

BRIERLEY HILL AREA COMMITTEE

Thursday 4th December 2008, at 7.00 p.m.
at the Brier School, Bromley Lane, Kingswinford

PRESENT:-

Councillor D Blood (in the Chair)
Councillor P Harley (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Mrs E Blood, Ms L Boleyn, Ms Foster, Mrs Greenaway, Mrs D Harley, Ms Harris, Islam, Mrs Jordan, Miller, Nottingham, Southall Tyler, Mrs Wilson and Mr D Horrocks, co-opted member.

Officers

The Director of the Urban Environment (as Area Liaison Officer), Section Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety), Mr P Boland, Principal Conservation Officer and Borough Archaeologist, Mr B Dwight, Group Highways Manager and Manager of Executive Support – (all Directorate of the Urban Environment), Ms P Sharratt, Assistant Director for Children’s Specialist Services, Mr D Williams, Lead Officer for Targeted and Curriculum (Youth Service), Ms J Garwood, Area Team Leader – Early Years, Youth and Education - (all Directorate of Children’s Services); Head of Housing Options, (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Senior Account Manager, and Marketing and Communications Officer, (Chief Executive’s Directorate), Mr K Edwards, Principal Solicitor and Miss K Fellows (Directorate of Law and Property).

Also in attendance

Mr T Jackson – West Midlands Fire Service
Inspector Bradbury and Police Constable K Sinar – West Midlands Police

together with thirty nine members of the public.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Southall and Mrs Wilson declared a personal interest in Agenda item 8 (Brierley Hill High Street Conservation Area – Results of Public Consultation and Conservation Area Management Proposals), in accordance with the Members’ Code of Conduct as both were Members of the Development Control Committee and neither spoke or voted on the issue.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2nd October 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

PETITIONS

A Petition from residents regarding a request to close Dawley Brook Trading Estate off from Wartell Bank, Kingswinford due to the amount of general traffic and lorries and noise pollution caused by the traffic going over the speed bumps was received and referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.

YOUTH ISSUES

- (a) The Area Liaison Officer reported on matters raised, and the outcomes of certain issues considered, at the meeting of this Committee's Young People's Working Group held on 17th November, 2008.

It was reported that a debate had taken place on skate parks and multi use games areas and arrangements had been made for a site visit to the former King George VI park and tennis courts, to consider whether this would be a viable site for the above, and if so there would be re-engagement of consultants to carry out an assessment. It was also agreed that the needs of young people should be established.

- (b) It was further reported that an oral report on the Youth Opportunities Fund had been presented, by Ms A Grove, Lead Officer for Universal Services, (Directorate of Children's Services), with details provided on how and when the funds were distributed. It had been agreed that details would be emailed to members of the monies distributed by the fund on a ward by ward basis.
- (c) A verbal report on Youth Issues and the provision of Youth Services had been presented by Ms J Garwood, Area Team Leader, Brierley Hill Youth Forum, when in particular it had been reported that there had not been any permanent youth provision in the Hawbush area for ten months, and that there was a vacant post for a detached Youth Worker in the area.
- (d) Mr M Nasser, The Area Youth Worker at Nine Locks Sports Group had raised an issue, indicating that this facility was not suitable for those young people who wished to play sport and it had been agreed that the Head of Sport and Physical Activity would speak to colleagues at the Dell Stadium, Brierley Hill to ascertain whether there was any possibility of the Sports Group utilising this facility. It had also been suggested that contact be made with Brierley Hill Community Forum to source possible funding for the group.

- (e) Ms J Garwood, Area Team Leader, Brierley Hill Youth Forum, stated that Young Travellers had raised issues of fly tipping and rat infestation on the travellers' site in Oak Lane, and it was agreed that the Head of Sport and Physical Activity would raise these issues with colleagues.
- (f) The Area Liaison Officer reported that future issues for the Working Group were discussed, when it had been agreed that Head Teacher representation should be invited to future meetings and other agencies should be invited when appropriate. It was further agreed that the agenda be expanded to involve young people, and stated that it was important to note that there was a need for the Working Group in order that Young People could voice their opinions and express their views.

