

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE

Monday 27th June 2011 at 7.00 p.m.
At Wollaston Village Hall, Bridgnorth Road, Wollaston, Stourbridge

PRESENT-

Councillors Attwood, Banks, Mrs Cowell, Hanif, L Jones, Kettle, Knowles, Lowe, Mrs Martin, Mrs Rogers, A Turner, Mrs Walker (for part of the meeting only) and C Wilson; and following their co-option: Mr R Owen and Miss N Hathway.

OFFICERS:-

Acting Director of Children's Services (Area Liaison Officer), Assistant Director Planning and Environmental Health, Head of Museums Greenspaces and Bereavement Services, Group Engineer – Traffic and Road Safety, (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Assistant Director Libraries, Archives and Adult Learning; Quality and Complaints Manager, Improvements and Complaints Consultant (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Area Youth and Community Worker and Area Detached Youth Worker (Directorate of Children's Services) Mr T Holder - Solicitor and Mrs J Rees (Directorate of Human Resources).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Inspector E. Boyle and Police Constable J Bird (West Midlands Police) Mr C Wood and Ms J Winpenny (West Midlands Fire Service) together with approximately 18 members of the public.

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor Kettle be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

(Councillor Kettle thereupon took the Chair)

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Adams, Barlow and Mr G Downing.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Knowles declared a personal interest in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of agenda Item 14 (School Crossing Patrol Facility, Heath Farm Road, Stourbridge), in view of his governorship of Gigmill Primary School.

Councillor Mrs Martin declared a personal interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of agenda Item 13 (Capital Allocations - Application by Holy Trinity Amblecote Church Hall), in view of her membership of the Holy Trinity Church.

Councillor Mrs Rogers declared a personal interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of agenda Item 16 (Heritage Lottery Grant for Mary Stevens Park), in view of her Chairmanship of the Friends of Mary Stevens Park and Swinford Common.

4 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8th March, 2011, be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the following amendments:

a) the deletion of the words "and prejudicial" in line one of minute no 81.

b) The addition of the following two resolutions to Minute no. 92

"(8) In the period between the Annual Council Meeting and the election of a Chairman at the first meeting of the Area Committee in a municipal year, the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Leaders of all political groups represented on the Council, be authorised to determine urgent applications for capital funding within the agreed criteria for Stourbridge Area committee capital allocations.

(9) Thereafter, the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee and the Opposition spokesperson(s), be authorised to determine urgent applications for capital funding within the agreed criteria for Stourbridge Area Committee capital allocations".

5 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor Mrs Cowell be appointed Vice Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

6 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROTOCOL FOR AREA COMMITTEES

A report of the Director of Corporate Resources was submitted on the terms of reference and protocol for Area Committees.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on the Terms of Reference and Protocol for Area Committees, be noted.

7 CO-OPTED MEMBERS

A report of the Director of Corporate Resources was submitted on the co-option of members to serve on the Committee for the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

The Area Liaison Officer advised that Mr G Downing and Ms P Shepherd had indicated their willingness to stand for reappointment and that the organisations they represented were happy for them to stand. She also advised that the Stourbridge Youth Council had nominated Ryan Owen and Nadia Hathway to serve as joint co-opted members to represent young people, should the Committee so wish.

The Chairman welcomed the young people to the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the following persons be re-appointed as co-opted members for the Committee for the 2011/12 Municipal Year representing the group or organisation indicated.

Mr G Downing – Local Businesses
Ms P Shepherd – Tenant and Residents Organisations
Mr Ryan Owen and Miss Nadia Hathway (as one joint member) – Young People

8 APPOINTMENT OF OUTSIDE BODIES

A report of the Director of Corporate Resources was submitted on the appointment of representatives to various outside organisations for the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

In response to comments from a Member of the Committee that he had not been invited to attend any meetings of the Withymoor Community Association, it was reported that this Association had disbanded seven years previous.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the appointments to the organisations indicated be made as follows:-

<u>ORGANISATION</u>	<u>REPRESENTATIVE</u>	<u>PERIOD OF OFFICE</u>
<u>Social Inclusion</u>		
Mary Stevens Hospice	The three Members of the Council for the Pedmore and Stourbridge East Ward	Annual
Palmer & Seabright Charity	Mrs S Lowe	For an indefinite period
Thomas Hill Education Foundation	Councillors Ms Partridge and A Turner	Period of three years from 01.02.2012
<u>Community Associations</u>		
Lye Body Building Gym	Councillors A Turner and Lowe	Annual
Lye	The three ward Members of the Council for the Lye and Stourbridge North ward	Annual
Norton	Councillor Adams	Annual
Withymoor *	Councillor Banks	Annual
*subject to confirmation		

RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

It was reported that no petitions had been received prior to the meeting and none were submitted at the meeting.

10

YOUTH MATTERS

Miss Hathway and Mr Owen, the two newly co-opted young people, gave an oral report on youth matters, including:

- Reference to a questionnaire to be circulated to all local Stourbridge Schools asking for opinions on local youth issues.
- That following the securing of a Health Awareness Grant, it was proposed to hold workshops in each of the four local Stourbridge secondary schools to raise health awareness.
- That the recent sports Olympics had been a big success; and
- Stourbridge Youth Centre was to offer a number of sports activities during the school summer holidays.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the oral reports be noted.

11

POLICE MATTERS

On behalf of Inspector Boyle, Police Constable Bird reported orally on Police matters, advising that:

- Crime figures had greatly reduced in the past year and the reasons for this.
- Recent Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings had been poorly attended, although there was no known reason for the lack of attendees.

In response to a request from the Chairman, Constable Bird undertook to send the crime figures to all Members of the Committee.

A member of the public praised the Stourbridge and Brierley Hill Police for assisting her in a recent situation. She had advised the Home Secretary of her gratitude.

RESOLVED

1. That the oral report on Police matters be noted.
 2. That the crime figures be sent to all Members of the Committee.
-

12

FIRE SERVICE MATTERS

Mr C Wood gave an oral report on fire matters advising that:

- Incidents of arson rubbish, dwelling arson, litter bin rubbish and vehicle arson had reduced in the last twelve months. Arson in offices and business premises had however increased.
- A number of education days had been held, such as The Under 5's Day at Himley Hall and the Armed Forces Day at which large numbers of the public took part with drivers being encouraged not to use mobile telephones whilst driving and to use seat belts at all times.
- Work had been ongoing with Healthy Hub Wardens which had resulted in a decrease in the number of anti social behaviour incidents.

Mr Wood also informed of an event on 8th August at Mary Stevens Park organised in association with the Police and local churches at which the Fire Service's education department and a fire appliance would attend.

RESOLVED

That the oral report on Fire Service matters be noted.

13

PUBLIC FORUM

Before reading questions from the public the Area Liaison Officer reported that any questions which could not be answered would receive a written response.

Questions and answers were then given as follows:-

1. A member of the public requested that white paint be introduced at the crossing near the bus stop at the junction with Wollaston Island.

The Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety undertook to investigate the request and send a written response to the questioner.

2. A member of the public questioned whether something could be done to prevent the dumping of rubbish and stone throwing at Mamble Road Builders Yard, which had closed three years ago. He commented on the noise nuisance between Thursday night and Sunday morning and that the road near the yard had not been swept in the last six months.

The Assistant Director Planning and Environmental Health undertook to have the matter investigated and for a written response to be sent to the questioner.

3. A member of the public commented that he believed that information given by a previous Area Liaison Officer and a Member of the Committee in September 2008, regarding the ring fencing for 5 years of the income of the Ernest Stevens Trust for the repair of the gates at Mary Stevens Park, and that if the Heritage Lottery Bid were successful the money “ring fenced” would not be required was incorrect, as the information now contained within the report being submitted to the meeting contradicted this.

A Member of the Committee responded, stating that at the time of the first report in 2008 the information referred to was correct, that if the Heritage Lottery Bid was successful the funding referred to would not be required and could be returned to the Area Committee’s Capital Allocations budget and the Ernest Stevens Trust fund. The Member of the Committee advised that no one was trying to mislead anyone, it was just a statement of fact that the terms and conditions of the Heritage Lottery Bid had now changed, as indicated in the report to be considered.

4. A member of the public expressed concerns regarding Section 106 monies referred to in the report to be considered under agenda item 16, which would be considered under that agenda item.
5. The same member of the public queried why the gates could not have been repaired by students at Dudley College, as he was concerned that whilst awaiting the results of the Heritage Lottery Bid the gates were deteriorating further.

A Member of the Committee advised that the college students would not be able to complete the work so as to comply with the criteria of English Heritage.

6. A member of the public, representing the Wollaston Village Hall thanked the Committee for having repaired the driveway to the Centre, but pointed out that the driveway did not belong to the Village Hall, as it had been installed to enable footballers to gain access to the fields at the back of the hall.

