

1 SEPTEMBER 2004

REPORT OF THE LEAD OFFICER

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REGENERATION 2003/2004

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the annual report to the Council for the review of the 2003/04 municipal year.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Article 6 of the Council's Constitution requires Select Committees to report annually to the full Council on their workings and to make recommendations for the future work programmes and associated working methods if appropriate. It was agreed through the Select Committee Chairs that the annual report of this Select Committee should be made to the September cycle of Council.

- 2.2 The Committee's Work Programme for the 2003/2004 Municipal Year included:-

- The continuing review of individual Directorate's ICT Strategy documents.
- Emphasis on reviewing the E-Government milestones and targets
- Priority Neighbourhood (Neighbourhood Management) Initiative
- Town Centre Regeneration and Management Initiatives
- Economic Strategy and local diversification
- Customer Access to Services Programme
- Overall Review of Council wide equality and diversity issues.
- Performance Indicators

2.3 Working Groups

At the outset of the municipal year, the Select Committee determined to maintain the ICT Policy Working Group and the Economic Strategy Working Group but felt that equality and diversity issues were more appropriately dealt with directly through the Select Committee itself.

- 2.4 Whilst the ICT Policy Working Group continued to maintain and indeed strengthen its monitoring role on E. Government issues, in particular the achievement of Best Value Performance Indicator 157. This indicator monitors progress to ensure that all key Local Authority processes are e-enabled by December 2005.

- 2.5 In the previous year (2002/2003), the Economic Strategy Working Group's focus was specifically to scrutinize the emerging and developing local Economic Strategy document. This was done through a structured series of sessions focusing on each of the Strategy's cornerstones and was able to develop a distinct remit from the role of the Select Committee.
- 2.6 Having made the appropriate and agreed changes to the Economic Strategy, this in part diluted the distinct remit for the working group.
- 2.7 In the event, the Economic Strategy Working Group met far less in the 2003/2004 year with many items going directly to the Select Committee.
- 2.8 This changed the reporting balance for the Select Committee. Hitherto it had largely concentrated on receiving feedback from the working groups it now became the recipient for major reports.
- 2.9 Commentary has been made in previous Select Committee Annual reports about key learning points from the Select Committee process in relation to such issues as the establishment of working groups; clear terms of reference; Democratic Service support and a single focus for Directorate liaison.
- 2.10 All these were in place for both the 2002/2003 and 2003/2004 Economic Strategy Working Groups. However, the 2002/2003 meetings had a clear task based focus ie. review each key section of the Economic Strategy amend it and report back from the members.
- 2.11 The particular success of 2002/2003 was that members could see the product of their involvement directly in the text of the developed document.
- 2.12 The key areas of work over the 2003/2004 year in terms of review, scrutiny and development were as follows:

2.13 **ICT Policy Issues**

a) **Implementing action of the Electronic Government (IEG2) Statement 2003 and Review**

As with previous submissions, this secured £200,000 for the Council with a central element of the programme being the ICT support required for the Customer Access to Services Programme. To quote the Best Value Inspection report from the previous year for ICT Services. 'The Council's technical infrastructure is fit for purpose and flexible enough to respond to new e-government developments. The Service has the right leadership and well trained staff to manage the changes facing it'.

b) **ICT review of the Council's Gateway Project –**

This concluded 'that the present project needed re-alignment in the face of the changed financial environment, notwithstanding the excellent work achieved so far'. In practice the Gateway Project has carried out its important pump priming work and as a separate organisation is no longer viable.

c) **ICT in the Community and Business World**

This expanded the initial review of the Gateway Project and considered the wider Community Based CCT infrastructural development in the borough covering amongst other issues the:

- i) Dudley People's Network
- ii) Youth and Community Centre facilities
- iii) Adult and Community Learning ICT opportunities
- iv) Dudley Community Grid for Learning
- v) Chapel Street Access Kiosk

d) **Directorates' 5 Year ICT Plans**

Throughout the year, each Directorate submitted for comment their ICT Strategies to ensure that there were the necessary linkages between them to maximise the effectiveness of ICT developments and meet the local needs of Dudley's citizens.

e) **BVPI 157**

This was a separate opportunity to question individual Directorates about their performance towards BVPI 157 by December 2005. This measure is to ensure all Government's identified service areas are 100% e-compliant. It is clear from the Directorates' response for this indicator, that some of the 'kick-start' measures proposed through the ICT Working Group and ultimately the Select Committee, were having a beneficial impact on the profile this indicator was given across the Council.

f) **ICT Futures**

It is probably inappropriate to single out individual presentations as defining stages in the Select Committee's work but in the January cycle, members considered the potential impact of new technology on Council Services ten years into the future with such thoughts as video conferencing making face to face meetings redundant; with every Council service booked on line and remote sensing of litter hot spots and faulty manhole covers.

