

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 2nd September, 2009, at 7.00 p.m.
at Stourbridge Town Hall, Crown Centre, Stourbridge

PRESENT:-

Councillor A Turner (Vice-Chairman) (in the Chair)

Councillors Attwood, Banks, Barlow, Mrs Cowell, Hanif, Jones, Kettle, Knowles, Lowe, Mrs Rogers and Mrs Walker

Officers:

The Director of Children's Services (Area Liaison Officer), Interim Assistant Director, ICT and Business Transformation (Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement), Assistant Director, Planning and Environmental Health; Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety, The Head of Museums, Open Spaces and Bereavement Services (All of the Directorate of the Urban Environment), Assistant Director, Library's, Archives and Adult Learning; Area Community Renewal Officer, The Area Housing Manager, Stourbridge (All of the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services) Area Youth Worker, Early Years, Youth and Education (Directorate of Children's Services) Mr T Holder, Solicitor and Mrs J Rees (both of Directorate of Law, Property & Human Resources)

Also in attendance

Approximately 30 members of the public.

20 **HONARARY ALDERMAN JOHN SIMPSON**

The Chairman referred to the recent death of former Honorary Alderman John Simpson, following which all present at the meeting stood in silent tribute to his memory.

21 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Adams, Mrs Martin and C Wilson and Mr G Downing.

23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor A Turner declared a personal and prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members code of conduct in respect of agenda item number 8 (Capital Allocations – application by Lye and Wollescote Partnership Group), in view of his being secretary of the Partnership Group and vacated the Chair during consideration of the application.

Councillor Lowe declared a personal interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item 8 (Capital Allocations - application for funding by the Lye and Wollescote Partnership Group) in view of his attendance at meetings of the Partnership Group).

Councillor Hanif declared a personal and prejudicial interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda item 8 (Capital Allocations – an application by the Lye and Wollescote Partnership Group) in view of his being a member of the Partnership Group, and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the application.

Councillor Mrs Rogers declared a personal interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item 9 (Mary Stevens Park HLF Bid and Gates). She also declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 11 (Healthy Towns Project), in view of her Chairmanship of the Friends of Mary Stevens Park Group.

24 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15th June 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed.

25 YOUTH MATTERS

The Area Youth Worker reported on the summer programme of events organised for young people at the Valley Road Centre, and advised that an update report would be submitted to future meetings of the Committee.

26 PUBLIC FORUM

Before reading questions from the public the Area Liaison Office 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 queried whether a crossing could be installed on the Ring Road, Stourbridge to avoid disabled and elderly people having to use the underpass, which he considered dirty and dangerous. He also considered that the slopes in the underpass were not user friendly for older people using the subway.

In response the Chairman advised that consideration had previously been given to a crossing and decided against, due to safety issues, in that it was considered that if pedestrians failed to see the lights change, it could lead to a fatality.

The Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety undertook to investigate the matter again.

- 2 A member of the public commented on the name contained in the report on the Mary Stevens Park as being misleading to the Charities Commissioner.

In response, the Head of Museums, Open Spaces and Bereavement Services advised that there had been no intention to mislead anyone and apologised for what was a genuine error contained within the report.

- 3 In response to concerns regarding the withdrawal of funding for the Cyber Bus Project, a Member of the Committee advised that the cyber bus was a very successful voluntary project, which had previously received funding from the Committee's Capital Allocation's budget. She was aware that the funding had ceased for the project in March 2009, but was unaware of any request from the Project organisers for any additional funding.

Another Member of the Committee advised that funding for revenue costs could not be sought from the Committee's Capital Allocation's budget as the criteria governing the budget were very strict and could only be used for capital projects.

- 4 A group of residents expressed concerns regarding the need for the trees on the perimeter of their properties to be felled, and the alleged lack of response from Council Officers. The residents gave the past history of the trees and their reasons why they considered the trees to be the responsibility of the Council, rather than the residents.

In response, the Area Housing Manager, Stourbridge, advised that there was no funding in the Council's housing budget to fell the trees, which, within the terms of the leases of the properties, were the responsibility of the residents. However, she suggested that it might be possible to seek funding from the Area Housing Panel for such work to be undertaken, on the grounds of Health and Safety, but that this would need to be in the next financial year, as there were no funds available in the Housing Panel budget this year.

The Area Housing Manager, Stourbridge advised that the position for the residents in Maynard Avenue was slightly different to that of the others, as it was sheltered housing and as a result, was the responsibility of the Council.

Following further representation from residents of Westwood Avenue and the Broadway, Stourbridge a Member of Norton Ward, undertook for him, together with the other two Ward councillors, to make a site visit to the properties, together with the Area Housing Manager, Stourbridge to view the situation with a view to resolving the concerns of the elderly residents.

- 5 A member of the public expressed concerns at the closeness to the Lye Bypass of the site for a "story chair" at the Butterfly Centre at the Lye and Wollescote Partnership, and the consequential effects of pollution on the health of young children. He also expressed concerns regarding the validity of what he considered the high cost of converting the tree stump on the site into a "story chair". He also queried whether such a project would need planning permission.

In response, Members of the Committee advised that as the project was behind the fence at the Butterfly Centre, it was unlikely to need planning permission. The Assistant Director, Planning and Environmental Health, confirmed that, as the tree stump was within the curtilage of the Butterfly Centre, it would not need planning permission.

- 6 Mrs Linda Waltho, MP, who was in attendance as a member of the public, expressed concerns on behalf of the Friends of Swanpool Park, that funding promised to them as a result of a recent fun day event, had not yet been provided. Also, no financial accounts had been submitted for the event.

Mrs Waltho advised that she was aware that there had also been an issue of security at the site, when allegedly the security group employed to secure the site, had been witnessed sitting in their cars, ignoring acts of anti social behaviour and themselves throwing litter from out of their parked cars. The security staff had also not attended to young people committing acts of anti social behaviour, including painting graffiti on the walls of the buildings within the park and climbing on the roofs of the building. It had been reported that the Police had not taken action against those causing anti social behaviour problems.

Mrs Waltho also expressed concerns that there appeared to be some confusion as to the times when the Police, and/or officers of the Council were responsible for security at the park.

In response, the Head of Museums, Open Spaces and Bereavement Services advised that the security staff had been brought in for the event and were not employed by the Council. She undertook to investigate the concerns expressed.

A Member of the Committee, responsible for the organising of the fun day event, advised that the amount of funding due to the Friends of the Park was in the region of £2,000 and confirmed that a cheque for that amount had already been sent to the Friends Group.

He also advised that a number of improvements had been made to the park in readiness for the event.

- 7 A member of the public commented that the whole of his question on the Stevens Trust, had not been read out. The last part related to Clause 8 of the Stevens Trust Deed. The member of the public suggested that the decision of the Committee, taken in November 2008 to ring fence the Capital Allocations funding for the repair of the gates at Mary Stevens Park, should be rescinded. The member of the public also referred to correspondence between himself and an officer of the Council on this matter.

The same member of the public expressed concerns that local voluntary organisations would not benefit from the Trust for the next five years as a result of the Committee's decision.

In response, the Legal Advisor advised that a written response had been sent to the questioner on this issue. He was unaware of the other correspondence referred to but, upon receipt of the documents in question, would investigate the issues.

A Member of the Committee commented that although Lye and Wollescote had first call on the funds from the Trust, there was provision within the Deed of Gift which gave the Committee the power, as Trustees, to spend funds on the maintenance of the gates.

Another Member of the Committee advised that the Trust's first priority was for the maintenance and improvements of the park, followed by the benefit of the wider community. He also mentioned, that should funding ring fenced for the repairs not be required then it would go back into the Trust.

27 DUDLEY COUNCIL'S WEBSITE

The Interim Assistant Director, ICT and Business Transformation gave a visual presentation demonstrating how the Council's website could be accessed to contact the Council on a number of issues, including seeking information, viewing information, contacting Officers of the Council and paying bills.

RESOLVED

That the Interim Assistant Director, ICT and Business Transformation be thanked for his visual presentation, the content of which was noted.

28 CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on two applications for funding from the Committee's Capital Allocations budget.

(Having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of the application by the Lye and Wollescote Partnership Group, Councillor Hanif withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this application only.)

(Having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of the application by the Lye and Wollescote Partnership Group, Councillor A Turner vacated the Chair and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this application only.)

Arising from this, Councillor Jones was elected Chairman of the Committee (Councillor Jones in the Chair)

With regard to the application by the Lye and Wollescote Partnership Group, a Member of the Committee expressed sympathy with a view, made in the public forum, regarding the pollution issue of the site. She also expressed concerns as to whether it was the right venue for such a piece of community art.

Another Member of the Committee expressed concerns regarding the project.

In view of a difference of opinion on the application, and in the absence of more detailed information it was

RESOLVED

- 1 That the application by the Barnardo's Time for Me Project for £900 towards the cost of a project to create a fire escape from the part of the building that the group occupied and the purchase of a sink, table and chairs for use by groups using the Youth Centre be approved.
- 2 That the application by the Lye and Wollescote Partnership Group for £1,500 towards the installation of a "story chair" piece of community art at the Butterfly Children's Centre, be refused.

(at the conclusion of this item Councillor A Turner resumed the Chair)

29

MARY STEVENS PARK HERITAGE LOTTERY FUNDING BID AND GATES

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the outcome of the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Park for People Programme and a recommendation as to a way forward on the project.