She also thanked everyone for cutting the trees down in Westwood Avenue enabling residents to see out of their property windows.

7. A member of the public commented on the Council's intention to seek “City Status” for Dudley, querying if Councillors would be paid a higher salary for managing a city and whether Members would receive the same remuneration for attending less meetings, since the reported reduction in meetings of the area committees, which also meant a reduction in consultation time. He also queried whether there was someone whom he could contact to request the reinstatement of 5 meetings per year for area committees.

Another member of the public also expressed concerns that the reduction in meetings of the area committee would curtail the democratic process.

A Member of the Committee responded that it had been considered that city status would benefit Dudley Borough by promoting the area's history and creating more jobs and encouraging more visitors to the town.

He also advised that Councillors were currently paid a basic allowance rather than being paid in accordance with the number of meetings attended.

Some Members of the Committee confirmed that they would meet between area committee meetings and hold surgeries to ensure that public consultation continued.

Other Members of the Committee confirmed support for the City status application, and were in agreement that the granting of city status would bring economic growth to the area.

Some Members of the Committee commented that the reduction of Area Committee meetings had been necessary in the current economic climate, which had necessitated many cuts.

8. A Member of the public questioned why the Mayor of Dudley did not attend the National Armed Forces Day. Members of the Committee responded that Dudley held its own Armed Forces Day celebration, at Himley Hall, which was always very well attended. Members were aware that the Mayor of Dudley had never been invited to the attend the National celebration.
9. During the ensuing discussion on the reduction in the number of meetings of the area committees, and other reductions in services made throughout the Council, a member of the public queried the amount of savings that had been made by the reduction in the number of area committee meetings.

The Area Liaison Officer undertook to send a written response to the questioner.

10. A member of the public expressed concerns that the current budget for area committee's had not been published and that the current criteria of local organisations having to wait three years before applying for additional funding was unnecessary. His comments would be considered under agenda item 13 (Capital Allocations)

A joint report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services and the Director of Children Services was submitted on progress of visits to Adult and Children Social Care establishments during the 2010/11 municipal year and also requesting further nominations to make visits in the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

In introducing the report, the Improvements and Complaints Consultant (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services) thanked all Members who had taken part in previous visits. He also advised that Members wishing to take part in the visits in 2011/12 would need to be CRB checked and attend a training programme prior to the commencement of visits.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report now submitted be noted.
- (2) That Members of the Committee advise the Directors of Adult, Community and Housing Services and Children's Services of their willingness to undertake visits during the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on applications for funding from the Committee's Allocations budget.

In presenting the report the Area Liaison Officer advised that Members had been furnished with a copy of the criteria for allocating funds from the capital allocations budget, as detailed in paragraph 5 of the report submitted for their consideration.

She also advised that she and the Chairman had, under their delegated authority approved an application by Holy Trinity Amblecocte Church Hall for £2,500 towards the installation of gas central heating for the hall, kitchen and meeting room and the installation of a new suspended ceiling in the hall.

The Area Liaison Officer also advised that a letter of thanks had been received from Mount Pleasant Methodist Church for the grant awarded to the Church.

She further advised that the Stourbridge Radio Group had requested an extension to the time allowed for them to claim their grant approved in September 2010, as there had been difficulties which had necessitated the delay in them claiming the grant.

Having taken the comments referred to in the Public Forum into account, and bearing in mind that the Committee had unspent funds outstanding from the previous year, Members indicated that they wished to amend the criteria used for allowing grants. They also expressed the view that due to there being less meetings of the committee that a working group should be established to consider applications between meetings of the Committee.

The changes to the criteria included: reducing the minimum period groups have to wait to apply for more funding from three years to two; increasing the amount people can ask for without having to find match funding from £1,000 to £1,500; the retention of the £5,000 limit groups can apply for, unless there were exceptional circumstances and the establishment of a working group to meet ad hoc to look at the detail of applications.

RESOLVED

1. That the criteria used to approve grants be amended to take into account the suggestions made in the paragraph above.
2. That the application by Holy Trinity Amblecote Church Hall for £2,500 towards the installation of gas central heating for the hall, kitchen and meeting room and the installation of a new suspended ceiling in the hall, as agreed as an urgent application by the Chairman and the Area Liaison Officer be noted.
3. That the application by the Ultimate Trampoline Club for £2,799.60 towards the purchase of webbing, overhead twisting belt and safety soft steps be approved.
4. That the request by Stourbridge Radio station for an extension to the time allowed to claim their grant approved in September 2010 be approved up, to expire on 13th December 2011.
5. That a working group, comprising one Member for each Ward, together with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, be established to consider applications in future.

