

MINUTES of the meeting of Social & Economic Development Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Leominster on Thursday, 5th February, 2004 at 10.30 a.m.

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

Co-opted Members Councillors: Mrs. P.A. Andrews, J.G.S. Guthrie, B. Hunt, G. Lucas, P.G. Turpin and A.L. Williams
G. Jones (Tourism), Mrs E. Newman (HALC), Mr. D. Stevens (Chamber of Commerce)

In attendance: Councillor Mrs M. Lloyd-Hayes, J. P. Thomas.

48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor H. Bramer and Councillor Mrs S. P. A. Daniels. Apologies were also recorded for Cabinet Members Councillors G.V. Hyde, J.C. Mayson and R. V. Stockton.

49. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor Mrs P. A. Andrews substituted for Councillor Mrs S.P.A. Daniels and Councillor G. Lucas substituted for Councillor H. Bramer.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

51. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 27th November 2003 and 14th January, 2004 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

52. UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE COMMUNITY YOUTH SERVICE TOWARDS NEW STANDARDS

The Committee were advised of the restructuring of the Community Youth Service and progress towards the revised planning guidance introduced December 2003, and the national standards and performance indicators in youth work.

The Community Youth Service Manager gave a presentation on the work and restructuring of the Service and he highlighted the following issues:

- The National Picture – it was a statutory service funded through the Education FSS. New DfES targets and planning guidance had been issued. Work had started to prepare for the Ofsted Inspection in Autumn 2004, results of which may be included as part of the CPA assessment. The Green Paper – Every Child Matters – contained ramifications for the service.

- The Role of the Service – the Service had to be educational, participative and inclusive. It worked to 22 Youth Standards and focused on 4 key targets for 2004-5 namely: the number of young people participating; the level of participation; the number of recorded and accredited outcomes.
- Local Picture – the service currently had a 25% staff vacancy rate, a situation that was reflected nationally. The accredited outcome target of 572 was unlikely to be met, mainly due to limited staff resources to run programmes. The predicted budget underspend was due in the main to staff vacancies. The need to meet targets had further enhanced partnership working through Service Level Agreements (SLAs).
- Restructuring – in line with the national agenda, the service was restructuring to increase face-to-face working. Where possible more qualified full-time staff were being employed, rather than part-time, to help meet the delivery of accredited training. A new Senior Youth Worker role had been established. An increased training and development activity of both staff and youth accreditation had been adopted.
- Financial Matters – While Service Standard 14 indicated £100 per head of youth population the Council's Education FSS allocation was £77.79 and the Council's budget for 2004-5 was £59.54. The predicted budget underspend of £120,000 was distorted by additional external income of £140,000 for specific work of which £70,000 had already been committed. The Cabinet Member (Community and Social Development) had been requested to carry forward £50,000 for expected recruitment costs.

The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs M.D. Lloyd-Hayes to address the Committee on youth issues.

Councillor Mrs Lloyd-Hayes outlined concerns following the closure of the two youth centres in the City. She highlighted that while the City Centre had a low resident youth population, due to the transport links and retail outlets it had a high transitory population. She reported upon the development of Close House, St. Peters Close, Hereford. The building had been provided by the Deanery and had been converted and equipped for youth activities through collaborative working. A number of agencies were interested in providing information through the Centre i.e. the Primary Care Trust and the Learning and Skills Council. She further commented that youth workers would be able to provide accredited training. There would be facilities for students to "drop-in" particularly to do homework while waiting for transport after school or college. She also indicated the fundraising undertaken.

Councillor Mrs Lloyd-Hayes also highlighted the need for increased youth worker provision in the County, particularly in the City.

The Committee congratulated all concerned with the youth centre project.

The Head of Culture, Leisure and Education for Life reported that meetings had taken place between the Council and the Youth Worker for the project regarding funding and a detailed Business Plan was awaited. Responding to a question regarding the involvement of Parish and Youth Councils in youth work, he confirmed that a number of Council's had been contacted or involved, however, the staffing levels in the service had restricted this area of development

The Chairman suggested that he and the Vice-Chairman informally meet youth representatives from around the County to discuss issues of concern.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman meet youth representatives to discuss issues of concern and report on their findings in due course.

53. CONSIDERATION OF THE ECONOMIC POSITION OF HEREFORD

The Committee considered the issues that had emerged from the special meeting of the Committee held in Maylord Orchards Meeting Room, Hereford, on 14th January, 2004.

The Head of Community and Economic Development reported that the meeting on the 14th January, 2004, the minutes of which had been approved earlier in the meeting, had provided an opportunity for nominated business representatives to give evidence and contribute to debate on the economic impacts of recent events and to make suggestions about initiatives to improve the situation.

A useful and constructive debate had taken place at the meeting where the following key issues had emerged:

- The importance of local management in addressing recent crises such as Foot and Mouth and the Legionnella outbreak was noted. The special meeting agreed that such local management was essential if such outbreaks were to be effectively tackled.
- The need for the public, private and voluntary sectors in the City to work in a more co-ordinated fashion to promote the County and City as a shopping and visitor location.
- The need to provide additional capacity/resource to the Hereford City Partnership to enable it to properly fulfil such a co-ordination role in the City Centre.
- The need to review the range/impact of activity in and around High Town such as Street Trading, Farmers Markets and Fair rides.
- The importance of the success of the wider economy of the City in driving up income levels, which would support expenditure in the City Centre. In particular the essential requirement for a Rotherwas Access Road to ensure the competitiveness of the large number of businesses on Rotherwas Industrial Estate.

The Committee recorded their appreciation to Mr Tector, Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards, and his staff for their work during the outbreak of Legionnaires disease.

The Committee discussed the need to attract customers, particularly young professionals, to shop in the City. The need for a City Centre Manager to co-ordinate ideas and initiatives, particularly from the small retailer, was noted.

In response to comments regarding the need for improvements to the parking and transport infrastructure, the Head of Community and Economic Development reported that the Cabinet Member (Economic Development, Markets and Property) would be meeting with the City Centre Partnership to explore possible improvements.

The Committee questioned the links between Advantage West Midlands (AWM) and the Council and were informed that, depending on the project, regular meetings took

place at various senior officer levels.

The Chairman suggested that the Committee revisit this issue at an appropriate time (6 to 9 months) to review any improvements or developments.

The Director of Policy and Community reported that the issues raised related to the portfolios of a number of Cabinet Members and she therefore recommended that the report, which had been previously circulated to the Committee, be referred to them for consideration.

RESOLVED: That

(a) the report be noted and that it be referred for consideration by the Cabinet Members for:

- **Economic Development, Markets and Property;**
- **Community and Social Development;**
- **Environment;**
- **Highways and Transportation; and**
- **Rural Regeneration and Smallholdings.**

(b) this issue be reviewed at an appropriate future meeting.

54. ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION

The Committee were informed of the Adult Learning Inspectorate's proposals for the reinspection of the Council's Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded Adult and Community Learning (ACL) provision.

The Head of Community and Economic Development reported that the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) had inspected the Council's adult learning provision for the first time in January 2003. A number of significant strengths were identified, principally within the areas of learning. However, a number of key weaknesses were identified which resulted in the ALI considering that the quality of provision was not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Under these circumstances the Council had been advised that its service would be subject to a re-inspection. The reinspection would take the format of quarterly monitoring visits, (starting March 2004) culminating in a full reinspection of the whole of the LSC funded ACL provision, involving 4 days between September to December 2004. The report outlined the reinspection team membership and the Council's support and preparation for the reinspection. It was proposed that findings from a stakeholder meeting together with supporting information from the local LSC on the current situation regarding funding, be reported to a future meeting.

The Committee noted that if the reinspection decided that the service did not come up to expected standards it could ultimately be put into 'special measures'. The Director of Policy and Community responded to a question about the level of investment needed in the service. She commented that there was no simple answer. The principal issue seemed to be the provision of a consistent level of access to the service, which was extremely difficult to provide in a rural area.

The Committee noted the wider benefits of the service to the local community and the increased employment prospects of those who had undertaken training.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and a further report be made to a future meeting.

**55. POLICY AND COMMUNITY DIRECTORATE 2003/04 FIRST EIGHT MONTHS
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Members were informed of performance of the non-corporate functions of the Policy and Community Directorate against their national and local performance indicators for the first eight months of 2003/04, and received details of the main areas of activity undertaken by those services during the two months since the last report.

Variances from key indicators and national best value indicators were detailed, together with an overview of the wider performance of the individual service area, at appendix 1 to the report.

During discussion the following principal points were noted:

- The Director of Policy and Community highlighted that a number of Directorate staff had moved to offices in Plough Lane, Hereford and that issues were being learned about working in the different office environment. In relation to the now vacant offices, it was reported that a number of staff in Leominster were consolidating into one building. Where appropriate, buildings were being handed back under their lease agreements or being offered on the open market.
- Since the opening of the multifunctional service facility at The Bromyard Centre, there had been over 300 new library users. This facility was considered an excellent example of multifunctional working.
- Responding to a question regarding public knowledge of the Herefordshire Plan, the Head of Community and Economic Development reported that the Plan was principally a guide for the participating organisations. The Director of Policy and Community reported that over the following year, a fundamental review of the Plan would be undertaken, which would lead to future considerations around the level of input from Herefordshire Council and other Partners. It was anticipated that a report on the Plan would be considered by Strategic Monitoring Committee at its next meeting.
- Comment was made that a number of Parish Councils were unaware of the purpose of the Market Towns Initiative. The Director of Policy and Community responded that an information sheet would be sent to all Town and Parish Councils, including the Committee for information, concerning the initiative.

RESOLVED: That subject to information being sent to Town and Parish Councils on the Market Towns Initiative the report be noted.

56. HUMAN RESOURCES

The Committee received a report on the sickness absence and other matters for the Policy and Community Directorate.

The Director of Policy and Community reported upon the sickness absence statistics for the Directorate, which covered the period 1st January 2003 to 31st December, 2003. The report indicated the number of people in each division and the full time equivalent (FTE) together with the FTE days lost for each division and the average days lost per FTE. The report also contained reasons for sickness absence and a

breakdown of accidents by division. She reported that the Directorate was performing well but there were still areas for improvement.

The Committee scrutinised the statistics and noted that exceptional circumstances i.e. long-term sickness, may distort the position.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 11.57 a.m.

CHAIRMAN