

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REGENERATION

Tuesday, 1st March 2005, at 6.00 pm
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor K Turner (Chairman)
Councillor Miss Harris (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Body, Mrs Coulter, Mrs Cowell, Islam, Jackson, Mrs Patrick, Rogers and C Wilson.

Officers

Assistant Director of Housing (Strategy and Private Sector) (as Lead Officer to the Committee), Director of Finance, Head of ICT Services, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, Head of Personnel and Support Services, Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration), Principal Planning Policy Manager and Business Support Manager (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Mr S Manson (Chief Executive's Department) and Mr J Jablonski (Directorate of Law and Property).

47

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12th January 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed.

48

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made by the following Members for the reasons indicated:

Councillor Ms Harris declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item Nos. 6 and 7 (Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2005/06 and Chief Executive's Directorate's Annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan) in view of her individual membership of Dudley Racial Equality Council.

Councillor Islam declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item Nos. 6, 7 and 10 (Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2005/06, Chief Executive's Directorate's Annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan and Quarterly Corporate Performance Report) in view of his being a member of the Dudley Racial Equality Council.

49 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Johnston and Knowles.

50 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBER

It was reported that Councillor Mrs Coulter had been appointed as a substitute for Councillor Johnston for this meeting of the Committee only.

51 ICT STRATEGY REVIEW AND e-GOVERNMENT PROGRESS REPORT

A report of the Corporate E-Champion and Director of Finance was submitted on the results of the annual review of the Corporate ICT Strategy, the latest information on the Council's performance against BVPI 157, which required 100% e-enablement of all services by 1st January 2006 and on an update of the Council's position regarding the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Programme for "Priority Services and Transformation Outcomes".

A copy of the draft ICT Strategy 2004-2009 was attached at Appendix C, progress achieved so far against BVPI 157 was set out in Appendix A to the report submitted and the seven Outcomes assessed as high risk in respect of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Priority Outcomes were set out in the table at paragraph 4.3 of the report submitted.

Arising from the presentation on the content of the report by the Head of ICT Services, it was noted that only one high risk priority outcome now remained, that in respect of G24: Integration of customer relationship management systems with back office activity in relation to CATS and that in respect of compliance with BVPI 157, the Director of Finance reported that he anticipated 100% compliance in respect of his Directorate by the end of March, 2005.

RESOLVED

1. That the information contained in the report, and Appendix C to the report, submitted on the draft ICT Strategy for 2005-2009, be endorsed.
2. That the information contained in the report, and Appendix A to the report, submitted in respect of the satisfactory progress made towards the deadline for 100% e-enablement be noted.

3. That the current position, as set out in the report and reported at the meeting regarding the assessment of progress on Priority Outcomes be noted and that, following a further review in March, 2005, in respect of Priority Outcome G24, further reports on this Outcome be submitted to future meetings of the Committee to be held in the 2005/06 municipal year.

52

DIRECTORATE OF FINANCE, ICT AND PROCUREMENT -
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2005/06

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on the Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2005/06 for the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement, a copy of which was attached to the report submitted.

In his presentation of the report, the Director of Finance commented in particular on the valuable work undertaken by the Benefits Shop; the use of technology in improving customer access allowing benefit claims to be completed from residents' homes and flexible working arrangements in his Directorate.

Arising from the presentation given and in response to a query from Councillor Islam regarding the training of managers and front line staff in equality and cultural awareness, the Director of Finance undertook to inform Councillor Islam of the numbers of personnel involved in such training.

In response to a further question from Councillor Ms Harris regarding any arrangements to link together the different flexible working arrangements operating across the Council's Directorates, the Head of Personnel and Support Services cited work that was being done in terms of work/life balance and in connection with supporting carers which included provision for different working arrangements, details of which would shortly be available on the Intranet.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and attached copy of the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2005/06, be noted.

53

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIRECTORATE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY
ACTION PLAN 2005/06

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the Chief Executive's Directorate's Annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2005/06, a copy of which was attached to the report submitted.

The Head of Personnel and Support Services in his presentation of the report, reported that there was a need to include reference in the report to the recent implementation of the Personnel and Payroll ICT System, which went live in February, 2005.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and attached copy of the Chief Executive's Directorate's Annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2005/06, be noted.

54

PROGRESS ON ADOPTION OF THE UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND PREPARATION OF TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLANS AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER ACT 2004

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress towards adoption of the Borough Unitary Development Plan and implications of the new planning regime and update on Town Centre Masterplans.

Following an introduction to the contents of the report by the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration), a presentation was given by the Principal Planning Policy Manager on the Introduction to the New Development Plan System - Local Development Frameworks. A copy of the presentation given was circulated at the meeting. Arising from the presentation given, a number of questions were asked on the significant changes to the national, regional and local planning process, which would be introduced as a consequence of the coming into force of the Act.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and presentation given at the meeting, on the progress on adoption of the Unitary Development Plan and preparation of Town Centre Master plans and the implications of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Order Act 2004, be noted and that in view of the significant changes to the national, regional and local planning process, a further comprehensive presentation on the new planning regime be given at a future meeting of the Committee in the 2005/06 municipal year.

PROGRESS REPORT ON BVPI 157 AND PRIORITY OUTCOMES FOR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIRECTORATE

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the position in respect of BVPI 157 interactions and the priority outcomes allocated to the Chief Executive's Directorate. A further note on the up to date position was also circulated at the meeting. This showed that the percentage of e-enabled process interactions was now at 82% and, as part of the presentation of this item by the Head of Personnel and Support Services; he confirmed that the target of 100% would be met by December, 2005. A further presentation of this matter would be made to the Committee in the event that significant progress was not made towards the attainment of the 100% target.

In respect of the priority outcomes allocated to the Chief Executive's Directorate, particular mention was made of G24, as outlined in paragraph 2.8 of the report submitted, and, as referred to earlier in the meeting, it was reiterated that further reports on progress in respect of this outcome would be made to future meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, as circulated at the meeting and as commented upon, in respect of the up to date position on BVPI 157 interactions and the priority outcomes allocated at the Chief Executive's Directorate, be noted.

QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee on the second Quarterly Corporate Performance Report for 2004/05 relating to performance for the period 1st April, 2004 to 30th September, 2004 submitted to the Cabinet on 15th December 2004, was submitted. A copy of the Quarterly Corporate Performance Report in relation to the Directorate of the Urban Environment and Finance was attached to the report.

Arising from an introduction given by the Lead Officer, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration) updated the Committee on the performance of the Directorate of the Urban Environment in respect of PI references BV109a, BV109b and BV109c, in relation to planning applications and stated that the third quarter performance for each of these was 30%, 52% and 72% respectively which indicated that significant progress had been made to achieving targets set. He also commented on the reasons for the previous performance levels and improvements that were now in hand. In

respect of two Finance Directorate PI's, those in respect of BV008 and BV078b, again satisfactory progress was being made and in respect of the latter performance indicator, as previously indicated, technology was now being introduced to assist in meeting the target for the average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances so that the Directorate expected to be on target by the end of the financial year.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Islam regarding the reference to Leisure in the second part of Section 4 of the Quarterly Corporate Performance Report, it was noted that his concerns on health and safety grounds had been noted by the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration) and that these would be passed to the relevant officers. His comments made about the impact on people of sudden closures of Dudley Leisure Centre which would be exacerbated following the closure of Brierley Hill Leisure Centre would be passed to the Lead Member for Culture and Recreation.

Councillor Ms. Harris then queried the clarity, structure and timing of the report given that the information was compiled approximately six months ago. In view of this, she queried the role of the Committee in considering the report and suggested that if reports continued to be received they should be received within three months of the information being compiled so that the Committee could then possibly have a better opportunity for reviewing any areas giving cause for concern. It was also suggested that this issue be raised by the Chairman at a meeting of Select Committee Chairmen.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, extract from the Quarterly Corporate Performance Report and as given at the meeting, in respect of the second Quarterly Corporate Performance Report for 2004/05 relating to performance for the period 1st April, 2004 to 30th September, 2004, be noted.

ORAL REPORTS ON WORKING GROUPS

The Lead Officer reported orally on the work undertaken at meetings of the Equality and Diversity Working Group held on 7th February 2005 and meetings of the Economic Regeneration Working Group held on 1st and 21st February 2005.

In respect of the meeting held on 7th February 2005, consideration had been given to a presentation on a recruitment event held in November 2004, which, despite efforts to promote and market the event had not attracted the turnout expected.

In view of planned improvements, the Working Group had requested further presentations to future meetings of the Group.

At the meeting held on 1st February 2005, consideration had been given to feedback from visits to Technology Centres leading to requests for further information in respect of the Steinbeis Innovation Model; a report in respect of the development of the Yorks Park Project and a visit to the Oxford Innovation Centre and the Staffordshire Business Innovation Centre.

At the meeting held on the 21st of February 2005, a presentation was given on Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum to offer First Stop Shop information and advice on innovation, research and development and, arising from such consideration, decisions were taken to carry out further investigations involving Councillor Turner in respect of Oxford Innovation and BPCI, Barnsley; Councillor Islam in respect of Staffordshire BIC and the Business Support Manager in relation to Cardiff Business School Activities which it was reported was not part of Cardiff University. The Chairman also reported that investigations in relation to Shotton indicated that they may not be wholly relevant to the investigations being carried out.

The Business Support Manager also reported that he had contacted Oxford Innovation regarding the invitation to make a presentation at the next meeting of the Working Group on 23rd March 2005.

Finally, the Lead Officer, in consultation with the Chairman, had been requested to submit a draft report to that meeting of the Working Group, which would commence at 6.30pm, highlighting the benefits to the Dudley Economy in relation to having an Innovation Centre.

In view of the need to present the findings of the Working Group to the meeting of the Cabinet in April 2005, it was agreed that a special meeting of the Select Committee be held at 6.00pm on Tuesday 12th April 2005 to consider the recommendations of the Working Group.

RESOLVED

That the information, as reported and updated above, in respect of the work of the Select Committee's Working Groups at meetings held on 1st, 7th and 21st February 2005, be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm.

CHAIRMAN