

## HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2005, at 6.30 p.m.  
at Howley Grange Primary School, Howley Grange Road, Halesowen

### PRESENT

Councillors Body, Boys, Burston, Crumpton, Jackson, Miss Nicholls, Ms Partridge, Mrs Shakespeare, Taylor, Mrs Turner, K Turner and J Woodall

### Officers

Area Liaison Officer, Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong Learning (Community Education Division), Assistant Director of Social Services (Learning Disability and Mental Health), Head of Policy (Executive and Support), Head of Design and Projects, Senior Engineer, Planning Regulations Manager, Regeneration Manager and Town Centre Manager (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Head of Priority Neighbourhood Initiative (Chief Executives Directorate), Senior Solicitor (Gary Collins) and Mrs M Johal (Directorate of Law and Property)

Approximately 12 members of the public were in attendance

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1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

### RESOLVED

That Councillor Jackson be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

(Councillor Jackson thereupon took the Chair)

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2 MINUTES

### RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed subject to the following amendments:-

- (i) Minute No 93, fourth paragraph, the words "Hagley Mall Road" to be deleted and replaced with "Hagley Mall".
- (ii) Minute No 96, the words "Earls High School" to be deleted and replaced with "Earls High School Playing Fields"
- (iii) Minute No 87(e)(ii), the words "Youth Council" to be deleted and replaced with "Youth Club".

3

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor Body declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 14 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of him being a Trustee of the Beech Tree Miners Institute

Councillor Ms Partridge declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 14 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of her being a Trustee of the Beech Tree Miners Institute.

Councillor Burston declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 19 (Town Centre Development Service) in view of him being employed by CENTRO.

Councillor James declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 19 (Town Centre Development Service) in view of him being Vice-Chairman of the Development Control Committee that would be considering the planning application to be made by Vale Retail.

Councillor K Turner declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 18 (Shell Corner/Halesowen North – Report of the Neighbourhood Manager) in view of him being Vice-Chairman and Trustee for Age Concern.

Councillor Mrs Turner declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 18 (Shell Corner/Halesowen North – Report of the Neighbourhood Manager) in view of her being a Trustee for Age Concern.

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APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs Faulkner.

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APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor Burston be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

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PETITION

A petition from residents of Ladysmith Road, Masons Close and Hightown requesting the closure of access from the alleyway running at the back and near to properties was submitted by Councillor Body and referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for attention.

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TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROTOCOL FOR AREA COMMITTEES

A report of the Director of Law and Property setting out the terms of reference and protocol for Area Committees was submitted. Reference was also made to a revision to the terms of reference of Area Committees agreed at the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 19th May, 2005, in respect of the second term of reference regarding local community plans in that the Council agreed that it should no longer be a specific requirement to produce a separate local community plan however this would not prevent any individual Area Committee from developing its own plan if appropriate.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and appendices to the report, submitted on the terms of reference, as revised, and the protocol for Area Committees, be noted.

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APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer seeking consideration to the appointment of Co-opted Members to the Committee for the 2005/06 Municipal Year was submitted.

RESOLVED

That Co-opted Members be not appointed to the Committee in the 2005/06 Municipal Year.

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APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL REPRESENTATIONS TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted seeking consideration of the appointment of representatives of the Committee to serve on outside organisations for the 2005/06 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED

That the following members be appointed to serve on the organisations indicated:

Cradley Community Association – Councillor Crumpton  
Lutley Community Association – Councillor Burston  
Wollescote Community Association – The Ward Members for the Cradley and Foxcote Ward, namely Councillors Body, Crumpton and Ms Partridge.

