

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 2nd February, 2005, at 6.30 p.m.
at Colley Lane Primary School, Colley Lane, Halesowen

PRESENT

Councillor Jackson (Chairman)
Councillor Burston (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Body, Crumpton, Mrs Dunn, Mrs Faulkner, James, Miss Nicholls, Mrs Shakespeare, Taylor, K Turner and J Woodall

Officers

Director of Finance (as Area Liaison Officer), Assistant Director - Community Education and Development, Head of Policy (Executive and Support), Head of Street Care, Principal Engineer (Transportation Policy), Senior Engineer and Regeneration Manager (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Principal Property Manager, Senior Solicitor (Gary Collins) and Mrs M Johal (Directorate of Law and Property)

Approximately 30 members of the public were in attendance

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17th November, 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made by the following Members for the reasons indicated:

Councillor Burston declared a personal interest in respect of the verbal update report in relation to the Bus Showcase Route in view of his employment with CENTRO.

Councillor Mrs Faulkner declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item Number 11 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of having a relative who was a Member of the Chapel and used the minibus to transport her to and from the Chapel.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Boys, Ms Partridge and Mrs Turner.

PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A resident queried the position on a petition that had been submitted in October 2002 from residents of Butchers Lane in relation to whether spare land in the road could be allocated for the use of car parking space. Councillor Body agreed with the comments made and further added that currently, parking on the road was on a bank, which was dangerous, as car doors had to be opened in the way of traffic.

In responding, the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) reported that a feasibility study would need to be undertaken at a cost of £10,000, which was a cost that had not been budgeted for.

- (b) A written question had been submitted prior to the meeting expressing concerns and highlighting consequences that would arise from the proposed changes within the West Midlands Fire Service plan, which was to cut the number of fire engines available between midnight and 8am from 62 to 47. Concern was also expressed at the possibility that Halesowen Fire Station would be closing to merge with Cradley Heath and it was requested that these proposals should be rejected.

The Committee agreed to refer the comments made to the West Midlands Fire Service for a response to a future meeting. It was also requested that the West Midlands Fire Service be requested to attend that meeting.

- (c) A resident queried the background and job descriptions of the new Town Centre Managers that had been appointed and expressed concern that they were not local and therefore would not have an in-depth knowledge of Halesowen. Mr David Guy, Regeneration Manager, who was one of the two appointees, introduced himself and briefly explained his background and knowledge of Halesowen. He further added that Mr Stuart Perry who was the Town Centre Manager for Halesowen could not be at this meeting due to a prior engagement. Mr Guy explained the broad approach he and Mr Perry would be taking in their duties and responsibilities and it was noted that Mr Perry would report to the next meeting of the Committee.

- (d) A member of the public referred to an incident that had happened that afternoon whereby shoppers in Somers Square had been subjected to disruptive behaviour from youths. Three youngsters, one on a bicycle and the other two on roller skates were causing mayhem and threatened and swore at residents and it was requested that security should be increased.

In response, Inspector Ludwig, West Midlands Police, advised that when incidents occurred in the Town Centre and the police did their best to contain them.

- (e) The position of the vacant Murco Petrol Station was queried and it was stated that take-up from the private sector was unlikely and therefore the site should be used for an extension to the library or converted to a Council building.

In responding the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) reported that there were a number of pre-applications, however no firm application had been made. The Chairman further added that the Council did not own the site, however temporary measures, such as placing advertisements to screen the eyesore were currently being pursued.

- (f) Concern was expressed in relation to the planning application for Tesco store on the Samson and Lion site and the impact that the road widening would have on the existing car parking provision for shops along Stourbridge Road. It was also queried why permission for the ATM had not been applied for at the same time as the planning application.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) advised that the ATM application would be considered at the Development Control Committee meeting on 14th February, 2005 and undertook to report back to a future meeting on the other issues raised.

- (g) A written question was submitted querying whether the Council had any plans to campaign against litter, in particular, gum and half-eaten bags and trays of chips and curry, which were then carelessly dropped to the ground. It was also pointed out that there were now new bins in Halesowen, which did not have the litter prevention advertisements that previous bins had.

In response, a Member reported that there were enforcement officers around the Borough and further added that educating businesses and children via schools was also being undertaken. A further Member commented that the litter wardens in Halesowen should be requested to issue fines throughout the whole of Halesowen, to include parks, and further stated that litter was not the only concern and that smokers should also be fined for stubbing cigarettes on the floor.

- (h) A resident queried whether double white lines could be inserted down Drews Holloway.

In responding, the Senior Engineer advised that double white lines could not be inserted on this type of carriageway, however he confirmed that other measures were being investigated in conjunction with CENTRO.

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POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Ludwig, West Midlands Police gave a short presentation and reported that the community Police meetings were to be re-established. The first meeting was due to be held on 21st March, 2005 at 7.30 pm in the coffee lounge at Halesowen Library.

A representative from the local Pensioners Convention thanked the Police for their attendance at a meeting that they had held and for the insight that had been provided in relation to the drugs situation.

