

ALDRIDGE AND BEACON AREA PANEL

Tuesday 1st October, 2013 at 6.00 p.m.

**at Collingwood Centre, Collingwood Drive, Great Barr,
Birmingham, B43 7NF**

Present

Councillor Towe (Chairman)
Councillor Rochelle (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor A. Andrew
Councillor Sears
Councillor Wilson

11/13 Welcome and Apologies

Each Member of the Area Panel (A.P.) and the officers present introduced themselves.

The Chair also welcomed Councillor Wilson in view of the fact that it was his first meeting on the A.P.

12/13 Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bird, Clarke, Flower, Harris, Hughes, and Murray.

13/13 Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July, 2013, a copy having previously been circulated to each Member be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

14/13 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

15/13 Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)

There were no items on the agenda which required the exclusion of the public under this Act.

16/13

Community Safety Plan 2011-14 Refresh

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The Area Manager of Community Safety presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein.

Arising from the discussions in relation to the crime figures and data in the area, the Chair encouraged members of the public to always report crime and ASB and to always get a reference number from the police.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

17/13

Participatory Budgeting

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The Partnerships Officer and the Group Manager (Road Traffic Network) presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein. In particular, Members were invited to share their opinions on the schemes as set out in table 1 of the report. The A.P. noted that the schemes which were listed in the report were historical ones and could have been suggested or established up to 20 years ago. In view of this, the costings identified within the report were also historical figures and would now be out of date. In addition the A.P. was advised that a consultation process would be started within the local community and that the outcome would be reported back to the next meeting.

Councillor Andrew advised that he could not see the merit in the scheme as set out in the location identified at Beacon Road. He could, however, see merit in providing such a scheme a little further down Beacon Road. Furthermore, he advised that he would rather see any money available for this to be spent on smartening up the area, especially in relation to grass verges where the general public parked their cars and damage occurred as a consequence. The Chair also felt that making improvements such as this would save the Council money on maintenance costs.

Councillor Rochelle gave his support to a scheme in relation to Broad Meadow in Aldridge. His views were duly seconded by his fellow Ward Member, Councillor Wilson. He advised that the area in question was on a main bus / school route and there were a number of grassed areas where a scheme could be introduced to help alleviate some of the traffic congestion and parking problems currently experienced in the

area. In relation to this point, a number of local residents were also in attendance to raise their concerns regarding parking and traffic flow problems in the vicinity of where their houses were located. In view of this, the Chair asked that the Area Manager and the Group Manager (Road Traffic Network) to contact the residents concerned with a view to investigating whether any viable improvements could be made to help alleviate / improve the problems currently being experienced by local residents in this area.

Councillor Rochelle also advised that parking problems experienced in relation to the Sussex Avenue scheme were largely as a result of Council and Service vehicles. He asked whether it was possible for problem areas to be covered in 'pilings' as a cheap solution to the problem.

Councillor Sears advised that there was a particular problem in relation to Poxon Road in Aldridge whereby emergency vehicles had difficulties in accessing all the properties in the road. This matter was compounded by the fact that the residents in this area were mainly elderly residents and he asked if a scheme in this area could be considered.

The Group Manager (Road Traffic Network) reminded the A.P. that the finances available would only be able to deliver one scheme for the whole area. The Partnerships Officers reiterated that a consultation process would be started shortly after the meeting and that local communities would be consulted on the proposals. In view of this the schemes would be put to the public vote to choose a scheme. The Clerk to the A.P. advised that, although the public would get the opportunity to vote on a preferred scheme, it was Members who voted to approve a scheme as only Members could approve to spend Council money.

Resolved

That:-

1. the progress to date in relation to Participatory Budgeting through the Area Partnerships Structure be noted;
2. the Panel's views on the proposal for piloting Participatory Budgeting verge parking initiative be noted;
3. the Panel's views, above, on the verge parking schemes as set out in table 1 be noted;
4. that the additional sites identified above, be noted;
5. that the Area Manager and Group Manager (Road Traffic Network) undertake to consult with residents in Broad Meadow, Aldridge, with a view to investigating whether any viable improvements could be made to help alleviate / improve the problems currently being experienced by local residents in this area.

