

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Thursday, 22nd January, 2009 at 6.00 p.m.
at Hurst Green Primary School, Narrow Lane, Halesowen

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs Faulkner (in the Chair)
Councillor James (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Body, Burston, Crumpton, Mrs Dunn, Hill, Ms Nicholls, Mrs Shakespeare, Taylor, K Turner, Mrs Turner, and Vickers.

Officers

The Director of Finance (as Area Liaison Officer), Interim Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services, The Assistant Director for Performance and Partnership (Directorate of Children's Services), The Head of Executive Support, Group Engineer and Team Manager – Parking Management (all Directorate of the Urban Environment), Head of Community Renewal (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services) and Mr J Jablonski (Directorate of Law and Property)

Also in Attendance

Station Commander D Baker (West Midlands Fire Service)
Sergeant I Barton (West Midlands Police)
together with ten members of the public.

66

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ms Partridge and Woodall.

67

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following members declared the interest indicated in the item showed in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, as follows:-

- (i) Councillor Burston – a personal interest in agenda item 12 – Halesowen Town Centre Development – in relation to Halesowen Bus Station given his employment by CENTRO.
- (ii) Councillor Mrs Faulkner – a personal interest in agenda item 15 – Hawne Lane, Halesowen and surrounding area – proposed Traffic Regulation Order – in relation to consideration given to an Order in Whittingham Road as she parked her car in that road.

- (iii) Councillor Hill – a personal interest in agenda item 13 – Earls High School Foundation – as he is a Governor of Earls High School.
- (iv) Councillor James – a personal interest in agenda item 13 – Earls High School Foundation – as he is a Governor of Earls High School.
- (v) Councillor James – a personal interest in agenda item 7 – Public Forum relating to a question on Tree Preservation Orders at Bundle Hill as he is the Chairman of the Council’s Tree Preservation Orders Committee.
- (vi) Councillor Ms Nicholls – a personal interest in agenda item 7 – Public Forum relating to a question about Tree Preservation Orders at Bundle Hill as she is a member of the Council’s Tree Preservation Orders Committee.
- (vii) Councillor Taylor – a personal interest in agenda item 7 – Public Forum in relation to a question on the modification of a planning application in respect of Coombeswood Wedge – proposed Cricket Pitch as he is a Governor of Olive Hill Primary School which is connected with the Coombeswood Development.
- (viii) Councillor Mrs Turner – a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 – Public Forum in relation to a question on the modification of a planning application in respect of Coombeswood Wedge – proposed Cricket Pitch as she is a member of the Council’s Development Control Committee.
- (ix) Councillor K Turner – a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 6 – Police/Fire issues and any other item on the agenda relating to any reference to West Midlands Fire Service as he is a member of that body.

68

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12th November, 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

69

YOUTH ISSUES

Dominic Tipping, Area Team Leader – Halesowen and Cradley Area Youth Team– Directorate of Children’s Services, informed the Committee of a number of events and activities undertaken by the Team; details regarding future team planning; area and youth service wide planned initiatives and information in respect of young people. A note detailing the information given was circulated at the meeting.

Arising from the presentation given members asked a number of questions and in response it was confirmed that a Lucy Barton from the area was a candidate for the United Kingdom Youth Parliament and that the outcome of the Youth Service Consultation that had been undertaken was still under consideration. Reference was also made to the work of three volunteers at Cradley Community Centre, Sharon Deer and Jill and Sue Wickett and a request made that thanks to them for their efforts be recorded.

RESOLVED

That the information as now reported on, at the meeting on youth issues involving the Halesowen and Cradley Area Youth Team, be noted.

70

POLICE ISSUES

Sergeant Ian Barton reported on a number of operations that have been held in the recent past in the area resulting in one instance in a 70% reduction in burglaries and on another occasion in a 65% reduction in thefts. The latter statistic concerned an operation in the town centre around Christmas that had been carried out in association with Asda. Other activities undertaken, involving raids on premises and work in respect of preventing anti social behaviour involving work with youth, was also reported on.

Arising from the presentation given members made a number of comments relating in particular to PACT meetings with particular reference to notification as to when such meetings were being held.

In relation to those meetings with which Sergeant Barton was involved he confirmed that e-mail addresses requested from attendees at meetings would be used in future to notify them of future meetings and he would feed back to his colleagues in other areas comments made by members present regarding PACT meetings in their areas.

It was also noted that proposals were currently underway to rationalise consultation arrangements in respect of such meetings so that hopefully any problems experienced would be overcome.

It was also indicated that should any member still be experiencing difficulties they should contact their relevant police officer so that they were made more aware of their concerns.

RESOLVED

That the information presented at the meeting, and as commented upon, in relation to police issues in the area of the area committee, be noted.

FIRE ISSUES

Station Commander David Baker of West Midlands Fire Service was in attendance at the meeting and commented on the latest proposals to the consultation document on a review of the Fire Service in the West Midlands the consultation on which had ended on 7th January, 2009.

In response to the concerns and representations made the revised proposal, to be considered by West Midlands Fire Authority at a meeting on 9th February, 2009, was that a new fire station, at a site yet to be determined, would have two twenty four hour fire appliances and not the one twenty four hour and one twelve hour appliance as previously proposed.

Arising from the comments made it was emphasised that the proposals as now outlined were subject to approval at the meeting of West Midlands Fire Authority to be held on 9th February, 2009 and would receive consideration together with all other proposals arising from the review undertaken. Should the proposals be adopted existing provision in the Old Hill and Halesowen areas involving two twenty four hour fire appliances would remain in operation until agreement as to the location of a new fire station had been reached; the new fire station built and in operation. Again the location of the new fire station would not be considered until after the authority meeting on 9th February, 2009.

RESOLVED

That the information as now reported on, and as reported at the meeting, be noted.

PUBLIC FORUM

(Having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest in view of her membership of the Development Control Committee, Councillor Mrs Turner left the meeting for the duration of the consideration of a question in relation to the modification to a planning application in respect of Coombeswood Wedge).

- (a) In response to a question received regarding the modification of a planning application in respect of Coombeswood Wedge – proposed cricket pitch, it was agreed that, as members wished to endorse their previous comments made and reiterated their concerns and objections to the planning application, the Head of Executive Support be requested to ensure that the comments made by the Committee at their meeting held on 12th November, 2008, when they had previously considered this matter, be included in the report to be submitted to the meeting of the Development Control Committee when that Committee considered the modified planning application.

- (b) In response to a question regarding Tree Preservation Orders on trees on British Legion land at Bundle Hill it was agreed that the Head of Executive Support be requested to investigate whether the orders had been made; inform the questioner direct and liaise with the ward member concerned who had commented on this matter.
- (c) In response to a question regarding progress on road/pedestrian safety near Pool Road, Halesowen, it was reported that quotations were currently being requested on altering the steps and that this work would hopefully be completed by the end of the current financial year. In response the questioner considered that the issues of pedestrians walking in the road and the unprotected nature of the subway, which, it was considered, could lead to someone falling off the subway edge were emphasised. It was considered that the work to the steps would not alleviate these concerns.

The group engineer indicated that he would give further consideration to the concerns raised.

- (d) Questions relating to the condition of the Pool Road car park and on the need for the appearance of the Grange roundabout to be improved were raised.

In response the Area Liaison Officer undertook to arrange for a report to be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on these issues.

73

WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillor Crumpton referred to decisions of Stourbridge Area Committee to allocate £10,000 of capital allocation funding to be set aside annually for five years towards the cost of repairing the gates at Mary Stevens Park, should a Heritage Lottery Fund Bid for these works be unsuccessful, and to the use of income from the Stevens Trust for this purpose.

He expressed a number of concerns regarding these decisions including their impact on the provision of funding for good causes and the lack of consultation with the ward members for the Cradley and Foxcote Ward part of which formed part of the area of benefit of the Stevens Trust. It was also commented upon that the ward members had previously been consulted on matters to do with funding arising from the Stevens Trust.

A request was therefore made as to whether any action could be taken by this Committee regarding the decisions of Stourbridge Area Committee.

In response the Area Liaison Officer reported that he would investigate this matter, taking into account the points that had been made, and, if appropriate, report back to the next meeting of this Committee.

- (b) Councillor K Turner expressed his thanks to the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services and the Cabinet Member for Housing, regarding a recent decision to offer reasonable alternative arrangements to community groups affected by the removal of access to the coffee lounge at Halesowen Library.
- (c) Councillor K Turner referred to the position in Brook Willow Road/Holly Bank and the need for appropriate measures to be put in place given concerns over safety. In response the position regarding the implementation of a traffic regulation order was referred to. In response to a request for a temporary measure the group engineer reported that he would speak to colleagues who dealt with the safer routes to school initiative so that the school in question could be visited to ascertain the measures that could be put in place to address the concerns expressed.

74

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE HELD ON 12TH NOVEMBER, 2008

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted setting out responses to questions asked at the meeting of the Committee held on 12th November, 2008.

During the consideration of this matter it was reported that an expression of interest, by Halesowen Town Football Club, had been received in respect of the former Cradley High School site.

RESOLVED

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

75

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted seeking consideration of applications for grants from the Capital Budget Allocation of the Committee, and matters associated therewith.

Arising from consideration of the first application for grant reported on, that in respect of the Friends of Huntingtree Park, it was agreed that the Area Liaison Officer speak to the parties concerned following the closure of the meeting, on the various points made regarding possible alternative funding and the use of Section 106 monies.

RESOLVED

- (1) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 for the Friends of Huntingtree Park towards the cost of repositioning the present access to the bowling green and replacement with more appropriate access via ramps and steps.
- (2) That approval will be given to a grant of £5000 for the 1st Halesowen Scout Group towards the cost of a replacement mini bus.
- (3) That approval be given to a grant of £911.02 for the Lighthouse Project Over 50's Club for the purchase of 25 additional comfortable chairs for use by the Group.
- (4) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 to the Howley Grange Scout Group towards the cost of installing security lights, shutters and an extruder alarm system, following a number of thefts and vandalism around the site; and
- (5) That approval be given to a grant of up to £350 to Youth 4 em towards the purchase of table tennis tables to help establish a weekly youth club.

76

APPLICATION IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

A report of the Interim Director of Law and Property was submitted on a request made by the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services that land to the rear of Cradley Library, fronting Maple Tree Lane, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report submitted, be declared surplus to requirements and disposed of so that a capital receipt could be obtained to contribute to the provision of library services.

Arising from the presentation given of the content of the report concerns expressed by ward members, as set out in the report submitted, were reiterated and a request made that further information be submitted before further consideration was given by the Committee to this matter. A ward member present also raised a number of points on this matter.

RESOLVED

That the Interim Director of Law and Property be requested to submit a further report to a future meeting of the Committee on the proposed disposal of land to the rear of Cradley Library, fronting Maple Tree Lane, in the light of a request for further information on this matter such information to include details as to land values and cost of car parking provision together with other issues raised by the ward member at the meeting.

77

HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

HAC/61

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress with regard to physical developments taking place in Halesowen Town Centre.

The Head of Executive Support also gave a verbal update arising from the meeting of the Town Centre Working Group held on 7th January, 2009, indicating the successful opening of both the Asda Store and the bus station prior to Christmas and the work that the Working Group would now be looking at to improve the street scene and further regeneration projects and initiatives in the Town Centre to help compliment the new development proposals.

Consideration would also be given to improving the public realm in and around the town centre including improvements to buildings, traffic islands, the towns gateways, public art, lighting and community safety.

An important aspect of this further work would be partnership working with town centre organisations including Asda who were keen to be involved in community issues. As a consequence of this an action plan relating to the suggested activities would be drawn up for consideration by the working group and once finalised, submitted to this Committee for approval.

Regarding the town centre management issues referred to in the report submitted, the success of the Christmas activities within the town centre were referred to in particular and it was noted that a further programme of events was now being put together for the current year and would be reported on to the next meeting of this Committee.

Arising from the presentation given members commented on the further work that the Town Centre Working Group would be engaged on, in particular regarding traffic islands, the towns gateways and public art so that, in response to concerns raised by members of the public, action would be taken to see what could be done to improve the town centre.

A comment was also made that, in the rear of the pet shop in High Street, Halesowen, there was old timber architecture possibly dating back to the thirteenth century that, it was considered, it was important to recognise and for steps to be taken to ensure that this feature was not lost.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, and as reported at the meeting, on progress regarding Halesowen Town Centre Development, be noted.

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on the accounts and annual returns of the Earls High School Foundation Trust. A statement of accounts for the trust was attached as Appendix 1 to the report submitted.

RESOLVED

That approval be given to the accounts of the Trust, on behalf of the Council, by the Committee in their capacity as Trustees and that the Chairman be authorised to sign the accounts on behalf of the Committee.

79

CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the powers of the Council in operating Civil Parking Enforcement.

The Team Leader – Parking Management in her presentation of the report referred to the legislative background to the Council being given its powers to operate civil parking enforcement and on aspects of the impact of this measure.

Following the presentation given members asked a number of questions in particular relating to the respective duties of officers of the Council who undertook civil parking enforcement and the powers retained by the Police in this regard. It was suggested that appropriate bodies such as the Local Government Association should be approached to press for the Council's officers to have the full range of powers to effectively operate civil parking enforcement.

Details of the number of officers employed and the scope of their work was also given setting into perspective the task to be carried out. Reference was also made to the liaison arrangements undertaken with the Police and the protocol entered into whereby the Police dealt with issues of parking enforcement at PACT meetings. If there were any issues that needed to be raised with the Council arising from these meetings these should be addressed to the Team Manager.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, and as reported at the meeting, on Civil Parking Enforcement, be noted.

80

PROPOSED TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS – HAWNE LANE, HALESOWEN AND SURROUNDING AREA

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on proposed traffic regulation orders in respect of Hawne Lane, Halesowen and the surrounding area.

During the consideration of this matter a request was made that a twenty mile per hour speed limit should be introduced on Whittingham Road.

Arising from the consideration given to this proposal and a suggestion made that the proposals in respect of Shelah Road should not be proceeded with. It was

RESOLVED

- (1) That traffic regulation orders in respect of a 7.5 tonne weight restriction in Hawne Lane, Cherry Street, Bloomfield Street West and Bloomfield Street North and for a one way traffic order in Bloomfield Street West (TMD/TM/521) be supported and that the Cabinet Member for Transportation be requested to approve the implementation of these measures.
- (2) That the proposal in respect of the prohibition of waiting in Greenbush Drive, Shelah Road and in Hawne Lane and surrounding area be not supported and that the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to agree to the making of a traffic regulation order for the prohibition of waiting in Greenbush Drive and in Hawne Lane and surrounding area only.
- (3) That, in respect of a proposal to introduce a 20 mph speed limit on Whittingham Road for its full length, the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman, be authorised, following consultation with ward members, residents and officers , to make a recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Transportation regarding a proposal to introduce a 20 mph speed limit on the full length of Whittingham Road.

81

COMMUNITY RENEWAL WORKING GROUP

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the progress made by the Working Group in developing the Halesowen Area Committee Community Renewal Plan arising from the latest meeting of the Working Group held on 9th December, 2009.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on the progress made by the Working Group in developing the Halesowen Area Committee Community Renewal Plan, be noted and that continuing support be given to the work of the Community Renewal Team in community localities.

82

DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held at Lutley Community Centre on 11th March 2009.

83

SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

Dates and meetings of the respective Select Committees for the remainder of the current municipal year were received and noted.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

CHAIRMAN