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#### PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) A resident complained about illegal parking of coaches on Whittingham Road and on the island on Stourbridge Road – The Head of Design and Projects assured the resident that steps were currently being taken to install a barrier and that the Police were also taking enforcement action. The Senior Engineer further reported that the matter had been referred to CENTRO and investigations were currently ongoing.
- (b) A question had been received in respect of the implications of the Engineering and Transport budget cuts from £22.2m in 2004/05 to £21.0 m in 2005/06 to which the Director of Finance had provided a direct written response. It was further queried why a loan against an asset had been required. The Area Liaison Officer responded and advised that the loan had to be taken out to release funds to spend on other important issues such as recycling and traffic management.
- (c) A written question had been received querying the possibility of a report to a future meeting about education in Halesowen “given to the policy of schools and colleges as businesses” – In response the Area Liaison Officer advised that this was not an appropriate Committee to discuss such matters and further commented that the Select Committee on Lifelong Learning would be discussing school and extended school issues and members of the public could attend to express their views.
- (d) A verbal question was asked in relation to the proposed crossing on Windmill Hill. It was pointed out that pollution was already high and that the proposed crossing which was halfway up the hill would further exacerbate the problem due to vehicles (including lorries and buses) having to stop and start. There were also fears that the crossing could lead to fatalities – The Senior Engineer agreed to meet all interested parties on site with a view to incorporating individual comments.

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#### WARD ISSUES

- (a) Councillor Body

- (i) Complained about the top of grass slopes on Butchers Lane not being mown properly – The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to investigate the matter.
  - (ii) Complained when grass was trimmed it was left too high and that weed killer was also used, which left the grass yellow – The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to investigate the matter.
  - (iii) Queried the length of time that residents of Wollescote had waited to receive black boxes for recycling newspapers and bottles – The Cabinet Member for the Environment advised that boxes for the Wollescote area were in the final phase, which was currently in progress and that boxes should be expected by the end of the Summer.
- (b) Councillor K Turner
- (i) Commented that residents of Fatherless Barn were experiencing difficulties with overgrown vegetation, which had now spread onto footpaths.
  - (ii) Complained that seats and bins which had previously been set on fire were damaged and had not been replaced and litter was now strewn onto the grass of Huntingtree Park; it was requested that consideration should be given to installing non-flammable bins.
  - (iii) Reported that children playing in the play area of Huntingtree Park were being intimidated by older youths and it was requested that funding should be allocated from the delegated capital budget towards installing closed circuit television to identify the culprits. By siting the camera appropriately, surveillance could also be undertaken of other areas in the park, such as the tennis courts.
  - (iv) Requested that the Area Committee should wholeheartedly oppose and object to the proposed siting (entrance of Huntingtree Park) of the telecommunications mast. It was further requested that the Area Committee should also object to the telecommunication mast on Lutley Mill Lane, which was due to be considered by the Development Control Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2005 – The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) advised that the telecommunication mast on Lutley Mill Lane was recommended to be refused. The Planning Regulations Manager advised that there was no further information in respect of the Huntingtree Park telecommunications mast, however she undertook to investigate the matter and to provide any further information direct to Councillor Turner.

- (v) Updated Members on the A456 and reported that following discussions and the survey that had been undertaken, a draft report containing proposals had been issued, which would be made available to the public from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2005. He advised that he had already received a copy and if required could submit it to interested parties.
- (vi) Circulated a copy of proposals from the Head of Traffic and Road Safety in relation to parking, loading and unloading problems experienced on Hagley Road and Wassell Road.
- (vii) Referred to the A458 – junction of Belle Vale and expressed concern at the impact of the pedestrian crossing which would cause delays to traffic and protract rat runs through Fatherless Barn; it was requested that a 20 mph speed limit should be imposed on Beeches Lane East, as it was a narrow road.

(c) Councillor Ms Partridge

Referred to the Sons of Rest Building in Cradley and reported that the building was still in a state of disrepair – The Area Liaison Officer undertook to pursue the matter.

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING HELD ON 30<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2005

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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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YOUTH ISSUES

A member of the Youth Council submitted an application for funding to help towards the disco that was held every Tuesday. He explained that the disco attracted youths from parts of Halesowen and surrounding areas and attendance was in the region of 100 -120.

A member of the Youth Parliament further commented that the disco gave young people the opportunity to become more involved with each other.

A Member commended the youths and volunteers that had been involved in arranging the disco and achieving it with limited resources and further reported that the event had been controlled at all times both indoors and outdoors.

RESOLVED

That the presentation and the application for funding be received and noted.

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14

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

Having previously declared a prejudicial interest in this matter, Councillors Body and Ms Partridge withdrew from the meeting at the consideration of this item and re-joined the meeting following its consideration.