18/13

Role of the Strategic Funding Officer

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The Strategic Funding Officer presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein.

Councillor Rochelle commented that the Aldridge Railway Station would require adequate parking in its vicinity to allow traffic to continue to flow smoothly around the town. He referred to a particular site nearby called the 'Jack Allen' site as he felt that it would be ideal for such purposes.

Councillor Andrew commented on the various streams of external funding that the Council could access. In particular, he shared his frustration with the A.P. in relation to European funding where 'red tape and strings attached' often hindered the process of obtaining funding from this source.

In addition, Councillor Andrew commented that Walsall had a problem with post codes under the A.P. which further hindered the securing of funding from external sources because it was considered an affluent area. For example, he highlighted the fact that some of the areas covered by this A.P. had 'hidden deprivation' in that many residents were asset rich but had little in the way of income.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

19/13

Winter Service

A verbal presentation was delivered.

The Group Manager (Road Traffic Network) delivered a verbal presentation on what could be expected as part of this year's winter service.

In particular, he advised that the current proposals would be taken to Cabinet for approval towards the end of October, 2013. In addition, he advised on various facts and figures associated with Walsall in its provision of the winter service.

It was reported that there were no significant changes to the scheme this year. However, from next year onwards there would be a significant change in view of the fact that a new Code of Practice required Local Authorities to undertake thermal mapping images of the whole of their territory. The reason for this was to help focus where resources were required so that specific areas could be targeted with greater efficiency.

The Chair informed the meeting that Walsall had one of the best winter service schemes in the country which was operated on a budget much smaller than many other Local Authorities. In view of this, he and the other Members wished to thank all the officers involved for their efficient and hard work throughout the winter months.

Resolved

That the presentation be noted.

20/13

Hay Head Wood

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Further to Minute No. 133/12, the Area Manager presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein. Members' views were sought in relation to a suitable resolution to the situation.

Following a lengthy debate on various options in relation to this item, the general consensus was for the car park to remain operational and that the existing trees, bushes and foliage be thinned out / removed where possible to make the car park more open and visible. In addition, the Group Manager (Road Traffic Network) agreed to investigate if he would be able to secure some 'chippings' to help repair the damage to the car park and help improve its appearance and functionality.

The Chair advised that the problems being experienced at this site were a criminal matter for the police and urged the police to increase their enforcement action in the area.

Resolved

That it be recommended that: -

1. the car park at Hay Head Wood remain open and operational;
2. the existing trees, bushes and foliage be removed and thinned out to allow for a more open and visible car park area;
3. the Group Manager (Road Traffic Network) be requested to investigate if some 'chippings' could be secured to help repair the damage to the car park and help improve its appearance and functionality.

21/13

Funding Report

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The Area Manager presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein.

Councillor Andrew reported that he was happy to accept and agree all the funding proposals as set out. However, he felt that the A.P.'s budget was not the appropriate budget for the 'Aldridge Toilets' project to be funded form. In view of this he stated that he would rather approve all the projects as set out and approve the 'Aldridge Toilets' project in principle, pending alternate funding sources being explored.

Arising from discussions on this report, the Chair sought agreement for the Area Manager to be granted authority to deal with funding applications up to the value of £1000. The Area Manger advised that the power would be to deal with 'urgent' items only for funding applications which were required quickly and had a genuine reason for urgency between meetings. The Chair advised that he felt that greater flexibility was required and agreed to speak with the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector on the matter.

Resolved

That:-

1. the funding for the project applications, as set out in appendix 1 to the report, be approved, subject to the Deputy Leader, in consultation with the Area Manger, seeking funding from an alternative budget to fund the 'Aldridge Toilets' project.
2. the Panel's Area Manager be granted authority to approve urgent projects only, up to the value of £1000 in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and relevant Ward Members.

22/13

Ongoing Updates on the Actions for Aldridge & Beacon Area

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The Area Manager presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

Termination of meeting

The meeting terminated at 7.50 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: