

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 9th March, 2011 at 6.30 p.m.
At Lutley Community Centre, Brookwillow Road, Halesowen

PRESENT

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

Officers

Area Liaison Officer (Treasurer), Chief Executive, Assistant Director Economic Regeneration (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Assistant Director of Housing Strategy and Private Sector (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Head of Traffic and Transportation, (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Assistant Director, Quality and Partnership, Youth Area Team Leader (Directorate of Children's Services), Area Community Renewal Officer (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Interim Assistant Director Law and Governance and Mrs M Johal – (Directorate of Corporate Resources).

Also in Attendance

Sergeant Martin Hall – West Midlands Police
Mr Mark Lawton – West Midlands Fire Service
Ms Julie Winpenny – West Midlands Fire Service

Ms Natalie Sampson and Ms R Frah– Health Trainer Service (For Agenda Item No 11)

There were approximately 20 members of the public in attendance.

77

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Dunn and Mrs Faulkner.

78 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of personal interests, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made by the following Members in respect of the matters indicated:

Councillor K Turner declared personal interests in respect of Agenda Item No 6 (Emergency Services Issues) in view of him being a Member of the West Midlands Fire Authority and Agenda Item No 14 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of him being the Director of Age Concern Stourbridge and Halesowen and the Vice-Chair of Age Concern Halesowen.

Councillor Burston declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 13 (Halesowen Town Centre Development) with regard to reference made to bus lanes as he was employed by Centro.

79 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13th January, 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed.

80 PETITIONS

It was reported that no petitions had been received since the last meeting. No petitions were presented at this meeting.

81 YOUTH SERVICE AREA PLAN

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

Members commended the Youth Service on the excellent work undertaken by them and a Member expressed concern that the service would be adversely affected following the budgetary cuts.

RESOLVED

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

82

EMERGENCY SERVICES ISSUES

Mr Mark Lawton, West Midlands Fire Service briefly explained about work that had been undertaken by the Fire Service and stated that there had been an increase in arson and that incidents had occurred mainly in the Belle Vale area. Remedial action was being taken and letterbox protectors were being placed in some properties and safety advice had been offered to residents.

RESOLVED

That the information given in the verbal update on emergency services issues be noted.

83

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.

Sergeant Hall reported on incidents that had occurred, and in doing so, reported that priority was being given to addressing anti-social behaviour, parking, speeding and mobile phone incidents. An initiative was also being undertaken in the Shell Corner area where there were high visibility patrols. Sergeant Hall further reported that two arrests had been made relating to burglaries and it was confirmed that Halesowen had the lowest crime rate in the Borough.

Sergeant Hall reported that Sergeant Jones had now retired and thanked him for the work that he had undertaken.

Members commended the police on the work undertaken by them and, in particular, commented that communication and response times had improved.

RESOLVED

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

84

PUBLIC FORUM

- (1) A question was asked about the method of pedestrian crossing justification used by the Local Authority. It was stated that Dudley had changed their procedure for justifying pedestrian crossings and that they were now using the Modified PV Square method which was the same system used by Warwickshire. There were varying multiplying factors used in assessing and concerns were expressed that the system did not take into account the elderly, disabled and people with pushchairs and that it was being assumed that people crossed the road in forty seconds.

In responding the Head of Traffic and Transportation reported that discussions had been held and a lengthy meeting had been held with the questioner. Following the discussions it had been agreed that further surveys would be undertaken and the Head of Traffic and Transportation undertook to circulate information relating to the issue to Members of the Committee, and to submit a report on the results of the findings of the survey to the next meeting of the Committee.

A Member thanked Officers concerned for a constructive meeting that had taken place relating to the crossings on the A456 and for taking the matter forward.

- (2) Reference was made to the increase in Council rents and it was stated that this income generated £5.2 million of which Dudley retained £1.4 million and it was commented that this was not acceptable given the current massive cuts being made by the Council.

In responding the Area Liaison Officer stated that the issue related to negative housing subsidy and that the Local Authority were required, by law, to account for council housing separately outside of the General Fund. Under this arrangement the Council is required to set rents in line with Government guidance and the Government makes an assumption as to how much the Local Authority needs to spend on management and maintenance of council homes. This leads to the Council paying negative subsidy into a National Pool. This system has been in place during successive Governments. However, it was reported that this system was expected to come to an end in April 2012 and be replaced by another system.

85

WARD ISSUES

There were no issues raised under this item.

86

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE HELD ON 13TH JANUARY 2011

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.

87

PRESENTATION ON HEALTH TRAINER SERVICE

Ms Natalie Sampson gave a presentation on the free service provided by the National Health Service.

The aims of the service were to reduce inequalities in health throughout the Borough, reduce the effect of long-term illness, help people become more healthy and to support people to achieve their goals. The service provided free and confidential motivation and support to people in Dudley who wished to make healthy changes to their lifestyle by eating more healthily, reducing their alcohol intake, giving up smoking and increasing their physical activity.

In concluding the presentation Ms Sampson informed the meeting that there were leaflets and referral forms available for those that were interested.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the presentation on the Health Trainer Service, be noted.

88

PROPOSED WARD NAME CHANGES

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on a proposal to change the ward names for the Lye and Wollescote and Cradley and Foxcote Wards.

RESOLVED

That the proposed ward name changes as set out in the report submitted, be supported.

89

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.

In presenting the report the Assistant Director Economic Regeneration referred to the Area Action Plan and indicated that a report on the preferred options would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee and that further consultation would take place towards the end of the year with a view to adoption in 2012.

In responding to a query the Head of Traffic and Transportation undertook to ascertain the position regarding the removal of the bus lanes following completion of the town centre development.

RESOLVED

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

90

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

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

In presenting the report the Area Liaison Officer indicated that the application made by Bethel Chapel for ICT equipment had been completed since the submission of the report.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member referred to the unspent allocations and requested that future reports should contain detailed information including the current position of the organisations to allow Members to make an informed decision. It was also considered that organisations should be encouraged to attend meetings of the Committee to present information on the work that they did.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the action taken by the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Opposition Spokesperson, in approving a grant of £390 to Bethel Chapel for the purchase ICT equipment, be noted.
- (2) That the action taken by the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Opposition Spokesperson, in approving a grant of £590 to Howley Grange Scout Group for the purchase of Market Stall style shelters, be noted.

- (3) That approval be given to a grant of £1350 only to the Church of God (Long Lane) towards structural maintenance of the building.
- (4) That a grant of £5000 requested by Good Howley Gardeners towards clearance of land behind their properties and fencing off be deferred pending further information so as to ascertain the position with regard to allotments being offered by the Council.
- (5) That a grant of £5000 requested by the Women's Awareness Association towards the provision of ICT equipment, sewing equipment, toys and electronic dictionaries, be refused and that the Association be given the opportunity to make a presentation to the Committee on the work that they do should they wish to make another application.
- (6) That approval be given to a grant of £3000 only being made to Greenhill Youth Centre towards ICT equipment for community use, replacement of recreational equipment, seating and materials for decoration.
- (7) That approval be given to the unspent allocations amounting to £472, as identified in Appendix 2 of the report submitted, being brought back to the central capital pot for reallocation to other groups.

91

DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that dates of future meetings would be determined at Annual Council, on 19th May, 2011.

92

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 8.10 pm.