

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REGENERATION

Wednesday, 3rd November, 2004, at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT:-

Councillor K Turner (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Patrick (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Body, Mrs Cowell, Mrs Dunn, Mrs Faulkner, Ms Harris,
Islam, Rev Johnston and Rogers

Officers

Assistant Director of Housing (Strategy and Private Sector) (as Lead Officer to the Committee), Assistant Director of Finance, Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration), Head of ICT Services, Mr P Bickerdike and Mrs Johal (Directorate of Law & Property).

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1st September, 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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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 No 10 insofar as it related to the Lift project in view of her being the Chairman of Dudley Beacon and Castle Primary Care Trust.

Councillor Mrs Dunn declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 6 insofar as it related to the deceased person that had been involved in a recent tragic accident being a friend.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Jackson, Knowles and C Wilson and the Director of Finance.

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was reported that Councillor Mrs Dunn had been appointed to serve as a substitute for Councillor C Wilson and that Councillor Mrs Faulkner had been appointed to service as a substitute for Councillor Jackson for this meeting of the Committee only.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON LIFELONG LEARNING – RESOLUTION OF 6TH OCTOBER 2004)

The following resolution of the Select Committee on Lifelong Learning at its meeting held on 6th October, 2004 was submitted for consideration:-

24”(3) That the Select Committee on Economic Regeneration be requested to consider the proportion of black and minority ethnic applicants appointed to posts under the Council, in comparison to the numbers of candidates short-listed, and having regard to the Council’s targets, for posts both within the remit of the Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning and of the Council generally”.

The Assistant Director of Housing (Strategy and Private Sector) (as Lead Officer to the Committee), explained that the Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning figures, in relation to black and minority ethnic applicants, had revealed a major decline in the number of candidates from the initial application stage and at the appointment stage. He reported that concerns had been expressed and it had been requested that the matter be investigated with a view to identifying whether the problem was a general phenomenon across the borough of Dudley or whether it specifically related to the particular nature of posts within a Directorate. It was suggested that the Equality and Diversity Working Group undertake the investigation into the matter.

A Member commented that if investigations revealed the problem related to specific Directorates then the matter should be referred to Select Committee Chairs for consideration. It was also requested that, whilst undertaking the investigation, consideration be given to identifying whether the problem related to recruitment issues where consequently the Council did not have any powers to change.

RESOLVED

That the Economic Regeneration (Equality and Diversity) Working Group be requested to undertake an investigation to consider the proportion of black and minority ethnic applicants appointed to posts under the Council, in comparison to the numbers of candidates short-listed.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ECONOMIC REGENERATION (ECONOMIC REGENERATION) WORKING GROUP

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee seeking consideration of the recommendations of the Economic Regeneration (Economic Regeneration) Working Group was submitted.

The Lead Officer to the Committee referred to the recent tragic accident on King Street that had resulted in a death and he suggested that the Select Committee on the Environment should also be requested to consider the signposting in King Street and Flood Street in light of the accident.

RESOLVED

- (1) That, regarding the site as referred to in paragraph 3.1(a) of the report, the Select Committee on Community Safety be requested to ascertain if partnership working to address the issues could be explored and that, should the Select Committee on Community Safety not wish to pursue this, the matter be referred back to the Select Committee on Economic Regeneration, for further consideration.
- (2) That the Select Committee on Community Safety be requested to refer the issue of business crime generally to the jobs theme group for crime and disorder reduction of the local strategic partnership for detailed consideration.
- (3) That the Select Committee on the Environment be requested to note the comments made in paragraph 2.5 of the report submitted to the Working Group, with a view to reviewing the need to update signposts in the Borough and specifically on King Street and Flood Street following the recent tragic accident.

E-GOVERNMENT PROGRESS REPORT

A joint report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, as Corporate E-Champion and the Director of Finance updating members with the latest information on the Council's performance against BVPI 157, which requires 100% e-enablement of all services by 1st January 2006, was submitted.

During the brief discussion it was requested that future reports that were submitted to the Select Committee should be accompanied with a breakdown of figures by Directorate to enable easy monitoring. It was further requested that reports should be in a simple, easy to understand format and where Directorates were not achieving the required standard, exception reports and action plans should be appended.

RESOLVED

- (1) That BVPI 157 progress be reported on an exception basis only, allowing the focus to shift to the Priority Outcomes.
- (2) That future reports be in a simple, easy to understand format showing a breakdown in figures by Directorate and that, where applicable, exception reports and action plans be appended.
- (3) That the IEG4 statement be completed and submitted to the Government and a further report be submitted to the Select Committee for information.
- (4) That the current parallel approaches to the Priority Outcomes, looking at them as 54 individual projects and as a single programme in the context of the CATS initiative, be continued.

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BROADBAND NETWORK PROVISION TO COUNCILLORS

A report of the Director of Finance informing Members on the progress of the Broadband Network that would be available to Councillors was submitted.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted be noted.

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DISABILITY ACCESS STRATEGY

A report of the Director of Law and Property informing the Select Committee of the new strategy for improving access to Council buildings and services for people with disabilities was submitted together with a copy of a report on this matter submitted to the meeting of the Executive held on 27th October, 2004.

Mr Bickerdike (Directorate of Law and Property) advised that the Corporate Property Group would be responsible for the day to day running of the Disability Access Strategy and that the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group along with other Groups would periodically review and amend the Disability Access Strategy and the Disability Access Improvement Action Plan.

Mr Bickerdike commented that the Equality and Diversity Working Group had specifically shown an interest in BVPI 156 concerning the review of disability access to Council buildings. He reported that since the Working Group had expressed considerable concern at funding the audit survey from the £300,000 that had been allocated towards the modification of disability access to all Council buildings, the Corporate Property Group had agreed to fund the survey through alternative means.

The Assistant Director of Housing (Strategy and Private Sector) requested that progress reports on the audit and disability access to Council buildings be submitted to the Equality and Diversity Working Group and the Select Committee on a regular basis.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted, and in the report to the Executive, be noted.
- (2) That regular progress reports in relation to the audit survey and the disability access to Council buildings be submitted to the Equality and Diversity Working Group and the Select Committee on a regular basis.

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ECONOMIC REGENERATION WORKING GROUP VISIT TO THE BRIERLEY HILL REGENERATION PARTNERSHIP

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee updating members on the Economic Regeneration Working Group's visit to the Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership was submitted.

The Chairman advised that, due to the extremely interesting and informative visit that had taken place to the Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership, another visit would be arranged in the New Year for the Select Committee and an invitation would be extended to include all Members of the Council.

In response to a query from a Member in relation to a change of ownership of Merry Hill, the Assistant Director of the Urban Environment (Economic Regeneration) confirmed that news of a change of ownership had been announced. He advised that a formal offer had been made by an Australian group named Westfield, a large retail centre operator. He informed the meeting that when the takeover had been completed, the new owners would be approached by Dudley MBC, with a view to ensuring the vision of Brierley Hill is carried forward.

The Chairman requested that a progress report on the Black Country Study and on the impact of Brierley Hill on the five townships be submitted to the next meeting of the Select Committee.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted be noted.
- (2) That a progress report on the Black Country Study and on the impact of Brierley Hill on the five townships be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 7.40 pm.

CHAIRMAN