

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE

Monday 20th February, 2012 at 7.00 p.m.
At Redhill School, Junction Road, Stourbridge

PRESENT-

Councillor Kettle (Chairman)
Councillors Adams, Attwood, Banks, Barlow, Hanif, L Jones, Mrs. Martin,
Mrs. Rogers, A. Turner and Mrs. Walker; Mr. Downing and Miss Hathway

OFFICERS:-

Acting Director of Children's Services (as Area Liaison Officer), Assistant Director Planning and Environmental Health and the Group Engineer – Traffic and Road Safety (both Directorate of the Urban Environment), the Group Accountant (Ms. Cooper), Area Detached Youth Worker (Directorate of Children's Services), Mr T Holder - Solicitor and Assistant Principal Officer - Democratic Services (Mr. Sanders) - all Directorate of Corporate Resources

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Inspector Palmer and Sergeant Gordon (West Midlands Police), Mr. Wood and Ms. Winpenny (West Midlands Fire Service) and Mr Corton (Head of Community Engagement, NHS Dudley), together with 23 members of the public.

39. **COUNCILLOR MRS. M. COWELL**

The Chairman referred with sadness to the recent death of Councillor Mrs. Cowell. Members, officers and members of the public stood in silent tribute to Councillor Mrs. Cowell's memory.

40. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Knowles and C. Wilson.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Attwood declared a personal and prejudicial interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of an issue which was to be discussed under Agenda Item No 12. (Ward Issues) concerning an event on the 7th May, 2012 at Mary Stevens Park, in view of his directorship of the firm, S and B Events Ltd., which would be involved in the provision of the facilities for the event.

Councillors Adams and Mrs. Rogers both declared a personal and pecuniary interest in the same issue as Councillor Attwood in view of their offices as Honorary President and Chairman, respectively, of the Friends of Mary Stevens Park.

Councillor Lowe declared a personal interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No 8 (Capital Clinical Commissioning Group of the National Health Service) in view of his capacity as an employee of UNISON who might be involved as Trade Union representative with staff in the National Health Service or Primary Care Trust affected by proposed changes in clinical commissioning.

42. PETITION

A petition from residents of Priory Road requesting the extension of double yellow lines installed at the junction of the road with Church Road, was submitted.

The petition organiser, Ms. Madden, exercised her entitlement under the Petitions Scheme to address the Committee on the subject of the petition for up to three minutes. In so doing, she conveyed the views of the petitioners on the reasons they considered the extension of the parking restrictions necessary.

Two other local residents then spoke on the petition, one in support and the other opposing it.

RESOLVED

That the petition be referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for consideration and investigation.

43. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 17th October, 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed.

44.

YOUTH MATTERS

Miss Hathway gave an oral report on youth matters, referring, in particular, to work undertaken to a project for encouraging young people not to smoke. She reported that schools and youth and community centres had been visited under the project.

Miss Hathway then reported on actions being taken to publicise the work and aims of the Youth Council more widely, since the body was conscious that these were not generally known.

Brief reference was then made to the use of the Youth Opportunities Fund.

RESOLVED

That the information provided by Miss Hathway be noted.

45.

POLICE ISSUES

The new Police Inspector for Halesowen and Stourbridge, Inspector Mick Palmer, introduced himself to the Committee and outlined the organisational arrangements applicable.

Inspector Palmer then reported orally on issues pertinent to the Stourbridge area, providing statistical information on crime by category and by ward, in terms of the numbers and percentages of crimes recorded and detection rates. The figures indicated that, overall, there had been 1087 fewer victims of crime in the Stourbridge sector for the year to December, 2011, this representing a decrease of 25.9%. The detection rate stood at 31% over the same period. The figures by type of crime were also provided.

In reporting the information, Inspector Palmer referred to the effectiveness of closed circuit television cameras in mitigating the incidence of street crime and burglary.

In relation to location issues, Inspector Palmer reported that the three Police teams currently working at Lynwood House would relocate to Stourbridge Police Station with effect from 29th February, 2012. He emphasised that this would not have any detrimental effect on the quality of policing in the community in the Lye/Wollescote and Cradley/Quarry Bank communities. Additionally, a Police room was to be established at Thorns School and Community College with the aim of encouraging links between the Police and the community.

Inspector Palmer referred to the priority given to crime prevention activities in reducing the incidence of crime, and to the importance of identification in terms of robust offender management in this work. He also referred to an operation being carried out in Stourbridge town centre currently to combat Town Centre crime in which high visibility uniformed Police and patrol tactics were being used.

In the question and answer session that followed, reference was made by a resident of Junction Road to problems of parking along that road on Sundays, when the adjacent playing fields were being utilised for football. Another member of the public suggested that these problems might be alleviated to some extent if the Council was to arrange for gates to the playing fields to be opened, thus allowing the football traffic a hardstanding, off road, area for parking.

