

WALSALL SOUTH AREA PANEL

Monday, 15 December, 2014 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference Room, Council House, Walsall

Present

Councillor E.B. Russell (Chair)
Councillor M. Arif
Councillor A. Ditta
Councillor A. Nawaz
Councillor H.S. Sarohi
Councillor V. White

Officers in attendance

Stuart Everton – Programme Manager (Walsall Council)
Kate Bowers - Interim Head of Communities and Public Protection
Denise Perry - Area Manager
Matt Underhill - Committee Business and Governance Manager

75/14

Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. Hussain; B.V. McCracken; D.A. Anson; R.A. Martin; M. Nazir & G. Sohal.

76/14

Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting that took place on 2 October, 2014, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

77/14

Declarations of Interest

<u>Name</u>	<u>Type of interest</u>	<u>Item</u>
Councillor Arif	Non-pecuniary	Item 7 - Funding Report
Councillor Whyte	Non-pecuniary	Item 7 - Funding Report

78/14

Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)

It was noted that there were no items to be considered in private session.

79/14

Darlaston & Pleck – Major Highway Scheme Update

The Programme Manager provided a summary of the project to date which had originated in 2002. It was explained that the access project was

focused on the area bisected by Junction 9 and 10 of the M6. The main driver was to enable the development of a number of brownfield sites that were heavily contaminated. The four key elements of the project are Bentley Road South, Bentley Mill Way, Darlaston Road/ Pleck Road Junction (Brown Lion) and the Bescott Road/ Wallows Lane Junction.

In 2010 the newly elected Government required the council to re-submit the Major Scheme Business Case. From the original business case the development of the East/ West Link was dropped and the overall costing of the project reduced from £32m to £26m. The Government approved the scheme, although it is now necessary for the council to underwrite any additional costs for the project beyond £26m.

It was explained that work began on delivering a new canal bridge in 2009/10 in Bentley Road South. This was prompted by the existence of two large recycling plants both of which require 24/7 access. The work included the closure of the railway line. This has been followed by work to introduce a new railway bridge. Other key work includes the lowering of the carriageway through James Bridge Aqueduct and work to establish a signalised junction at Bentley Mill Way/ Darlaston Road Junction.

In response to a Panel query it was explained that residents have been informed about the works in a variety of ways. This included letter drops to 4,500 homes before the scheme started, together with a series of press releases with local councillors and the use of social media. A number of councillors praised the work of both officers, as well as the efforts of the current and previous administration, which would have significant benefit for both local residents and throughout the borough.

In response to a further query it was explained that the work at the James Bridge Aqueduct would include lowering the carriageway by a metre. However, the structure would remain at height that was more than sufficient to enable high sided vehicles, such as HGVs, to pass safely. It was also explained that the pillars would be strong enough to cope with a vehicle crashing into them. In relation to potential flood risk, for example following heavy rainfall, it was explained that stop locks had been constructed on either side of the aqueduct. These are monitored constantly for movement by the Canals and Rivers Trust and if there is any risk of flooding the water will be drained out by a pumping station and transferred to very large tanks.

In response to an additional Panel query regarding the heavily contaminated IMI site, it was explained that officers were seeking agreement with a private contractor to carry out the clean-up work. This was likely to be funded by prudential borrowing. It was also explained that grants had also been agreed with individual companies to undertake surveys of their land to determine the extent of contamination.

In response to a further query it was explained that it was intended to incorporate a cycling route into the development. It was also intended to establish a cycle network across the borough, although this would take up to two or three years to be established. The importance of seeking lit

cycling routes was also agreed to enable them to be used throughout the day and evening for commuting.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

80/14

Area Manager's Report

The Panel considered the latest report from the Area Manager on progress to achieve the Area Panel's priorities.

The Area Manager explained that a domehawk camera was now available for deployment in early January and invited Members to consider potential locations for its use. Members identified and agreed that the area of Spout Lane was suitable as it experienced significant problems of anti social behaviour, including street drinking and fly-tipping.

A number of Members raised concerns regarding the former Kings Arms, Spout Lane. It was explained that the owner of the site was in the process of replacing it with four retail units. The owner of the site had previously made a planning application regarding the part or whole purchase of a council owned car park adjacent to the site for the intended use of customers and for deliveries. Members explained that the application had in part been rejected by the Planning Officer who felt there was sufficient street parking. It was agreed that the Area Manager would report back to the Panel on the latest position in this matter at the next Panel meeting.

A number of Members expressed concern regarding an off licence which was suspected of significantly contributing to street drinking, as well as selling cigarettes and alcohol to underage children. The Area Manager explained that it would be possible for this to be reported to the monthly tasking meeting. It could then be referred to Trading Standards for test purchasing. Members noted that they had objected to granting of a licence to this business. However, the Police had not objected and as a result the application had been approved. The meeting noted that typically the Police Officer responsible for considering such applications would not be local to the area and so potentially would be unfamiliar with any problems. The Area Manager agreed to seek the details of the Police Officer responsible for considering such applications and to share these with Members.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

81/14

Funding Report

The meeting considered funding applications.

Gility Shopping Centre – Park Hall Area NW Notice Board

The Area Manager introduced the application. It was explained that the funding would be used to purchase a notice board to inform local residents about events in the area.

That the *Park Hall Area NW Notice Board* be awarded £300.

It was **moved** by Councillor Russell and **seconded** by Councillor Nazwaz. The Motion having been put to the vote was declared **carried**.

Caldmore outdoor cinema

The Area Manager introduced the application. It was explained that the funding would be used to purchase equipment for an outdoor cinema which will show movies from across cultures accompanied by talks and culture days. The objective is to bring communities together and improve cross-cultural understanding. In response to a Panel query it was explained that the Caldmore Community Garden was a “green oasis” maintained by a local volunteer on whg land located near St Michael’s Church. The Community Garden includes an open air classroom for use by local schools and the community. In response to a further Panel query it was explained that the outdoor cinema would operate from March onwards during the year with films shown in the early evening, while there was some seating available including some benches made by Walsall College.

A number of Panel Members expressed concern regarding the impact on the local community of the cinema. This included the risk they felt it might pose in terms of encouraging street drinking, disturbance to residents who lived nearby to the Community Garden and parking problems. On this basis Members agreed to defer a decision on the funding application until the next meeting. It was also agreed that the Area Manager would undertake a consultation with local residents in the immediate and neighbouring roads. Councillors’ Arif and Whyte, having declared an interest, left the room for the duration of the vote.

It was **moved** by Councillor Nawaz and **seconded** by Councillor Ditta:-

That the Outdoor Cinema funding application be deferred until the next Panel meeting. In addition, that the outcome of consultation with local residents in Bath Street and St Michael Street regarding the cinema be undertaken with the results reported to the next Panel meeting.

The Motion having been put to the vote was declared **carried**.

82/14

Dates and venues for future meetings

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 10 February, 2015 in the Council House, Walsall.

Termination of meeting

The meeting closed at 7.20 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: