

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC
REGENERATION**

Monday, 11th April, 2005, at 6.00 p.m.
in Committee Room 3 at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor K Turner (Chairman)
Councillor Ms Harris (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Islam, Jackson, Johnston, Mrs Patrick, Rogers and C
Wilson.

Officers

Senior Assistant Director of Finance, Assistant Director of the Urban
Environment (Economic Regeneration), Business Support Manager,
and Mrs Johal (Directorate of Law & Property).

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1st
March, 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of
Councillors Mrs Cowell and Knowles and the Lead Officer to the
Committee.

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**RECOMMENDATION OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC
REGENERATION (ECONOMIC REGENERATION) WORKING GROUP
CONCERNING INNOVATION CENTRES**

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted setting
out the findings of the Select Committee on Economic Regeneration
(Economic Regeneration) Working Group in relation to Innovation
Centres.

The Vice-Chairman (Chairman of the Economic Regeneration Working Group) presented the report.

Following the presentation of the report the Senior Assistant Director of Finance queried whether attempts had been made to ascertain the views of local businesses. In response, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration) commented that if the facility was made available it would be utilised by local businesses. It was further pointed out that the proposed feasibility study would endeavour to determine local business interest, however he highlighted the fact that there was a need to have an infusion of businesses. The Business Support Manager further commented that members of the Dudley Business Group were aware of the research work that had been undertaken by the Economic Regeneration Working Group in relation to technology and innovation centres and they were of the opinion that start up premises for businesses was a “hot issue”.

The Chairman commented that an ideal location existed for a technology or innovation centre to be established in the Dudley area and he urged that the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration should be recommended to allocate funding to engage professionals to conduct further research to outline the benefits of having a centre in Dudley.

Further comments made by Members included the need to have a high quality high specification centre in Dudley similar to the centres that had been visited and it was also commented that it was felt that there was a demand for the facility in the community.

In response to a query from a Member in relation to the possibility of extending the centre outside of the Dudley area to make it the Black Country Innovation Centre, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration) reported that a Black Country Innovation and Incubation Study currently existed. A report from the study was due to be published in March, however, due to a delay it was now expected to be towards the end of April. It was further commented that Dudley’s specific interests (such as low paid workers) needed to be determined and initial thoughts were to get something started, however support would be given to a Black Country wide Innovation Centre with established networks if requested.

RESOLVED

- (1) 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.

- (2) 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.
- (3) 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.

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CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their dedicated support throughout the year.

He also extended the Committee's best wishes to the Lead Officer to the Committee and to Councillor Mrs Cowell who was currently in hospital for an operation.

The meeting ended at 6.40 pm.

CHAIRMAN