In congratulating the police on the reduction in crime figures, a member of the Committee asked if the reduction had owed to a reluctance of the public to report crime, even when it had occurred. While acknowledging that this was a factor, Inspector Palmer emphasised that, in the main part, the reduction had been achieved primarily to the policing and preventative measures described.

RESOLVED

That the oral report now given by Inspector Palmer be noted and that it be noted further that the Inspector will arrange for the issue of the parking at Junction Road to be considered.

46.

FIRE ISSUES

Mr. Wood gave an oral report on fire matters, advising that domestic incidents had reduced by some 60% and that, while a number of small fires had occurred, no deaths or significant injuries had resulted.

Mr. Wood referred to a new fire appliance, which would be based in Dudley but was likely to be seen in operation at Stourbridge.

Mr. Wood referred also to the involvement of the Fire Service in a joint initiative with other disciplines, including the Police, on life skills and to the involvement of the Service with schools on a project on the Great Fire of London. The Great Fire of London was now a curriculum subject and the role of the Fire Service would be to present a comparison of measures taken to combat fire, including preventative issues, between 1666 and 2012.

In response to a question, Mr. Wood confirmed that the Fire Service were satisfied with access to Stourbridge Ring Road from the Fire Station. In this regard, however, a member of the Committee asked that the Directorate of the Urban Environment ensure the yellow hatched box at that location be maintained in a good condition.

A member of the public suggested that beepers be installed to the pelican crossings on Stourbridge Ring Road in order to assist blind people. Councillor Banks, however, as a member of the Committee with partial vision, expressed the view that the existing facilities were sufficient, since persons with a visual impairment were aware of rotation devices, indicating when pedestrian crossing lights were on green, that were fitted routinely to pelican crossings.

In response to a question by a member of the Council regarding risk assessments for community centres, Mr Wood gave a brief explanation and arranged with the member who raised the issue to provide him with the telephone number of the Fire Safety Officer after the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the oral report now provided be noted and that the Group Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety) be asked to arrange for the issue of the maintenance of the yellow hatched box adjacent to the Fire Station on Stourbridge Ring Road to be maintained in good condition.

47. CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP FOR THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

The Head of Community Engagement of NHS Dudley, Mr. Corton, gave an oral report on the changes proposed to the National Health Service, in which Primary Care Trusts would be discontinued and primary care being provided through Clinical Commissioning Groups and secondary care by hospitals. In so doing, the Head of Community Engagement outlined the respective roles of the health agencies involved in terms of commissioning and delivery of services and explained the governance and scrutiny arrangements that would apply to Clinical Commissioning Groups, with particular reference to Dudley.

In the subsequent discussion, a member of the public indicated his disagreement with the proposals on the grounds that the number of tiers of health provision that would be applicable under the revised arrangements and the loss of local control he considered would result.

In response to these issues, the Head of Community Engagement indicated the measures regarding local accountability that would be applicable under the revised arrangements in terms of governance and scrutiny, giving the respective examples of the Chief Executive of Dudley M.B.C. being a member of the Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group and the scrutiny arrangements that would apply through the Health and Wellbeing Board, which would include Council Members, and the Council's Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee. A discussion then ensued on the new arrangements, in relation to which differing views were expressed.

RESOLVED

That the presentation by the Head of Community Engagement be received and noted.

48. PUBLIC FORUM

The following issues were raised under this item.

- (1) A local resident asked to be advised when gas central heating would be installed in properties numbered 20-42 Bredon Avenue.

A petition from 10 of the residents, in support of the request, was submitted.

In acknowledging that there remained an issue in relation to storage heaters, Councillor L. Jones, as Leader of the Council, advised the meeting that all of the Council's housing properties had been brought up to, and now complied with, the Decent Homes Standard, except for those properties where Council contractors had been unable to gain access.

It was agreed that the matter would be investigated and that the local resident, the Leader of the Council and the Area Liaison Officer would be kept informed of the situation.

- (2) A local resident complained of dog fouling and litter in the Stepping Stones area and of dropping of litter at Junction Road.

The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Planning and Environmental Health) was asked to take up the matter with the resident.

- (3) The same resident complained of a problem with drains at Junction Road.

It was agreed that the Assistant Director would follow up this matter.

- (4) A request was received from two local residents asking to be advised of progress and decisions made in relation to their correspondence with the Council regarding the provision of a footpath along Racecourse Lane to Landsgate. In asking the question, one of the residents referred also to an on-going problem of speeding cars in Racecourse Lane, notwithstanding the installation of speed warning signs along the road.

RESOLVED

That the Group Engineer - Traffic and Transportation report to the next meeting of the Committee on these matters.

