

BRIERLEY HILL AREA COMMITTEE

Thursday 2nd October 2008, at 7.00 p.m.
at the Brier School, Bromley Lane, Kingswinford

PRESENT:-

Councillor D Blood (in the Chair)
Councillor P Harley (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Mrs E Blood, Ms Foster, Mrs Greenaway, Mrs D Harley, Ms Harris, Islam, Mrs Jordan, Miller, Nottingham, Southall and Tyler

Officers

The Director of the Urban Environment (as Area Liaison Officer), Head of Sport and Physical Activity, Section Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety), Borough Artist and Manager Executive Support Team – (all Directorate of the Urban Environment), Mr D Williams, Lead Officer for Targeted and Curriculum (Youth Service) (Directorate of Children's Services); Head of Housing Options, Area Community Renewal Officer and Community Development Officer (all Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Senior Account Manager, Marketing and Communications (Chief Executive's Directorate), Senior Solicitor, Ms K Fellows and Mr J Jablonski (Directorate of Law and Property).

Also in attendance

Mr T Jackson – West Midlands Fire Service
Sergeant Benson – West Midlands Police
Ms B Pickin – Dudley Council for Voluntary Service (by invitation)

together with fifteen members of the public

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ms Boleyn and Mrs Wilson and Mr D Horrocks (Co-opted Member).

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Tyler declared a personal interest in Agenda item 11 (Capital Allocations) in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct in so far as the item related to the application received from the 1st Wall Heath Senior Section (Girlguiding), in that he is a member of the County of West Mercia Guides Executive.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1st July 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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APPOINTMENTS TO COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted arising from a decision at the last meeting of this Committee in relation to Minute 9 – Appointment to Outside Bodies – that the constitutions of the community associations to which Members of this Area Committee were appointed be checked.

Arising from the request made, the relevant constitutions had been checked and it had been ascertained that of the nine community associations to which appointments were made, eight required the appointment of two elected Members and one required the appointment of one elected Member. It was reported at the meeting however that, following submission of the report, it had been ascertained that in fact one of the community associations, that for Pensnett, required not two but one elected member to be appointed.

As the number of representatives required was at variance with the previous practice of the Committee on such appointments, it was, following detailed consideration of this matter:-

RESOLVED

- 1 That in respect of the community associations indicated, the following annual appointments be made:-
 - (a) Brockmoor – Councillors Mrs Greenaway and Mrs Jordan
 - (b) Dingle – Councillors Nottingham and Southall
 - (c) Fens Pool – Councillor Ms Foster
 - (d) Hawbush – Councillors Ms Harris and Islam
 - (e) Kingswinford – Councillors P Harley and Miller
 - (f) Nine Locks – Councillors Ms Harris and Mrs Wilson
 - (g) Pensnett – Councillor Mrs Greenaway
 - (h) Wall Heath – Councillors Mrs D Harley and Tyler
 - (i) Wordsley – Councillors Mrs Blood and Southall

2. That, arising from resolution 1 above, that part of minute 9 of the meeting of this committee held on 1st July,2008,be rescinded in so far as it relates to the appointment of representatives to community associations.
 3. That, in the light of the information indicated in the report submitted and as reported at the meeting, the community associations concerned be requested to review the provisions within their constitutions regarding the appointment of elected members to serve on those bodies so that either three Ward Members might be appointed to them, or that such appointments be made on a more flexible basis to enable a Member to be substituted by another Member from that particular Ward should the nominated Member(s) be unable to attend.
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PETITIONS

- (a) Councillor Southall presented a petition from local residents and nine letters from residents relating to the proposed closure of Barnett Lane Post Office, with a request that it be kept open. The petition and associated letters were received and referred to the Director of Law and Property for forwarding to Post Office Limited.
 - (b) A petition from residents of Bromley submitted by Councillors Ms Foster and Mrs Jordan, requesting that the Council install a safety camera in Bromley to counteract the problem of speeding vehicles, was received and referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment for attention.
 - (c) A petition from residents of Oak Street, Kingswinford, against Oak Street Conservative Club, Kingswinford, regarding allegations of illegal parking and unsocial excessive noise after twelve midnight on weekdays and weekends, was received and referred to the Directorate of the Urban Environment, for investigation in conjunction with West Midlands Police, and the Directorate of Law and Property.
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YOUTH ISSUES

- (a) The Area Liaison Officer reported on matters raised, and the outcomes of certain issues considered, at the meeting of this Committee's Young People's Working Group held on 2nd September 2008.

