opening and also to consider arrangements for the Christmas Market.

Councillor K Ahmed undertook to investigate the issue.

Councillor K Ahmed advised of the ongoing budget issues faced by the Council. He stated that that it would cost in the region of £11,000 per annum to open the toilets on Sundays and currently there was no budget to cover that cost.

Lead Officer to the Forum to advise on whether an application for funding from the Community Forum could be submitted in this regard.

The Chair responded. The increase was in line with the provisions of the Member's Allowances Scheme, which had been adopted on recommendations from an Independent Panel.

Complaint made that it was difficult to access Birmingham Street car park or Hall Street due to road restrictions. Vehicles still used the restricted road for access and the police were not prosecuting offenders.

Councillor K Ahmed acknowledged the issue but stated that restrictions were in place to create a pedestrianised area and reduce traffic congestion. Although the police were not taking consistent enforcement action the restrictions had reduced some traffic.

Further consideration would be given to the matter when redeveloping Cavendish House area.

Request for monitoring Brewery Fields Playing Fields on Corporation Road as the grounds beside the children's play area were being used as a rubbish tip. Also the playing fields behind the play area were being used for dog fouling.

The Chair requested that details of known offenders be noted with a view to prosecuting. Referred for a response.

31 **Working with you – Topics Raised by Local Councillors**

Councillor M Roberts referred to the Holly Hall Academy and reported that Mr Graham Lloyd, Principal would be retiring and that Mr Rob Hash had been appointed in his place. Pupil number intake had also recently increased.

32 **Community Forum – Love Your Local Community Funding**

The Forum considered a report of the Lead Officer.

The Lead Officer reported verbally on a late application that had been received from the Black Country Festival Group requesting funding of up to £3000 (£1000 from each Ward) towards costs to hold an entertainment day on 11th July 2015 in the Stone Street Square area to celebrate Black Country Day as part of the Black Country Festival.

A further application was received at the meeting from New Wrens Nest Tenants and Residents Association for funding of up to £1000 towards initial start up costs for holding regular lunch clubs.

Application

Recommendation

Black Country Community Radio

Withdrawn – Organisation was not successful in obtaining licence from Ofcom and therefore total funding of £3000 to be allocated back to the budget for all 3 Wards (£1000 each)

Dudley Al-Karim	Deferred due to insufficient funds available in St Thomas's Ward and pending further information.
Friends and Residents of Buffery Park	Approve a contribution of £2500 (£2000 to be allocated from St Thomas's Ward and £250 from each of the St James's and Castle and Priory Wards)
Black Country Festival Group	Approve a contribution of £2500 to be spent towards costs for holding an entertainment day (£1500 to be allocated from St James's and £500 from each of the St Thomas's and Castle and Priory Wards)
Arc-Aid	Approve request for the grant of £1,500 approved at the last meeting to be spent on grills to secure outside windows and replacement of a door instead of previous items requested. (NB: The allocation was from the High Street Innovation Fund shared equally between the 3 Wards).
New Wrens Nest Tenants and Residents Association	That the application be deferred. Lead Officer to deal with as a matter of urgency in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Ward Councillors.

A submission for initial start up costs towards the Crown Charity Based Coffee House, Dudley was also received at the meeting. It was suggested that the relevant application form be completed to enable consideration being given at a future meeting of the Forum.

33 **Next Meeting**

It was reported that meetings of the Community Forum would be held on the following dates subject to Council approval on 21st May, 2015:-

Wednesday 17th June, 2015 (venue to be confirmed)
Thursday 10th September, 2015 (venue to be confirmed)
Wednesday 4th November, 2015 (venue to be confirmed)
Wednesday 27th January, 2016 (venue to be confirmed)
Wednesday 16th March, 2016 (venue to be confirmed)

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The meeting ended at 7.45 pm