

MINUTES of the meeting of Community Services Scrutiny Committee held at: The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 17th December, 2007 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor TM James (Chairman)
Councillor RH Smith (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: CM Bartrum, DJ Benjamin, PGH Cutter, DW Greenow, KS Guthrie, MAF Hubbard, B Hunt, PM Morgan and RV Stockton

In attendance: Councillors WLS Bowen, PJ Edwards and MD Lloyd-Hayes

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mrs E Newman (Co-opted Member) and from Councillor AJM Blackshaw, Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services).

27. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Mr M Wilson substituted for Mrs E Newman.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Name	Agenda Item	Interest
Councillor TM James	11	Personal – as Arts Council Board member
Councillor RH Smith	11	Personal – as Council appointed Board Member, Courtyard Centre for the Arts.
Councillor PGH Cutter	During discussion on item 5	Personal – through involvement in organising Christmas Lights at Ross.
Councillor RV Stockton	Generally	Personal – as former Cabinet Member.
Mr M Wilson	6, 7, 11	Personal – as former Cabinet Member.

29. MINUTES

In considering the minutes the following amendments were proposed:

Minute No 20 – Presentation by Cabinet Member – add to the end of the first bullet point: The Committee was concerned about changes being made in advance of the outcome of the Tourism Scrutiny Review.

Minute No 20 – Presentation by Cabinet Member – add at the end of the eighth bullet point: The Committee expressed concern about any decisions in advance of the planned scrutiny review of the Community Safety and Drugs Partnership.

Minute No 23 – Revenue Budget 2007/08 – add at the end of the second

paragraph: The Committee were concerned about the accuracy of the figures reported.

RESOLVED: That subject to the above amendments being made the minutes for the meeting held on 8th October 2007, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

The Chairman referred to a letter from the Market Towns Forum suggesting that the disparity in the funding awarded by the Council towards the provision of Christmas lights in the Market Towns be investigated. The Director of Adult and Community Services reported that changes to the funding were contained in the 2008/9 budget. On considering the suggestion the Committee requested a report to the next meeting setting out the position including any comparators with surrounding authorities.

RESOLVED: that a report on Market Towns Christmas Lighting be included in the work programme for the April 2008 meeting.

31. ROTHERWAS FUTURES PROJECT

The Committee considered an update on the Rotherwas Futures Project.

The Committee received a presentation by Alan Ronald, Economic Regeneration Officer (Strategic and Major Projects). The themes and main points of his presentation were:

Project Objectives:

- Development of the new road to give flood free access to the area and avoid existing low railway bridge.
- Refurbishment of existing properties where relevant.
- Development of site service infrastructure to provide up to 35.59 acres of additional land for development.
- Increase attraction to high tech and knowledge based industries.
- Delivery of marketing and management strategy and materials to promote plot/building sales and leases.

Organisation and funding:

- the project was a joint venture between the Council and AWM.
- AWM to provide £6,650,000 grant towards road costs and £2,850,000 investment capital for estate work.
- Council to ring fence capital receipts and proportion of income from Rotherwas towards estate development, the balance to come from prudential borrowings.
- Road cost estimated at £12.1M, estate work £6.6M.

Road development:

- It was within budget with over £6M spent
- On schedule for opening - Spring 2008
- Project would include Holme Lacy Road traffic restrictions (to be finalised)
- Rotherwas Ribbon had been built over but with extra protection and regular monitoring.
- The A49 roundabout would open early 2008.
- The new Hoarwithy Road bridge would open before Christmas 2007.

- Delays had occurred due to Welsh Water services; work on the Ribbon and the protection of power lines over A49.

Estate Work

- Existing buildings to be refurbished by end 2012
- Improvements to estate image and signage (possible name change to simply "Rotherwas")
- Improvements to broadband provision.
- Provide flood alleviation for plots available for development (Phase 1) by autumn 2008.
- Make service provision at southern magazine area to provide development plots (Phase 2) by mid 2009.
- Produce marketing & management strategy by spring 2008.
- Consider options for Phase 3.

