

SELECT COMMITTEE ON REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ADULT EDUCATION
26th OCTOBER 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

TOWN CENTRES REGENERATION UPDATE

PURPOSE

1. To update the Select Committee on progress to date in relation to the regeneration of the Borough's 4 Principal Town Centres

BACKGROUND

Strategic Context

2. Government policy is committed to protecting/sustaining town centres. The central objective being to promote their vitality and viability by planning for the growth of existing centres and enhancing them by promoting them as a focus for development. This "town centres first" approach is enshrined all guidance and reflected in a range of regional, sub-regional and local strategies and policies that are summarised in Appendix 1 attached to this report.
3. Town Centres play a critical role in delivering the vision and strategic aims laid out in the Economic Strategy. There are a significant number of long term regeneration projects in the town centres and this report is intended to bring members up to date with progress.

New Heritage Regeneration Ltd.

4. At the last meeting on the 7th September the Committee received an update on the activities of the Council's arms length company, New Heritage Regeneration Ltd. Therefore it is not proposed to cover their role and activity in detail in this report other than to confirm the Company's role in delivering regeneration activity across the Borough, with a special focus on the four principal town centres and in particular at present focussing on Dudley and Brierley Hill.

CURRENT REGENERATION INTITATIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

BRIERLEY HILL

5. Brierley Hill has seen difficult times over the past 30 years with the decline and disappearance of its traditional manufacturing industries such as the Round Oak Steel works and Marsh and Baxter and structural changes in retailing behaviour in the economy. However the town is on the verge of an exciting new future, the evidence of which is beginning to appear.

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Phase 1 Review

6. The adoption of the RSS review in 2008 was significant both for Brierley Hill and nationally as it was the first time that an 'out of town' centre had been reclassified as a town centre. The recommendations were good news for the future regeneration of the Black Country as a whole and particularly for the regeneration of Dudley Town Centre and the future development of Brierley Hill which is now the strategic town centre for the Borough incorporating the Merry Hill Centre, the Waterfront and Brierley Hill High Street.

Brierley Hill Action Area Plan (AAP).

7. The Council began work on the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan (AAP) in August 2006 as part of its Local Development Framework. The AAP will set the planning framework for the area, which will include Brierley Hill High Street, the Merry Hill shopping centre and the Waterfront business park. The AAP will be the basis by which planning decisions are made within the area and is to be submitted to Cabinet on the 28th October 2009 for approval to publish the final plan. The plan contains a vision, a series of objectives on how this vision will be reached, and allocates sites within the boundary for specific uses. Furthermore, it shows how the growth and regeneration of the town centre is to be phased and implemented by stakeholders and partners. The plan will be subject to an Examination in Public in the summer of 2010 with a view to adoption in March 2011.

Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership (BHRP).

8. The BHRP was a public, private and community partnership which was formally established in 2002, to integrate the regeneration of the Brierley Hill area. The Partnership ceased operations in December 2009 when its main source of funding from Europe came to an end. The Partnership along with the Council was successful in promoting the vision for Brierley Hill and helping achieve the new strategic status that the town has through the RSS, as well as promoting a number of projects. The Council, New Heritage Regeneration, and the new Brierley Hill Town Centre Partnership will be picking up much of the work undertaken by the Partnership.

Brierley Hill Town Centre Partnership.

9. Following the cessation of BHRP, the continuing need for a stakeholder forum in the town has been addressed by a new Partnership which was launched in July 2009 and held its first meeting in September. The Partnership consists of a network of local and sub regional community groups, business groups, public sector bodies and other relevant organisations which will work together in the best interests of the town centre.

Brierley Hill Sustainable Access Network.

10. This £28 million project, which opened in November 2008, has provided a new parallel route to the High Street between Dudley Road and Church Street together with a new road linking Waterfront Way with Pedmore Road. The project also included junction improvements at Hickman Road/Pensnett Road, Bryce Road/Pensnett Road and Bank Street/Brockmoor High Street. The project has provided immediate benefits to the town centre and surrounding area by reducing congestion, improving air quality and the general environment in Brierley Hill. It will also provide opportunities for future development and improved links to public transport.

