

SELECT COMMITTEE
ON REGENERATION, CULTURE AND
ADULT EDUCATION

Thursday 28th January 2010, at 6.00 pm
in Council Chamber at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor P Harley (Chairman)
Councillor Mottram (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Caunt, GH Davies, Hanif, Knowles, Ms Partridge, Woodall
and Wright.

Officers

Interim Director of Finance (as Acting Lead Officer to the Committee),
Assistant Director of Economic Regeneration, Head of Economic
Regeneration Delivery, Strategic Regeneration Manager and Tourism
Development Officer (all Directorate of the Urban Environment); Head
of Policy (Chief Executive's Directorate); Interim Assistant Director
Legal and Democratic Services and Mr J Jablonski (Directorate of Law,
Property and Human Resources).

Seven members of the public were also in attendance.

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CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Arising from consideration of a change in the order of business and
comments made by the Chairman, to the effect that Agenda Item 11 –
Progress Report on Corporate ICT Strategy 2008/13 had now been
deferred for consideration at the March meeting of the Committee, it
was:-

RESOLVED

That Agenda Item 9 – Report on the Visitor Economy – be
considered as the next item of business following Agenda Item
6 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2010/11.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of
Councillors Barlow, Lowe and K Turner.

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SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was reported that Councillors Hanif and Wright had been appointed as substitute members for Councillors Lowe and Barlow respectively for this meeting of the Committee only.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Member made a declaration of interest in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26th October, 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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PUBLIC FORUM

A Member of the public referred to the erection of a temporary mobile phone mast near to Coseley Swimming Baths and requested further information on this matter.

Councillor Mottram also commented on the position as far as he had been able to ascertain it and, following the seeking of advice from the Directorate of the Urban Environment, had been informed that the Company concerned did not require the approval of the Council for a temporary mast to be erected for a six month period. It was noted that the location of the mast was close to houses in which young people were living, however this was not a material planning consideration.

Consideration was given to the legislative background regarding the erection of such masts and the situation when they would require referral to the Council. However it was stressed that to date the Company had acted in accordance with national guidelines and legislation and in view of that no action could be taken. Consideration was also given to the question of notification to Ward Members of such development and whilst none of the Ward Members concerned had been notified regarding this particular mast instances were given of where prior notification had been received in other Wards. It was also considered that members of the public in addition to contacting local councillors should also lobby their Member of Parliament given that any changes would require a change in the law.

Arising from the consideration given to this matter it was agreed that the Assistant Director Economic Regeneration would arrange for the relevant guidelines concerning the erection of mobile phone masts to be sent to all Members of the Committee.

REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY 2010/11

A joint report of officers was submitted on the proposed Revenue Budget Strategy for 2010/11 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2010/11 – 2012/13.

The Interim Director of Finance outlined the background to the proposals, as set out in the report submitted, and also referred to paragraphs 35 to 56 which set out implications for services covered by the Terms of Reference of this Select Committee. He also referred to amendments to the report involving Appendix C, in that the figures for the Children and Families Social Services and other Children's Services had been transposed and to paragraph 22 in that the columns should read £,000's and not £m as indicated.

Arising from the presentation given questions were asked by Members and in response to a question from Councillor Ms Partridge regarding the percentage of the Regeneration Budget that related to staffing costs the Interim Director of Finance indicated that he would write to her direct on this matter.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet's Revenue Budget Strategy proposals for 2010/11 and Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2010/11 – 2012/13, as set out in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted, be noted and that the Cabinet be informed that there were no observations that this Select Committee wished to make on the proposals.

REPORT ON THE VISITOR ECONOMY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted updating the Committee on progress and achievements over the past twelve months in respect of the development of the borough's visitor economy and future planned developments within the borough.

Arising from the presentation of the content of the report by the Tourism Development Officer it was:-

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, on the progress and achievements to date in respect of the development of the borough's visitor economy, the work of the Tourism Development Team and the continued vision to develop Dudley as a world class visitor destination, be noted.

HEALTHY TOWNS PROJECT

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted updating the Committee on actions taken following the last meeting of the Committee and the discussions that had taken place regarding the Healthy Towns Project.

In connection with this matter a guide to Dudley Borough's Healthy Towns Programme was circulated to Members at the meeting together with a map of the borough showing obesity prevalence by 2001 Census Ward (Age-Standardised) for Dudley persons.