He reported in particular that discussions were to be held with a representative of the owner of a piece of land as to whether it would be a viable site for a skateboarding facility; that further consideration would also be given to funding options for undertaking projects, such as skate boarding provision and on liaison with Youth Forum Workers on the question of what young people wanted as far as activities and facilities were concerned, and addressing the various issues involved in the provision of such facilities.

Reports on these matters had been requested for consideration at the next meeting of the Working Group scheduled for 9th February, 2009.

YOUTH SERVICE CONSULTATION

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the Youth Service Consultation document which had been published on 7th October, 2008. The Consultation would run until 6th January 2009.

Ms P Sharratt, Assistant Director for Children's Specialist Services reported in particular on the rationale for the organisation and development of the service, and invited the members of the Area Committee to make comments upon the report.

Councillor Miller commented that he agreed that attention should be given to all children in the Borough, and particular attention should be paid to looked after children, in order to provide them with the same life style as other children.

Councillor Ms Harris acknowledged that the general universal offer within the consultation to be made available to all young people who live within the Dudley Borough was a good premise, she would like to see it more closely used for young people not getting any services or help, and in particular referred to there being no permanent youth provision in the Hawbush area for ten months, and suggested that the way forward may be to more closely target those areas of deprivation.

Councillor Ms Harris referred to the 'Respect Yourself Campaign' and suggested that the work in relation to the campaign should also target young fathers and the partners and young men of those subjected to domestic violence.

Councillor Islam referred in particular to the Universal Curriculum and the cost to young people of Dudley Youth Service Activity, suggesting that the subscription scheme should be closely monitored in order to ensure affordability for all those wishing to access the youth sessions.

In referring to the Universal Curriculum Councillor Islam recommended that the opportunities to young people should include citizenship and civic pride and also such workshops to provide young people with an idea of how the democratic process works. He also recommended that programmes should be made available to take young people to various places of worship to broaden young peoples minds upon religion, and community centres in order to demonstrate what could be offered by these facilities.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and appendix to the report, submitted on Youth Service Consultation be noted and that Members make any further comments they would wish to make in accordance with the Consultation document submitted.

CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF THE ETHNIC MINORITY ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE – AMENDED OCTOBER, 2008.

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the consultation on the future of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, as amended on 23rd October, 2008.

Ms P Sharratt, Assistant Director for Children's Specialist Services reported in particular that there would be no changes to this year's budget of the service, and that the consultation now being undertaken concerned the financial support for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service for the future financial year, namely 2009/10. The consultation document submitted had been amended to reflect this.

It was further reported that following the end of the consultation period the Cabinet Member, in conjunction with the Cabinet and Council would determine the future structure and operation of, and budgetary arrangements for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service and the members were invited to comment upon the report, and make any representations to the Cabinet Member as part of the consultation process.

Arising from the presentation a number of comments were made in particular:-

- Councillor Ms Harris commented that she agreed the service should be reviewed to meet new challenges, and although it was noted that the consultation laid out an offer, she was disappointed that there were no examples of best practices and if there should be no-one appointed as a Community Development Worker, it would be difficult to calculate how much money should be spent on this service. The points made were responded to.
- Councillor Ms Harris recommended that Consultations in the future, should provide more information, in order to provide consultees with an informed choice.
- Councillor Islam agreed that the service should be reviewed, and in order to provide the best service for the Dudley Borough, recommended that these services in other areas of the country should be monitored in order to ascertain best practice.
- Councillor Ms Boleyn welcomed the Consultation, advised that she was disappointed that it had not taken place earlier, and invited everyone to respond to the Consultation before the 8th December, 2008. The points made were responded to.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and appendix to the report submitted be noted and that the cabinet member for Children's Services be informed of the comments made at the meeting as part of the consultation process.

