

**REGENERATION, CULTURE AND
ADULT EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, 18th January, 2012
at 6.00 pm in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor K Turner (Chairman)
Councillor Islam (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Ali, Attwood, Caunt, G.H. Davies, Knowles, Mottram, Mrs. Simms
and J. Woodall.

Officers

Assistant Director, Housing Strategy and Private Sector (Lead Officer to the Committee); Assistant Director, Directorate of Corporate Resources (Law and Governance); Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration; and Planning Policy Manager (both Directorate of the Urban Environment); and Mr. J. Jablonski (Directorate of Corporate Resources)

Also in attendance

One member of the public

29. **APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Evans.

30. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No member made a declaration of interest in accordance with Members' Code of Conduct in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

31. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 2nd November, 2011, be approved as a correct record and signed.

32. PUBLIC FORUM

A Dr. Hill, Managing Director of Pathcreating Ltd., based in Brierley Hill, addressed a number of issues to the Committee regarding the carrying out of regeneration work and the ability of local businesses to be involved with such work; the Council's engagement with local stakeholders, for example, through Business First with networking and whether more needed to be done and issues regarding working with social enterprise.

In connection with the second point Dr. Hill mentioned that she had not been invited to the launch of Dudley Business First and would have welcomed the opportunity that an invite would have given.

In response, the Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration commented that one of the aims of the Council was to encourage businesses to use local business and this was one of the aims of Dudley Business First, together with establishing networks and making links, in particular, regarding the identification of potential external funding opportunities. Mention was also made of a website for Dudley Business First which would extend across the Black Country.

The Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration also apologised for Dr. Hill's company not receiving an invitation to the launch of Dudley Business First and stated that he would arrange for an officer to meet with her regarding the service.

The Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration also indicated that a further aim was the promotion of new/social enterprises and commented on the work that would be undertaken with Government and agencies to put together packages in respect of this. He also undertook to meet with Dr. Hill in due course to discuss further the matters raised by her.

Arising from the comments made, Councillor Knowles commented that he was the Council's Champion for Small Businesses and had visited and talked to a number of businesses in the Stourbridge area. He also commented that unfortunately, there appeared to be limited opportunities for such visits and discussions with businesses in other parts of the Borough. Whilst there was no budget for the work undertaken, he considered the visits and discussions to have been helpful to the businesses concerned.

RESOLVED

That the responses given to the questions posed be noted and that following the further discussions between the Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration and Dr. Hill, a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the matters raised and that the item be included in the work programme of this Committee for the 2012/13 municipal year.

33. PROGRESS REPORT ON REGENERATION OF THE LOCAL AND DISTRICT CENTRES

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted updating the Committee on progress in the regeneration of the Borough's local and district centres and on the legal and other issues relating to street trading in the Borough's centres raised at the last meeting of the Committee.

The Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration commented on the report in relation to the progress in the regeneration of the Borough's local and district centres and the Assistant Director, Law and Governance outlined that part of the report in respect of issues relating to street trading in the Borough's centres.

Arising from the comments made, the following particular points were raised by Members:-

- (a) In relation to the previous consideration given by this Committee to a proposed Innovation and Incubation Centre, the Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration reported that whilst such a centre was unlikely to happen in the form originally envisaged, due to the changed economic circumstances since its first proposal, the Council were still heavily involved in this project and were currently talking to the new owners of the Castlegate site so as to try and bring the project forward. The Chairman indicated that he would wish a report to come to the Committee in due course on progress regarding the provision of an Innovation and Incubation Centre.
- (b) Councillor Caunt raised the issue of air quality in Sedgley which he indicated had again not been included in this latest report on regeneration of the local and district centres and considered that little had been done on this issue. There was an on-going need for traffic management measures to be introduced so as to speed up travel through Sedgley to the benefit of local residents and those using the flourishing shopping centre. In response, the Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration stated that he would discuss the issues raised with Councillor Caunt which would also include the question of alternative car parking provision in Sedgley in the light of a private car park now charging for its use.
- (c) A member commented on the lack of detail in the report in respect of the Roseville local centre. In particular, regarding the one way traffic system in Roseville which he considered had been very successful and the traffic management measures introduced in relation to parking around Coseley Railway Station and considered that such successes should have been included in the report. In response, the Assistant Director, Regeneration, apologised for their omission and indicated that he would ensure that they were included in a future report.

- (d) A member requested that, where possible, when improvements were being made to shops that the shops, where appropriate, were encouraged to make available, especially for the elderly, the use of their toilet facilities.
- (e) A member requested that in future reports more numbers be included, especially in relation to funding received for projects.

Following consideration of issues in relation to local and district centres, consideration was then given to the issues raised in relation to street trading in the Borough's centres.

In this connection, a query was raised whether a plan of the Borough was available showing those streets known as consent streets where a Street Trading Consent was required from the Council to sell goods from a stall/barrow or such similar provision in that street. There were also streets where street trading could not take place, known as prohibited streets.

In response, the Chairman reported that as far as he was aware, there were ten sites in the Borough spread between Dudley, Halesowen and Stourbridge and then commented on a number of issues in relation to the operation, funding and impact of such sites which he considered had a detrimental effect on shopkeepers in town centres and that action needed to be taken to ensure that trading in the town centres was viable. He also compared the position regarding the yearly tariff paid by traders for sites in town centres and those paid by market stall holders.

Consideration was also given to the comments made in paragraph 48 of the report submitted in respect of the charging of fees and what was reasonable to take into account when determining the fees to be charged for a street trading consent. It was considered that the current fees charged were not economic and it was considered that Dudley's fees were low compared with those charged by surrounding Boroughs. It was considered, therefore, that the various issues raised at this meeting needed to be looked at in depth, given the concerns raised about the operation of the consents, their apparent uncompetitiveness and impact on local town centres. A comment was also made that alternative uses could possibly be made for the sites currently given over to street trading consents or consents issued could be on the same basis as market traders possibly with a manager managing them on site.

As part of the proposed in-depth review of this issue, it was considered that consideration should also be given to the context of the 1991 decision outlined in paragraph 48 of the report regarding the issue of reasonableness of fees.

A further issue was also raised in respect of shops encroaching on the pavement with goods and the Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration undertook to arrange for the comments made relating, in particular, to shops in Halesowen to be investigated.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Assistant Director, Law and Governance, in consultation with other officers, as appropriate, be requested to report to the next meeting of this Committee to be held on 7th March, 2012, with a further in-depth report relating to the various issues raised at this meeting relating to street trading in the Borough's centres and that the information contained in the report include details of comparisons with the other six Metropolitan Boroughs and Wyre Forest Borough as to the fees charged for street trading consents, issues relating to the charging of fees and possible alternatives, for example, changing to a market stall situation.
- (2) That the Assistant Director, Economic Regeneration also report to the next meeting of this Committee on the measures that could be undertaken to encourage more trading in the Borough's local centres with particular reference to the issue of car parking.

The meeting ended at 7.05 p.m.

CHAIRMAN