

## HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2008, at 6.30 p.m.  
at Lutley Community Centre, Brookwillow Road, Halesowen

### PRESENT

Councillor Jackson (Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs Faulkner (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Crumpton, Mrs Dunn, Hill, James, Ms Partridge, Mrs Shakespeare, Taylor and Mrs Turner.

### Officers

Area Liaison Officer, Head of Policy (Executive and Support), Group Engineer (Transportation), Head of Design and Projects, Team Manager (Green Care), Senior Planning Officer (Policy), Mrs M Johal and Mr P Furidze (Directorate of Law and Property)

### Also in Attendance

Inspector Hobson – West Midlands Police  
Assistant Director of Finance (Revenues, Benefits and Management Support)  
Head of Marketing and Communications  
Priority Neighbourhood Manager (Halesowen)

Approximately 50 members of the public were in attendance.

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### CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman announced that the consultation meeting to discuss the future of Cradley High School would be held at Cradley High School on Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2008 in the school hall.

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### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Body and J Woodall and the Assistant Director of Housing (Strategy and Private Sector).

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### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made by the following Members in respect of the matters indicated:

- (a) Councillor Burston – Agenda item No 12 – Halesowen Town Centre Development – Personal interest regarding any discussion of service revisions arising from the Dudley Bus Review and regarding the Halesowen Bus Station in view of him being employed by CENTRO.
- (b) Councillor Mrs Turner – Agenda item No 9 – Delegated Capital Budget – A prejudicial interest in view of her being a Trustee of Age Concern.
- (c) Councillor K Turner – Agenda item No 9 – Delegated Capital Budget – A prejudicial interest in view of him being the Vice-Chairman of Age Concern.
- (d) Councillor K Turner – Agenda item No 9 – Delegated Capital Budget – A personal interest in view of him being a Member of the Caslon Community Partnership.
- (e) Councillor Taylor – Agenda item Nos 9, 11 and 16 – Delegated Capital Budget, The Leasowes Restoration and Highways Minor Works Capital Programme 2008/09 – Personal interests in view of him being a Member of Friends of Leasowes and a Governor of Olive Hill Primary School.
- (f) Councillor Mrs Faulkner – Agenda item No 15 – Shell Corner Local Regeneration Plan – A prejudicial interest in view of her being the Vice-Chairman of Shell Corner Partnership.

At this juncture a Member indicated that another Member of the Committee had not declared an interest at a previous meeting to which the Area Liaison Officer responded that it was the responsibility of individual Members to declare an interest and that any issues should be referred to the Council's Monitoring Officer for consideration.

## MINUTES

A Member referred to Minute No 63(a)(iii) regarding the bollards installed in Careless Green and commented that she had requested that a report be submitted on the matter. The Area Liaison Officer indicated that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

## RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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YOUTH ISSUES

There were no issues reported under this agenda item.

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POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Hobson reported that there were no specific issues to report and apologised that, owing to administration problems, he had not been able to produce an up to date list of Partners and Communities Together meetings. However, he indicated that some of the meetings given in the list in the minutes of the previous meeting were still current.

A Member indicated that Inspector Hobson would be leaving and that this was his last meeting and expressed her thanks to him for his efforts and hard work in the Cradley and Foxcote Ward, particularly with the problems that had been experienced with the hostel in the Lye and Wollescote area. Other Members also joined in thanking Inspector Hobson and congratulated him on his new appointment and the Chairman also thanked him on behalf of the Committee and wished him success in the future.

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PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A resident complained about the sequence of traffic lights at the junction of Colley Lane and Chapel House Lane and indicated that it was very difficult to turn right.

In responding the Group Engineer (Transportation) reported that the junction would be investigated in the next few months and that Ward Members would be consulted on the findings and on suggestions for improvement.

- (b) Concern was expressed about the litter across Stour Valley Nature Walk along Butchers Lane and that consequently people had rats in their gardens.

The Area Liaison Officer undertook to refer the matter to the appropriate Officer.

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WARD ISSUES

There were no issues raised under this agenda item.

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

(Having previously declared prejudicial interests in this matter, Councillors K Turner and Mrs Turner withdrew from the meeting for the consideration of the following item and re-joined the meeting following its consideration.)

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

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member referred to a previous suggestion that had been made to apportion grants to Wards and that an allocation be set aside for general grants applicable to all Wards and he requested that the suggestion be reconsidered for the next Municipal Year. Another Member indicated that she did not favour apportioning grants as it would potentially restrict some people and that it should be an open opportunity for all to apply. She further indicated that it was the role of Members to reach out to the community to make them aware that the money was available and to offer their support in making any applications.

## RESOLVED

- (1) That the action of the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Body, in approving a grant of £1000 to Overend Methodist Mission for the purchase of new games and equipment for use by the newly formed Youth Club, be noted.
- (2) That the action of the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Body, in approving a grant of £200 to 'Time Out' Group towards new catering equipment, be noted.
- (3) That approval be given to a grant of £1912 to Dudley Life Skills Partnership towards new sports and IT equipment.
- (4) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 to Friends of Leasowes for reed planting alongside Priory Pool for the benefit of waterfowl and to prevent further erosion of the banks.
- (5) That approval be given to a grant of £4900 to Caslon Parent, Teacher and Friends Association for funding to set up an area of the school field into an allotment.
- (6) That approval be given to a grant of £5000 to Age Concern towards the cost of replacing their stolen mini bus.

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## APPLICATION IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

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A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on a request relating to land and property controlled by the Council.

### RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to refuse the offer for the gifting of land at Lyde Green, Halesowen, as shown hatched to the plan attached to the report, for reasons as outlined in the report, particularly as there were concerns regarding the stability of the slope and Japanese Knotweed.

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## THE LEASOWES RESTORATION

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

Prior to the presentation of the report a member of the public read out a letter on behalf of the Friends of the Leasowes and indicated that the initial request for a breakdown of the costs of the restoration was made on behalf of the Friends of Leasowes at the last meeting of the Committee, which was prompted by the concern over the delays in the project which had started ten years ago. The overwhelming view of park users was that the funds remaining for the site work needed to complete the restoration programme had been seriously eroded by the extended timescale of the project, which contrasted with the conclusions reached in the report. The present situation was that only £584,569 remained for the work from initial funding of £1,742,080 showing that 66% of the available money had been used at the current stage of the programme. The estimated final funding of £584,569 available for the final stage of the work also included unidentified totals for items such as the temporary Wardens Base and that the actual funding available for the work in Virgils Grove could be less than that figure. The report raised a range of further questions associated both with the use of funding and issues of a more general nature and the Friends of the Leasowes considered it essential that an opportunity be made available to review the information provided in the report together with a discussion of all the factors that had delayed the progress of the restoration programme from its outset. It was also considered that discussions should involve a representative of the Restoration Team and input from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

In responding the Head of Design and Projects indicated that he would be willing to attend a meeting together with a representative from the Heritage Lottery Fund. He then presented the report.

Arising from the presentation of the report several Members expressed concern and requested that a detailed analysis on where the money had been spent be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee. It was also suggested that the matter be referred to the Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education to enable a proper scrutiny exercise to be undertaken.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That a further report to include a detailed analysis on where the money had been spent be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.
- (2) That the matter be referred to the Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education for a detailed investigation.

#### HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted, and a verbal report given on progress made with regard to physical developments taking place within Halesowen Town Centre.

During the course of the presentation of the report, the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) indicated that there was a slight modification to the Asda proposal, which was the subject of a current planning application to create an additional floor to allow for a customer café and toilets. However, he pointed out that it would not impact on the timescales of the overall development and that Asda were still intending to open in November 2008. He further reported that the Halesowen Town Centre Working Group had met on 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2008 and that it had been commented that all partners should place great emphasis on ensuring that the overall development was kept to schedule and that the programme of works were synchronised.

The Group Engineer (Transportation) then reported on transportation matters and, in doing so, indicated that the current highway works would substantially be completed by the end of April 2008. In referring to the Town Centre Access Study he informed the meeting that a copy of the plans had been placed in libraries and also pointed out a proposed amendment to the Grange Roundabout. A letter had been circulated to all frontages and findings would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member referred to the synchronisation of works and commented that works to the A456 could take place if a successful tender was found whilst Carillion were still on site. He also sought an assurance that safety measures on the A456 would be considered.

A Member expressed concern at the revision of bus services made by Centro affecting Hayley Green and Hasbury and indicated that consequently the elderly and disabled had to change several buses to get to Russells Hall Hospital and Merry Hill. Another Member supported the comments made and indicated that Belle Vale had also been seriously affected by the removal of buses and commented that the elderly and infirm were losing their ability to leave their homes to carry out chores such as shopping and she urged that representations be made to Centro to reconsider their decision.

In responding the Group Engineer (Transportation) indicated that the review to bus services in Dudley were part of measures by Centro and Travel West Midlands which would eventually include the whole of the West Midlands. Regarding safety measures on the A456 he indicated that the original Highways Agency proposals had included a review of speed but that it had not been pursued. However, he undertook to consider the matter and include it in any deliberations.

During the ensuing debate about the revision of bus services it was suggested that strong representations be made to Centro and that the lack of consultation also be mentioned.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted, and as reported at the meeting, on the progress and development in Halesowen Town Centre, be noted.
- (2) That the Area Liaison Officer, on behalf of the Committee, be requested to write a strong letter to Centro expressing dissatisfaction in the removal of buses in Halesowen and also pointing out the lack of consultation.

#### TREE STRATEGY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Council's Tree Strategy in respect of the management of the Boroughs tree stock.

Arising from the presentation of the report Members made several comments and queries including a lack of walking space on pavements due to encroaching trees and roots coming through tarmac, Tree Preservation Orders on trees that blocked light, the unacceptable length of time taken to remove trees used to climb and enter elderly people's gardens, the process on how to protect trees of beauty and an assurance that the appropriate Committee would consider sparing mature trees when developing gardens.

In responding the Chairman of the Tree Preservation Orders Committee referred to trees that blocked light and indicated that there was a requirement to adhere to the legal framework and that blocking light was not a good enough reason in itself to remove a Tree Preservation Order. He acknowledged the problem with roots coming through tarmac but indicated as there was very little land roots would try to come out for water. With regard to trees of beauty he advised that Members and members of the public should contact the appropriate Officer with a view to making an application for a Tree Preservation Order.

A Member suggested that a review mechanism should be put in place to allow the Tree Strategy to be reviewed regularly.

#### RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be informed that the proposed actions to review and consolidate the Tree Strategy and Tree Risk Management Strategy, and to further raise the profile of the Tree Strategy through a series of presentations to key stakeholders within the Council, be supported together with an appropriate consultation process following the review of the Tree Strategy.

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#### CRADLEY/WINDMILL HILL REGENERATION PLAN – DELIVERY WORKING GROUP

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on establishing a Working Group of the Committee to oversee the Implementation Plan in the Cradley/Windmill Hill Regeneration Plan.

Following the presentation of the report the Area Liaison Officer reported that a written question had been submitted prior to the meeting about the provision of a medical centre in Windmill Hill. He indicated that the matter could be referred to the Working Group for consideration.

A Member commented that, as this was an important issue, restrictions should not be placed on only one Member per Ward and that it should be left open to individual Wards to determine how many Members they wished to nominate. It was also suggested that the Working Group should be made open to include members of the public. However, other Members considered that to enable the Group to have a meaningful debate and to make an appropriate recommendation the Working Group should remain as a small group. It was further commented that deliberations by the Working Group would be fed back to the Committee for consideration by other Members and members of the public.

#### RESOLVED



- (1) That the Halesowen Area Committee (Cradley/Windmill Hill Regeneration Plan Delivery) Working Group be appointed with the following terms of reference:-
- Receive regular progress reports from the Local Centres Officer
  - To agree priorities for action
  - Identify and resolve any constraints to plan progress
  - Guide public relations and communications for the plan
  - Report progress to the Committee on a regular basis
  - To review the regeneration plan annually.
- (2) That the Working Group comprises one Member from each of the three affected Wards, namely, Belle Vale, Cradley and Foxcote and Hayley Green and Cradley South Wards and that nominations be submitted direct to the Area Liaison Officer.

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SHELL CORNER LOCAL CENTRE REGENERATION PLAN

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress of the Shell Corner Local Centre Regeneration Plan.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on progress made in relation to developing the Shell Corner Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan, be supported and noted.

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HIGHWAYS SAFETY SCHEMES CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2008/2009

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the proposed programmes of work for Local Safety Schemes, Pedestrian Crossings and Safer Routes to School within the Halesowen area for the 2008/2009 financial year.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member referred to a request for a pedestrian crossing on Highfield Lane and expressed disappointment that it had been refused on the grounds that it did not meet the criteria and requested that the matter be reconsidered.

A Member welcomed the proposals for Park Lane, Cradley and indicated that it would alleviate the problems that had been experienced. However, she referred to the details for the other schemes, particularly Bower Lane/Saltbrook Road, Quarry Bank and expressed concern at the consideration of a mini roundabout, as it would be unsuitable for the area. She also referred to the Netherend Lane Scheme and sought assurances that it would not be a piecemeal project and would be considered in line with wider traffic schemes. It was also commented that Members should be kept up to date with progress on reserve schemes and she particularly referred to a cycle lane that had suddenly appeared without any notice on a street that had been approved for works last year.

A Member referred to the Safer Routes to School Scheme and indicated that representations had been made by residents following an accident and it was queried whether the scheme for Rosemary, Brookwillow and Hollybank Roads could be brought forward to safeguard children. Reference was again made by another Member with regard to the mini roundabout at Bower Lane/Saltbrook Road and it was considered that the road had major problems and suffered from floods and it was suggested that consultation takes place with residents and businesses around the area. It was also suggested that consultation should take place with local people with regard to the suitability of the zebra crossing on Netherend Lane as it was near Two Gates crossing where there were a number of public houses and the crossing was not utilised by children. Reference was also made to land opposite Hillcrest Avenue that had been allocated for housing and it was suggested that owing to the dangerous junction, Section 106 monies for the application be used to make the road safer.

A member of the public complained about Hagley Road and Wassell Road and indicated that yellow lines were being ignored and traffic was queuing owing to lorries loading/unloading goods for Tesco. A request was also made to put a keep left sign on Park Lane on the bend by the Church.

In responding the Group Engineer (Transportation) indicated that a Traffic Regulation Order on Wassell Road would shortly be implemented together with details on Park Road to denote short and long stay. With regard to enforcement he indicated that the Council would take over responsibility from July onwards and that it would be a significant change, as key areas would be targeted and patrolled. He undertook to ask relevant Officers to investigate the matter about Hillcrest area and the Two Gates crossing. Regarding the Bower Lane/Saltbrook Road

scheme the Group Engineer (Transportation) informed the meeting that he would not proceed without consulting the relevant Ward Members. He also indicated that the scheme for Rosemary, Brookwillow and Hollybank Roads would be considered later in the year. He further undertook to investigate the issue about Highfield Lane and why it had not met the criteria requirements.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be informed that the proposed Local Safety Schemes, Pedestrian Crossings and Safer Routes to School initiatives as outlined in Appendices A, B and C respectively, be supported.
- (2) That the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to investigate the issues as reported above.

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PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR THE JOINT CORE STRATEGY FOR THE BLACK COUNTRY

An updated report of the Director of the Urban Environment was circulated at the meeting on the timescale and process for public consultation on the Preferred Options for the joint Core Strategy for the Black Country.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member referred to the Preferred Options Document and commented that Halesowen should have quality housing rather than affordable and high-density housing to encourage businesses and employment.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the updated report submitted, on the process for public consultation on the Preferred Options for the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country, be noted and that any comments be made direct to the relevant Officer within the prescribed timescale.

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DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That it be noted that dates of future meetings would be determined at the Annual Meeting of the Council to be held on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2008.

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SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

As a way of giving additional publicity to meetings of the Council's Select Committees, details of Select Committee meetings had been included on the agendas of meetings of Area Committees.

The information given in respect of publicity for future meetings of Select Committees was noted.

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THANKS TO THE CHAIRMAN

A Member informed the meeting that this was the last meeting that the Chairman would attend as a Member and the Committee joined in thanking the Chairman for his efforts and the way he had conducted meetings as Chairman and wished him success for the future.

The Chairman in turn thanked Members, Officers and members of the public for their support during his years of Chairmanship. He particularly thanked the Area Liaison Officer for his contributions and support throughout the years.

The meeting ended at 8:35 pm.

CHAIRMAN