

MINUTES of the meeting of Social & Economic Development Scrutiny Committee held at Brockington, 35, Hafod Road, Hereford, on Thursday, 2nd October, 2003 at 10.30 a.m.

Present: Councillor A.C.R. Chappell (Chairman)
Councillor J. Stone (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs P. Andrews, H. Bramer, Mrs. S.P.A. Daniels,
J.G.S. Guthrie, B. Hunt and P. G. Turpin

Non-Voting Members Mrs E. Newman, D. Stevens

In attendance: Councillors P.E. Harling, R. V. Stockton (Cabinet Member – Community and Social Development)

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors M.R. Cunningham and Mrs R.F. Lincoln.

25. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

Councillor Mrs P.A. Andrews substituted for Councillor M.R. Cunningham and Councillor D. J. Fleet substituted for Councillor A.L. Williams.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

27. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th September, 2003, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28. POLICY AND COMMUNITY DIRECTORATE 2003/04 FIRST FOUR MONTHS PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee were informed of the national and local performance indicator information for the first four months of 2003/04 for the non-corporate functions of the Policy and Community Directorate together with details of the main areas of activity underway by those services during that period.

The Committee noted that a 2003/04 Guide to Performance Indicators had been produced, copies had been previously supplied to Members of the Committee, in an attempt to provide meaningful background information to the performance report. The Committee thought the Guide was clear and informative.

In the course of scrutinising the indicators the following principal points were noted:

- Youth Service local target 2 – the Committee were informed that this target related to the number of individuals undertaking accredited learning. In relation to Youth Service funding it was noted that underspends had resulted from the difficulty in recruitment rather than service provision.

- Heritage Service – it was noted that the Children’s play area at the Old House related to the introduction of an activity area. While guidance was given when requested, the museum facilities at Kington and Leominster were not part of the Council’s Service.
- In response to a question concerning the monitoring of leisure centres the Head of Culture, Leisure and Education for Life reported that he anticipated that an update report would be given on the Leisure Contract by the Chief Executive of HALO to the next meeting. The method of monitoring of the contract was also briefly explained.
- Support Unit – the Committee questioned the number of cases handed to the police or prosecutions arising from the CCTV system. It was also suggested that the Committee see the CCTV Control Room in action. The Head of Culture, Leisure and Education for Life reported that 147 incidents had been reported during the first full month of operation. However, it would take time for these to be processed by the police.
- Economic Investment & Development – The Committee expressed some disappointment at the number of enquiries via the Enquiry Service being converted into new business. In relation to the Rail Freight Study it was reported that the study was underway and the potential for site rail/road sites at Bulmers and Moreton-on-Lugg were briefly debated.

RESOLVED: That subject to the comments above the first four months 2003/04 performance indicator report be noted.

29. PROGRESS REPORT ON ACCESS TO SERVICES IN KINGTON AND SURROUNDING AREAS: WESLEYAN CHAPEL

The Committee received a progress report on the possible refurbishment and conversion of the Wesleyan Chapel, Kington.

The Head of Customer Services and Libraries reported that the draft scheme provided for 4 floors potentially incorporating a new Library, INFO shop, TIC, Registrars Office, Citizens Advice Bureau and commercial office space. A consultation meeting had been held with representatives of the local community including Kington Town Council, neighbouring parishes, local Councillors and Kington Regeneration Partnership.

He further reported that the Council’s Cabinet at its meeting on 4th September 2003, had agreed the recommendation that further development work be undertaken by establishing a partnership based project team to establish funding, develop and implement the scheme. This was now being actioned and external funding opportunities for the scheme were being explored. A public consultation exercise had now commenced.

The Committee noted the position but questioned the validity of a registrars office in a religious building. The Head of Customer Services and Libraries undertook to look into the issue.

RESOLVED: That the progress report be noted.

30. REGENERATION FUNDING STREAMS WITHIN HEREFORDSHIRE

The Committee received a report on the funding streams available to Herefordshire Council.

