

MEETING OF THE CABINET

Wednesday 20th April 2005 at 6.00 pm
at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Caunt (Leader of the Council) (Chairman)
Councillors Adams, Evans, Fraser-Macnamara, Jones, Mrs Martin,
Miller, Mrs Shakespeare and J Woodall.

Minority Group Members nominated to attend meetings of the Cabinet:
Councillors Ali, G H Davies, Mrs Ridney and Sparks (Labour Group);
Councillors Tyler and Ms Hart-Bowman (Liberal Democrat Group);
together with the Chief Executive and other officers.

121 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16th
March 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed.

122 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No Member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the
Member's Code of Conduct.

123 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of
Councillors Burt, Crumpton, Ms Foster, Mrs Millward and C L Woodall.

124 **CHANGES IN REPRESENTATION OF MINORITY GROUP MEMBERS**

It was reported that Councillor Mrs Ridney was serving in place of
Councillor Crumpton for this meeting of the Cabinet only.

125 **COUNCIL PLAN 2005/06**

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the Council Plan
2005/06. The Plan provided details of the key corporate priorities and
objectives to be achieved by the Council over the forthcoming year.
The Council Plan was supported by a detailed action plan including
milestones and targets.

Progress against the milestones and targets would be monitored through quarterly performance reports to the Cabinet and Corporate Board.

Members commented on the following points in the Council Plan document:-

- (a) Clarification was sought of the reasons for the specific reference to over half of the Borough's residents being within 10 minutes of a Council access point. The Chief Executive indicated that this was in accordance with central Government targets and commitments.
- (b) Improving ease of access to Halesowen Bus Station - the Chief Executive agreed to review the inclusion of this action in the Council Plan and the Director of the Urban Environment would circulate a copy of the annual road and footway programme 2005/06 to Members.
- (c) Improving the number of young people leaving care with at least 1 GCSE qualification - this target had been set in line with Government targets. Members accepted the underlying principle of this proposed outcome, however, it was considered that the target of 1 GCSE should be reviewed. Officers would give further consideration to the comments of Members prior to the submission of the Council Plan to Council for approval.

Members also commented that the document should indicate those milestones or targets set by the Council in accordance with central Government requirements.

RESOLVED

That the Council be recommended to approve the proposed Council Plan for 2005/06, subject to officers giving further consideration to specific comments made by Members as set out above.

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Council's Economic Strategy for 2005/06. The document summarised the key areas of the strategy for the Borough, including details of the framework of policy and strategic documents impacting on the strategy and the strategic partnerships and agencies influencing its implementation.

The Economic Strategy underpinned the 'Regeneration Matters' theme of the Council Plan. The strategic aims were underpinned by an action plan with key objectives, actions, milestones and timescales.

The successful implementation of the strategy depended on effective corporate and joint working together with resource input from a variety of private and public sector organisations at a regional, sub-regional and local level. The strategy supported the aspirations set out in the 2033 Black Country Vision and the key elements of the Black Country study.

Final consultation would take place during April 2005 and a full copy of the revised Economic Strategy for 2005/06 would be placed in the Members' Library for future reference.

RESOLVED

That the Council be recommended to approve the revised Economic Strategy for 2005/06.

(This was a Key Decision with the Cabinet and Council indicated as Decision Takers).

127	REVISED DEPOSIT UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN - RESPONSES TO THE OBJECTIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS TO THE PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS OCTOBER 2004
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This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

128	<u>COVENTRY AIRPORT PLANNING INQUIRY - UPDATE</u>
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A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the situation regarding the planning inquiry into the expansion of the passenger terminal at Coventry Airport.

Approval was sought to the appointment of Counsel to represent the West Midlands Authorities (except Coventry City Council) at the enforcement and planning Public Local Inquiries and to apportion legal costs between the six authorities based on population size. The cost of Dudley MBC's legal representation for the Public Inquiry had been set at a maximum of £35,000.

In response to comments made by Members concerning expansion plans for Wolverhampton Business/Halfpenny Green Airport, the Leader indicated that the Council had previously recorded objections in its capacity as a statutory consultee.

RESOLVED

That the appointment of Counsel to act on behalf of the West Midlands Authorities (with the exception of Coventry City Council) at the enforcement and planning Public Local Inquiries be supported and that approval be given to share the legal costs of Counsel between the Authorities (except Coventry) up to a maximum contribution from the Council of up to £35,000.

129

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) STRATEGY

A report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning was submitted on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Strategy - Giving Every Child the Opportunity to Succeed - Putting Learning First for Dudley. The strategy aimed to develop a long-term approach to providing high quality education for children with special educational needs. The strategy took account of recommendations made by OFSTED following inspections in 2000 and 2002.

The report addressed the need and reasons for changing SEN provision in the Borough; details of the consultation process and feedback received; key issues and proposals arising from the proposed strategy and the financial implications. The Council had published a draft SEN Strategy on 7th March 2005. In the light of issues and concerns raised, the strategy had been developed to ensure that existing provision was continued and improved; that poor buildings were refurbished or rebuilt and that the breadth and flexibility of SEN provision was increased to best meet the preferences of parents and children.

The strategy would be implemented through a process of detailed action planning involving all mainstream and special schools and the multi-agency professional reference group. In line with a flexible approach to the implementation of the strategy, the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning would take individual decisions on the implementation of key elements of the strategy. The strategy would be subject to ongoing review taking account of future developments and the views of stakeholders. The ongoing review would be included in the work programme of the Select Committee on Lifelong Learning.

Specific reference was made to proposals for the improvement of buildings at Old Park School and the need for consultation with all affected parties. The preferred option was to develop new school buildings on a new site owned by the Council and then relocate the school and sell the existing land and buildings. The capital costs of relocating Old Park School would be the subject of a bid to the Department for Education and Skills for capital funding under the Targeted Capital Funding programme. If this bid was not approved, other funding options would be considered.

RESOLVED

That the Council be recommended to endorse the amended Special Educational Needs Strategy as published with the report now submitted.

(This was a Key Decision with the Cabinet and Council named as Decision Taker).

130

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted outlining the serious concerns expressed by the Select Committee on Lifelong Learning regarding changes to the funding and delivery of Adult and Community Learning proposed by the Learning and Skills Council. The report outlined the areas of service delivery that would be affected by the potential changes and the anticipated negative impact on the approach to adult and community learning taken by Dudley MBC.

The Select Committee on Lifelong Learning had discussed the matter on 15th March 2005 (Minute No. 69 refers) and expressed extreme concerns relating to the proposed changes. These included an anticipated reduction in funding as a result of re-focusing the learning areas into the 'first steps' and 'personal development' streams. There were serious concerns that Dudley would be adversely affected by both a reduction in overall funding together with the inability to fund all 'personal development' learning, which was used as a first point of engagement with programmes such as employability work and engaging with older learners. Accordingly, it was envisaged that the proposed changes would have a significant impact on access to learning for vulnerable groups including those in deprived neighbourhoods and older learners.

RESOLVED

That the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Directors of Finance and Education and Lifelong Learning, make appropriate responses to the proposed changes to the funding arrangements for Adult and Community Learning and register the concerns of the Council at the highest level.

131

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REGENERATION CONCERNING INNOVATION CENTRES

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Council's approach to the development of Innovation Centres. The Select Committee on Economic Regeneration had considered the matter at its meeting on 11th April 2005 (Minute No. 61 refers). The Select Committee had resolved:-

- That the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration be requested to set up a project to define the scope and need of an Innovation Centre in Dudley.
- That it be noted that the objective of the project would be to present recommendations on the feasibility of setting up an Innovation Centre, which would provide the catalyst for diversification of, and added value to the Dudley economy, either by the means of a virtual facility or otherwise, with a view to servicing Dudley, and could include participation in any Black Country wide arrangements.
- That consideration be given to the implications on officer time for research and also feasibility costs and that it be noted that the project may include the possibility of some funding from a range of options.

RESOLVED

- (1) That approval be given to the setting up of a project to explore the feasibility of an Innovation Centre for the Borough.
- (2) That the findings from the completed project be presented to the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration for consideration.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance on the Council's 2005/06 Annual Efficiency Statement (AES) submission. The Council had been required to submit the first AES to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by the deadline of 15th April 2005. In accordance with this deadline, the AES had been agreed by the Leader, in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance, and forwarded to the ODPM.

The planned efficiencies for Dudley MBC fell into the broad categories of better procurement performance, exploiting new technology and more productive working arrangements. The total value of efficiencies proposed in the first Dudley AES totalled £4.8m, detailed as total cashable efficiency savings of £3.8m and total non-cashable efficiency gains of £1.0m.

The Cabinet noted that the process to compile the first AES had been developed in the context of tight deadlines to meet Government requirements.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Annual Efficiency Statement 2005/06 forward-looking submission be noted.
- (2) That the Chief Executive and Director of Finance submit a further report outlining the backward-looking gains for 2004/05 and considering how best to incorporate efficiency planning into the Council's strategic planning and performance management processes.

133

EQUALITY LEGISLATION AND THE APPROACH TO STATUTORY
EQUALITY PLANS

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on developments relating to equality legislation. The Cabinet was requested to consider the Council's future approach to the preparation of statutory equality documents.

It was reported that the Government was proceeding with plans to extend and to rationalise equality legislation. This would have a significant impact on the Council's approach to equality and diversity issues and additional implications for the review of the Race Equality Scheme. The report addressed issues associated with the new Disability Discrimination Act, the Equalities Review and the integration of statutory equality planning requirements.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the proposals for the extension and review of equality legislation be noted.
- (2) That the recommended approach to the review of the Race Equality Scheme and the proposal to produce a generic Equality Scheme be approved.
- (3) That the Director of Law and Property, in consultation with Councillor Mrs Shakespeare, be authorised to approve the revised Race Equality Scheme for publication by 31st May 2005.

134

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON LIFELONG
LEARNING

The Annual Report of the Select Committee was submitted.

RESOLVED

That the report be referred to Council.

135

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON CULTURE
AND RECREATION

The Annual Report of the Select Committee was submitted.

RESOLVED

That the report be referred to Council.

136

ISSUES ARISING FROM SELECT COMMITTEES (IF ANY)

No issues were reported under this item.

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL