

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 14th March, 2007, at 6.30 p.m.
at Lutley Community Centre, Brookwillow Road, Halesowen

PRESENT

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

Officers

Area Liaison Officer, Head of Policy (Executive and Support), Head of Public Protection, Group Engineer (Transportation), General Manager (Planning), Principal Planning Officer, Project Development Officer, Solicitor (Ms H Kidd) and Mrs M Johal (Directorate of Law and Property)

Also in Attendance

Inspector Neil Hobson – West Midlands Police
Ms June Hill – Dudley Life Skills
Ms Vicky Ransome – Groundwork Black Country
Ms Shubboleth Shechter – Project Manager, Buchanan Consultants

Approximately 60 members of the public were in attendance.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ms Partridge and J Woodall and the Assistant Director for Partnership and Children's Trust.

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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 11 (Responses to Questions Raised at Halesowen Area Committee on 24th January 2007) regarding reference to bus service revision in view of him being employed by CENTRO

Councillor Burston declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 12 (Delegated Capital Budget) regarding reference to Earls Gymnastic Club in view of him being a Governor of Earls High School.

Councillor Burston declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 12 (Delegated Capital Budget) regarding reference to Lutley Community Centre in view of him being the Council's nominee for the Centre.

Councillor Burston declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 17 (Halesowen Town Centre Development) regarding reference to the bus station in view of him being employed by CENTRO

Councillor Mrs Faulkner declared prejudicial interests in respect of any reference made to Halesowen College in view of her being a local resident, reference to Friends of Hope Street Park in view of being a Member of the Group and any reference to Shell Corner Partnership in view of her being the Vice-Chairman.

Councillor Mrs Shakespeare declared prejudicial interests in respect of any reference to Shell Corner Partnership in view of her being a Member and any reference to Friends of Hope Street Park in view of being a Member of the Group.

Councillor K Turner declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 10 (Groundwork Black Country Presentation) in view of him being the Director, Treasurer and Vice-Chair for Groundwork Black Country and Board Member of Groundwork Regional.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th January, 2007, be approved as a correct record and signed.

80

PETITION

A Member reported that she would be submitting a petition opposing the granting of planning permission for Application Number P07/0348 regarding the site at 61-63 Hurst Green Road during Ward Issues.

81

POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Hobson, West Midlands Police was in attendance for the item and confirmed that there were no issues to report but undertook to answer any queries that may arise during the course of the meeting.

82

PUBLIC FORUM

(a) The following comments and questions were made regarding Fish 4 Dogs Limited:-

HAC/58

- If the permit to operate was granted would there be a condition imposed that required no offensive odour beyond the process boundary
- Similar conditions had previously been imposed on G Clancey Limited but residents had still suffered
- House valuations had shown that with the presence of Fish 4 Dogs Limited, the value of houses had been reduced
- The definition of “offensive odour” was queried and it was further commented that residents could not sit in their gardens due to the stench and it was further stated that the company had a high turnover of staff and that a delivery driver had physically been sick upon entering the company premises
- Did the council undertake any research when the company had applied for a permit to operate
- There had been numerous odour related appeals and the company were situated 50 yards away which was in very close proximity to some residents
- The abatement equipment currently in use had not been designed for the purpose of abatement of fish stench
- There was a problem with a broken belt that had caused a release of odour and there was also problems with a noisy fan

In responding the Cabinet Member for the Environment reported that a meeting was due to be held the next day with the relevant Ward Councillors to discuss ways forward and detailed information had been requested. The Head of Public Protection then responded to the queries and comments made and confirmed that a permit to operate had been applied for by the company. Officers had carried out various investigation exercises and details would be submitted to the meeting that was due to be held the next day. He further emphasised that if the permit were to be granted, prescriptive conditions would be imposed to alleviate the offensive odour and that they would be rigorously enforced. It was further pointed out that if the odour continued then the Council would pursue legal action against the company.

- (b) Several questions and comments were made again by residents regarding the adoption of Foredraft Street and an update on the position was requested.