- (5) In the context of a retrospective demand from the Council for ground rent of £600 per annum for use of the pavilion at Wollescote Hall for the two Senior Citizens' Mixed Membership Flat Green Bowling Clubs which had the use of the bowling green at the rear of the Hall, an allegation of unfairness and discrimination was made by a member of one of the bowling clubs in the light of the Council levying no such charge on the Sons of Rest, who were the users of the crown bowling green at the front of Wollescote Hall.

The club member pointed out that the flat green clubs had contributed towards the cost of a pavilion which had been erected and which was now a Council asset; that those clubs had contributed also to the cost of green preparation work and watering equipment; that members made a seasonal subscription in advance of £15 per person, whereas no subscription was payable in respect of the Sons of Rest Club; and that a charge of £30 was levied by the Council on the clubs for the provision of refreshments for visiting teams, with the clubs also being responsible for cleaning the room afterwards.

The club member indicated that he had written to the three Council departments concerned and only one reply had been received.

It was agreed that the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Planning and Environmental Health) would investigate the issue with the relevant directorates and that contact would be made with the club member and Councillor Mrs Martin. A request for a meeting would also be put forward if considered helpful in resolving matters.

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on applications made for funding from the delegated capital budget of the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the application made by Stourbridge Cricket Club for a grant in the sum of £1,000 towards the cost of equipment, stumps, gloves, balls, helmets, etc. totalling £1,455, to establish a girls' junior section at a total project cost of £3,205, be approved.
- (2) That the application now submitted by the Amblecote and Wollaston Cricket Club for a grant of £3,447 towards the cost of concrete bases, equipment and a net enclosure for practice areas at the club premises be refused on the grounds that, while it is acknowledged that a number of members of the club live within the Stourbridge area, the Headquarters of the club is situated outside the Borough.
- (3) That the application now submitted on behalf of the Stourbridge University of the Third Age for a grant of £1,000 for a digital projector, whiteboard and compact disc system, be approved.
- (4) That the application now submitted on behalf of Stourbridge Glassboys' Under 8's Football Team in the sum of £651 towards a total cost of £748, for the replacement of football clothing for the Team, be approved.
- (5) That the application now submitted on behalf of Base Foundation CIC for a grant of £4,894.80 towards a total project cost of £6,892.80 for the purchase of study desks and chairs and six computers, be approved.
- (6) That the application now submitted by Stambermill Scout Group for a grant of £5,000 towards a total project cost of £95,000 for new Headquarters premises, be approved.

50. RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted containing responses made to questions asked at the last meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

51. WARD ISSUES

- (1) Reference was made by Councillor Attwood to a May Day Party proposed at Mary Stevens Park on the 7th May, 2012.

Following discussion on the issue of the personal and prejudicial interest declared by Councillors Attwood, Adams and Mrs. Rogers at the start of the meeting, the three members left the meeting room at this juncture.

Consideration was then given to an application by the Friends of Mary Stevens Park to the Committee, as Trustees of the Stevens Trust and Mary Stevens Park, for the closure of Mary Stevens Park to the general public on 7th May, 2012 but for the Park to be open to those whom paid an admission fee.

Concerns were expressed by Members of the Committee that the request had not been supported by a written report to the Committee. The Committee were concerned further that this was not the first year in which the application for the event had been made in the same manner and not supported by a written report.

Concerns were also expressed in relation to problems caused to local residents from litter and vehicular parking which had arisen in the vicinity around Mary Stevens Park when this event had been held in previous years.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Committee, as Trustees of the Stevens Trust and Mary Stevens Park, consent to the park being closed on 7th May, 2012 to the general public but open to those whom pay an admission fee.
 - (2) That, should a request for the closure of Mary Stevens Park to the general public and its opening for those who paid an admission fee be received in the future, the request be considered by the Committee, as Trustees, only if the request is supported by a written report included on the agenda for the meeting.
 - (3) That the issues of litter and parking nuisance to residents in the areas around Mary Stevens Park, which arise from the event, be referred to the appropriate Cabinet Members for discussion and consideration.
- (3) Councillor Barlow, on behalf of both Councillor Knowles and himself, paid tribute to the outstanding and selfless work carried out within the Wollaston and Stourbridge Town ward by Councillor Mrs. Cowell and for her excellent service as a member of the Stourbridge Area Committee, including her period as Vice-Chairman. It was agreed that a letter of condolence be sent to Councillor Mrs Cowell's family on their sad loss.

- (4) In appreciating the provision of the new mini roundabout installed at the junction of Vicarage Road and Eggington Road, Councillor Barlow asked if Eggington Road would be included on the list of highway improvements in 2012/13. The Group Engineer - Traffic and Road Safety agreed to respond to Councillor Barlow on this issue.
-

52. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

The dates of Scrutiny Committees remaining to be held in the current municipal year were received and noted.

53. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting of the Committee would be determined at the Annual Council Meeting on 17th May, 2012.

The meeting ended at 9.05 p.m.

CHAIRMAN