
Central Dudley Area Committee - 5th September 2006

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Economic Regeneration Activities

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Committee of progress on the Council's aims and priorities for economic regeneration within the central Dudley area.
2. To invite the Committee's comments on a proposed Townscape Heritage Initiative and a proposed delivery vehicle for the Dudley Area Development Framework.

Background

3. The overarching objective underpinning the Council's Economic Regeneration agenda is to promote the general prosperity and well being of the Borough to achieve a fairer society. The Council is also seeking to exploit the Borough's natural, historical and social assets to attract more people to live, work and invest in the area.
4. The Council's economic regeneration aims are to: -
 - (a) **Optimise the opportunity for local people to obtain local jobs**, through:
 - building the capacity of local residents to access local jobs
 - delivering training programmes for local unemployed people
 - providing job brokerage facilities
 - providing employment related support and advice to potential/existing trainees
 - developing sustainable communities.
 - (b) **Support new and existing businesses**, through:
 - creating new jobs
 - increasing inward investment
 - safeguarding existing jobs
 - proactively communicating with local businesses
 - providing sites/premises for new employment opportunities.

- (c) **Strengthen and diversify the local economic base**, through:
- developing the skills base through quality training
 - stimulating an enterprise culture and encouraging business innovation
 - developing the visitor economy
 - creating a safe, attractive and healthy environment for residents, businesses and visitors.
- (d) **Improve the economic infrastructure**, through:
- maximising the potential of the major development sites
 - improving transportation infrastructure and increasing choices in mode of travel
 - delivering and caring for high quality landscape and urban design
 - regenerating the borough's four town centres and 15 local centres
 - developing and maintaining a positive image.
- (e) **Champion the interests and assets of Dudley Borough, securing resources and improving its position regionally, nationally and internationally**, through:
- creating and maintaining close working relationships with international, national and regional public and private sector funders
 - marketing widely opportunities for future development and improvements in the Borough
 - celebrating Economic Regeneration successes to a wide audience.

5. The Council's Economic Regeneration aims are clearly linked to the Community and Council priorities and a range of regional and sub regional strategies that influence and impact on local issues. They include:

- **The Community Strategy** - economic regeneration is a key driver for the creation of a prosperous borough. The Economic Development and Regeneration Partnership of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) deliver the LSP's economic regeneration agenda.
- **The Council Plan** - economic regeneration delivers the Regeneration Matters agenda of the 2006/7 Council Plan. Economic regeneration also underpins and supports key activities delivered through all the other themes of the current Council Plan.
- **The Economic Strategy** - the 2006/7 economic strategy sets out the 15-20 year vision and focus for economic regeneration activities in the Borough.

6. A summary of recent economic regeneration achievements in the Central Dudley area, with particular reference to Dudley Town Centre (including a more detailed summary of the Dudley Townscape Heritage Initiative and the Dudley Partnership Vehicle) are provided below.