The Area Liaison Officer referred to comments that he had made at previous meetings and reiterated his commitment to take the matter forward with a view to some progress being made but pointed out that the matter was very complex. There were a wide range of underpinning legal issues and the Council had an obligation to comply with legal requirements. Upon further discussion the Area Liaison Officer undertook to meet Ward Councillors and the residents on site with a view to discussing the matter further.

- (c) A question was asked regarding the future of the Visitor Centre in Leasowes Park.

The Chairman reported that arrangements were still being made for a meeting to be held with Officers to discuss the future of the Visitor Centre.

- (d) A resident expressed concern about fencing that was giving way on land that belonged to the Council. There were also asbestos sheets that had caused his garden to deteriorate.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to investigate the matter.

- (e) It was queried whether CENTRO would replace the bus lay-bys that had been filled on the A458 as it was causing congestion and air pollution. A Member also commented that a letter objecting to the removal of the lay-bys had been submitted to CENTRO and the situation had worsened for the disabled. Another Member concurred with the comments made and said that local residents had to contend with polluted air and suggested that the matter should be revisited.

The Group Engineer (Transportation) reported that the bus lay-bys had been filled in to accommodate the Bus Showcase Route 9 Project. Sub-standard lay-bys had been removed due to the difficulties being experienced in docking the buses caused by irregular kerbs and that he was not aware that the lay-bys would be replaced. The Group Engineer (Transportation) further reported that an analysis of air pollution had been undertaken in the Windmill Hill area and he reported that the results to date had shown a marginal improvement since the Bus Showcase Route 9.

- (f) A resident reported on problems being experienced at the Colley Gate junction caused by the positioning of the yellow box leading to confusion and hence blocking traffic and causing accidents. He further pointed out that it was difficult to get out of his property due to the road being blocked by traffic, including buses.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to investigate the matter.

WARD ISSUES

(a) Councillor Crumpton

Referred to the closure of Cradley High School and commented on the conflicting and disturbing stories that were now emerging. He requested that a full detailed report covering plans for the future of the children; whether they would be required to move to schools outside of the Ward; the situation with uniforms and also detailing actions and outcomes at this stage of the process be submitted to a future meeting.

(b) Councillor Mrs Dunn

Referred to the comments made regarding the closure of Cradley High School and pointed out that residents of Belle Vale were complaining that they had been refused their first choice of school. She asked that this aspect should also be incorporated and addressed in the report but also requested that a response be submitted to her beforehand.

(c) Councillor Body

Also referred to the closure of Cradley High School and requested clarification on the amount of debt the school were in.

(d) Councillor Mrs Faulkner

Circulated a paper that updated Members about the Shell Corner Partnership and requested that an item be allocated on a future agenda of the Committee to enable them to make a presentation on current and future plans.

(e) Councillor Mrs Shakespeare

- (i) Reported that a newsletter detailing Shell Corner Partnership's current and future plans was due to be released in the middle of the year.
- (ii) Complained about speeding traffic on Woodbury Road and Long Lane and also that buses were blocking Hurst Green Road as they passed each other. She reported that she had asked for mobile speed visors to be installed on Woodbury Road and Long Lane and requested they should be installed as a matter of urgency.

- (iii) Submitted a petition opposing Planning Application Number P07/0348 regarding the site at 61-63 Hurst Green Road, on behalf of residents of Hurst Green Road and surrounding areas, which was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for attention.
 - (iv) Thanked the Committee for sending a letter objecting to the withdrawal of bus service Nos 236 and 236A to Travel West Midlands.
- (f) Councillor K Turner
- (i) Reported that he had attended the Young Entertainers Event as a Board Member for Groundwork Black Country. The event had included two schools in the Borough, namely, Leasowes Community College and Windsor High and it was requested that a letter, on behalf of the Committee, be submitted to the schools congratulating them on their efforts.
 - (ii) Referred to Lutley Mill Road junction with Belle Vale on the A458 and complained that upon completion, an open green space had been left, which was now being used as a car park. He urged that action be taken as soon as possible.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) referred to Lutley Mill Road and reported that the contactors would be visiting the site on Friday of this week and that the verge would be reinstated within the next few weeks.

