

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON REGENERATION, CULTURE AND
ADULT EDUCATION**

Tuesday, 6th March, 2007, at 6 p.m.
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor K Turner (Chairman)
Councillor Crumpton (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Hill, Jackson, Rahman, Southall and C Wilson.

Officers

Assistant Director of Housing (Strategy and Private Sector) (as Lead Officer to the Committee), Assistant Director of Culture and Community, Business Support Unit Manager and Ms L Avery (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Head of Policy, Mr S Manson, Mrs K Jesson and Ms E Carver (Chief Executives Directorate) and Mr J Jablonski (Directorate of Law and Property).

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COMMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN

On the occasion of the last meeting of the Select Committee in the current municipal year the Chairman thanked all those who had attended meetings throughout the year commenting on the good work that had been done. He also referred to the commendation in the recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment in respect of economic regeneration and paid tribute to the work of those members who had also served on the predecessor committee the Select Committee on Economic Regeneration and to the work of officers in achieving the excellent result recorded. Mention was also made of specific projects such as the Incubation Innovation Centre, work in relation to town centres, in particular Halesowen, and work on the five local centres identified in 2004 on which work was progressing. The achievements gained were considered to be a recognition of the work of a Select Committee in involving itself in developing issues and ideas.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillors Body, J R Davies, Jones and Tyler.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rahman declared a personal interest in any matter referred to on the agenda in relation to Leisure Centres in that he is a user of Dudley Leisure Centre.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th January, 2007, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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PUBLIC FORUM

No issues were raised under this agenda item..

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DUDLEY BOROUGH ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2007/08

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Council's Economic Strategy revised for 2007/08. Attached as a Appendix to the report submitted was a copy of the presentation on the Economic Strategy 2007/08 Update as given to the members of the Economic Regeneration Working Group of this Committee at a meeting held on 23rd January, 2007.

Consideration was then given to the content of the presentation, in particular those pages relating to the five strategic aims, some key achievements and new projects and initiatives included within the 2007/08 Strategy Update and the next steps in respect of the Strategy. It was noted that the Strategy would be reported to Cabinet on 21st March, 2007 and to Council on 16th April, 2007.

Arising from the consideration given, Members asked a number of questions and made comments in particular relating to:-

- The date of December, 2007, when all the five Local Centre Regeneration Plans should have been completed;
- The need for a greater diversity of house type to assist with reversing the trend of people leaving the Black Country

- The need for a review to be carried out in respect of one of the regeneration plans, for example that for Cradley, before any further such plans were considered. Arising from the suggestion made the member concerned was asked for any ideas he had on achieving feedback and involving the local community which would be welcomed.
- That the Council should have an involvement in respect of changes regarding the Child Support Agency, based in Brierley Hill, given the loss of over 1,000 jobs, by ensuring that information was sought on the current position and on redeployment issues.
- That it was hoped that further support would be given to the establishment of a Black Country Olympic Business Club.
- That there was a need to focus on areas of deprivation outside of town centres possibly using housing as the lead for regeneration. In response to this it was recognised that the Strategy was a staged process which would lead to such consideration with the need to review work that had been done. It was also noted that housing was a strong feature of the Local Area Agreement and that when this was in place further information could be submitted to the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted, and as reported at the meeting, in respect of the Dudley Borough Economic Strategy 2007/08, be noted and that the Dudley Borough Economic Strategy 2007/08 be referred to Cabinet for consideration at their meeting to be held on 21st March, 2007.

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Obesity Strategy Annual Monitoring Report for July 2005 – July 2006 with specific reference to those areas contained within the Strategy identified as coming within the terms of reference of this Select Committee.

During the presentation given by the Assistant Director of Culture and Community on the content of the report mention was made of paragraph 10 of the report which set out the four areas within the Committee's terms of reference in which good progress had been identified, relating to

- (i) Parks as Physical Activity Centres
- (ii) Increasing activity of children and young people
- (iii) National Cycling Training; and
- (iv) An accredited healthy lifestyle course being piloted with learning disability clients.

Reference was also made to paragraph 11 of the report submitted relating to areas that had made slower progress including the introduction of the smartcard and the application of health impact assessments as part of decision making processes by the Council. The process had been used to passport funds from the Sport and Recreation revenue budget to Brierley Hill Community Partnership to deliver physical activity and sport projects in the Brierley Hill area which was at an early stage of development and would require close monitoring to measure the effectiveness of this approach.

Paragraph 12 of the report submitted also included early warning signs for problem areas which included issues regarding developing a healthy workplace; difficulties in accessing allotments used by school children and established targeted physical activity sessions for overweight adults in leisure centres to be rolled out during 2007 as part of the MEND Project.

Arising from the presentation given in which reference was also made to the overall good working relationship between the Council and Dudley Primary Care Trust in this regard, Members made a number of comments and raised questions relating in particular to:-

- The need for further work to be done to review the developing healthy workplace initiative so that all leisure facilities were used to their greatest potential with leisure centre staff possibly approaching local employers and offering corporate membership of leisure centres to their staff.
- The need to review the effectiveness of, and offer possible further assistance to, Brierley Hill Community Partnership.
- The need for every possible encouragement to be given to healthy eating initiatives in respect of children as well as adults.
- The likelihood that the numbers of obese and overweight children in Dudley, as indicated in paragraph 3 of the report submitted, was an extrapolation from national figures and not actual figures from individual schools or other sources.

- The need to publicise activities being undertaken in parks arising from receipt of Liveability funding.
- That Groundwork Black Country could be approached regarding environmental works needed in parks and that they would be giving a presentation on their work to the next meeting of Halesowen Area Committee to be held on 14th March, 2007, which Members who did not serve on that committee may wish to attend.
- The receipt of awards by both Crystal and Halesowen Leisure Centres with congratulations to the staff involved in the achievement of these awards.

RESOLVED

That the information contained the progress report submitted, and as reported at the meeting, on the implementation of the Multi-Agency Strategy to tackle Obesity, as set out in the Obesity Strategy Annual Monitoring Report: July 2005 – July 2006, with particular reference to those areas within the terms of reference of this Committee, be noted.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIRECTORATE'S EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2007/08

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2007/08 for the Chief Executive's Directorate, a copy of which was attached as an Appendix to the report submitted.

Following a presentation of the content of the report and action plan by the Head of Policy members made a number of comments and raised questions relating in particular to:-

- That the information contained in the action plan needed to be simplified so that the main points/issues requiring attention by members could more easily be identified and given consideration.
- Arising from the foregoing point, the possible need for the information contained in the action plan to be presented to members in a different format so that issues requiring scrutiny could be more easily identified. This could be achieved by the use of explanatory text, in the preamble to the action plan, on issues members needed to be made aware of.
- The need for an explanation to be given rather than the use of "n/a" where this occurred in the action plan so as to aid understanding.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on the Chief Executive's Directorate's Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2007/08, be noted and that the Head of Policy be requested to take account of the comments made by members at the meeting on the content of the action plan.

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DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT'S EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2007/08

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Directorate of the Urban Environment's annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2007/08 a copy of which was attached as an Appendix to the report submitted.

Arising from the presentation given on the content of the action plan by Mrs Jesson members made a number of comments and raised questions relating in particular to:-

- The usefulness of the information contained in the preamble to the Action Plan relating to key issues and targets for 2007/08.
- The need to possibly generalise the content given in priority 4 of the action plan so that the improvement and development of the understanding of employees in bereavement services of cultural and religious requirements that may affect service delivery was generalised and embraced all groups.
- Queried the relevance of the inclusion of a representative from a BME group on all shortlisting and interview panels in Environmental Management, and other areas, given the experience in other organisations. It was emphasised that fairness was the key criteria and that the best person for the job should be appointed.
- Again, as with the proceeding agenda item, the need for an explanation to be given rather than the use of "n/a" where this occurred in the action plan so as to aid understanding and regarding reference 5.1 the need for 100% to be included in the 2007/08 column where "n/a" currently appeared.
- Again, as with the preceding agenda item, given the comments made the Lead Officer undertook to ensure that consideration was given to the template used for the production of action plans by the relevant corporate officer working group.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the Directorate of the Urban Environment's Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2007/08 as set out in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted, be noted and that the Lead Officer to the Committee be requested to refer the comments made by this Committee on the action plans submitted in respect of this Directorate and of the Chief Executive's Directorate, considered earlier in the meeting, to the relevant corporate officer working group, as indicated above.
- (2) That any outstanding actions arising from the review of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2006/07 be incorporated into the 2007/08 Equality and Diversity Action Plan; and
- (3) That the Committee receive, in the next municipal year, from the Directorate of the Urban Environment an Equality and Diversity Annual Report for 2007/08 detailing information on the implementation of the objectives outlined in the attached action plan.

OUTLINE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2007/08

A report of the Lead Officer was submitted on proposals for the Outline Work Programme of the Committee for the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

Arising from the consideration given to this matter it was considered that two additional items should be added to the Outline Work Programme relating to a review of the library service and a review of the Netherton Regeneration Centre Project.

RESOLVED

That the following Outline Work Programme for 2007/08 be considered by the Select Committee at its first meeting to be held in the next municipal year:-

- Review of Library Service
- Review of Netherton Regeneration Centre
- ICT Strategy
- Planning Obligations
- Visitor Economy in Dudley and the Council's Role

- Planning Applications Statistics in relation to apartments. Percentage of affordable housing targeted across the Borough.
- Insurance for Community Groups in Council facilities – progress report
- Future of the Archive Service
- Regeneration of Coseley and other townships in the Borough
- Dudley Sports Village
- Facility Developments at Crystal, Dudley and Halesowen Leisure Centres
- Big Lottery Application – Wrens Nest Visitor Centre
- Incubation Innovation Centre
- Funding Changes – Adult Education

together with the following standard items:-

- Update of the Council's Capital Strategy and Budget
- Equality and Diversity Reports in respect of the Chief Executive's Directorate and the Directorate of the Urban Environment
- Quarterly Reports on Corporate Performance Management regarding the Directorates of Finance, ICT and Procurement, Chief Executive, Urban Environment and Adult, Community and Housing Services (as appropriate)
- Annual Review of Equality and Diversity
- Obesity Strategy Annual Monitoring Report

The meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.

CHAIRMAN