

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 24th January, 2007, at 6.30 p.m.
at Olive Hill Primary School, Springfield Road, Halesowen

PRESENT

Councillor Jackson (Chairman)
Councillor Burston (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Body, Mrs Dunn, Mrs Faulkner, Hill, James, Ms Nicholls, Ms Partridge, Mrs Shakespeare, Taylor, K Turner and Mrs Turner

Officers

Area Liaison Officer, Assistant Director for Partnership and Children's Trust, Head of Policy (Executive and Support), Group Engineer (Transportation), Regeneration Project Officer, (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Principal Solicitor (Mr M Farooq) and Mrs M Johal (Directorate of Law and Property)

Also in Attendance

Inspector Neil Hobson – West Midlands Police
Sergeant J Taylor – West Midlands Police

Approximately 20 members of the public were in attendance.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Woodall and Crumpton.

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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 in respect of the matters indicated:

Councillor Burston, in respect of Agenda Item No 12 (Earls High School Foundation – Final Accounts) in view of him being a Governor of that school._

Councillor Hill, in respect of Agenda Item No 12 (Earls High School Foundation – Final Accounts) in view of him being a Governor of that school._

Councillor James, in respect of Agenda Item No 12 (Earls High School Foundation – Final Accounts) in view of him being a Governor of that school._

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22nd November, 2006, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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YOUTH ISSUES

Several youths were in attendance and a representative informed the meeting that the Greenhill Youth Centre had formed a Youth Committee. It was intended that a representative from the Youth Committee would attend meetings of the Area Committee in the future with a view to updating Members on issues that were discussed. An invitation was also extended to Members of the Committee to visit and talk to the members of the Youth Committee to offer their expertise and advice on Committee meetings.

An application for funding from the Delegated Capital Budget was also submitted requesting £5000 to enable refurbishment works to be carried out at the Greenhill Youth Centre in the kitchen area and in the computer room. It was commented that the works would not only benefit the young people at the centre but would benefit the community as a whole.

A Member commented that the grant would enable better services to be provided to children and the community and commented that the application should be wholeheartedly supported and agreed in principle with a view to approving at the next meeting.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the verbal report from the Youth Service be noted.
 - (2) That the application form received in respect of refurbishment works at Greenhill Youth Centre for funding from the Delegated Capital Budget be received and approved, in principle, subject to full details being submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.
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POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Hobson, West Midlands Police briefly reported on performance figures in the area and confirmed that figures for Halesowen were showing a reduction in crime. He further commented that this was mainly due to the commitment of the police and the support of the local community.

A Member thanked the police for the commendable work undertaken in Huntingtree Park and in reducing complaints about anti social behaviour from between 40-60 to just one. He further referred to graffiti around the park that had been recently painted over by youths and commented that some of the graffiti work had been artistic. He suggested that community funding should be pursued with a view to illuminating the area around the community room and for the provision of graffiti boards for youths to express their artistic talents.

In responding the Area Liaison Officer advised that reference to Huntingtree Park was made in Agenda Item No 9 and informed the meeting that Officers were liaising closely with the Friends of the Park Group with a view to producing an action plan and that this matter would be taken into consideration.

RESOLVED

That the verbal report from the Police be noted.

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PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A question was asked regarding the position on an alcohol ban in and around Huntingtree Park. It was commented that the problems that were being caused had been reported and that PC Gary Hall had made an application in October of last year.

The Principal Solicitor advised that the evidence that had been presented had related to under-aged drinking and indicated that legal powers already existed for the police to confiscate the drink. He further commented that if this was not the case and that the problem was with older people then upon further evidence the matter would be reconsidered.

Inspector Hobson confirmed that there was an issue and supported an alcohol ban and agreed to submit the evidence to the Council.

- (b) Reference was made to planning law and in particular to an application to extend a derelict building in Lye High Street.

The Area Liaison Officer advised that comments could not be made as this application was not within the remit of this Committee and related to Stourbridge. However, he indicated that there were strict rules and regulations regarding planning applications and that the Council followed procedures in accordance with the law.

