

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 14th November, 2007, at 6.30 p.m.
at Olive Hill Primary School, Springfield Road, Halesowen

PRESENT

Councillor Jackson (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Faulkner (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Body, Crumpton, Mrs Dunn, Hill, James, Ms Nicholls, Ms Partridge, Mrs Shakespeare, Taylor, K Turner, Mrs Turner and Woodall.

Officers

Area Liaison Officer, Assistant Director of Housing (Strategy and Private Sector), Head of Policy (Executive and Support), Group Engineer (Transportation), Principal Solicitor (Mr M Farooq), Tourism Development Officer, Mrs M Johal and Mr P Furidze (Directorate of Law and Property)

Also in Attendance

Joe Millward – Member of the Youth Parliament
Inspector Hobson – West Midlands Police
Sergeant M Norgrave – West Midlands Police

Approximately 80 members of the public were in attendance.

39

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Burston.

40

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made by the following Members in respect of the matters indicated:

- (a) Councillor Body – Agenda item 13(b) – Land Issues – Disposal of Surplus Land – Cradley High School – A personal interest in view of him being the Chair of Homer Hill Friends of the Park.
- (b) Councillor Mrs Faulkner – Agenda item 11 – Responses to Questions Raised at the Halesowen Area Committee Held on 6th September 2007 – A personal interest regarding any reference to Whittingham Road in view of her being a resident in the area.
- (c) Councillor Hill – Agenda item 12(a) – Earls High School Foundation Application for Grants – A personal interest in view

of him being a Governor at Earls High School.

- (d) Councillor James – Agenda item 12(a) – Earls High School Foundation Application for Grants – A personal interest in view of him being a Governor at Earls High School.
- (e) Councillor Mrs Turner – Agenda items 13(b) and (c) – Land Issues – Disposal of Surplus Land Cradley High School and Holt Farm Primary School – A prejudicial interest in view of her being a Member of the Development Control Committee.
- (f) Councillor Mrs Turner – A prejudicial interest regarding any reference to the Cradley Speedway in view of her being a Member of the Development Control Committee.

41

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6th September, 2007, be approved as a correct record and signed.

42

PETITION

A petition was submitted by Councillor Ms Partridge on behalf of residents of Cradley requesting support for a local secondary school and a range of educational and additional supporting facilities in Cradley as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme. The petition was received and referred to the Director of Children's Services for attention.

43

YOUTH ISSUES AND PRESENTATION BY JOE MILLWARD –
MEMBER OF THE YOUTH PARLIAMENT

At the suggestion of the Area Liaison Officer it was agreed that Agenda Item No 5 (Youth Issues) and Agenda Item No 6 (Presentation by Joe Millward) be considered together due to their similarity.

Joe Millward, Member of the Youth Parliament (MYP) then made a presentation entitled 'Youth Parliament – Making our Mark', regarding work undertaken by Members of the Youth Parliament, and in doing so, reported that he also served as a co-opted Member on the North Dudley Area Committee. The United Kingdom (UK) Youth Parliament was a charitable organisation, which had 400 MYPs. Two MYPs and two Deputies represented Dudley. He pointed out that as the representatives came from the Central and North Dudley areas there were no representatives from the Halesowen area.

Arising from the presentation the Vice-Chairman reported that the Area Youth Manager was aware that young people of Halesowen had not shown interest in becoming representatives and she reported that he was pursuing the matter with a view to encouraging young people to participate. In response to a query as to how the Committee could offer their help and support in encouraging young people to become representatives for the Halesowen area it was reported that Joe Millward would be willing to make further presentations at schools within the Halesowen area to inform pupils about the service and the need to have representatives from the area. A Member suggested that publicity events and road shows that were organised by the Youth Parliament should also be held in the Halesowen area with a view to attracting young people in the area to attend. The Area Youth Manager commented that he had recently been appointed and was in the process of engaging a core group of young people from the area and he urged that if anyone was interested that they should contact him directly.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the presentation, 'Youth Parliament – Making our Mark', regarding work undertaken by Members of the Youth Parliament and related youth issues, be noted.

44

POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Hobson was in attendance and as requested at the previous meeting circulated a paper advertising future Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings that were due to be held in the area. In referring to the matter about speeding traffic on Mucklow Hill, he indicated that enforcement had been undertaken on three occasions and in that time twenty-four tickets had been issued. He reported that when enforcement of this type was undertaken the police had a policy whereby they had to ascertain whether the area was a 'hot spot' area. However, following analysis of comparable data from other areas it had been concluded that Mucklow Hill could not be classed as a 'hot spot' but he assured Members that further enforcement would be taken before Christmas.

Inspector Hobson requested, and the Committee subsequently agreed, that any questions at future meetings to him should be submitted in writing at least a week before the meeting to enable him to have sufficient time to provide an appropriate answer.

A Member complained about scramblers and unlicensed motorbikes in the Wollaston area and also indicated that they were taking the machines up and down the steps on Brook Crescent and causing a nuisance to the elderly residents. Another Member also complained about motorbikes at Homer Hill Park and queried whether extra policing could be allocated to that area. Complaints were also made about scramblers riding around the banks of the park and consequently disturbing football matches. Inspector Hobson undertook to investigate the matter and respond to the next meeting.

RESOLVED

(1) That the verbal report given by Inspector Hobson regarding police issues be noted.

(2) That the following dates of the Partners and Communities Together meetings be noted:-

Neighbourhood 28 – Cradley – 21st November, 2007 at 7pm – Colley Lane Primary School

Neighbourhood 29 – Hasbury and Lapal – 5th December, 2007 at 7pm – Lutley Primary School (subject to confirmation)

Neighbourhood 30 – Hawne and Halesowen Town – Date to be arranged

Neighbourhood 31 – Coombeswood and Hurst Green – 20th November 2007 at 7pm – Halesbury School

Neighbourhood 32 – Halesowen and Lapal – 7th January 2008 at 7pm – Leasowes Community College

(3) That any questions requiring a response from Inspector Hobson at future meetings be submitted to him in writing at least a week prior to the meeting of the Committee.

PUBLIC FORUM

(a) A resident complained about Fish 4 Dogs Limited and commented that the smell was there permanently and was particularly worse when the wind was blowing in his direction as it carried the odour. An officer had visited his premises but had said that there was a smell but it was not offensive.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) acknowledged the concerns made and indicated that the relevant Officer was due to meet with the company next week with a view to discussing the odour matter.

(Having previously declared a prejudicial interest in this matter, Councillor Mrs Turner withdrew from the meeting for the consideration of the following question and re-joined the meeting following its consideration.

- (b) Reference was made to the Cradley Speedway proposal and concern was expressed at its siting off Oldnall Road. A Member referred to a public meeting that had recently been held and indicated that approximately 400 people had attended and had expressed concerns about the loss of green belt. He suggested that if and when the planning application was registered a notice in the press should also follow to alert people due to the amount of interest that had been generated. Another Member also requested that the documents relevant to the application be displayed at Cradley Library. Members supported the need to have a Special Meeting of the Committee, if necessary, to discuss the issue when it arose and that the meeting should be held locally at an appropriate venue such as Colley Lane Primary. A view was also expressed that as the matter was of sufficient significance for the whole of Halesowen, the Special Meeting should be held at St John's Church as it was situated in the centre of Halesowen. A Member also suggested that the Development Control Committee should consider holding a special meeting when considering the application for the Cradley Speedway due to the significance of the issue.

RESOLVED

That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee, and owing to time constraints, if necessary, a Special Meeting of the Committee be arranged due to the significance of the issue, to discuss the report to be submitted to a meeting of the Development Control Committee following receipt of any planning application relating to Cradley Speedway and prior to that meeting.

WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillor Ms Partridge
- (i) Reiterated concerns about Fish 4 Dogs Limited and indicated that the stench could be smelled from ¼ mile away from the factory and urged that swift action be taken.
- (ii) Queried general planning issues regarding warehouse type developments and expressed concern about the large sized buildings that were erected and in particular referred to the James Grove Factory.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) explained that planning policy in this regard was complex and indicated that policies were directed by the Unitary Development Plan and circumstances could be different for individual developments.

- (iii) Requested that a report on the Tree Strategy to include details of trees with and without Tree Preservation Orders, how to protect trees and authorise their removal be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to speak to the relevant Officer with a view to submitting a report to a future meeting.

- (b) Councillor K Turner

Referred to Rosemary, Brookwillow and Hollybank Roads and expressed concern about the danger to young children who attended Lutley School. A survey had been undertaken with various agencies and it had been recommended that a combination of single and double yellow lines be laid down on the roads together with double yellow lines on all corners of the roads.

The Group Engineer (Transportation) stated that following discussions he had agreed that the proposals were reasonable and indicated that he would refer the matter to the appropriate Officer with a view to pursuing a Traffic Regulation Order.

- (c) Councillor James

- (i) Referred to the Tree Strategy as mentioned earlier and indicated that some trees were the responsibility of the Highways Authority. He further informed the meeting that if there were new trees on a road, investigations could be made with a view to ascertaining whether they were the subject of a Tree Preservation Order, and if they were not, a Tree Preservation Order could be applied for.

- (ii) Referred to the James Grove Factory and indicated that although there had been complications with the site it was the only hand made buttons factory left in the United Kingdom and that it should be appreciated.

- (d) Councillor Body

Complained again about the speed on Oldnall Road and indicated that the national speed limit still applied on the road. He informed the meeting that there had been two accidents last week and he requested that the speed limit be reduced.

The Group Engineer (Transportation) stated that part of the road had been reduced to 30 mph but undertook to speak to the relevant Officer about this and a request from another Member regarding the same problems on Lutley Lane.

47

ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKING GROUP FOR THE
CONSIDERATION OF BUS SERVICES

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on a request from the Cabinet Member for Transportation for the establishment of a Working Group to consider local bus services in Halesowen.

In presenting the report the Area Liaison Officer indicated that a nomination of one Member per Ward would be appropriate with the Chairman of the Committee as ex-officio.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member welcomed the concept of Centro undertaking a consultation exercise but indicated that he was under the impression that the process ended on 1st January, 2008 and it was queried how consultation would take place with constituents. He also requested that further details regarding timings and dates of meetings be submitted prior to nominations being made. In responding the Chairman indicated that the opportunity should not be lost and requested that nominations be made direct to the Area Liaison Officer.

RESOLVED

That Members be requested to submit nominations for appointment to a Working Group to consider local bus services in Halesowen direct to the Area Liaison Officer.

48

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING HELD ON
3RD JULY 2007

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

In presenting the report the Area Liaison Officer referred to paragraph 5 of the report and indicated that the Group Engineer (Transportation) had updated the Committee on the situation earlier in the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report now submitted, be noted.

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

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 £1620 to the Dudley Children's Book Group for the purchase of equipment, such as a camera and display boards.
- (2) That approval be given to a grant of £1064 to the Halesowen/Dudley Yemeni Community Association for the provision of a new Public Address (PA) system.
- (3) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 to the 2nd Cradley (St Peter's) Scout Group in order that the land around the site can be landscaped.
- (4) That the action of the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Body, in allocating a sum of £160 for a new litterbin to be installed in Broome Close, be noted.
- (5) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 to St Peter's Church, Cradley towards the cost of repairing the Church building roof.
- (6) That approval be given to a grant of £2796 to St Paul's Blackheath Parish Church towards the cost of replacing the uneven hall floor.

EARLS HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION APPLICATION FOR GRANTS

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on a request for an application for funding from the Trust.

RESOLVED

That approval be given to a grant of £4000 to a pupil at Earls High School to help finance her expenses to represent Great Britain at the 2008 Paralympics in Beijing and that, following completion, she be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to share her experience.

APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on requests relating to land and property controlled by the Council.

- (a) Request for the Variation of Restrictive Covenant – Land at Colley Lane, Cradley, Halesowen (Cradley Liberal Club)

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services be recommended to approve the application to vary the restrictive covenant on land at Colley Lane, Cradley, Halesowen, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, on terms and conditions as agreed and negotiated by the Director of Law and Property.

