

MINUTES of the meeting of Community Services Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 1, Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford on Friday, 17 October 2008 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor TM James (Chairman)
Councillor PM Morgan (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: DJ Benjamin, PGH Cutter, GFM Dawe, BA Durkin,
DW Greenow, KS Guthrie, B Hunt, RH Smith and RV Stockton

In attendance: Councillors WLS Bowen and PJ Edwards

64. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor MAF Hubbard and Mr G Woodman.

65. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor TM James	6	Personal – City Partnership
Councillor DJ Benjamin	6	Personal – City Partnership
Councillor RH Smith	6	Personal – as Council appointed Board Member, Courtyard Centre for the Arts.
	8	Personal – as Council appointed Board Member, West Mercia Police Authority.

67. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes for the meeting held on 17 July 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no suggestions from the public for future scrutiny.

69. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE EDGAR STREET GRID PROJECT

The Committee considered a report on the Scrutiny Review of the Edgar Street Project, held on 30th September 2008 at the Courtyard Centre for the Arts, Hereford, presented by the Head of Economic and Community Services.

The Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services) replied to a query from a Member by saying that the Council was adopting a holistic approach to the regeneration of the city, and that this included the carbon footprint. Measures were being considered ranging from Park & Ride, the transport infrastructure and the passage of traffic through and around the city. Discussions were underway with Arriva regarding the Transport Hub, and the first meeting of the Working Group to address the matter would take place in January 2009. Consideration was also being

given to the issue of lorry and freight transport into the city. He added that the reduction of emissions from traffic travelling around the city looking for car parking spaces should not be underestimated.

A Member thanked Officers for the report, and suggested that it would be possible to get better engagement with the project if greater linkage could be demonstrated between the project and the city, especially on Widemarsh and Catherine Streets. The Chief Executive, ESG Ltd said that there was a great deal of work in hand with the project, and one of the options was to siphon more traffic out of the inner ring road. One way of doing this would be to increase the size of the link road. The Cabinet Member added that Ben Hamilton-Bailey had been engaged as an urban design consultant and was nationally renowned in his field. It was important that the image of the city itself should be carefully considered, and central to this was the impact of Blue School Street and the link with Widemarsh Street. There would need to be a commonality of image for the area and choice of materials that would provide a link to the city in visual terms. Mr Hamilton-Bailey would help to ensure that the single city concept was achieved.

The Committee considered the recommendations of the report. It was agreed that Cabinet be requested to consider Recommendation 7.1, that the scheme be referred to as 'The Expanded City Centre'. It was further agreed that Cabinet be requested to consider Recommendation 7.2, subject to the following amendment:

Consultation – The importance of full consultation is recognised both to ensure the best results for the people of Herefordshire, but also to ensure compliance with planning regulations. ESG Ltd should continue with its current consultation (both giving and receiving) and to investigate and use other innovative methods of consultation as appropriate.

It was agreed that Cabinet be requested to consider Recommendations 7.3 and 7.4.

A Member stated that it was imperative that better linkages should be created to the Courtyard, and asked that the recommendation be strengthened. The Chief Executive, ESG Ltd replied to a comment from another Member by saying that there was ongoing detailed analysis of the project, and that consideration had been given to move the proposed multiplex cinema development further North on the site, and therefore closer to the Courtyard.

In reply to a further question, he went on to say that a bridge across the A49 was not entirely out of the question, but that it was not necessarily the best solution to the problem. A bridge was appropriate were there was a differential of levels between the sides that were to be joined, but it was more appropriate wherever possible to keep pedestrians at the same level they were starting out from. A bridge at this point over Edgar Street would also be extremely costly, and would not be an efficient use of public money. The Director of Regeneration added that a solution to the issue of the A49 coming through the City was required. The Council would continue to work with the Highways Agency to construct an outer distributor road and therefore allow the A49 through Hereford to be downgraded. After a brief discussion it was agreed that Cabinet be requested to consider Recommendation 7.5 of the report.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the report of the Edgar Street Grid Review, in particular its Recommendations set out at section 7, as amended in item 7.2, should be submitted to Cabinet.**
 - (b) the Executive's response to the Review including an action plan be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive had approved its response;**
 - (c) a further report on progress with respect to the Review be made**

after six months with consideration then being given to the need for any further reports to be made.

