

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Thursday, 9th September, 2010 at 6.30 p.m.
At Colley Lane Primary School, Colley Lane, Halesowen

PRESENT

Councillor James (Chairman)
Councillor Burston (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Body, Crumpton, Mrs Dunn, Mrs Faulkner, Hill, Ms Nicholls,
Ms Partridge, Mrs Shakespeare, Taylor, K Turner, Mrs H Turner, Vickers
and J Woodall.

Officers

Area Liaison Officer (Treasurer), Assistant Director Libraries, Archives
and Adult Learning (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing
Services), Assistant Director, Quality and Partnership (Directorate of
Children's Services), Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration and
Transportation, Head of Executive Support, Head of Economic
Regeneration Delivery, Group Engineer (Transportation) (all Directorate
of the Urban Environment), Area Community Renewal Officer
(Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Senior Solicitor
and Mrs M Johal – (Directorate of Law, Property and Human
Resources).

Also in Attendance

Councillor Simms – Cabinet Member for Housing, Libraries and Adult
Learning (for Agenda Item No 11)
Inspector Clive Steedman – West Midlands Police
Mr Chris Wood – West Midlands Fire Service
Mr Andy Grosvenor – West Midlands Fire Service

There were approximately 40 members of the public in attendance.

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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:

Councillor Body declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of
Agenda Item No 15 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of him being a
Trustee of Wollescote Community Association.

Councillor Burston declared a personal interest in respect of any
references made to bus services in view of him being an employee of
CENTRO.

Councillor Crumpton declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 15 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of him being a Trustee of Wollescote Community Association.

Councillor James declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 14 (Earls High School Foundation – Application for Grant) in view of him being a Governor of the School.

Councillor Hill declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 14 (Earls High School Foundation– Application for Grant) in view of him being a Governor of the School.

Councillor Ms Partridge declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Agenda Item No 15 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of her being a Trustee of Wollescote Community Association.

Councillor K Turner declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 15 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of him being a regular attendee at St Margaret's of Antioch Church.

Councillor K Turner also declared personal and prejudicial interests in respect of Agenda Item No 5 (Emergency Services Issues) in view of him being the Deputy Shadow Leader for West Midlands Fire Service and Agenda Item No 13 (Halesowen Town Centre Development) in view of him being a member of the Halesowen and Rowley Regis Rotary Club and a member of the Organising Committee for the Halesowen Victorian Fair.

Councillor Mrs Turner declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 15 (Delegated Capital Budget) in view of her being a regular attendee at St Margaret's of Antioch Church.

MINUTES

A Member referred to Minute No 20, fourth paragraph relating to the bus service review and requested that the review should take into account the number 230 bus service as it had been rerouted in the Hurst Green area. In responding the Group Engineer (Transportation) reported that Centro had indicated that they did not have the resources to conduct a bus review but he undertook to speak to Centro about the number 230 bus service.

The Vice-Chairman indicated that the Diamond Bus Company had encountered difficulties in adhering to the number 230 bus service timetable and therefore had to reroute the service to improve reliability.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7th July, 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed subject to the following paragraph being inserted prior to the resolution in connection with Minute Number 18 – Borough Wide Air Quality Action Plan for Dudley:-

“The Cradley and Foxcote Members expressed concern about air quality in the Cradley and Foxcote area and wished it to be noted that they did not support the proposals in the consultation document and that the issue should be included as an agenda item at a future meeting”.

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PETITIONS

Waiting Restriction Proposals in the Vicinity of Shell Corner

It was reported that several petitions on waiting restriction proposals in the vicinity of Shell Corner had been received and that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

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EMERGENCY SERVICES ISSUES

Mr Andy Grosvenor, West Midlands Fire Service introduced himself and briefly explained his background.

During the ensuing question and answer session Mr Grosvenor indicated that there had been no decision to reduce firemen. He further reported that the Chief Fire Officer was undertaking a review of the Fire Service with a view to ensuring that a quality service continued given the budgetary constraints.

Members congratulated the emergency services for their quick response times and requested that regular updates be provided on the provision of services.

RESOLVED

That the information given in the verbal update on emergency services issues be noted.

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AREA POLICE AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (PACT) ISSUES

A schedule of PACT meetings arranged in the area of the Committee had been included with the agenda for information.

Inspector Clive Steedman informed the meeting that details of all PACT meetings and surgeries were given on the West Midlands Police website and he informed residents and Members that the meetings were an opportunity to communicate with the police on any issues that were of local concern.

A Member indicated that it was sometimes difficult to attend police meetings as they often clashed with Council meetings and it was requested that communication should take place with Members with a view to preventing any clashes.

