

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REGENERATION**

Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2006, at 6 p.m.  
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

**PRESENT:-**

Councillor K Turner (Chairman)  
Councillors Attwood, Body, Mrs Cowell, J Davies, Jackson, Knowles  
and Rogers

**Officers**

Assistant Director of Housing (Strategy and Private Sector) (as Lead Officer to the Committee), Director of Children's Services, Director of Finance, Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration), Head of ICT Services, General Manager – Planning and Development, Mr M Dando and Mrs A Roberts – Senior Planning Officers, Mr C Hill – Economic Regeneration Advisor, Principal Policy and Performance Management Officer – Chief Executive's Directorate and Mr J Jablonski (Directorate of Law & Property).

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**MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the Special meeting of the Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following members declared personal interests in respect of the agenda items indicated and for the reasons given, as follows:-

- (a) Councillor Attwood – in agenda item 11 – Quarterly Corporate Performance Management Report in respect of references to the Liveability Project as he is a member of the Environmental Task Group on Liveability and Chair of the Friends of Mary Stevens Park.
- (b) Councillor J Davies in respect of the Revenue Budget Strategy 2006/07 in so far as it relates to Dudley Citizens Advice Bureau in that he has colleagues within the organisation whose grant is included in the proposed budget and also in respect of agenda item 11 – Quarterly Corporate Performance Management Report in respect of references to the Liveability Project as he attends meetings of the Friends of Buffery Park as a local Councillor.

- (c) Councillor Rogers – in respect of agenda item 7 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2006/07 – in respect of references to the Citizens Advice Bureau in that he is a member of the Trust Directors of that body.
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41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ms Harris, Mottram, Mrs Patrick and Wilson.

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42 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE FOR THIS MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

It was reported that Councillor Attwood had been appointed to serve as a substitute for Councillor Wilson for this meeting of the Committee only.

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43 CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13(c), it was

RESOLVED

That agenda item 7 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2006/07 be considered as the next item of business.

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44 REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY 2006/07

A joint report of the Director of the Urban Environment and the Director of Finance was submitted on the proposed Revenue Budget and Council Tax for 2006/07.

Following a presentation by the Director of Finance in which he reported that the Cabinet at its Special meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2006, had approved the budget proposals for 2006/07 for consultation with Select Committees, in accordance with the Constitution, it was

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet's Budget proposals for 2006/07 be noted.

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## CORPORATE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY OBJECTIVES FOR 2006/07

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A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on the proposed corporate equality and diversity objectives for the Council for 2006/07 comprising an Equality Scheme, an Equality Standard for Local Government, a People Management Strategy 2006/08 and a Disability Access Strategy.

Arising from the presentation of the content of the report given by the Principal Policy and Performance Management Officer – Chief Executive's Directorate a query was raised regarding the wording of the Finance paragraph of the report.

### RESOLVED

That the proposed corporate equality and diversity objectives for 2006/07, as detailed in the report submitted, be endorsed and that following developments of the various action plans referred to a further report be submitted to a subsequent meeting of the Committee on this matter to include identification of the funding in the action plan and details showing how it was proposed to increase the number of disabled people employed by the Council.

## E-GOVERNMENT PROGRESS REPORT

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A joint report of the Corporate e-Champion (John Freeman – Director of Children's Services) and Director of Finance was submitted on information about the latest Implementing Electronic Government submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on 19<sup>th</sup> December, 2005, the final report of the Council's performance against Best Value Performance Indicator (BVP1) 157, which required 100% e-enablement of all services by 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2006, an update on the Council's position regarding the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's programme for 'Priority Services and Transformation Outcome' and information about the next phase of the National e-Government programme.

Arising from the presentation given on these matters by the Corporate e-Champion, it was requested that he convey the congratulations of the Committee to all Directorates in achieving the targets set. The role of the Committee in this achievement was also recognised.

### RESOLVED

- (1) That the success of the Council in meeting the targets set for the end of December, 2005, as indicated in the report submitted, be acknowledged.
  - (2) That the remaining fourteen 'Good' Priority Outcomes as indicated in Appendix A to the report submitted be noted and that a further progress report on these matters be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.
  - (3) That the Committee acknowledge and support the achievements to date and also support the planned take up phase where the real benefits should arise.
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### PROGRESS ON THE BLACK COUNTRY STUDY

The General Manager – Planning and Development reported orally on the current position regarding the Black Country Study. Particular mention was made of the background of the study in that it was the first sub-regional study of its kind in this country. It was also noted that the study went up to 2031 and was a totally new look at the sub-region. Mention was also made of the context of the study within other initiatives in that it was part of the Development plan.