The Policy and Commissioning Manager reported upon the funding streams available and commented that each had its own criteria or focus with clear rules about the type and scale of activity or project it would support. However, there were a number of general criteria and examples were given in the report. Many parts of the County were designated under Objective 2 European funding status. The majority of Herefordshire was also now included in the Rural Regeneration Zone (funded through Advantage West Midlands). Other successful bids had led to Leader+ funding, to support the local natural and historic environment and Market Towns Initiative funding.

An overview of the main funding streams available and their criteria was attached as appendix 1 to the report.

The Committee congratulated the officers on the clear and informative overview and requested that it be supplied to all members of the Council for information, possibly followed by a seminar for members.

The Committee debated the funding streams available and appreciated that to maximise available funding, the Council had to co-ordinate a number of bids into one scheme, particularly where match funding was required. To highlight this aspect information regarding Leominster Access Road and Herefordshire Rivers' LEADER+ schemes was circulated. The currently high levels of European funding were noted. However, it was questioned whether an action plan should be formulated to cover any shortfall in future years.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and copies of the overview, together with the examples of the co-ordinated approach, be sent for information to all Members of the Council.

31. HEREFORDSHIRE PLAN AMBITION GROUPS

The Committee considered recent progress in relation to the Herefordshire Plan Ambitions relevant to the Policy and Community Directorate.

The Committee received a report outlining the Directorate's responsibility for the Herefordshire Plan and the Directorate's involvement and support in the delivery of a number of the ten ambitions in the Plan. Detail of the progress in delivering each of the ambitions was set out in the report.

The Committee briefly debated the composition of the Ambition Groups and questioned in particular the Business, Economic Development and Tourism Ambition Group in relation to the wide remit of the Group and the reporting mechanism of the Tourism sub-Group.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and it be recommended to the Partnership that, to facilitate the flow of information, Councillor J.G.S. Guthrie should serve on both the Tourism Sub-Group and the main Ambition Group.

32. STAFFING NUMBERS WITHIN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Committee were advised of the staffing numbers within the Social and Economic

Development departments of the Policy and Community Directorate.

The Committee received a report indicating the number and type (full or part time) of staff in the Directorate. A number of posts were externally funded and the report indicated both the various funding schemes involved and the percentage funded, or contribution made by the Council.

The Committee questioned issues around the cost of accommodation, project monitoring etc and were informed that often in addition to match funding, these were a pre-requisite of a number of funding streams. On the whole the benefits greatly out-weighed these support costs.

In relation to the format of the report, the Committee found the report useful and requested that an annual report be made at the end of the financial year, which indicated significant changes in staff numbers.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and an annual report be made at the end of the financial year, which also indicated significant changes in staff numbers.

33. REVIEW OF POLICY ON FESTIVALS

The Committee received a proposal that a review of the policy on Festivals within the Arts Programme supported by Herefordshire Council be undertaken.

The Chairman reported that the Cabinet Member (Community and Social Development) had requested that this Committee undertake a review of festivals. He commented that this was against a background that a number of issues and concerns had been raised by festivals, which took place this year, mainly around funding and investment.

The Chairman proposed that a short and concise piece of work be undertaken which would feed into both the review of the policy on the Voluntary Sector and the general grants programme.

It was proposed that the review panel membership comprise the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and two other members of the Committee. The review would look at a number of festivals in the County. The Review Panel would sit in public to receive evidence and would include an opportunity for representatives of festivals to participate. It was anticipated that the conclusions would be presented to Committee in November 2003 and then reported to the Cabinet Member soon thereafter.

RESOLVED:

That

- (a) the Festivals Review Panel comprise of the Chairman, (Councillor A.C.R. Chappell), Vice-Chairman, (Councillor J. Stone) and Councillors H. Bramer and Mrs R. F. Lincoln and;**
- (b) The timetable and actions outlined in the report be approved.**