

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ADULT EDUCATION–
16TH JANUARY 2008**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

PROGRESS REPORT ON REGENERATION OF HALESOWEN

PURPOSE

1. To update the Select Committee on progress to date in relation to the regeneration of Halesowen

BACKGROUND

Strategic Context

2. The Council's Economic Regeneration aims are to: -
3. **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; and
 - developing sustainable communities.
4. **Support new and existing businesses through:**
 - creating new jobs;
 - increasing inward investment;
 - safeguarding existing jobs;
 - proactively communicating with local businesses; and
 - providing sites/premises for new employment opportunities.
5. **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; and
- creating a safe, attractive and healthy environment for residents, businesses and visitors.

6. **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 4 town centres and 15 local centres; and
- developing and maintaining a positive image.

7. **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; and
- celebrating Economic Regeneration successes to a wide audience.

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

9. **The Community Strategy** - Economic regeneration delivers the jobs theme of the existing Community Strategy, developed by the Dudley Community Partnership (DCP), and will be a key driver for "creating a prosperous and attractive Borough". The DCP established themed partnerships to deliver the priorities set out in the Community Plan. The Economic Development and Regeneration Partnership (EDRP) was established to deliver their Economic Regeneration agenda.

10. **The Council Plan** - Economic Regeneration delivered the Richer Borough Theme of the original Council Plan and delivers the Regeneration Matters agenda of the current Council Plan. Economic Regeneration also underpins and supports key activities delivered through all the other themes of the current Council Plan (environment matters, safety matters, learning matters, caring matters and quality matters).

11. **The Economic Strategy** - The Council's Economic Strategy sets out a 15-20 year vision and focus for economic regeneration activities in the Borough. It recognises the changing national, regional, sub-regional and local strategies and policies which impact on the local economy including the West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy, the Black Country Study which provides a 30 year vision of improving the social, physical and environment for the sub-region, the Arc of Opportunity Regeneration Zone Implementation Plan (2007-10) for West Birmingham and the South Black Country and Dudley's Neighbourhood Management Strategy.

12. The Economic Strategy makes a significant contribution to the achievement of the priorities contained within the Dudley Community Strategy, particularly the "Creating a Prosperous Borough" theme, and the Council Plan, principally the Regeneration Matters theme, and supports other themes such as Environment Matters and Safety Matters.
13. The Economic Strategy brings together, not only the economic regeneration activities delivered by the Council, but also those delivered by a number of partner organisations and these are clearly set out within the Strategy's action plan. The Strategy is produced with the input of a significant number of staff across all Directorates in the Council. It is also subject to wide ranging consultation, both internally and externally, and is formally approved through the Cabinet and full Council. Implementation of the Strategy is monitored by the Economic Development & Regeneration Partnership and scrutinised by this Select Committee.
14. **Directorate and Service Plans** - Economic Regeneration features as a key component of the Directorate of the Urban Environment's Strategic Plan. Each of the service areas within the Economic Regeneration Division produces an annual Service Plan setting out the clear priorities for their respective Sections.
15. **West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy (WMRES) "Delivering Advantage" 2004 –2010** - sets out the region's approach to the economic development and regeneration of the West Midlands. The strategy is currently based on the four objectives or "pillars" that will drive the transformation of the West Midlands:
 - Pillar 1. Developing a diverse and dynamic business base;
 - Pillar 2. Promote a learning and skilful region;
 - Pillar 3. Create the conditions for growth; and
 - Pillar 4. Regenerate communities in the West Midlands.
16. To deliver the West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy, resources are targeted through the region's Regeneration Zones, Business Clusters and High Technology Corridor. The Strategy contains an action plan of 45 actions to be delivered by a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector partners across the region. The updated Strategy is due to be published in December 2007 and will set out revised actions needed for the region to be recognised as world class by 2010 and will also look forward to 2020 and establish what more the region needs to do to continue to improve its economic performance
17. **West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)** - published originally as Regional Planning Guidance 11 (RPG11) in 2004 , sets out the Government's vision for the metropolitan area and the shires . Its vision is for: " an economically successful, outward looking and adaptable region which is rich in culture and environment, where all people, working together, are able to meet their aspirations and needs without prejudicing the quality of life for future generations." This is now being reviewed. There is a three phase review to the Regional Spatial Plan. The full implications for the RSS Phase 1 Revision for a new Strategic Centre at Brierley Hill are set out in paragraphs 27-31 Of this report

18. **The Local Transport Plan (LTP)** - recognises the synergy between economic development, regeneration, housing and transport and the LTP strategies are closely aligned to the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies. It is vital that if the vision for economic growth is to be sustained, the infrastructure is geared to support the regional aspirations and investment targeted to support regeneration. The shared vision for the LTP is:
- a thriving and sustainable community where people want to live and where business can develop and grow;
 - town, city and local centres that are attractive and vibrant;
 - clean air and less congested traffic conditions;
 - a safer community; and
 - equal opportunities for everyone to gain access to services.
19. **West Midlands Regional Visitor Economy Strategy (2004)** - presents a coherent framework for tourism in the West Midlands. A key feature of the strategy is the need to create successful, sustainable destinations. It identifies the need to focus on key destinations and visitor gateways. This strategy identifies the Black Country as an emerging destination which requires regeneration investment. The Black Country Visitor Economy Strategy was developed in 2004 and provides a framework for tourism development. The Strategy identifies the need for a Black Country Partnership to build on the existing Black Country Tourism initiative. It also identifies the need to invest in the 5 key destinations of the Black Country including Dudley Town Centre and Brierley Hill/ Merry Hill.
20. A review of the delivery structure created in the West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy was undertaken in late 2006 which proposed alterations to the organisations responsible for delivering the visitor economy strategy. A 'refresh' of the Strategy was undertaken in late 2007, identifying priorities for investment.
21. A piece of work is currently being undertaken to take forward the Black Country Visitor Economy Strategy and more generally tourism in the Black Country for which the outcomes are due to report shortly
22. **City Regions** - The government sees the City Regions as being motors for national progress challenging how they can take their economic and social development to a new level. The Council is actively involved in the City Region in the West Midlands through involvement with our regional partners. The City Region's aims include:-
- delivering jobs and investment and a new strategic global growth opportunity as a key driver for the wider "Midlands" to add to the UK's wealth creation potential; and
 - delivering a new high quality urban environment and quality of life of international standing which encourages diversity, knowledge, creative and vibrant communities. This builds upon the city centre regeneration projects which have been seen across the conurbation but extend this quality into local communities.
23. **Black Country Study** – The Council, along with the Black Country Consortium and its partners, is taking an active role in the Black Country Study, which aims to

articulate the Consortiums' aspirations as set out in its vision "Looking Forward: The Black Country in 2033". The study is a dynamic project to develop the long-term renaissance of the Black Country and will be critical in shaping the future regeneration of Dudley Borough. The four key objectives of the study are to:

- reverse the trend of people leaving the Black Country;
- raise income levels;
- accommodate a more balanced population (achieving parity with the national social grade profile); and
- create high quality, sustainable environments.

24. The Consortium is leading efforts with partners to prepare a comprehensive Delivery Plan at present. This will highlight the key projects to be undertaken by the private sector, local authorities, Centro, AWM, English Partnerships and other delivery bodies. A detailed 5 year programme and an indicative 10 year programme are now being prepared towards an overall 25 year transformational development strategy.