In presenting the report, the Head of Museums, Open Spaces and Bereavement Services advised that following the failure of the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, a representative of the Heritage Lottery Funding's regional office, had visited Dudley to discuss the bid further. He had recommended a resubmission of the bid in February 2010. If a revised bid were submitted, a decision would be expected by June 2010.

A Member of the Committee expressed a view that the repair to the gates could only be put off for so long.

Another Member of the Committee expressed a wish that all of the gates within Mary Stevens Park be repaired, and not just the main gates.

RESOLVED

- 1 That the outcomes of the Stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund application, as set out in the report submitted, be noted.

- 2 That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture be advised of the Committee's support for a re-submission of the Stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund application for the Park Masterplan and refurbishment of all ironwork at the park, and
 - 3 That the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to arrange for the submission of the bid for the Masterplan and refurbishment of all ironworks at the Park for the February 2010 round of applications, subject to the amendment of the title of the trust, as detailed in paragraph 5 of the report submitted.
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30

COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

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

In presented the report the Area Committee Renewal Officer advised that a meeting for Members of the Working Group with staff from the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services was being arranged. She also advised that Mary Stevens Park had been chosen as the 'Health Hub' for Stourbridge, within the Healthy Towns Initiative.

She advised on the work being undertaken by the Problem Solving Group in liaison with the Halesowen Area Community Renewal Officer, Police and the Anti Social Behaviour group to combat anti social behaviour.

A Member of the Committee commented that there were pockets of deprivation in all Wards within the Stourbridge Area Committee area, but that the information contained within the Community Plan seemed to focus mainly around the Lye and Wollescote Ward. The Community Renewal Officer advised that whilst work was ongoing in all areas covered by the Stourbridge Area Committee, the Lye and Wollescote Ward had been identified as being the most disadvantaged Ward in the Stourbridge Area, and as a result, much her work centred more in that area than the others.

It was noted that if the particular Member for Pedmore and Stourbridge East wished to attend meetings of the Community Renewal Working Group, he could and could also contribute to discussions held.

In response to comments that children from deprived areas left school with fewer academic qualifications, a Member of the Committee disputed this comment, and advised that Dudley schools in Lye had achieved good exam results, despite the deprivation in the area.

RESOLVED

- 1 That information contained in the report submitted on the Community Renewal Working Group be noted.
- 2 That the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services be advised of the Committee's support for the continuation of the work of the Community Renewal Team and the community localities.

31 HEALTHY TOWNS PROJECT

The Head of Museums, Open Spaces and Bereavement Services gave a short oral presentation on the Healthy Towns Project giving details of the components of the healthy hubs locally. She indicated the nature of the component parts of the project which included a number of initiatives aimed at enabling the public to engage a more healthy lifestyle including the utilisation of cycle paths, children's play areas, outdoor gymnasiums, park leader walks and encouragement towards healthy diets.

A building for staff facilities near the Pavilion in the park was scheduled to be completed by February 2010. Any comments made would be taken into consideration during the consultation.

Hard copies of the project could be sent to Members of the Committee, if they so wished.

Comments from Members of the Committee included:-

- a) Concerns at the sustainability of the project.
- b) Concerns that the building at the pavilion could be used for other activities and that people who worked outside usually made their own arrangements in respect of matters such as parking.
- c) Concerns regarding plans for the buildings once the project expired.
- d) Concerns regarding lack of consultation with Members and the lack of information received.
- e) Concerns that the use of cycles in the park could contravene the by laws of the park.
- f) Concerns as to how staff would be trained and CRB checked.
- g) Concerns at the lack of supervision for equipment at the gym.
- h) Concerns over staffing issues at the end of the project, and whose responsibility these would be.

- i) A query as to who would be the employers of staff taken on for the Project?
- j) Concerns at how accessible the project would be for disabled people and the apparent lack of consultation with disabled groups in the area.
- k) The colour of the equipment needed to be visible to those with visual impairments.
- l) Concerns at the size of the gym and the positioning of it.
- m) The need for employment issues and costs to be shared with all within the partnership.
- n) The need for consultation with the Friends of the Park Groups and the need to engage with the Friends.

RESOLVED

- 1 That the content of the presentation on the Healthy Towns Initiative be noted, with the reservations indicated above.
- 2 That the Director of the Urban Environment be advised of the comments referred to above.

32 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.

33 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

RESOLVED

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

34 DATE AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

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

**16th November 2009 at 7.00pm at Wollaston Village Hall,
Bridgnorth Road, Stourbridge**

**18th January 2010 at Redhill School, Junction Road,
Stourbridge**

**8th March 2010 at 7.00pm at Hobgreen Primary School,
Hobgreen Road, Stourbridge, West Midlands**

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm

CHAIRMAN