

MINUTES of the meeting of Community Services Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 12 April 2010 at 10.00 am

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

Councillors: DJ Benjamin, GFM Dawe, BA Durkin, JHR Goodwin, MAF Hubbard, B Hunt, G Lucas and RV Stockton

In attendance: Councillors AJM Blackshaw (Cabinet Member - Economic Development and Community Services), WLS Bowen, PJ Edwards, JG Jarvis (Cabinet Member - Environment and Strategic Housing), MD Lloyd-Hayes and Mrs G Churchill (HALC) and Mr PH Hands

53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors DW Greenow, KS Guthrie and RH Smith.

54. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor JHR Goodwin substituted for Councillor DW Greenow and Councillor G Lucas for Councillor KS Guthrie.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

| Name | Item | Interest |
|------------------|---|--|
| Cllr GFM Dawe | 6 – Edgar Street Grid Update | Personal – A firm in his ward affected by ESG plans. |
| Mr P Hands | 9 – Update on the Response to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee Review of Tourism | Personal – Chairman of Visit Herefordshire. |
| Cllr MAF Hubbard | 6– Edgar Street Grid Update | Personal – Director of It's our City |
| | 9 – Update on the Response to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee Review of Tourism | Personal – Council appointee to Board of Visit Herefordshire and proprietor of tourist accommodation |
| Cllr JG Jarvis | 9 – Update on the Response to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee Review of Tourism | Personal – proprietor of tourist accommodation |

56. MINUTES

Mrs Churchill requested that it be recorded that she had not attended the last meeting because she had been advised by Democratic Services that it would not be appropriate for the co-opted members to attend as the meeting had been called solely to discuss crime and disorder scrutiny.

RESOLVED: That the minutes for the meeting held on 26 February be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no suggestions from members of the public

58. EDGAR STREET GRID - UPDATE

(Councillors GFM Dawe and MAF Hubbard declared personal interests)

The Committee considered a progress report on the Edgar Street Grid (ESG) project.

Mr J Bretherton and Mr G Williams of ESG Ltd gave a presentation outlining progress on the project since November 2009. This included: planning approvals gained, steps to implement the signed agreement with Stanhope, construction works started and the position on the necessary Compulsory Purchase Orders. It also set out actions expected to be completed by spring 2011 including discharging conditions in relation to planning consents, further planning applications, construction works and business relocations. Further detail was provided on business relocations from the existing livestock market.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- Clarification was requested on the budgetary provision for relocation and whether this was managed by the Council or ESG Ltd.

Mr Bretherton replied that there were three phases to the relocation. Phase 1 would be financed by the grant from Advantage West Midlands (AWM). Negotiations were taking place with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) over the financing of phases 2 and 3. The HCA had given preliminary approval to contributing to the scheme. Detailed negotiations needed to take place which would take some time to complete. The Council had also applied to be part of a pilot scheme for advanced development zones.

- Asked about the plans for provision of a substantial hotel as part of the development, Mr Bretherton replied that space had been allocated but there was no demand at the moment and no negotiations were taking place.
- A Member expressed the view that in seeking planning permission for the Link Road forming part of the project, insufficient consideration had been given to scope for sustainable transport including rail travel, cycling and walking, noting that the railway station was generating footfall of 1million.

Mr Bretherton stated that considerable work had been undertaken on developing a green travel plan including discussions with the Highways Agency.

- It was noted that most if not all the existing businesses affected by the retail development would need to relocate because the rise in land values would make it uneconomic to remain.
- In response to concern about traffic congestion Mr Bretherton said that the Council and the Highways Agency had considered the traffic modelling. The Highways Agency had supported the proposals.
- Continuing concern was expressed that the retail development would put considerable and unsustainable pressure on the existing Town Centre.

Mr Bretherton remarked that in seeking planning permission for the development the impact on the City Centre would be one of the planning considerations.

- The Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services) commented that the Edgar Street Master Plan had been updated to take account of the change in the economic climate since the Scheme had originally been proposed. The indications were that the private sector remained prepared to invest in the area. At the moment the City and County's market share of retail expenditure was low. His view remained that if investment did not take place the City would die. Doing nothing was not an option.
- It was suggested that Hereford's main problem was that the infrastructure made it hard to access the City Centre. That issue should be addressed first.
- It was asked whether the three proposed anchor tenants on the retail development would demand payments to them prior to the development to secure their involvement. Mr Bretherton said it was routine practice for developers to offer incentives in undertaking developments of this type.

