

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 9th November, 2011 at 6.30 p.m.
At Cornbow Hall, 10 Hagley Street, Halesowen

PRESENT

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

Officers

Area Liaison Officer (Treasurer), Assistant Director of Housing Strategy and Private Sector (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration and Transportation, Head of Executive Support, Head of Traffic and Transportation, Group Engineer (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Assistant Director, Education, Play and Learning, Youth Area Team Leader (Directorate of Children's Services), Assistant Director Law and Governance and Mrs M Johal – (Directorate of Corporate Resources).

Also in Attendance

Inspector Michael Palmer – West Midlands Police
Mr Elfyn Edwards – Station Commander, West Midlands Fire Service
Mr Andy Grosvenor – West Midlands Fire Service
Ms Julie Winpenny – West Midlands Fire Service

Ms Naima Hassan and Ms Inteha Noor – Women's Awareness Association (For Agenda Item No 6)

There were approximately 50 members of the public in attendance.

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CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman congratulated Tommy Mundon, a Black Country Comedian from Halesowen on his elevation to a carpet of comedians.

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APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

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

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:

Councillor Burston declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 13 (Regeneration of Cradley/Windmill Hill) with regard to reference made to partnership arrangements and negotiations being underway with Centro as he was employed by Centro.

Councillor Burston declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 17 (Delegated Capital Budget) with regard to Halas Homes as his wife was employed by them and he had been involved in fund raising.

Councillor K Turner declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 17 (Delegated Capital Budget) relating to the Halesowen Golf Club application in view of him being a friend and associate of the Principal Professional.

Councillor K Turner declared personal and prejudicial interests in respect of Agenda Item No 7 (Emergency Services Issues) in view of him being a Member and Deputy Group Leader of the West Midlands Fire Authority and Agenda Item No 17 (Delegated Capital Budget) relating to the application made by Stourbridge and Halesowen Age Concern in view of him being the Director of Stourbridge and Halesowen Age Concern and the Chair of Halesowen Branch.

Councillor Hill declared personal interests in respect of Agenda Item No 15 (Earls High School Foundation – Final Accounts) and Agenda Item No 16 (Earls High School Foundation Trust) in view of him being a School Governor.

Councillor James declared personal interests in respect of Agenda Item No 15 (Earls High School Foundation – Final Accounts) and Agenda Item No 16 (Earls High School Foundation Trust) in view of him being a School Governor.

Councillor James declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 17 (Delegated Capital Budget) relating to the application made by Halesowen in Bloom in view of him being a Member of the Committee.

Councillor J Woodall declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 17 (Delegated Capital Budget) relating to the application made by the Halas Ministry in view of him being a member of Halesowen Parish Church of St John the Baptist.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6th July, 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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PETITIONS

- (a) It was reported that the following petition had been received since the last meeting and that a response had been sent to the first named petitioner:-

Cobham Road – On Street Car Parking

- (b) The following petitions were received at the meeting:-

(i) Lighting in Highfield Crescent

A petition was submitted by Councillor Ms Partridge on behalf of residents of Highfield Crescent requesting lighting in the area.

(ii) Closure of Gully from Albert Road to Halas House

A petition was submitted by Councillor James on behalf of residents in Albert and Albrighton Roads. A resident spoke on the petition and stated that residents were becoming increasingly frustrated as rubbish (including syringes) was being dumped into people's gardens and that it was hazardous as there were children about. The petitions were received and would be referred to the Director of the Urban Environment.

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YOUTH SERVICE

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

RESOLVED

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

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PRESENTATION BY THE WOMEN'S AWARENESS ASSOCIATION

Ms Naima Hassan and Ms Inteha Noor gave a presentation on the aims and objectives of the project and elaborated on the work they did for the women in the community particularly those women at risk.

RESOLVED

That the information given in the presentation on the work of the Women's Awareness Association be noted.

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EMERGENCY SERVICES ISSUES

Mr Elfyn Edwards, Station Commander, West Midlands Fire Service reported that he had been in post since July 2011. The main focus had been to combat rubbish arson attacks and it was reported that there had been five such incidents in the Halesowen area and that there had been an increase from the previous year during the same period. However, continuing efforts were being made to alleviate the problem and the situation was continually being monitored.

Mr Edwards further reported that there had been a number of fires at Council owned properties and that fire alarms were being looked at and work was ongoing to educate people and the Fire Service were promoting free Home Safety Checks.

In response to a query about the number of fires in Council premises, Mr Edwards undertook to provide the Member concerned with further details of the fires including information on the locality of the buildings and proposed actions to combat the problem. He confirmed that there were no trends insofar as fires pertaining to any particular Ward.

RESOLVED

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

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AREA POLICE AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (PACT) ISSUES

A schedule of PACT meetings arranged in the area of the Committee had been included with the agenda for information.

Inspector Michael Palmer reported that he had replaced Inspector Steedman.

Inspector Palmer indicated that the website had not been updated with some of the dates of the PACT meetings and indicated that meetings would be held on 15th December, 2011 at 7pm at Windsor High School and 9th December, 2011 at 7pm in the Healthy Hub, Huntingtree Park

It was reported that there was a continuing trend in the reduction of crime in the Halesowen area and Inspector Palmer indicated that robbery had reduced by a third and that vehicle crimes and burglaries had also reduced compared to the same period in the previous year. An issue of concern was that of graffiti and damage, particularly at Huntingtree Park and it was reported that two people had been arrested for these incidents and were awaiting trial.

In response to a query about incidents occurring in the Cradley and Wollescote Ward, Inspector Palmer indicated that the Ward was covered by Stourbridge as far as policing was concerned but he undertook to provide details direct to the Member concerned.

RESOLVED

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

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PUBLIC FORUM

- (1) A question was asked as to why refuse from flats above the shops in Windmill Hill was allowed to be piled up on Foredraft Street Car Park for collection by refuse collectors when Council leaflets stated that bin bags would only be collected from individual properties. It was queried whether the flats could be issued with their own communal bin to prevent other people dumping their rubbish.

In responding the Head of Executive Support indicated that he would investigate the matter and provide a written response to the questioner concerned.

- (2) Reference was made to planning application number 92/51116 and it was queried as to why the building for an Islamic Culture Centre and Car Park at Malt Mill Lane had still not been completed and it was stated that a car park for traders and businesses would be more appropriate. Concern was also expressed about a particular building that was not being used for its purpose and that it was being used as a mosque instead.

In responding the Head of Executive Support stated that planning permission had been granted in 1992 for the construction of the Mosque within five years. The foundations had been laid but, unfortunately, planning law did not extend to completion of the building. He also undertook to investigate the matter regarding the building that was being used as a mosque.

- (3) A resident complained about the state of the condition of the abandoned building on the James Grove and Sons site and indicated that it was an eyesore. There was graffiti on the inside windows and on the floors, the front door was smashed and concern was expressed that it would suffer from an arson attack.

The Head of Executive Support commented that action was being taken and a response was awaited from the owners and the deadline was the following day. A meeting would be held after the expiry of the deadline to decide the next course of action. However, it was pointed out that when a planning application was approved for a new development it was up to the developer as to when the development commenced.

- (4) Reference was made to the previous meeting where it had been stated that no decision would be made on the reduction in the Fire Service until there had been full consultation. It was further commented that at a consultation meeting the only issue that was debated on was whether there should be one or two fire engines.

In his capacity as a Member of the West Midlands Fire Authority, Councillor K Turner stated that owing to a reduction in funding the decision had been made for Halesowen and Cradley Heath Fire Stations to become one hub and it was indicated that this would take place. Consultation meetings were not held to reverse or reconsider that decision but on whether there should be one or two new hubs. He assured the meeting that the five-minute first response rate to any category one incident would be maintained regardless of the location of the hub.