PROPOSED BRIERLEY HILL HIGH STREET CONSERVATION AREA – RESULTS OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the consultation undertaken in relation to the draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Brierley Hill High Street and on the subsequent formation of management proposals for the new Brierley Hill High Street conservation area.

Mr P Boland, The Principal Conservation Officer/Borough Archaeologist, in his presentation of the report, stated that the Brierley Hill High Street Character Appraisal and Management proposals were set out in the foyer of the school for perusal.

Work in respect of the preservation and enhancement of listed buildings, and work with Advantage West Midlands was also reported.

In relation to funding it was reported that funding partners would be approached and enquiries were being made to attract investment, to develop shop fronts and Advert Design Guidance Grant Aid would assist with this.

In responding to a question from Councillor Tyler, the Principal Conservation Officer/Borough Archaeologist indicated that although 111 questionnaires in relation to the Consultation were returned despite 2,500 letters being sent out this had not been unusual in relation to consultations and some of the returns were received from organisations, who had many members, whilst other key organisations had been consulted direct.

Councillor Ms Harris commended the Officers involved in the Consultation for their hard work and was delighted with the result of the consultation, stating that she considered that such recognition of the local heritage was overdue and would help preserve the legacy of industrial, Victorian and Edwardian buildings, and wished to provide her full and unqualified support for this.

Councillor Islam also supported the proposals and indicated that the conservation area in Brierley Hill would help to attract visitors to the area who were interested in industry.

In responding to a question from Councillor Miller the Principal Conservation Officer/Borough Archaeologist indicated that, in relation to derelict buildings, and the cost of rebuilding/maintaining these buildings, the conservation area could act positively to assist in funding for such buildings.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report and appendices to the report submitted on the proposed Brierley Hill High Street Conservation area – results of public consultation and conservation area management proposals, be noted together with the proposal to formally designate the Brierley Hill High Street conservation area and adoption of proposals for its future management.

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the introduction of two Traffic Regulation Orders to control moving traffic and waiting in Brierley Hill.

In presenting the report, the Section Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety) referred to the plans of the proposed orders that were on display, and to the two types of order, one relating to moving traffic and one relating to parking.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report and appendices to the report submitted, be noted and that the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to agree to the introduction of two traffic regulation orders to control moving traffic and waiting in Brierley Hill with the amendment recorded in appendices A and B of the report submitted.

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PUBLIC FORUM

Consideration was given to the following written/oral questions raised:-

- (a) In response to a question raised in relation to the enforcement of the 'No Waiting' traffic regulation order in Brockmoor High Street, and the possibility of introducing parking permits for residents, it was reported that there was no policy in place at the present time, however the Cabinet Member for Transportation had been written to in relation to the introduction of a policy and the outcome was awaited. The Section Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety) would respond on the issue of permits.
- (b) In response to a question raised in relation to obstructive parking at Poets Corner, Brierley Hill, it was reported that traffic regulation orders were introduced in this area. The introduction of 'H' bars outside the properties effected was suggested. This question would be discussed following the meeting. The Section Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety) would liaise with the Police.
- (c) A question was raised in relation to the siting of the new Crestwood/Pensnett Academy, as the questioner indicated that the area of the academy included a sports hall, that formed part of Campus 21. It was noted that further consideration would be given to this matter, and the following matter, later in the meeting.
- (d) A further question was raised in relation to the siting of the new Crestwood/Pensnett Academy, and in particular as to who would make the final decision on the siting, as it appeared unclear as to whether this would be the Council or Oasis Community Living.

- (e) A question was raised in respect of the use of the Pensnett Community Centre by the Brierley Hill Operatic Society and clarification of the arrangements agreed with the Brierley Hill Operatic Society were sought.

A full response would be sent to the questioner by the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services.

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COMMUNITY RENEWAL

The Area Liaison Officer reported on the first meeting of the Community Renewal Working Group with particular reference to a debate that had taken place as to what could be achieved by the Working Group. There had also been a request for an update on activities within the Brierley Hill Area Committee Area, and an explanation of the generic acronyms used. It had been agreed that there would be a need for more detailed reports for action planning to try to avoid duplication, and there would be a report to the area committee on the work of the working group to a future meeting. The Working Group had agreed to meet approximately every six weeks.

RESOLVED

That the information as reported on be noted.

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MEMORIAL TO ROUND OAK STEEL WORKERS

The Area Liaison Officer gave a verbal update on the siting of the Memorial, indicating that this had been the subject of discussion with the Cabinet Member for Transportation to ascertain whether the Fire Station Roundabout or near vicinity in Brierley Hill would be a viable location for siting the Memorial.

It was further reported that the location and the issue of funding would continue to be researched and following this a further report would be submitted to the Committee at its meeting to be held on 2nd April, 2009, containing full details of feasible options for the siting of a suitable Memorial. Marketing and Communications (Interim Chief Executives Directorate) would be requested to ensure that effective publicity was arranged to gauge local views on the siting.

RESOLVED

That the information as now reported on be noted and that the area liaison officer be requested to arrange for a report to be submitted to the Meeting of this Committee to be held on 2nd April, 2009.

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PARK SECURITY AT KING GEORGE V PARK, WORDSLEY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the security arrangements at King George V Park, Wordsley.

The Area Liaison Officer reported that in response to Members' previous request the closing time for the gates at King George V Park had been brought forward to 7pm from 9pm early in September, 2008, and also it was understood that additional site patrols had been taking place between 5pm and 7pm to support the Council's Park Keeping service on site during the period to the end of October, and as a consequence of these changes, the levels of reported anti social behaviour on the park had reduced.

It was further reported that following the Council being made aware that the gates had not been closed on time on a number of occasions, the issue had been taken up immediately with the security company who had rectified the problem, and as a result it was believed that no further complaints had been received on this matter. It was confirmed that Officers would continue to monitor the situation.

Councillor Southall advised that there had been no further reported incidents of anti social behaviour, and was grateful that CCTV had been installed, indicating that this had been a deterrent to the perpetrators of the vandalism and anti-social behaviour at the Park.

Councillor Mrs Jordan also confirmed that there had been no further incidents of vandalism or anti social behaviour, however she indicated that it had come to her attention that the security company were not opening the gates to the park during mornings, with this being left to those employed by the park.

The Area Liaison Officer confirmed that he would bring this to the attention of the relevant Officer.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted in respect of park security at King George V Park, Wordsley, be noted.

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CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted in respect of two requests that had been received for a capital allocation.

Consideration had been given to the requests made at a meeting of the Capital Allocations Working Group of this Committee, held prior to this meeting, and the Area Liaison Officer, in informing the Committee of the recommendations made at that meeting, also referred to updated requests received from the Wordsley Aikido Club and The Citizens Advice Bureau.

RESOLVED

- (1) That in respect of the application received from Dudley HUGS, (Hearts Undergoing Support), Kingswinford, in the sum of £790; in view of the three year rule as regards repeat applications, a maximum offer of £2,500 be offered subject to the group reporting back with details of further equipment required.
- (2) That, a maximum allocation of £5,000, (criteria limit for bids), be approved in respect of the request made by Woodcraft Folk for the purchase of a PC, Projector and various items of camping/outdoor kitchen equipment and that the relevant officers be requested to work with Woodcraft Folk so as to assist them with the purchase of the equipment, in order to obtain value for money.
- (3) That the sum of £2,455 be approved in respect of the request made by Wordsley Aikido Club, for the purchase of cushioned training mats, subject to confirmation that mats would be made available for use by other groups who use the Church used by this group and purchased via the Council to ensure value for money.
- (4) That the application received from The Citizens Advice Bureau, in the sum of £4,872 be deferred to enable Officers to contact and work with the Bureau so as to determine whether an alternative source of funds would be available.

MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING HELD ON 2ND OCTOBER, 2008

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted updating the Committee on issues raised at its meeting held on 2nd October, 2008. The appendices to the report submitted set out progress on matters received.

Councillor Ms Foster reported that the consultation relating to The Crestwood School and Pensnett High School had begun, and Councillor Tyler requested that a Special Meeting of the Committee be arranged, within the consultation period.

In responding to the question deferred from the Public Forum, regarding the closure of Wartell Bank, Kingswinford and why Hauc Construction were being allowed to continue to operate without planning permission, the Area Liaison Officer reported that Hauc Construction had applied for retrospective planning permission, which had subsequently been refused. Hauc Construction now had three months in which to appeal against the refusal.

In responding to the question regarding the closure of Wartell Bank, Kingswinford, the Area Liaison Officer referred to the Petition that had been handed in by residents that evening, and advised that Officers would investigate the matters raised in the Petition, and provide updates to future meetings of the Area Committee.

Councillor Mrs Harley raised the issue of a road closure and a prohibition of driving traffic regulation order, and the Area Liaison Officer advised that there would be legal issues to be addressed and Officers of the Local Authority would continue to do all they could to investigate options, including liaising with the Police regarding the existing orders, and legal advice would be sought.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the information contained in the report submitted, on a number of issues raised at the meeting of this Committee held on 2nd October, 2008 be noted.
- (b) That arrangements be made for a Special Meeting of the Committee to be held within the consultation period set out in relation to the Crestwood School and Pensnett High School so that the Committee can give consideration to this matter.

WARD ISSUES

Written responses to the Ward Issues raised by Members in advance of the meeting were circulated to Members at the meeting. The questions received and responses given were as follows:-

- (a) In response to questions raised by Councillor Ms Foster, regarding Station Road, Brockmoor - road safety measures, an update was requested on the pedestrian crossing and other road safety measures, specifically:-
 - Advance warning signs and improved road markings;
 - Assessment for the possibility of a pedestrian crossing;

It was reported that whilst the introduction of advance warning signs and improved road markings along Station Road did not form part of the current programme of approved local safety schemes, consideration was being given to a small number of additional initiatives, such as proposed works in the area, with a view to them being implemented as part of the overall 2008/2009 Highways Minor Works programme. At that stage, therefore, whilst it was not possible to be specific about an actual date, it was still intended that the signs/markings in this area would be progressed within this overall timescale.

It was further reported that the assessment process for schemes to be carried out during the 2009/10, programme of works was due to be carried out at the end of the current calendar year. A provisional list of suitable schemes would be discussed with the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet Members for Transportation in January, 2009. A report would be submitted for consideration by the Cabinet at their meeting on the 11th February, 2009 followed by full Council on 23rd February, 2009.

- (b) In response to a further question raised by Councillor Ms Foster relating to Bromley/Pensnett - road safety camera, it was reported that mini speed visors were being used along Bromley, in both directions, earlier this year for a period of approximately three months between April and July. However given the limited number available, and the need to employ them on a rotational sequence around the Borough, it was intended that the speed visors would next be used along Bromley in the New Year.

It was further indicated that the installation of permanent speed cameras was an issue under the control of the West Midlands (Metropolitan Authorities) Road Safety Partnership, and subsequent discussions with the Police Camera Enforcement Unit had revealed that the site had already been assessed in January this year, but having regard to the 85th percentile speeds being less than the Association of Chief Police Officers guidelines for speed enforcement being appropriate, this site did not meet the basic criteria for the introduction of a speed camera.

The Police Camera Enforcement Unit had agreed to undertake another assessment of the site to see if the overall position had changed but this was not likely to take place within 12 months of the last assessment and would need to be subject to other commitments that were already planned for assessments elsewhere across the West Midlands.

(c) In response to a further question raised by Councillor Ms Foster, relating to parking in High Street, Brockmoor, and particularly with regard to enforcement action available to the Council to ensure that patrols by parking enforcement officers were visible and sustained, to ensure on-street parking on the High Street was limited to one hour, it was indicated that:-

- The on-street log for this area confirmed that, contrary to any perception, visits to the area by the enforcement officers had remained at a reasonably constant frequency since September;
- In order to avoid regular patterns being established, there was a need to avoid any level of anticipation by building in a degree of variation in the actual days and times of the visits;
- It was confirmed that the last visit to the location was on 28th November, 2008, when nine observations were started and two notices issued. It was also confirmed that each enforcement action at the location required two separate visits by the enforcement officer in order to allow for the one hour period of permitted parking. Consequently, having regard to the above example, upon return, seven vehicles had departed leaving only two exceeding the waiting restriction.

