

**MINUTES of the meeting of Social & Economic Development Scrutiny Committee held at The Larruperz Centre, Grammar School Close, Ross-on-Wye on Friday, 11th June, 2004 at 10.00 a.m.**

**Present:** Councillor A.C.R. Chappell (Chairman)  
Councillor J. Stone (Vice Chairman)

**Councillors:** Mrs P.A. Andrews, H. Bramer, M.R. Cunningham,  
J.G.S. Guthrie, D.C. Taylor and P.G. Turpin

**Co-opted Members:** Mrs C. Jones (Chamber of Commerce), Mrs. E. Newman (HALC)

**In attendance:** Councillor P. E. Harling

**1. CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN**

The Committee noted the reappointment at Council on 21st May 2004 of Councillor A.C.R. Chappell as Chairman and Councillor J. Stone as Vice-Chairman.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs S.P.A. Daniels, Councillor G.V. Hyde, Councillor J.C. Mayson, Councillor R.V. Stockton, Councillor A. L. Williams, Mr. G. Jones and Mr P. Collins.

**3. NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Councillor Mrs P. A. Andrews substituted for Councillor A.L. Williams.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor A.C.R. Chappell declared personal interests in agenda item 6 as a Friend of the Ross Festival, and agenda item 7 as Chairman of the Partnership Committee for the South Wye Single Regeneration Budget Scheme.

Councillor H. Bramer declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 6 as a voting member of the Ross Festival Board of Trustees.

**5. MINUTES**

The Committee noted that in the minutes of the meeting held on 15th April 2004, Mrs E. Newman was listed as a co-opted member and also recognised as being 'In Attendance'.

It was also noted that Councillor D.C. Taylor had replaced Councillor Mrs. R.F. Lincoln who since the last meeting had resigned from the Committee.

**RESOLVED:** That subject to the deletion of Mrs E. Newman from the 'In Attendance' listing as referred to above the minutes for the

**meeting held on 15th April 2004, be approved and signed by the Chairman.**

**6. FESTIVALS REVIEW - PROGRESS REPORT**

Councillor H. Bramer, having declared a prejudicial interest as a voting member of the Ross-on-Wye Festival Board of Trustees, left the meeting for the duration of this item. Councillor A.C.R. Chappell declared a personal interest as a Friend of the Ross Festival.

The Committee was updated on the progress made following the recommendations of the Festivals Review Group approved on 27th November 2003.

The Cultural Services Manager briefly brought the Committee up to date on actions taken following the recommendations of the Festivals Review. Members were told that at the time of the Festivals' Review the Ross Festival had been in crisis. That crisis had now stabilised following the provision of an interest free loan from the Council; receipt of half of next year's Service Level Agreement (SLA) payment; plus additional funding from Ross-on-Wye Town Council. As a result of the SLA Performance Indicators had been adopted which had originally been created for the revised Cultural Strategy. The Festivals Review has also resulted in greater co-operation between festivals in the County concerning: marketing, box office arrangements, administration, and in the exchange of ideas and good practice. Members were also informed of the wider impact of festivals, principally concerning the economic benefits to the County but also concerning the needs of the festivals in relation to matters such as transport and signage.

The Festival Director (Ross-on-Wye International Festival) informed Members how, since the time of the Festivals Review, changes had taken place regarding a revised business plan. Staffing levels had been reviewed in order to cut costs due to the burden of debt. That debt had now been removed due to financial support from Herefordshire Council, the Arts Council, and Ross-on-Wye Town Council. The Festival Director (Ross) also reported that the festival was working in partnership with the Courtyard sharing box office arrangements, and had increased its promotions mailing list by 20%. In relation to Performance Indicators post-festival market research was to be completed in order to quantify the festival success.

The Festival Director (Ledbury Poetry Festival) informed Members that enquiries for the Ledbury Poetry Festival were exceeding expectations with record box office receipts for the opening week. Members were reminded that the festival was more than just an annual event with events taking place throughout the year, principally through local schools. The Festival Director (Ledbury) assured Members of the strength of the festival and indicated that an SLA would enable the festival to achieve further success and financial security.

The Director of Policy and Community informed the Committee that whilst there was sympathy for a SLA for the Ledbury Poetry Festival, any decision regarding the allocation of a SLA would have to await the conclusions of the Review of Council Support to the Voluntary Sector which was expected later in the year.

The Chairman invited the Festival Directors to attend a future meeting of the Committee to inform Members how the festivals had progressed.

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted and a progress report be presented to the Committee after the festival period.**

**7. SOUTH WYE SRB - FORWARD STRATEGY**

Councillor A.C.R. Chappell declared a personal interest in the item as Chairman of the South Wye Regeneration Partnership.

The Committee was advised of the regeneration initiatives being undertaken in the South Wye area of Hereford City, through the Single Regeneration Budget Scheme (SRB) and reminded of the need to have a forward strategy in place for when the scheme ended in March 2006.

Herefordshire Council on behalf of the South Wye Regeneration Partnership (SWRP) had submitted a successful bid for SRB funding in 1999. An overall funding package over a 7-year period (September 1999 – March 2006) of £13.5m been had agreed, of which £4.3m was SRB funding. The SRB scheme covered the former wards of Belmont, Hinton and St Martins along with the Rotherwas Industrial Estate.

Feedback from local residents and stakeholders; the Police; Learning and Skills Council (LSC); Primary Care Trust (PCT) and local Councillors indicated that the SRB scheme was having a significant impact in addressing needs and demands in the South Wye area.

Members received a presentation from the SRB Programme Manager who outlined the benefits of the SRB scheme to the South Wye area across the themed areas of: Jobs, Education and Training; Housing, Transport and Environment; Quality of Life and Community Facilities.

The SRB scheme had resulted in a number of successful projects for the South Wye area ranging from the development of community facilities to the creation of learning and training opportunities for what was traditionally a low skills area. The SRB scheme had created networks providing a local focus point for a source of knowledge and information and had inspired people to realise personal goals they may otherwise never have achieved.

The Committee appreciated the work undertaken by the SWRP. However, Members noted that the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 indicated that the South Wye area was still an area of need and deprivation. SRB funding would end in March 2006. Therefore, all the benefits for the South Wye area instigated by SRB funding could be lost unless alternative funding was secured. It was noted further that individual projects were experiencing difficulties in securing grant funding to continue projects beyond 2006.

The loss of SRB funding and the consequent reduction in regeneration activity was an area of concern. In response the SWRP had established a Forward Strategy Working Group to examine the issues that still needed to be addressed as well as the options for delivery of regeneration projects in the South Wye area once SRB funding ceases.

**RESOLVED:**

**That (a) the initiatives that the South Wye Regeneration Partnership had supported in South Wye and the impact that the overall scheme be noted;**

**(b) the implications of the end the SRB scheme in South Wye**

**be noted;**

**and**

**(c) that Cabinet Members be recommended to actively seek to progress the work done by the SRB scheme after March 2006 when funding ceased.**

**8. ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE RE-INSPECTION**

The Policy and Commissioning Manager informed Members of progress towards the Adult Learning Inspectorates (ALI) re-inspection of the Council's Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded Adult and Community Learning (ACL) provision in 2004.

Members were informed that since the last report the ALI's lead inspector had carried out his first official monitoring visit. The ALI lead inspector, in reviewing the Post Inspection Action Plan and supporting evidence had verified that in most of the previously identified areas of weakness, some or good progress had been made. The ALI lead inspector also recognised that staffing appointments following the restructuring of the Lifelong Learning Development Unit (LLDU) would enable further progress against two areas in which it was felt there had so far been limited progress.

The Policy and Commissioning Manager expected further progress in the identified areas of weakness to be reported at the next inspection in July 2004 before a full re-inspection. Indications were that the full re-inspection was now likely to take place between October and December 2004.

In terms of funding, the Policy and Commissioning Manager reported that funding was still being sought to finance ACL in future years. However, Members noted that £50,000 per year for two years had been secured to further develop activities to support widening participation of ACL in rural areas of the County.

**RESOLVED: That the progress of the Council's Adult and Community Learning post inspection plan be noted.**

**9. POLICY AND COMMUNITY DIRECTORATE 2003/04 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (OUTTURNS)**

The Committee was informed of the performance of the non-corporate functions of the Policy and Community Directorate against their national and local performance indicators for 2003/04, including details of the main areas of activity undertaken by those services during the two months since the last report, and a summary of the main achievements of the year for each service.

Information on the key local indicators and any national Best Value indicators, together with comparative data available was contained within Appendix 1 of the report.

During the course of discussion the following principal points were noted:

- The Committee noted the success had in links between the Council and Chamber of Commerce Business Link with regard to the Supporting Businesses performance indicators.

- The Director of Policy and Community reported that the outturn figures for BV170a (Number of visits to/usages of museums per 1,000 of population) was 812 and not 798 as shown at page 24 of the Appendix.
- Concern was expressed regarding the fact that 92% of primary schools had required supplementary visits to their local libraries as their own school libraries were poorly maintained.

**RESOLVED: That the performance indicator information for 2003/04 set out in the report be noted.**

## **10. HEREFORDSHIRE PLAN AMBITION GROUPS**

The Committee considered recent progress in relation to the Herefordshire Plan Ambitions relevant to the Policy and Community Directorate.

Members were informed that the Directorate was involved in supporting the delivery of a number of the 10 Ambitions set out in the Herefordshire Plan. Progress in delivering each of these ambitions was set out in the report.

Significant progress was being made regarding the Tourism Ambition. In conjunction with Advantage West Midlands the Tourist Ambition Sub-Group was in the process of forming itself into a Designation Management Partnership, which would see the establishment of a formal tourism organisation in the County in the wake of the Regional Tourist Board, which had now been dissolved.

The Director of Policy and Community informed Members that the Economic Development Strategy (EDS) was approaching its next stage of development and action plans would be drawn up for later presentation to the Committee.

The Chamber of Commerce representative stated that the EDS represented an opportunity for the Council. However, it was critical that the policies that were being developed were specific to the County's individual needs.

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**

Because there were various issues concerning the postal service in Herefordshire the Chairman suggested holding a meeting of the Committee in September or October 2004 specifically to debate the postal service. This suggestion was welcomed by the Committee.

The meeting ended at 11.35 am

**CHAIRMAN**