

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REGENERATION

Thursday, 8th September, 2005, at 6.00 p.m.
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor K Turner (Chairman)
Councillors Body, Mrs Cowell, J Davies, Knowles, Mottram, Rogers and
C Wilson.

Officers

Assistant Director of Housing (Strategy and Private Sector) (as Lead
Officer to the Committee), Director of Law and Property, Assistant
Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration), Senior
Assistant Director of Finance, Strategy and Best Value Manager
(Directorate of Finance ICT and Procurement), Corporate Personnel
Manager (Chief Executive's Directorate) and Mrs Johal (Directorate of
Law & Property).

11

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8th
June, 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed.

12

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the
Members' Code of Conduct.

13

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of
Councillors Ms Harris (Vice-Chairman) and Mrs Patrick.

14

CONGRATULATIONS TO COUNCILLOR KNOWLES (PREVIOUS MAYOR)

The Chairman congratulated Councillor Knowles (previous Mayor), on
behalf of the Committee, on his achievements during his Mayoral Year
and on the efforts made to support the Borough of Dudley. He further
congratulated him on achieving the Co-operative Bank Mayor of the
Year Award in which he was first runner up.

Councillor Knowles in return thanked the Committee for their support and particularly thanked all the officers involved for their support and excellent service.

15 CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

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

RESOLVED

That Agenda Item No 8 be considered as the next item of business.

16 ANNUAL REVIEW OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY 2005

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on the annual review of equality and diversity for 2005.

During the presentation of the report, the Director of Law and Property reported that the Race Equality Scheme had been reviewed and that the revised scheme had been in operation since May of this year. He further highlighted the importance of equal opportunities within an organisation.

RESOLVED

That the annual review of equality and diversity 2005, as attached to the report now submitted, be supported and referred to the Cabinet for approval.

17 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REGENERATION 2004/05

A report of the Chairman of the Committee was submitted on the Annual Report to the Council for the review of the 2004/05 Municipal Year.

The Lead Officer to the Committee presented the report, and in doing so, thanked the Director of Law and Property and other Officers for their support in undertaking the work of the Committee in his absence.

The Chairman thanked the Committee on the efforts and commitment in undertaking work in relation to the need for an Innovation and Incubation Centre in Dudley and reported that resources had been approved by the Cabinet for the continuation of the work and indicated that, once in place, the Project Manager would be submitting regular reports to the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the annual report of the Select Committee on Economic Regeneration for 2004/2005 be approved and referred to the Cabinet and Council.

18

UPDATE OF THE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL STRATEGY

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on the update of the Council's Capital Strategy.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and in the attached draft Capital Strategy, be supported and referred to Council.

19

E-GOVERNMENT PROGRESS REPORT

A joint report of the Director of Finance and the Corporate e-Champion was submitted on the latest information on the Council's performance against Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 157, which requires 100% e-enablement of all services by 1st January, 2006 and updating members on the Council's position regarding the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) programme for 'Priority Services and Transformation Outcomes'.

In presenting the report, the Senior Assistant Director of Finance assured Members that all Directorates had indicated that they were on target and that 100% e-enablement of services would be achieved by 31st December, 2005.

In response to a query, the Senior Assistant Director of Finance reported that smaller businesses that could not afford to e-enable services would not be precluded from transacting business with the Council.

The Chairman requested that to enable monitoring of e-enablement compliance by 31st, December 2005, Directorates with outstanding priority outcomes or BVPI 157 interactions be asked to submit to the next meeting of the Committee, a brief report on progress with an action plan confirming that the deadline would be met as part of the e-government progress report. It was further recommended that a small group of Members (Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Councillor Mrs Patrick) should meet with representatives of the Directorate of the Urban Environment with a view to receiving a progress report on outstanding priority outcomes, and if necessary, to interview the Director concerned with a report submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (1) That, as part of the e-government progress report to the next meeting of the Committee, Directorates with outstanding priority outcomes or BVPI 157 interactions be requested to submit a brief report on e-enablement progress and compliance by 31st December, 2005, together with an action plan confirming that the deadline would be met.
- (2) That the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Councillor Mrs Patrick meet with representatives of the Directorate of the Urban Environment with a view to receiving a progress report on outstanding priority outcomes, and if necessary, to interview the Director concerned and that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

AGE PROFILE OF ALL EMPLOYEES OF DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A report of the Head of Personnel and Support Services was submitted detailing the age profile of all Dudley MBC employees, the current arrangements for employees who wished to work beyond the age of 65, the age profile of higher and lower earners within the Council and the number of people over the age of 50 who had applied for, and had been appointed to jobs, within the Council between April 2004 and March 2005.

During the presentation of the report, the Corporate Personnel Manager advised the Committee of new legislation that was due to come into force from October 2006 and informed Members that the Council would also be reviewing their policy at the same time highlighting the fact that people of all ages should be employed.

Arising from the presentation of the report, the Chairman queried whether the Council provided a form of structured retirement for employees nearing retirement, for example, flexible working to enable the person prepare for retirement. He further commented that the older and mature employees were burdened with additional duties and pressures due to their extensive wealth of experience and when nearing retirement, further demands were placed on them to ensure a successor was trained for continuity. In responding the Corporate Personnel Manager advised that restrictions were in place due to the Pension Scheme, however, she pointed out that the flexible working hours policy was a right all employees could take advantage of. She further commented that work was currently underway to review the skills required to replace staff and that more robust training would be offered.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted, on the results that had been achieved in ensuring that the Council employs staff in all age ranges, be noted.
- (2) That the age profile of Dudley MBC be kept under review by Corporate Personnel and that any arising issues, such as a considerable reduction in the percentage of employees under 25, be highlighted at the earliest opportunity.
- (3) That support be given to the proposal to introduce a new policy to ensure that people over the age of 65 can be recruited to Council posts.

PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIC REGENERATION WORKING GROUP

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted seeking consideration of the proposed work programme for the Economic Regeneration Working Group.

Arising from the presentation of the report, Members expressed concern at the vagueness of the Section 106 Agreement and requested a definition and explanation to be submitted in the initial report to the Working Group. It was further requested that to enable a better understanding, a glossary or "jargon buster" should be included in future reports. In responding the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration) gave a brief explanation of the Agreement and stated that it was an obligation on developers to meet costs for the effects of the development, for example, funding highway works. He undertook to ensure that an officer who could give a proper definition and explain the new guidelines from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in relation to the Section 106 Agreement would attend the first meeting of the Working Group. It was further reported that currently, an exercise was underway with the Directorate of the Urban Environment and the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration to review the Section 106 Agreement.

The Chairman proposed, and it was agreed, that the first meeting of the Working Group scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 13th September, 2005 should be cancelled to enable officers to prepare a full report.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the work programme for the Economic Regeneration Working Group as stated in paragraph 3 of the report submitted, be approved.

- (2) That the meeting of the Working Group scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 13th September, 2005 at 6.30 pm be cancelled.
- (3) That a report defining and explaining the Section 106 Agreement be submitted to the first meeting of the Working Group scheduled to be held on Thursday, 29th September, 2005 at 6 pm.
- (4) That a glossary or “jargon buster” be included with all future reports to the Committee and Working Groups.

The meeting ended at 7 pm.

CHAIRMAN