16

HEATH FARM ROAD STOURBRIDGE: SCHOOL CROSSING PATROL FACILITY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the outcome of further investigations into the viability of the school crossing patrol facility at Heath Farm Road, Stourbridge. In presenting the report the Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety advised that a third investigation had confirmed that there was insufficient data to support the continued provision of a school crossing patrol in Heath Farm Road.

A member of the Committee requested whether any alternative suggestions had been considered. In response the Group Engineer, Traffic and Road Safety advised that a vehicle activation sign had been installed.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report submitted be noted.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be advised of the Committee's support for the discontinuation of a school crossing patrol in Heath Farm Road.

17

HIGHWAYS MINOR WORKS CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2011/12

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the proposed programmes of work for Local Safety Schemes, Safer Routes to Schools and Pedestrian Crossings within the Stourbridge area for the 2011/12 financial year as described in Appendix A, and shown on the plan attached to the report submitted.

In presenting the report, the Group Engineer Traffic and Road Safety advised that the programme of work had been delayed to accommodate the revised West Midlands Local Transport Plan. He also advised there had been a need to reconsider unsupported schemes.

Members of the Committee expressed the views that:

- The programme as set out in the report submitted, needed to include a small scheme in Heath Farm Road, Stourbridge
- Concerns that the Eggington Road, Wollaston Scheme would be similar to the scheme already existing in Duncombe Street/Bridgnorth Road.
- The Duncombe Street/Bridgnorth Road junction was considered dangerous.
- The need for a mini roundabout in Vicarage Road at the junction of Eggington Road.
- Concerns that the red anti skid road surface material had a very short life span.
- The need for The Queensway to be upgraded.
- The need to include Racecourse Lane and Stanley Road in future local safety schemes.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be advised of the comments of the Committee as set out above and also of the Committee's support for:

- a) The proposed Local Safety schemes, for Eggington Road, Wollaston, Studley Gate, Stourbridge, a small local scheme in Heath Farm Road, Stourbridge and the introduction of speed management throughout the area covered by the Committee.
- b) The proposed Safer Routes to Schools schemes for Thorns Road southbound and the Queensway, Pedmore.

18

HERITAGE LOTTERY GRANT FOR MARY STEVENS PARK

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the success of the first round of the Heritage Lottery Fund application and on the programme for the development of the second round application, with a request to consider options to provide match funding for the Stage 2 Heritage Lottery Fund application, including the appointment of a Project Manager and a design Team to draw up the detailed bid. It was anticipated that the bid could be submitted by August 2012 and results known early in 2013.

In presenting the report the Head of Museums, Greenspaces and Bereavement Services advised on the need for a commitment from the Committee to match fund the shortfall of £125,000 towards the second stage of the application.

Comments by Members of the public under the Public Forum session were taken into consideration, together with comments from Members of the Committee, including that:

- Caution was required, especially in the light of recent Council cuts including redundancies.
- Some people considered that the gates at Mary Stevens Park could be repaired without involving alterations to the park, as set out in the bid.
- Concerns that Section 106 monies referred to in the report, might not be available for use in the Park
- There would be a need to consult further on the detail of the project once drawn up.
- Concerns that the bid was taking so long to come to fruition.

In response to concerns about the funding put in from the Committee's Capital Allocation Budget and Ernest Stevens Trust, a Member of the Committee advised that there would be no loss of money. If the bid failed, funding from the Committee and Ernest Stevens Trust would still be available to repair the gates.

RESOLVED

1. That the content of the report be noted.
2. That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture be advised of the Committee's support for the application for the Stage 2 Heritage Lottery Bid application.
3. That the funding sources identified in the report, including the £125,000 already "ring fenced" for the repair of the gates be committed as match funding for the Second Stage Heritage Lottery Bid application.
4. That, once a Project Manager had been appointed, a Working Group, comprising one Member from each Ward be established.

19 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on written responses sent in respect of questions asked at a previous meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report be noted.

20 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

No issues were raised by Members.

21 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of future meeting of all Scrutiny Committees held at the Council House, Dudley be noted.

22 DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of future meetings of the Committee be noted, as follows:-

17th October 2011 at 7.00 p.m. at Hob Green Primary School, Hob Green Road, Pedmore Fields, Stourbridge, DY9 9EX.

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

The meeting ended at 9.15p.m.

CHAIRMAN

SAC/14