

Directorate of Urban Environment Scrutiny Committee - Monday 30th March 2015

Report of the Scrutiny Committee Lead Officer

Inward Investment in Dudley Borough and the Black Country

Purpose of Report

1. To outline a suite of recommendations for Members to consider for implementation in 2015/16.

Background

2. During the course of 2014/15 updates on inward investment activities, at both a local and a regional level, have been presented to the Scrutiny Committee and Working Group, respectively.
3. In line with the Annual Scrutiny Programme (2014/15) the Scrutiny Committee and Working Group have considered the following inward investment activities, namely:-
 - Inward investment enquiry co-ordination and joint working between Black Country local authorities (9th July 2014 Scrutiny Committee)
 - Black Country City Deal (1st October 2014 Scrutiny Committee)
 - The inward investment activities of Invest Black Country (IBC) and Marketing Birmingham (Accountable Body of the European-funded *Invest in the City Region* project) and the economic impact at local level (joint presentation given to Members at 17th December Working Group).
4. In light of the comments raised by members during the scrutiny process the following recommendations are outlined in Table 1 below. The recommendations below draw on comments raised by Members throughout 2014/15.

Table 1: Inward investment - recommendations for implementation in 2015/16

Recommendation 1	<p>Member awareness of inward investment activities</p> <p>To embed updates on current and proposed inward investment activities at both a local and regional level into existing and periodic updates to Members.</p>
Recommendation 2	<p>Partnership working with Invest Black Country</p> <p>To continue to work closely with Invest Black Country, in line with the Collaboration Agreement, to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the Council work closely with UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) to continue to attract inward investment enquiries received at a national level;• greater co-ordination of delegation visits to the Borough• local development opportunities for prospective investors are promoted by Invest Black Country to a national and international audience;• the Borough is promoted as an inward investment location via appropriate social media channels; and• the Black Country Bullet website (Dudley MBC-led) is promoted as an inward investment tool to showcase the strengths of the automotive sector within Dudley and the Black Country
Recommendation 3	<p>Promoting the Borough to an international audience</p> <p>To work closely with the Government's Regeneration Investment Organisation (RIO) and Invest Black Country to better promote the Borough's strengths and development opportunities to prospective international investors.</p> <p>The RIO, launched in November 2013, works on behalf of UK Trade and Investment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identify and assess credible UK regeneration opportunities;• promote UK regeneration opportunities at an international level; and• support investors and facilitate regeneration investment deals.
Recommendation 4	<p>Secure external funding to increase inward investment</p> <p>To continue to work closely with the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Black Country local authorities to identify external funding opportunities for inward investment and regeneration projects. This will build on the Council's successes to date in securing European funding (via the 2007-2013 Programme), Regional Growth Fund, City Deal and Local Growth Fund to support inward investment activities and wider regeneration developments. Key funding opportunities for 2015/16 include: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• future rounds of Local Growth Fund (the Council in partnership with Warwick Manufacturing Group has recently secured £4.5m to support the development and delivery of the Very Light Rail project); and• the next round of European Funding (up to 2020) – call for new proposals to commence 23rd March 2015.

Recommendation 5	<p>Capacity within the Economic Development Team</p> <p>As requested by Members, resources available to the Economic Development Team are currently being assessed through the budget review process. In addition, the current restructure proposals offer the opportunity to create greater synergies between services and enhance capacity as a result</p>
Recommendation 6	<p>Dudley Business Investment Zone</p> <p>To work closely with Invest Black Country, Marketing Birmingham, INTU (owners of the Merry Hill Shopping Centre) and local property agents to further market the Waterfront and business rate incentive scheme to encourage take up of vacant office space.</p>
Recommendation 7	<p>Point of contact for prospective inward investors</p> <p>Dudley Business First to continue to act as the single point of contact for receiving and handling inward investment enquiries.</p> <p>To further enhance the Dudley Business First website by promoting Invest Black Country and undertake further analysis of website users to better understand the residence and sector of users (trial period now live for a period of one month at nil cost).</p>
Recommendation 8	<p>Unique selling points of the Borough</p> <p>To undertake a refresh of the 'unique selling points' of the Borough focused based on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pipeline regeneration projects • Transport, rail and air accessibility • Sector strengths • Workforce • Education strengths - drawing on the recent successes of Dudley College (Centre for Advanced Building Technologies and Construction Skills) and Halesowen College (Advanced Science, Engineering and Technology Centre) in securing Growth Deal funding • Broadband availability • The lifestyle strengths of Dudley Borough (visitor economy, housing, culture and green spaces)
Recommendation 9	<p>Supporting existing businesses to invest</p> <p>To continue to support local businesses to invest by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to provide a single point of contact for business support and inward investment enquiries via Dudley Business First; • Providing assistance in sourcing and securing grant and/or loan assistance to expand (e.g. Regional Growth Fund); • Enabling local businesses to promote their products and services for free via the Dudley Borough Business Directory; • Assisting businesses to source locally available land and property within the Borough; and • Signposting businesses to the relevant support offered locally,

	regionally and nationally.
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Finance

5. The cost associated with the scrutiny arrangements is delivered within existing budgetary allocations

Law

6. Scrutiny Committees are established in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 and the requirements of the Council's Constitution, which was adopted under the Local Government Act 2000, subsequent legislation

Equality Impact

7. Provision exists within the recommended scrutiny arrangements for overview and scrutiny to be undertaken on the Council's policies on equality and diversity.

Recommendation

8. It is recommended that:-
 - Scrutiny Committee request the Cabinet Member for Regeneration approve the recommendations, outlined in Table 1, for implementation in 2014/15.



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List of Background Papers

None