Prior to consideration of the content of the report a request was made that consideration of the report be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee so that those Members who were not able to attend this meeting might be given the opportunity to comment on this matter.

In response the Chairman indicated that whilst not agreeing to the request he would arrange for an item to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting so as to give all Members of the committee the opportunity to raise any further questions they might have regarding the project.

The Acting Lead Officer to the Committee then presented the content of the report and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on the progress made with the implementation of Borough's Healthy Towns Programme, be noted and that an agenda Item be included on the agenda for the next meeting of the Committee so as to give Members the opportunity to raise any further questions they might have regarding the project.

DUDLEY BOROUGH LOCAL ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

A copy of a presentation on the Dudley Borough Local Economic Assessment had previously been circulated to Members and was commented upon by the Strategic Regeneration Manager.

In his presentation he emphasised in particular that the presentation provided an update on the new statutory economic assessment duty contained in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act, 2009 requiring Councils, including Dudley, to prepare an assessment of the economic conditions in their area that is a Local Economic Assessment (LEA).

The new duty would come into force from April, 2010 and should be completed within the next six to twelve months and not the six to nine months indicated in the copy of the presentation submitted. This change was due to draft statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government in December, 2009.

Further details were also given in respect of the core objectives of the LEA together with a proposed outline content in respect of its four key themes of place, business and enterprise, people and communities and sustainable economic growth.

Regarding the theme of business and enterprise it was noted that the views of local businesses across a range of ideas would need to be gauged and in respect of the third theme – people and communities - there was new statutory duty to provide a Child Poverty Needs Assessment. Of these four themes it was considered that the most challenging was that relating to Sustainable Economic Growth given the move to a low carbon economy as well as maximising potential opportunities for green growth.

Details were given of the LEA approach to be adopted and details of the consultation to be undertaken.

Details were also given of the timescales involved leading to approval of the final LEA by Cabinet in January/February 2011. The projected date for completion and delivery of the Dudley Borough LEA was March 2011.

Arising from the presentation given Members asked a number of questions and made comments relating in particular to the consultation to be undertaken and the process involved.

In response to comments on the need to consult as widely as possible with representatives of the business community and the need to involve that community in the development of the content of the LEA it was reported that such consultation had already begun with the Federation of Small Businesses but would be extended to other representative bodies and an undertaking was given that the Council would consult on an on-going basis as suggested.

Regarding the process involved it was commented upon that the projected delivery date of the LEA was March 2011 whilst the economy required action to be taken now. It was further considered that much of the information required was available and therefore there was a need to provide the information to take action now.

The comments made were acknowledged and an assurance given that the Council would continue to do whatever was required whilst the LEA was being formulated and that the relevant information would be included in the document.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the presentation given, and commented upon, on the Dudley Borough Local Economic Assessment, be noted and the comments made as outlined above actioned.

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THE LEASOWES RESTORATION

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted arising from a request made at the September 2009, meeting of this Committee for further information as referred to in the report.

Arising from the comments made by the Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery on the content of the report Councillor Mottram queried the content and in so doing indicated that a further more detailed report was in fact required so that detailed scrutiny could be given to this project.

Other Members also raised queries on the project and arising from the comments made, it was:-

RESOLVED

That Members be requested to contact the Lead Officer to the Committee – Ron Sims – Assistant Director, Housing Strategy and Private Sector, setting out the questions to which they would wish responses to be given in respect of the Leasowes Restoration Project with a view to the Lead Officer preparing a further report for consideration at a future meeting.

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QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on the performance of the Council in relation to the activities relating to the Terms of Reference on this Committee for the second quarter of 2009/10, July – September, 2009.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and extract from the report, submitted in relation to the activities relating to the Terms of Reference of this Committee for the second quarter of 2009/10 July – September 2009, be noted.

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QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11.8

In response to questions raised by Councillors K Turner and Lowe under Council Procedure Rule 11.8 and the questions and responses having been circulated at the meeting the Chairman obtained the consent of the Committee to the questions and responses, as circulated, being accepted without the need for them to be read out. The questions posed and the responses given were as set out as follows:-

Responses to Councillor K Turner's Questions

Healthy Towns.

1. Could the Chairman confirm that access corridors, for both cyclists and pedestrians, will be actively engaged within the designs In the event of possible restriction by increased parked vehicles provision for off street parking will be facilitated.