In responding Inspector Steedman indicated that efforts would be made to ensure that meetings did not clash. In response to a further query about Halesowen North meetings not being held at venues in that ward, Inspector Steedman explained that there was a shortage of venues and that the police were reliant on support from the community to offer accommodation and it was requested that if anyone was aware of suitable venues in the area that they be communicated to the police.

A Member referred to an application for a Dispersal Order in Cradley and commented that the police should engage with the Youth Service and Councillors to discuss other methods of approaching the problem prior to applying for a Dispersal Order. Inspector Steedman indicated that there were valid reasons if a Dispersal Order was applied for, however he acknowledged that this did not eradicate the problem and that the problem may just move to another location. Inspector Steedman agreed that the Youth Service should be involved and undertook to speak to Inspector Boyle regarding the issue.

RESOLVED

That the information given in the verbal update on policing issues be noted.

PUBLIC FORUM

- (a) Reference was made to the air quality on Windmill Hill and the levels of pollution and it was commented that radical measures needed to take place to combat the problem.

In responding the Chairman acknowledged that there were certain areas with high levels of pollution and the Head of Executive Support indicated that there was no short term solution.

- (b) A resident referred to refuse collection and indicated that a roll of bags had been left on her path with no information. Residents had been informed that only up to three bags of rubbish would be collected which impacted on those with large families and it was also commented that other Local Authorities had wheelie bins. The process for collecting plastics and cardboard for recycling was also queried.

In responding the Chairman indicated that up to three bags could be collected per household in one week. He also reported that the Council were conducting a pilot service with a view to rolling out recycling of plastics and cardboard for the whole of the Borough. .

- (c) Complaints were made about underage drinking, consumption of drugs and general anti social behaviour occurring in the early hours of the morning on Friday and Saturday evenings in the park on Barrack Lane. The park was situated at the back of residents' homes and residents were regularly disturbed by the noise resulting in loss of sleep. A resident pointed out that the park was the Council's responsibility and a commitment had been given that a gate would be erected but no action had been taken as yet.

The Area Liaison Officer undertook to refer the matter to the Community Safety Team and Dudley Property Consultancy.

30

CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13(c), it was

RESOLVED

That agenda item Number 11 be considered as the next item of business.

31

HALESOWEN LIBRARY LOCALITY PANEL

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on the planned establishment of the Halesowen Locality Library Panel. The Panel was a pilot with a view to developing the model across the borough as part of ongoing engagement and consultation for Dudley Libraries.

Arising from the presentation of the report by the Assistant Director Libraries, Archives and Adult Learning the following comments were made by Members and members of the public:-

- It was suggested that the election of the panel should be made as simple as possible in a democratic manner and that library users in good standing should be given the right to vote.
- Reference was made to paragraph 11 of the report and it was suggested that the Council's website, electronic mailing lists as well as posters be utilised for nomination purposes.
- The lack of consultation was referred to, and in particular, the decision to transfer Social Services to Halesowen Library. With regard to the Library Panel, the Head of Service - Library Operations had indicated that a meeting would be held to discuss proposals, but no further communication in this respect had been received other than a decision sheet had been prepared.
- Since Social Services had moved into the library and acquired the space that was used to display notices there was now a lack of notification space and it was considered that there should be fewer leaflets to enable some space being freed.
- The position of the Halesowen Library Forum was queried and clarification was sought on whether it would still continue following the establishment of the Library Panel.
- It was vital to have a wide range of representation on the Panel and to enable the Panel to comprise of a cross-section of people it was considered that the suggested composition of five library users was restrictive.
- Members were of the opinion that three Councillors on the Library Panel would be sufficient and it was requested that Members be given the option to substitute.

In responding to comments made, the Assistant Director Libraries, Archives and Adult Learning acknowledged that the Council's website could be used for nominations but with regard to using electronic mailing lists she explained that the library system did not enable the facility to be used for that purpose. However, this was an improvement hoped to be made in the future.

With regard to the position of the Halesowen Library Forum, the Cabinet Member for Housing, Libraries and Adult Learning indicated that a decision had not been made and that the matter would be discussed following the trial period of the Panel. The Cabinet Member for Housing, Libraries and Adult Learning requested that comments and feedback be given about the trial through the Library Panel so that efforts could be made to make any improvements before being rolled out to the rest of the Borough.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on the introduction of library panels as a key engagement mechanism with library users, be noted.
- (2) That the Halesowen Library Locality Panel comprise three Ward Councillors (Two Conservative and One Labour) and that nominations be submitted direct to the Chairman of the Committee.

32 WARD ISSUES

No ward issues were raised.

33 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE
HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE HELD ON 7TH JULY 2010

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

A Member referred to paragraph 4 of the report relating to trief kerbs and requested that consideration be given to their implementation in the vicinity of the church on Park Lane, Cradley. In responding the Group Engineer (Transportation) undertook to speak to the relevant officer with a view to including trief kerbs in the safety scheme.

RESOLVED

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

34 REPORT OF HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE WORKING GROUPS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on issues arising from meetings of the Working Group.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted, be noted.

35 CRADLEY/WINDMILL HILL LOCAL CENTRE REGENERATION PLAN

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress in delivering the Cradley/Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan.

In presenting the report, the Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery informed the meeting that the media had, on a number of occasions, reported that regeneration of the local centre had been stalled or was not progressing swiftly enough. He confirmed that this was not the case and that the Council had formally identified Cradley/Windmill Hill as a priority centre on two occasions.

Arising from the presentation of the report a member of the public referred to the vacant shops in Colley Gate and it was commented that the Council should use Compulsory Purchase Order powers to rectify the situation. The timescales for the development of Foredraft Street was queried and clarification was sought on whether proposals for the new Health Centre had been abandoned. In responding the Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery indicated that the Council did use Compulsory Purchase Order powers but that the costs associated with this had to be borne by a development partner. With regard to the timescales for Foredraft Street the Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery indicated that they were within the control of the Local Authority and that the initial process to market the site was currently being prepared. A planning application would then be submitted and timescales were then reliant on the developer. With regard to the plans for a new Health Centre it was confirmed that the project had not been abandoned and that the National Health Service (NHS) Dudley were seeking to identify an alternative site as the Providence Methodist Church site had been found to be unsuitable. However, the Head of Economic Regeneration stated that NHS Dudley remained committed to locating a scheme in the Cradley/Windmill Hill area.

Arising from concerns expressed by members of the public about the state of the Cradley and Foxcote Ward, the Assistant Director Economic Regeneration and Transportation acknowledged that there were difficult issues and it was commented that empty and derelict shops was a national problem. Efforts were being made to speak to potential developers but difficulties were being experienced due to the current economic climate and it was stated that the Council did not have funding to use Compulsory Purchase Order powers without the backing of a development partner.

The Chairman suggested that a meeting of the Halesowen Area Committee (Cradley/Windmill Hill Regeneration Plan Delivery) Working Group should be convened to enable discussions to take place.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on the progress of regeneration work in Cradley/Windmill Hill local centre, be noted.

36

HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

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

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member referred to paragraph 16 of the report and informed the meeting that the Victorian Fair was due to be held on the 9th October and not on the 8th October, as stated in the report.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, on progress with regard to developments in and around Halesowen Town Centre, be noted.

37

EARLS HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION – APPLICATION FOR GRANT

A report of the Treasurer was submitted on an application for funding from the Trust.

RESOLVED

That the application of a grant of £2000 to financially assist JC with the remainder of his fees be approved.

38

DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

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

(Having previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the Wollescote Community Association application Councillors Body, Crumpton and Ms Partridge withdrew from the meeting for that application and rejoined the meeting following its consideration.

The Area Liaison Officer reported on a subsequent application that had been considered in consultation with the Chairman and Opposition Spokesperson requesting a grant of £800 for a security gate to be erected on an a private access road leading to Shenstone Valley, Compton, Kent and Gower Roads. Arising from the discussion Members requested clarification on the number of residential properties that were served by the private access road.

RESOLVED

- (1) That approval be given to a grant of up to £5000 being made to the Short Cross Methodist Church towards the cost of a major kitchen refurbishment programme.
- (2) That the application for a grant from Air Training Corps 223 Squadron for assistance towards a second mini-bus, be refused, as the Committee had recently assisted the Squadron in purchasing a replacement mini-bus.
- (3) That approval be given to a grant of up to £5000 being made to St Margaret's of Antioch Church towards major roof repairs.
- (4) That approval be given to a grant of up to £1800 being made to the Wollescote Community Association towards a major kitchen refurbishment.
- (5) That approval be given to a grant of up to £5000 being made to the Halesowen Athletic and Cycling Club – Tennis Section towards an overall project to refurbish the ageing tennis courts.
- (6) That approval be given to a grant of up to £3600 being made to the Howley Grange Scout Group towards the costs of developing the community meeting rooms for further community use.
- (7) That approval be given to a grant of up to £675 being made to the Halesowen Asian Elderly Association towards setting up a consultation cubicle to deal with all aspects of confidential interviews.
- (8) That the action taken by the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Opposition Spokesperson, in approving a grant of up to £150 for Wesson Gardens for a new black plastic litter bin, be noted.

DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of future meetings of the Committee be noted as follows:-

10th November, 2010 – Earls High School
13th January, 2011 – Hurst Green Primary School
9th March, 2011 – Lutley Community Centre

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 9.10 pm.

CHAIRMAN