(Having previously declared a prejudicial interest in this matter, Councillor Mrs Turner withdrew from the meeting for the consideration of Items (b) and (c) and re-joined the meeting following its consideration.

- (b) Disposal of Surplus Land – Cradley High School

Arising from the presentation of the report, Members expressed concerns about the closure of the leisure facilities at Cradley High School and the proposal to declare the site surplus to requirements.

A Member commented that should the site be developed for housing purposes there would be an increased demand for school places and leisure facilities. He stated that the leisure facilities were used by a lot of people on a daily basis and it would be a great loss and he further indicated that a vote that had been conducted by the Halesowen News had revealed that 82% of people did not want the facility to close. Another Member supported the comments made and further expressed concern that consultation had not taken place with appropriate user groups.

A Member was of the opinion that there had been insufficient discussions between the Council Directorates concerned and the basis of information from Officers. He believed there were a range of issues related to the site which remain to be considered and clarified before any decision were made to declare the site surplus to requirements. He urged that further consultation with local residents and users of the leisure facilities should take place.

Several members of the public submitted comments and queries on the slips provided and concerns were expressed regarding a proposed housing development, the need to adequately educate children, particularly when schools were oversubscribed, distances that children had to travel to school, inadequate sports and recreation facilities and whether Cradley would receive funding to have a new secondary school as part of the Building Schools for the Future Project. A representative also read out a letter on behalf of Lynda Waltho, Member of Parliament expressing concern about the closure of the leisure facilities and that proper consultation had not taken place and that the matter was being rushed.

Discussion then ensued about the changing facilities for the Two Gates Football Club and a Member expressed the view that serious consideration should be given to adequate facilities being made available. A member of the public concurred with the comments made and further indicated that the playing of football would be lost together with parking facilities at the site.

The Area Liaison Officer responded to points and concerns as raised and indicated that it was hoped that the Council would receive significant funding from the Building Schools for the Future programme but there was no indication of timescales or how funding would be deployed. Following the announcement of the closure of Cradley High School the Cabinet Member for Leisure had stated that he would do whatever possible to retain the facilities at Cradley Leisure Centre for public use. Officers from various Directorates had worked together in this regard with a view to identifying whether a practical solution could be reached to retain the leisure facilities in some form.

The Area Liaison Officer further reported that it was the Council's intention to provide changing room accommodation and drainage improvements to the pitches on Homer Hill Park together with a multi use games area or ball court. With regard to the sports hall facility there were complex issues, which were against retention of the facility. He informed the meeting that the facilities were not designed to operate as a stand-alone facility from the school and there were major problems in terms of design that were difficult to overcome considering the amount of demolition that would be involved and the nature of what might be left by way of a sports centre facility. There would be the need for a comprehensive redesign of the facility to accommodate properly managed public use, which would require significant capital expenditure. Furthermore, there would be the need for additional revenue resources to operate the facility on an annual basis, neither of which the Council had made provision for in light of the many demands for the Council's resources. There had been a significant number of additional sports halls provided in the area to the extent that the borough was well catered for in terms of levels of provision. Working with these facilities the Council would consider redirecting existing users of Cradley Leisure Centre to these alternative facilities in order that their sporting participation could continue.

A Member expressed concern that insufficient information had been provided for decisions or recommendations to be made. Information such as whether surveys had been conducted on usage of the leisure facilities and what alternative provisions were available should have been provided. The running costs to keep the facilities open was also requested together with details of the amount of Section 106 money that would be made available.

Upon being put to the vote it was:-

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Children's Services be informed of the concerns of the Committee that:-

- (1) No detailed discussion had taken place between Directorates about the Cradley High School and Cradley leisure centre site.
- (2) No consultation had taken place with Members, stakeholders and the general public and that the Committee considers that it is in the Council's and the public's interest that such detailed consultation should take place.
- (3) The decision to declare the site of Cradley High School surplus to requirements for sale should be put in abeyance pending further information.
- (4) Following further consultation the matter be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee with a full report and recommendations for further consideration.