NHS Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT).

11. NHS LIFT is a vehicle for improving and developing frontline primary and community care facilities. It aims to allow Primary Care Trusts to invest in new premises in new locations, not merely reproduce existing types of service and provide patients with modern integrated health services in high quality, fit for purpose primary care premises.
12. The Brierley Hill LIFT is a £21.3m healthcare centre, which is nearing completion and due to open its doors in May 2010. It is the largest LIFT scheme in the UK and the second of its type in Dudley, following the new centre in Stourbridge on the former Corbett Hospital site. The project will provide a state-of-the-art community facility on 1.45 acres of land at the former Brier School site, in Cottage Street. Dudley Infracare LIFT Ltd (DIL), a public-private partnership company created under the Government's Partnerships for Health programme, is delivering this project which will bring modern health and social care services to the area and improve access to services for local patients.

Delivering the Strategic Vision for Brierley Hill

13. In late 2007 the Council submitted an outline bid to Advantage West Midlands (AWM) to support the regeneration of the new Strategic Centre of Brierley Hill. The bid was composed of 7 'transformational' projects as follows:
 - Acquisition of 6 commercial properties on Brierley Hill High Street that are in poor structural condition & located in a key strategic position
 - Feasibility Study assessing the current parking facilities in the area consider the future parking provision, investigate the business case and funding models for a multi decked car park.
 - Improvements to the High Street which will cultivate a new image that is clean, bright, contemporary and urban. The enhancements will increase economic investment, create new businesses / jobs and increase usage by local residents
 - Conversion and connection of two buildings into a landmark Community Services Centre which will ensure that the Signpost Partnership can deliver its vital services in a key location in the heart of Brierley Hill.

- Land acquisition & the building of new educational facilities to support the needs of local people & employers, leading to a multi-site occupied building drawing in Higher Education provision & local employers
 - Acquisition of 8 plots of land along the route of the Brierley Hill Sustainable Access Network
 - Ongoing funding to support the former BHRP after the ERDF funding expired in December 2008
14. In February 2008 the Council received outline approval from Advantage West Midlands (AWM) for £8.6m for the public realm improvements to the High Street and various land and property acquisitions. Officers are currently preparing a detailed bid to Advantage West Midlands to draw down these resources. A number of the property acquisitions have taken place in advance, in order to take up opportunities while the properties were available and at competitive prices. This application will create the necessary conditions for growth by improving infrastructure, creating improved workspace & enhancing the environment. It will stimulate investment into the locality, thereby creating necessary employment opportunities.
15. Other elements of the outline bid relating to the Community Services Centre and the land acquisition for the educational centre are being dealt with separately. In particular the latter project is stalled due to difficulties with Learning and Skills Council support. The remaining elements of the bid were not supported by AWM.

Town Centre Events

16. 4 major events were held in Brierley Hill in the 2008/09 year including the Christmas lights switch-on and Brierley Hill Fun Day. The St Georges Day celebrations were also held for the first time this year in the town.

DUDLEY

Dudley Town Centre Area Development Framework (ADF)

17. The Dudley ADF was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in December 2005 and identified 9 opportunity areas for development and presents a vision, development strategy and illustrative development framework to guide residents, businesses, developers, investors and Dudley Council in shaping the future of the town centre.
18. In 2007 October 2007 the Council agreed that the most appropriate way forward to deliver the ADF was through a Council led joint venture with the involvement of AWM and English Partnerships (now the Homes and Communities Agency - HCA). This organisation would be at arms length from the Council but work on its behalf and it was also agreed that its remit would extend to delivery across the Borough. (see para 28 above).

Dudley Town Centre Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)

19. The THI is a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant giving programme to assist the repair and regeneration of the historic environment within conservation areas in towns and cities. Its aims include:
 - to use built heritage as a stimulant for economic regeneration;
 - to contribute to the sustainability of local economies ;and
 - to support the communities that live and work in each project area
20. The Council has been successful in securing £4.1m of grant from HLF and AWM for the 'Common Fund', including a £150,000 contribution from the Council. A Project Officer is now in post and projects are currently being developed with owners and the Council's properties in conjunction with NHR. The project was formally launched at the Town Centre Partnership in March 2009.
21. The programme also includes training programmes, guidance for shop owners and heritage trails and interpretation.

Castle Hill

22. As a consequence of the Council terminating the Castle Hill development agreement with St Modwen Developments in February 2009, the opportunity exists for a revitalised development of this site. This would offer improved connectivity between Castle Hill and the town centre and it is proposed that the project will fall in the remit of NHR who are now looking at a new way forward.

Dudley Town Centre Partnership

23. The Partnership was launched in March 2009 and is a sub group of the Economic Development and Regeneration Partnership which is part of the Local Strategic Partnership for the Borough.
24. The Partnership brings together a range of stakeholders whose purpose is to support the Council, businesses and the community in promoting Dudley town centre's renaissance through its unique character, cultural assets, development and tourism. This includes agreeing progress and priorities for the THI Project.

Wrens Nest National Nature Reserve (NNR) – Ripples through Time

25. Following the disappointment of not winning the £50m from the BIG Lottery for the Strata project, the Council has been successful in securing £800,000 from the HLF for "Ripples through Time" , which is phase 1 of this project. The HLF monies will fund improved access, interpretation and education for visitors to the NNR, including new viewing areas at the Seven Sisters mine.
26. In May the Step Shaft cavern, also part of the Strata project was turned into a subterranean laboratory to understand more about this world class site. A three dimensional survey was undertaken to create a virtual reality tour which will be seen later this year. The cavern is now being filled in with sand to stabilise its roof and walls while funding is sought for the cavern to be opened as a visitor attraction.

North Priory

27. Outline plans have been submitted to redevelop the site for 314 properties including two bedroomed apartments or bungalows and a mix of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom houses. Residents were invited to take an exclusive look at the proposed plans earlier this year. Residents also had the opportunity to give their thoughts on how the lettings process will work on the new estate. Demolition of the existing estate is ongoing and is due for completion shortly.

Priory Park

28. Consultants have been appointed to co ordinate the submission of a Stage 2 bid to HLF under the Parks for People programme. This follows on from the successful investment made via the Transforming Your Spaces and Liveability programmes. The timetable for submission is by March 2010 with a decision by September 2010.
29. Future Skills Dudley have also been able use the project as part of their Ground Force programme to train local people who are neither in education, employment nor training courses.

Town Centre Events

30. In 2008/09 10 major events were held including the Christmas lights switch on, Duncan Edwards Day, Veterans Day and a Psychic Fair.

HALESOWEN

Halesowen Area Action Plan

31. Members will be aware that the Council's Planning Policy activity is focussed through the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS currently includes the preparation of an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Halesowen which will be a comprehensive plan to guide the location, design and layout of new development, and will be supported by a detailed implementation programme. Work has already commenced on the AAP and the remaining timetable for this work is as follows:
- Consultation on options – June 2010
 - Consultation on preferred option – January 2011
 - Submission to Secretary of State – June 2011
 - Independent Examination - October 2011
 - Adoption – July 2012
32. In view of the long lead in time for the AAP, members agreed to undertake a consultation in 2006 called "Halesowen Matters". This was to obtain the views of local residents and businesses on a wide range of issues. The results obtained helped members focus on the regeneration needs of the

town and provided the Town Centre Working Group with an agenda of issues to address and progress. These will feed into the AAP process.

Town Centre Working Group

33. The Halesowen Area Committee receives regular updates on the regeneration and planning activity in the town centre and the Committee has established a Town Centre Working Group in support of this activity.
34. The Group is now overseeing the preparation and, subject to available funding, implementation of a range of environmental improvement projects to deal with upgrading the public realm and gateways to the town following the disruption to the town during the construction of the Asda store and the new bus station. This includes developing a Halesowen in Bloom programme that could be entered into the national competition.

Cornbow and Bus station redevelopment

35. The redevelopment of the Cornbow Centre to provide for a new Asda store of 75,000 sq feet was completed in November 2008 and provides for 588 car parking spaces and up to 400 full time jobs.
36. Following on from this a new state of the art bus station opened in December 2008. This new facility includes eight bus stands, new waiting areas for passengers, electronic information displays, CCTV and a help point.
37. During the redevelopment Queensway was made one way only to accommodate the construction process. This arrangement has now been made permanent following the limited impact on access and the improvements to pedestrian safety and vehicle flow adjacent the Church.
38. During the redevelopment a progress group was established with representatives of the Council, the developers Vale Retail, CENTRO and the Police. This Group met on a regular basis to monitor progress and deal with issues, blockages and constraints.

Grange Island

39. Work has commenced on improving the Grange Island at the junction of the A456 and A458. This work will improve traffic flows at this strategic junction in the Borough's highway network and improve access for local businesses and visitors. The island will also provide for an improved gateway to the town.

Town Centre Events

40. 4 major events have taken place in the town during 2008/09 including the ever popular Halesowen by the Sea, the regular Victorian Market and the Christmas lights switch on. In addition a "Wheels on Reels" event with the

Zion Christian Church showing a film proved popular and another is planned. Regular Farmers markets were also held.

STOURBRIDGE

41. Stourbridge is a crossroads market town that serves both the south west of the West Midlands conurbation and the north east of Worcestershire. The town centre has had a mixed fortune in recent years and has not escaped the effects of the recent downturn, however is performing relatively well compared to other centres. The current average UK rate for vacant properties equalling 12%. Stourbridge currently holds a vacancy rate of approx 9%
42. Generally good town centre accessibility is hindered by the ring road and there is a need for public realm improvements and open space provision in the centre. Stourbridge is a compact manageable shopping centre, with a strong catchment population that needs to be attracted. The ring road acts as a deterrent to pedestrians and is also difficult to negotiate for car users seeking to get onto the town centre exits off the ring road. The speed and scale of the current three lane one-way system is a particular deterrent for the elderly, especially for accessing the car parks
43. The main problems in the town relate to traffic management. The links from the bus and rail station to the town and from the surrounding areas are predominantly through underpasses. Improvements have been made by providing new surface crossings and the underpasses have recently been improved and repaired, however they remain disliked by the majority of the community and provide for a poor image of the town to visitors using public transport. The ring-road acts as a barrier to movement of pedestrians from the surrounding residential areas, and the access to the multi-storey car parks off the ring road can be difficult to negotiate due to the three lane one-way system
44. The High Street is used for both parking and vehicle movement, and has narrow pavements impeding pedestrian movement. The availability of this parking leads to a constant circulation of traffic searching for a space and vehicles manoeuvring into spaces hold up traffic and are a hazard to pedestrians, in particular young children.
45. The Ryemarket centre has not been immune to the effects of the downturn and has seen major retailers such as Woolworths, Jessops and Adams all close. However new stores are opening such as Home Bargains, Bright House and Costa Coffee.

Stourbridge Area Action Plan (AAP)

46. As with Halesowen the Council's Planning Policy activity is focussed through the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS currently includes the preparation of an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Stourbridge which will be a comprehensive plan to guide the location, design and layout of new

development, and will be supported by a detailed implementation programme. Work has already commenced on the AAP and the remaining timetable for this work is as follows:

- Consultation on options – January 2010
- Consultation on preferred option – November 2010
- Submission to Secretary of State – April 2011
- Independent Examination - August 2011
- Adoption – April 2012

47. The AAP will build on earlier masterplan preparatory work carried out by urban design and planning consultants David Lock Associates which was commissioned in early 2005 but which was not taken to completion due to changes in the planning system leading to the introduction of the new LDS process and a consultation exercise undertaken in 2006 entitled “Stourbridge Matters”. The findings of which were presented to this Committee in March 2008.

Crown Centre

48. The Centre has been the subject of two planning applications by Modus Developments, both of which were approved by the Council. They both proposed wholesale redevelopment of the Crown Centre, the first for ;

- Increased supermarket floorspace with a new occupier (Tesco)
- 5 new A1 retail units
- a new market hall
- 75 residential apartments (60 x 1 bed & 15 x 2 bed)
- associated car parking & servicing areas

Key elements of the proposals included:

- Improved pedestrian routes through the centre and strengthened links with the town centre
 - Improved accessibility through the provision of ramps and steps, new lifts, easier steps and staircases, improved lighting and signage.
 - Replacement of the currently unpopular multi-storey car park with new parking on level decks with improved ramp arrangement and direct pedestrian access to the heart of the shopping centre and to the markets.
 - Placing of the markets on the ‘desire line’ route between the ring road bus stops and the town centre in order to encourage passing footfall and to maximise the opportunity for the use of public transport.
 - The creation of a varied skyline and to respect existing long distance views of St Thomas’s church.
49. Due to a sharp downturn in the housing market, a second application was submitted which replaced the 75 residential units with a 120 bed hotel. The remainder of the application was basically unchanged. This application was o

approved in January 2009. However progress has been slow on delivering the project and discussions are ongoing with the developer.

Former B&Q store

50. The former B&Q store is being refurbished as a new Aldi foodstore, which is due to open in November 2009.

Bus Station

51. Planning permission was granted to Centro in September 2009 for the redevelopment of the bus station which will provide a 21st century facility for the town and will be renamed Stourbridge Interchange.

Angel Triangle

52. Any development of the Angel Triangle land in recent years has been restricted by Tesco's aspirations for the site, however, following the withdrawal of their planning appeal and subject to Tesco entering into an agreement with Modus for the Crown Centre, opportunities now exist for the progression of development on this land. The Area Action Plan process will identify the most appropriate use for this site

Town centre residential developments.

53. There had been considerable interest in residential development in and around the town centre with planning permission being granted for the following developments:

- Worcester Street -18 apartments
- Webb Court (retirement apartments)
- Former gas works site - 116 apartments
- Corbett Hospital – 83 houses and apartments
- Enville Street - 44 sheltered housing units
- Market Street - 16 flats

However due the very sharp downturn in the housing market, many of these have yet to be implemented or completed. The former gasworks site is only just being finally completed and the Corbett Hospital site has yet to commence with the builders going out of business. As mentioned previously the Crown Centre redevelopment has also stalled.

Environmental improvements.

54. In recent years the Council has made significant investment in the physical fabric of the town centre. These improvements include:

- Reconfiguration and widening of the Enville Street approach to the town centre

- New surface level pedestrian crossing at the Hagley Road/St John's Road/New Road junction
- Refurbishment of all the subways approaching the town in the last 12 months, including new safety measures..
- New decorative lighting columns with hanging baskets in High Street and Foster Street
- New litter bins and bollards throughout the town centre
- Restoration of the town clock
- New convenient and secure cycle stands
- Dark blue and gold colour scheme adopted for all street furniture, inspired by the town's coat of arms

55. The proposals to revitalise the northern gateway into Stourbridge town centre have been put into effect with the completion of Phase 1 "The Secret Garden" which has seen redecoration of the subway walls, new murals and landscaping is virtually complete. The project will create an attractive and welcoming first impression to visitors accessing the town centre from the north and improve links with the canalside area. There are three key elements to the project,

- upgrading Lower High Street subway to provide a safe and attractive entrance into the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists. This is now virtually complete.
- creating a pocket park on the underused tarmac area at the bottom of Lower High Street to provide much needed seating for students and the wider public
- emphasising the crossing over the River Stour from which the town derives its name

56. A strong public/private sector partnership has been developing Stourbridge's floral display over the last three years and the town has achieved the gold award for the past two years in the prestigious Heart of England in Bloom competition.

Town Centre Events.

57. A series of successful events have taken place during the year including the popular Stourbridge Carnival, the Harvest Festival, children's events during school holidays and the Christmas Lights switch on. Many of these are undertaken in partnership with the Chamber of Trade who has an active events Committee. The Council has also introduced a new Farmers Market following the demise of the previous market and this has been well received by the public and stallholders.

TOWN CENTRES TEAM

58. To support the regeneration activity in the four principal town centres and the 5 priority local centres, the Directorate has a town centres team of 10 posts lead by a Regeneration Manager. There are four project officers dealing with implementation strategies, project management of major schemes including

the Dudley Townscape Heritage Initiative and external funding applications. One of these project officers is currently seconded to New Heritage Regeneration Ltd as a result of her extensive involvement in the development of proposals for the delivery of the Dudley ADF

59. Since April 2006 there have been 4 Town Centre Managers in covering the 4 principal town centres only. Each Town Centre Manager is working with internal and external partners to deliver environmental enhancement and crime reduction schemes for each town centre and assisting with change management issues that are associated with major improvement and development schemes. Town centre managers are responsible for staging events which promote the town centres and increase footfalls. They also bring forward various environmental projects which without their intervention would probably never happen. The team is supported by a Support and Information Assistant
60. As part of our continuous reviewing and developing best practice, consultants have been appointed to undertake an evaluation of the impact of the town centre events programme on the vitality and viability of those centres. The work will look at the current evidence available nationally, identify best practice, and undertake interviews at a sample of events, including traders, the public and elected members. The final report will be available in 2010.

FINANCE

61. There are significant financial implications arising for the Council as a result of the various initiatives and programmes described above. A considerable amount of external funding has already been approved, or is being sought, with matching Council or other resources being applied where available.
62. Each individual strategy or development programme should be financially justifiable, and following project appraisal will be reported to Cabinet recommending inclusion in the Council's capital programme or revenue budget where appropriate.

LAW

63. The matters contained in the report cover a range of the Council's statutory powers, but generally rely on Section 2 of the Local government Act 2000, which enables the Council to do anything which is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic social or environmental wellbeing of its area.

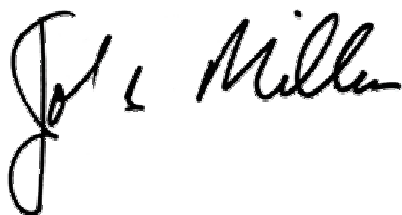
EQUAL IMPACT

64. This work has been conducted in full accordance with the Council's equality and diversity policies and should in no way have any prejudicial impact on different racial groups, disabled people, both genders and/or other relevant

groups. The needs of children and young people are considered in any planning and implementation activities.

RECOMMENDATION

65. It is recommended that the Committee note the significant progress made in regenerating the Borough's principal 4 town centres and comment accordingly.



J. B. MILLAR – DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

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Background documents used in the preparation of this report:-

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase One Revision,
[Government Offices | West Midlands |](#)

Economic Strategy for Dudley Borough 2009/10
<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/business/regeneration/economic-strategy--intelligence>

Dudley Borough Community Strategy 2005-2020
<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/index.asp?pgid=2301>

Dudley Council Plan 2010
<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/index.asp?pgid=1630>

Dudley Area Development Framework (December 2005)
<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/community-and-living/town-centre-management/dudley-town-centre/dudley-town-centre-area-development-framework>

Strategic Context

1. The Council's Economic Regeneration aims are to: -

Optimise the opportunity for local people to obtain local jobs through:

- building the capacity of local residents to access local jobs;
- delivering training programmes for local unemployed people;
- providing job brokerage facilities;
- providing employment related support and advice to potential/existing trainees; and
- developing sustainable communities.

Support new and existing businesses through:

- creating new jobs;
- increasing inward investment;
- safeguarding existing jobs;
- proactively communicating with local businesses; and
- providing sites/premises for new employment opportunities.

Strengthen and diversify the local economic base through:

- developing the skills base through quality training;
- stimulating an enterprise culture and encouraging business innovation;
- developing the Visitor Economy; and
- creating a safe, attractive and healthy environment for residents, businesses and visitors.

Improve the economic and environmental infrastructure through:

- maximising the potential of the major development sites;
- improving transportation infrastructure and increasing choices in mode of travel;
- delivering and caring for high quality landscape and urban design;
- regenerating the Borough's 4 town centres and 16 local centres; and
- developing and maintaining a positive image.

Champion the interests and assets of Dudley Borough, securing resources and improving its position regionally, nationally and internationally through:

- creating and maintaining close working relationships with international, national and regional public and private sector funders;
- marketing widely opportunities for future development and improvements in the Borough; and
- celebrating Economic Regeneration successes to a wide audience.

The Council's Economic Regeneration aims are clearly linked to the Council's Community Strategy and Council Plan priorities and a range of regional and sub-regional strategies that influence and impact on local issues. They include:

The Community Strategy

2. Economic regeneration delivers the jobs theme of the existing Community Strategy, developed by the Dudley Community Partnership (DCP), and will be a key driver for "creating a prosperous and attractive Borough". The DCP established themed partnerships to deliver the priorities set out in the Community Plan. The Economic Development and Regeneration Partnership (EDRP) was established to deliver their Economic Regeneration agenda.

The Council Plan

3. Economic Regeneration delivered the Richer Borough Theme of the original Council Plan and delivers the Regeneration Matters agenda of the current Council Plan. Economic Regeneration also underpins and supports key activities delivered through all the other themes of the current Council Plan (environment matters, safety matters, learning matters, caring matters and quality matters).

The Economic Strategy

4. The Council's Economic Strategy sets out a 15-20 year vision and focus for economic regeneration activities in the Borough. It recognises the changing national, regional, sub-regional and local strategies and policies which impact on the local economy including the Regional Economic Strategy, the Regional Spatial Strategy, the Arc of Opportunity Regeneration Zone Implementation Plan for West Birmingham and the South Black Country and Dudley's Neighbourhood Management Strategy.
5. The Economic Strategy makes a significant contribution to the achievement of the priorities contained within the Dudley Community Strategy, particularly the "Creating a Prosperous Borough" theme, and the Council Plan, principally the Regeneration Matters theme, and supports other themes such as Environment Matters and Safety Matters.
6. The Economic Strategy brings together, not only the economic regeneration activities delivered by the Council, but also those delivered by a number of partner organisations and these are clearly set out within the Strategy's action plan. The Strategy is produced with the input of a significant number of staff across all Directorates in the Council. It is also subject to wide ranging consultation, both internally and externally, and is formally approved through the Cabinet and full Council. Implementation of the Strategy is monitored by the Economic Development & Regeneration Partnership and scrutinised by this Select Committee.

Directorate and Service Plans

7. Economic Regeneration features as a key component of the Directorate of the Urban Environment's Strategic Plan. Each of the service areas within the Economic Regeneration Division produces an annual Service Plan setting out the clear priorities for their respective Sections.

The West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES):

8. *"Connecting to Success"* sets out what the West Midlands region needs to do to improve its economic performance. The Strategy sets an ambitious vision for the West Midlands, this being:

"To be a global centre where people and business choose to connect"

The Strategy focuses on 3 main themes – Business, People and Place - which comprise a number of strategic objectives:

- Business - objectives include seizing market opportunities, improving competitiveness and harnessing knowledge
 - Place - objectives include increasing Birmingham's competitiveness, improving infrastructure and sustainable communities
 - People – objectives include sustainable living, raising ambitions and aspirations and achieving full potential and opportunities for all
 - plus the need to provide a powerful voice for the West Midlands.
9. In order to deliver sustainable economic development and growth, the targeting and prioritisation of resources to deliver the strategy is aligned closely with the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. The WMES therefore targets its spatial interventions on three primary areas, which are areas of multiple market failure including the Regeneration Zones, concentrations of knowledge assets including the High Technology Corridors and Birmingham as the major economic driver within the West Midlands economy
 10. A Delivery Framework accompanies the Strategy and provides further details on how the strategy will be delivered.