RESOLVED

That the information be noted.

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING HELD ON 17TH NOVEMBER, 2004

A Member of the public advised that she had reported the complaints in relation to paragraph 2.2 of the report. It was further reported that the wire across the footpath had been repaired, however the situation in relation to the trees and shrubs remained. The Area Liaison Officer undertook to pursue the matter.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report be noted.

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WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillor Crumpton

- (i) Expressed concern that a third of the people in the Cradley and Foxcote Ward were subject to a Dispersal Order and requested that the root of the problem be identified. He further added that there was still a need to recruit Youth Officers and requested that consideration be given to resolving the issue.

- (ii) Thanked the police for attending within 10-15 minutes following the reporting of an incident, however it was pointed out that the resident involved in the incident did not want the police informed due to fear of reprisal.
- (iii) Complained about major problems in the Tanhouse Estate area and requested that the area be treated as a special case. There were new houses built on the estate, however there were major problems such as old accumulated litter left on the streets, smashed cars and windows and a number of children terrorising the residents. He further reported that there was no barrier between the school and the park and excluded children caused mayhem whilst riding their scooters.

The Area Liaison Officer undertook to pursue the matter with the Directorate of Housing with a view to establishing whether there was any funding that could be allocated.

(b) Councillor Mrs Faulkner

Expressed concern at the new Blackheath bypass and said that crossing Long Lane was getting more dangerous, particularly for the elderly residents and the congregation from the United Reform Church. It was requested that consideration be given to a pelican crossing being placed on Green Lane.

The Senior Engineer agreed to meet Councillor Mrs Faulkner at the site to undertake an investigation with a view to including the work on the 2006/07 pedestrian crossing programme.

(c) Councillor K Turner

- (i) Queried when the pedestrian crossing on Huntingtree Road would be operational.

In responding, the Senior Engineer reported that commissioning of the crossing had been delayed due to problems with electricity supply, however it was expected to be operational shortly.

- (ii) Reported that only some of the potholes that had been previously reported had been filled and queried when work on the remaining potholes would be completed.

The Senior Engineer undertook to investigate the matter.

- (iii) Referred to the need to have a safe crossing on Hagley Road, between Cherry Tree Lane and Rosemary Road, due to extensive use by adults and children and the possibility of a central reservation or crossing with a refuge in the middle was queried.

The Senior Engineer undertook to investigate the possibility of a pedestrian refuge.

- (iv) Made reference to a survey that had been carried out on 28th November, 2004 and 5th December, 2004 on the A456 and, in light of the findings, requested that a letter be written, on behalf of the Committee, to the Highways Agency stating that urgent consideration be given to the installation of a pedestrian crossing.

It was reported that there was an awareness of the problems in relation to crossing the road but that until the road was de-trunked, it was still the responsibility of the Highways Agency. It was further commented that officers worked with the Highways Agency and monitored the situation closely.

BUS SHOWCASE ROUTE N0 9 – A458 BELLE VALE JUNCTION IMPROVEMENT

The Principal Engineer (Transportation Policy) gave a verbal report on the proposed improvement to the junction of Belle Vale and Lutley Mill Road with the A458 Stourbridge Road, Halesowen. A map of the proposed scheme was made available for viewing.

It was reported that it had been suggested that the junction should be realigned to a crossroads and signalised, however this increased delay and required the relocation of the existing bus stops. A preferred alternative scheme had been drawn up that required widening the A458 Stourbridge Road in the vicinity of the junction to accommodate right turning traffic, and a minor realignment of Lutley Mill Road junction. The bus stops would be connected by the provision of a controlled pedestrian crossing. The scheme would also include some waiting and loading restrictions to safeguard passing traffic.

During the discussion that followed the presentation, Councillor James indicated that this was the first time that the three Ward Members had been made aware of the scheme. It was further commented that a pedestrian crossing had previously been requested at Belle Vale junction and the response had been that a pedestrian crossing could not be installed at that junction. It was requested that consideration be given to the safety aspect and that full consultation be undertaken with the residents.

The Chairman advised that the scheme was being funded by CENTRO and the Committee were being asked to support the scheme in principle, which would then lead to the consultation stage.

A Member commented that the showcase route was a good idea, however the bus stops were larger than normal and pointed out that it would impact on traffic in the rush hour, due to the limited space for overtaking.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the verbal report be noted.
- (2) That the implementation of the scheme be supported in principle.
- (3) That a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee outlining the results of the consultation.
- (4) That a copy of the Plan be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

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EARLS HIGH SCHOOL

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) gave a verbal update on progress of meetings of the Working Group in relation to the Earls High School.

Members of the Earls High School Working Group queried some of the information given and clarified the position in respect of the provision of a steel barrier for the car park.

The issue of dredgings at Earls High Playing Fields and the impact of odour on residents was also mentioned. The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to respond direct to the Member concerned and to other Ward Members.

RESOLVED

That the verbal progress report be noted and that a further update report be submitted to Members of the Committee, clarifying points that had been raised.

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ST GEORGE'S DAY PARADE

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) gave a verbal progress report on the St George's Parade.