(d) A further question raised by Councillor Ms Foster in relation to speeding on High Street, Brockmoor, and concerns raised in relation to the speed that traffic was approaching High Street from Leys Road, particularly at the busy crossroads at which there were lights, it was requested that the Council consider installing better advanced warning of the lights from the Leys Road end of the High Street, which may encourage traffic to slow down.

In response to this request, it was indicated that the possibility of introducing advance warning signs for the traffic signals at High Street/Station Road was not considered appropriate at this location due to the current level of forward visibility, and also based on Department for Transport guidelines, that stated that 'neither should it normally be used where visibility was impaired only by parked vehicles as the imposition of waiting and loading restrictions should be considered'

However, as part of the Council's approved programme of works for 2008/2009, a new Puffin style pedestrian crossing was to be installed along High Street, Brockmoor, near to its junctions with Cressett Lane and Norwood Road. This installation was in advance (on the Leys Road side) of the existing traffic signals at the junction of High Street and Station Road and would, besides being a speed reducing feature itself, also be supported by some temporary 'New Traffic Signals Ahead' signs that should also be complementary in raising driver awareness of the prevailing site conditions in the area generally.

- (e) Councillor Ms Foster raised a request in relation to hospital parking affecting Tennyson Street, Byron Street and Milton Street, requesting that the council propose the introduction of parking restrictions and residents only parking permits to alleviate the problems caused by visitors to Russells Hall hospital parking outside residents' homes.

In response it was indicated that sections of the above streets were included in the large-scale yellow line scheme proposed to counter obstructive parking associated with Russells Hall hospital. However, where objections were received by local communities, they were not pursued.

Tennyson Street, Byron Street and Milton Street would therefore, be added to a list from which future traffic regulation proposals would be selected but as other Traffic Regulation Orders were currently under investigation for other areas of the Borough, it was unlikely that it would be possible to make any new proposals for the Russells Hall area for a number of years. Also there was no current Council policy regarding Residents Parking Schemes, and it was unlikely that such a policy would be in place for several years.

- (f) Councillor Ms Foster raised an issue in relation to the Gorsty Avenue car parking area and more particularly in relation to the grassed area that had been tidied up some time ago, indicating that it was attracting nuisance and anti-social behaviour, causing damage to surrounding cars. Residents were requesting that much of the grassed area be removed so that it was no longer attractive as a playground and enable additional cars to park in safety.

In response it was indicated that due to the narrowness of Gorsty Avenue, a number of initiatives had been previously undertaken to assist traffic movements and residents parking, including facilities around the perimeter of the roundabout in question. Any further measures to modify or remove the grassed area would not retain the turning facility and would likely result in difficulties for vehicles that would then be forced to reverse, particularly as they approached the junction with Station Road where viability was already limited.

Furthermore, it was indicated that the replacement of the grassed area with another surface would not necessarily remove the site as a play area and could actually attract even more attention.

This matter would be referred to the Council's Community Safety Team to consider any initiatives that they might take in order to address residents concerns about the level of anti social behaviour currently taking place.

- (g) In response to a question raised by Councillor Mrs Wilson, concerning a letter received from the Chair of the Nine Locks Community Centre, requesting confirmation as to when the car park adjacent to the pre-nursery unit would be available, to alleviate over parking at Nine Locks Community Centre, it was indicated that the building in question no longer housed a pre nursery unit, and was now a contact centre for children and families and provided facilities for young people. Children's Services were looking at creating a small number of parking spaces, on the former play area, when funding became available, however it was noted that staff would need to use this car park.