7. Recent key Economic Regeneration achievements within the Central Dudley Area:

8. **Improving the visitor economy** – Work is underway with key public and private sector partners, local attractions and businesses to develop and promote Dudley as a tourist destination. In 2004/5 the Council supported the inaugural International Festival Of Glass in Stourbridge, which attracted 7,000 visitors. Dudley is also leading on the Black Country's aspiration for World Heritage status for the Black Country Canal System.
9. **Brownfield & contaminated land** - Dudley is one of only 14 authorities in the country to be invited by English Partnerships (EP) to participate in a national exercise to identify the barriers to bringing brownfield land forward for development to inform a national brownfield land strategy to be published in autumn 2006. Dudley was chosen for its experience and good track record of remediating brownfield land. As a result of this work, the Cavendish Quarter site in Dudley town centre was chosen to be taken forward in partnership with EP for redevelopment. Negotiations are proceeding with EP and the landowner to deliver the Council's aspirations for this site.
10. **Future Skills Dudley (FSD)** - Future Skills Dudley is part of Dudley MBC and sits within the Economic Regeneration Division of the Directorate of the Urban Environment. It was established during 1989 and has for the last 17 years delivered a wide ranging and very successful set of initiatives aimed at improving local peoples Economic Well Being, placing thousands into work and training many more.
11. Consisting of up to 90 staff and with an income estimated at £6million for the 2006/07 financial year, it has now become a significant and well renowned player within the regeneration field. A recent Adult Learning Inspection (ALI) during 2005 gave FSD a grade 1 for Leadership and Management with grade 2's across all other areas covered by the inspection, we are now classified amongst the 'Best of the Best' nationally.
12. It also holds a range of accreditations to delivery services and qualifications, which includes: NVQ's in Construction, Fencing and Horticulture, Key and Basic Skills (Literacy & Numeracy), Information Advice & Guidance, Jobsearch and Jobs Brokerage services, together with outreach and Mentoring.
13. These programmes are delivered through is infrastructure of town centre (Dudley) and community based (Castle & Priory, Brierley Hill & Netherton) training, operations and client support centres.
14. The range of services offered to local unemployed people through FSD includes:
 - **The Building Essential Skills for Construction Trades (BEST) Programme** - Sponsored through the Black Country Regeneration Zone and funded by AWM (Advantage West Midlands), with £5 million available to sponsor 4 years of activity up to July 2007. This initiative covers the areas of: Dudley, Sandwell and West Birmingham, it will create over 1000 new learning opportunities, filled by thousands of trainees, place over 800 people into jobs within the construction and allied sectors and educate many more. Specific initiatives will support priority groups such as the long term unemployed, members from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups and those still at school.

- **New Deal** – Future Skills Dudley won the right this year to become the Jobcentre Plus Prime Contractor and is now the lead body for the delivery and management of all new deal programmes across the South Black Country. Together with our key partners (Pertemps and Sandwell CVO) we have now begun delivering services that will support almost 10,000 local unemployed people over the next two years, with around half from within Dudley and a target of placing up to 53% into work.
 - **Operational Teams** – FSD has its own in-house operations teams that complete a range of construction (paving, brickwork & Community Safety programmes) and environmental improvements (fencing repairs and renewals) and maintenance programmes (Social Decorating Programme) for council directorates. This is achieved through tradespersons and trainers who together with the trainees they are instructing and teaching complete around £500k of real life improvements each year to council land and tenanted properties.
 - **Liveability (Groundforce) Programme** – FSD in partnership with Greencare and Friends of the Park have been maintaining two of Dudley's parks (Priory & Netherton), for the past two years or so, making significant improvements linked to structured training, as staff and trainees maintain the parks and work closely with the friends groups.
 - **LPSA and NRF** – FSD combined the Local Public Service Agreement programme with our own Neighbourhood Renewal scheme to deliver a set of outreach and part time employment programmes. We succeeded in meeting both the LPSA & NRF targets (400 people into work), with the successful programme continuing through the 2006-08 NRF programme and other DCP resources. This initiative maybe built into the LAA Economic Development block as a potential reward target from 2007.
15. In summary, FSD will be engaging with around 3000 unemployed clients each year aiming to place up to half into work, with activities completely funded through external resources (£6 million each year) no direct cost to the Council, together with leading on a set of sub-regional strategic and operational partnerships that will underpin Dudley Council's success and benefit the whole sub-region.
16. **Netherton Regeneration Centre (The Savoy Centre)** - A total of £4.5 million of European and AWM funding has been secured for the Netherton Regeneration Centre to provide a community based vocational training centre in the Netherton and Woodside Ward to train unemployed people and move them into employment. The project also includes the development of former houses into business units for social enterprises. The centre was opened in February 2006. To June 2006 the project has created 8 new jobs, delivered 201 learning opportunities, supported 63 people into employment, assisted 8 businesses and will provide 1,570 sq. metres of new premises.
17. **Prince's Trust** - The Council has a unique relationship with the Prince's Trust. It employs the Prince's Trust Area Manager for the Black Country and also provides office accommodation at the Lye Business Centre for both the Area Manager and his staff and the Manager and staff for the whole of the West Midlands Region. From April

2002 to June 2006 the Prince's Trust Business Programme has supported 230 new business start-ups in Dudley. The programme has achieved a 61% survival rate for business supported through the Prince's Trust and still trading in their third year.

18. In the 2005/6 academic year, 15 XL clubs ran in 7 secondary schools supporting the personal development of 200 year 10 and 11 students who may be at risk of exclusion have now been established in Dudley schools. Up to June 2006 86 people have participated in the Prince's Trust Team Programme that aims to re-engage young people aged 16-24 and assist them in access to training, jobs and education. Up to June 2006, 22 development awards had been awarded to help young people access education, training and work.
19. As a result of this close joint working, a pioneering alliance has been established between the Prince's Trust, Dudley Council, the European Social Fund and Futurestart. £5 million has been secured in late 2004 by the Prince's Trust from the European Social Fund to create a revolving loan fund to help young people from across the West Midlands to start their own businesses. The grant is being matched by a further £5 million from the private sector making a total package of £10 million. The fund is targeted at individuals who have been excluded from traditional sources of finance who can then act as role models for others in the community. At a conference in late 2004, the Director of the European Division at the Government Office for the West Midlands announced that this was both a first in the Country and in the whole of Europe.
20. **Dudley Borough Business Crime Partnership Initiative** - Dudley Borough Business Crime Partnership Initiative was launched in August 2003 in Dudley, Brierley Hill, Halesowen, Merry Hill and Stourbridge. During 2004 the initiative was expanded into Sedgley, Kingswinford, & Netherton and membership has now increased to 146. In 2003, this was the first crime partnership:
 - with a Crown Prosecution Service board member
 - to cover a whole Borough
 - to have an intranet of 5 computers in 5 town centres to access crime and criminal activity
 - in the West Midlands to be awarded the safer shopper award (business crime safety standard) by the newly formed Action Against Business Crime Initiative launched by the Home Office in 2004.
21. The Dudley Borough Business Crime Partnership Initiative has been awarded:
 - best practice for Crime Partnership by GOWM
 - best practice Crime Partnership by the Association of Town Centre Management
 - the West Midlands regional winner for the Community Safety Award.
22. In November 2005, a new business crime database will be commissioned that not only works between the 5 current centres in the borough but links to 10 city & town centres across the UK to track travelling business crime across the country. Future links will be established in 2006/7 to an additional 7 local centres in the Borough. A major new initiative is currently being developed through the Council's Intranet

broadband for a failsafe radio link system that can communicate when all radio and telephone lines are down and can be used for implementing emergency plan, acts of terrorism or major criminal activity. This is due to be live by May 2006. It is being coordinated through the Directorate of the Urban Environment's IT section and involves all partners in the Business Crime Partnership.

23. **Wren's Nest and Seven Sisters Heritage Experience** - This project is addressed in two parts; firstly, the work undertaken by the Geotechnics team within Economic Regeneration to stabilise the mines to realise its future potential, and secondly the work currently underway to realise the vision of stabilising the Seven Sisters Mines as a Visitor Destination in addition to a wider scheme to develop a heritage attraction through the Big Lottery Fund's Living Landmarks: People's Millions programme. A separate paper is being presented to Cabinet on this aspect of the project.
24. The Seven Sisters Mines are located within the Wren's National Nature Reserve with the surrounding area forming part of a Site Of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The National Nature Reserve was declared in 1956 because of the unique nature of the geological exposures and is as one of few sites worldwide where Silurian fossils exist in abundance. The Seven Sisters earth heritage feature is considered to be of National / International importance. In addition the Seven Sisters area is know as a bat hibernacula of National / European importance and is protected under UK and European Law.
25. In October 2001, a major roof fall occurred at the Seven Sisters Mine. At that time the prevention of public access to the site relied on the existence of a 2 metre high perimeter fence. Following the collapse, options had to be considered to resolve the public safety issues and seek funding to undertake the necessary works. There was a need to find a solution that would balance the need to resolve public safety issues whilst being sympathetic to the environmental, archaeological, and geological sensitivity of the site. It was recognised that a successful scheme would only be achieved by full consultation and involvement of the Stakeholders. At least 16 key Stakeholder groups were identified ranging from English Nature, Health and Safety Executive to Local Community groups.
26. Following the Directorate of the Urban Environment's experience and success with Strategic Partnership Contracting, and in line with ODPM guidelines on Re-thinking Construction, (now Constructing Excellence), it was decided to adopt a Partnership Contract procurement approach with Early Contractor Involvement using a Contractor of known experience and expertise. It was also agreed that, to ensure success, the project management structure should include a formal Stakeholder strategy.
27. Because of the innovative approach to this Contract, the Contract was submitted and eventually accepted onto the ODPM Constructing Excellence programme. The project was nominated for Partnership working, but in particular, for Stakeholder strategy adoption.

28. In early 2005 the outcome of the project was presented to the West Midlands ODPM Constructing Excellence peer assessment group and was subsequently awarded demonstration status. The project was also submitted to the Considerate Constructor Scheme, as a partnership between DMBC and Wrekin Construction, and was awarded National Gold award status.
29. The stabilisation project received funding from English Partnerships' Land Stabilisation programme and the Seven Sisters mines were stabilised by using temporary infill in 2004. In early 2005, it was agreed that to fund the scheme, a Heritage Lottery Fund bid would need to be developed which is currently being collated and will be submitted later this year. In addition, the Wren's Nest and Seven Sisters Heritage Experience is part of the Black Country's bid to the Big Lottery Fund as part of the A Million People: Black Country as Urban Park project.
30. In August 2006, the Black Country as Urban Park project was one of only 6 visionary projects successful in moving forward to the second stage of the Big Lottery Funds' Living Landmarks: The People's Millions programme, run in conjunction with ITV. The short-listed projects will ultimately compete for a single grant of between £25 million - £50 million, with the winning project being decided by a televised public vote.
31. **Liveability** – £3.4 million of ODPM funding, secured through the Liveability Pilot Project, and £372,000 of Big Lottery Funding through Transforming Your Space is being supplemented by Section 106 and other grant monies to improve public parks and green spaces within the Borough, reform Council Services and build community capacity through greater involvement of the Friends of the Parks Groups, comprising of local residents. A Local Involvement Programme, with dedicated officers from Groundwork Black Country, are working with Friends of the Parks Groups to develop their skills and abilities to be self sustaining in their aim to improve their local park or green space. Physical improvements are being undertaken based on long term Master Plans developed for the participating parks which are based on public consultation and the views of the Parks Groups.
32. Alternative methods of grounds maintenance, using trainees in horticulture, are being explored through a Groundforce programme on Priory and Netherton parks. The trainees gain qualifications and work experience through secondments to the Council's Greencare team. A high percentage of trainees then secure permanent employment. Through reciprocal arrangements with Greencare, their permanent workforce also receives training to develop the skill base of employees. The respective Friends groups are involved with the project management of this element of the project.
33. 27 parks will be radically improved through the project; reduced levels of vandalism and anti social behaviour in the parks are anticipated due to greater local "ownership" and usage of the parks. The capacity of 27 local Friends Groups will be built through

their involvement in the programme. Local people will gain grounds maintenance and horticultural skills which will help their employment prospects.

34. Recent key Economic Regeneration achievements within Dudley town centre:
35. **Dudley Town Centre** - The regeneration of the Borough's four principal town centres of Dudley, Brierley Hill, Stourbridge and Halesowen lies at the heart of the Council's regeneration agenda. Significant progress has been made in Dudley town centre. A summary of recent progress is provided below:
- An **Area Development Framework** (ADF) for Dudley Town Centre was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by the Council in December 2005 following extensive consultation with local retailers, developers, local residents and community groups. The ADF identifies nine opportunity areas for development, and these are shown in **Appendix A** to this report. The potential outputs of implementation of the ADF include; creation of 1,048 residential units, an increase of 2,536 residential population within the town centre, 3,104 jobs created, £9.80m of public realm improvements and the proposed development will have an estimated end value of £258m. Funding has been secured from Advantage West Midlands to assist in the land assembly of key sites within the Priory Street opportunity area and development proposals and funding options for other opportunity areas are currently being progressed with English Partnerships. In November 2004, the Council was invited to present the Dudley ADF as a good practice model at the Live, Work and Shop national conference for Local Authority planners.
 - A new public square, **Stone Street Square**, which forms part of the initial Dudley town centre redevelopment proposals, was completed in 2004/5 as one of only 10 schemes in the country to be invited to apply for funding through ODPM's Capital Modernisation Fund. Revenue funding has been secured to establish a year round programme of events, in support of which Stone Square is able to host a number of events. The revitalisation of Stone Square was also intended to act as a catalyst for the sensitive redevelopment of the adjacent land (bounded by Stone Square, Priory Street and Wolverhampton Street) and a development brief has been completed to assist in this exercise.
 - The first phase of a package of improvements has also been completed at **Inhedge Gardens** using a combination of Home Office, Section 106 and mainstream Council funding. As a result, levels of crime and antisocial behaviour have been radically reduced and legitimate use increased.
36. **Castle Hill** – Following extensive public consultation, the Council approved a revised outline planning application in June 2005 submitted by St. Modwens Properties plc to develop a 65.7 hectare site at Castle Hill, Dudley (including the former Freightliner site). This development, which has a potential end value of £100 million, includes the refurbishment and redevelopment of the Dudley Zoo and Castle complex, new visitor attractions, residential development, a garden centre, heritage retail, a leisure

complex, a hotel and a public house, integration of a metro stop, improved junction works and integration with the town centre. It is located in the Borough's most deprived ward, and is seen as a key driver in the regeneration of Dudley town centre and a milestone in the further development of Dudley's visitor economy. Projected outputs of the project include the creation of 703 jobs, 65 residential units and 146 new residents living in the area.

37. **The Dudley Area Development Framework Delivery Vehicle** - The Dudley Town Centre Area Development Framework (ADF) presents a vision, development strategy and illustrative development framework plan to guide residents, businesses, developers, investors and the Council in shaping the future of Dudley town centre. The guidance provides a framework to manage, guide and target change and inspire action to drive forward the process of rejuvenating Dudley town centre.
38. On the 15th March 2006 Cabinet authorised the appointment of consultants King Sturge Financial Services to develop options for the overall implementation of the ADF in the most effective manner, within the shortest possible time and with acceptable levels of risk.
39. A cross-directorate working group of officers has been working since April 2006 with King Sturge Financial Services Consultancy in order to prepare an outline business case stage with a remit to:
 - confirm the Council's objectives for the regeneration of Dudley Town Centre
 - conduct an assessment of the Council's property portfolio
 - prepare an options analysis including development of a preferred financial model
 - prepare a draft strategy for initial approval
 - prepare an outline business case.
40. The consultants have reviewed all of the Council's property assets with a view to how they may best meet the Council's core aim of maximising the contribution of their property portfolio towards achieving the ADF regeneration objectives.
41. King Sturge Financial Services has considered how this strategy might be best implemented. In doing so they have had regard to the successful Property Regeneration Partnership (PRP) recently established by East Midlands Development Agency (as the assets of both the Council and East Midlands Development Agency are broadly similar) and it is recommended that this model be adapted in Dudley town centre by forming a Limited Partnership (or Limited Liability Partnership, depending on the Council's selected partner and final scale and objectives of the partnership) that will hold, manage and in some cases develop the assets.
42. It is recommended that the Council will own 50% of the created vehicle (PRP) and a private sector partner (PSP), selected through competition, will own the remaining 50%. It is anticipated that the partnership will have an initial life of 10 years for development assets and existing investment assets, during which the Council will retain a 50% ownership of the vehicle and therefore have control over how the assets are managed. If the Council wishes to retain an interest in property it occupies or to retain control of public realm in the long term, the life of the vehicle could be extended

to say 30 years. At this stage, the model assumes that all assets are sold at the end of the ten year period, this is required to crystallise the values for the model.

43. The key benefits of this strategy are:

- creating a funding source which will take a long term view and speculate development where appropriate
- the regeneration of sites which are difficult to develop on a quicker and wider scale than would occur if simply left to normal market forces
- allow ongoing, long term, direct strategic control of the investment assets to ensure that the needs of existing tenants are accommodated and premises are available to attract new companies to the Borough
- attract substantial private sector investment to upgrade the portfolio at the outset - this would be long term 'patient' investment
- harness the entrepreneurial skills of the private partner in managing the portfolio in a way that will incentivise them to increase the value of the portfolio
- obtain a long term stream of capital receipts from the properties
- generate significant economic outputs from the portfolio funded by the private sector
- create a vehicle that will be able to utilise private sector funds
- ensure that the Council receives capital receipts at least equivalent to the current market value of the existing portfolio and shares in the growth of the value of the portfolio over time
- enable the Council to internalise (to the PRP Company) the managing agent function.

