

BRIERLEY HILL AREA COMMITTEE

Thursday 4th February, 2010 at 7.00 p.m.
at the Brier School, Bromley Lane, Kingswinford

PRESENT:-

Councillor Harley (in the Chair)
Councillor Mrs Greenaway (Vice Chairman)
Councillors D Blood, Mrs E Blood, Ms Boleyn, Foster, 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 Museums, Greenspaces and Bereavement Services, Section Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety) and Manager, Executive Support Team (All Directorate of the Urban Environment), Assistant Director of Housing, Area Community Renewal Officer (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Senior Account Manager, Marketing and Communications, (Chief Executive's Directorate), Ms H Kidd, Solicitor and Miss K Fellows (both Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources).

together with Inspector S Bradbury, West Midlands Police, Mr C Newton, West Midlands Fire Service and seven members of the public.

61 **APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

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

62 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Ms Boleyn and Tyler declared a personal interest in Agenda Item Number 8 – Capital Allocations – in so far as the item related to Wall Heath Community Centre as they had been nominated to represent the Council on that Community Association.

Councillor Ms Harris declared a personal interest in Agenda Item Number 8 – Capital Allocations – as a Member of the Dudley MBC Employees' Sports and Social Club, in so far as the item related to an application received from that Club.

63 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3rd December, 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed.

COMMUNITY RENEWAL/YOUTH ISSUES

The Area Liaison Officer reported that the Brierley Hill Youth Forum would give a presentation to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Area Community Renewal Officer indicated that the Community Renewal and Young People's Working Group were due to meet on 2nd March, 2010 and that a full progress report upon Borough issues would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information reported on at the meeting be noted.

PUBLIC FORUM

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

- (a) A written question was submitted in relation to the action that was being taken by the Council to protect the listed buildings and trees on the old Wordsley Hospital Site. The Area Liaison Officer responded stating that the Planning Section of the Directorate of the Urban Environment included historic environment and tree protection officers whose role was to work with developers and the public to protect listed buildings and trees.
- (b) A written question in relation to parking problems and proposals for a one-way traffic system in Victoria Street, Bent Street and John Street, Brierley Hill, problems with signage being covered and uncovered and lack of notification prior to the system being implemented. The Section Engineer would provide the questioner with a written response and provide clarification of the current position.

Inspector Bradbury confirmed that he would liaise with colleagues and provide the questioner with a verbal response in relation to the issue over signage.

- (c) A member of the public referred to a petition that had been submitted to the previous meeting of the Committee requesting the closure of the pathway leading from Kilburn Drive to Holbeache Lane and Oak Lane requesting confirmation of the criteria that should be satisfied for such closures, making reference to residents suffering incidents of anti social behaviour and arson.

The Section Engineer responded indicating that the Petition would be reported on later in the evening and advised that there had to be support for closure of the path from the Police and the local Police Crime Reduction Officer had indicated he could not support a gating order.

Councillor Tyler confirmed that he had endeavoured to obtain detailed analysis of the incidents of anti social behaviour within a 250 metre radius of Kilburn Drive from the Police Crime Reduction Officer however to date he had not received a response.

The Area Liaison Officer responded stating that he would request the Police Crime Reduction Officer to provide the questioner with details of the criteria set for the closure of paths and respond to Councillor Tyler's request as detailed above and agreed to arrange for the matter to be looked at further.

Inspector Bradbury confirmed that he would liaise with his colleague Inspector Quiney and request him to contact the questioner.

67 CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED

That, pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13(c), a presentation from the Brierley Hill Station Commander of the West Midlands Fire Service be considered as the next item of business.

68 WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

The Brierley Hill Station Commander of West Midlands Fire Service reported orally on the success of fire operations during the preceding two years, indicating that the Fire Service carried out free fire safety checks, home surveys and supplied smoke alarms to homes within the Borough.

In relation to tackling anti social behaviour it was reported that Arson Reduction Officers were employed by the Fire Service, their roles being to investigate area hotspots in order to address issues that could cause or create anti social behaviour.

