

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE

Monday 10th March 2008 at 7.00 pm
at Hob Green Primary School, Stourbridge

PRESENT:-

Councillor Adams (Chairman)
Councillors Banks, Mrs Collins, Mrs Cowell, Hanif, Jones, Kettle, Knowles, Lowe, Mrs Martin, Mrs Rogers, A Turner, Mrs Walker and C Wilson; Mr J Downing.

OFFICERS:-

Director of Law and Property (as Area Liaison Officer); Assistant Director, Development and Environmental Protection and the Group Engineer - Traffic and Road Safety, (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Group Accountant and the Principal Tax Accountant (Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement), the Assistant Director, Libraries Archives and Adult Learning and the Area Housing Manager Stourbridge District (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Assistant Director of Children's Services Resources and the Area Youth and Community Worker (Directorate of Children's Services), Marketing and Communications Officer (Chief Executive's), the Building and Estates Officer and Mrs J Rees (Directorate of Law and Property)

IN ATTENDANCE

Approximately 50 members of the public were in attendance.

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APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor Attwood.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Adams and Mrs Rogers declared personal and prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 9, (Stevens Park and Recreation Ground Foundation Trusts – Applications for Grants), in view of their membership and Vice Chairmanship respectively, of the Friends of Mary Stevens Park group.

Councillor Mrs Collins declared a personal and prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 13 (Lye and Wollescote Cemetery Chapel – Update on the Applications made for External Funding to the Architectural Heritage Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund), in view of her son being a Director of the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21st January, 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

The receipt of a petition, from residents of High Street, Wollaston, requesting consideration of traffic calming measures and enforcement of unlawful parking along High Street, was reported. The petition had been referred to the Director of the Urban Environment, who had responded to the petitioners.

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CO OPTED MEMBER

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the co-option of a Member to represent the Youth of the area to serve on the Committee for the remainder of the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

In presenting his report, the Area Liaison Officer advised that Ryan Nokes had indicated that he would be willing to stand as a co-opted member for the remainder of the current municipal year and for the duration of 2008/09 Municipal Year. However, due to study commitments there would be times when he would be unable to attend meetings and he had therefore requested that a representative be allowed to attend on his behalf.

RESOLVED

That Ryan Nokes (or his nominee, in his absence) be appointed as a co-opted Member of the Committee for the remainder of the 2007/08 Municipal Year, and the ensuing 2008/09 Municipal Year, representing young people.

YOUTH ISSUES

Mr Nokes updated the Committee on the Stourbridge Youth Forum, which now comprised 11 members, and had met on three occasions, as well as going on a short residential in early February 2008. The Forum had looked at improving its facilities and had secured funding to provide a lap top and accessories. Mr Nokes advised that he would be reporting on youth issues regularly and pushing for developments in the near future.

The Area Youth Worker thanked Mr Nokes for standing as a co-opted member of the Committee and wished him success.

He then advised the Committee that the Cyber Bus was up and running again and was currently working on site four nights per week as follows:

Mondays at Rufford School,
Alternate Tuesdays at the shops near Wychbury and Wollaston,
Wednesdays at Withymoore Village near the local superstore,
Thursdays at Stamford Road.

The Area Youth Worker thanked the Committee for their recent grant towards the salary of the Cyber Bus driver's wages, which had enabled the Cyber Bus to be put back into operation.

The Chairman thanked the Area Youth Worker for his hard work and for taking the bus out to places where it was needed.

RESOLVED

That the oral report on youth issues be noted.

PUBLIC FORUM

Before reading questions from the public, the Area Liaison Officer stated that any questions which were not addressed at the meeting would receive a written response from the appropriate officer.

Questions and answers were then given as follows:

- a) A representative of the Stourbridge Township Council raised concerns, which had been voiced previously, regarding the neglected state of the Listed Gates at Mary Stevens Park and expressed a wish for the gates to be refurbished and maintained. Another member of the public again suggested, that the work of restoring the gates to their former pristine condition be given to students of Dudley and/or Stourbridge colleges. In response, the

Assistant Director, Development and Environmental Protection (Directorate of the Urban Environment), stated that she was aware of the public's wish to have the gates restored. However an application to obtain funding to repair the gates from the Lottery Fund had been unsuccessful and the Directorate of the Urban Environment was attempting to seek funding for the project from alternative sources.

The Assistant Director, Development and Environmental Protection (Directorate of the Urban Environment) also indicated that as had been reported previously, the suggestion to use students for such work had proved to be inappropriate because of the intricacy and highly specialised nature of the work involved. However, she undertook to take back again to her colleagues the suggestion of using students to undertake the work. She further advised that the gates had been inspected recently and that the inspectors had advised that the deterioration was ornamental, not structural, and that regular inspections would continue to be undertaken.

