

MINUTES of the meeting of Community Services Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 29 June 2009 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor TM James (Chairman)
Councillor KG Grumbley (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: DJ Benjamin, DW Greenow, KS Guthrie, B Hunt, RH Smith and RV Stockton

Co-opted Members Mrs G Churchill (HALC), Mr B Seamans (LINK) and Mr G. Woodman (Hereford & Worcester Chamber of Commerce)

In attendance: Councillors WLS Bowen and PJ Edwards

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor MAF Hubbard and Mr P Hands.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor RH Smith	8	Personal – West Mercia Police Authority
Councillor B Hunt	8	Personal – West Mercia Police Authority

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

There were no suggestions from the public for issues for future Scrutiny.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes for the meetings held on 11 March and 6 April 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. ANNUAL REPORT ON ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Cabinet Member for Economic and Community Services presented his report.

The Cabinet Member took the Committee through his report, and highlighted the following areas in particular:

- Enterprising Britain UK Runner Up Award
- Rotherwas Access Road opened in July 2008 with at least £1m worth of new business created

University Challenge – the development of a bid to the Higher Education Funding Council for a University Centre for Herefordshire which should accommodate a further 200+ students.

Free swimming for 16 and 60+ at Halo Leisure Centres ; overall participants for May 2009 were 3225 which was 25% up for 16+ compared to May 2008 and 28% up for 60+ compared to May 2008.

In 2008/9 the Economic and Community Services budget saved £60k to contribute to the budget pressures within the Regeneration Directorate.

Although a large number of performance indicators were new for 2008-09 there were a number of areas where targets were achieved and performance was better than in 2007-08. These were:

- Number employed in knowledge and technology intensive industries (increased from 10,923 to 11,722)
- People killed or seriously injured (down from 133 to 93)
- Children killed or seriously injured (down from 11 to 6)
- Violent crime per 100,000 population (down from 15.6 to 13.9)
- Vehicle crimes per 100,000 population (down from 5 to 4.8)
- Overall crime numbers (down from 11,172 to 10,471)

In reply to a question, the Cabinet Member said that the Hereford Partnership was designed to promote the growth of the City centre. The success of producing a statutory document between the partners in order to achieve this end was no mean achievement.

In reply to a question, the Head of Economic and Community Services said that the University Challenge would provide a higher education facility in the County that would be different from the traditional university provision. The emphasis would be far more on distance learning, although it was envisaged that courses would also be held on the Blackfriars site within the City.

A Member asked how far the increase in funding to the Parish Path Partnership scheme went to meet the demands of the parishes. The Interim Parks, Countryside and Leisure Development Manager replied that maintenance was generally up to date in those parishes that were members of the scheme.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

7. REVIEW OF THE BACKLOG OF DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS

The Committee received a report on Definitive Map Modification Orders. The Interim Parks, Countryside and Leisure Development Manager reported that the Council currently had a backlog of 82 modification order applications awaiting determination. The number of new applications being made per year was variable, but over the past eight years it averaged at 7.6 applications per year. At present there are 13 high-priority applications, 33 medium-priority applications, and 36 low-priority applications awaiting determination. An investment of £200k per year over three years would be needed to clear the backlog up to determination stage. Beyond that, a further £300k per year would be required to employ extra legal support and open up the routes on the ground.

Whilst the clearance of the backlog of Definitive Map Modification Orders up to determination stage within 3 years was possible, it would in all likelihood result in the backlog being shifted along rather than cleared. The service was currently concentrating on high priority applications which were those that provided the most benefit to the community. Considerable parts of the process were out of the Council's control so it would not be possible to completely clear the backlog within 3 years as it is unlikely that either the council's Legal services or the Secretary of State would be able to deal with a dramatic increase in orders and the subsequent objections. The service should however

ensure that some orders are made this year. The service delivery review will provide the opportunity to review the resources committed to this area of work and to possibly re visit the current statement of priorities.

The Council was undergoing review of a number of Services with Amey, who currently had two contracts with the Council to deliver a number of Services including Rights of Way. It had been decided that it was in the Council's interest to commission out all aspects of Public Rights of Way leaving only those areas that could not be delegated. Amey would be responsible for all areas of the Service including Definitive Modification Orders.

