

MINUTES of the meeting of Community Services Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 6 December 2010 at 10.00 am

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

Councillors: SPA Daniels, BA Durkin, DW Greenow, KS Guthrie, MAF Hubbard, B Hunt, SJ Robertson, RH Smith and Mr G. Woodman

In attendance: Councillors WLS Bowen and PJ Edwards

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor PL Bettington and AP Taylor.

38. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor SPA Daniels substituted for Councillor AP Taylor.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Name	Item	Interest
Cllr MAF Hubbard	12 - Edgar Street Grid - Update	Director of a not for profit campaigning organisation, It's Our City
Cllr SPA Daniels	10 - Progress Report from the Safer Herefordshire Scrutiny Review Group	A family member is employed by Safer Herefordshire
Cllr RH Smith	10 - Progress Report from the Safer Herefordshire Scrutiny Review Group	Council appointed Member of the West Mercia Police Authority.

40. MINUTES

On considering the accuracy of the Minutes, the following amendments were made:

The penultimate bullet point on page 9: 'ESG Herefordshire Ltd had adopted a strident attitude in the early stages of the project, and had not accepted constructive criticism' be changed to 'but the company had accepted constructive criticism'.

The final bullet point on page 9: He had, however, been told by Stanhope that it was not appropriate for Rockfield to be on the new site' be changed to 'He had, however, been told in a letter from ESG Herefordshire Ltd that it was not appropriate for Rockfield to be on the new site'.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the above amendments, the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 November 2010 were approved.

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

There were no suggestions from members of the public.

42. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received a report on the Revenue Forecast outturn position for Community Services as at 30th September 2010 and the progress of the 2010/11 Capital Programme

The Community Services Accountant reported that currently there was an underspend of 48k in the Directorate which would be used to help ease pressure on the Adult Social Care budget.

There was an apparent overspend in Appendix 1 of £375k, but this was an accounting measure pertaining to funds held by the Council on behalf of the Robert Owens Society, which provided funding for Higher Education in the County. The Society had initially looked to provide funding in Hereford in partnership with the Council, but were now working with partners to develop a teacher training centre in Bromyard. They were unable to wait two more years in order to invest in Hereford as they required high quality accommodation in order to meet OFSTED requirements

There was a reduction in the budgets for Belmont Pools of £78k, as the budget had been re profiled to be spent in 2011/12 rather than the current year. A reduction in the Free Swimming budgets of £54k. This had been transferred to Hereford Leisure pool, which was not within the Community Services Capital Programme as it was run by Halo.

She went on to say that the Ross Library scheme had been under review and it was expected that the budget for 2010/11 would be significantly reduced. Ledbury Library continued to be under review and it was expected that the exposure for this year would be reduced to £100k until the review had been completed.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- That there was ambiguity in the accounts, as the apparent overspend on the budget for Hereford Futures was not correct.
- In reply to a question from a Member, the Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services) said that it was unclear what the full impact of the Comprehensive Funding Review would be until the end of December. A meeting would be held with Ledbury Town Council thereafter to discuss the future of Ledbury Library.
- He went on to say that contrary to concerns expressed in the meeting, Tourist Information Centres (TIC's) were not being closed, and that there would be a TIC in every market town.
- That there was no reduction in spend on CCTV, the Council had budgeted for £14k for the year, of which only £10k had been spent to date.
- That the Free Swimming Scheme had been withdrawn, as it had been funded by a grant from Central Government. This grant had been stopped when the new administration had been formed, and the Council had therefore been obliged to stop the scheme.
- The Golf Driving Range, reported in the capital programme, would be a net financial asset to the Council, and would be run by a third party in order to reduce revenue costs.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

43. PERFORMANCE OUT-TURN UP TO THE END OF SEPTEMBER 2010

The Committee received a report on the outturns for key national Performance Indicator targets for services within the Sustainable Communities Directorate.

The Assistant Directorate Services Manager (Strategy) reported that whilst the majority of indicators were on target, there were a number that were currently below target. Where possible the services had action plans in place to improve performance against these indicators.

In reply to a question from a Member asking how the encouragement of multinational stores onto the Edgar Street Grid site would improve NI 166 (Average employee earnings in the area), as these retailers would, in his opinion, pay little more than the national minimum wage to staff. The Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services) replied that there was a concern in the County that the average wage was £20k, rather than the national average of £25k. There was a need to migrate businesses into the County, and the number of technology companies that had moved to Herefordshire was growing apace. The Director of Sustainable Development added that there was a lot of evidence that investment by local companies in the skills of their employees helped them to secure better wages, and the proposed Higher Education Centre within the Edgar Street Grid Site would also be of benefit in this respect.

A Member said that he was glad to see that NI 21 (Dealings with concerns about anti-social behaviour) was performing well, and that the number of incidents had been reduced.

RESOLVED

That:

- (a) the report be noted; and;**
- (b) areas of concern continue to be monitored.**

44. REVIEW OF THIRD SECTOR SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

The Committee received a report on the proposals contained within the Review of the Third Sector Support and Development Services and its overall objective to achieve consensus on the future provision of services, resources and delivery.

The Director of Resources reported that joint review between Herefordshire Public Services (HPS) and the Third Sector was being undertaken to consider future provision of support services to front line voluntary and community organisations. It had examined the needs of front line organisations and taken account of both the views of key stakeholders the financial constraints placed on HPS. A number of options for the future structure for the delivery and commissioning of support services had been developed and were under consideration.

There was a tight timetable on the future delivery arrangements, which would need to be agreed and substantially in place by April 2011.