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

11. Published originally as Regional Planning Guidance 11 (RPG11) in 2004, sets out the Government's vision for the metropolitan area and the shires. Its vision is for: "an economically successful, outward looking and adaptable region which is rich in culture and environment, where all people, working together, are able to meet their aspirations and needs without prejudicing the quality of life for future generations." This is now being reviewed via a three phase process. The RSS Phase 1 Revision was issued by the Secretary of State on the 15th January 2008, and confirmed the roles of Brierley Hill as the fourth strategic centre in the Black Country, and Dudley town centre as a new focus for tourism, culture and living. The Phase 2 review has recently

been the subject of an examination in public and the Inspectors report is awaited.

The Local Transport Plan (LTP)

12. The LTP recognises the synergy between economic development, regeneration, housing and transport and the LTP strategies are closely aligned to the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies. It is vital that if the vision for economic growth is to be sustained, the infrastructure is geared to support the regional aspirations and investment targeted to support regeneration. The shared vision for the LTP is:

- a thriving and sustainable community where people want to live and where business can develop and grow;
- town, city and local centres that are attractive and vibrant;
- clean air and less congested traffic conditions;
- a safer community; and
- equal opportunities for everyone to gain access to services.

West Midlands Regional Visitor Economy Strategy (2004)

13. The Strategy presents a coherent framework for tourism in the West Midlands. A key feature of the strategy is the need to create successful, sustainable destinations. It identifies the need to focus on key destinations and visitor gateways. This strategy identifies the Black Country as an emerging destination which requires regeneration investment. The Black Country Visitor Economy Strategy was developed in 2004 and provides a framework for tourism development. The Strategy identifies the need for a Black Country Partnership to build on the existing Black Country Tourism initiative. It also identifies the need to invest in the 5 key destinations of the Black Country including Dudley Town Centre and Brierley Hill/ Merry Hill.

14. A review of the delivery structure created in the West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy was undertaken in late 2006 which proposed alterations to the organisations responsible for delivering the visitor economy strategy. A refresh of the West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy was undertaken in 2007 identifying priorities for regional investment. Four key themes have emerged: Conference & Exhibitions, Festivals and Events, Food and Drink and Culture. An Action Plan for the region is now being developed in which Tourism West Midlands will identify the work programme for the coming three years. Sub-regional partnerships will also be asked to identify ways in which activity relating to these priorities can be delivered by its partners.

City Regions

15. The government sees the City Regions as being motors for national progress challenging how they can take their economic and social development to a new level. The Council is actively involved in the City Region in the West Midlands through involvement with our regional partners. The City Region's aims include:-

- delivering jobs and investment and a new strategic global growth opportunity as a key driver for the wider “Midlands” to add to the UK’s wealth creation potential; and
- delivering a new high quality urban environment and quality of life of international standing which encourages diversity, knowledge, creative and vibrant communities. This builds upon the city centre regeneration projects which have been seen across the conurbation but extend this quality into local communities.
- a Multi Area Agreement (MAA) has recently being signed off by the City Region allowing greater flexibility in spending on regional priorities.

Black Country Study

16. The Council, along with the Black Country Consortium and its partners, is taking an active role in the Black Country Study, which aims to articulate the Consortium’s aspirations as set out in its vision “Looking Forward: The Black Country in 2033”. The study is a dynamic project to develop the long-term renaissance of the Black Country and will be critical in shaping the future regeneration of Dudley Borough. The four key objectives of the study are to:

1. reverse the trend of people leaving the Black Country;
2. raise income levels;
3. accommodate a more balanced population (achieving parity with the national social grade profile); and
4. create high quality, sustainable environments.

17. The Consortium is leading efforts with partners to prepare a comprehensive Delivery Plan at present. This will highlight the key projects to be undertaken by the private sector, local authorities, Centro, AWM, English Partnerships and other delivery bodies. A detailed 5 year programme and an indicative 10 year programme are now being prepared towards an overall 25 year transformational development strategy

Black Country Joint Core Strategy

18. Every local authority has to produce a Core Strategy for their Local Development Framework which will set the strategic spatial policy context for the Borough. The 4 Black Country Boroughs are to adopt a pioneering approach by working together to produce a Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country building on work on the Black Country Study. The Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country is shortly to be published and then submitted to the Government in February 2010 with a view to adoption in March 2011.