

**SELECT COMMITTEE**  
**ON REGENERATION, CULTURE AND**  
**ADULT EDUCATION**

Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2009, at 6.00 pm  
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

**PRESENT:-**

Councillor C Wilson (Chairman)  
Councillor Mottram (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors Barlow, Hanif, P. Harley, Jones, Lowe, Stanley, K. Turner  
and Woodall.

**Officers**

Assistant Director, Housing Strategy and Private Sector (Lead Officer to the Committee), Interim Chief Executive, Senior Assistant Director of Finance, Assistant Director of Finance (ICT and Business Transformation) and Customer Services Manager (All Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement), Head of Economic Regeneration Strategy, Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery, Head of Planning, Planning Policy Manager, Head of Personnel and Senior Personnel Officer (All Directorate of the Urban Environment), Principal Policy and Performance Management Officer (Chief Executive's Directorate) and Mr J Jablonski (Directorate of Law & Property).

together with eleven members of the public.

42                   **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors D Blood, G Davies and Perry.

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43                   **SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

It was reported that Councillor P Harley had been appointed as a substitute member for Councillor D Blood and that Councillor Jones had been appointed as a substitute member for Councillor Perry.

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44                   **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor K Turner declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 11 – Dudley Borough Economic Strategy 2009/10 - in connection with any references to Dudley Zoo as he was a member of Dudley Zoological Society.

Councillor Woodall declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 – the Leasowes Restoration – as he was a member of the friends of Leasowes Park.

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## MINUTES

### RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed subject to the addition of the following words to resolution 36(2) after the word “submitted” in the fourth line of that resolution – the report to contain a range of options; ....

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## PUBLIC FORUM

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting the members of the public present.

Mr Guest, of Friends of Mount Pleasant School, raised a number of points arising from the information contained in the agenda for this meeting regarding the recent visit by Committee Members to Coseley with particular reference to the comments made about the archives at Mount Pleasant School.

In response to questions raised he was informed that the issue of acquiring space at the Black Country Museum site was an issue to be considered at the next meeting of the Board and that similarly the involvement of Sandwell in the project was still under discussion. In response to issues of funding it was reported that £7million had been allocated to build a facility and, as previously indicated, if Sandwell did not subsequently require space in the facility it would be scaled down accordingly.

In response to issues regarding the lack of information in respect of a feasibility study the Lead Officer gave an undertaking that details of the feasibility study would be forwarded to Mr Guest.

Mr Guest also commented on the need to regenerate Coseley given the various facilities that had and might be lost. It was also considered that Coseley had been neglected as compared with other areas of the Borough.

Members then asked a number of questions and a separate report on the future of the Mount Pleasant site following any relocation of the archives was requested to be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee. In response to a further question from a member it was reported that borrowing would be used to fund the project with debt charges being incurred.

At the conclusion of this matter the Chairman referred to the minutes taken of the site visit to Coseley held on 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2009, with particular reference to the archives and the conclusion contained in those minutes that the Committee agreed that the current building was not fit for purpose and because of the restriction it imposed the Service was unable to serve the community as a whole. It was also indicated that the preferred site was the Black Country Museum.

Mr Wilkes, Chairman of Coseley Civic Trust, then circulated to members at the meeting a supplementary letter to that circulated at a previous meeting of the Committee.

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## PROGRESS REPORT ON REGENERATING THE SIXTEEN LOCAL AND DISTRICT CENTRES

A joint report of the Director of the Urban Environment and the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted updating the Committee on progress in the regeneration of the Borough's sixteen local and district centres and to feed back to members the outcome of the Coseley Regeneration visit held on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

The Lead Officer in introducing the report referred to a further visit by the Vice-Chairman of the Committee and himself together with the Chief Executive of the Local LIFT Programme, John Coyne, to ensure that all avenues of regeneration resource for Coseley were examined. It was therefore emphasised that any opportunity to regenerate Coseley would be taken on board so that the profile of Coseley was raised.

The Lead Officer also raised the possibility of members visiting LIFT Projects in the Burnley, Lancashire, area. The offer made at the last meeting of the committee to visit the LIFT Project in Brierley Hill was also reiterated.

The Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery then presented the content of the report in relation to the regeneration of the Borough's sixteen local and district centres and the Lead Officer to the Committee commented on the site visit made to Coseley as indicated in the report and Appendix 1 to the report submitted.

Arising from the comments made Members made a number of comments and queries in particular relating to what they perceived as the actual progress made in relation to certain of the centres indicated in the report.

Certain members also commented on the need for local Ward Councillors to be involved in all facets of the regeneration initiatives outlined and, as appropriate, for full consultation to be undertaken with all concerned on proposed changes to any proposals.

In a response to queries raised regarding the food store and LIFT Projects in Lye the Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery reported that he would arrange for the member concerned to receive a response direct to his queries.

Regarding Coseley a comment was also made, reiterating comments made previously by the committee, that Coseley should be treated on the same basis as the Borough's sixteen local and district centres so that benefits over the longer term would hopefully accrue.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the information contained in the report submitted, on the progress made in regenerating the Borough's sixteen local and district centres, following the allocation of additional resources in 2005/06, be noted.
2. That the regeneration activity in Coseley, as indicated in the report submitted and in Appendix 1 to the report submitted and as reported at the meeting, one of the non priority district and local centres at present, be noted.
3. That the Lead Officer be requested to arrange for a site visit to be made by the Members of the Committee, on a date and at a time to be arranged, to Burnley, Lancashire, to look at the various LIFT Projects in that area as a way of possibility facilitating regeneration activity with particular reference to the Coseley area.

#### CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIRECTORATE'S EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2009/10

A report of the Interim Chief Executive was submitted on the annual equality and diversity action plan for 2009/10 for the Chief Executive's Directorate. A copy of the action plan was attached as an Appendix to the report submitted.

Following the introduction of the report by the Interim Chief Executive, Members made a number of comments relating to the priorities shown in the action plan regarding BME communities, disabled people, in relation to the Domestic Abuse Strategy and the attempts to increase participation in electoral registration and elections, all of which were responded to.

In responding to a comment a made about the BME Community Consultation Event in 2009, the Interim Chief Executive reported that the event was open to the public and that all Members of the Council would receive an invitation to attend.

## RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on the annual equality and diversity action plan for 2009/10 for the Chief Executive's Directorate be noted and endorsed.

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### DIRECTORATE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT'S EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN FOR 2009/10

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Directorate of the Urban Environment's annual equality and diversity action plan for 2009/10. A copy of the action plan was attached as a Appendix to the report submitted.

Following an introduction to the report by the Head of Personnel, the Senior Personnel Officer also commented on the various priorities contained within the action plan.

Arising from the comments made by the Officers, Members made a number of comments and raised queries with particular reference to:-

- How many car parks had insufficient disabled parking places. In response the Senior Personnel Officer reported that she would arrange for the relevant Officer to report back to the Member concerned on this matter.
- In response to a query regarding the introduction of increased recycling opportunities for people living in high rise flats, the Senior Personnel Officer reported that she was arrange for the Member concerned to be informed of the background to the introduction of this matter. She also commented that it was considered that all the high rise accommodation indicated would have either a recycling facility or shared facility by December, 2009.
- Regarding the DUE website referred to in priority 6 the Senior Personnel Officer reported that she would arrange for the comments made as to the website and provision for community languages to be referred to the officer concerned.
- Regarding priority 8 – establishing an agreed method for carrying out Muslim burials – it was requested that Councillors, particularly those with high numbers of people practising that particular religion in their ward, be kept informed on this issue given the number of queries received from constituents on this matter.

- In response to a query regarding the blue badge scheme for disabled drivers the Lead Officer reported that he would arrange for an investigation of the scheme and for a report back to the Member concerned.

#### RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on the Directorate of the Urban Environment's annual equality and diversity action plan for 2009/10, be noted and endorsed.

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#### THE LEASOWES RESTORATION

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted updating the Committee on the progress of The Leasowes Restoration.

The Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery, reported on the content of the report submitted with particular reference to the completion date in December, 2008, some six weeks earlier than the contractual completion date of 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2009. A separate contract for the carrying out of tree, shrub and aquatic planting was also completed in February, 2009. The opening event for the project was held on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2009.

Arising from the presentation given the Chairman expressed his thanks to Rupert Dugdale for all his efforts in achieving the early completion date for the project.

In response to a comment made that a further visit be made by Members of the Committee now that the project had been completed the Chairman indicated that the Lead Officer would be requested to arrange for Members of the Committee, as a group, to visit the Leasowes Park on a day and at a time to be arranged in the future.

#### RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, updating the Committee on the progress of The Leasowes Restoration project, be noted.

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#### MEMBER ENGAGEMENT WITH PROCESSES ASSOCIATED WITH PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

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A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on proposals for engagement and communication with Ward Members in relation to the processes associated with Planning Obligations arising from the request made at the meeting of this Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2009. A proposed process for engagement and communication was outlined in Appendix A to the report submitted.

Arising from the presentation of the report Members expressed their thanks and welcomed the proposed process for consultation and engagement as set out in Appendix A to the report submitted.

It was also considered that this matter was a good example of a scrutiny committee working to achieve something that would have a direct impact on communities.

Arising from a query the Head of Planning outlined the process whereby Council Officers engaged with Developers in relation to Section 106 Planning Obligations.

In response to a query from a Member an undertaking was given that the use of the word "receptor" in the second stage of the process would be deleted and replaced with words to the effect that the allocation of income would be to the site receiving the contribution.

#### RESOLVED

That, subject to the minor amendment referred to above regarding the replacement of the word "receptor" in the second stage of the process, the information contained in the report, and Appendix A to the report, submitted on proposals for engagement and communication with Ward Members in relation to the processes associated with Planning Obligations be recommended to the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration for implementation.

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the Dudley Borough Economic Strategy 2009/10 as part of the consultation, commenced in January, 2009 on the updated Strategy.

The Head of Economic Regeneration Strategy gave a presentation on the Economic Strategy copies of which were circulated to Members at the Meeting.

(At this juncture the Chairman left the meeting).

(Councillor Mottram (Vice Chairman) in the Chair).

Following the presentation given Members made a number of comments and queried aspects of the Strategy with particular reference to:-

- The current number of jobs secured for local people arising from developments in Halesowen.

The Head of Economic Regeneration Strategy undertook to arrange for the Member concerned to be notified of the number.

- The need to arrest the decline in the population of the Black Country.

The Head of Economic Regeneration Strategy responded to the comments made by referring in particular to proposals for Housing growth.

- In relation to proposals for Stone Street Square and surrounding buildings.

The Head of Economic Regeneration Delivery reported that Stone Street Square and Priory Street were one of the Borough's eight priority areas and that Priory Street was one of three projects that the New Heritage Company would be bringing forward.

- The need to recognise that whilst the Council contributed to the strategy they were not the main component in ensuring the successes referred to.
- The need for all partners and public and private organisations in the Borough to work together to aid regeneration. Particular mention was made of the Castle and Zoo and the potential impact on the rest of the Borough.
- The need to address the variations in qualification levels between the wards in the Borough and monitor the associated earning levels to try and ascertain whether the strategy was addressing this or perpetuating the existing situation.

The Head of Economic Regeneration Strategy responded to the points made by citing the work being carried in various wards and also referred to the example of the Innovation Campus on Castlegate as a way to try and stimulate/retain high wage/graduate opportunities in the Borough. Further work with the private sector was also referred to.



In response to a related query it was confirmed that the Borough still had the highest employment rate in the Black Country.

- The potential of heavy rail to help in regenerating the area and in improving links with surrounding areas so as to improve access to and from Dudley was commented upon. The need to ensure that development was not carried out which would impede this was also referred to.
- The need to look to small businesses to generate high earning jobs was cited.
- The need for land to be retained for industry was also commented upon.

#### RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and as presented and referred to at the meeting, in relation to the Dudley Borough Economic Strategy 2009/10, be noted, as part of the consultation process in respect of the Strategy and that, as appropriate, the comments referred to above be taken forward in the update of the 2009/10 Economic Strategy.

#### PROGRESS REPORT ON CORPORATE ICT STRATEGY

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on progress with the implementation of Corporate ICT Strategy 2008/13 reported to the meeting of this Committee held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

Prior to the presentation of this report the Lead Officer referred to the impending retirement of Dave Cook, Assistant Director of Finance (ICT and Business Transformation) and in so commenting thanked him for all the work that he had done on behalf of the Select Committee and in other areas.

Lance Cartwright who had been appointed as the Interim Assistant Director (ICT and Business Transformation) was also introduced to Members at the meeting. Following on from the comments made Members expressed their best wishes to Dave for the help and assistance given to them in various capacities and similarly thanked him for all the assistance given. Dave responded appropriately to the comments made.

The Assistant Director of Finance (ICT and Business Transformation) then presented the contents of the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted.

Following the presentation given and comments made by Members it was:-

RESOLVED

1. That the information contained in the report submitted, on the progress on the ICT Strategy for 2008-13, as set out in the report, and Appendix to the Report, submitted, be noted.
2. That the Corporate ICT Strategy be reviewed in 2009/10 following the formation of a clearer view on Transformation, as indicated in paragraph 13 of the report submitted.

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QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on performance in the third quarter of 2008/09, October to December 2008, in relation to the activities relating to terms of reference of the Committee.

Arising from consideration of the content of the report summary, circulated with the report submitted, particular reference was made to the regeneration of the North Priory Estate – reference R1.2d – showing an indicator of below target performance.

The Lead Officer to the Committee updated the Committee on the current position regarding the rehousing of existing residents and responded to related comments and questions from Members on this matter.

A comment was also made on the new facilities at the Crystal Leisure Centre that had now opened which were considered to be money well spent.

In relation to both of these matters the Lead Officer undertook to refer to the appropriate Officers the appreciative comments made by Members at the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on performance in the third quarter of 2008/09, October to December, 2008, in relation to the activities relating to the terms of reference of this Committee, be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.47 p.m.