

Action Notes of the Halesowen North and Halesowen South Community Forum

Tuesday 6th September, 2016 at 6.30pm
at Leasowes High School, Kent Road, Halesowen

Present:

Councillors H Bills, S Henley, K Shakespeare and A Taylor

Officers:

S Beckett - Lead Officer to the Forum (Head of Revenue and Benefit Services)
and K Griffiths (Democratic Services Officer) – Chief Executive's Directorate

Together with 10 members of the public

1 **Election of Chair for the 2016/17 municipal year**

Councillor K Shakespeare was elected Chair of the Forum for the 2016/17 municipal year.

2 **Appointment of Vice-Chair for the 2016/17 municipal year**

Councillor A Taylor was appointed Vice-Chair of the Forum for the 2016/17 municipal year.

3 **Apology for Absence**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor D Vickers.

4 **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

5 **Dudley: Have Your Say and Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

The Lead Officer provided the Forum with details on the background to Dudley: have your say consultation. Councillors and residents were advised that an event would be held on Wednesday 28th September, 2016 at Dudley Council House from 6.30pm to 9.00pm. The event would give attendees the opportunity to have their say about community safety with a view to collecting information to plan future Community Safety priorities.

Reference was made to the online survey that was available on the Safe and Sound website www.dudleysafeandsound.org for people to complete if they were unable to attend the event in order to enable their views to be taken into account.

The Lead Officer reported on the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme. Leaflets detailing information about the consultation and questionnaires on the future of the scheme had been circulated at the meeting. Residents were encouraged to complete the questionnaire and submit responses by 16th October, 2016. It was noted that the questionnaire was also available online by visiting www.dudley.gov.uk/benefits/

6 **Listening to you: Questions and Comments from Local Residents**

Subject

Members of the public referred, in detail, to a number of safety concerns affecting Howley Grange Road. It was reported that a community group had been set up to combat the speeding and dangerous driving along Howley Grange Road, especially near the local primary school. Local Councillors had been contacted and had attended meetings and were in support of the campaign. A Facebook page, e-mail account and online petition had also been set up to assist the group to communicate the safety issues and encourage support from residents.

Residents referred to a number of historic road incidents, which had not been recorded on Police databases, which had taken place in the area and requested traffic calming measures to be introduced along Howley Grange Road before a serious injury or a fatality occurred.

A petition containing approximately 600 signatures was presented to the Forum in support of safety measures being put in place along Howley Grange Road.

Action

Following a lengthy discussion, the issues raised were referred to the Place Directorate in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme.

It was noted that issues had been raised with Police; however no action had been taken.

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services explained the criteria used when prioritising schools for the safer routes to school scheme.

A Ward Councillor for Halesowen South undertook to contact the Police to request statistical information relating to the number of accidents/incidents in the area.

Residents also referred to Howley Grange Road being used as a “cut through” from Spies Lane to Bartley Green and incidents concerning speeding vehicles.

A Member of the public referred to the parking issues affecting the service road on Royal Oak Road/side of Manor Lane.

It was reported that signs had been erected as part of the Safer Routes to School Scheme restricting vehicle access to residential properties only, however these signs were being ignored. It was suggested that the wording of the signs needed an extra plate stating that access is to properties 5-37 only and NOT Lapal School.

Reference was made to the planning application to build two new permanent classrooms and an ancillary room at Lapal School. These would enable the school to expand significantly over the next seven years. A view was expressed that the application took no account of the impact this would have on access to the School. Residents believed that, as housing in the immediate area was not expanding, pupils would come from further afield and worsen the parking problems. The resident indicated that objections had been submitted in relation to the current planning application and unless further measures were taken to address the parking situation, these would not be withdrawn.

The resident indicated that the preferred solution was to lock the access gate to the school from the service road during school start and finish times but opened on the basis of need e.g. for school trips and access to buses during the course of the school day.

Referred for a written response.

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services referred to actions currently being taken by the Headteacher to combat parking issues in the vicinity of Lapal School.

7 **Working with you: Topics raised by Local Councillors**

| <u>Subject</u> | <u>Action</u> |
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| Councillor K Shakespeare referred to recent discussions in relation to the possibility of purchasing a pro-laser speed gun for a number of agencies to use to prevent speeding in the Halesowen area. | Referred to West Midlands Police for investigation/action. |
| Councillor K Shakespeare referred to the influx of travellers within the Borough and indicated that a West Midlands wide group had been created, involving a number of agencies, to discuss/implement strategies to prevent future issues. She encouraged residents to contact local councillors in the first instance to report any sightings of travellers. | Noted. |
| Councillor H Bills referred to the table top event, which was taking place on Saturday 29 th October, 2016 at the church in Vicarage Road, to raise money for Christmas solar lights in Shell Corner. Doors opened at 10.00am and would close at 1.00pm. All residents were invited to attend. | Noted. |

8 **Halesowen Business Improvement District (BID)**

Representatives from the Halesowen Chamber of Trade were in attendance at the meeting and B Wheeler gave a verbal presentation on progress to date, current arrangements and future planning and development should the BID be successful.

Representatives expressed gratitude to all Members for their help and support in relation to the road show event which, for a number of reasons, had to be cancelled. Members were assured that the event would be re-arranged in the near future. The Chamber would be requesting further assistance with a view to capitalising on expertise and skills to help with the BID campaign.

Arising from the presentation, specific issues were raised in relation to the need for support from Councillors and officers of the Council with the BID campaign to ensure maximum publicity. The Chair undertook to raise this matter with officers directly.

In concluding, gratitude was expressed for the work carried out by the Lead Officer in relation to obtaining information on businesses in the Halesowen area to enable the Trade to undertake the BID preparation work.

The Chair thanked the representatives from the Halesowen Chamber of Trade/B. Wheeler for the presentation received.

9 **Community Forum Funding**

Application

Recommendation

Halesowen Chamber of Trade

Approval of £2,500 to contribute towards the purchase of Christmas lights for Halesowen Town Centre.

Dudley CVS

Refused as it was considered not to be an appropriate use of Community Forum Funding.

Dudley Council's Environmental Services Division

Refused as Members did not agree this was a priority for funding.

Coombswood Cricket Club

Approval of £3,276 to purchase modern, safe and up to standard sight screens. It was noted that the application had been dealt with as an urgent funding application prior to the Community Forum.

Beautique

The Lead Officer updated the Forum on the background/circumstances of the application. The funding was refused as it was not considered to be an appropriate use of Community Forum Funding.

10 **Dates, Times and Venues of Future Meetings**

It was reported that meetings of the Community Forum would be held on the following dates:

- Tuesday 1st November, 2016 – Olive Hill Primary School – 6.30pm
- Tuesday 10th January, 2017 – Leasowes High School – 6.30pm
- Thursday 16th March, 2017 – Halesbury School – 6.30pm

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm