

Minutes of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee

Wednesday, 12th July, 2023 at 6.00 pm
At Saltwells Education Development Centre, Bowling Green Road, Netherton

Present:

Councillor D Stanley (Chair)
Councillor S Henley (Vice-Chair)
Councillors A Aston, R Collins, A Davies, M Hanif, A Hopwood, E Lawrence, T Russon (From Minute No. 5), P Sahota and K Westwood.

Officer:

K Taylor (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

1 Comments of the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee and emphasised his wish for the Committee to undertake a positive approach to ensure detailed and effective scrutiny on the issues within the remit of the Committee.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors C Eccles and J Elliott.

3 Appointment of Substitute Members



It was noted that Councillors R Collins and M Hanif had been appointed as substitute Members for Councillors J Elliott and C Eccles respectively, for this meeting of the Committee only.

4 **Declarations of Interest**

No member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

5 **Public Forum**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

6 **Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24**

The Committee considered the programme of meetings and items of business for detailed consideration by this Select Committee during 2023/24.

In referring to the suggested items for inclusion, Councillor P Sahota considered that the proposed list did not reflect the wider range of services being delivered by the Regeneration and Enterprise Directorate and Corporate areas and believed that there was some flexibility and capacity within the programme to include additional items and still allow sufficient time for informative discussions. He further reported that the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise and Senior Officers were supportive to the recommendations.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed to include the following items for inclusion to the programme for the 2023/24 municipal year:-

Commercialisation Strategy Update

An update from the service area on how the Strategy was progressing and to identify solutions in reducing ongoing annual subsidies and ensure that the Council was delivering their aspirations.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

An overview and update on progress made from the service area in delivering positive outcomes from the Fund.

Estates Strategy

An update from the service area and assurance needed that timescales were being adhered too in rationalising and ensuring Council owned estates were fit for purpose. This update would be presented in conjunction with the Council House Refurbishment Update.

Key Performance Indicators – Corporate and Regeneration

An oversight of the key performance indicators in relation to Regeneration and Corporate areas only and consideration as to whether they were challenging in order to help deliver better services and performances.

Councillor A Davies welcomed the inclusion of an update on progress made in relation to stalled sites, and requested that a further update be scheduled in March, 2024. He also referred to the proposed update on the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension to the November, 2023 meeting and suggested whether this should be deferred to later in the municipal year to allow sufficient time in exploring opportunities in securing the additional funding needed to support the Metro extension to Brierley Hill.

In referring to the My Dudley Digital Project, Councillor E Lawrence emphasised the importance of IT within the organisation and referred to discussions held at the Future Council Scrutiny Committee during last year, where it was noted that a significant amount of money had been allocated for upgrading to Microsoft E5 licences and welcomed an update on this area.

Councillor E Lawrence further recommended an additional item in relation to performance data in relation to Leisure Centres, in particular Duncan Edwards Leisure Centre and Halesowen Leisure Centre. It was noted however that this could be presented in line with the Commercialisation Strategy item.

Councillor A Aston welcomed and supported the comments and suggestions made, however urged that flexibility be maintained throughout the programme to allow for any emerging issues during the year.

The Chair acknowledged the good points made and emphasised the need for Members of the Select Committee to be fully engaged and undertake robust discussions whilst considering the items brought forward. Lead Officers for each report would be requested to attend the respective meeting and present current information and future aspirations and ensure that items were completed in order to avoid any repetition. Accountability and assurance would need to be demonstrated in order to evidence how taxpayers' money was being spent appropriately. It was also suggested that site visits would be undertaken where appropriate.

Following a request to re-schedule the January, 2024 meeting and subsequent discussion, the Committee agreed to retain the meeting date, as approved by Full Council in May, 2023, however requested that the Senior Democratic Services Officer review the timings of the proposed business items in accordance with comments made by the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the report on the programme of meetings and potential items of business for this Committee, be noted.
- (2) That the Senior Democratic Services Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be requested to review the timings of the proposed items in relation to the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension Update and the Economic Regeneration Strategy and Action for later consideration during the municipal year.
- (3) That the following items be included in the programme of business for 2023/24:
 - Key Performance Indicators – Corporate and Regeneration
 - Commercialisation Strategy Update
 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund
 - Estates Strategy
 - Stalled Sites Progress Update (March, 2024)
- (4) That, subject to resolution (2) and (3) above, the Committee confirm the programme of business as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report submitted, subject to the need for flexibility to reflect any changes that might arise during the municipal year.

- (5) That the Lead for Law and Governance, following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be authorised to make all the necessary arrangements to enable this Committee to undertake its programme of scrutiny work during the 2023/24 municipal year.
 - (6) That the terms of reference for the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee, as set out in the Appendix to the report submitted, be noted.
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7 Questions Under Council Procedure Rule 11.8

There were no questions to the Chair pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

The meeting ended at 6.49pm

CHAIR