

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE

Monday, 21st March, 2005 at 7.00 pm
at Hob Green Primary School, Hob Green Road, Stourbridge

PRESENT:-

Councillor Adams (Chairman)
Councillors Attwood, Banks, Mrs Collins, Donegan, Kettle, Rogers, A
Turner, C Wilson and Vickers; Mr P Singh, Mr G Downing and Miss R Hill.

Officers:-

Director of Law and Property (as Area Lead Officer); Head of Public Protection, Head of Design and Projects, Head of Bereavement Services, Senior Engineer Traffic and Transportation, (Directorate of the Urban Environment); Assistant Director of Education, Access and Inclusion Division, Area Youth and Community Worker (Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning); Group Accountant Corporate Finance (Directorate of Finance) Neighbourhood Manager (Chief Executive) and Mrs. J. Rees (Directorate of Law and Property).

IN ATTENDANCE:

Approximately 130 members of the public were in attendance, together with the Assistant Chief Officer, West Midlands Fire Service, Station Manager of Stourbridge Fire Station, Fire Union's Representative and the Director of Corporate Development of Dudley Group of Hospitals. Councillor Crumpton (Ward Member for Cradley and Foxcote) was also in attendance.

77

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 31ST January, 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed.

78

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Cowell, Jones, Knowles, Mrs. Martin, Musk, Mr. Coggan and Ms Shepherd.

79

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rogers declared a prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 7 (West Midlands Fire Service) in view of his membership of the West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority.

Councillor Rogers declared a prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 9 (Capital Allocations) in view of his Membership of the Scout Association and their Fund Raising Committee.

Councillor Rogers declared a prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 10 (Grant Applications - Stevens Park and Recreation Ground Trust) in view of his membership of the Scout Association.

Councillors Kettle, Turner and Crumpton declared a prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 10 (Grant Applications) in view of their membership of the Beech Tree Miners and Wollescote Welfare Trust.

Councillors Banks, Mrs. Collins and Donegan declared a prejudicial interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of Agenda Item No. 12 (Proposed Skatepark - Stevens Park Wollescote), in view of their membership of the Development Control Committee.

80

RECEIPT OF PETITION

The following petition was received and referred to the Officer indicated for consideration and attention:

From 111 residents of the Lye and Wollescote area, objecting to the proposals for a skatepark facility at Stevens Park, Wollescote. The petition was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for consideration and deferred for consideration under agenda item 12.

81

YOUTH ISSUES

The Co-opted Member, representing young people, gave a verbal report on the recent "Have a Say Day", which had proved to be very popular. It was envisaged that the newly-elected young people would meet with Councillors in very near future.

DUDLEY GROUP OF HOSPITALS PRESENTATION

The Director of Corporate Development, Dudley Group of Hospitals, gave a presentation on the issue of waiting times and on the current position in respect of the proposed changes to the delivery of hospital services, and their impact on the public.

The Director responded to a number of questions raised by Members and the public.

RESOLVED

That the Director of Corporate Development be thanked for his presentation, the contents of which are noted.

FIRE SERVICE PRESENTATION

(Having previously declared a prejudicial interest in this item, Councillor Rogers withdrew from the meeting during its consideration).

The Station Manager of Stourbridge Fire Station gave a presentation on proposals by the Fire Service to alter their resource allocation, particularly between midnight and 8.00 a.m. At the same time, more fire prevention and educational work with the public and school children would be undertaken and the Station Manager indicated how this would be achieved.

The Assistant Chief Officer of the West Midlands Fire Service then reported on the decision of the Fire Service Committee, at a meeting held earlier this day that, as a result of the consultation process, a smaller reduction in the number of available appliances than originally proposed would be effected. He confirmed that there were no plans to cut the number of fire appliances at the Stourbridge and Halesowen stations. He also explained the impact of new technology equipment which would enable a more effective management of calls to incidents and thus ensure an improved use of manpower.

A representative of the Fire Brigade Union presented the viewpoint of the Unions on the proposed changes, conveying the concerns of the Union regarding average response times, the response in the event of terrorist or other emergency incidents and the impact of possible redundancies on the service.