(c) Disposal of Surplus Land – Holt Farm Primary School

The Vice-Chairman expressed her sadness at the proposal to close the school and indicated that when the announcement had been made she had urged that the site be used for community facilities. She informed the meeting that Shell Corner Partnership had undertaken investigations with a view to taking over the school and using it for community purposes but this was not practical. She did however, feel that consideration should be given to any development of the site for community purposes.

RESOLVED

That, subject to a condition that Section 106 monies be used to support community facilities, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services be recommended to declare the site of Holt Farm Primary School, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, surplus to requirements for sale on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.

- (d) Request to Purchase Land – Rear of 22 Maple Tree Lane (Off Beechcroft Estate), Halesowen

Arising from the presentation a discussion ensued about the provision and allocation of Section 106 monies and how it was spent and it was requested that a report on the matter be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to approve the sale of the land to the rear of 22 Maple Tree Lane, (off Beechcroft Estate), Halesowen, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, to the developer on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.
 - (2) That the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to submit a report detailing information about the application and calculation of Section 106 monies to a future meeting of the Committee.
- (e) Request to Purchase Land – Rear of Mead End, The Drive, Off Drews Holloway, Halesowen

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to declare all of the Council owned land at the rear of Mead End, The Drive, off Drews Holloway, Halesowen, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, surplus to requirements for sale on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.

REPORT ON THE PEOPLE'S MILLIONS £50 MILLION LOTTERY
GIVEWAY BLACK COUNTRY URBAN PARK

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Black Country's project in the 'People's Millions £50 million Lottery Giveaway' – Black Country Urban Park and on how to support the project in the public vote in late November/December. A Digital Versatile Disk (DVD) was also shown about the project.

In presenting the report the Tourism Development Officer pointed out an amendment to paragraph 11 of the report and indicated that only one vote per telephone number and email address could be made. She also informed the meeting that copies of the DVD would be made available shortly to all schools in the Borough with a view to publicising the project. Information packs would also be provided to Members with a view to them engaging in promotion of the project.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on the Black Country Urban Park Project, be supported and that the Committee actively engages the public and businesses in the promotion of the project with regard to the public vote in November/December.

53

CRADLEY (WINDMILL HILL/COLLEY GATE) REGENERATION PLAN

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the progress of the Cradley/Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan.

Arising from the presentation of the report the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to ensure that the relevant Officer liaised with the Member concerned with a view to answering the queries regarding barriers to resources and the improvement line that was still in existence.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted be noted and that support be given to the regeneration proposals in the Cradley/Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan.

54

HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress made with regard to physical developments taking place within Halesowen Town Centre.

In presenting the report the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) referred to paragraph 3 of the report and indicated that the route of the shuttle bus had been changed and that further details would be submitted to a future meeting. The Group Engineer (Transportation) also updated the Committee on the Access Study and informed the meeting that consultation would end in three months' time and a further report would be submitted to the Committee at its meeting in January, 2008.

A member of the public referred to the Grange roundabout and stated that a number of surveyors had been seen taking photographs during the past couple of months. The de-trunking of the A456 had not taken place and concerns were expressed that there had been no consultation with regard to any plans. Regarding the Access Study he indicated that it

would be more appropriate for the consultation exercise to be undertaken and then Members asked to support the proposals depending on the results. In responding the Group Engineer (Transportation) informed the meeting that ongoing discussions were taking place with regard to de-trunking and that the Highways Agency safety scheme would be used with a view to developing it to improve safety further. Regarding the proposals in the Access Study the Group Engineer (Transportation) agreed that the resolution should be changed to reflect consultation taking place prior to support from Members.

Members also reiterated the need to ensure that full discussions take place with the Highways Agency with regard to de-trunking of the A456 and that proper and up-to-date costings be obtained prior to the Council accepting responsibility.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report submitted on the progress and development in Halesowen Town Centre, be noted.
- (2) That support be given to the consultation exercise being undertaken with regard to the proposals in the Access Study as appended to the report submitted.

55

DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of future meetings of the Committee be noted as follows:-

24th January, 2008 – Colley Lane Primary School
12th March, 2008 – Lutley Community Centre

56

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 9.10 pm.

CHAIRMAN

HAC/38