25. **The Regeneration Zone Implementation Plan 2007-10** - The Arc of Opportunity is the largest of the West Midlands Regeneration Zones covering an area stretching in an arc from the western edge of Birmingham city through Sandwell and across areas of central Dudley to Lye. The key aim of the Zone is to link regeneration activity with the areas of greatest need and ensure that resources and policies are coordinated to the best effect. The strategic focus of the plan is underpinned by 3 inter-related themes:

- enterprise
- employment
- environment

26. **Joint Core Strategy** – Every local authority has to produce a Core Strategy for their Local Development Framework which will set the strategic spatial policy context for the Borough. The 4 Black Country Boroughs are to adopt a pioneering approach by working together to produce a Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country building on work on the Black Country Study. The Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country has reached issues and Options stage with consultation in June 2007. Officers are currently working towards the next stage of the process.

Current regeneration initiatives in Halesowen and recent achievements

27. Halesowen's development into its status as one of the Borough's 4 principal town centres has created a difficult challenge for the Council and those wishing to invest in significant development opportunities. The town centre occupies a constrained site limited by topography and by the planning policies which seek to protect its retail core, the result of which is that there is very limited scope for the development of underused or vacant land.

28. **Halesowen Area Action Plan.** Members will be aware that the Council's Planning Policy activity is focussed through the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS currently includes the preparation of an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Halesowen which will be a comprehensive plan to guide the location, design and layout of new

development, and will be supported by a detailed implementation programme. The timescale for this work is as follows:

- Commencement - July 2008
- Consultation - January to July 2009
- Submission to Secretary of State - February 2010
- Independent Examination - November 2010
- Adoption - April 2011

29. However, in response to concern expressed by Members, residents and local stakeholders in Halesowen in respect of short term impacts of the significant regeneration activities underway in the town centre, associated transportation issues and the long lead in time to the adoption of the AAP, Officers carried out a consultation exercise in the town between September and October 2006, titled "Halesowen Matters". The purpose of this exercise was to seek the views of Members, residents and local stakeholders on their perceptions of the existing town centre environment and opportunities for future enhancements and to collate information in relation to transportation and accessibility issues within and adjacent to the town centre. Whereas this exercise was carried out separately to the AAP, the results obtained provided useful information to support the evidence base for the development of the AAP. Furthermore, this exercise supported the strategic aims of the Council Plan and Community Strategy, respectively, by focussing on the regeneration of the town centre.
30. The Halesowen Area Committee receives regular update reports on regeneration and planning activity in the town centre, and the Committee has established a Town Centre Working Group in support of this activity
31. Following the, "Halesowen Matters", consultation last year the Town Centre Members Working Group has continued to meet to consider the findings and develop proposals. These proposals form the "Halesowen Town Centre Access Study", addressing problems of congestion and through traffic in the town by the implementation of a traffic management plan based on the current redevelopment proposals and planned improvements to the surrounding highway network. It is also proposed to improve facilities for walking and cycling. The study was available for public consultation for three months from the middle of October 2007 and on the whole has been well received. The outcomes of the consultation will be reported to the Halesowen Area Committee in January 2008 following which it is hoped to take the proposals forward with and following current regeneration activity in the town centre
32. **Cornbow Centre and Bus Station redevelopment.** Vale Retail were granted planning permission in July 2005 for a major redevelopment of the centre which offer significant opportunities for the town centre. These may be summarised as follows;
- 6,970 m² (approximately 75,000 sq ft) of retail floorspace – an increase of 3,528 m² (just under 38,000 sq ft) including a new Asda supermarket
 - A new 588-space multi-storey car park – offering an increase of 188 spaces
 - Creation of between 300 and 400 full-time and part-time jobs for local people

- Strengthening the town centre retail offer, re-using underused and vacant land within the town centre;
- Accessibility will be significantly improved, especially for disabled people through the provision of improved lifts, new travelators, and 42 parking spaces are being provided for disabled users;
- Removal of the unsightly existing multi storey car park and former Murco garage site
- Provision of a much improved environment at a significant 'gateway' to the town centre