The Committee noted the update.

59. BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee considered the financial position for Community Services revenue budgets for the period to 31 January 2010,

The Community Services Accountant reported that the projected overspend for 2009/10 was £90k and commented on the recovery plans in place to address the overspend, as described in the report.

The report referred to a number of externally funded grants that had been secured. It was requested that in future reports the lifespan of grants should be stated.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

60. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Committee considered progress towards achievement of targets for 2009-10 relevant to the Committee and contained within the Environment & Culture and Regeneration Directorates' Plans.

The Improvement Manager presented the report.

It was noted that for National Indicator (NI) 171- new business registration rate per 100,000 resident population aged 16+, the most up to date data available from the Office of National Statistics was from 2008. It was requested that future performance reports should contain an explanatory note on the availability of data for this indicator.

Regarding NI 152 – working age people on out of work benefits, a Local Area Agreement target, it was reported that although the report showed performance had fallen, and was worse than target, negotiations were taking place with the Government Office West Midlands to agree a lower target. It was expected this lower target would be met.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

61. UPDATE ON RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REVIEW OF TOURISM

(Mr P Hands and Councillors MAF Hubbard and JG Jarvis declared personal interests)

The Committee considered an update on the completed and planned actions relating to the scrutiny review of tourism, with specific reference to the Tourist Information Centres (TICs) in Herefordshire.

In December 2009 the Committee had received and rejected the executive's initial response to its scrutiny review of tourism. The update noted that there had been some changes within tourism since the Committee's review had been completed and these were continuing. Recommendations within the review had influenced some of those changes and many issues raised in the scrutiny review were still relevant. The Tourism Manager commented on some of the activities that had taken place, as described in the report, relating to the recommendations in the scrutiny review and confirmed that a report was due to go to Cabinet shortly on the future role of TICs.

It was noted that some of the recommendations had related to the role of the County's Destination Management Partnership (DMP). An independent review of the DMP had been commissioned to assess the potential of tourism in the county and the role of the DMP in fostering change. A copy of this report was provided to Members at the meeting, with the intention being that a future report would be brought back to the Committee on the independent review's implementation.

In the course of discussion the following principal points were made:

- That there had been an unacceptable delay in reaching a decision about the future of Tourist Information Centres in the County, creating undue uncertainty for employees, and potentially missing out on some opportunities. It was imperative that a decision was taken on their future role promptly.
- That the scrutiny review had been overtaken by events and it was important to focus now on the review of the DMP and its findings.
- The Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services) apologised for the delay in responding to the scrutiny review but emphasised that considerable work on tourism had been ongoing and its important contribution to the local economy was recognised. He encouraged the Committee to consider the review of the DMP at its next meeting and reiterated that a report was shortly to be submitted to Cabinet on the future role of TICs. He thanked Mr Hands, as outgoing Chairman of the DMP for his work.

RESOLVED:

That (a) the actions set out in the report be noted: and

(b) a report be made to the next meeting on the implementation of the independent review of the Destination Management Partnership.

62. SCRUTINY OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP - WORK PROGRAMME

Further to its meeting in February 2010 the Committee considered the work programme for the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Scrutiny Review Group and the appointment of a further Member to serve on the Group.

The Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) informed the Committee that he had recently become Chairman of Safer Herefordshire (the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership). He had instigated a review of the Partnership's constitution and terms of reference and a copy would be provided to members of the Committee. He had also initiated a review of the Partnership's budget arrangements. He proposed to send the findings of this budget review to the Scrutiny Review Group for comment.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Scrutiny Review Group work programme as appended to the report and including the referral of the findings of a review of budget arrangements by Safer Herefordshire be endorsed;**
 - (b) the CDRP Scrutiny Review Group work programme be recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval and reported to Safer Herefordshire; and**
 - (c) Councillor DJ Benjamin be appointed to serve on the Review Group appointed to lead on the scrutiny of crime and disorder scrutiny.**

63. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme.

It was agreed that the Committee should include consideration of the provision of advice services within its work programme, as there appeared to be a plethora of such organisations.

RESOLVED: That the work programme as amended be recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval.

The meeting ended at 12.00 pm

CHAIRMAN