In response to a question, the Director, Environment and Culture said that strategy work would remain with the Council after the Service was transferred to Amey, who would be expected to deliver to the Council's priorities. The priorities for the Directorate were set by the Executive.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- A Member said that he found the report to be unsatisfactory, and said that firmer proposals were required.
- That the budget for footpaths for the previous year had been £230k. This had to cover the maintenance of 3,500 km of rights of way, as well as all the legal work associated with Definitive Map Modification order work.
- A Motion that an exempt report should be provided to the Committee on how the Definitive Map Modification order backlog would be addressed in the contractual arrangements with Amey, was lost.

Mr Everitt, a resident of Ledbury, addressed the meeting. He said that he had submitted four applications for footpath Definitive Map Modifications in 2006 and, bearing in mind both the backlog and the way certain applications were prioritised, it was unlikely that his applications would be dealt with in his lifetime. He asked whether this was an appropriate level of service that the public should expect from the Council.

The Director of Environment and Culture replied that the Service extracted the maximum value for money from the funds that were available to it. There was scope to improve the existing service, and this was why it was being transferred to Amey.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) **Concern was expressed regarding the continued backlog of Definitive Map Modification Orders.**

and;

- b) **That the need for improvement in the resourcing of the Service, both financial and personnel, should be highlighted to the Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services).**

8. EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSE TO THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH THE HEREFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY AND SAFETY DRUGS PARTNERSHIP

The Committee received a report on the Executive's response made to it in the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Community Engagement in Community Safety and Drugs Partnership. The Head of Economic and Community Services reported that all the recommendations from the review had been accepted by Cabinet. In the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

- A review of PACT meetings had been undertaken and the changes that had been recommended would be implemented in the next round of PACT meetings which would start in September 2009.
- That more support was required, both financial and administrative, for the Drug and Alcohol Forums if they were to continue to exist in some Market Towns.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) **The attention of the Cabinet Member should be drawn to the lack of funding for Safer Herefordshire Forums, and would urge that continued and enhanced funding to these groups be confirmed in order to prevent their demise.**

and;

- b) **The Committee acknowledged that the report was the response by the Executive to the scrutiny review recommendations, but would have welcomed an update on activity as the response did not contain up to date information.**

9. HEREFORD UNITED FOOTBALL GROUND LEASES

The Committee received a report on the options for development of the Hereford United Football Ground within the context of the wider ESG development. The Council and ESG Ltd had held a number of meetings with the head tenants and the football club to discuss proposals for a commercial redevelopment of part of the ground to fund the refurbishment of the football ground and stands. Discussions had reached the stage of preparing Heads of Terms for a re-structuring of the lease to permit such a development. However, it had become clear that neither the head tenant nor the football club was prepared to proceed with such a development in the current financial circumstances

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

10. COMMUNITY/CULTURAL SERVICES REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee received a report on the final revenue outturn position for Community Services for 2008/09 and the outlined agreed budget for 2009/10. The Community Services Accountant reported that, as previously projected, expenditure had exceeded budget by £200k in relation to the HALO job evaluation costs. Over time funding had become insufficient as staff had progressed through the pay grades. For 2008/09 this had been met by transferring the sum from reserves at year end. From 2009/10 the amount was being built into the Council's base budget.

She went on to say that Libraries had overspent by £102k, mainly as a result of an insufficient budget to meet IT service level agreement costs which included maintenance of the public access PC's. There was an overspend on Public Rights of Way of £30k as a result of contract inflation on works carried out by Amey Wye Valley Ltd.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

**11. ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE AND REGENERATION DIRECTORATES:
PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR 1 APRIL 2008 - 31 MARCH 2009**

The Committee received a report to update Members on the achievement of targets for 2008-09 relevant to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee and contained within the Environment & Culture and Regeneration Directorates Plans. It was noted that indicators were moving in a positive direction, with 69% showing green, and 10% showing red.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

12. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report to update Members on the achievement of targets for 2008-09 relevant to the Committee and contained within the Environment & Culture and Regeneration Directorates Plans.

RESOLVED: That the report was noted.

The meeting ended at 12.15 pm

CHAIRMAN