A Member of the Committee suggested that the possibility of using some of the Ernest Stevens Trust Funds for the repair of the gates be investigated. The Principal Accountant undertook to investigate the feasibility of utilising the Stevens Trust Funds for this purpose.

- b) A member of the public raised concerns regarding the lack of public conveniences in Stourbridge Town Centre late at night and in the early hours of the morning, and on the need for vandal proof facilities to be provided. The Assistant Director, Development and Environmental Protection (Directorate of the Urban Environment) advised that conveniences adjacent to the Police station, next to Court Passage, were usually open from 6 am – 8 pm Monday to Saturday. The public conveniences were fitted with the most up to date vandal proof facilities, and the facilities in question had, for a trial period, been opened 24 hours per day during the Christmas period. However, due to vandalism, and the resultant high costs to the Council, the decision had been taken to close the facilities at 8 pm. Sergeant Dalton stated that the police had not been advised of the revised opening times of the public conveniences, but that if they had been made aware, the Police would have monitored them regularly.
- c) A member of the public raised concerns relating to the Archives and Stourbridge historical items. These concerns were deferred for consideration under agenda item 16.
- d) A member of the public raised concerns regarding litter in the Withymoor area, particularly near the local superstore. The Assistant Director, Development and Environmental Protection undertook to investigate and send a detailed written response to the questioner.

- e) A member of the public raised concerns that a recent planning application which had been refused by the Council, had been overturned by the Planning Inspectorate at Bristol, following an appeal by the developers. Consent had been granted despite the fact that there were insufficient parking facilities for the proposed properties. Some Members of the Committee expressed their concerns that someone living so far away could be allowed to change the decision of local Councillors, who knew the area concerned very well. The Director of Law and Property advised that once a decision of the Council was overturned by the Planning Inspectorate, the decision could not be reversed. The Council could only express concerns regarding the process to the Secretary of State. Members of the public suggested that the local Member of Parliament should be lobbied to seek to change the situation. Some Members of the Committee commented that the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration should object to the process.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Committee request that the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and the Member of Parliament be requested to write to the Secretary of State objecting to the situation whereby the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol have the power to overturn decisions made by the locally elected Council Members.
 - (2) That this Committee write to Secretary of State expressing the same objections referred to in 1 above.
- f) Comments raised by a member of the public relating to agenda item 12 (Stourbridge Northern Gateway Improvements) were deferred for consideration under that agenda item.

APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on two requests to purchase land and properties controlled by the Council.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be advised to approve the application to dispose of the land adjoining 81 High Street, Lye, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be advised to approve the application to purchase land adjacent to 62

Dennis Hall Road, Amblecote, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.

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CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on three applications for funding from the Committee's capital allocation budget. The Area Liaison Officer advised that the application by Withymoor Colts Football Club had had to be reduced, as some of the items were of a revenue nature. In recognition of the good work carried out by members of the Football Club, Members of the Committee gave their support for an additional £120 for a full sized striped net for the Withymoor Colts Football Club.

RESOLVED

That the sums referred to below be allocated to the following organisations, for the purposes indicated:-

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Stourbridge Cricket Club	Purchase of equipment	£1,095.65
Withymoor Colts Football Club	Purchase of barbeque, generator, speed ladders, boundary poles, net clips, mini soccer goal and a full sized striped net	£1,039.79
Friends of Norton Covert	Purchase of kissing gates and hedging plants	£2,500

OLD PARK SPECIAL SCHOOL AS PART OF THE THORNS COMMUNITY LEARNING VILLAGE

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on proposals for a new facility for Old Park Special School as part of the Thorns Community Learning Village which would incorporate the three local schools working together to improve education and facilities for young children. The project would include a hydro pool, which would be open to the whole of the community and a multi use games area, which could be used throughout the year. Consultation on local issues was to be undertaken.

In support of the report, the Building and Estates Officer (Directorate of Law and Property) gave a visual presentation detailing the proposals for the new improved provision of education on the site of the existing Thorns Community College. The proposals indicated that access and egress to the new school would be via Thorns Road.

Some Members of the Committee requested that the Ward Councillors for Lye and Wollescote and Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood be kept informed of progress with the project as and when it developed.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Building and Estates staff be thanked for the visual presentations, the contents of which be noted, together with the contents of the report submitted.
- 2) That the Ward Councillors for Lye and Wollescote and Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood Wards be kept abreast of developments of the project.

STEVENS PARK AND RECREATION GROUND FOUNDATION TRUSTS GRANT APPLICATIONS

(Having previously declared prejudicial interests in the application by the Friends of Mary Stevens Park, Councillors Adams and Mrs Rogers withdrew from the meeting and Councillor Mrs Cowell took the Chair during consideration of the application Councillor Adams reassumed the Chair after consideration of the application).

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on three applications for funding from the Trust, one of which included a request by the Friends of Mary Stevens Park for permission to charge for a Family Fun Day at Mary Stevens Park on 5th May, 2008.