There will be advance Member engagement in relation to any of the proposals for the Active Travel Corridors.

The need for off-street parking arising from the impact of the developments will be considered on a case by case basis.

2. Could the Chairman please identify LTP funding benefits?

£200,000 of LTP (Local Transport Plan) funding is being utilised to compliment the funding available from the Healthy Towns Programme.

3. In reference to Appendix 1 where Friends of the Park are the Council's recognised representatives, would the Chairman confirm that elected members will be the first informed of any proposed improvements by Borough Officers or any other body, in respect of all Borough Parks or Public Open Spaces.

The Marcomms Plan for the project details the ongoing process for Member engagement with the project and is designed to ensure that Elected Members are notified of any proposals for the development of Borough/Parks at the earliest opportunity. This includes the circulation to all ward members of regular updates to supplement the healthy town's booklet.

Dudley Visitor Economy

1. In report Select Committee Regeneration Culture and Adult Education 28th January 2010, agenda item 9 page 23 Para 10 & 11. Could the Chairman please confirm visitor numbers in 2004 as with an average spend of £29.38 pp £178m would represent in excess of 6million visitors. The report clearly states “the number of visitors has slightly decreased”. 4.3million is only 71% of 2004 calculated spending.

The 2004 Economic Impact Assessment identified that the Borough welcomed in the region of 4.8 million visitors. The approximate value of the visitor economy in 2004 was £178 million.

To arrive at the approximate total of the value of the Visitor Economy is an involved methodology and you cannot multiply the number of visitors with the average visitor spend. There are instances where overnight visitors spend more than a day visitor, therefore the average figure quoted is for both day and overnight visitors.

2. Para 28 How many B & B's do we have registered in Dudley Borough

Bed and breakfasts do not need to be registered with the Council to operate a Bed and Breakfast, although if they serve food, they should be registered with the Council's Environmental Health Team.

There are 11 Bed and Breakfasts registered with the Environment Health Team.

3. When can we look forward to a full Tourist Information Centre with full accreditation?

There are no current plans for visitor information provision to be supplied by any other means that at present – via Dudley Council Plus, the Boroughs Libraries and the website.

The Leasowes Restoration

1. Para 10 Bullet Point 2 How true to original can finished detail is considered.

The evidence that has been used to inform the restoration proposals was drawn from extensive archive research (maps, written records and historical images), archaeological investigations and surviving examples of parks and gardens laid out elsewhere at the same time as The Leasowes. Given that there are no surviving landscape structures from Shenstone's time, and that he left no plans or designs, it is inevitable that there has had to be a degree of conjecture in preparing the restoration proposals. Additional to this is the need for the restoration to have regard to the 21st century standards required in respect of accessibility, maintenance, flood risk and health and safety. Given this, and the specialist advice provided to the project particularly by the project Engineer, Historic Landscape Consultant and Archaeologist, it is considered that the finished proposals are as true to the original as is realistically possible.

2. Bullet Point 3 In respect of additional 18 months delay what was incurred as increased costs in respect of Historic Landscape Consultant and Project Management as they were secured on time basis.

The original estimated cost for the Historical Landscape Consultant was £40,000 and the final cost was £45,000.

The original estimated cost for Project Management was £160,000 and the final cost was £226,000.

3. What further expenditure is considered over next 2 years?

The only expenditure anticipated in relation to this project over the next 2 years is in relation to the existing revenue funding for the Wardens and Grounds Maintenance services

ICT Strategy

1. Can you please rationalise expenditure in line with proposed Budget Statement.

This item has now been rearranged for the next Select Committee Agenda so the question can be raised specifically at the next meeting

2. In event of failure to secure funds from new streams how will expenditure be met?

This item has now been rearranged for the next Select Committee Agenda so the question can be raised specifically at the next meeting

Quarterly Corporate Performance

1. A number of green stars appear to have been achieved on easily attainable targets. Who set the targets?

Overall there are 28 green stars across the Council Plan 117 key performance indicators, nine appear within the remit of this Select committee. Conversely, there are 13 red triangles across the Council Plan and none in this Committee's remit. Six of the nine green stars in our remit relate to Adult Learning issues.

They were set by officers but were based on outturns from previous years and where external funding agencies are concerned have been negotiated realistically with an eye on continuous improvement.

One of the Green Stars relates to a stretch performance grant and will therefore have been agreed with the Government Office of the West Midlands .

The two benefits related targets with Green stars at the time of setting assumed a number of factors that would mean achieving previous targets would not be met:

- The full year effect of reductions in backdating rules for Pension Credit (effective Oct 08)
- The impact of dealing with more complex / lengthy queries rather than assistance with claims now that DWP performance has improved
- The potential *initial* effect of (a) using the newly introduced EDM system for Shop work & (b) for Shop involvement in the Knowing Our Customer initiative
- 2 new untrained members of staff in a small workforce

It must be remembered that the targets reflect a “snapshot” in time and can vary markedly for many reasons , what is important is the position at the year end. Therefore the latest position is worth noting:

- Shop performance remains ahead of this years target but the gap is narrowing .
- Campaigns performance is currently below target for the period from September.

Responses to Councillor Lowe's Questions

SRCAE/29 Paragraph 3 (Minutes of last meeting) states that the reasoning for Mary Stevens Park being selected for the initiative was that its focus was 'obesity' rather than 'deprivation'.

1. Would it be possible to request the data/research that was used to identify Mary Stevens Park over the other Parks within the Area C'ttee and where this data came from?

In terms of the specific site selection a key aspect in the success of our bid was to have a borough wide impact, with each of the five townships benefiting from a hub.

The project was developed with a health hub within each area committee boundary and therefore parks were only compared against other parks within their respective area committee boundaries and not in comparison to all parks borough wide.

The comparisons of parks within the five area committee boundaries took account of:

- 1) In or close to an obesity hotspot

"One of the key methods to prevent obesity is by increasing activity levels. The wards adjacent to Mary Stevens Park have statistically one of the lowest participation rates of walking and cycling in the Borough and also in terms of engagement with public through events and programmes."

- 2) The number of households within 1250 metres of the hub
- 3) Capacity of the hub to accommodate component parts
- 4) The number of existing facilities
- 5) An existing friends group and community support Active transport links

The selection of MSP over others within the Stourbridge Area Committee boundary also had regard for overall visitor numbers from the borough as a whole. MSP have historically received 48% of all park visitors

2. Additionally could the C'ttee see a breakdown for Ward for Obesity levels?

Data available and will be sent to Committee Members in a Map form

3. Could you confirm that the view is that obesity is not linked to deprivation and the research/reasoning for this view?.

It is accepted Obesity is linked to deprivation

4. If it is accepted that there is a link between deprivation obesity then why was Mary Stevens Park given preference?

One of the key methods to prevent obesity is by increasing activity levels. The wards adjacent to Mary Stevens Park have statistically one of the lowest participation rates of walking and cycling in the Borough and also in terms of engagement with public through events and programmes.

In addition 48% of all park visits recorded in the Borough occur at MSP and therefore MSP offered an opportunity for maximum impact in relation to this specific programmes aims.

It is accepted that less established parks and open spaces need also to be developed to encourage use and this is part of an overall commitment to increase participation in healthy activities borough wide by encouraging the development of friends groups and community activity with due regard to resources available

The following is an e mail from Suzanne Turnock of the Department of Health which sets out their successful bid selection criteria and goes some way to explaining the focus on the quality of bid **rather than deprivation** or affluence statistics that are often used in other grant funding allocations:

From: Suzanne.Turnock@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Sent: 17 March 2009 12:56

To: Dean Hill

Subject: Healthy Towns

In Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: a cross –government strategy for England, the Government explained that the aim of the Healthy Community Challenge Fund was to work with a small number of local areas to test out different ideas that could help to create a healthier environment through physical activity and healthy food choices.

The 9 Healthy Towns were selected on the basis of three criteria. First, their proposals were both ambitious and comprehensive. Second, they also included fresh thinking on the changes that could be made to create healthier communities, and so had something that we felt would provide interesting lessons for towns across England. Finally, their plans were also set within a coherent framework that ensures there is strategic direction and they had the clear support of senior officers.

As discussed, our primary consideration was the quality of the proposal, rather than deprivation or other statistics, and this is the reason why Dudley was selected as a Healthy Town.

