

Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education
30 October 2006

Report of the Lead Officer

Annual Report of the Former Select Committee on Economic Regeneration for 2005/2006

Purpose of the Report

1. To receive and note the annual report of the former Select Committee on Economic Regeneration for 2005/2006.

Background

2. Article 6 of the Council's Constitution requires Select Committees to report annually to the full Council on the work carried out over the previous municipal year making both recommendations for key areas of future work programmes and any amended methods of working if appropriate.
3. As in previous years, the work programme for the year was rooted in the Council Plan in terms of both the key issues but also identifying the timetable for reports back.
4. Given the wide ranging coverage of this Select Committee with its remit to cover regeneration initiatives in the borough but also its remit for Corporate Human Resources, Equality and Diversity and ICT matters, it is difficult to single out a number of key issues.
5. However, three areas of ongoing development have been identified.
 - a) The continuation of the monitoring and development work in relation to Dudley's ICT Strategy.
 - b) The scrutiny of the Council's performance with regard to Equality and Diversity issues with particular emphasis on driving forward the Council's Disability Access work.
 - c) The remit for the scrutiny of planning policy and development raised the issue of an examination of Section 106 or the planning obligations placed on developers to ensure that they contributed to improvements in the community infrastructure. This covered housing, public open spaces, transportation and community development areas.

6. Notwithstanding these important issues, the Committee Work Programme for the 2005/2006 municipal year also included:
 - A range of Directorate Equality and Diversity Annual Reports
 - Capital Strategy
 - Mayoral Regeneration visit updates
 - Black Country Study Regeneration Issues
 - New Planning Regime – Local Development Framework
 - Quarterly Corporate Performance Report
 - Passenger Transport Infrastructure and Usage
 - Neighbourhood Management Issues
 - Visitor Economy
 - Innovation and Incubation Centre
7. To discharge this wide ranging but focused work programme the Select Committee again established the Economic Regeneration Working Group to pick up those areas which specifically were central to the economic regenerative issues across the borough.

ICT Strategy Developments

8. The first meeting of the Select Committee in the municipal year considered the present state of corporate play with regard to the Council's performance against BVPI 157, which requires 100% e-enablement of all services by 1st January 2006. At that stage with six months to go, all directorates, apart from the Directorate of Life Long Learning, were more than 80% complete. Some directorates ie. the then Social Services and Finance, were already 100% complete some six months early. In the event by January 2006 all Council Services had met the BVPI 157 target. By this time the Government were emphasising the Council meeting a series of 54 mandatory Priority Outcomes with regard to the extension of e-enablement to their new Transformation Agenda. This was achieved to target in Dudley as well

Equality and Diversity Issues

9. Early in the municipal cycle, the annual review of Equality and Diversity was produced and from this it was evident that in relation to BVPI 156 ie. 'the percentage of local authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable and accessible to disabled people' then 'according to the indicator the Council compares relatively poorly against the top metropolitan authority performers'. The Select Committee noted the improvements in accessibility that Dudley Council Plus would make to increasing this score. It was clear from the equivalent report in September 2006 that the performance had markedly improved throughout 2005/2006. In overall Human Resources and ICT terms the Select Committee looked forward to the implementation of the new staff monitoring system which should finally throw more light on whether the apparent low level of employees with a disability (BVPI 16a) compared to the top quartile metropolitan performers is a real performance issue or a data gathering problem. The position a year later demonstrates again a marked improvement despite the HR data system still awaiting full implementation. To ensure full and proper scrutiny of issues relating to disability within the community, then a series of reports and updates were presented to the

Committee. This included presentations on the Disability Access Strategy and the work being done to ensure economic regeneration in the Borough addressed the needs of people with a range of disability and health problems.

Planning Obligations – Section 106 Agreements

10. A series of Working Groups and Select Committees considered the position of the Council's policy, practice and financial monitoring of Section 106 Planning Obligation Agreements in the Borough. The importance of these Section 106 agreements to the regeneration of the Borough was evident by the fact that during the year a new post within DUE was created alongside a project plan which the Select Committee considered had 'clear robust and targeted' timescales. Ultimately, the scale of Section 106 financial obligations was presented to the Select Committee. Given the scale of potential capital investment this could give it remains a key issue for the Select Committee.
11. In addition to these three key issues, the Select Committee retained its continuing interest in:
 - a) The creation of an innovation and incubation centre in the Borough to ensure Dudley is at the cutting edge of new added value industrial development.
 - b) Issues from the Quarterly Corporate Performance reports, particularly in those areas of access and response to Dudley Council Plus where deviations from the target performance levels occurred. The Committee did note however a marked improvement during the year in response times to planning submissions.
 - c) The update of the Council's Capital Strategy and the continuing importance placed within it on viewing regeneration in the round with an emphasis on the need for it to be embedded within a wider community context.

Conclusion

12. The former Select Committee and its successor with its dramatically broadened remit of Culture and Adult Education is now even more central in driving forward regeneration in its widest sense. The interweaving of the cultural and sports agenda in relation to regeneration and the important training, learning and development perspective that adult education gives will be a major fillip to ensuring the economic regeneration of the Borough is viewed in its wider community context.

Finance

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

Law

14. The requirement for the Committee to make an annual report to the Council is contained in Article 6 of the Constitution.

15. 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.

Equality Impact

16. This report complies with the Council's equality and diversity policy and has taken these issues into account whilst scrutinising the areas of work described.
17. The Select Committee has the overarching responsibility for Corporate Equality and Diversity issues and therefore receives both the Council's Annual Review of Equality and Diversity as well as the annual Equality and Diversity reports from the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance, ICT and Procurement.

Recommendation

18. That the Annual Report of the former Select Committee on Economic Regeneration for 2005/2006 as set out above, be received and noted.



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