Questions by the Committee and members of the public were addressed by the Station Manager, the Assistant Chief Officer of the West Midlands Fire Service and the Union Representative.

RESOLVED

That the Station Manager, the Assistant Chief Officer of the West Midlands Fire Service and the Union Representative be thanked for their respective contributions to this very informative presentation, the contents of which are 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:-

1. A question regarding an alleged recent long wait for a CT scan, by a stroke victim, was raised, in response to which the Director of Corporate Development of Dudley Group of Hospitals, undertook to investigate and send a written response to the questioner.
2. A number of comments relating to the proposed skatepark provision in Wollescote were deferred for consideration under that agenda item 12.
3. Representatives of the Sons of Rest Club at Wollescote Hall asked for clarification on the need for a licence or lease to run their club at Stevens Park, Wollescote. The Area Liaison Officer advised that, whilst investigating a request for access to the Hall by another organisation, it had been discovered that the Sons of Rest Club did not appear to have written consent to use Wollescote Hall. There was a need, therefore, to provide documentation to ensure good practice and to set out the terms of occupation of the building. The Area Liaison Officer confirmed that there would be no charge for the issue of such licence or lease.
4. A member of the public commented on the possible future provision by Dudley MBC of wheelie bins. The Area Liaison Officer advised that this matter had been investigated, but that wheeled bin provision had been considered too costly to introduce. A written response would be sent to the questioner by the Director of the Urban Environment, as she was not in attendance.
5. A member of the public expressed concerns at the withdrawal of the bathing service for elderly and infirm and its consequential effect on people who relied on the service. The concerns were referred to the Director of Social Services for a written response to be sent to the questioner.

6. A member of the public expressed concern at the potential fire risk to his home from students attending Ridgewood School, who had already set fire to the scrubland between his property and the school. The Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong Learning undertook to speak with the Head Teacher to investigate the concerns. The Station Manager of Stourbridge Fire Station undertook to visit the school and liaise with school and police in order to resolve the problems. He confirmed that if a problem were to emerge the fire service could provide fire prevention exercises for pupils.
7. A member of the public requested information regarding the proposed new mosque and community centre in Oakeywell Street Dudley. The Chairman responded that the Dudley Muslim Association had obtained the freehold of this land, having previously held it on 99 year lease. The land had been purchased for value. The planning application for the project was to be considered by the Development Control Committee on 25th April, 2005. Any person wishing to submit views on the application were advised to contact the Council's Development Control Section.
8. A member of the public requested a referendum on the Muslim Association's application. The Area Liaison Officer responded that a referendum was very unlikely, on the grounds of cost. He advised that already over 1000 people had submitted views on the planning application to the Development Control Section.
9. A number of comments relating to agenda items 9 and 10 were deferred for consideration under those agenda items.
10. In response to a member of the public's enquiry as to what the Council's Mission Statement was, the Area Liaison Officer said that the Council Mission was to make the Borough a high quality place to live, work and spend leisure time for all our residents and visitors.
11. A member of the public complained that he had not received an adequate response to previous questions submitted at the meeting on 31st January regarding the green waste disposal unit at Iverley Park Farm. The Area Liaison Officer apologised to the complainant for this delay. The complaint was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for investigation and a written response to be sent to the questioner.
12. In response to issues raised by members of the public regarding two planning applications for premises in Monument Avenue, and for confirmation that their comments had been brought to the attention of the Development Control Section, the Area Liaison Officer advised that their objections should be pursued through the Development Control Committee.

CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

(All those Members of the Committee, who had previously declared prejudicial interests in applications for a grant under Minute 79, withdrew from the meeting whilst the applications in which they had declared interests, were considered).

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted requesting consideration of three applications for funding from the residue of the Capital Allocations budget for 2004/05.

The Area Liaison Officer also reported that the Council had approved an amount of £50,000 capital allocations grant for 2005/06 which would be available from 1st April 2005.