He reported in particular that discussions were to be held with a representative of the owner of a piece of land as to whether it would be a viable site for a skateboarding facility; that further consideration would also be given to funding options for undertaking projects, such as skate boarding provision and on liaison with Youth Forum Workers on the question of what young people wanted as far as activities and facilities were concerned, and addressing the various issues involved in the provision of such facilities.

Reports on these matters had been requested for consideration at the next meeting of the Working Group scheduled for 17th November 2008.

Arising from the oral report given, Councillor Mrs Jordan raised a number of points, one of which related to the remit of the Young People's Working Group. The Area Liaison Officer would forward details on this matter to her.

Councillor Mrs Jordan also referred to the Lookout Project in her Ward area and the business plan that had been produced. One aspect of that business plan was a proposal to use the former estate office in Commonsides. Arising from the discussion on this matter, it was reported by Councillor Mrs Greenaway that she had approached officers in the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services on this matter and that when she received a response from those Officers she would forward a copy to her Ward colleagues and other Members of the Committee.

Arising from further consideration of the issue of youth provision, in particular a skateboarding facility, reference was made to the fact that the Brierley Hill area was the only area of the Borough that did not have a skatepark facility, mainly due to the fact that a suitable site could not be found.

It was agreed that the Head of Sport and Physical Activity would submit a report to the next meeting of the working group on how skatepark facilities in other parts of the Borough were being supported and whether they represented good value for money.

- (b) Mr D. Williams, Directorate of Children's Services, reported orally on the restructuring of the Youth Service and on the timescale for consultation on the detail of planning and delivery of services to young people over the next two years.

A consultation document was to be released in early October for a thirteen week period ending on 31st December,2008.

As part of that consultation there would be a presentation to the December meeting of this committee.

A copy of a briefing paper and timeline on this matter would be e-mailed to all members of the committee following the meeting.

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PROMOTION OF THE SMALL GROUPS PROJECT – DUDLEY COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted and a presentation given by the Small Groups Development Officer of the Dudley Council for Voluntary Service, Ms B Pickin, on this project.

Ms Pickin outlined aspects of the project as indicated in Appendix 1 to the report submitted and as outlined on the accompanying leaflet that had been circulated to members of the committee and circulated at the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the initiative be noted and that the Small Groups Development Officer be thanked for her presentation.

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PUBLIC FORUM

Consideration was given to the following written/oral questions raised:-

- (a) In response to questions raised regarding parking restrictions in Bryce Road and surrounding areas, it was reported that the proposed parking restrictions relating to Bryce Road were only a small part of an overall series of Traffic Regulation Orders that had been advertised in conjunction with the Brierley Hill Sustainable Access Network (the 'Parallel Route').

The proposals had been advertised in the press on 2nd May 2008, with on street notices being placed between 2nd and 28th May 2008. Such advertisement was the normal approach adopted for advertising Traffic Regulation Orders and did not include personal notification to individuals.

The specific proposals in respect of Bryce Road related only to a relatively short length of that road, being the length of approximately 50 metres from its junction with the traffic signal installation at Pensnett Road and Commonsides. As no objections had been received to the Bryce Road Traffic Regulation Order, the Order was due to come into effect from 30th September 2008, and road markings to this effect would then be laid accordingly.

In respect of a further question raised about the impact on the Dell Stadium, it was reported that there were no additional arrangements being put into place to accommodate visitor parking when events were held at the Dell Stadium, as this would not be an issue that would directly affect the making of an Order.

A full response to the questions raised would be sent to the questioner.

- (b) In response to two questions asked relating to the closure of Wartell Bank from Dawley Brook Trading Estate and in respect of tipping arrangements at Dawley Brook Trading Estate, the questioner was informed that the Section Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety) would investigate the issue of the closure of Wartell Bank and respond to him and the local Ward Councillor involved in writing. In respect of the second question asked, the questioner was asked by the Area Liaison Officer to speak to him and the Section Engineer at the conclusion of this meeting when discussions would also be had on the licence applications referred to by the questioner at this meeting.
- (c) The Chairman responded to a question raised as to how someone became an Independent Councillor as they were very interested in becoming one, "to give a voice to the public who are dissatisfied with their Council and to listen to them".

In his response, the Chairman referred to the holding of elections for this area in 2010 and that the person concerned needed to write to the Head of Electoral Services, Chief Executive's Directorate, who would then provide them, at the appropriate time, with the necessary details.

In response to a further question raised, the Chairman indicated the ways in which a member of the public might become involved with issues, for example, by continuing to attend meetings of this Committee and other meetings of the Council, for example, Select Committees, most of which had an item on the agenda which enabled members of the public to raise issues relevant to the terms of reference of those Committees.

- (d) In response to a question raised about the impact of Merry Hill on retail outlets, in particular, in this area, comments were made, in response, both to the regeneration aspects that were occurring in the Brierley Hill area involving working with traders, new roads and new health centre and work with colleges and schools and the regeneration that was going on generally in town centres in the Borough. Details were also given of various persons and organisations involved in the regeneration in the area.

There was, it was considered, plenty of opportunity for members of the public to be involved in the various projects being undertaken. Reference was also made to the construction of the by-pass, most of the cost of which was Government funded, which would further open up opportunities in the area.

A Report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the positioning of the Round Oak Steel Workers' Memorial.

Steve Field, the Borough Artist, had arranged a display based on research undertaken in Brierley Hill Library and the Local Archives Centre containing studies for the structure, a steel ladle, and a plan showing the proposed location of the structure, a copy of which had also been circulated at the meeting.

The proposed site for the Memorial, as indicated on the plan, was a flat area that had been made available by the construction of the new road and was on the south-west corner of the junction adjacent to the Asda store and was to be landscaped as part of the highway scheme. It was proposed that the Memorial be fabricated and erected in 2009.

Arising from the presentation given members of the public and Members of the Committee commented on, and made strong representations for, the Memorial to be located on the Firestation island, which was considered to be nearer the location of the Round Oak site. The site currently proposed was, it was reported, not considered by local people to be one that they recognised as being part of their heritage.

During the consideration of this matter, a former Senior Executive of the Round Oak Steel Works asked that the Managing Director of the company at the time of its closure, a Mr Dennis Mitchell, be invited to attend the unveiling ceremony and, if possible, take a part in the proceedings.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and as reported at the meeting, on the Round Oak Steel Workers' Memorial, be noted and that, in view of the views expressed, the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Borough Artist and other appropriate Officers, be requested to look again at the positioning of the Memorial, in particular the suggested site of the Firestation island, and report back to the next meeting of this Committee.

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CULTURAL OLYMPIAD AND DUDLEY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted informing the Committee about the Cultural Olympiad and its relevance to Dudley.

The Head of Sport and Physical Activity, in his presentation of the content of the report, referred in particular to the progress to date involved in organisation at Regional, Black Country and local level on this matter, which would plan for the holding of a series of events to showcase British Art and Culture to run alongside the 2012 Olympic Games.

Opportunities for local people and local communities to become involved were also reported on and toolkits would be made available to prospective organisers and the organisers would be encouraged to apply for small grants from funds, such as Awards for All. It was though emphasised that the brand image of both the Olympics and the Paralympics plus London 2012, were all protected by law and should not be used without permission. Organisers of local events, therefore, should seek appropriate advice on this matter.

Arising from the presentation given, and in response to a query by a Member, it was reported that the Dudley Games, for example, could fall within the remit of the Cultural Olympiad as would any other such games that involved local people.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on the Cultural Olympiad and its relevance to Dudley, be noted and that Members be asked to identify opportunities for local people to participate in the Cultural Olympiad and liaise with the Head of Sport and Physical Activity, as appropriate.

CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted in respect of two requests that had been received for a capital allocation.

Consideration had been given to the requests made at a meeting of the Capital Allocations Working Group of this Committee, held prior to this meeting, and the Area Liaison Officer, in informing the Committee of the recommendations made at that meeting, also referred to an updated request received from the 1st Wall Heath Guides, involving an increase in the amount requested by them from £775 to £2,000.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the application received from St Mary's Parish Church, Kingswinford, be refused, in accordance with criteria relating to the making of applications within three years of a previous application and there being no very exceptional circumstances, and that the Church be invited to apply again in March 2009, so that their application could be considered by the Committee at its meeting in April 2009.
- (2) That the sum of £2000 be approved in respect of the request made by the 1st Wall Heath Senior Section (Girlguiding) for the purchase of a notebook computer, printer and various items of camping equipment, including gas cookers, large billy cans, cooking trays, tables for cookers and food preparation, full set of cooking utensils and associated items, plus a large lockable cupboard to store equipment securely.

MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING HELD ON 1ST JULY 2008

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted updating the Committee on issues raised at its meeting held on 1st July 2008.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on a number of issues raised at the meeting of this Committee held on 1st July 2008, be noted.

WARD ISSUES

- (a) In response to questions raised by Councillor Miller, regarding the cost to the Council of clearing up the Cot Lane Play Area site following the recent travellers visit to the site on 15th July 2008, and then their return on 22nd July 2008, and also the cost of clearing up other sites in Wall Heath earlier in the year, it was reported that the cost for the Enville Road fly tip removal was £762; the cost of the A449 clean up was £530 and the cost of the Cot Lane clean up was £501 (costs including visits to the sites on both occasions), a total of £1793.