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted updating the Committee on the latest position with regard to the Capital Budget Allocation and suggesting an outline allocation for 2005/06.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the proposed outline allocations as set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report now submitted, be approved.
- (2) That the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and a representative from the Opposition Group, be authorised to consider and agree, where appropriate, requests for funding from community and voluntary groups.
- (3) That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to take appropriate action to promote the availability of funding for 2005/06, as indicated in paragraph 2.6 of the report now submitted.
- (4) That the actions of the Lead Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Councillor Body, in approving the grant of £1,600 to the Lutley Community Association and £2,000 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cradley (St Peters) Scout Group, be noted.
- (5) That the request from the Beech Tree Miners Welfare Institute, for retrospective funding of £5,000 for the building of dedicated disabled facilities at the Institute, be deferred pending further information to clarify the relationship between the Charity and the bodies referred to in paragraph 2.9.2 of the report submitted.

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APPLICATIONS 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 regarding land and property within the Committee's area.

RESOLVED

That the application to vary the restrictive covenant on the basis that the land at the rear of 39 Quarry Lane, Halesowen, as shown on the plan attached to the report, is still used for garden purposes only, be approved on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.

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16

DUDLEY BOROUGH CHALLENGE – CONSULTATION PHASE III

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted updating Members on the progress of Dudley Borough Challenge and proposals for consultation of the draft strategy document.

A member of the public commented that Dudley Borough Challenge was a good initiative, however various Directorates of the Council already covered it and he therefore failed to see how it would make a difference. Directorates were already doing their best with the resources that were available and it was queried how improvements were measured as improvements may already be in place elsewhere in the Council. In responding, the Head of Priority Neighbourhood Initiative explained that the initiative was a statutory requirement and fell in context with the Council's community plan and further provided a framework basis for bidding for external bodies. The initiative enabled partners to work together in tackling the Borough's profiles and it was further commented that performance was measured in line with the floor targets set by the community partnerships and by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. She advised that any comments should be submitted in writing to the Dudley Borough Challenge Team.

A member of the public commented that it was felt that the Area Committee did not seem to be a mechanism where important issues concerning the area could be discussed and issues were discussed piecemeal rather than as whole issues. The Head of Priority Neighbourhood Initiative again advised that any comments should be submitted in writing to the Dudley Borough Challenge Team.

RESOLVED

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



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**PROGRESS OF ELECTED MEMBER VISITS TO SOCIAL SERVICES ESTABLISHMENTS NOVEMBER 2004 – APRIL 2005**

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A report of the Director of Social Services was submitted containing information about the progress of visits to Social Services establishments undertaken by Members.

Councillor Taylor commented that visits undertaken by himself and Councillor Vickers had not been placed on record.

Members reported that visits that had been carried out to most establishments had found that they were running well, however, problems with youths, lighting and unsuitable bathing facilities had been identified at the Brett Young Day Centre. Reference was also made to an elderly residential home that housed a stainless steel sink in one of the rooms and it was commented that the sink was not big enough and often washing hands in it created difficulties.

A Member further commented that it would be useful to visit different establishments other than those allocated and requested that consideration be given to visiting establishments in Stourbridge. The Assistant Director of Social Services (Learning Disability and Mental Health) advised that there was no restriction to which establishments were visited and he undertook to note the comments made.

**RESOLVED**

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and appendices to the report now submitted, be noted.
- (2) That the comments made by Members in relation to the Brett Young Day Centre, the stainless steel sink in an elderly residential home and the request to visit other establishments other than those allocated, be noted.
- (3) That Members nominated for the 2004/05 Municipal Year be approved as the nominees of this Committee to undertake rota visits to Social Services establishments in the year 2005/06 and that Councillor Ms Partridge be included.

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**SHELL CORNER/HALESOWEN NORTH – REPORT OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGER**

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A report of the Chief Executive was submitted updating Members on key achievements in the Shell Corner Area during 2003/04, outlining forward plans for the neighbourhood and informing the Committee of the recent Neighbourhood Management survey undertaken in the area.