Estate Work Status

- Refurbishment of buildings had started.
- Negotiations were underway to have oldest buildings refurbished by new tenants.
- A flood model had been built and were in discussions with Environment Agency over flood schemes.
- Rotherwas businesses involved in solving broadband issue.
- External Agency employed to advise on marketing and design over next few months.
- Topographical and geo-physical surveys complete.
- Full archaeological and ground investigation work being specified.

Expected Outcomes

- Improved access, facilities and image to attract inward investors in high tech and knowledge based sectors.
- Removal of access constraints and provide development opportunities for existing businesses.
- Safeguarding of existing jobs on Rotherwas.
- 850 new jobs on Rotherwas within 10 years.
- Lever in >£20M private sector investment.

Rotherwas Enterprise Centre

- This would be one of 3 hubs in Herefordshire funded by AWM.
- Work has started on a site off the Straight Mile road, near the new roundabout
- Some areas should be bookable for larger meetings, training etc.
- The hubs and spokes will provide a focus for providing support to businesses, via Business Link.
- The centre will be built and run by Evans Easyspace Ltd.
- Work on the Enterprise Hub at Leominster had also been started.

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

- Holme Lacy Road traffic restrictions may include weight restrictions and traffic calming measures.
- While the focus will be on providing more Hi-tech jobs, a wide range of jobs would be available.
- A number of start-up units would be available on a time limited basis to ensure a general turnover in occupancy.
- AWM and the Council were funding the project. No developer contribution

had currently been secured although the Council was actively seeking contributions via Sec 106 funding. Should such contributions be secured then the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy would be adjusted to release funding for other schemes.

- Land purchase had been completed by compulsory purchase order, however, negotiations were ongoing concerning land values and this may effect the final project cost.
- The Committee considered it essential that adequate broadband was provided. Broadband speeds were effected due to the distance from the Hereford exchange. BT were reluctant to provide new broadband cabling on the grounds that such an investment made a poor business case for them. Other methods of provision e.g. wireless technology, was being investigated. The Committee expressed concern about broadband provision both to the estate and the County as a whole and requested update reports.
- Discussing the type of buildings to be provided the Committee noted that various size units would be provided, however, the Committee suggested that a number of flexible buildings with sliding partition walls should be provided, thereby providing a varying amounts of floor space as companies grow.
- The Learning and Skills Council were reviewing the likely range of skills needed in view of the Rotherwas and ESG development.
- Any plan to locate Council offices to Rotherwas would be addressed though the Accommodation Strategy which would be reviewed by Strategic Monitoring Committee.
- Flood compensation schemes were included in the project budget, however, any down-stream flood alleviation schemes would need to be reviewed. Responding to concerns over using the Environment Agency 1960 theoretical Flood maps, particularly in view of changing weather patterns, the Economic Regeneration Officer reported that the consultants would be discussing these issues with the Environment Agency.
- Responding to concerns about the long-term costs of financing this project by prudential borrowing and the Councils involvement with the ESG project the Director of Adult and Community Services reported that the Council's financial input to the ESG project was via land values and that the Medium Term Financial Strategy had identified the capacity to do both projects.
- The Council were unable to offer any financial incentives to attract new businesses. However, it was understood that AWM may be able to offer limited incentives for businesses to relocate. It was reported that currently there was a healthy take up of units and this was expected to continue.
- A notional line north of the Straight Mile was protected from development in, planning terms, should a future extension to the road be considered.
- The project included improved information and signage. Facilities for parking up of lorries would be investigated further.
- Progress with the building refurbishment programme was dependant on the type and period of lease. Currently one building had been started and one was awaiting commencement.