Councillor Miller also asked that his thanks to Officers from the Directorate of the Urban Environment in tidying up the various areas be recorded and to Dr. Ron Sims and other Officers from the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services for their participation and assistance in these matters.

- (b) In response to a query raised by Councillor Mrs Greenaway, about advice to pensioners to enable them to receive free cavity wall insulation, it was reported that persons should contact the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre on telephone number 0121 543 2904 for advice on heating grants and insulation, as they would be able to refer them to all sorts of schemes available in their area. The address of the centre was Hestia Managed Services Limited, European Business Park, Taylors Lane, Oldbury, West Midlands B69 2BN. It was also reported that persons could ring the Black Country Housing Group on 0121 561 3845 about the Health Through Warmth Scheme, but it was further noted that they must have a health related condition to qualify for the scheme. Full details of the information given in relation to this query would be emailed to all Members of the Committee.

During the consideration of this item, a Member reported on an incident involving cold calling on a constituent and advised that in no circumstances should persons respond to cold callers, but rather discuss matters with friends and family, or other acquaintances.

- (c) Councillor Ms Harris referred to alcohol related incidents in High Street, Brierley Hill, and surrounding streets and to discussions with the Neighbourhood Policing Team on this matter. A request was made that an alcohol ban, similar to that introduced in other parts of the Borough, be implemented in respect of Brierley Hill High Street and surrounding areas. It was indicated that West Midlands Police would be supportive of such a ban.

RESOLVED

That the Director of Law and Property be requested, in consultation with West Midlands Police, to consider the introduction of an alcohol ban in Brierley Hill High Street and surrounding streets with a view, should the necessary evidence be available, to a report being submitted to a future meeting of the Licensing and Safety Committee on the making of an Order to introduce such an alcohol ban.

(d) Councillor Ms Foster :-

- (i) Referred to consultation on the regeneration of Pensnett, which had importance not only for Pensnett but for the Borough as a whole and the current position following the ending of the consultation period.

It was agreed that the Area Liaison Officer would arrange for Councillor Ms Foster to receive an update on this matter and for periodic reports to be submitted to this committee.

- (ii) Asked that consideration be given to the making of the issue of Pensnett/Crestwood School a standing item on future agendas of the Committee. The Chairman indicated that consideration would be given to this request.
- (lii) Informed Members of the Committee that the period for consultation on the closure of post offices ended on 7th October 2008, and that if they wished to make any comments, they would need to do so in the near future.

(e) Councillor Mrs Jordan referred to:-

- (i) The horse trough outside St Mark's Primary School Pensnett, erected in 1911, that had recently been damaged by a vehicle and asked that consideration be given to the re-location of the horse trough to another site in Pensnett where there was less likelihood of it being damaged.
- (ii) The issue of a barrier at Fens Pool Avenue, which would not now be erected. In response, the Area Liaison Officer reported on the discussions that had taken place and the reasons why, given the conflict of business and local needs, the barrier would not now be erected. In so doing, however, he outlined a number of alternative measures, which it was considered, would help to alleviate the problems giving rise to the request for the erection of the barrier.

Such alternatives would be the making of an order, which would enable the Police to question persons in the area and the erection of signage. The use of bollards was also mentioned. The Council, together with the Police and the local community would therefore try to introduce measures to alleviate the concerns of local residents.

- (f) Councillor Tyler reported that in addition to the horse trough previously mentioned, there were two other horse troughs erected in 1911 and suggested that overall the number of such artefacts in the Borough was not known. In view of this, he suggested that if such heritage was to be preserved for future generations, it needed to be documented and if it was meant to work, should be made to work and arrangements made for future maintenance.
- (g) Councillor Southall, in response to concerns raised about Wordsley Park, in particular acts of vandalism to the bowling green and the park keeper's office, referred to the response in an earlier report submitted to the Committee, on matters raised at the previous meeting of the Committee, regarding security at Wordsley Park.

He asked that the security company hired by the Council be requested to respond to concerns, in particular those relating to the closing of the gates at the park and related issues.

The Area Liaison Officer, in response, reported that he was aware of the issues raised and that work would be carried out with the company to alleviate the concerns expressed. He also undertook to provide a more detailed response on the issues to Ward Councillors and to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee.

37 SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

The dates of future meetings of the Council's Select Committees in the current municipal year were received and noted.

38 DATES OF FUTURE AREA COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Arising from consideration of a proposal that the time of future meetings of the Committee be changed from 7pm to 6.30pm, it was

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of future meetings in the current municipal year, be received and noted and that meetings continue to commence at 7pm.

The meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.

CHAIRMAN