

## **Minutes of the Select Committee for Policy Review**

**2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2018 at 5.30 pm  
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor Worsey (Chair);  
Councillors Cherrington, Edwards and Rollins.

**Apologies:** Councillors Ali, Dr Jaron and Sandars.

7/18 **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

8/18 **Inclusive Growth in Sandwell**

The Select Committee received a presentation from the Executive Director – Resources and the Director – Regeneration and Growth providing an update on the Regeneration and Inclusive Growth Strategy and Delivery Plan.

Inclusive Growth was defined by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation as “enabling as many people as possible to contribute to and benefit from growth”. It was important to measure not just how much growth was generated, but how well it was shared across the whole of the population and the borough itself.

During the development of methods to track progress towards Vision 2030, Inclusive Growth was identified as the most suitable method as it was considered a natural fit with many of the ambitions within the Vision. The Local Government Association Peer Challenge which took place in January 2018 recommended that the Council consider and develop a strategic regeneration and skills plan for the borough to compliment Vision 2030. After reflecting on this recommendation, the Council had decided to take a more innovative approach and was working to develop a Regeneration and Inclusive Growth Strategy and associated Delivery Plan.

## Select Committee for Policy Review – 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2018

The Select Committee was advised that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, in partnership with the University of Manchester ran an Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit that provided inclusive growth information across the country by Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area. The Foundation had sought, through the West Midlands Combined Authority, a pilot authority to work with on inclusive growth and Sandwell had volunteered to take part. The Combined Authority itself has established an Inclusive Growth Unit to work across the region and ensure the principles and approach of Inclusive Growth were integrated throughout the work of the Combined Authority.

Several drivers for Inclusive Growth within Sandwell had been identified:

- The commitment to change from the Council and partners in line with Vision 2030;
- Sandwell had the lowest average annual full-time earnings in the Black Country;
- Complex supply side market failures including land supply, viability gaps, low skills and educational attainment;
- A need to build and ensure economic resilience;
- Poor health indicators for the people of Sandwell.

There were also external drivers impacting on Sandwell including an increasingly complex environment for policy, strategy, funding and delivery with national government, West Midlands Combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnerships all having a role. In addition, uncertainty caused by issues like Brexit and the government's appetite for devolution also had an impact.

It was proposed to commence a programme of development, engagement and communication with elected members, partners, local businesses and the communities of Sandwell to develop a Regeneration and Inclusive Growth Strategy. It was suggested that an update on this development work could be brought to a future meeting of the Select Committee.

From the comments and questions by members of the Select Committee, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

**Select Committee for Policy Review –  
2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2018**

- The key strategic industries in Sandwell were mostly manufacturing related, with wholesale and retail, construction and transport also important sectors.
- There was a significant number of inactive working age people in Sandwell. This was due to family caring responsibilities or health related matters that could be brought back into the active workforce through targeted interventions.
- Sandwell had the highest proportion of people with no formal qualifications in the Black Country.
- Numbers of apprenticeships in Sandwell had risen and were the highest in the Black Country.
- Good quality housing was a key priority in Sandwell. In order to meet current housing targets 13,420 more homes needed to be built in Sandwell by 2026.
- Travel to work flows indicated that the biggest flow was residents of Sandwell working in Birmingham, the second and third biggest were Dudley and Birmingham to Sandwell respectively. This demonstrated how well Sandwell was located to take advantage of increased prosperity across the region as a place to live and to work.
- It was not yet known which jobs and sectors people were commuting to and from Sandwell to work in.
- Aspiration, low skills and land quality issues were three key areas that needed to be focused on to bring about Inclusive Growth in Sandwell.
- The Council operated a successful apprenticeship programme and recently introduced higher level apprenticeships. It also had established summer internship and graduate programmes.
- Employees on the Council's graduate programme had carried out a project called Aspire. This was linked to Ambition 1 of Vision 2030 and was about understanding the aspirations of Sandwell's young people. Over 3000 responses to an online survey had been received and focus groups had also been held.

**Select Committee for Policy Review –  
2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2018**

- The Inclusive Growth Monitor had reported that, as at 2015, the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership area scored the lowest for both prosperity and inclusion. Whilst this was in common with other areas that had suffered from the loss of key industries, the Select Committee expressed concerns at the situation and requested that representatives of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership be invited to a future meeting to talk about their work.

The Select Committee was advised that it was intended to hold a member workshop as the start of ongoing involvement of councillors in developing the Regeneration and Inclusive Growth Strategy. Alongside this, a communication and engagement strategy would be developed to focus on meaningful engagement with partners, local businesses and Sandwell's communities. Members asked that the role of the West Midlands Combined Authority be explained as part of the involvement and engagement work to help build understanding of the key role of that Authority in this matter.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that the Leader be requested to consider introducing a portfolio within his Cabinet dedicated to aspirations and skills due to the importance of those issues for Sandwell;
- (2) that the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership be invited to a future meeting to discuss its work in Sandwell;
- (3) that a further report on the Regeneration and Inclusive Growth Strategy and Delivery Plan be submitted to the Select Committee in January 2019.

(Meeting ended at 6.28 pm)

Contact Officer: Alex Goddard Democratic Services Unit 0121 569 3178
--