

SELECT COMMITTEE
ON REGENERATION, CULTURE AND
ADULT EDUCATION

Wednesday, 16th January, 2008 at 6.00 pm
in Committee Room 3 at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor C Wilson (Chairman)
Councillor Mottram (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Crumpton, Jackson, Jones, Rahman, Southall, Tomkinson,
K Turner and Woodall

Officers

Assistant Director Housing Strategy and Private Sector (Lead Officer to the Committee), Senior Assistant Director of Finance (Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement), Assistant Director Economic Regeneration, Assistant Director Culture and Community and Head of Sport and Recreation (All Directorate of the Urban Environment) and Mr J Jablonski (Directorate of Law and Property)

together with two members of the public.

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RETIREMENT OF MR JOHN WOODALL (ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ECONOMIC REGENERATION)

The Chairman reported that this would be the last meeting of the Select Committee at which John Woodall would be in attendance due to his impending retirement on 22 February 2008. The Chairman and Members, collectively and singularly, expressed their thanks to Mr Woodall for all the work he had done in his role at the Council and he was wished a happy and long retirement.

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APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence for the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Tyler.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No member made a declaration of interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

MINUTES

RESOLVED

- 1) That, subject to the deletion of the apology recorded for Councillor K Turner, for the reasons given at the meeting, the minutes of the Special Meeting of the Committee held on 24th October, 2007, be approved as a correct record and signed.
- 2) That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29th October, 2007, be approved as a correct record and signed.

PUBLIC FORUM

Mr Brian Guest of the Friends of Mount Pleasant School raised the following matters in connection with Minute 43 (Dudley Archives and Local History Service Relocation) of the meeting of this Committee held on 29th October, 2007:-

- a) A reiteration of the request made at that meeting that the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services write to him giving details of the costings requested. Mr Guest commented that to date a letter had not been received from the Director and he speculated on the reasons for this.
- b) That although the preamble to the minute referred to work that had been carried out with the Friends of the Archives who, it was stated, had also been consulted on the future plans, Mr Guest commented that the Assistant Director Libraries, Archives and Adult Learning had not been present at meetings of the Friends Group and, therefore, he would ask that either the Director or that Assistant Director attend a meeting of the Friends of the Archives to discuss the proposals.
- c) Mr Guest asked whether there had yet been a decision on the involvement of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council with the project and in response he was informed that those present were not aware that such a decision had yet been made.
- d) He commented that the Mount Pleasant School site should be kept as a heritage centre as Coseley needed a focal point.

On this latter point it was noted that a report requested at a previous meeting regarding possible developments in Coseley would be submitted to the March meeting of this Committee.

At the conclusion of the points made by Mr Guest, Mr Wilkes, the other member of the public present, asked that a desktop assessment report from Birmingham Archaeology on the Mount Pleasant School site commissioned as material input to Planning Application P06/0074 be brought to the attention of the relevant officers so that they could consider its contents.

In responding to the above comments the Lead Officer reported that he would draw to the attention of the relevant officers the points made at (a) and (b) above and the latter point made.

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REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY 2008/09

A joint report of officers was submitted on the proposed Revenue Budget Strategy for 2008/09 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2008/09 – 2010/11 that had been approved by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 9th January, 2008.

The Assistant Director of Finance in his presentation of the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted commented on the background to the proposals and in particular to paragraphs 27 to 38 in respect of implications for services covered by the terms of reference of this Select Committee.

Arising from the presentation given members commented on various aspects of the Strategies both in general and specific terms with particular reference to the efficiency and other savings referred to in Appendix B to the report under the heading “DUE” in respect of Review of Leisure Facilities and Revised Staffing Arrangements. The comments made were responded to. Comments were also made and responded to in relation to the Local Authority Business Growth Initiative and the airport.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet’s Revenue Budget Strategy proposals for 2008/09 and Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2008/09 – 2010/11 be noted and that the Cabinet be informed that this Select Committee had no other observations that it would wish to make.

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PROGRESS REPORT ON REGENERATION OF HALESOWEN

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress to date in relation to the regeneration of Halesowen.

The Assistant Director Economic Regeneration commented on the content of the report with particular reference to current regeneration initiatives in Halesowen and recent achievements including the Halesowen Area Action Plan, Cornbow Centre and Bus Station redevelopment, partnership working, environmental improvements and town centre management.

Following the presentation given members commented on a number of the points made.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on progress to date in relation to the regeneration of Halesowen Town Centre, be noted.

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LEISURE CENTRE INVESTMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on a proposed schedule of investment in major leisure facilities over the first six months of 2008.

The Assistant Director Culture and Community and Head of Sport and Recreation commented on the content of the report which detailed in particular health and fitness developments at the Crystal, Dudley and Halesowen Leisure Centres and investment relating to the Disability Discrimination Act in respect of those centres. Details were also given of floodlight replacement at the Dell Stadium.

Reference was also made to the position in the Coseley area whereby in respect of health and fitness this was being developed at the Coseley School and so was not a feature of the report submitted. The current position in this regard was reported on.

Arising from the comments made members made a number of comments in relation to the swimming baths at Coseley and responses were given in relation to expenditure and the need for potential expenditure at that facility.

Further comments were also made in relation to the perceived patchy nature of provision in relation to health and fitness. As regards the Coseley area it was suggested that the officers concerned meet with representatives of the Coseley School to ascertain whether they could assist with the obtaining of a suitable partner for the school so that their facilities could be developed.

It was also noted that the issue of trust management and partnerships would form part of the review of leisure facilities that was to be undertaken.

Arising from the comments made it was considered that the approach set out in report submitted was the right one and was a good step.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on the proposed schedule of investment in major leisure facilities over the first six months of 2008, be noted and endorsed.

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QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report of the Lead Officer of the Committee was submitted on performance in the second quarter of 2007/08, July to September 2007, in relation to the activities relating to the terms of reference of this Committee.

In his presentation of the content of the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted the Lead Officer referred in particular to the outstanding performance in relation to BV109a – Percentage of Major Planning Applications determined within 13 weeks - in that actual performance was 71.21% against a target of 60%. It was noted and commented upon that this was a major key government target on which other matters rested.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on performance in the second quarter of 2007/08, July to September 2007, in relation to activities relating to the terms of reference of this Committee, be noted.

The Meeting ended at 8.05 pm

CHAIRMAN