Issues specific to Dudley were then mentioned relating to centres, the designation of Brierley Hill as a strategic centre, the maintenance of Dudley Town Centre's role as a focus for leisure, tourism and building on the current success of attractions of the town and maintaining and enhancing the role of Halesowen and Stourbridge centres. Related issues in respect of employment, housing and transport were then referred to.

Regarding the timetable for the study the first consultation phase would be completed this month leading to publication of the Black Country Study report in the spring of 2006 and submission to the Secretary of State in May, 2006. Further consultation would be held in the summer of 2006 with an examination in public in late 2006/early 2007. The Secretary of State would make his decision and the study would be incorporated into the Regional Spatial Strategy in late 2007/early 2008.

Arising from the presentation given a number of questions were raised and comments made relating in particular to the collating and reporting of all responses received by the Black Country Consortium into a public document; the need to attract and retain people with appropriate skills to the Black Country, the need for guidance to be developed for use by planners so that more informed decisions could be made regarding the use of sites for housing and the conflicting aspects of national guidance in this regard.

In the light of the discussion held on the production of policy guidance relating to housing and land issues, it was suggested and agreed that when a draft policy document, likely to be produced by autumn of this year, had been drafted it be referred to this Committee for review.

#### RESOLVED

That the information as now reported on progress on the Black Country Study be noted and that the Director of the Urban Environment be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of this Committee in either September or October, 2006 on draft policy guidance relating to the housing/land issues discussed at this meeting.

#### UPDATE ON THE 2006/07 ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Colin Hill, Economic Regeneration Advisor, gave a presentation on the Dudley Economic Strategy for 2006/07. A copy of the presentation, together with a draft copy of the Strategy, was circulated at the meeting.

The presentation set out the background and context to the Strategy, its relationship to other strategies and plans on a regional, sub-regional and local level, the overall content of the Strategy, its relationship to strategic partnerships and the process whereby, building on the 2005/06 strategy and its achievements, consideration would be given, following inclusive external and internal consultation, by the Cabinet at its meeting in March, 2006 to the Economic Strategy for 2006/07.

It was also noted that of the strategic aims contained in the Strategy the fifth aim, that of championing the interests and assets of Dudley Borough, securing resources and improving its position regionally, nationally and internationally was a new aim. A review was also given of achievements in 2005/06 and baseline information cited in particular that Dudley had the lowest weekly average earnings in the West Midlands and that there was continuing restructuring of the local economic base.

Details were also given of the job seeker allowance claimant count based on information received showing wide disparities between wards of the Council. It was noted that the wards shown were those formally in place prior to the re-organisation of ward boundaries in 2004 and that updated information based on current ward boundaries would be included in the further update report to be submitted to the Committee.

Consideration was then given to five key challenges to be addressed by the strategic aims and recognition of the national and international context and outlook of the Strategy.

Arising from the presentation given, questions were asked and comments made relating in particular to the need for local jobs for local people; the linkages between this item and planning aspects of the Black Country Study regarding the supply of industrial land and the loss of larger employment sites to housing which could be considered again when the policy document referred to earlier in the meeting was submitted to the Committee in the autumn of this year; the nature of jobs created; the work currently being undertaken, relating to the earlier discussion on equality and diversity, regarding the employment of people with disabilities or learning difficulties and the nature and scope of the assistance that could be given by the Council either directly or indirectly to support businesses. In this regard it was suggested, and agreed, that when consideration was given at a future meeting to the activities of the Princes Trust the person referred to at the meeting by Councillor Knowles be invited to attend that meeting so as to outline his experiences of support given relating to small businesses.

At the conclusion of questions and comments the Chairman thanked Mr Hill for the presentation given.

RESOLVED

That the information given in the presentation in respect of the Dudley Economic Strategy 2006/07 be noted.

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INNOVATION, INCUBATION AND ENTERPRISE CENTRE

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the progress to date in relation to the feasibility study into the provision of an Innovation Centre within the Borough of Dudley.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted on the progress to date in relation to the feasibility study into the provision of an Innovation Centre within the Borough of Dudley be noted and that the works already undertaken be endorsed.
- (2) That a further progress report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee with a view to a recommendation being made to the Cabinet in relation to the continuation of the feasibility work begun and funding generally for this project.

## QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

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A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on the second Quarterly Corporate Performance Management report for 2005/06 relating to performance for the period 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005 to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2005.

### RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm.

CHAIRMAN