

Minutes of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee

Wednesday, 30th August, 2023 at 6.00 pm
In Committee Room 3, The Council House, Priory Road, Dudley

Present:

Councillor D Stanley (Chair)
Councillor S Henley (Vice-Chair)
Councillors A Aston, J Cowell, A Davies, C Eccles, P Lee, and P Sahota.

Officers:

I Newman (Director of Finance and Legal), L Fulci (Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services – via Microsoft Teams), C Driscoll (Director of Children's Services), M Farooq (Lead for Law and Governance) and K Taylor (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

Also in Attendance:

Councillor S Clark (Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources)
Councillor P Atkins (Cabinet Member for Corporate Strategy)

8 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors E Lawrence and K Westwood.

9 Appointment of Substitute Members



It was noted that Councillors J Cowell and P Lee had been appointed as substitute Members for Councillors K Westwood and E Lawrence, respectively, for this meeting of the Committee only.

10 **Declarations of Interest**

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

11 **Public Forum**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

12 **Questions Under Council Procedure Rule 11.8**

There were no questions to the Chair pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

13 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Resolved

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

14 **Call-In of Decision Sheet – Loan to Dudley and Kent Commercial Services Ltd Joint Venture Company**

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted to respond to the call-in of the decision of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources concerning a loan to Dudley and Kent Commercial Services Ltd Joint Venture Company (JVC). The decision had been called-in at the request of four Members of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee in accordance with the Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules, as set out in the Council's Constitution. A copy of the exempt decision sheet relating to this item was circulated, together with the procedure to be followed at the meeting, as outlined by the Chair.

The Chair then invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources to make representations concerning the decision together with the Director of Finance and Legal and the Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services. The Director of Children's Services and the Lead for Lead and Governance was also in attendance, at the request of the Committee, and responded to questions raised.

Arising from the representations made, Members made the following comments and raised questions, which were responded to at the meeting:

- a) The proposed loan set out within the Decision Sheet would enable the commercialisation of the service by providing both temporary and permanent recruitment services to other organisations. It was confirmed however that the focus was on the recruitment process of temporary staff.
- b) The risks associated with selling services commercially was acknowledged.
- c) Following a data review, Dudley maintained schools and academies were considered as a target market allowing the opportunity to build on existing partnership working and acknowledging the challenges faced with recruitment and budget pressures. It was acknowledged that although the response rate to the survey circulated to all Dudley Schools was 31%, this was considered a good response.
- d) The investment required to establish the external trading team would be shared equally by the shareholders.
- e) It was noted that recruitment fees were dependent on the job role.
- f) Members acknowledged and recognised the importance of commercialisation and income generation within the Council.

- g) Members queried why the request for the loan could not have been reasonably deferred until the end of the second financial year in order to review the company's financial performance accordingly.
- h) The service would undertake a consultant led sales approach by employing specialist sales consultants to engage and build relationships with stakeholders in potential customer organisations. It was noted that activities would be in line with set Key Performance Indicators including; sales calls and customer site visits.
- i) The historic and severe recruitment challenges of permanent staff within the Children's Services Directorate and Legal Services were outlined, however it was also acknowledged that there had been some improvement in the recruitment of temporary staff since the JVC had been established in 2022.
- j) It was reported that each Directorate were responsible in developing a Strategy in relation to workforce.
- k) A Member suggested that measures should be considered to ensure that Dudley's bank of temporary workers were supported and encouraged to remain within Dudley.
- l) It was reported that approximately 800 positions had been filled since the service had been operational.

Following all questions and contributions, the Chair asked for any final statements before the Committee proceeded to consider the matter.

The Chair thanked all Members and Officers for attending and the positive discussions and contributions made during the meeting.

Resolved

That the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee recommend that no objection be raised to the decision, in which case no further action is necessary and that the decision of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources be implemented with immediate effect.

The meeting ended at 6.45pm

CHAIR