

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 22nd March, 2006, at 6.30 p.m.
at Olive Hill Primary School, Springfield Road, Halesowen

PRESENT

Councillor Jackson (Chairman)
Councillor Burston (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Body, Crumpton, Mrs Dunn, Mrs Faulkner, Ms Partridge, Mrs Shakespeare, Taylor, Mrs Turner, K Turner and J Woodall

Officers

Area Liaison Officer, Head of Policy (Executive and Support), Principal Engineer (Transportation Policy), Head of Design and Projects, Head of Public Protection, Senior Engineer, Town Centre Manager (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Priority Neighbourhood Manager (Chief Executive's), Senior Solicitor (Gary Collins) and Mrs M Johal (Directorate of Law and Property)

Approximately 50 members of the public were in attendance.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Boys, James and Ms Nicholls.

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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 the Chairman of the Cradley Community Centre.

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 Cradley Community Centre.

Councillor Burston declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 14 (Halesowen Town Centre – Transport and Regeneration Issues) in view of him being employed by Centro.

Councillor Mrs Shakespeare declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 11 (G Clancey Limited and Fish 4 Dogs) in view of her being the Cabinet Member for the Environment.

Councillor K Turner declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 9 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of him being a regular attendee and registered on the church electoral roll of St Margaret's Church, Hasbury, and also a personal interest in view of being an associate of the applicant who had submitted the application for 2nd Cradley (St Peters) Scouts.

Councillor Mrs Turner declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 9 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of her being a regular attendee and registered on the church electoral roll of St Margaret's Church, Hasbury.

Councillor Taylor declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 15 (The Leasowes Restoration) in view of him being a Member of Friends of Leasowes Park.

Councillor J Woodall declared personal interests in respect of Agenda Item No 9 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of being a member of Halesowen Group of Church of England Churches and in Agenda Item No 15 (The Leasowes Restoration) in view of him being a Member of Friends of Leasowes Park.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25th January, 2006, be approved as a correct record and signed subject to an amendment to Minute No 69(a), second paragraph by the inclusion of the word "Some" at the beginning of that paragraph.

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PETITIONS

The following petitions were submitted and referred to the officers shown for attention:

- (a) On behalf of Councillor Ms Nicholls in respect of residents objecting to the Halesowen College Planning Application No P06/171 in relation to the proposed three-storey building, which would not be in keeping with the College layout, would overlook nearby properties and increase traffic congestion. The petition had been referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration.

- (b) From residents of Halesowen protesting at the height and proximity of the new James Grove factory that had moved closer to the houses in Beach Drive and Beach Street, Halesowen. The petition had been referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration.
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PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A member of the public queried why the draft statement of community involvement that had been produced by the Council had not been submitted to Area Committees for consultation.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) advised that the statement had not been submitted to Area Committees due to the tight timescales and process. However, he briefly explained the new planning system and reported that two workshops had previously been held for members of the public. From 24th March, 2006, a six-week public consultation process was due to commence and a full report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

- (b) The position on the development of the A456 roundabout at Grange Hill/Grange Road was queried. The Highways Agency had agreed to the development of the scheme but there were safety issues with the proposals. Also, funding had not been applied for, as yet, by the Highways Agency and it was unlikely that the scheme would commence before the road was detrunked. It was further queried that if funding was secured by the Highways Agency and the road then became the responsibility of the Council, would the money that had been approved, be transferred to the Council.

The Senior Engineer confirmed that Council Officers had made similar representations to the Highway Agency. The Principal Engineer (Transportation Policy) further reported that they were aware of the proposals being made by the Highways Agency and efforts were being made to monitor the situation closely.

Members agreed with the comments made and acknowledged that the Council should not take responsibility for the road until appropriate proposals had been confirmed.

- (c) Reference was made to the petition that had previously been submitted in relation to the James Grove Development. A number of residents complained about the height and proximity of the factory to residential properties and queried the planning decision to approve the site. It was also mentioned that residents had been informed of the original planning application P03/2182, however they had not been informed of the revised application P05/0155.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) advised that records were available relating to correspondence that had been sent in relation to the revised planning application. He further confirmed that the planning process had been duly followed and that the Development Control Committee had made the decision. However, he undertook to liaise with the Senior Enforcement Officer with a view to cross checking planning conditions to ascertain whether there was any breach.

- (d) A question was asked regarding an update on the safety measures and proposals for Mucklow Hill.

The Senior Engineer confirmed that the speed limit was being reduced from 40 mph to 30 mph, carriageway markings were being changed from double to single and that a pedestrian crossing would be installed. The proposals had yet to be audited for safety purposes and it was anticipated that they would be introduced in the next financial year on a phased scheme basis.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment also gave an assurance that efforts would be made to pursue the proposals and that residents would be kept informed.

- (e) A written question was received in relation to the volume of traffic using Fatherless Barn estate as a rat run to avoid the lights in Colley Gate. It was queried whether consideration could be given to Beecher Road East being made no entry off Stourbridge Road combined with a no right turn out of Beecher Road East on to the Stourbridge Road.

A Member requested that owing to pollution problems and the need to combat traffic congestion, consideration should be given to analysing and submitting a report on the whole area rather than approaching it in a piecemeal fashion. It was further suggested that due to the proximity of some areas that bordered Sandwell, they should also be involved in discussions. Another member advocated taking a narrow approach and concentrating on areas with pollution and agreed that a report should be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Senior Engineer undertook to investigate the issue with a view to reporting back to a future meeting. He further commented that Sandwell were currently undertaking extensive work around Cradley Heath and that the question of a partnership should be defined to a more appropriate time.

- (f) A resident queried the Green Care budget figures in relation to Leasowes Park and sought clarification on where and what it had been spent on. A detailed breakdown was requested.

The Head of Design and Projects undertook to provide the questioner with a breakdown of the figures.

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WARD ISSUES

(a) Councillor Mrs Faulkner

Updated the Committee on the outcome of a public meeting held in respect of a Multi Use Game Area (MUGA) on Hurst Green Park. A consultation exercise had been undertaken and 86.3% of forms that had been returned had indicated support for a MUGA. It was further reported that 75 people had indicated their interest in participating in and forming a Hurst Green Friends of the Park and a meeting would be held in due course.

(b) Councillor K Turner

(i) Commented on the ongoing reduction of bus services and particularly referred to Hasbury being disadvantaged as there were no services on weekends and evenings to Halesowen. There were now discussions to stop bus service No 241, which would further impact on the day service. To avoid people reverting back to using their cars and adding to traffic congestion, he requested that a letter be sent to the relevant body asking for the continuation of the 241 bus service.

Members agreed with the comments made and indicated that the gradual decrease in bus services was unsatisfactory.

(ii) Referred to another road traffic accident that had recently occurred outside the school on Huntingtree Road and requested that a local safety scheme be considered before a fatality occurred.

(c) Councillor Crumpton

(i) Thanked Barnardos and the Youth Service for commencing Future Skills in Cradley Heath, which had resulted in reduced problems with children in the area.

(ii) Referred to an area in Wollescote at the end of Birchfield Crescent where there was a coppice that needed tidying up. Cider bottles had been found there and it was requested that the police should investigate how the youths, between 10 and 13, were acquiring alcohol. Youths were subject to dispersal orders and it was requested that youth provision should be provided in the area.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment suggested that officers be requested to investigate and enforce action against businesses selling alcohol to under aged children.

- (iii) Mention was made of discussions currently taking place with Councillors in relation to Lye and Wollescote Cemetery being transferred to a rock venue. It was requested that a report be submitted to the Committee with a view to consultation taking place with affected residents.

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING HELD ON 25th JANUARY 2006

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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DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

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

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

RESOLVED

- (1) That approval be given to a grant of up to £5,000 to St Margaret's Church, Hasbury, towards the provision of a disabled toilet, disabled access and improved community facilities in the Church, subject to the receipt of further written details of the proposed community use and confirmation that the scheme could be fully funded.
- (2) That approval be given to a grant of £5,000 to the 2nd Cradley (St Peters) Scouts, towards the renovation of the interior of the building, including provision of disabled toilets and cooking facilities.
- (3) That approval be given for up to £5000 being earmarked to the Halesowen Youth Centre, for funding the provision of drama and dance facilities at the Centre and that the Area Liaison Officer be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Body, to approve a grant when further details were received.

- (4) That the action of the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Body, in approving a grant of £300 to the Cradley Community Centre, for the provision of a preparation table in the kitchen area at the Centre, be noted.
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SHELL CORNER PARTNERSHIP

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the development of Shell Corner Partnership.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report now submitted be noted and that a further update report be submitted to the Committee in six months time.

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G CLANCEY LIMITED AND FISH 4 DOGS, SALTBROOK INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, CRADLEY

(Having previously declared a prejudicial interest in this matter, Councillor Mrs Shakespeare withdrew from the meeting at the consideration of this item and re-joined the meeting following its consideration).

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the queries raised by a member of the public at the last meeting of the Committee.

In response to a query concerning the Council's responsibilities in relation to Clancey's, the Head of Public Protection commented that if the Environment Agency refused the permit, the Agency would be responsible for enforcement action should the process continue to operate without a permit. If the factory ceased to operate the sand attrition plant then responsibility would revert back to the Council and an application would have to be made direct to the Council. However, he pointed out that legal advice was being sought to clarify the position.

