

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE

Monday 18th January 2010 at 7.00 p.m.
at Redhill School, Junction Road, Stourbridge

PRESENT:-

Councillor C Wilson (Chairman)

Councillors Adams, Attwood, Banks, Barlow, Mrs Cowell, Hanif, Jones, Knowles, Kettle, Lowe, Mrs Rogers and Mrs Walker; and Mr H Mursaleen

Officers:

The Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (as Area Liaison Officer); Assistant Director Economic Regeneration and Transportation, Group Engineer - Traffic and Road Safety, (all of the Directorate of the Urban Environment), Assistant Director – Libraries, Archives and Adult Learning; Area Community Renewal Officer; Area Housing Manager – Stourbridge (All of the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services); the Area Team Leader, Area Youth Worker; Early Years Youth and Education Services (Directorate of Children Services); Mr T Holder – Solicitor and Mrs J Rees (both of the Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources)

In attendance

Inspector B Quiney and Acting Sergeant A Gallagher (West Midlands Police), Mr N Bucktin (Dudley Primary Care Trust), Mr C Stone (Deputy Lieutenant of the West Midlands County) together with approximately 20 Members of the public.

48 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs Martin; Mr G Downing and Ms P Shepherd.

49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Members declared a personal or prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of any items to be discussed.

50 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16th November, 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the inclusion of Councillor A Turner's name in the list of attendees.

51 YOUTH MATTERS

Mr H Mursaleen, the co-opted member, gave an oral presentation on issues affecting young people including that:-

The Area Youth Forum's next meeting was scheduled to take place on 10th February, 2010, at which time new officers would be elected.

The United Kingdom Youth Parliamentary elections were scheduled to take place during the last week in January and first week in February.

RESOLVED

That the oral report on youth matters be noted.

52 THE QUEEN'S AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICES

Mr C Stone, Deputy Lieutenant for West Midlands County, gave an oral presentation on the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, advising that the Award was established by the Queen in celebration of her golden jubilee in 2002. Mr Stone advised that the Awards were open to voluntary groups in the United Kingdom and equivalent in status to the MBE. The Award recognised groups or individuals who gave their time freely for the benefit of others. Groups whose sole purpose was to fund raise were not eligible for the Award.

Mr Stone indicated that leaflets were available at the meeting for those interested who wished to know more about the Award.

As indicated on the available leaflet further information and details of how to nominate groups of individuals could be obtained by either visiting www.queensawardvoluntary.gov.uk or e-mailing queensaward@consol.co.uk.

In response to a query from a Member of the Committee as to the closing date for application forms, Mr Stone advised that the Award was an annual Award and that although the date for receipt of nomination forms for the year ended 31st December 2009 had passed, the closing date for receipt of applications for the year ending 31st December 2010 was September, after which time applications would be sent to the Cabinet Office for consideration.

RESOLVED

That Mr Stone be thanked for his oral presentation, the content of which was noted.

53 PUBLIC FORUM

Before reading questions from the public the Area Liaison Officer advised that any questions which could not be answered on the evening would be investigated and a written response would be sent to the questioner as soon as possible.

Questions and answers were then given as follows:-

1. A member of the public questioned what problems had led to the refuse and recycling collections in his area not being covered during the recent inclement weather.

The Assistant Director, Regeneration and Transportation undertook to investigate and have a written response sent to the questioner.

The Area Liaison Officer and Members of the Committee stated that compared to neighbouring Local Authorities, Dudley had managed to undertake the majority of collections, although it was acknowledged that some collections had been late due to the extremely inclement weather. It was also acknowledged that on one particular day the roads had been considered unsafe to send out recycle vans and therefore collections had not taken place.

2. A member of the public questioned how to find out the current situation regarding equal pay claims for employees in Children's Services.

A Member of the Committee stated that the claims were progressing and that some letters had already been posted. Any further queries should be directed to the Human Resources Section of the Directorate of Children's Services.

3. A member of the public questioned the rate of interest and terms being earned on the COIF fixed interest and COIF equity based investments held by the Ernest Stevens Trust.
4. The same member of the public questioned when the rent on Jordan Field had been reviewed last.

Both questions were referred to the Interim Director of Finance for a written response to be sent to the questioner.

AREA POLICE AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (PACT) ISSUES

Inspector B Quiney from the West Midlands Police reported orally on Police issues in the Stourbridge Area including that:-

The levels of reported crime over the festive period for Sector J2 had decreased.

Initiatives were being investigated to address anti social behaviour 'repeat callers' to ensure that repeat offences did not occur.

The Stay Safe initiative was working extremely well in taking suspected "at risk" children and young people to the Safe Centre in Lye and arranging for their parents to collect them from the Centre.

A recent application by the Bell, Stourbridge, for an extension to their licensing hours, had been refused by a recent Licensing Committee at the Council House, which the Police considered would help them to ensure that the area in Stourbridge could be cleared of drinkers by 03.00 hours.

In referring to the Police restructuring, effective from 6th April 2010, Inspector Quiney advised that, as he would be retiring from the Police Force in March, his replacement within the new structure would be Inspector Ed Boyle, with Acting Sergeant Gallagher remaining in situ. Under the new structure, the new Chief Superintendent would be Keith Baldwin.