A member of the public pointed out an error in paragraph 2.1 of the report. The amount stated should read "£4771.21"

In respect of the application by the Oldswinford St Mary's Cricket Club, and in response to requests by Members of the Committee, the Area Liaison Officer undertook, to request that users of the playing fields be allowed to use the toilet facilities at the Cricket Club.

Upon consideration of the report, it was

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>
The 15th Stourbridge Norton St Michael's Scout Unit	Erection of a brick built building	£5,000
New Farm Estate Neighbourhood Watch	Combined Printer/Scanner	£300
Oldswinford St Mary's Cricket Club	Improvement Project	£4,100

GRANT APPLICATIONS: STEVENS PARK AND RECREATION GROUND FOUNDATION TRUST

(Those Members of the Committee who had declared a prejudicial interest under Minute 79 in applications for a grant from this Trust, withdrew from the meeting whilst the applications in which they had declared an interest were considered. Councillor Crumpton also withdrew from the meeting).

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted seeking consideration of two applications for funding from the Trust.

Some concern was expressed at the retrospective nature of the application by Beech Tree Miners and Wollescote Welfare Trust. Upon consideration of the report and after detailed discussion the Committee agreed to award a grant of 50% of the sum requested.

In respect of the application by St Andrew's Scout Group, a member of the public pointed out that other capital grants had been made to the Group from the Stevens Trust and the Committee's capital allocation.

Following detailed discussion in which the representative of the Directorate of Finance advised that payment would be deferred until after 1st April, 2005 and would be paid from income generated in 2005/06, the Committee agreed to approve the grant in the full amount requested.

RESOLVED

That the sums below be allocated to the organisations for the purposes indicated, subject to the organisations confirming to the Director of Finance that the remaining funding required has been secured.

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Beech Tree Miners and Wollescote Welfare Institute	Provision of disabled facilities	£2,500
Wollescote St Andrew's Scout Group	Installation of Central Heating	£4,900

AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGERS

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted updating on key achievements in the Lye and Stourbridge managed neighbourhoods during 2003/04. Appreciation of the good works of the Neighbourhood Management Team was expressed.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted.

88

SKATEPARK PROVISION – STEVENS PARK, WOLLESCOTE

(Those members of the Committee who had previously declared prejudicial interests in this item withdrew from the meeting during its consideration).

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the results of the public consultation recently undertaken on a proposal to install a skatepark facility at Stevens Park, Wollescote.

A petition signed by 111 residents was submitted opposing the proposal to site a skatepark facility at Stevens Park, Wollescote for numerous reasons including noise nuisance, safety and supervision concerns, inadequate car parking facilities, emergency access problems, and additional burden on park staff.

The Friends of the Stevens Park Group objected to the proposal for a number of reasons, including access problems, parking, noise litter, public safety concern relating to anti social behaviour.

Within the Public Forum session, a number of members of the public had raised objections for numerous reasons, including noise nuisance, alleged inconsistency with the Deed of Gift, safety concerns, lack of supportive evidence proving a need for a skatepark, lack of car parking facilities, detrimental impact on the landscape of the park, lack of detailed costings for the scheme.

Members of the Committee expressed their views on the proposals within the report. Reference was made by a member of the public to the new indoor skateboard facility at the ground floor of the Bells Road car park in Stourbridge, which had over 2,000 members.

After lengthy debate on the proposals set out in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 of the report, it was

RESOLVED

That the proposals contained within the report be not approved.

89

SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURES

The time having reached 9.30 p.m. it was

RESOLVED

That Council Procedure 22 .1 be suspended to enable agenda items 13, 14 and 15 only to be considered.

90 HIGHWAY MINOR WORKS CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2005/2006

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the proposed Programme of Work for Local Safety Schemes, Pedestrian Crossings and Safer Roads to Schools within the Stourbridge Area.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
 - (2) That the schemes in the proposed Programme as indicated in the appendices to the report submitted; be supported.
-

91 STOURBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE/MASTER PLAN

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the progress of the Stourbridge Area Town Centre Master Plan.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the contents of the report submitted be noted.
 - (2) That the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to submit a progress report to each future meeting of the Stourbridge Area Committee.
-

92 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on written responses made to questions asked at previous meetings.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.45 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

SAC/54