It was stated that during the last two and half years out of eight abandoned vehicles in the Borough, seven had been successfully removed, thus preventing a cause of anti social behaviour.
In relation to fly tipping, forty eight separate tipping incidents had been dealt with, resulting in the successful removal of rubbish within the Brierley Hill area and of dwellings that were left empty and deteriorating, five had been demolished, with thirteen being successfully secured, thus preventing a site for anti social behaviour.

It was stated that in relation to commercial properties, four had been demolished and twenty-eight secured.

In relation to the successful operations referred to above, these had greatly improved anti social behaviour figures together with the economic cost of tackling fire and it had been calculated that just over £2 million had been saved in the Brierley Hill area which had been classed as efficiency savings.

It was reported that the Brierley Hill Area was divided into six areas with each having a dedicated watch for all activities who would attend various activities on a regular basis including Police and Communities Together meetings and activities arranged at local Community Centres.

As part of the presentation on arson reduction within the Borough photographs of void and derelict buildings, fly tipping and abandoned vehicles were circulated to members.

The Station Commander was thanked for his presentation.

RESOLVED

That the information reported on at the meeting be noted.

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DUDLEY BOROUGH LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the work of the Dudley Borough Local Access Forum and to invite applications from members of the public to join the Forum.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report be noted and that members of the public be invited to apply for membership of the local access forum by the closing date of 14th February, 2010.

70

CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on applications for funding from this year's Capital Allocations budget.

Arising from consideration of the three applications received, as indicated in the report submitted and one further application, by this Committee's Capital Allocations Working Group earlier this day it was:-

RESOLVED

1. That, in respect of the application made by Wall Heath Community Centre, and that, as it was considered that there were very exceptional circumstances for approving an amount beyond the usual maximum of £5,000, the sum of £8,000 for the cost of.

constructing a walkway linking the rear car park to the front of the premises, illuminating the side of the building and resurfacing the enclosed area of the car park that was used by the pre School Unit based at the Centre be approved.

2. That, subject to the provision of an up to date Bank Statement, the sum of £4,642 be approved in respect of the request made by Dudley MBC Employees' Sports and Social Club for the refurbishment of the Club's seating area following the recommendations of the Fire Warden and changes in legislation.
3. That approval be given to the application received from Nine Locks Community Association for the sum of £4,033 to purchase a boiler and toilet furniture.
4. That, subject to the Association reporting back with details on the Capital Items required, a maximum allocation of £5,000 be offered to the Dudley Stroke Association.

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MATTERS RAISED AT THE MEETING OF THE BRIERLEY HILL AREA COMMITTEE ON 3RD DECEMBER, 2009

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted updating the Committee on a number of issues raised at the meeting of Brierley Hill Area Committee on 3rd December, 2009.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the Report submitted be noted.

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WARD ISSUES

Written responses to the Ward issues raised by Members in advance of the meeting were circulated to Members and the public present at the meeting prior to the start of the meeting. The questions received and responses given were as follows:-

- (a) In response to a question raised by Councillor Southall that during the recent bad weather, a section of the wall bordering Wordsley Park along Bells Lane collapsed onto the children's play area.

Having contacted the officer concerned, consideration was being given as to whether the damaged portion of the wall was to be rebuilt or whether it would be replaced by fencing similar to that which was used on the boundary line opposite The Green and Ryder Street.

I am asking therefore for three things:

- To be informed as to which re-build option is to be adopted.
- How soon this can be achieved.
- An assurance that the remainder of the wall be inspected as a matter of the utmost urgency and if faults are identified, then remedial action is authorised accordingly.

Should railings prove to be the preferred option, then I would hope that built into the decision making process would be the consideration of a natural noise attenuation barrier being removed and the possible effect that this might have on people living in the houses opposite.

Councillor Southall also requested at the meeting that the cost of rebuilding the wall be investigated.

Councillor Mrs Jordan requested that she be advised of the cost of the rebuild and indicated that her preferred option would be the re-build of the wall.

Response -

The wall collapsed on January 13th and in the opinion of our building surveyors it was caused by the inclement weather with the snow and ice getting between the pavement and the wall, expanding and pushing the wall off its bed course sufficient enough for gravity to take over.

As soon as the collapse was reported, the play area was closed whilst fallen masonry was removed by Greencare. Local ward councillors were also briefed on 13th January by Greencare.

Temporary metal fencing had been erected on the pavement side. The remaining wall was not in imminent danger of collapse but there was concern that local youths might start to push it over, so officers were monitoring the situation closely and if there is a deterioration, building surveyors may have to take down the remaining length of wall and replace with temporary fencing.

In the mean time, surveyors had estimated the replacement cost for steel palisade fencing along the whole length to the Lawnswood Junction at approximately £30,000. Replacement with fencing would have the disadvantage for local residents of opening up views and associated noise from this popular play area to the houses opposite. The cost of a new brick wall would be considerably greater. Surveyors are currently discussing design options and estimated costings for a wall with structural engineers.

The play area was closed immediately to prevent children being exposed to any danger. Now that the unstable section of wall that runs along the boundary of the play area has been brought down, Greencare are now taking steps to erect fencing between the play area and the wall for extra protection thereby allowing the play area to re-open shortly. Children will then be able to use this popular site in safety whilst the Council makes a decision about the wall.

The Area Liaison Officer also advised that the possibility of utilising Section 106 monies to cover the re-build costs for the wall would be investigated.

- (b) In response to a question raised by Councillor Harley regarding one of his constituents who had contacted him from Middleway Avenue. His property was on the junction of Middleway Avenue / Cot Lane. His complaint was that the small area next to his property (in Cot Lane) was full of rubbish such as beer cans, pop bottles, condoms and the usual. It was also used as a toilet by the odd person walking back from the pub late at night.

For many years this constituent had cleaned up the filth and attempted to keep the side of his property tidy by trimming back trees and cutting down the weeds etc. Now he has had enough and would like the authority to remove the shrubbery at the side of his property therefore eliminating the cover that undesirables have at this moment.

It was also used as a cover for gangs of children in the summer evenings. Any action would be appreciated prior to the summer months when the problem is a real issue to him.

Response -

Green Care inspected the site on the morning that the issue was raised and found litter, beer cans, bottles etc. deposited over the area in question. An immediate removal of the litter was carried out later the same day.

The resident was consulted with regard to reducing and thinning out of the bushes and the work had been programmed to be carried out within the next three weeks.

DUE's Street Cleansing Team Manager also met with the resident to ascertain what additional support could be provided over and above the litter pick and thinning of the vegetation. As a result, a litter bin was being sited by the bus stop and the footway on Cot Lane would be swept.

- (c) Councillor Islam raised a question in relation to the progress upon the Round Oak Workers Steel Memorial.

The Area Liaison Officer indicated that design costs had been calculated and sources of funding were being investigated. It was stated that a report on the Memorial would be presented at a future meeting of the Area Committee.

- (d) Councillor Ms Harris referred to persistent problems with stray horses within the Brockmoor, Kingswinford and Wallheath areas and requested that a report be presented to a future meeting of the Area Committee as to the course of action the Council would adopt and any action they could take to deal with stray horses together with their advice to the public, who encountered such problems.

RESOLVED

That the Area Liaison Officer be requested to:-

- (1) Report to a future meeting of the Committee upon the position relating to the Round Oak Steel Workers Memorial;
- (2) Report to the next meeting of the Committee upon the course of action the Council could adopt and any action they could take to deal with stray horses together with their advice to the public in order to deal with stray horses.

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SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

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

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DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE AREA COMMITTEE MEETINGS.

That the following date for the remaining meeting, and venue in this municipal year be noted:-

Thursday 25th March, 2010 at The Brier School.

The meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.

CHAIRMAN