

**MINUTES of the meeting of Social and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee held at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Thursday, 19th June, 2003 at 10.30 a.m.**

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

Councillors. H. Bramer, R.B.A. Burke, M.R. Cunningham, Mrs S.P.A. Daniels, B. Hunt, Mrs R.F. Lincoln, P.G. Turpin.

**Non-voting Members:** Mrs E. Newman (HALC), Mr D Stevens (Chamber of Commerce).

**In attendance:** Councillors J.H.R. Goodwin, G.V. Hyde (Cabinet Member – Economic Development, Markets & Property), Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes, R.V. Stockton (Cabinet Member – Community and Social Development).

**1. CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN**

The Committee noted the appointment by Council of Councillor A.C.R. Chappell as Chairman and Councillor J. Stone as Vice-Chairman.

The Chairman welcomed members to the Committee and introductions were made. The Director of Policy and Community reported upon changes to the voluntary sector in relation to the non-voting membership on the Committee. She anticipated that consideration of a nomination to serve as representative for the Voluntary Sector would be made by the Development Agencies Liaison Group on Friday 20th June.

**2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

There were no named substitutes.

**3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor J.C. Mayson (Cabinet Member – Rural Regeneration and Smallholdings).

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**5. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meetings held on 17th March and 9th April, 2003 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

**6. SCRUTINY – ROLE AND TECHNIQUES**

The Committee received a presentation on the role of scrutiny and the techniques that Scrutiny Committees can use in their work.

The Policy Officer briefly described the background to scrutiny and outlined some of the key principles and risks to effective scrutiny. She advised in relation to

questioning skills; the development of work programmes and highlighted the 10 steps to undertaking successful in-depth reviews. She further advised that some issues could be investigated by methods other than by formal Committee for example select Committee style, task and finish groups, presentations, briefings or by meeting in other venues. She summed up by directing Members to a number of useful documents and websites.

The Chairman thanked the Policy Officer for the informative presentation and gave his vision for the role of the Committee. He expressed the view that Members should be professional in their approach and that, when appropriate, meetings should be held at a time and place to suit the public. Meetings should vary in format depending on the subject under consideration. He also suggested that a pro-forma be sent to members of the Committee to ascertain their specific areas of interest in the Directorate in order that Members could be accurately matched to future reviews.

The Committee noted that the Chamber of Commerce, HALC and the Voluntary Sector were represented as non-voting members on the Committee.

The Chairman proposed that a meeting be arranged for early September to which the programme area Cabinet Members be invited to discuss with the committee their aspirations for their programme areas.

## **RESOLVED**

### **THAT:**

- (a) the presentation be noted and a pro-forma be sent to members of the Committee to establish specific areas of interest;**
- (b) a meeting of the Committee be arranged for early September to which the programme area Cabinet Members be invited to discuss their aspirations for their programme area.**

## **7. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered its work programme.

The Director of Policy and Community commented that the programme, attached to the report at appendix 1, incorporated a number of items identified as requiring periodic monitoring or attention, together with a number of key issues for review.

The Committee debated the programme and noted that a number of items listed for this meeting had not been reported upon. These would however be reported to the additional meeting to be held in early September. It was intended that the principal focus of the September meeting would be to hear the views and aspirations of the programme area Cabinet Members.

In response to a suggestion that the Committee scrutinise the development of the 'Edgar Street Grid' the Director of Policy and Community reported that this issue was in the remit of the Strategic Monitoring Committee. However, certain associated issues would probably be referred to this Committee. Concerning the issue of a swimming pool for North Herefordshire, she commented that no further information was available. However, a report would be presented to Cabinet in July and a briefing would be held for local members.

In answer to a number of questions regarding the item listed in the programme for 29th January, 2004 – Objective 2/RRZ/SRB/Leader + projects, the Director of Policy and Community briefly reported that these were various financial regimes external to the Council. Often these involved drawing down financial resources from Government or Europe for specific, or area based, initiatives. As this was a complex and important issue a briefing report would be prepared for members and the subject would be brought forward in the work programme.