It was stated that four or five contact sessions per day were provided and for health and safety reasons, visitors to the centre needed to park as close to the centre as possible as they were often transporting small children and new born babies, however they would rarely need to use more than three or four car parking spaces.

It was indicated that the nearby Chapel Street car park was now fully available to the public, following completion of the new road project with adequate walkways between the car park and the centre.

- (h) There were further concerns raised by the Chair of the Nine Locks Community Centre in relation to the incline at the beginning of the new disabled path at the Nine Locks Community Centre, as wheelchairs were being pushed by elderly people, who were experiencing difficulties. The question as to what could be done to alleviate the problem was received and referred to again below.
- (i) Councillor Ms Harris also raised the above issue, stating that the disabled access ramp, to access the Centre, had been adjusted and re-laid as part of the by-pass work. However due to the general slope of the new public pavement that the disabled access path fed into, a new slope had also had to be laid from the entrance drive to the public pavement. The angle of this was such that it was an almost impossible task to push a wheelchair up it without a considerable effort. It was also considered that it would be very difficult to hold on to the wheelchair on the journey back down the ramp.

It was reported that the site had been inspected and it was accepted that the area of footway immediately behind the drop kerb at the car park access was steeper than would be desirable. It was indicated that the reason for this was that Hill Street was already on a grade and the drop kerb exacerbated it. The raised surface on the tactile paving also provided an additional obstacle to wheelchair users, however it should be noted that the new path that had been constructed from the highway boundary towards the premises was less steep than the existing access ramp to the building.

It was stated that Engineers would be carrying out a survey to ascertain whether it was feasible to reduce the gradients on the existing footway, but also to ascertain whether an additional short path could be constructed off the access road at an acceptable gradient.

- (j) In responding to a request from Councillor Mrs Wilson that the alleyway leading from Addison to Fisher Street be cleaned up on a regular basis, it was indicated that the alleyway provided access to garages under the control of the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services. A number of site visits had been made to this site, that had resulted in no action being considered necessary.

It was further indicated that a more recent inspection had been carried out whereby it was reported that there was very little litter present. However, the site would continue to be monitored and any excessive accumulation of litter would be dealt with accordingly.

- (k) Councillor Mrs Wilson reported that a 9 year old school girl had requested that the roundabout at Dudley Road where young people had to cross to attend the Merry Hill Shopping Centre, be kept trimmed down as it made crossing dangerous as due to the overgrowth they could not see the on-coming traffic.

It was reported that the work to trim the overgrowth had been completed four weeks previous to the meeting, and further work would be programmed to take place each year.

- (l) Councillor Mrs Harris raised an issue on behalf of a local resident, requesting designated parking bays on John Street with extended kerbs and bollards to prevent people from parking on the corner of the street.

In responding to this request, it was indicated that the present scheme relating to John Street was intended to reduce through-traffic movements and also improve the quality of life for residents, by proposing a short section of one-way traffic flow, and by regularising on-street car parking at John's Street's major road junctions.

It was further stated that the Traffic Regulation Order proposals for John Street were as follows:-

(i) WAITING RESTRICTIONS

Double yellow lines proposed for both sides of John Street at its junctions with Bank Street and Dudley Road.

(ii) ONE-WAY TRAFFIC FLOW

A one-way traffic flow could only be introduced in a direction away from the Fire Station, as John Street was utilised by the Fire Service for emergency vehicle movements.

It had been originally proposed that all of John Street should become one-way, from Dudley Road towards Bank Street, however following requests from the local community, the one-way proposals towards Bank Street were reduced. If supported they would now only be from the entrance of Myles Court towards Bank Street.

