

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>7<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2011</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>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</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO AREA:</b>	<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES</b>

**CLASSIFICATION:** Open

## **Wards Affected**

County-wide

## **Purpose**

To update the Committee on the progress of Actions Plans relating 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.

## **Recommendations**

**THAT:**

- (a) progress of delivery of the actions is noted;**
- (b) considering the actions achieved or planned there is 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.**

## **Key Points Summary**

- Many of the actions concerning tourism have been integrated with the work on remodelling of the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) network.
- A tourism review has been concluded which provides an increased role for Visit Herefordshire as an independent provider of services commissioned by the local authority.
- The recommendations relating to the economic development strategy review have influenced the new economic development strategy that will be presented to Cabinet in June as part a suite of documents including the Local Transport Plan and Local Development Framework.

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
Natalia Silver, Assistant Director, Economy and Culture on (01432) 260732

- The actions concerning volunteering are progressing delivered through the Volunteering Development Group.

## Alternative Options

- 1 That the action plans for economic development strategy and tourism are brought back to scrutiny for future reporting.

## Reasons for Recommendations

- 2 The tourism and economic development strategy reviews took place in 2008 and 2009 respectively and though many of the actions have been achieved, circumstances and development have overtaken the original outcomes of the review.

## Introduction and Background

- 3 Community Services Scrutiny Committee brought forward a report reviewing the economic development strategy on 5 October 2009. The task of the review was to consider the economic development strategy in light of the current economic downturn and changes in priorities. The review was supported from officers within the Planning Policy Service and as a result there is a great deal of connectivity to the Local Development Framework – which is a positive approach considering the impact of the LDF on decisions that will affect the economy.
- 4 The review of tourism services was presented to Community Services Scrutiny Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2008. This review focused on TICs but also more generally the delivery of tourism in the county.
- 5 On the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2009 the Community Services Scrutiny Committee decided to establish a review group to consider support for volunteering. After a series of interviews and discussions the review group presented its findings to the wider committee on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

## Key Considerations

- 6 **Economic Development** – since the review was completed there has been significant change within economic development and regeneration. These include:
  - Establishment of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership covering the areas of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford with the key purpose of growing the local economies through business development and in turn creating private sector jobs.
  - The previous Government introduced a duty to produce a Local Economic Assessment which has now been produced and has formed part of the State of Herefordshire report. As well as data findings a business survey was completed and wider public consultation commissioned.
  - A Herefordshire Business Board has been established to support economic growth through private sector development. This is a sister board to the Economic Development Partnership Group that pulls together a number of private and public organisations to implement the economic development strategy. This group is part of the Herefordshire partnership which is reviewing its purpose, role and structure.
- 7 The new economic development strategy has been informed by the research and consultation to be presented to cabinet in June linked to the Local Development Framework and the Transport Plan. This is in recognition of the interdependencies between documents.

- 8 **Tourism** – the remodelling of the TICs has now been completed. With the exception of Ross Visitor Centre (which is an integrated facility with Heritage) Herefordshire Council no longer directly runs TIC provision. However, there is still tourist information being provided in all the market towns, Hereford and Queenswood. There have been different solutions in each area, with a budget saving of £200,000.
- 9 During 2010/11 there has been a review of the central co-ordination of tourism that has the key functions of attracting people to the county, running tourism related events and general tourism development. The review has resulted in an enhanced Visit Herefordshire company taking the lead on tourism supported by a service level agreement with Herefordshire Council. This means that there will no longer be a tourism team directly employed within the local authority.
- 10 **Volunteering** – Within volunteering as there is an increasing focus on people contributing their time to run services and support communities although funding for volunteering has decreased generally and locally some schemes halted because of withdrawal of finance (ABG funding). This has resulted in some of the actions being delayed or withdrawn. However, as jobs are increasingly hard to find there is potential to use volunteering more widely as a tool of work experience or diversifying skills.

## **Community Impact**

- 11 The economic prosperity of the county has an impact on the sustainability of key services in the county.
- 12 Tourism is a key industry for Herefordshire and Visit Herefordshire's key task will be to increase visitor spend in the county. Much of the tourism delivery is through small operators which are a key component of the tourism profile.
- 13 There is strong correlation between the positive effects of volunteering on communities and individuals as found through the review.

## **Financial Implications**

- 14 There are no direct cost implications, however points to note:
- There is potential sources of funding via the Regional Growth Fund for regeneration schemes through a nationally competitive process though finance is limited.
  - With the demise of AWM there is reduced funding for schemes including tourism projects.
  - Herefordshire Council will be supporting Visit Herefordshire through a service level agreement negotiated annual and based on achievement of milestones.
  - There is potential funding for volunteering through routes to employment.

## **Legal Implications**

- 15 There are no legal implications beyond the enhanced role of Visit Herefordshire.

## **Risk Management**

- 16 Risk for the action plans include:
- a. The independent TICs fail to achieve income generation to meet the financial out-

goings.

Mitigation: TICs supported by Herefordshire Council and Visit Herefordshire. Ross Visitor Centre acting as a “hub” which can provide back-up for TICs.

- b. The approach as outlined in the Economic Development Strategy does not have an impact on the growth of the economy with a double dip in the recovery.  
Mitigation: collaborative approach to delivery of the strategy including with the newly formed Business Board and the existing Economic Development Partnership Group.
- c. Funding for new volunteering schemes does not materialise resulting in increased pressure on those who currently volunteering.  
Mitigation: that alternative sources of funding are explored and agencies pool their resources to promote and manage volunteering.

## **Consultees**

- 17 The separate reviews included a list of people interviewed which has previously been reported.

## **Appendices**

- 18 Appendix:

Appendix 1 Action Plan for Tourism Review - update

Appendix 2 Action Plan for Economic Development Strategy Review - update

Appendix 3 Action Plan for Review of Volunteering in Herefordshire - update

## **Background Papers**

### **Reviews:**

- Scrutiny Review of Tourism Delivery
- Scrutiny Review of Economic Development Strategy
- Scrutiny Review of Volunteering in Herefordshire