

Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education - 4th March 2009

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Dudley Borough Economic Strategy 2009/10

Purpose of Report

1. To consult with the Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture & Adult Education on the Dudley Borough Economic Strategy, which is being updated for 2009/10.

Background

2. The Dudley Borough Economic Strategy underpins the 'Regeneration Matters' theme of the Dudley Council Plan, and the 'Creating a Prosperous Borough' theme of the Dudley Community Strategy.
3. The Economic Strategy is informed by input from a range of partners and is developed by Dudley Council on behalf of the Dudley Economic Development and Regeneration Partnership (EDRP), which is a thematic partnership within the Dudley Community Partnership structure.
4. The Economic Strategy provides a long-term vision, focus and delivery plan for economic regeneration in Dudley Borough.
5. The purpose of the Strategy is to provide a co-ordinated response and approach to the key economic issues and challenges facing Dudley Borough. The Strategy sets out the local economic priorities for the borough and provides the mechanism to identify the key regeneration projects and initiatives that will create the conditions for economic growth and sustainability.
6. The Economic Strategy is updated annually to ensure that the document reflects new developments that are planned and/or underway and any changes to policies and strategies affecting economic regeneration.
7. It is recognised that the current economic climate will have a significant impact on delivering the vision and aims of the Economic Strategy and the recession will further add to the economic challenges the Borough faces. An overview of the current economic climate for the Economic Strategy is provided in Section 3 of the strategy document. This section covers the current and anticipated impact on Dudley Borough, including the impact on delivering economic regeneration, as current market conditions in most sectors are impacting on the early delivery of regeneration projects. The role of New Heritage Regeneration Limited is to bring forward development projects as well as preparing for an upturn in economic conditions.

8. The vision for the Economic Strategy is the same as the vision for the economy in Dudley's Next Generation Local Area Agreement, which is:
"A Borough with a vibrant and sustainable economy, where all neighbourhoods and communities benefit from the prosperity that results and where inequalities are reduced".
9. The 2009/10 Economic Strategy has four Strategic Aims, which are:
 1. To optimise the opportunities for local people - including the most vulnerable people and those from deprived areas - to develop and improve their skills and obtain jobs
 2. To encourage the development of a dynamic and diverse business base and jobs through support to new and existing businesses in the borough
 3. To improve the economic and environmental infrastructure of Dudley Borough and its town centres
 4. To champion the interests and assets of Dudley Borough, securing additional resources and improving its position regionally, nationally and internationally

The previous Economic Strategy had 5 strategic aims. Following consultation with the EDRP, Strategic Aims 2 and 3 have been merged into one aim, which is now Strategic Aim 2.

10. The Economic Strategy supports the vision of the West Midlands Economic Strategy and its three key themes – Business, People and Place. It also supports the Black Country Vision and the Black Country Strategy for Growth and Competitiveness and its four key objectives, which are:
 1. Population growth to 1.2m
 2. Raising incomes to the national averages
 3. Achieving a better balance of resident households reflecting the national average
 4. Transforming the environment
11. Successful delivery of the Economic Strategy depends on joint working, strong partnerships, and input of resources from a variety of public and private sector organisations at regional, sub-regional and local level.
12. The Strategy reflects cross directorate working within the Council. Other Directorates, in addition to the Directorate of the Urban Environment, contribute to the update of the Economic Strategy, and will also contribute directly to delivering economic regeneration activities. These include the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services and the Directorate of Children's Services.

In addition, key external organisations involved in the development and delivery of the Strategy include Business Link, the Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus, Further Education Colleges, Dudley Primary Care Trust, The Prince's Trust and Black Country Chamber of Commerce.

13. For the 2009/10 update of the Economic Strategy, there has been a significant review of the format, content and presentation of the document and a revised format has been developed. The main strategy is designed to focus on the vision and strategic aims, highlight case studies of recent achievements and provide a clear,

focused overview of key strategic initiatives and projects that will be taken forward by economic regeneration partners and agencies to support the delivery of the vision and strategic aims. The document also includes an assessment of the current economic climate which is already impacting, and will continue to impact, on the local economy.

14. Detailed delivery plans for each strategic aim have been developed to clearly set out the key projects and initiatives and are included as appendices to the Strategy. Each delivery plan contains a series of objectives with key actions, targets, outputs, milestones and timescales in order to manage the implementation of the Strategy.
15. Some of the economic regeneration activities that will be taken forward from 2009/10 onwards include:
 - Continued delivery of the City Strategy Pathfinder, which has been extended for two years for 2009/10 and 2010/11, and is focused on maximising training, support and employment for people in the five most disadvantaged wards in the borough - Castle & Priory, Netherton, Woodside & St Andrew's, St Thomas's, Brierley Hill and St James's.
 - Production of the Black Country Brownfield Land Strategy, working with the other Black Country Local Authorities and Black Country Consortium.
 - A review of employment land in Dudley Borough which will be taken forward by Planning Policy, Dudley MBC.
 - Revisit plans for Dudley Zoo and Castle to look at a development to link into other local attractions.
 - Delivery of Healthy Towns Programme, "Let's Go Outside", to transform parks, play areas and nature reserves in the borough and to promote healthy lifestyles for all ages through a programme of activities and events.
 - Physical redevelopment of the eight opportunities sites in Dudley town centre, through New Heritage Regeneration Limited, and the appointment of a joint venture partner.
 - Delivery of the Dudley Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) to restore, maintain and conserve key buildings of historic interest and bring vacant floor space back into use as well as enhancing the town's appearance and image.
 - Further development of plans for the South Black Country Enterprise and Innovation Centre.
 - Promotion of a major junction improvement to the A461/A4123 Burnt Tree Island junction, in conjunction with Sandwell MBC.
 - Commence work on site for the North Priory housing development.
 - Completion of the new health and social care centre in Brierley Hill.
 - Further development of Area Action Plans for Brierley Hill, Stourbridge & Halesowen.
 - Taking forward public realm improvements in Halesowen town centre.
 - Progress the Northern Gateway Public Realm Scheme in Stourbridge, subject to funding being secured.
 - Implement regeneration plans in Lye, Shell Corner and Cradley, including a potential LIFT development in Cradley, and finalise regeneration plans for Quarry Bank and Pensnett.
 - Progress plans for the multi-million pound new post-16 education centre for Stourbridge College and the new Brierley Hill public library.
 - Implement the Ripples through Time project at Wrens Nest National Nature Reserve, which will see it become a first class destination for geology and environmental regeneration.
 - Development of projects for funding from the European Regional Development Fund through the Sustainable Urban Development funding package.

- Delivery of targets for the Wealthy Communities theme of the Dudley Next Generation Local Area Agreement, in respect of worklessness, child poverty, earning levels, new business registrations and skills at levels 2 and 4.
- Ongoing review of implications for the Local Authority from the Sub-National Review of Economic Regeneration.
- Commence development of the Russells Hall Extra Care Housing Scheme; the Council will continue to identify further sites for the remaining Extra Care Housing Schemes.
- Through Future Skills Dudley (FSD) continue to maximise the Council's engagement with employers and Jobcentre Plus via Local Employment Partnerships to ensure local residents secure employment opportunities.
- Through FSD continue activity through Department for Work and Pensions and/or Learning and Skills Council mainstream and discretionary funding to provide employability and skills training to local people.

16. The draft 2009/10 Economic Strategy was issued for consultation in January 2009.

17. The final strategy will be reported to the Council's Cabinet meeting in March 2009. When the final strategy is approved by Cabinet and Council, a copy will be placed in the Members' Room.

Finance

18. The Economic Strategy is likely to have a significant financial impact from the level of the regional economy to that of individual neighbourhoods within the Borough. More detail of this financial impact is provided in the Resources section of the strategy document.

The Council will work with all relevant partners and agencies in seeking the required external financial support for economic regeneration projects within the Economic Strategy which are not currently financed within either the Council's or other organisations' budgets. However, the impact of recession is likely to be significant and will provide a major challenge to business, public bodies and the charitable sector, as well as to families and individual members of the public within the Borough.

Law

19. Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 empowers the Council to take action to implement measures it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the Borough.

Equality Impact

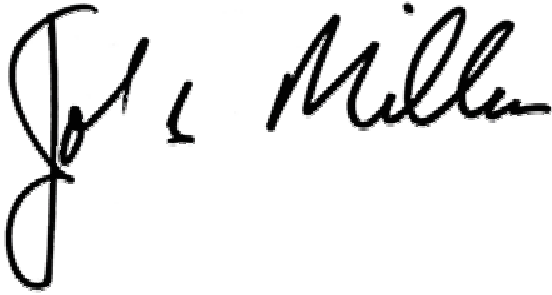
20. The Strategy aims to bring increased prosperity across the Borough. In addition, Strategic Aim 1, optimising opportunities for local people to obtain local jobs, is primarily aimed at residents, including children and young people, and wards that are recognised as being disadvantaged in economic and social terms.

Details of Dudley Council's Equality and Diversity Policy are included in Appendix 7 of the Economic Strategy.

Recommendation

21. It is recommended that:-

- the Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education notes the contents of the report, as part of the consultation process, and provides further comments on any particular issues to be taken forward in the update of the 2009/10 Economic Strategy to the Contact Officer.



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List of Background Papers

2009/10 Draft Dudley Borough Economic Strategy