- (m) In response to a further question as to whether a convex mirror could be situated on the telegraph pole situated opposite the entrance to Little John Street to aid visibility, it was indicated that mirrors were not permitted on the public highway due to the difficulties of assessing the speeds of passing motorists and the possible distortion of images for a viewer. Mirror images were not a safe source of information on which to make motoring decision.
- (n) It was also requested that a sign alerting motorists to the presence of Little John Street along John Street be erected.
- In response to this request it was reported that as part of the proposed traffic management scheme for John Street, a sign could be introduced next year in John Street to emphasise the presence of Little John Street.
- (o) In response to a request that there should be new road markings emphasising the narrowness of John Street, it was stated that white carriageway markings would also be considered as part of the 2009/10 John Street traffic management programme.
- (p) Councillor Mrs Jordan wished to raise the issue of tenants' own improvements and the information given to an in-coming tenant about previous improvements and how these would be repaired/maintained during the tenancy

In response the Assistant Director of Housing had looked into this issue and considered that it would be more appropriate to include information in the repairs handbook rather than referring to this within the tenancy agreement. The handbook was currently being reviewed so any proposals relating to this issue were quite timely given that the latest edition was due for publication in April 2009.

It was also indicated that processes and procedures would be looked at to ensure a consistent approach in advising the new tenant of existing tenant's improvements.

- (q) In responding to a question from Councillor Mrs Jordan in relation to the feasibility of making Norwood Road from the junction of High Street to Pheasant Street one way, it was indicated that without undertaking a feasibility study it would be difficult to say what the outcomes of this study would show, however some of the basic issues to be considered would include:-
- (i) What is the purpose and desired outcome of making the street one way and what this was intended to achieve?
 - (ii) Does the proposal have the support of those residents who would be most directly affected, bearing in mind access to properties would be restricted to one way in and one way out?
 - (iii) With the consequential transfer in the numbers of vehicles currently travelling along this section of Norwood Road having to travel along the adjoining streets, is this sustainable and what would be the views of the residents in those areas?
 - (iv) It was indicated that in relation to agenda item nine, (Brierley Hill Sustainable access network) this gave a clear indication on the level of work that had been done in relation to Traffic Regulation Orders in the Brierley Hill area during the last twelve months as part of the Brierley Hill Sustainable Access Network Scheme. This work had dominated officers' time to the exclusion of other Traffic Regulation Order initiatives elsewhere in the Borough and any new requests would, therefore, clearly have to be added to the list of requests currently pending.
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- (r) At this juncture the Area Liaison Officer indicated that, in order to clarify the position relating to the raising of Ward Issues by email prior to the meeting of the Area Committee, the arrangements were an attempt to enable Ward Members to submit questions up to three days in advance of the meeting, to ensure that expedient written responses were received, rather than historically having to wait a further six weeks for answers. The written responses to questions received had been circulated at the meeting and would be circulated at the start of meetings in future.

It was confirmed that the arrangement did not prohibit questions from being asked on the evening of the meeting, should it not be possible to provide three days notice.

The following further questions were then raised:-

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- (s) Councillor Ms Foster then queried the response to the question she had received regarding hospital parking. The Area Liaison Officer responded by indicating that a commitment had been made earlier in the year, to refer to the Cabinet Member for Transportation the issues in relation to the parking.

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- (t) Councillor Mrs Jordan raised an issue in relation to 'No through traffic' signage for heavy goods vehicles, attempting to drive along High Street, Brockmoor from its junction with Station Road/Hickman Road towards Bank Street, as there had been vehicles reversing back onto Bank Street causing a danger and a hazard.

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- (u) Councillor Mrs Jordan also referred to the response to her question relating to the council's responsibility in relation to hard standings, stating that a tenant had taken over a council tenancy, and a hard standing erected by the previous tenant had collapsed. Post inspection of the wall following erection of the same was referred to, and the need for planning permission for the dropped kerb at the property.

The Head of Housing Options responded by stating she would provide a more detailed response to Councillor Mrs Jordan.

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SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

The dates of future meetings of the Council's Select Committees in the current municipal year were received and noted.

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DATES OF FUTURE ORDINARY AREA COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The dates and venues of future ordinary meetings of the Committee were noted, as follows:-

29th January, 2009 – The Civic Hall, Brierley Hill.

2nd April, 2009 – The Briar School, Bromley Lane, Kingswinford.

The meeting ended at 9.15 p.m.

CHAIRMAN