2.14 **Economic Strategy Issues**

a) **Prince's Trust**

The Select Committee reviewed the operation of the Prince's Trust activity in Dudley which indicated that their local activities placed Dudley in the forefront of Prince's Trust performance in the country and demonstrated the impressive range and scale of work carried out through this sometimes understated vehicle.

b) New Deal Programme

The New Deal Programme, in particular its operation in Dudley, was reviewed with issues being picked up through the Economic Strategy Working group.

c) Town Centre Regeneration

Consideration was given throughout the cycle to town centre regeneration plans identifying how best to integrate operational management with strategic direction of the town centres in a way that ensured development in one did not have unintended adverse impacts on others.

d) Future Skills

A presentation on the Future Skills Programme in Dudley arose out of the initial New Deal presentation to the Select Committee and considered through the Economic Strategy Working Group. This was alongside a presentation on innovation centre development which has been picked up by the Select Committee for this year as a key way of addressing the diversification of the manufacturing base of Dudley.

e) Visitor Economy Strategies

Consideration was given to the developing visitor economy strategies in relation to both Dudley and the Black Country as a whole, recognising the importance of this area in the diversification of the economic base in Dudley as elsewhere, a theme picked up by the new Committee's Work Programme.

2.15 Diversity Issues

From a previous Select Committee, the issue arose about how one Directorate had achieved a level of BME staff of over 10% compared to the Corporate average of less than 4%. From the Directorate presentation this had been the result of working with Impact Training and work placement opportunities for BME trainees.

2.16 Capital Strategy Updates

The Annual Capital Strategy report for 2003 was presented to this and all Select Committees and was likely to be assessed as good in line with the GOWM assessment for 2001 and 2002.

2.17 Council Plan Monitoring

All Select Committees picked up the scrutiny and monitoring of their relevant Council Plan targets that fell within the remit of the Select Committee. The Select Committee were mindful of the fact that of the 10 key actions under the 2003/2004 Council Plans half of them were within the remit of their Select Committee.

2.18 Priority Neighbourhood Initiatives

Consideration was also given to the Priority Neighbourhood Initiative (forerunner of the Neighbourhood Management Initiative) and the optimum distribution of managers to give best value to the community.

2.19 Making the Difference Programme

The work of the Making the Difference Programme was considered at one of the Select Committees, given its overall remit for Human Resource issues, but it became apparent that this subject area was so wide ranging it could have formed an annual Work Programme for a separate working group and not necessarily one within the economic regeneration remit.

2.20 Debt Prevention

A one-off update on the joint Debt Prevention Project between Dudley Citizens' Advice Bureau and the Directorate of Housing. This programme will use trained CAB staff to train Estate Management Officers (EMO's) in the Housing Directorate to offer basic budgeting; debt awareness and welfare benefit advice existing and prospective tenants.

2.21 Other Issues

Other Issues considered included a review of remuneration and staffing structures and the Council's complaint procedures.

Conclusions

2.22 One key lesson learned in the year was that the focus of activity and range of items was probably too wide and through the Select Committee Chairs meetings it was determined that in future a fewer range of subject areas in more depth would be the working brief for the Select Committee.

2.23 The original Work Programme for this Select Committee had been constructed in terms of content and timescale from a detailed consideration of the 2003/2004 Council Plan. Given the wide ranging remit of the Select Committee and the scale of key actions in the Council Plan within the remit of

the Select Committee, then the pool of potential items for the Work Programme was very large.

- 2.24 A degree of editing was done to get the Work Programme to a manageable scale but in retrospect a greater degree of pruning was required so that one or two key economic issues could be tracked through from cycle to cycle, culminating in a final report to the Select Committee.
- 2.25 The lessons learned have been helped inform the programming and selection of subjects for this year's Select Committee and its working groups.

3. **PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 That the annual report of the Select Committee on Economic Regeneration for 2003/2004 as set out be referred on to the Executive and then full Council.

4. **FINANCE**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report at this stage.

5. **LAW**

- 5.1 The requirement for the Committee to make an annual report to the Council is contained in Article 6 of the Constitution.
- 5.2 The relevant statutory provisions regarding the Council's Constitution are contained in Part II of the Local Government Act 2000, together with Regulations, Orders and Statutory Guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 5.3 The legal provisions regarding the issues referred to in paragraph 2.3 above are indicated in the reports submitted to the Committee on those issues.

6. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

- 6.1 This report complies with the Council's equality and diversity policy.

7. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 That the proposals set out in paragraph 3.1 above be approved.

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 Article 6 of the Council's Constitution

Minutes of the meeting of the Economic Vitality and Jobs Select Committee
held on 3 June, 26 June, 16 September, 21 October, 9 December 2003, 29
January, 23 March and 26 April 2004.

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