

**MINUTES of the meeting of Community Services Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 7 March 2011 at 10.00 am**

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

**Councillors:** PL Bettington, Churchill, BA Durkin, KS Guthrie, SJ Robertson and RH Smith

**Co-opted:** Mrs G Churchill (HALC)

**In attendance:** Councillors WLS Bowen and PJ Edwards

**64. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors MAF Hubbard, B Hunt and AP Taylor.

**65. NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

None.

**66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name	Item	Interest
Cllr RH Smith	7 – Performance out-turn to End of December 2010	Council appointed Member of the West Mercia Police Authority.

**67. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes for the meeting held on 11 February 2011, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

None.

**69. BUDGET MONITORING 2010/11**

The Committee received a report on the Revenue Forecast outturn position for Community Services as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010 and the progress of the 2010/11 Capital Programme.

The Community Services Accountant reported that Economic Development was expected to overspend by £20k as a result of an anticipated contribution to the newly formed Local Enterprise Partnership between Shropshire, Telford and Herefordshire Services of up to £20k. The Library services were forecasting an overspend of £9k, but it was hoped that this might be eliminated before the financial year end following further reviews within the service.

She went on to say that the Capital budgets for Community Services for 2010/11 were shown in Appendix 2 of the report. The total of the Capital Programme had decreased to £9,567k, and related to:

- The golf driving range capital scheme at Hereford leisure centre, which was a spend to save scheme fully funded by Halo, and would not be completed in the current year.

- The forecast on Grange Court had slipped by £500k as a result of cash flow revisions following the sign off of the scheme.
- As a result of a scheme redesign, Ross Library had now reduced the budget for 2010/11 by £592k.

The Sustainable Communities Director added that there were two issues that had held up the development of the Golf Range. One was the lease agreement with the Race Course Company, as the Council had a tenancy agreement with them for the land. The other was a planning consent issue associated with the rights over sight lines for the range. This did not affect the land that the range would be built on.

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

## **70. PERFORMANCE OUT-TURN TO END OF DECEMBER 2010**

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

The Principal Directorate Services Officer reported that NI 152 (Working Age People on out of work benefits) was currently rated as amber which indicated that the outturn was within 5% of the target. Further data would be available on the indicator by the end of March.

He went on to say that:

- NI 9 (Use of Public Libraries) would no longer be reported on, and local indicators would be developed in its place.
- Whilst NI 40 (Drug users in effective treatment) had been rated amber in the report, some of the most important actions had been achieved and progress continued to be made against the drug treatment review actions. The most recent outcome had seen a rise in treatment numbers from 532 to 547 users. This meant that the indicator was now on target, and could be rated as blue.
- That NI 30 (Re-offending rate of prolific and other priority offenders) was currently blue. As at 31 March 2010 there had been 76 proven re-offences, and the latest out-turn, in December, was of 39 proven re-offences. Work with all of the agencies involved would continue in order to ensure that the rate of re-offending would be further reduced.

**RESOLVED:**

**THAT:**

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

## **71. ACTION PLAN MONITORING: SCRUTINY REVIEWS OF TOURISM WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES, THE HEREFORDSHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2005 - 2025 AND THE SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEERING IN HEREFORDSHIRE**

The Committee received an updated report on the progress of Actions Plans related to the Scrutiny Review of Herefordshire Economic Development Strategy 2005 – 2025, the Review of Tourism with Specific Reference to Tourist Information Centres and the Review of Support for Volunteering in Herefordshire.

The Assistant Director, Economy and Culture reported that the recommendations from the Review of the Herefordshire Economic Development Strategy had been considered as part of the new Economic Development Strategy, which would be put to Cabinet in

June as part of the Local Development Framework and the Local Transport Plan. The establishment of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership covering Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford and Wreakin would also have an impact on the way that the Council undertook its work.

The Assistant Director went on to say that the remodelling of the Tourist Information Centres (TICs) had been completed. With the exception of Ross Visitor Centre, the Council would no longer directly provide TICs. Tourist information was still being provided in all of the market towns, and in Hereford and Queenswood. Different solutions had been reached in each area, with a budget saving of £200k. VisitHerefordshire would organise the service under a service level agreement with the Council.

Within volunteering, there had been a freeze on Area Based Grant funding, and as a result some schemes had been halted because of the withdrawal of finance. This had resulted in some of the actions from the Action plan being delayed or withdrawn. However, as jobs were increasingly hard to find there was potential to use volunteering more widely as a tool for work experience or diversifying skills.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- That Job Centre Plus were actively interested in using volunteering, and did refer people to the Council who they did not consider quite ready for the job market in order to help improve their skills.
- A Member asked that officers should give both serious consideration and thoughtful replies to recommendations put forward by the Committee as part of scrutiny reviews.
- In reply to a question from a Member regarding recommendation 6 of the Tourism Review, the Assistant Director said that signage had been improved for the Bromyard Tourist Information Point (TIP). There were also plans to move the TIP from its present location into a vacant shop in Bromyard.
- She went on to answer further questions by saying that it was not possible for the Council to extract itself from the current building used by the TIC in Hereford, as there was eight more years to run on the lease. Savings were being made, however, as Visit Herefordshire would use the building as its Head Office, and the Council would be reimbursed through the Service Level Agreement with the company.
- The Assistant Director went onto say that Leominster Town Council had not wanted to move the TIC from its present site, and had taken over the running of the service. Herefordshire Council would not provide funding for the service after 1 April 2011.
- In reply to a Member's question regarding the Herefordshire Business Board's approach to small businesses, the Sustainable Communities Director said that the Service was continuing to work with small businesses, and added that the number of businesses that were now VAT registered had increased substantially, and the associated performance indicator was ahead of target.

**RESOLVED:**

**THAT:**

- (a) **progress of delivery of the actions be noted; and;**
- (b) **in consideration of the actions achieved or planned there would be no further reporting on action plans relating to the review of the Herefordshire Economic Development Strategy 2005 – 2025,**

**or the Review of Tourism with Specific Reference to Tourist Information Centres.**

**72. HEREFORD FUTURES - UPDATE**

The Committee received a verbal update on the progress of the Hereford Futures projects. The Sustainable Communities Director reported that confirmation of a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for the Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS) had been received from the Planning Inspectorate in January, as well as agreement with the National Trust over the use of their land for the scheme. There would be an initial sod cutting ceremony on the 18th March. The scheme would alleviate flooding from a number of houses and Merton Meadow. There would still be flooding within the City, and land would be set aside on Merton Meadow for flood compensation.

The Director went on to say that the Planning Application for the Old Cattle Market Scheme was due to be considered by the Planning Committee on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011. If the application were approved, then Stanhope would take vacant possession of the site by the end of the current year. The New Livestock Market would be completed in June. Businesses that were currently within the Old Livestock Market would have their leases terminated and would receive new six month leases that would finish on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011. One business, RM Jones, an agricultural chemist currently located on the Livestock Market site, had received planning permission for a unit at the new Livestock Market site.

Detailed discussions were ongoing with two businesses within the Link Road line over their relocation or retirement. Funding was in place to compensate them. There was a longer time scale in which negotiations could be undertaken with the other businesses that would be affected. An application to the Regional Growth Fund for £20m had been submitted by Hereford Futures for funding the Link Road. The application was currently being considered by the Department of Business, Innovation, and Skills and an announcement on the decision was anticipated in late April / early May. In total the government had received approximately 450 bids to the fund. Alternative funding sources were being considered if the initial bid was unsuccessful.

He went on to say that Sanctuary Housing had commenced working on the Planning Application for the Urban Village, and it was expected that it would be submitted by the end of the year.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- In reply to a question from a Member, the Sustainable Communities Director said that the Environment Agency's flood models had been used in the planning of the Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS). The model illustrated that the Yazor Brook did not normally flood at the same time as the River Wye, but one or two days in advance of it. This meant that there would be little concern over the outfall of flood water into the River Wye.
- In reply to a further question, the Director went on to say that a review of the Market Stalls in High Town had been undertaken a year after they had been moved to the new site. The review had included retailers, market traders and the City Council, and had concluded that the new arrangement was working well. He undertook to provide a briefing report to the Committee on the progress of the Old Livestock Market Site and the position of the market traders on the site.

**RESOLVED:**

**THAT:**

- a) the report be noted; and;
- b) a briefing report be provided to the Committee

**73. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

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

The meeting ended at 11.25

**CHAIRMAN**