

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REGENERATION

Wednesday, 8th June, 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 Body, Mrs Cowell, J Davies, Jackson, Mottram, Mrs Patrick, Rogers and C Wilson.

Officers

Director of Law and Property (Acting Lead Officer to the Committee),
Director of Finance, Head of ICT Services, Assistant Director of the
Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration), Management Support
Officer, (Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement), Principal Policy
and Performance Management Officer (Chief Executives Directorate),
and Mrs Johal (Directorate of Law & Property).

1

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11th
April, 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed.

2

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ms Harris (Vice-Chairman) declared a personal interest in
respect of Agenda Item No 8 in view of her being an Independent
Member of Dudley Racial Equality Council.

3

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of
Councillor Knowles, the Lead Officer to the Committee and the Senior
Assistant Director of Finance.

4

TERMS OF REFERENCE, RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE COMMITTEE AND SCRUTINY PROTOCOLS FOR SELECT COMMITTEES

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted setting out the terms of reference, procedure rules and the Scrutiny Protocols for Select Committees.

The Chairman commented in relation to Appendix 2, paragraph 4 of the report that stated “there shall be 6 ordinary meetings of each Select Committee in each year” and he queried as to why this Committee only had five scheduled meetings. In response the Director of Law and Property advised that the decision to hold five meetings per year had been made last year at the Annual Meeting of the Council and the Constitution had not been updated.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 attached to the report, submitted, be noted.

5

APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted seeking consideration for the appointment of Working Groups of the Committee for the 2005/06 municipal year.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Equality and Diversity Working Group be not re-appointed for the 2005/06 municipal year.
 - (2) That the Economic Regeneration Working Group for the 2005/06 municipal year be re-appointed with its current terms of reference but with a membership comprising the whole Committee.
-

6

WORK PROGRAMME CONFIRMATION

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted confirming the provisional work programme for the 2005/06 municipal year.

The Vice-Chairman commented in relation to “Decline in Usage of Free Bus Passes” and suggested that the topic be discussed in context within the remit of the Committee. She further commented that some items, as suggested in the Work Programme, were that of monitoring and commented that to be proactive, flexibility should be given to consider other items during the course of the year, such as the changes in Neighbourhood Management and Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Work Programme for 2005/06, as outlined in the report submitted, be approved subject to the addition of the word “Retired” before Mayor in paragraph 2.2, item 8 of the report.
- (2) That “Technology Centres” in paragraph 2.2 of the report, item 14, be renamed “Innovation and Incubation Centres”.

REVISED RACE EQUALITY SCHEME

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted seeking consideration of the revised Race Equality Scheme.

The Vice-Chairman queried whether the Council would be seeking any external verification of the information to be monitored. In responding the Principal Policy and Performance Management Officer advised that there was a number of best value performance indicators audited by external auditors. The Council’s performance under the Race Equality Scheme was presented to Dudley Racial Equality Council as part of its annual report on equal opportunities and diversity. He further reported that current proposals included the holding of a public meeting in relation to equality issues and he undertook to provide the Committee with the outcome of that meeting.

The Director of Law and Property reported that an Officer Advisory Group was in operation and all policies, strategies, and plans relating to equality and diversity were submitted to them for consideration.

The Vice-Chairman queried the decision that had been made involving the discontinuance of the Dudley Racial Equality Council in its current format after March, 2006. She stated that discussions had not taken place following the decision and details such as whether there were any emerging organisations was unknown. She sought clarification on how the Council would be tackling the issue after March, 2006. In responding the Principal Policy and Performance Management Officer commented that the monitoring of information would continue and he suggested that exploration of other avenues could be discussed with the community. One possibility for such monitoring was the Community Representatives Panel, which included representatives from black minority ethnic communities.

The Chairman requested that an update report addressing the concerns expressed by Members be submitted to the Committee during the course of the year.

The Director of Law and Property advised that the matter would be included in the annual report on Equal Opportunities.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and the Appendix attached to the report, submitted be noted and that further progress reports on implementing the Scheme be submitted to the Committee as part of the annual review of equality and diversity.
- (2) That the concerns expressed by Members in relation to the changes to the Dudley Racial Equality Council be noted and that a further update report addressing the concerns be submitted to the Committee in due course.

8

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIRECTORATE'S EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2004/05

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted seeking consideration of the Chief Executive's Directorate's equality and diversity annual report for 2004/05.

A Member commented that there was no reference made to age and highlighted the difficulties faced by the over 50's in finding employment and he queried the Council's policy on the issue. In response, the Director of Law and Property advised that the equality and diversity policy stated that there should not be any discrimination against age. He further stated that age was not considered to be a barrier for gaining employment within the Council. The Policy and Performance Management Officer advised that legislation was due to come into force towards the end of next year that would outlaw discrimination against age.

The Vice-Chairman suggested that figures on the average age of new recruits should be investigated as it was recognised that there was a new drift towards recruiting mature people, but this may be inevitable for the type of jobs and wages offered. The Principal Policy and Performance Management Officer undertook to provide detailed statistics to a future meeting of the Committee. It was further requested that the report should include information on the Council's flexible working policy and how it supported its employees.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and the Appendix attached to the report, submitted, be noted.
- (2) That a further report detailing the average age of new recruits and details on the Council's policy in respect of flexible working be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTORATE OF FINANCE, ICT AND PROCUREMENT FOR 2004/05

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted seeking consideration of the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement's Equality and Diversity Annual Report for 2004/05.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and the Appendix attached to the report, submitted, be noted.

ICT STRATEGY REVIEW AND E-GOVERNMENT PROGRESS REPORT

A joint report of the Corporate E-Champion and Director of Finance was submitted providing Members with the latest information on the Council's performance against BVPI 157, which requires 100% e-enablement of all services by 1st January, 2006.

The Head of ICT Services presented the report and informed Members that statistics in the report reflected those to the end of April. However, since then he had printed off the report for the end of May and it had shown a significant improvement.

In response to a query in relation to the position of G19 being classed as high risk, the Head of ICT Services reported that this had impacted from a lack of resources. However, he assured Members that recruitment of replacement staff had now taken place and the acquiring of resources for implementation was also being explored.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the assessment of progress with BVPI 157 and the chart showing progress over the previous twelve months be noted.
- (2) That the assessment of progress on Priority Outcomes be noted.
- (3) That the approach to production of Implementing Electronic Government 4.5 be supported.

(4) That the following be noted:-

- (i) the costs of meeting the BVPI 157 targets and ODPM priorities being met from within existing resources or bid from new funding streams;
- (ii) that to date, much of the funding for projects has come from a combination of departmental funds, ICT corporate strategy fund and IEG monies
- (iii) that IEG4 has attracted further funding of £150,000 for 2005/06.

The meeting ended at 7 pm.

CHAIRMAN