RESOLVED: That

- 1. it be recommended to the Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services) that further consideration be given to:**
 - a) the development of a marketing strategy for attracting further businesses to Rotherwas;**
 - b) improving the provision of broadband facilities at the estate;**
 - c) ensuring that proper flood alleviation measures are put in place to protect and enhance the value of properties on**

- the estate;
 - d) the range of buildings on the estate particularly the possibility of 'flexible buildings', ensuring that companies can grow;
 - e) the Council's future requirement for office space and the potential for an energy from waste site.
2. that a report on broadband provision to the estate be made to the next meeting and a report on broadband provision to the County be included in the Committee work programme for a future meeting.

32. ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Committee considered a report on the performance indicators position and other performance management information for the Economic and Community Services Division within the Adult and Community Services Directorate.

The Head of Economic and Community Services presented the report and commented that overall the position was healthy. Twenty nine performance indicators were on target or better (green status), eleven were rated amber and five were red. In relation to those rated red she reported that: LPSA2 Reduce violent crime – related to reports and not convictions; LPSA2 Reduce criminal damage – incidents of minor damage e.g. graffiti, were being addressed partly through the Council's Streetscene operations. Both LPSA2 targets contributed to the target LPSA2 15% reduction in overall British crime. BVPI220c Library visits per 1,000 population – due to population changes, the quality of stock held and disabled access issues at a number of sites the target was unlikely to be met. However, it was hoped that the introduction of a 'loyalty scheme' would increase the visitor numbers. BVPI170c No. of pupils visiting museums – Insufficient staff to deliver sessions and the timing of Mobile Museum tours had effected the achievement of this target.

The Committee noted that the time involved in undertaking Health and Safety assessments prior to any school visits could be a contributory factor to the fall in pupil visitor numbers.

The Committee also noted that in a number of instances the Council had no direct influence over the 'Crime and Disorder' targets. It was, however, assisting its partners to bring about change.

RESOLVED: That the position set out in the monitoring report be noted.

33. REVENUE BUDGET 2007/08

The Committee considered the projected outturn for the financial year 2007/2008 for Economic and Community Services.

The Head of Economic and Community Services presented the report for the period to 30 November 2007, copies of which had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

She highlighted that the previous report had indicated a likely £40k overspend, however, since then a number of mitigating actions had been taken to reduce this position and a £19k overspend was now forecast reflecting the requirements to meet the pay settlement that had not been budgeted for centrally.. The report set out a number of pressures on the budget and actions taken to manage the remainder of this years financial position.

RESOLVED: That the position set out in the Revenue Budget report be noted.

(The Committee adjourned for 5 minutes and resumed at 11.45am)

34. ACTION PLANS FOR CULTURAL SERVICES INSPECTION; REVIEW OF HEREFORD CITY PARTNERSHIP; THE 18-35 REVIEW AND THE REVIEW OF MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL CENTRES

The Committee considered progress in implementing the action plans arising from the Cultural Services Inspection; Review of Hereford City Partnership; the 18-35 Review and Museums and Heritage Centres.

The Head of Economic and Community Services presented the report together with associated action plans at Appendix 1-4, which set out the proposed action and progress to 1st November 2007 for each action plan.

On scrutinising the action plans the Committee noted the following points in response to questions raised:

CPA Cultural Services Inspection

- R1b – a value for money outcome had been established and was expected to be confirmed in January 08.
- 36 –Herefordshire Partnership had decided not to include “culture” as a priority indicator in the new LAA..
- 44b – Cabinet Member Briefing on 3rd October considered that the cost benefit analysis did not prove value for money and therefore rejected the proposal. The situation would, however, be monitored.
- 46 – Generic Directorate wide standards had been produced, however, implementation was now expected to be January 08.
- 50 – Cabinet Member Briefing on 3rd October decided not to seek Green Flag accreditation for Queenswood on resource grounds favouring feedback via satisfaction surveys.
- 51 – the Head of Economic and Community Services would brief the local ward Members for Ledbury on current progress concerning the Masters House.

