Minutes of the Rowley Regis Town Committee

6th July, 2006 at 6.00 p.m.
at the Municipal Buildings, Barrs Road, Cradley Heath

Present: Councillor Mrs Price (Chair);
Councillors Mrs Boucher, Butler, Ching, Crompton,
Mrs Docker, D Hinton, Mrs M James, R Price and
Mrs Shackleton.

Apologies: Councillors Mrs J Webb (Vice-Chair) and Thomas.

Observer: Councillor S C Smith.

24/06 Declaration Of Interest

Councillor Docker declared a personal interest in any matters
relating to the Blackheath Business and Community Association, in
view of her position as voluntary secretary for the Association.

25/06 Introductions and Chair’s Announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Rowley Regis Town
Committee and explained the protocols and ‘domestic’
arrangements for the meeting.

The Chair also made reference to the following:-

New Ward Members

The Chair welcomed Councillors Butler and Ching to their first
meeting as members of the Rowley Regis Town Committee,
following the recent local elections.
Councillor Thomas

The Chair informed the Committee that the Leader of the Council, Councillor Thomas, was now recuperating at home following his recent fall. The Committee expressed its best wishes for his speedy recovery to good health.

Awards

The Chair informed the Committee that two awards had recently been received by two people who worked with communities within the Rowley Regis area. The first was John Payne who had been awarded the Learning Towards Employment Award for constantly improving his skills and was a valued community worker at the Whitegate Centre for the Lighthouse. The second was Geoff Tranter, who received the Citizen of Rowley Regis Award. Geoff joined the Lighthouse Project in 2003 and hosted a self-support group for those individuals suffering from bereavement. He had also recently become a Mentor in Hand-to-Hand service within the Lighthouse. The Committee placed on record its thanks and appreciation to the winners for their work in the area.

26/06

Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 6th April, 2006, be confirmed as a correct record.

27/06

Issues Previously Considered or Raised at the Committee

The Committee noted the progress on outstanding petitions and questions submitted at previous meetings of the Town Committee.

In connection with Minute No. 15/06 of the meeting held on 6th April 2006, the following issues were raised:
(1) **Proposals to erect a youth recreational shelter on the playing fields at Brickhouse Estate and Confields Lane, Rowley Regis**

Despite the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People approving proposals to erect a youth recreational shelter on the Brickhouse Estate, at his Cabinet Advisory Team meeting held on the 21\textsuperscript{st} June 2006, further presentations objecting to the decision were made at the meeting. Whilst the Committee acknowledged the concerns of local residents relating to the youth shelter potentially increasing the instances of anti-social behaviour, the Committee felt that the youths in the area needed a safe and neutral place to meet. The Committee therefore requested the Youth Service and the Police to become actively involved in providing support for the running of the centre. It was also felt that the effects of opening the youth shelter be looked at during its first six months of operating.

(2) **Provision of a play facility/bicycle park on the Grace Mary Estate, Tividale**

Local ward members reiterated that it was imperative that ward members and local residents be involved in the consultation process for identifying a location for the facility.

(3) **Problems of fruit spillage by a local greengrocer located opposite the Blackheath Market place, which was causing a hazard to pedestrians**

The Committee felt that the Head of Highways Direct should undertake a further monitoring exercise, using the photographic evidence collected by a local ward member, as it was felt that the goods displayed on the pavement were a serious obstruction to pedestrians who were having to stand in the road in order to get past.

**Resolved:-**

(1) that the Head of Cultural Services ensure that local ward members and local residents be consulted on any proposals to site a play facility/bicycle park in Grace Mary Estate, Tividale;
(2) that the Head of Highways Direct be requested to undertake a further exercise to monitor fruit spillage/obstruction on the pavement caused by a local greengrocer.

28/06 Neighbourhood Tasking

The Committee received an update from Inspector Richards of the West Midlands Police on the development of neighbourhood policing and town tasking.

Neighbourhood Tasking had been introduced in the Borough in January 2006 and included working with various partner agencies to help identify and combat problem “hot spots” in the area, including issues of local concern.

Neighbourhood Tasking was undertaken on three levels as follows:-

- **Local Level** – the police would have weekly contact with partner agencies in order to identify any issues that needed to be dealt with, including signal events, where certain matters would have a significant impact upon the community;

- **Town Tasking** - Inspector Richards chaired the Town Tasking Group which was made up of local managers and met every fortnight to address and prioritise problems in the area.

- **Borough Tasking** – this Group comprised of all Inspectors and senior managers for all six towns in the Borough. The Group met every month to identify problem “hot spots” and would make bids for extra resources in order to help alleviate some of these problems.

In addition to the Neighbourhood Tasking approach that was being carried out, residents were encouraged to identify any other problems in their area to enable the Police and partnering agencies to be able to tackle them. Residents were also reminded to report any incidents of anti-social behaviour on the anti-social behaviour hotline.
Welfare Rights Take-up in Rowley Regis

The Committee received a report on the achievements of the Anti-Poverty and Welfare Rights Service in Sandwell during 2005/06. It was reported that approximately £17 million had been claimed and almost 7,000 people had been referred to the service for assistance.