- (c) A resident of Foredraft Street reported that an incident had occurred on that street that day. The road had had a burst water pipe and water had gushed onto her and other driveways and furthermore the water had frozen over and was extremely hazardous. The Water Board had fixed the water leak but they had commented that the road was in such a bad state that it was putting pressure on the pipes underneath. It was also queried what had happened to the money that had been handed over in respect of the adoption of Foredraft Street. Further complaints were made in respect of the weighbridge on Foredraft Street that was giving way and it was queried whose responsibility it was.

The Area Liaison Officer commented that the issue of the adoption of Foredraft Street was extremely complex and that part of Foredraft Street had not been adopted and therefore the Council was not responsible. It was further reported that it would cost a significant amount to get the Street in a reasonable state and to get it into an acceptable standard for adoption the costs would have to be met by the frontages. He acknowledged that there were serious issues that had to be addressed and he agreed to meet the residents on site.

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WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillor Burston

Referred to a recent Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meeting and commented that complaints had been made regarding parking outside Lutley School and it had been suggested that Brookwillow Road should be made into a one-way road.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to investigate the matter.

- (a) Councillor K Turner

(i) Reiterated the concerns about parking outside Lutley School and commented that the PACT meeting had agreed that a survey should be undertaken.

(ii) Commented on the lack of recycling bins and suggested that a trial should be undertaken by placing them outside the Youth Centre at Highfields Park.

In responding Members acknowledged the need to have recycling bins but commented that there was no space outside the Youth Centre and moving the problem to another area was not the solution.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment commented that the decision had been made to move the recycling centre, even though it was well used, due to the problems that residents were experiencing. However, the identification of a site where both Members and residents would be content was still being pursued.

- (iii) Complained about the conifer trees around the bowling green area in Huntingtree Park and reported that a road had to be closed recently due to the storms as one of the conifers became unsafe and had to be cut down. It was suggested that the trees should be cut down and sponsors should be found with a view to more suitable trees being planted.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) advised that there was ongoing consultation regarding the matter with the Friends of Huntingtree Park.

- (iii) Raised concerns again regarding speeding on Huntingtree, Lansdowne, Portsdown and Dunstall Roads and requested the reinstatement of the speed visors in Dunstall Road.

The Group Engineer (Transportation) confirmed that speed visors would be reinstalled on Dunstall Road and Huntingtree Road.

- (b) Councillor Ms Nicholls

Queried what action the police were taking in respect of the coaches that parked on Whittingham Road causing an obstruction.

In responding Inspector Hobson reported that six tickets had been issued recently and further commented that discussions were taking place with a view to agreeing a permanent solution to the problem.

- (c) Councillor Ms Faulkner

Reported that Friends of Hope Street Park had been formed and that the first meeting was due to be held on 31st January, 2007 at Halesbury Special School.

- (d) Councillor Mrs Shakespeare

Commented on the withdrawal of the Nos 236 and 236A bus services, which would impact on residents of Olive Hill, particularly the elderly and children, as they would have to walk to Long Lane to catch a bus. She requested all complaints be forwarded to her to add weight to help retain the services and also asked that a letter of objection be sent to Travel West Midlands on behalf of the Committee.

The Area Liaison Officer undertook to write a letter of objection to Travel West Midlands for the withdrawal of the bus services, as indicated, on behalf of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the Area Liaison Officer be requested to submit a letter of objection on behalf of this Committee to Travel West Midlands for the withdrawal of the bus services as indicated above.

(e) Councillor Ms Partridge

- (i) Queried the position regarding a report on the Lye and Wollescote Cemetery to the Committee.

The Head of Policy explained that the report had been delayed due to a decision for consultation to be undertaken with English Heritage and other conservation bodies. Following completion of the consultation exercise a report would be submitted to both the Stourbridge and Halesowen Area Committees.

- (ii) Queried the position of the footpaths from Brook Crescent.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to investigate the matter.

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING HELD ON 22ND NOVEMBER 2006

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted informing the Committee of the written responses made to questions asked at the previous meeting.

RESOLVED

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

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DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

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 the final arrangements made in respect of the Liveability Fund, which had indicated that only three parks in Halesowen would benefit. It was suggested that funding from the Delegated Capital Budget should be allocated to parks to enable them to get match funding from other areas and parks that had not benefited from the Liveability Fund should be given priority.

The Area Liaison Officer commented that consideration would be given to the matter when allocating next year's budget and funds could be earmarked.

RESOLVED

- (1) That approval be given to a grant of £5,000 to the Halesowen Athletic and Cycling Club towards the cost of replacing their "Throws" safety cage in order to comply with the new International Association of Athletics Federations 2006 regulations.
- (2) That the action of the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Body, in approving a grant of £130 to Barnardos – Dudley Community ROUTES crèche towards new baby feeding chairs, be noted.
- (3) That the action of the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Body, in approving a grant of £1972 to Youth4em Community Action Group towards Information Technology equipment for anti-social behaviour presentations to schools and colleges, be noted.
- (4) That approval be given to a grant of £540.00 to the Crafty Café for foldaway tables and storage boxes.
- (5) That the action of the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Body, in approving a grant of £1850 to the West Midlands Police for their "Coffee in the Dark" scheme for various items to enable them to continue with the scheme, be noted.
- (6) That the action of the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Body, in refusing the request for funding from the owners of Lutley Mill towards the cost of improving public access to facilities at the Mill, for the reason indicated in the report submitted, be noted.
- (7) That approval be given, in principle, to a grant of £5000 to the Greenfield Youth Centre for the refurbishment of the kitchen area and computer room subject to full details being submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

- (8) That the provision of an alternative funding source to that of the Area Committee for the Halesowen Lighthouse project, reported to the last meeting of the Committee, be noted.

71 APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

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

Arising from the presentation of the report, Members expressed concern about trees and queried whether there were trees on the splay, if so whether there were any that were preserved and whether landscaping was required.

RESOLVED

That the application for a Restrictive Covenant on the Council owned land at Bromsgrove Street, Halesowen, as indicated on the plan attached to the report submitted, be deferred, pending further information.

72 THE EARLS HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION – FINAL ACCOUNTS

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on the accounts and annual returns of the Earls High School Foundation Trust.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the accounts of the Trust be approved by this Committee, on behalf of the Council, in their capacity as Trustee.
- (2) That the Chairman of the Committee be authorised to sign the accounts and the annual returns on behalf of the Committee.

73 HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE CONSULTATION EXERCISE

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress of the Halesowen Town Centre Consultation Exercise together with a presentation on the findings.

In presenting the report, the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) reported on the timescales of the work to be undertaken in the Halesowen Town Centre and said that development of the Asda store would commence in March, 2007, with an anticipated opening time during December, 2008. Details of the Halesowen bus station and the associated road works were to be disclosed in the next couple of weeks and details would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Regeneration Project Officer then presented the key findings of the Halesowen Town Centre Consultation Exercise.

In conclusion, the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) advised that five key priorities had been identified namely: street cleanliness, town centre events, crime prevention, congestion on roads leading into town and car parking. There was a need to retain the viability of the Town Centre and to address the identified problems a Town Centre Management Risk Strategy and Access study had been identified. It was suggested that the Halesowen Town Centre Consultation Exercise Working Group should oversee the monitoring of the Town Centre Management Risk Strategy and Access Study. The intention was to bring in a variety of measures during the disruption of works to alleviate the impact on people visiting the town centre.

A member of the public commented that the findings of the exercise and the action taken for development should be used to progress the Town Action Plan next year. An assurance was also requested that sensitivity would prevail for people living in the area during the works. The amount and volume of rubble that would be generated was also queried. In responding the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) reported that the Council worked closely with the developers and had regular meetings and he confirmed that the developers were committed to minimal disruption. He undertook to raise the query on the amount of rubble that would be generated from the works.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report and the presentation, regarding the findings of the Halesowen Town Centre Consultation Exercise, be noted.
- (2) That approval be given to the Halesowen Town Centre Consultation Exercise Working Group overseeing the Town Centre Management Risk Strategy together with the Access Study in relation to congestion and car parking and that regular updates be submitted to the Committee.

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TOWN CENTRES MANAGEMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the service provided by the Town Centre Management Service in relation to Halesowen Town Centre.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report now submitted be noted and that further reports be submitted to future meetings of the Committee on the activities of the Town Centre Development Service.

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DATE AND VENUE OF FUTURE MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date and venue of the next meeting of the Committee be noted as follows:-

14th March, 2007 – Lutley Community Centre

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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.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.

CHAIRMAN