18-35 Review

Key elements would be integrated into the Economic Development Plan.

Ref I - the potential for live/work units were being investigated at Ross. Work was being undertaken with schools to ensure that pupils were aware of the range of employment/business opportunities in the County.

Ref iv - the Business Start up Grant had been frozen due to budget position and not meeting the objective. A revised programme would be established for 2008/9.

Hereford City Partnership

Ref 17.1 – the Council through the Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services) would take the lead on developing a strategic vision for Herefordshire. This work would be integrated with other support work and proposals for ESG and would involve input from various stakeholders.

Ref 17.4 – the recommendation was being considered as part of the current budget process. It was commented that the current City centre retailers needed support to ensure that the retail centre didn't fragment post ESG development.

The Hereford City Manager reported that the main leaseholder of Maylord Orchards

had been a major financial supporter of the City Partnership, however, due to the change in leaseholder revised financial support was being sought. She also commented that the quality of the street trading in High Town could be better.

Museums and Heritage Centres

- Council sites were fully accredited.
- Ref ii – despite budget cuts regionally, the West Midlands funding packages were continuing.
- Ref iii – the Community Grant Scheme was still available to applicants.
- Ref iv – An existing Museum insurance scheme, that fulfilled many of the requirements, had been identified and therefore may negate the setting up of a local partnership insurance arrangement.
- Ref vi – work was underway to achieve a suitable methodology to measure the social and economic impacts of heritage in accordance with the CPA outcome.

In relation to all the action plans it was suggested that to save the duplication of reporting to consecutive meetings and officer time updating reports, that action plan reporting for future reviews be by exception reporting.

RESOLVED That the report be noted and in the future update reports on Action Plans following a Scrutiny Review be by exception report.

35. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme.

The work programme at Appendix 1 was noted. Further to Minute No. 30 a report setting out the position regarding Market Towns Christmas Lighting be added to the programme for the April meeting.

Further to Appendix 2 to the report the Director of Adult and Community Services suggested that an update on the Livestock Market relocation be reported to the April meeting.

It was noted that the scoping statement for the Review of the Community and Safety Drugs Partnership should focus on the degree of public engagement in the partnership.

RESOLVED: That subject to the above amendments the work programme be approved and reported to the Strategic Monitoring Committee.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: That under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12(A) of the Act, as indicated below.

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

36. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE COURTYARD CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

THE FOLLOWING IS THE FULL MINUTE OF PROCEEDINGS

The Committee considered the action plan for the Courtyard Centre for the Arts in response to the recommendations of the 2006 scrutiny review.

The Head of Economic and Community Services presented the exempt report. She reported that the Community Services Scrutiny Committee had conducted a review of the Courtyard Centre for the Arts, with a report considered by the Committee on 31st January 2005. This Review was revisited in 2006 with a second report that was considered by the Committee on 6th June, 2006. The reviews addressed the services and operation of the Courtyard, specifically considering the financial challenges of running the arts centre. Both review reports were passed to the Executive for consideration and action.

Since the reviews were conducted, the Courtyard Board had commissioned an external consultant to work with the management on the overhaul of operations at the centre. This had resulted in a comprehensive action plan covering areas beyond the scope of the scrutiny review of 2006, with a five-year plan to recover the deficit position.

The action plan, attached at Appendix 1 to the exempt report, had been produced by the Courtyard in response to the recommendations of the 2006 review. The Action Plan had been presented to Cabinet on 29th November, with the Courtyard's action to date noted. Cabinet have asked for the Courtyard to give an update of progress in six months time.

The Committee debated a number of issues covered by the Action Plan namely: the potential for franchising elements of the business; ensuring a varied but economically sustainable programme of events; the overall financial position of the Centre; the need to be involved, and part of, the ESG development; cinema facilities; catering provision; car parking provision; the current level of support by the Council and the Arts Council and the Courtyard's overall progress in implementing the action plan.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 1.06 p.m.

CHAIRMAN