Suzanne

Suzanne Turnock

Programmes and Delivery: Built Environment

Cross Government Obesity Unit

SRCAE/29 Resolved 2 states that 'a special meeting of this C'ttee be arranged to scrutinise the process'

5. Could you confirm that following this meeting strenuous efforts were taken by officers and members to resolve these issues and discuss at a normal meeting rather than arrange a special meeting (diary commitments etc)?

The reasons for not having a special meeting are contained in the report in the main agenda (item 7) at Appendix 2 on page 6. It was unfortunate that the normal scheduled meeting had to be rearranged because of a major power failure and that the rearranged meeting at such short notice did give some members problems in attending.

6. Could you confirm if this special item is now incorporated into this meeting?

Confirmed

7. Could you confirm that Cllr's Lowe, Turner and Barlow were three of the C'ttee members who expressed a desire to discuss this item in detail?

All Select Committee members expressed a desire to discuss the item in detail

8. Could you confirm that the same 3 Cllr's have been unable to attend this rearranged meeting?

Confirmed

9. What steps will be taken to ensure the same Cllr's have the ability not just to send questions into this meeting but have the ability to discuss openly with all parties involved?

Following discussions with the Chairman it has been agreed that room will be made on the next Select Committee Agenda for further discussion of this item if members wish

10. Could we consider this item be carried over to the next select C'ttee or should questions be raised a full council?

Following discussions with the Chairman it has been agreed that room will be made on the next Select Committee Agenda for further discussion of this item if members wish

Page 2 Paragraph 12 Ward Member Involvement in the project were lacking.

11. Could I ask what has been put in place to ensure this situation does not reoccur?

The Marcomms Plan, referred to within the report, is designed to ensure full and proper ongoing Member engagement with this programme and the Director of the Urban Environment has also raised the critical importance of early ward member engagement in similar borough wide projects in the future at the Corporate Board earlier this month.

12. Could I request that all Cllr's, not just those of the Wards affected, be included in future to identify relevant sites?

There are no current proposals for future sites as part of the programme funding, however any opportunities to replicate facilities or activities within resources available or utilization any under spends on the programme at other locations will be developed in consultation with ward members whose views will be passed on to the cabinet member accordingly

13. If this had occurred would it have led to Mary Stevens Park being chosen, if so why? If not why not?

The selection of parks was based on key criteria listed in 1 above and supported by Government Obesity Unit as indicated in the E mail in 4 above

Given these criteria MSP would still have best met the criteria and aims of this specific project .This is notwithstanding ward members will have wished to see a hub within their own ward boundary and therefore consensus may have been difficult hence the importance of site selection sign off by the leader and cabinet member

14. What consultative events occurred pre selection?

There were no specific Healthy Towns Consultative events held pre the selection of sites. Consultative information from past projects and programmes e.g. Liveability, Transforming Your Space, Steps to Health, Play Pathfinders were reviewed and utilised in the development of proposals.

15. Was there any Cllr consultation pre selection? If so where and when? If not why not?

Consultation/Meetings were held with the then Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture in December 2008.

16. Paragraph 13 mentions the Members portal. When did this go live and what is the address?

The member's portal is already established and the Healthy Town information links from the portal are currently being finalised and will be available shortly.

In addition the report tonight outlines other consultation mechanisms (paragraph 13) including a booklet and regular progress updates that will go to all 72 ward members

17. Will monthly emails go to all Cllr's or just those to Wards affected? Could I request they go to all Cllr's?

The updates will go to all 72 members and to other organisations and partners.

Page 4 states that Friends of the Parks are recognised group for initiatives related to parks.

18. Could I request information as to how and when this decision was arrived at?

For the past 10 years the Borough has seen the friends of parks movement go from strength to strength. The first programme that this manifested itself in was the Transforming Your space initiative in 2002 during which the collective representatives from friends of parks throughout the Borough assisted the Council with the development of a process through which the funding was eventually allocated.

Since then individual friends groups have worked with the Council to develop master plans for their sites and their ongoing implementation as and when funding has become available. In some cases local Ward Members sit on their local friends of park group.

19. What consultation was entered into with other friends groups not chosen for this initiative? Where? When? If not why not?

No consultation has been entered into with those sites not selected for this programme.

20. Were local Cllrs within those Friends groups invited to the consultative process? If so when. If not why not?

All Members were invited to one of the consultation events held last year.

The meeting ended at 7.00 pm.

CHAIRMAN