

## **SELECT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC VITALITY AND JOBS**

Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2003, at 6.00 p.m.

### **PRESENT:-**

Councillor Ms. Partridge (Chair)  
Councillor Mrs. Patrick (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors Blood, Bramall, Mrs. Cowell, Knowles, Lowe, Sparks, Turner and Zarab together with Dr. Sims (Lead Officer to the Committee), Director of Finance and Ms. Flavell (Directorate of Finance), Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration), Head of Personnel and Support Services and Mr. Manson (Executive Directorate) and Mr. Sanders (Directorate of Law and Property)

### **1            MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2003, be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the substitution of the word “country” for the word “county” in the last line of the preamble to minute 53 (Marketing and Communication).

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### **2            DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No member declared a declaration of interest, in accordance with the Members’ Code of Conduct, in respect of any item to be considered at this meeting.

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### **3            TERMS OF REFERENCE AND RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE COMMITTEE**

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee setting out the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Committee was submitted.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

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### **4            APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS**

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee seeking consideration of Working Groups to be appointed in the 2003/04 municipal year was submitted.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the ICT Policy Working Group and the Economic Strategy Working Group be appointed for the 2003/04 municipal year with their existing terms of reference.
- (2) That an Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Working Group be established in the 2003/04 municipal year with the terms of reference of the Equal Opportunities and Disability Discrimination Working Group but with the additional remit to support and advise the Select Committee in its policy development and scrutiny role in respect of the Priority Neighbourhood Initiative.
- (3) That each Working Group comprise three members of the Labour Group, three members of the Conservative Group and two members of the Liberal Democrat Group and that the nominees of the three Groups of members to serve be submitted to the Director of Law and Property.

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PROVISIONAL WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee appraising members of the provisional work programme outlined at the meeting of the Committee held on 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2003 was submitted.

Some concern was expressed at the number of issues proposed for inclusion in the work programme, given the limited resources available for the scrutiny function. Reference was made by the Chair to the role of the Committee in monitoring issues contained in Action Plans under the area of responsibility of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the provisional work programme, as appended to the report now submitted, be approved but that it be acknowledged that certain issues may have to be consolidated together if the programme is to be completed.

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ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2003/04

Consideration was given to the Economic Strategy for 2003/04, in advance of its submission to the Executive for approval on the following day.

The covering report confirmed that the issues raised by the Select Committee in the previous municipal year had been incorporated into the Strategy.

In the discussion, reference was made to the issue of the attract and retention of business in the Borough and the impact of skills training thereon. In this regard the implications to the local economy of the withdrawal of Wolverhampton University from the Dudley Campus in terms of learning skills were discussed. The Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Strategy) drew attention to the flexibility of the Black Country workforce in enabling a low unemployment to be maintained in a period of severe decline in the manufacturing sector but acknowledged that a significant proportion of current employment in the area was in low paid area. He emphasised the importance of skills training in particular areas in order to enhance the economic standing of the area.

The impact of residential development on brown field sites on the local economy was discussed, in the light of the loss of such sites for industrial purposes in the longer term.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the Economic Strategy for 2003/04, be received.
- (2) That the issue of the impact of the utilisation of brown field sites for housing development in the context of the regeneration of the Borough be added to the Work Programme.

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted under cover of which was set out the annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan for the Executive Directorate for 2003/04.

In relation to Objective CAP4, a discussion ensued on the proportion of applications received from persons from ethnic minorities in relation to the numbers of application forms and job details requested from those persons. Regarding the numbers of ethnic minority staff in professional posts, the view was expressed that it would be interesting to compare the numbers of ethnic minority employees in the legal profession with those in such fields as accountancy and planning. Discussion then ensued on statistical information regarding the Council's race equality scheme.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan be received.

- (2) That the Director of Law and Property be asked to attend the next meeting of the Select Committee to discuss statistical information regarding ethnic minority employment in the Directorate of Law and Property.

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#### DIRECTORATE OF FINANCE, ICT AND PROCUREMENT – ANNUAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2003/04

The annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2003/04 for the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement was submitted.

Arising from discussion on the report, the Director of Finance indicated the make up of the workforce of the Directorate, which comprised 65% women. Many of those staff had direct interface with the public and worked on a job share or part time basis. Home working was being explored.

Regarding Objective 6 in the Action Plan, both the Director of Finance and the Lead Officer to the Committee drew attention to the need for improved access to the Cash Office to enable proper access for disabled people. The Action Plan indicated that an application made for funding in this respect had been unsuccessful.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be received.
- (2) That the issue of access to Council buildings be considered by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Working Group.

The meeting ended at 7.35 p.m.

CHAIR