In response to a question from a Member of the Committee regarding whether the Police neighbourhood areas would continue to be co terminus with Council Ward boundaries, should the Boundaries Commission amend Council Boundaries in the future, Inspector Quiney answered that he was unable to comment on future arrangements regarding boundaries, as this would be a matter for his superiors, should the changes come into effect.

Members of the Committee commented that it would be good to see continuity within the public sector.

In response to comments from a member of the public as to the segregation of the crime figures for Stourbridge's night time economy and other crime in the area, Inspector Quiney advised that the figures were in fact separated and that although additional police were brought in to combat anti social behaviour, the surrounding areas of Stourbridge did not suffer as a result of additional policing being brought in to address issues on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. The Police were aware of nuisance caused by young people skating along the streets following skating sessions at the Crystal Leisure Centre. The Police were working with Crystal Leisure Centre staff to address this issue. The Police would also use their powers under a Dispersal Order which would come into force at the end of January, to disperse large groups of youths congregating around the Crystal Leisure Centre area.

In response to comments regarding litter in the doorway of Pargeters shop front in the early hours of the morning and the alleged lack of cleaning at the weekend, a Member of the Committee advised that the Environmental Management staff regularly cleaned up the Stourbridge area in the early hours of the morning, and particularly at weekends.

A member of the public asked whether there was a by-law prohibiting cycling on the pavement, as he was concerned that some Police Officers were cycling on the pavements around the Stourbridge Ring Road. In response, the Legal Advisor advised that this was a matter for individual Local Authorities, but he was not aware of such a by-law in Dudley. Inspector Quiney undertook to speak to the officers concerned regarding this matter.

The Chairman and Members of the Committee thanked Inspector Quiney for his work and wished him well for his future.

RESOLVED

That Inspector Quiney be thanked for his oral presentation, the content of which was noted.

55 CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on an application for funding from the Committee's Capital Allocation budget from Green Street Gardens Tenants and Residents' Association for £429 for the purchase of a laptop and printer, to enable elected members of the Association, to carry out administrative duties necessary to run the Tenants and Residents' Association.

RESOLVED

That the Application by the Green Street Garden Tenants and Residents' Association for £429 for the purchase of a laptop and printer be approved.

56 COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the progress made by the Working Group in developing the Stourbridge Area Committee Community Renewal Plan.

In presenting the report the Community Renewal Officer advised of the meeting held by the Working Group on 3rd December 2009 and work undertaken, including that:-

The newsletter for Enville Street and Stepping Stones had now been circulated.

The Healthy Towns Initiative was progressing well.

The Butterfly Centre had completed its public art project.

The regeneration of Lye High Street was progressing well. as was work with the Asian community in Lye and surrounding area. Gym classes were being extended at Lye Community Centre, due to their popularity.

The Job Club was working to full capacity.

There had been a delay in establishing a Caste and Crystal Credit Union Volunteer point at Lye, due to the expiry of the lease of the premises and alternative premises were being sought.

The Area Community Renewal Officer advised that funding was required to enable CCTV Camera provision for Lye High Street. The Humarra Project also required funding to enable it to expand.

A Member of the Committee requested that the Area Community Renewal Officer speak with him after the meeting to discuss further the issues regarding the Castle and Crystal Credit Union.

A Member of the Committee expressed concerns that leaflets were not available to promote Amblecote.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the content of the report submitted be noted.
- (2) That the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services be advised of the support of the Committee for the continuation of a Community Renewal Team in community localities.

A report of the Interim Director of Finance was submitted on the accounts of the individual Trusts comprising the Ernest Stevens Bequest for the year ended 31st March 2009 as indicated in the report submitted.

The Chairman commented that it was encouraging to see that the interest earned on the investments was not much below previous years.

A Member of the Committee requested that the unclaimed grant referred to in the report be investigated to clarify whether the applicant intended to claim the grant.

Members of the Committee advised that they would be happy to sign the audited accounts, subject to the issues raised in the public forum, regarding the accounts, being resolved.

RESOLVED

1. That the audited final accounts of the Ernest Stevens Trust for the year ended 31st March 2009, as attached to the report submitted, be approved.
2. That the Chairman be authorised to sign the accounts and annual returns for the year ended 31st March 2009, on behalf of this Committee, subject to the issues raised in the Public Forum being clarified.

58

DUDLEY BOROUGH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Dudley Borough Access Forum and on the invitation of applications from members of the public to join the Forum.

A Member of the Committee commented on a number of spelling and grammatical errors contained within the report submitted and requested that more care be taken in future with the reports.

Some Members commented that previously membership of the Forum did not represent all areas of the Borough and that it was important to get an even balance of membership across the whole of the Borough.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the content of the report on the Dudley Borough Access Forum be noted.
- (2) That report authors be requested to take more care before submitting reports to the Committee.
- (3) That members of the public be encouraged to apply for Membership of the Local Access Forum before the 14th February 2010.

59

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

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

RESOLVED

That the content of the report submitted be noted.

60 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of future meetings of all Select Committees held at the Council House, Dudley, be noted.

61 DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED

That the date and venue of the next meeting of the Committee be noted as follows:-

Wednesday 8th March 2010 at 7.00 p.m. at Hob Green Primary School, Hob Green Road, Stourbridge, West Midlands.

The meeting ended at 8.25pm

CHAIRMAN