The Area Liaison Officer advised that the application for funding by Friends of Mary Stevens Park, as detailed in paragraph 9 b of the report submitted, had been withdrawn since the publication of the report.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Committee, as Trustees of the Stevens Park and Recreation Ground Foundation Trust, grant permission for The Friends of Mary Stevens Park to hold and make a charge for a May Day Fun Day event at Mary Stevens Park on the 5th May, 2008.
- (2) That the Committee note that the application by the Friends of Mary Stevens Park, as set out in paragraph 9 b) of the report submitted was withdrawn.
- (3) That the sums referred to below be allocated to the following organisations, for the purposes indicated:-

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount</u>
The Green Fingered Gang	Purchase of decking table and barbeque	£1,150
Friends of Wollescote Park	Repairing of terracing at front of Wollescote Hall	£5,000

STOURBRIDGE NORTHERN GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on proposals to enhance and improve the northern gateway into Stourbridge town centre from the A491 Amblecote High Street.

The Stourbridge Town Centre Manager gave a short visual presentation outlining the proposals, which would include emphasising the crossing over the River Stour, upgrading the Lower High Street subway and creating a pocket park at the bottom of Lower High Street. The Town Centre Manager envisaged that the proposals would enhance Stourbridge as a visitor attraction. Leaflets on revitalising Stourbridge Town Centre were circulated at the meeting and those present were invited to take them away for information purposes.

It was suggested that the Amblecote Coat of Arms should be depicted and that the subway be treated with bright wall treatment. Signage could use the narrow boat and canal themes.

A member of the public commented, during the public forum session that the bridge over the River Stour was half in Stourbridge and half in Amblecote. He suggested that Amblecote should be depicted within the new development, to reflect that a lot of local history, including the glass industry, had been situated in Amblecote. He also asked whether Section 106 money from the Canal Street development could be used for the improvements in the town centre.

Comments from Members of the Committee on the proposals for the improvements included:

- a) A suggestion for a café in or near the pocket park.
- b) The pocket park could be utilised as an appropriate venue for New Year fireworks displays.
- c) A question as to whether some of the Section 106 funding from the development of the Crown Centre
- d) A request for a full risk assessment to be carried out on the shared space at the pocket park, to ensure the safety of young children.
- e) Whether some of the Section 106 funding could be used to install additional public conveniences.
- f) The need for the project to be more widely advertised.
- g) Councillor Mrs Walker, as Cabinet Member for Children's Services, welcomed the project and commented that she was in favour of art students at the local schools and colleges becoming engaged in the project. She suggested that the project be advertised in Amblecote Library and/or the Amblecote Church hall.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Town Centre Manager be thanked for his presentation, the contents of which be noted.
 - (2) That the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration be advised of the comments referred to above.
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LYE & WOLLESCOTE CEMETERY CHAPEL – UPDATE ON THE APPLICATIONS MADE FOR EXTERNAL FUNDING TO THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE FUND & HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND

(Having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this matter, Councillor Mrs Collins withdrew from the meeting during its consideration).

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted, on the success of the applications made by the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust (WMHBT) to the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) for a series of four separate grant packages and on the progress of the Single-Stage application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the actions required in order to move the project forward.

A member of the public commented that he understood that reference to certain documents published earlier was missing from the list of background papers detailed at the end of the report. The Area Liaison Officer advised that the background papers listed at the end of the report submitted were those referred to in the preparation of the report and that it was not intended to be an exhaustive list of papers relating to the subject matter.

In response to comments from a member of the public relating to the limited opening hours of the cemetery and whether the success of the bid would have an effect on the future use of the cemetery, the Assistant Director Development and Environmental Protection undertook to have a written response sent to the questioner.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the success of the applications made by the WMHBT to the Architectural Heritage Fund for a series of four separate grant packages for Lye Chapel be noted.
- (2) That the Committee note that an application is to be submitted to the HLF at the end of March 2008 by the WMHBT (in partnership with the Council) for a Single-stage bid and that the outcome of this application to the HLF be reported back to a future meeting of the Committee.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR
THE JOINT CORE STRATEGY FOR THE BLACK COUNTRY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the timescale and process for public consultation on the Preferred Options for the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country. The report also invited the Committee to submit its response to the consultation on the Strategy.

In presenting the report, the Assistant Director Development and Environmental Protection, advised that consultation on the preferred options for the Strategy would take place from 17th March until 29th April, 2008. She encouraged those in attendance to speak with Officers present outside of the meeting to make their views known. All comments would be taken into consideration before the proposed strategy was taken to the Secretary of State for approval.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the contents of the report, including the timescale for consultation, be noted.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration be advised of the Committee's support for the Joint Core Strategy, as set out in the report submitted.

HIGHWAY MINOR WORKS CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2008/09

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 Schools within the area covered by Stourbridge Area Committee for the 2008/2009 financial year, as set out in appendices attached to the report.

Comments from Members of the Committee included:

- a) A lack of support for the introduction of a reduced speed limit at Ham Lane, (although some Members suggested that a cycle lane be introduced in that area).
- b) That the Name "Birmingham Road" should be amended to read "Birmingham Street".
- c) A lack of support for a narrowing of Birmingham Street as it joins Stourbridge Ring Road.

- d) A need for traffic signals to be erected at the junction of the Stourbridge Ring Road and Birmingham Street.
- e) A need for Birmingham Street to be narrowed where traffic joins it from Stourbridge Ring Road, since queuing vehicles cause danger to vehicles in the vicinity of the entrance to the Civic Amenity Site.
- f) A need for the new “give way” junction markings at the junction of the Kingsway and Vicarage Road, Wollaston, to be made more prominent.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be advised of

- (1) the Committee's comments as indicated in paragraphs a) – f) above
- (2) the Committee's support for the proposals for the introduction of Local Safety Schemes for Birmingham Street/St Johns Road, Stourbridge Ring Road; Thorns Road, Quarry Bank; Kingsway/Wentworth Road/Vicarage Road/High Street, Wollaston and Woods Lane, Brierley Hill, as set out in appendix A
- (3) the Committee's support for the introduction of a Safer Route to School for Amblecote Primary School, School Drive, Amblecote.

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the planned programme to be carried out by Dudley Archives and Local History Service and Dudley Library Service, to ensure that the valuable archival records held by the Council at Stourbridge Library were held in an appropriate place to ensure their safe keeping for the future and for availability to residents. The report also referred to the plans for consultation on the future development of the Dudley Archives and Local History Service in relation to the Local History and Archives collections currently located at Stourbridge Library.

Comments on the issue from a member of the public, raised in the public forum session, were addressed by the Assistant Director, Libraries Archives and Adult Learning (Adult, Community and Housing Services), who advised that timescales for the work to be carried out were not available at the moment, as funding for the project still had to be secured.

Some Members of the Committee expressed concerns that the current building used to house Dudley archives was not suitable and therefore the Stourbridge collection could be damaged beyond repair if moved to that location. The general consensus of opinion was that the Stourbridge collection should remain at Stourbridge Library until the proposed new facility was ready to house the collection appropriately.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the future plans for the Archives and Local History Service in relation to the Local History and Archive collection currently held at Stourbridge Library be noted.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services be advised of the Committee's wish for the historical items pertaining to Stourbridge to remain at Stourbridge Library until such time as suitable alternative accommodation to house the collection was secured and available to the public.

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SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

RESOLVED

That Council Procedure 6.2 (b) be suspended to enable Items 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 to be considered.

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ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

- a) Councillors Banks and Mrs Cowell raised concerns that although they had previously been advised by Centro that all trains from Stourbridge travelling to Birmingham needed to travel into Snow Hill Station, some distance away from the main shopping centre situated in the City Centre, due to lack of capacity at New Street, recently when Snow Hill station had been closed all trains from Stourbridge had been redirected to New Street Station. They advised that it was difficult for people with disabilities, mothers with young children and the elderly to get to the New Street area from Snow Hill.

- b) Councillor A Turner expressed concerns relating to traffic issues during recent work at Vicarage Road. He suggested that should there be a need for similar work in the future, that temporary traffic lights be installed in the Stamford Road and Birmingham Street area, to enable residents to leave the Penfield's Estate more easily.

He also requested that, should the planning application for the pocket park in Stourbridge be successful, that the mural and seats within the area to be used for the pocket park, be moved to a suitable location in Lye, for the benefit of the local residents.

- c) Councillor Knowles, as Cabinet Member for Regeneration, advised that, as requested previously, he had undertaken to investigate comments by a member of the public, relating to the development of land at the Corbett Hospital site, and he invited the Director of Law and Property to update the meeting on the findings of the investigations.

The Director of Law and Property advised that three months ago, as requested, he had written on this matter to the Dudley Group of Hospitals advising them that the site had originally been given to the people of Stourbridge by Mr Corbett for a hospital and had asked whether the terms of the original trust would be upheld. No response had been received until immediately prior to today's meeting when the Director had received an e-mail stating that the Dudley Group of Hospitals would have to seek legal advice on this matter. He would keep the Committee and Councillor Knowles advised of any further information received.

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SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICATION

Information was given regarding the dates for future meetings of all Select Committees, which were to be held at the Council House, Dudley. Members of the public were welcome to attend such meetings.

RESOLVED

That the information given in respect of the dates of future meetings of Select Committees, be noted.

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DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the dates and venues of future meetings of the

Committee would be advised when determined in the new municipal year.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm.

CHAIRMAN