44. The approval of Cabinet will be sought to support the proposed strategy for implementing the Dudley ADF as set out above and for King Sturge Financial Services to proceed to the next stage of their work in forming the Dudley Property Regeneration Partnership which will be the creation of a business plan.

45. It is intended that the business plan will be marketed externally later this year. The tax, legal and financial implications of the proposed Dudley ADF delivery vehicle will be assessed and validated externally before the business plan is marketed externally. If Cabinet agrees to support the development of a business case for the Dudley ADF delivery vehicle, a further report will be presented to Cabinet in November to present the Business Plan and advise of the process for marketing of the delivery vehicle externally.

46. In the current proposed revisions to the Black Country Study document (May 2006), Dudley town centre is given a new role in the region (p25+26):

“Dudley will continue to perform an important role as a non-strategic centre in the Black Country. Dudley’s future renaissance will be founded upon the town centre’s unique tourism and culture assets and major residential development. All future development will seek to maintain and enhance the existing general character of the centre as a key contributor to the Black Country tourism role and an important focus for quality housing.”

47. Dudley Council is committed to developing Dudley town centre as the civic centre of the Borough as stated above, which will include the rationalisation of Dudley Council's office accommodation.
48. **Dudley Town Centre Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)** – The THI is a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant-giving programme to assist in the repair and regeneration of the historic environment within conservation areas in towns and cities. Its aims include:
- to use built heritage as a stimulant for economic regeneration;
 - to contribute to the sustainability of local economies; and
 - to support the communities that live and work in each project area, for example, by bringing vacant floor space in historic buildings back into use, whether for public, commercial or residential functions, or by making a historic area more attractive as a location for business or as a tourist destination.
49. Bidding for THI funding is a 2 Stage process, and in response to a Stage 1 bid submitted by the Council in May 2005, the HLF has agreed in principle to offer a grant of £1.95m towards a proposed Dudley Town Centre Conservation Area THI "Common Fund" which would be set up to deliver the THI. In addition to the HLF approving the Council's Stage 1 bid, it also offered the Council a £25,000 Development Grant towards the cost of production of the Stage 2 bid.
50. On the 14th December 2005 Cabinet authorised the Director of the Urban Environment to enter into a contract with the HLF to accept the Development Grant and to submit a Stage 2 bid in respect of the Townscape Heritage Initiative for Dudley Town Centre.
51. The Conservation Studio, who are heritage consultants, were appointed to advise Dudley Council in the preparation of a Stage 2 bid to the HLF following a competitive tender process which took place in March/ April 2006.
52. An Officer project team has been working with heritage consultants 'The Conservation Studio' to prepare detailed proposals with a view to submitting the Stage 2 bid by December 2006. These proposals include:
- assessment of match funding opportunities required for the Common Fund
 - surveys and cost estimates of eligible properties and improvements
 - preparation of a Training Plan, Conservation Area Management Plan and Action Plan
 - consultation with town centre stakeholders, property owners, and Central Dudley Area Committee
 - incorporation of property valuations prepared by the District Valuer.
53. The Council will be required to secure match funding of at least £2,000,000 if the bid is to be considered for acceptance by the HLF. Potential contributions to this match funding are currently being investigated from Advantage West Midlands (through the Regeneration Zone) and other sources. A detailed report of progress in securing match funding will be provided to the November meeting of Cabinet.