A Member opposed the decision to reduce two fire engines to one and it was commented that it would be difficult for a fire engine to get from one location to another in five minutes particularly during peak traffic periods. Concern was also expressed in that a second tender had to be present before anyone could be rescued which would result in lives being lost.

A Member requested that Councillor K Turner should feedback to the West Midlands Fire Authority the views of the Area Committee and members of the public.

- (a) Councillor Mrs Turner

Indicated that the 006 bus service was operating in Hayley Green and she urged members of the public to support the service by using it so that the service was not taken away.

(b) Councillor Mrs Dunn

Informed the meeting that the "Keeping Older People Safe" Team would be in the Short Cross area between 23rd – 25th November for advice.

(c) Councillor Crumpton

(i) Referred to a garage at the top of Mogul Lane and complained that there were problems with cars being parked on pavements and that residents were finding it extremely difficult to get their cars out and it was requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the matter.

(ii) It was reported that the Bridge at the bottom of Mogul Lane had flooded again and it was queried whether anything could be done to prevent the problem from reoccurring.

(d) Councillor Ms Partridge

Commented that there were six Council homes in the Cradley and Wollescote Ward and it was requested that it be placed on record that the Cradley and Wollescote Councillors were opposed to the sale of Council houses, as it was not in the best interests of that particular Ward.

33 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE
HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE HELD ON 6TH JULY 2011

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

RESOLVED

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

34 PROPOSED TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS TO CONTROL
WAITING AND MOVING VEHICLES IN THE GREATER HALESOWEN
AREA

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the introduction of two Traffic Regulation Orders in the Halesowen area.

The following persons referred to had indicated that they wished to speak at the meeting and, unless indicated, were in attendance at the meeting and spoke on the Traffic Regulation Order proposals as indicated:-

- (i) Plan 1 – One Way System Brookwillow Road – Ms P Tennant and Councillor K Turner (Ward Member)
- (ii) Plan 1 – One Way System Brookwillow Road – Mrs J Barker and Councillor K Turner (Ward Member)
- (iii) Plan 11 – Halesowen Area Waiting Proposals Frankley Avenue, Goodrest Avenue, Howley Grange Road, Shenstone Valley Road, Spies Lane – Mr K Scott (not in attendance) and Councillor A Taylor (Ward Member)
- (iv) Plan 14 – Waiting Restrictions, Halesmere Way and Woodman Avenue – Mr M Pearson
- (iv) Plan 15 – No Waiting Restrictions, Chadbury Road – Mrs A Shackleton

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to approve the introduction of the two Traffic Regulation Orders with the amendments as set out in Appendix A and B of the report submitted, and modified, as appropriate, as follows:-
 - (i) Plan 1 – Brookwillow Road, Hayley Green – proposed one-way traffic order be not included in the final Order.
 - (ii) Plan 2 – Brookwillow Road and adjacent streets – that the proposed single yellow line scheme for “no waiting 7am – 7pm Monday to Friday” with “no waiting at any time” around road junctions be included in the final Order.
 - (iii) Plan 3 – Thornhill Road and Meadowbrook Road – that limited parking on the lay-by be introduced and the proposed double yellow lines be included in the final Order.
 - (iv) Plan 4 – Cherry Tree Lane area – that the proposed double yellow lines be included in the final Order.
 - (v) Plan 5 – Highfield Lane, Halesowen – that the proposed one-way traffic order be not included in the final Order.
 - (vi) Plan 6 – Cavalier Drive Junction with Highfield Lane – that the proposed no waiting at any time restriction be included in the final Order.

- (vii) Plan 7 – Furnace Coppice, Halesowen – that the Proposed Prohibition of Driving, Except for Access Order be included in the final Order.
- (viii) Plan 8 – Haysech Road – that the proposed one-way traffic order for Haysech Road be reversed to include a right turn only into Hawne Lane and that the modified Order be included in the final Order
- (ix) Plan 9 – Hill Bank Road – that the proposed one-way street be not included in the final Order
- (x) Plan 10 – Colman Hill Avenue – that the proposed no waiting at any time be included in the final Order
- (xi) Plan 11 – Frankley Avenue, Goodrest Avenue, Howley Grange Road, Shenstone Valley Road, Spies Lane – that the proposed yellow lines be not included in the final Order
- (xii) Plan 12 – Manor Lane and Shenstone Avenue – that the proposed yellow lines to fill in the gap in the existing yellow lines be not included in the final Order and consideration be given to restrict parking to a maximum stay of one hour.
- (xiii) Plan 13 – Grange Crescent – that the proposed revocation of the existing yellow lines be not included in the final Order.
- (xiv) Plan 14 – Halesmere Way and Woodman Avenue – that, subject to further discussions being held with a resident to determine whether further unrestricted parking may remain in Halesmere Way, the proposed additional length of waiting restriction be made available and be included in the final Order.
- (xv) Plan 15 – Chadbury Road – that the proposed no waiting at any time restriction for future access to a drainage gully be not included in the final Order.
- (xvi) Plan 16 – Hales Road, Islington – that the proposed “no waiting at any time” restriction be not included in the final Order.
- (xvii) Plan 17 – High Street Service Road – that the proposed waiting restrictions be included in the final Order.

- (xviii) Plan 18 – Dudley Road and Forge Lane – that the proposed double yellow line restrictions be included in the final Order.
- (xix) Plan 19 – Maypole Fields, Maypole Hill, The Forge, Cradley Forge – that the proposed double yellow line restrictions be included in the final Order.

In response to a query regarding a start date for the introduction of the Orders, the Group Engineer undertook to respond directly to the Member concerned.

35

REGENERATION OF CRADLEY/WINDMILL HILL

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the delivery of the Cradley/Windmill Hill Regeneration Strategy.

Arising from the presentation of the report a question was asked by a member of the public as to why it had been suggested to introduce small public spaces with seating along Windmill Hill when residents had been led to believe that air quality on the hill was “toxic”. A Member of the Committee requested that a report should be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee to include information on the air quality and proposals for that particular area be submitted to a meeting of the Committee. It was also requested that thanks and appreciation be placed on record to Officers that had attended the Cradley Forum to discuss that particular issue as residents had been impressed with their commitment and investment. In responding, the Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration and Transportation indicated that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee and that a local consultation exercise would also be held.

The Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration and Transportation undertook to respond direct to the Member concerned with a response to a query about the funding allocated from the Council’s Empty Shops Grant towards the Cradley/windmill Hill Local Centre on details of what was being considered for those spaces, how far negotiations had taken place and whether the money would be lost if not used.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report on progress made in delivering the Regeneration Plan, be noted.

HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress with regard to physical developments taking place in and around Halesowen Town Centre, with particular regard to the Halesowen in Bloom Initiative.

Arising from the presentation of the report Members requested that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on the future of the bus lanes in Queensway and Bromsgrove Road and that local Ward Councillors be consulted on the matter in the meantime.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted, on progress in respect of the physical developments taking place in and around the Halesowen Town Centre and the Halesowen in Bloom Initiative, be noted.
- (2) That a report on progress with regard to the future of the bus lanes in Queensway and Bromsgrove Road be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

EARLS HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION – FINAL ACCOUNTS

A report of the Treasurer was submitted on the final accounts and annual returns of the Trust for the year to 31st March, 2011.

RESOLVED

- (1) That, on behalf of the Council, in their capacity as Trustees, the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31st March, 2011 be approved by the Committee.
- (2) That the Chairman be authorised to sign the accounts on behalf of the Committee.

EARLS HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION TRUST

A report of the Director of Corporate Resources was submitted on a request from the Earls High School to change the trustees of the Earls High School Foundation from Dudley Council to the Academy Trust.

Arising from the presentation of the report concerns were expressed about the small amount of money granted by the Council to the School in the past, that there would be an end to a democratic system and that there were concerns about Academies in general.

RESOLVED

That the Council be recommended to approve the new Academy Trust to be appointed as sole corporate trustee of the Charity in place of the Council.

39

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

(Having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest in certain applications under this item, Councillors James and K Turner left the meeting for the respective applications and re-joined the meeting following its consideration).

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on requests for grants from the Delegated Capital Budget. A supplementary paper on additional grants that had been received was also circulated prior to the meeting.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member suggested that the criteria for bids/allocations as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted should be reviewed to make it clearer to Groups on whether they can apply for funding and for what purpose.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the following decisions be made in respect of the grants indicated to organisations set out in Appendix 2 to the report submitted:-
 - (a) That the position in respect of the grant to Leasowes Community College that the money would be spent be noted.
 - (b) That the grant of £2500 to Cradley Town Football Club towards building disabled toilets be withdrawn and made available for reallocation.
 - (c) That the remaining unspent grant of £64.03 to Tanhouse Tenants and Residents Association be made available for reallocation.
- (2) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 to the Women's Awareness Association for ICT equipment, sewing equipment, toys and electronic dictionaries.
- (3) That approval be given to a grant of £1500 to the charity Loaves 'N' Fishes towards the cost of ICT equipment.

Having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following application, Councillor Burston, the Chairman left the meeting whilst the application was being considered and re-joined the meeting following its consideration).

Councillor Taylor (Vice-Chairman) in the Chair

- (4) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 to Halas Homes for chairs, tables and other furniture and computers.
- (5) That approval be given to a grant of £3664 to the Halesowen Chamber of Trade for the cost of replacing the Christmas lights in the town centre.
- (6) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 being made to the Halas Team Ministry towards the cost of replacing lead stolen from the Church roof.
- (7) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 being made to Stourbridge and Halesowen Age Concern towards the total cost of redecoration, carpets and furniture.
- (8) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 being made to The Hub towards the cost of purchasing a mobile football plus trailer.
- (9) That approval be given to a grant of £4000 being made to Howley Grange Scout Group to replace old parquet flooring.
- (10) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 being made to Halesowen in Bloom towards the cost of purchasing planters, hanging baskets and watering equipment for the town.
- (11) That a grant of up to £5000 being made to Halesowen Golf Club towards golfing equipment, uniform clothing, buggies, bags, IT equipment and software for advanced tutorial exercise and Astroturf mat, be deferred and that the Golf Club be requested to attend the next meeting of the Committee with a view to giving a presentation on their work.

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SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

As a way of giving additional publicity to meetings of the Council's Scrutiny Committees, details of Scrutiny Committee meetings had been included on the agendas of meetings of Area Committees.

The information given in respect of publicity for future meetings of Scrutiny Committees was noted.

42

QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE 11.8

The Area Liaison Officer reported that a question had been received under Council Procedure 11.8 from Councillor Ms Partridge. The question and the response was read out as follows:-

Question

“Why has the Council recently (Front Page Express and Star 26th Oct) announced that Windmill Hill A458, is to be subject of a road improvement scheme and why hasn't this announcement been accompanied by consultation with local councilors? For the record a statement is requested to confirm the official source of the press story along with details of who has taken any decisions on this matter, when improvements can be expected and what resources have been allocated to ensure that these improvements are made”.

Response

Halesowen Area Committee Agenda Item 13 (Regeneration for Cradley/Windmill Hill) reiterates the regeneration issues and refers to associated traffic problems in the area. In response, the Express and Star contacted Councillor Adams (the Cabinet Member for Regeneration) directly to ascertain the Council's current position. Councillor Adams responded appropriately in as much as he indicated the Authority was still committed to the regeneration of Cradley and that highway improvement works at the junctions of Toys Lane, Colley Lane and Furlong Lane were “vital” to improve traffic flow and air quality. The banner headline “Scheme to widen Cradley Road is on way” accompanying the article is somewhat misleading and does not represent his comments as reported in the article.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm.

CHAIRMAN

HAC/26