During the ensuing discussion a Member referred to the recommendation in the report and expressed concern that there would be significant cost implications if action was not taken. There was an obligation to protect the people living in the Borough and residents had a right to expect the Council to take appropriate action.

A Member circulated correspondence and documents in relation to Fish 4 Dogs, including an appeal letter and expressed concern that the problem with the factory opening their front doors and letting the smell out had not been addressed.

A member of the public also expressed concerns and, in doing so, commented that attempts should be made to prevent odour rather than to reduce it. He further pointed out that, in relation to Clanceys, although several complaints had been made over the past six years, the company had been prosecuted only once for a breach of conditions.

The Head of Public Protection advised that he had not previously had sight of some of the documents now circulated in relation to Fish 4 Dogs and undertook to investigate the matter. He acknowledged the concerns expressed and assured members of the public and the Committee that if compliance requirements were still not being met, following the installation of equipment, as described in the report, a recommendation to refuse the issue of a permit to Fish 4 Dogs may be appropriate.

During further discussions, it was agreed that whilst the recommendations in the report should be supported, the Committee should also express concerns about the effects on local residents and ask relevant Members and officers to use whatever means were available to the Council to ensure that consideration for the permit application by Clancey's to the Environment Agency is expedited as quickly as possible. It was agreed that a draft resolution be circulated to all Members for consideration.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Committee expresses concern about the effects of the continuing operation of G. Clancey Ltd and Fish 4 Dogs on local residents.
- (2) That the Committee accepts that the installation operated by G Clancey Ltd is an A1 installation and is thereby regulated by the Environment Agency and asks appropriate Members and officers to use whatever means are available to the Council to ensure that consideration of the permit application by Clancey's to the Environment Agency is expedited as quickly as possible.
- (3) That the ongoing efforts being made by the Council in determining the permit application by Fish 4 Dogs in order that a decision on whether to accept or refuse the permit application could be made in as short a time period as was reasonably practicable, be supported.

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HIGHWAYS MINOR WORKS CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2006/2007

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the proposed programmes of work for Local Safety Schemes, Pedestrian Crossings and Safer Routes to School within the Halesowen Area for the 2006/2007 financial year.

Arising from the presentation of the report, a Member suggested that the Cabinet Member for Transportation should be recommended to consider applying a 20 mph zone outside all schools in the Borough.

RESOLVED

That support be given to the proposed Local Safety Schemes, Pedestrian Crossing and Safer Routes to School initiatives as outlined in Appendices A, B and C respectively of the report submitted and referred to the Cabinet Member for Transportation for approval.

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TOWN CENTRES MANAGEMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the service provided by the Town Centre Management Service in relation to Halesowen Town Centre.

The Town Centre Manager reported that the Somers Square refurbishment had been delayed due to inclement weather however, the work had commenced on 21st March, 2006.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report now submitted, be noted.
- (2) That further reports be submitted to future meetings of the Committee on the activities of the Town Centre Development Service.

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HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE – TRANSPORT AND REGENERATION ISSUES

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the measures being taken to address concerns relating to traffic and regeneration issues in Halesowen Town Centre.

In the context of the reference made to the Cradley Forum in the section of the report about public consultation, a Member referred to a recent meeting of the Cradley Forum and expressed concern about the basis of the Forum, the conduct of the last meeting and the cost implications, including officer support in servicing the meeting. He proposed that the Area Committee should withdraw all Council support for the Forum and this was seconded.

The Chairman advised that the general advice was that there would be no support for the creation of further consultation forums and commented that should Members choose to provide such consultation within their own Wards, they could do so but from their own resources. However, he believed the issue of withdrawing support for the Forum was a matter for the Leader of the Council, but also felt that consideration should be given to the possibility of implementing an alternative consultation mechanism.

A Member referred to a previous meeting of the Committee where support had been given to the Cradley Forum continuing in its current form and that Halesowen Forum should be reinstated.

There was general support for the issues related to the Town Centre set out in the report and it was:-

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report now submitted, be noted and supported.
- (2) That the position of the former Safeway supermarket, as outlined in the report, be noted.
- (3) That Officers be requested to make arrangements for a consultation meeting on developments in the Town Centre.
- (4) That the question of withdrawing continued support for Cradley Forum, as currently operated, be referred to the Leader of the Council and that consideration be given to an alternative consultation mechanism.

THE LEASOWES RESTORATION

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the progress of the historic landscape at Leasowes Park.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report now submitted be noted and that further reports on the progress of the restoration be submitted to the Committee in due course.

The meeting ended at 9 pm.

CHAIRMAN