- (iii) Reported that a meeting was being held on 26th March, 2007 with Groundwork Black Country to discuss future plans and work to be undertaken. He urged that Members and Officers attend that meeting to find out about future plans and details such as the carrying out of work on a community garden and development of land suited to playing football and a bicycle track. He further reported that a "walkabout" in Cradley was also planned.
- (iii) Queried whether the speed visors had been installed on Dunstall and Huntingtree Roads as the due date was today.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) confirmed that the speed visors had been installed that day on Dunstall Road and that Huntingtree Park would follow shortly.

- (iv) Referred to the previous meeting and queried the position with regard to the funding of lights around the community room in Huntingtree Park and also regarding the picnic tables and chairs and graffiti boards. The situation with the cutting of the conifers around the bowling green as previously requested was again raised.

In responding the Area Liaison Officer referred to Minute No 66 and reported that the matter regarding issues about Huntingtree Park would be addressed and considered in conjunction with the Friends of the Park Group with a view to producing an action plan. He reported that the Group had undertaken further work and information had now been submitted which included the provision for graffiti boards.

Regarding the cutting of the conifers, the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) commented that a Green Care Manager had visited and inspected the site and the work would be carried out in accordance with the priority schedule.

84

DUDLEY LIFE SKILLS WORK PRESENTATION

Ms June Hill, Barnados, gave a presentation regarding progress made with Dudley Life Skills Partnership and, in doing so, reported that the partnership focussed on undertaking work with young children. The project had been running in Dudley for a number of years now and they had close working relationships with other organisations such as the Police, Local Authority and Connexions to enable the best advice to be given to children and young people. Some of the diverse activities that the organisation had been involved in to engage young people were arranging visits to museums and exhibitions, holding fashion shows and the offering of personal safety and anger management talks and workshops.

RESOLVED

That the presentation regarding progress made by Dudley Life Skills Partnership be noted.

85

GROUNDWORK BLACK COUNTRY PRESENTATION

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

Ms Vicky Ransome, Operations Director, Groundwork Black Country gave a presentation on the work undertaken Groundwork Black Country.

Ms Ransome reported that Groundwork Black Country delivered environmental activity to meet the needs of key partners and to help make the Black Country a better place to live and work. Groundwork Black Country was an organisation with a strategic role, achieving high quality, innovative and competitive outcomes. The key to this was the involvement of local people who developed the skills and knowledge needed to ensure that the work undertaken had lasting benefits to the Black Country. Physical projects were delivered within six theme programmes namely, community education, business, land, youth, employment and training.

RESOLVED

That the presentation given regarding work undertaken by Groundwork Black Country be noted.

86 CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13(c), it was

RESOLVED

That agenda item number 15 be considered as the next item of business.

87 CRADLEY (WINDMILL HILL/COLLEY GATE) REGENERATION PLAN

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress made in the production of the Cradley Regeneration Plan together with a presentation on proposed regeneration improvement options.

Ms Shubboleth Shechter, Project Manager, Buchanan Consultants gave a brief presentation on the current position and proposed options regarding the Cradley Regeneration Plan.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report submitted on the progress made in the production of the Cradley Regeneration Plan, together with the presentation on potential options for the Cradley local centre, be supported and noted.

88 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING HELD ON 24th JANUARY 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.

RESOLVED

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

89

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on requests for funding from the Delegated Capital Budget together with an addendum that was circulated at the meeting.

With regard to the request for funding for the Earls Gymnastic Club, a Member asked that clarification be sought that funding was for equipment for the Club and not the school.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the action of the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Body, in approving a grant of £1000 to the Fatherless Barn Evangelical Church Over 60's Group for funding towards a new cooker and dishwasher, following the recent modernisation of their kitchen area, be noted.
- (2) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 to the Greenhill Youth Centre for funding towards the refurbishment works to be carried out at the Centre in the kitchen area and in the computer room.
- (3) That approval be given, in principle, to a grant of £5000 to the Quinton Methodist Church for funding towards the provision of disabled toilet facilities, subject to further evaluation and a similar level of grant being approved by Birmingham City Council and that the decision to award a grant be delegated to the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Body.
- (4) That approval be given to a grant of £1990 to the Lutley Community Association for funding towards replacement lighting in the main hall.
- (5) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 to the Earls Gymnastic Club for funding to replace vital safety equipment used by the Club, subject to the club securing the total funding package.