54. The Stage 2 bid must be supported by a Conservation Area Management Plan which will set out the measures that will need to be put into practice to ensure that the benefits of the scheme are maintained. The Council will be required as a condition of the HLF grant to formally adopt the Conservation Area Management Plan and ensure that it is put into practice for at least 10 years after the THI scheme has ended.
55. The THI Partnership, comprising representatives of local organisations which will represent local stakeholders and the local community, will be consulted on the draft Conservation Area Management Plan in September 2006.
56. If funding is received from the HLF it is predicted the Dudley Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) project will start in 2007 and run until 2012. The THI could bring around £7.6 million investment to Dudley town centre over the next 5 years. A THI officer will be appointed specifically to deliver this project.
57. If successful, improvements from the THI project will include:
- repair of occupied historic buildings
 - repair and conversion of empty or underused historic buildings
 - restoration of historic buildings' architectural features
 - educational initiatives and conservation training to ensure that the historic environment will continue to be maintained and protected when the THI project ends.
58. **Town Centre Management** – To support the increased activities for economic regeneration projects and proposed developments in the four principle town centres the Department has recently been restructured to meet increasing demands.
59. Two new Regeneration Officers have been appointed to assist with the development of town centre Masterplans, project implementation strategies and the project management of major schemes and developments as stated within this report. Regeneration Officers also assist with external funding applications and management of steering groups for major projects.
60. Two Town Centre Managers have also been appointed and this now provides a dedicated Town Centre Manager for each of the four principle Town Centres. Each Town Centre Manager is working with internal and external partners to deliver environmental enhancement and crime reduction schemes for each town centre and assisting with change management issues that are associated with major improvement and development schemes. Town Centre Managers have also delivered or supported 71 public entertainment events over the past five months including; St. George's Day procession, French Markets, street entertainers, Halesowen by the Sea and the Dudley Coffin Race.

Summary of effects to date of Economic Regeneration projects in Dudley Borough

61. As a result of the above economic regeneration achievements the following has been achieved;

- Although unemployment (Job Seeker Allowance) levels in the Borough have increased from 3.3% to 3.8% (July 2006), over the last twelve months, in line with the national trend, Dudley's unemployment rate continues to be below the national average. In addition, Dudley's unemployment rate is the lowest in the Black Country.
- The Borough's employment rate at 75.2% (2005) was higher than the Black Country, West Midlands and England averages.
- In 2004, 15.8% of the Borough's working age population was qualified to NVQ level 3 or equivalent, ahead of the Black Country, West Midlands and national averages.
- In 2005, the number of VAT registered businesses in Dudley Borough was 7,830 – the highest in the Black Country, and representing 30% of the Black Country's stock of businesses.
- In 2005/06, 1,062 new business start-ups were supported in Dudley Borough by Business Link Black Country, and The Prince's Trust - the highest number of any of the Black Country Boroughs. 9% of these were from minority ethnic groups.

Finance

62. The work being carried out by King Sturge Financial Services in relation to the Dudley Area Development Framework is funded from Council resources.
63. The stage 2 bid for THI is being funded by HLF grant and revenue budget. The "common fund" for the project requires the HLF grant to be matched equally and work is currently ongoing to secure the match funding required.
64. The other regeneration activities detailed in this report all have direct financial implications on the authority and are funded from a variety of sources. These are closely monitored to ensure that wherever possible costs are contained within the funding available.

Law

65. The Council may do anything which they consider is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000. This general power together with other statutory powers including the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Public Health Act 1875 will enable the Council to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

Equality Impact

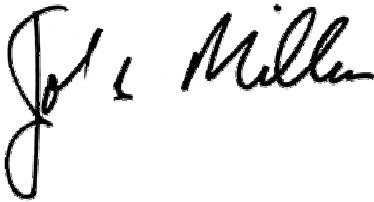
66. The Economic Regeneration projects that are listed in this report accord with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.
67. All consultation exercises undertaken in connection with these projects have been carried out in accordance with the Dudley Council Consultation Toolkit and draft

Statement of Community Involvement, and with particular consideration for the views of children and young people.

Recommendation

68. It is recommended that:

- The Committee note the progress made in support of the Council's regeneration priorities.
- The Committee is invited to comment on the proposals for a Townscape Heritage Initiative in Dudley Town Centre.
- The Committee is invited to comment on the proposals for a proposed Dudley Property Regeneration Partnership (the delivery vehicle for the Dudley Area Development Framework) to support the regeneration of Dudley town centre.



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List of Background Papers

'Dudley. Sharing Exciting Times. Area Development Framework' (December 2005), Dudley MBC