**RESOLVED: That subject to the comments noted above the work programme be approved.**

## **8. MEMBERSHIP OF VOLUNTARY SECTOR REVIEW TEAM**

The Committee considered the membership of the Voluntary Sector Review Team.

The Director of Policy and Community reported that following the local government elections the membership of this Committee and the Voluntary Sector Grants Panel had changed and it was necessary to nominate two members from this Committee and one member from the Panel. As Group Leaders had still to appoint members to the Voluntary Sector Grants Panel she recommended that, to facilitate an early meeting of the Team, the Committee appoint two members and that the Panel member be appointed in due course.

**RESOLVED: that Councillor Mrs S.P.A. Daniels and Councillor J. Stone be appointed as this Committee's representatives on the Voluntary Sector Review Team.**

## **9. POLICY AND COMMUNITY DIRECTORATE 2002/03 FINAL QUARTER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Committee were informed of the national and local performance indicator information for the final quarter of 2002/03 for the non-corporate functions of the Policy and Community Directorate.

Information on all national Best Value indicators, and those key local indicators where actual performance significantly varied from target (more than plus or minus 10% or where a trend was developing) was attached to the report at appendix 1. A brief narrative summarising the key activities/achievements of each service area during the final quarter was also provided.

During the course of scrutinising the indicators particular attention was drawn to BV 117 and the encouraging level of visits to libraries. In relation to overall performance at the Records Office reference was made to the degree of staff vacancies in the service and to the impending retirement of the Record Office Manager. The Director of Policy and Community reported it had been necessary to temporarily relocate staff time due to the implications of the Freedom of Information Act. However she expected that vacancies would be filled. The Records Service was managed by Cultural Services and the retirement of the Records Office Manager provided the opportunity to review the records service in light of requirements under the Data Protection Act and other expected changes. The Committee congratulated the Records Office Manager on her many years service.

**RESOLVED: that the Directorate's final quarter 2002/03 performance indicator information be noted.**

## 10. PAYMENT OF UNDISPUTED INVOICES WITHIN 30 DAYS

The Committee considered performance against the national Best Value Performance Indicator for the payment of undisputed invoices within 30 days, for the financial year 2002/03.

The Director highlighted the progressive improvement in the payment percentage. She commented that occasionally the payment of invoices had been delayed due to staff leave or when invoices had to be sent to other locations for verification. The Committee noted the position and requested a report on the actions proposed to be taken to achieve the 100% target.

**RESOLVED: that the report be noted and a report on the actions now being taken to achieve the 100% target be presented to a future meeting.**

## 11. REVIEW OF COMMUNITY AND PARTNER INVOLVEMENT IN SCRUTINY

The Committee reviewed the additional membership of outside bodies on the Committee.

The Director of Policy and Community confirmed the nomination of non-voting representatives to the Committee from Herefordshire Association for Local Councils and the business community through the Chamber of Commerce. A nomination from the voluntary sector was expected through the Development Agencies Liaison Group. Following the local elections, the establishment of the new Committee provided the opportunity to reconsider whether any other bodies might make a good contribution to the work of the Committee. She outlined a number of other methods of involving community representatives.

The Committee discussed the benefit of contact with County organisations and agreed that County representatives should be invited from the Herefordshire NFU and the tourism sector. The Chairman suggested that a group be formed of local experts who could be called upon on an individual basis to advise the committee when specific issues were considered.

The representatives from HALC and the Chamber of Commerce commented upon the benefits of having permanent representative members on the Committee which facilitated the two way exchange of information. The Chamber of Commerce advocated the proposal to involve experts for specific issues.

The Committee were pleased to note that Clare Wichbold, Regeneration Officer (Projects Development), had been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours list with an MBE for her work on producing a long term recovery programme for the County following the Foot and Mouth epidemic.

**RESOLVED**

**THAT:**

- (a) the Herefordshire NFU and the Tourism Sector each be invited to nominate a representative to serve as a non-voting member of the Committee;**
- (b) a local expert group be formed and called upon to advise the committee on specific issues.**

**(c) Clare Wichbold MBE be congratulated on her award.**

The meeting ended at 11.48 a.m.

**CHAIRMAN**