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.

The Chairman informed the meeting that he had, along with relevant Officers, undertaken a site visit to assess the situation regarding the visibility splay at Bromsgrove Street. A resident also spoke objecting to the application and reported that he had submitted pictures of the site to all Members of the Committee showing the extent of the number of trees that would have to be cut and the significant amount of embankment that would have to be taken out to accommodate the application. He further reported that he had been past the site and witnessed trees being taken down, including the removal of a tree that had a Tree Preservation Order placed upon it.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to approve the application to vary a right of way that crosses 57 George Road, Halesowen, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, subject to the applicant paying all costs involved in the matter, and subject to the approval of the owner of No 51, on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Personnel, Law and Property be recommended to refuse the application for a Restrictive Covenant on the Council owned land at Bromsgrove Street, Halesowen, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted.

TO SEEK SUPPORT FOR A BOROUGH WIDE AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA FOR DUDLEY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted seeking support for the declaration of a whole Borough Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The proposals for a whole borough AQMA had been supported by the Select Committee on Environment and Corporate Board who had approved consultation through the Area Committees before submitting a report to Cabinet in July 2007.

RESOLVED

That the advantages of the declaration of a whole Borough Air Quality Management Area, as detailed in Appendix 1 attached to the report, now submitted be supported and following a period of consultation be referred to Cabinet in July 2007 for approval, insofar as this Committee were concerned.

92 PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE JOINT CORE STRATEGY FOR THE BLACK COUNTRY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the preparation and progress of the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country including the local consultation events undertaken in Dudley borough.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report now submitted on the preparation and progress of the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country including the local consultation events undertaken in the Borough, be noted.

93 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.

During the course of the presentation of the report, the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) updated Members on discussions that had taken place at the Halesowen Town Centre (Consultation Exercise) Working Group the previous day. It was reported that two particular issues namely the Town Centre Management Risk Strategy and an Access Study were discussed and during the discussion, congestion issues along High Street and the impact on the Church were highlighted. It was considered that a fuller proposal, such as, south bound traffic only coming through High Street, should be investigated. This would allow the new bus station to operate as designed and would still allow access to car parks and servicing and a detailed report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on this issue. During discussions at the meeting of the Working Group congestion on the A456 Grange Road roundabout and the consequent impact of rat running through Blackberry Lane was also considered. In this regard, the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) reported that the de-trunking of the road was due to take place with effect from 1st, May, 2007 which would bring with it maintenance money for a safety scheme which could be used towards tackling congestion on that particular roundabout.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) further reported that a Management Risk Strategy for the Town Centre had been put together which included monitoring elements for criteria relating to the viability and vitality of the town centre particularly during the development process. A regular meeting between CENTRO, Vale Retail and Council Officers would be held to discuss and monitor arising issues and outcomes of those meetings would be regularly reported to the Working Group and to the Committee. He further reported that work had commenced on the bus station over a week ago and reports had indicated that traffic was still moving reasonably well and monitoring would be undertaken on a daily basis to ensure that the traffic continued to move as smoothly as possible.

Arising from the presentation of the report and the verbal update a Member requested that all Members of the Committee should be kept fully informed and involved at all times of the process and at an early stage. A Member further reported that people should also be consulted and informed to ascertain their views on what they required. It was also requested that signage in the Town Centre during the works also needed to be looked at and, in particular, signs to new bus stops and signs indicating that shops were still open during the works.

A Member referred to the de-trunking of the A456 Grange Roundabout and commented that the issue had been part of an ongoing debate for over two years. If de-trunking went ahead on the date mentioned the money that would be received by the Local Authority would be equal to the quotes that had been submitted two years ago, which could mean that the Council could have insufficient funding. It was suggested that the Committee should request that the Highways Agency should complete the work on the Grange Roundabout prior to detrunking taking place.

In response to a query from a member of the public regarding the lack of public toilets in the Town Centre during the Cornbow development, the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to consider the matter further. In response to a further question regarding proposals for Lidl, the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) confirmed that a planning application had not as yet been received although Lidl had undertaken a consultation exercise.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report now submitted on the progress and development in Halesowen Town Centre, be noted.

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 9.15 pm.

CHAIRMAN