33. In addition, CENTRO are currently carrying out improvements to the Bus Station, partly in response to the Cornbow Centre development plans to expand out into the existing Bus Station, but also the need to accommodate improved facilities. These facilities include two modern, high-quality passenger waiting areas serving eight bus stands, electronic information displays with up-to-date timetable information, CCTV and a help point will be provided. Improvements have been included to allow easy access for all users, and one of the bus stands will serve Ring & Ride minibuses, used by people with limited mobility.
34. The Council has been working in close partnership with CENTRO on an enhanced road layout in the vicinity of the bus station which includes new pedestrian crossings and traffic calming measures.
35. The new bus station is due to open in Spring 2008 together with the enhanced road layout, and the new Asda store and the improvements to the Cornbow Centre are due to be completed by Christmas 2008.
36. **Partnership Working.** In April 2007, representatives from the Council, Vale Retail, Centro and the Police attended the first Halesowen Progress Meeting. All partners have committed to attending a regular progress meeting over the course of the Cornbow development to ensure effective communication between the agencies involved in the physical regeneration initiatives in Halesowen and to identify and resolve any blocks or constraints to progress and these meetings are proving effective on that purpose
37. **Environmental improvements.** In the last 5 years the Council has made significant investment in the physical fabric of the town centre. These improvements have included the following:
- The completion of Somers Square, a new civic & events space in the town centre
 - Removal of unsightly and redundant raised brick planters
 - New seating and bins
 - A new permanent Christmas tree, partly sponsored by Sandvik UK Ltd
 - New bollards and vehicle access restrictions to improve the safety of the town centre

38. **Town Centre Management** To support the increased activities for economic regeneration projects and proposed developments in the four principal town centres the Department has recently been restructured to meet increasing demands.
39. 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.
40. Since April 2006 there have been 4 Town Centre Managers in post covering the 4 principal 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 are responsible for staging events which promote the town centres and increase footfalls. They also bring forward various environmental projects which without their intervention would probably never happen.
41. 28 events were held in Halesowen in the 2006/7 year including the Christmas lights switch-on, a Circus skills workshop, French market, Halesowen College student performances, Halesowen by the Sea and the annual Victorian Street Fayre

FINANCE

42. There are significant financial implications arising for the Council as a result of the various initiatives and programmes described above. A considerable amount of external funding has already been approved, or is being sought, with matching Council or other resources being applied where affordable.
43. Each individual strategy or development programme should be financially justifiable, and following project appraisal will be reported to Cabinet recommending inclusion in the Council's capital programme or revenue budget where appropriate.

LAW

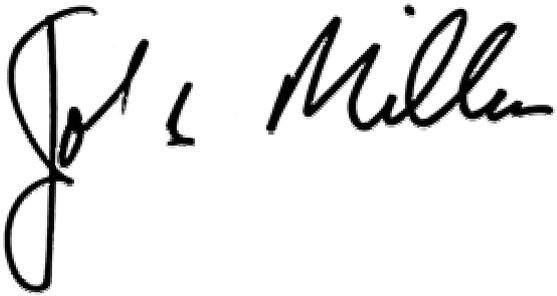
44. The matters contained in the report cover a range of the Council's statutory powers, but generally rely on Section 2 of the Local government Act 2000, which enables the Council to do anything which is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic social or environmental wellbeing of its area.

EQUAL IMPACT

45. This work has been conducted in full accordance with the Council's equality and diversity policies and should in no way have any prejudicial impact on different racial groups, disabled people, both genders and/or other relevant groups. The needs of children and young people are considered in any planning and implementation activities.

RECOMMENDATION

46. It is recommended that the Committee note the significant progress made in regenerating Halesowen Town Centre and comment accordingly



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Background documents used in the preparation of this report:-

Draft Phase One Revision, The Black Country Study, Examination in Public, 9th to 18th January 2007, Report of the Panel (March 2007)

<http://www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk/page.asp?PageRef=88>

Economic Strategy for Dudley Borough 2007/08

<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/business/regeneration/economic-strategy--intelligence>

Dudley Borough Community Strategy 2005-2020

<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/index.asp?pqid=2301>

Dudley Council Plan 2007

<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/index.asp?pqid=1630>