

## **SELECT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REGENERATION**

Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2005, at 6.00 p.m.  
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

### **PRESENT:-**

Councillor K Turner (Chairman)  
Councillor Ms Harris (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Attwood, Mrs Cowell, Jackson, Knowles, Mottram, Mrs Patrick and C Wilson.

### **Officers**

Assistant Director of Housing (Strategy and Private Sector) (as Lead Officer to the Committee), Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration), Senior Assistant Director of Finance, Head of ICT Services, Head of Priority Neighbourhood Initiative (Chief Executive's Department), Business Support Manager (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Strategy & Best Value Manager (Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement), Building Surveying Manager and Mrs M Johal (Directorate of Law & Property).

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### **MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Turner declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 9 (Quarterly Corporate Performance Report) in view of reference made to Castle Hill Development, as he a Trustee of Dudley Zoo Gardens.

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### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Body, J Davies and Rogers.

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### **APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE FOR THIS MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE**

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

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## DISABILITY ACCESS STRATEGY

The Lead Officer to the Committee commented that this was the first part of a two-part discussion on the disability access strategy. The first part would form an introduction and overview and the second part scheduled for December would present a wider insight and be linked to a presentation on the employment of vulnerable groups.

The Building Surveying Manager circulated a briefing report summarising the progress that had been made with the implementation of the Council's Disability Access Strategy.

During the course of the presentation of the report, the Building Surveying Manager outlined the key progress that had been made with the implementation of the strategy and covered topics that included effective management and review processes, improved awareness, help from the disabled community, more disability access audits, more accessible information, design problems, more accessible services, more accessible buildings and improving performance.

Arising from the presentation of the report, a Member commented that signposts, which were placed on roads and pavements presented a problem for those with limited visibility as people often walked into them. He also queried whether the Council had any responsibilities to ensure that non-Council owned buildings were complying with access requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act. In responding the Building Surveying Manager reported that street furniture was a current discussion topic and planning guides were advising on various methods to reduce signs and also encouraging the use of wall signs or tucked signs to eliminate obstruction. He further reported that developers were required to conform to building regulations and were required to produce an access statement. In relation to existing buildings he advised that it was a requirement to improve access to a building and to make a reasonable adjustment, however enforcement would need to be balanced depending upon the capabilities and size of the company concerned.

A Member expressed concern at the number of cars parked legally and illegally on pavements and roads, which created problems for people in wheelchairs, as they had to go around and between the cars. In responding, the Building Surveying Manager reported that parked cars was the responsibility of the Highways Authority, however he anticipated that there would be more active consideration given for disabled people in the future. The Chairman suggested and it was agreed that the comments made should be referred to the Select Committee on the Environment for investigation with a view to ensuring enforcement action was taken by the police.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the presentation be received and noted.
- (2) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting.
- (3) That the comments made by Members in relation to the number of cars parked illegally on roads and pavements be referred to the Select Committee on the Environment with a view to ensure that enforcement action was taken by the police.

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CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

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

RESOLVED

That Agenda Item No 6 be considered as the last item of business.

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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 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2006, updating members on the Council's position regarding the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) programme for 'Priority Services and Transformation Outcomes' and informing Members of the proposed approach to the development of ICT Strategy in 2005/06.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Councillor Mrs Patrick be authorised to make any further investigation on progress with BVPI 157 and required priority outcomes leading to the December deadline.

- (2) That further progress reports from Directorates be submitted direct to the Chairman for consideration by 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2005.
  - (3) That further progress reports be submitted to the Committee for monitoring the 25 Good Outcomes to ensure that compliance is reached by the March 2006 deadline.
  - (4) That support be given to the approach to development of ICT Strategy, which will be based on a strategic review of ICT led by the Director of Finance.
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#### UPDATE ON VISITS MADE BY THE RETIRED MAYOR

Councillor Knowles (Retired Mayor) gave an update on visits made during the second half of his Mayoral Year.

During the course of the presentation reference was made to the numerous businesses that had been visited, which included G Clancy Limited that produced high quality camshafts, Pensnett Business Park that had 93% occupancy rate, Folkes Holding which was the oldest business in the area, Somers who produced long forgings, James Grove who made buttons and Micron Machining Services that made castings.