and;

- (d) **A further report on the following areas should be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee: Hereford City Centre Regeneration Strategy; Support for Businesses relocating from the Grid and Inclusion of the Football Ground in the development.**

70. REVENUE BUDGET 2008/09

The Committee noted the Community Services Revenue outturn 2007/08. The Environment & Culture Accountant reported that the total Community Services budget for 2008/09 had increased to £9,925,722 from £9,789,458. The net increase of £136,264 related to the transfer of budget relating to the annual contributions to Job Evaluation costs for staff transferred to HALO and Amey Wye Valley Ltd. The budget had previously been held centrally. The Council was required to meet the financial impact of increases in pay of the transferred posts affected by the single status agreement. The original central budget had been set based on reasonable assumptions about pay grades but funding had become insufficient as staff progressed through the grades. Cabinet had agreed that this should be covered by reserves. There was a reduction of £165k in Economic Development which related to income from commercial premises previously used to fund Edgar Street Grid (ESG) operational costs. The funding had now ceased and Advantage West Midlands would now directly grant fund the operational costs of ESG. There was a reduction of Management budget by £28,231 following the disaggregation of the Head of Service budgets. This reflected a transfer of the budget associated with the reorganisation of Directorates.

A Member expressed concern that the report did not include a clear exposition of what actions were being undertaken with regard to the budget out-turn. He asked that reports should not, in the future, condone apparent inactivity.

In reply to a query, the Director of Environment and Culture said that the main area of overspend in Cultural Services was as a result of the cost of maintaining the public access computers within libraries. There had been an increase in the Service Level Agreement, and whilst there was capital to purchase computers, there was no revenue to support their operation. The amount was not insignificant, and measures were being taken to address the issue. He undertook to circulate a note to Members laying out the detail of the measures. The Interim Head of Culture and Leisure added that there were eighty PC's in a network, and the contract allowed for the maintenance of the infrastructure, the network and the PC's themselves. The charges were consistent across the Authority.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that the next report should indicate action taken to address the projected overspends.

71. ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Committee noted the report on the performance indicator position and other performance management information for the Economic and Community Services Division within the Regeneration Directorate and Cultural Services functions within the Environment and Culture Directorate. The Improvement Manager reported that following the merger of the two Directorates, the report still had a transitional format. It was intended that the report would be harmonised with the performance reports

that were submitted to the Strategic Monitoring Committee and Cabinet. In the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:

- In reply to concerns from Members over the veracity of the data and its bearing on the status of the PI, the Improvement Manager said that, in this baseline year, if there was no historical data the PI was flagged as amber. The Committee would be provided with a clearer view at future meetings, when the new indicators were fully operational. He concurred with Members that there should be no discrepancy between the reporting of amber and green PIs, and that this would be rectified in the future.
- In reply to further concerns, the Head of Economic and Community Services said that the PIs that were reported on were designed to provide the Committee with a cross section of the work of the service. Some of the national PIs were not prioritised within the County, and it was not considered appropriate to include them in the report.
- Councillor Smith thanked Officers for the report, but said that he did not consider the document to be fit for purpose in its existing format, and proposed that it should be rejected. The Improvement Manager suggested that an informal meeting of the Directors and the Chairman and Vice Chairman be held to address the structure of the report and to address the issues that had been raised.

RESOLVED:

- That: (a) the report on performance be noted,**
and;
(b) areas of concern and exception continue to be monitored.

72. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme.

The work programme at Appendix 1 was noted. It was agreed that a report on the Flavours of Herefordshire Food Festival would be received at the next meeting as well as a report on the PACT meetings.

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

Statement from the Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services)

The Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services) reported that of the twelve finalists for the 2008 Enterprising Britain awards, Herefordshire had won the Runner up prize, with Scarborough taking the title of UK Enterprise Capital. The Awards Ceremony had been held at 11 Downing Street the previous evening. He thanked the Head of Economic and Community Services and her team for all the work they had put into the project, and congratulated them on their success.

The Council had taken a holistic vision for Herefordshire and the City that would be used as the building blocks to help regenerate the County. The City itself would be taken forward to the 2009 competition with the intention of winning.

The meeting ended at 3.25 p.m.

CHAIRMAN