A Member pointed out that elected members should have been included on the list in the report and further commented that it was pleasing that Shell Corner was not as deprived as it had been and urged focus should continue to ensure further improvements. Other comments made by Members included the need to include certain schools that ran before and after school activities and that the Hillbank area should have been included in the report.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the activities undertaken by the Neighbourhood Manager to bring together partners, services and communities within the Halesowen North (Shell Corner) boundary of Dudley, be noted.
- (2) That it be noted that the Shell Corner partnership was the vehicle for community regeneration in Shell Corner/Halesowen North.
- (3) That a future report/presentation be submitted to the Committee on the findings of the neighbourhood management survey for the borough in general, and in particular, Shell Corner/Halesowen North.

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#### TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

Having previously declared a prejudicial interest in this matter, Councillor James withdrew from the meeting at the consideration of this item.

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted updating the Committee on the activities of the Town Centre Development Team in relation to the management of Halesowen.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) reported that the Regeneration Manager and Town Centre Manager would firstly present the report and a discussion would then follow in respect of Vale Retail due to a number of questions that had been received.

The Regeneration Manager and Town Centre Manager then briefly presented the report.

A Member commented that due to the extremely popular events that had been held, such as St George's Day, Farmers Market and the Victorian Fayre, consideration should be given to holding regular events in Halesowen. The events could include an element of winning prizes to attract people to Halesowen to invigorate the retailers and the town centre and he further commented that he had approached various organisations that had offered to donate prizes.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) then updated the Committee on the position of Vale Retail. He reported that questions had been submitted in writing from Somerfield as they had a store in the area and had a vested interest.

The Planning Regulations Manager then briefly outlined the contents of the proposed planning application and highlighted certain facts such as the site to be demolished would include the Murco Petrol Station and that CENTRO were pursuing plans to move the bus station, however that would be made under a separate application.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) reported that the proposal for moving the bus station integrated with the Vale Retail development and he assured Members that the application from CENTRO would be submitted within a few weeks.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the content of the report be noted and support be given to the work of the Town Centres Development Team.
- (2) That the updated position in respect of Vale Retail be received and noted and that the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) provide a written response to questions submitted by Somerfield.

#### THE LEASOWES RESTORATION

The Head of Design and Projects gave a verbal update report on the Leasowes Restoration and reported on the unforeseen factors and complications that had arisen during the detailed design of the project.

These factors included:-

- Revised requirements from the Environment Agency for the removal of silt dredging from the site had led to the need to identify alternative sites and obtain planning permission for the preferred site at the Earls High School Playing Fields.
- Designs had required revision following archaeological investigations and sewer surveys.

- There was a need to submit applications to the Environment Agency for Impounding and Drainage Licences and difficulties arose in obtaining a firm date for approval of these licences from the Agency. The Council had been advised that its applications were due to be determined on 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2005, however, due to the complexity of trying to recreate an 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape with the health and safety, engineering, and legal/statutory approval requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it was not possible to submit acceptable proposals to the Environment Agency in time for this approval and applications were rejected. An agreement has been reached with the Agency and heritage advisory on a solution and the application has been resubmitted.

Tender documents were now substantially complete, and subject to approval of the licences, work was due to start in November and completion was anticipated by June, 2006.

The Head of Design and Projects then referred to the preparation of a feasibility study for provision of a more fitting visitor centre and wardens base at the site to replace the ageing portakabin. Based on visitor numbers and types the report had suggested a modest but fitting building with wardens office, interpretive facilities, toilets and a community room, a business plan for its development and maintenance and funding sources. The report was currently out for consultation with Officers and the Friends of the Leasowes prior to finalisation.

#### RESOLVED

That the verbal update report be noted.

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#### EARLS HIGH SCHOOL PLAYING FIELDS

The Head of Design and Projects gave a verbal update report on Earls High School Playing Fields.

Following approval by the Committee in March of capital funding to deliver improvements to reduce antisocial activity and illegal parking, steps have been taken to secure these improvements. Originally, the Halesowen Abbey Trust had intended to do the work, however, given the scale of the work and the presence of a gas main in the vicinity, the work has been divided between the Trust and a contractor.

The Chairman thanked the Working Party for all the work that had been undertaken.

RESOLVED

That the verbal update report be noted.

The meeting ended at 8:50 pm.

CHAIRMAN