Councillor Knowles commented that the Council should do its utmost to help businesses in the area and suggested that the Committee should look at the procedures involved as it was felt that there were barriers, which prevented officials talking to companies. He also referred to a debate involving the acquisition of a site by Clancey's.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Knowles for the informative presentation and further commented that if Clancey's did not acquire the Yorks Park site, then attempts should be made to link that area with the site adjoining the Sandwell area, to form a joint innovation venture.

#### RESOLVED

That the presentation and update on visits be received and noted.

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#### QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on the first Quarterly Corporate Performance Report for 2005/06, relating to performance for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2005 to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2005.

Arising from the presentation of the report, a Member commented in relation to the key performance indicator regarding an increase in the number of young people participating in supervised sports and recreational activities in parks. He queried, in particular, how these targets and figures had been derived as there was no indication as to which parts of the borough had been used in the statistics and he highlighted the fact that there were a lot of deprived areas and it was felt that statistics had been drawn from the "better areas" and did not relate to the whole of the Borough. He further referred to the key performance indicator in relation to an increase by 10% of the number of school children taking part in the Sportslink Afterschool Programme and he commented that the Council did not have a direct influence on this indicator.

In responding the Lead Officer to the Committee commented that the key performance indicator in relation to young people participating in sports in parks was the responsibility of the Select Committee on Culture and Recreation and he undertook to relay the concerns expressed. In relation to Sportslink Afterschool Programme, the Lead Officer to the Committee undertook to investigate the matter and to respond to a future meeting of the Committee and to the Member concerned.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted and Appendix to the report, be noted.
- (2) That the Lead Officer to the Committee convey the concerns expressed by members in relation to the key performance indicator regarding young people participating in sports in parks to the Select Committee on Culture and Recreation.
- (3) That the Lead Officer to the Committee respond to a future meeting of the Committee and to Councillor Attwood with fuller details in relation to the key performance indicator regarding Sportslink Afterschool Programme.

#### WORK PROGRAMME TIMETABLE OF REPORTS

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted seeking consideration of a timetable of reports as part of the Work Programme for the Select Committee for 2005/06.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the timescale for submission of reports be approved.

- (2) That a Special Meeting of the Committee be held on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2005 at 6pm to discuss the Disability Access Strategy in conjunction with the employment of vulnerable citizens.
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## NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Head of Priority Neighbourhood Initiative made a brief presentation updating Members on Neighbourhood Management.

The Head of Priority Neighbourhood Initiative reported that Neighbourhood Management commissioned a community perceptions audit within the Council's managed neighbourhoods to benchmark public attitudes against a representative baseline of residents across the Borough as a whole. It also commissioned a community profile for each managed neighbourhood based on the 2001 census and other data held by partners.

The findings included:-

- 19% of people in the borough had limiting long-term illness. In the managed neighbourhoods this was, on average, 4% higher
- Economically active people who were unemployed in neighbourhoods was 12.3% and in the Dudley Borough, 5.9%
- Employment structure showed two clear patterns with regard to occupation groups in the managed neighbourhoods, those occupations that are generally thought to generate the higher incomes employ 19.2% of the workforce compared to 33.2% for Dudley as a whole and no managed neighbourhood reached the Borough figure
- The percentage of people in the managed neighbourhoods without any qualifications was significantly higher than for the Borough as a whole, 52.2% compared to 37.4%
- Over a third (365) of residents in managed neighbourhoods, smoked or someone in the household smoked, which was significantly higher compared to the current national level of 24%.

The findings had proved that there was very clear evidence that the efforts concentrated on improving services in the managed neighbourhoods seemed to be making a firm public impact and areas for further improvement included issues for young people, crime, environment, housing specifics, community cohesion and jobs.

The Chairman suggested and it was agreed that the report should be presented to other Select Committees and requested that it be referred initially to Select Committee Chairmen for their consideration.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the presentation be received and noted.
- (2) That Select Committee Chairmen be requested to consider the Neighbourhood Management update report with a view to a presentation being made to all other Select Committees for information.

The meeting ended at 9 pm.

CHAIRMAN