The Committee was also informed that approximately £2 million had been claimed in additional benefits in Rowley Regis.

The Committee placed on record its appreciation for the work of the Anti-Poverty and Welfare Rights Service and encouraged people to come forward in order to take-up benefits that they may be entitled to.

Resolved that the Committee note the continued success of the take-up initiatives and recommend continued investment in benefit take-up for older people.

Year 4 of Implementing the Neighbourhood Strategy

The Committee received a progress report on the work of the Town Team to develop service improvements across the neighbourhood areas in Rowley Regis which included:-

- developing an Information and Communications Service across all six towns;
- adopting a Town Charter as a means of collective accountability;
- consolidating and further developing the neighbourhood action plans alongside the proposed Neighbourhood Charters;
- establishing a neighbourhood tasking approach that focused on local issues and problem solving;
- directly engaging communities through the development of community led local forums at town and ward level linked to local neighbourhood forums and issues groups;
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- systematically listening to local people including regular neighbourhood walkabouts with service providers and residents to assess issues/problems;

- strengthening community engagement and building capacity of local communities to participate;

- actively promoting good inter-community relations through implementing recommendations agreed at the borough level.

31/06

**Petitions**

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<td>A petition was received on behalf of youths of Station Road, Blackheath requesting a play facility/youth shelter on the Wharf Car Park, Blackheath as a facility for youngsters to meet.</td>
<td>Referred to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.</td>
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32/06

**Public Question Time**

The Committee received the following questions:-

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<td>Request for information on why the roofs in Dudley Road and Brickhouse Estate were being replaced, whether those residents who had opted for the Right to Buy scheme to buy their homes would be approached by the Council and how much it would cost private owners (who shared a roof with a Council home), to replace their roof if they wished to.</td>
<td>The roofs had been replaced because they had reached the end of their economic life. Sandwell Homes would not replace roofs to private properties unless there was an obligation under the lease agreement with the Council. Tenants who had made a Right to Buy application but had not yet purchased their property would need to cancel their applications before Sandwell Homes could reconsider undertaking Decent Homes Improvements to their home which could include roof replacement where necessary.</td>
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Subject: Request for information on CCTV in Blackheath, including information on whether CCTV cameras on the Blackheath High Street were working, whether the cameras were monitored on a 24-hour basis and, if not, were they still recording and if CCTV footage had been used for any criminal prosecutions following a spate of crime in the Blackheath Town.

Action: Councillor Docker, as voluntary secretary of the Blackheath Business and Community Association, who currently owned the CCTV system on the High Street, reported that the cameras, which had been purchased using Home Office funding, were all due to be replaced shortly. The cameras were currently recording 24 hours a day and met Home Office criteria. However, they were currently not being monitored daily. Councillor Docker also undertook to speak to the resident directly in order to address any further concerns.

A question was asked regarding the result of a Home Office survey identifying West Bromwich as the 38th worst crime spot in the country.

Action: The Police representative undertook to take up the issue with the Chief Superintendent.

33/06 Local Area Budget – Monitoring Report – Year 2005/06

The Committee received a report monitoring its budget position as at 31st March, 2006.

34/06 Funding Applications

The Committee considered five applications for funding which had been received since the last meeting, for funds within the Committee’s Local Area Budget.

Having considered the applications, the Local Area Board had recommended that two applications, totalling £7,350, be approved for funding.
In addition, the Local Area Board recommended deferring consideration of two applications for funding from the Nifty Fifty Club and Options For Life pending further information being obtained. It was also proposed to defer consideration of the application from Haden Hill Swimming Centre to the last meeting of the Town Committee in February 2007 in the event that unallocated funding from the Town Committee’s Local Area Budget was still available.

Resolved:-

(1) that the grants to the following organisations be approved:

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<td>Friends of Grace Mary (FOSA)</td>
<td>£4,850</td>
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<td>(provision of four playground areas within the school)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old Hill Police Station</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
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<td>(purchase of bicycles to aid officers patrolling the area)</td>
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(2) that consideration of the following applications be deferred to enable additional information to be obtained:

- The Nifty Fifty Club
- Options For Life

(3) that consideration of the application from Haden Hill Swimming Club be deferred and reconsidered if any funding is available towards the end of the financial year.

35/06

Issues from Rowley Regis Town Committee Community Forum

There were no issues from the Community Forum.
36/06  **Forthcoming Events and Matters of Interest in Rowley Regis**

The Committee was informed of various forthcoming events and matters of interest in the Rowley Regis area.

37/06  **Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held at 6.00p.m. on Thursday 12th October, 2006 at a venue to be confirmed.

(Meeting ended at 7:34 p.m.)