It was reported that preparations for the Parade were developing and that the event would be in two parts and would include a Civic parade that would be led by the Mayor.

RESOLVED

That the verbal report be noted and a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

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APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted regarding land and property within the Committee's area.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Leisure be recommended to approve the sale of the land at 11 Hartside Close, Halesowen, as shown on the plan attached to the report submitted, subject to a condition stipulating that the land be used only as a lawned garden to prevent trees or other form of vegetation being planted and also to an appropriate condition restricting the provision of fencing or hedging around the site.
 - (2) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to refuse the application to purchase the land adjoining 116 Colley Gate, Halesowen, in the light of objections to the proposal made at the meeting.
 - (3) That the report in relation to the sale/lease of the land adjoining 7 and 8 Tenter Court, Halesowen, as shown on the plan attached to the report, be withdrawn for further information, and that the report be referred to the three Ward Members for consideration.
 - (4) That the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Cabinet Member for Leisure be recommended to refuse the application for vehicular access to the rear of 23 Brandon Road, Halesowen, in the light of objections raised by two Ward Members and local residents.
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DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted seeking consideration on requests for funding from the Delegated Capital Budget.

RESOLVED

- (1) That approval be given for a grant of £5,000 to Bethel Chapel, Wollescote towards the costs of a replacement minibus.
 - (2) That the action of the Lead Officer, in consultation with the Chairman, in approving expenditure of £1,700 for the cost of supply and installation of the flagpole in Halesowen Town Centre, be noted.
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REPORT OF THE CULTURE AND RECREATION SELECT COMMITTEE

A report of the Lead Officer for the Culture and Recreation Select Committee was submitted seeking the Committee's views on the proposed Dudley MBC Commemorative Plaque Scheme.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report be noted and the policy supported.

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HALESOWEN PAY AND DISPLAY CAR PARKS

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted, informing the Committee of any changes in patronage on pay and display car parks in Halesowen, following the introduction of new tariff charges on 4th October, 2004.

The Area Liaison Officer informed the Committee that written questions and comments had been submitted. He indicated that the queries and comments made were that car parking charges were wrong and not a good measure, there should be a one-hour charging tariff and a request was received querying whether accounts in relation to Halesowen car park could be inspected.

In relation to inspecting the accounts, the Area Liaison Officer explained that the Council were required by law to make its Accounts available for public inspection at defined periods. He undertook to send details of the Council's car park accounts to any member of the public who asked.

Further comments made by members of the public included concerns that Halesowen pay and display car parks had a higher charge than others in the Borough and it was felt that Halesowen would be further disadvantaged when Tesco offered free car parking. It was further commented that there were a number of empty spaces in car parks and it was queried whether a feasibility study could be undertaken on the possibility of introducing half price ticketing for people, such as the over 60's.

The Head of Street Care reported that any changes in the method of payment for charges at pay and display car parks would impact on suitability of the existing machines and may require the purchase of new ones. This would have to be considered in accordance with the budget available for the management of the service. He further commented that income from pay and display machines was considered and prioritised in accordance with the repair and maintenance requirements identified on all of the Boroughs car parks, one of the factors being the general condition of the infrastructure and the Health and Safety of members of the public.

The Head of Street Care undertook to investigate the possibility of undertaking a feasibility study in relation to empty spaces and half price ticketing for people such as the over 60's. In response to a further query, he undertook to provide information direct to the questioner regarding how much Halesowen paid in car parking charges compared to other pay and display car parks in the Borough.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report be noted and that a further report be submitted to a future meeting covering the possibility of introducing a one-hour car parking charge and half price ticketing.

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BLACKBERRY LANE, HALESOWEN: OBJECTIONS TO PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTIONS

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted seeking the Committee's support for the introduction of weekday daytime waiting restrictions in short sections of Blackberry Lane and Fairfield Road, Halesowen.

RESOLVED

- (1) That, having considered the objections and other correspondence received, and noting the moderate nature of the proposals, support be given to the introduction of the proposals for The Borough of Dudley (Blackberry Lane, Halesowen) (Restriction of Waiting) Order 2005, as shown on Drawing No TMD/CP/416 attached to the report and described in the attached schedule.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to introduce the scheme.

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PROPOSALS FOR DISABLED PARKING PLACING PROGRAMME G

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted for consultation and inviting comments from the Committee in respect of requests to be included in Programme G of the on-street Disabled Parking Places scheme.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended that the schemes detailed in Appendix A, (which had not been objected to), as attached to the report, should be introduced as advertised.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to overrule the objection to the sites as shown in Appendix B attached to the report and the sites introduced as advertised.

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THE LEASOWES RESTORATION

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted advising the Committee on the progress of the historic restoration of Leasowes Park.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report be noted and further update reports be submitted, in due course, on the progress of the restoration.

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DATE OF FUTURE MEETING

RESOLVED

That the next meeting of the Committee be held on 30 March 2005 at Earls High School at 6.30 pm.

The meeting ended at 21:05 pm.

CHAIRMAN