As a result of consideration of feedback and the work undertaken as part of the preliminary phases of the project a list of options had been developed. Five options had been agreed for evaluation and the Third Sector Support Services Review Group had decided that between Option 2 and Option 5, the latter was the most preferable. A report would be submitted to the Joint Management Team, and then to the Cabinet meeting in January.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- That whilst it was clear that there was commitment to the process by those involved, it was important that the specific skills offered by individual organisations should not be lost.
- A Member expressed concern that insufficient consideration had been taken of how the existing system had evolved.
- That if all the organisations were merged, there was a danger that a great number of volunteers would be lost.

A Member said that he found the report obscure, lacking in clarity, and felt that the report as a whole was inadequate. There was a multiplicity of organisational structures, but it wasn't clear as to what these pertained to. It appeared that the approach that had been adopted was a passive reaction to a series of inputs, rather than active investigation. There was a lack of information on the amount of public money that had been spent, and to what purpose. He went on to say that, on the available evidence, Option 5 seemed to be too bureaucratic and over-complicated. The reliance on 'spokes' suggested weakening of control over both expenditure and effectiveness of delivery. He found that Option 2 was the most attractive of the five possible options.

In reply, the Director of Resources said that he believed that the report had captured the complexity of the situation, as the Review Group had been dealing with separate autonomous bodies with separate governance issues. The Council was trying to take individual organisations with it, as there was no way they could be made to undertake these changes, apart from using the leverage of financing. There had been two active research exercises that had provided the initial evidence base for the Review, and Grant Thornton had conducted further research.

In reply to a further question, the Director said that there was dialogue between the spokes and the localities, although it was clear that not all localities were the same.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- a) The Committee considered the Review of Third Sector Support and Development Services and in particular commented on the conclusions, which would be used to inform recommendations to the Joint Management Team and Cabinet, and;**
- b) It was proposed that the Director of Resources should be invited to review the report in the light of the Committee's considerations, and provide a more substantive report to the Committee in order to allow it to form an opinion.**

45. EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEERING

The Committee considered a report on the Executive's response to the Review of Volunteering conducted by the Committee.

The Third Sector Liaison Officer reported that the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Volunteering had been agreed by the Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services) and an Action Plan out together that outlined how the recommendations would be achieved. The key activities outlined in the plan aimed to result in more people volunteering. The activity would be concentrated on a collaborate approach facilitated through the Voluntary Development Group (VDG), specifically supported by the Voluntary Sector Liaison Officer employed by the Council.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- That any parishes that were not members of the Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) would be dealt with by the Parish Liaison and Rural Services Officer, who would also be involved.
- A Member said that he believed that the role of Community Transport would be more important following the Comprehensive Spending Review, and urged the Third Sector Liaison Officer to take consideration of this when compiling the report outlined in Recommendation 11 of the Action Plan.

RESOLVED

That:

- (a) the report was approved; and;**
- (b) the action plan should be monitored by the Committee over the next 12 months.**

46. PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE SAFER HEREFORDSHIRE SCRUTINY REVIEW GROUP

(Councillor Daniels and Councillor Smith declared a personal interest)

The Committee received a summary report of the evidence the Safer Herefordshire Review Group had received.

The Partnership Manager for Safer Herefordshire reported that the Review Group felt that the indicator NI 30 (To reduce the re-offending rate of prolific and other offenders) was well understood by Safer Herefordshire and performance against the indicator was good and that positive progress was being made. The Review Group felt the meeting had been very useful and informative. It was recognised that Safer Herefordshire had tangible information and intelligence which it used to direct activity and thereby reduce the impact on the County of persistent offenders.

The Vice Chairman concurred, and added that it was clear that progress was being made in this area, which dealt with the needs of a specific number of offenders.

RESOLVED

THAT:

- a) The recommendations made by the Safer Herefordshire Review Group be endorsed by the Committee, and referred to the Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing), for consideration.**
- b) The Review Group applauded the success of the Shift Care Farm Programme and were impressed to receive clear evidence of its results.**
- c) that the Chairman of Herefordshire Policing Board be invited to consider, in consultation with the BCU Commander, the possibility of offering some degree of funding to evidently high performing services such as Shift Care Farm Programme.**

47. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be approved and reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

48. EDGAR STREET GRID - UPDATE

(Councillor Hubbard declared a personal interest)

The Committee received an updated report on the Edgar Street Grid Project.

The Economic Development Manager reported that the Government's White Paper *Local Growth: Realising Every Place's Potential* gave an indication of possible new financial instruments that would be available to Local Government. The potential impact this would have on Council led projects had yet to be determined but could increase the number of financial options available to deliver ESG related projects. The Government had also announced the launch of a £1.4b Regional Growth Fund (RGF), and a number of projects within the Hereford Futures portfolio had been submitted to the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Shadow Board as project ideas for RGF funding.

There had been a pause in negotiations with settlements for businesses in the second and third phases of the Link Road project as a result of the uncertainty over funding. Funds had been identified, however, to open negotiations with two businesses in phase three of the project.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- That the Flood Alleviation Scheme was fully funded by a capital grant from Advantage West Midlands.
- Negotiations with three of the businesses on the Old Cattle Market Site were underway, and one had shown interest in moving to the New Market Site. There was a restrictive covenant on the site that meant that any businesses that wished to trade from it had to be agriculturally related. There were a number of options available to businesses that were not agriculturally related, and they could move, for example, to the Beech Business Park, where the National Farmers Union and the Young Farmers Club were.
- That seven plots on the Masterplan for the New Cattle Market Site had been allotted for an agricultural related business park

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 11.45 am

CHAIRMAN