

## HEREFORDSHIRE PLAN AMBITION GROUPS

Report By: Director of Policy and Community

### Wards Affected

County-wide.

### Purpose

1. To consider recent progress in relation to the Herefordshire Plan Ambitions relevant to the Policy and Community Directorate.

### Considerations

2. The Policy and Community Directorate has overall responsibility for the development and delivery of the Herefordshire Plan for the Council. In addition the Directorate is involved in supporting the delivery of a number of the 10 Ambitions in the Plan. Progress in delivering each of these ambitions is set out in turn below.
3. **Business, Economic Development and Tourism Ambition Group**

“Ambition: To support Business Growth and create more and better paid work in Herefordshire”

### Membership

The Ambition Group includes representatives of Herefordshire Council, Economic Development Service, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Learning and Skills Council, Chamber of Commerce and Business Link for Herefordshire and Worcestershire, Herefordshire Council’s Tourism Service, Advantage West Midlands, Herefordshire Council’s Forward Planning Service, Jobcentre plus, Federation of Small Businesses, and the Voluntary Sector Assembly. The Cabinet Members (Economic Development, Markets and Property) and (Rural Regeneration and Smallholdings) and Cllr Guthrie attend the Ambition Group.

The core Group has met three times since October 2003, with additional sub-group meetings also taking place.

There are also two sub-groups looking at Food and Agriculture and Tourism issues.

William Lyons from the Chamber of Commerce is acting Chair and Gareth Jones, Economic Investment and Development Manager, and Val Pike, Economic Investment and Development Support Officer, from Herefordshire Council facilitate the Group.

### General

#### Economic Development Strategy

Over the past six months the group has maintained its focus on the development of the new Herefordshire Economic Development Strategy, supported by grant assistance from Advantage West Midlands. The group has worked closely with the consultants (EDAW) on the preparation of the Stage 1 economic baseline, identifying key issues and a vision for the County. This work has also included a series of

briefing and consultation events to gain feedback on the findings, and links to other Ambition Groups and their strategies.

Stage 2 of the strategy will be focused around the development of action plans for each of the themes, and detailed delivery plans. This will continue over the next few months, and the Ambition Group will lead on the delivery and monitoring of the strategy once it is completed.

### **How the Group functions**

When the strategy is completed, the Group is planning to review its operations and membership to strengthen its role as the main strategic economic partnership within Herefordshire. It is important that the membership supports the strategy and action plan, to help drive forward their delivery.

### **Sub-Groups**

The Tourism Sub-group is continuing to meet and act as the management role for Herefordshire Tourism and the Herefordshire Tourism project.

The new Sustainable Land Use Group is also meeting, reporting back to both this Ambition Group and the Environment Group. The group organised and held a conference in January on the Common Agricultural Policy reform and what it could mean for Herefordshire, which was very successful and well attended. Speakers included the now President of the National Farmers Union, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and University academics.

### **Benefits**

The main benefits to the County from the partnership working engendered by the Group include:

- ❑ A stretching of resources due to avoidance of duplication and competition amongst the providers of economic development services;
- ❑ Leverage of external funding through co-ordinated support for projects;
- ❑ Building capacity and awareness of activities within different organisations and thus increasing the dynamism of staff;
- ❑ Being flexible and innovative in the way partners work together.

## **4. Community Development and Local Services Ambition Group**

“Ambition: Encourage communities to shape the future of Herefordshire”

### **Membership**

The Ambition Group includes representatives from a variety of statutory, voluntary and community organisations from across Herefordshire. The membership includes two representatives from the Voluntary Sector Assembly, and two representatives from the Community Development Workers Forum (Practitioners Group). The group has recently carried out a review of its working practices and membership and has moved to a structure of one core group and four sub-groups, to enable more people to become involved in supporting the development and delivery of the Community Development Strategy for Herefordshire. Wider membership from a range of sectors is currently being sought for these groups. The core group meets bi-monthly.

### **Strategic work**

Now the Community Development Strategy has been finalised, a small sub-group has been formed to agree and lead the implementation of its local priorities through a

dedicated action plan, and identify funding etc. The Group is in the initial stages of its work, which will continue over the forthcoming year.

The Ambition Group and its members contribute to wider strategic work through representation on other groups, such as the Objective 2 Action for Regenerating Communities in Herefordshire (ARCH) programme, Parish Plans and Herefordshire Voice steering groups. The Ambition Group has also contributed to the development of strategies including the emerging Economic Development Strategy, and replied jointly to voluntary/community sector consultations.

### **Community Team**

The new Community Development Co-ordinator is in post, and is providing dedicated support to the Ambition Group and sub-groups. The Group has noted the excellent progress that has been made since the post was filled, and the additional work and achievements that have been enabled as a result.

### **Who's Who 2003 Guide**

A guide to over 180 community workers working in the County was produced at the end of February 2003, and has been well used by community groups and a whole range of organisations. The guide is available in paper version and is on the Herefordshire Partnership website. Work is currently underway to update the guide and improve the layout and content based on users feedback. The updated version will be available by the end of the year.

### **Community Development Workers Forum**

The Community Development Workers Forum continues to meet regularly with very high attendance levels. The aim of the Forum is to increase the awareness of and best practice between workers, improve their knowledge of activities underway across Herefordshire and network with local organisations. Recent meetings have included briefings on external funding available to communities and current research. The Forum will also be holding a "speed dating" session in June, to enable the members to exchange best practice and share ideas, leading to future actions.

### **Network links**

The Ambition Group continues to develop communication and partnerships to deliver the Ambition. The Community Development and Local Services Ambition Group (CDLSAG) continues to support the Herefordshire Rivers Leader+ project, ARCH European funded Programme, Objective 2 Steering Group, Social Inclusion Ambition Group, Herefordshire In Touch Content Group, Herefordshire Information and Research Network, and several steering groups, such as the Countryside Agency/ODPM funded "Bridges project". The group recently nominated a member to represent Herefordshire on the Rural Regeneration Zone Pillar Group for Community Regeneration. This networking ensures that the Ambition Group is making effective linkages across the county in support of its aims.

## **5. Community Safety Partnership**

"Ambition: Reduce crime and disorder and make Herefordshire safer."

### **Membership**

Since the merger of the Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership and Drug Action Team, the membership has been continually evaluated to ensure all relevant partners attend. This has resulted in streamlining the membership to now include Herefordshire Council, the Police, Primary Care Trust, Probation Service, Fire

Brigade, Police Authority, Youth Offending Team, and the Voluntary Sector Assembly. The main Strategy group meets quarterly.

### **Strategic work**

The Partnership has started the process of developing the Crime and Disorder Reduction strategy 2005 – 2008. A researcher has just been appointed to assist in the baselining and research work, and there will be a considerable amount of community consultation undertaken during July and August. The final strategy will be ready by April 2005.

The Partnership has also just completed a Partnership Assessment, with a supporting improvement plan to develop and improve how the Partnership functions over the next year. The assessment is based on the Business Excellence model, and includes recommendations on processes, performance management, financial management and partner engagement.

### **Partnership activities**

#### **The NOISE project**

The project has recently expanded to Leominster, where at the last event over 300 young people were involved in a weekend “clear up” event. A similar event was also held in South Wye, with over 200 young people.

#### **Alcohol Arrest project**

The Alcohol Arrest project has continued to develop with help from Bulmers, and is going live in September. Further work is being undertaken with Bulmers in line with the National Alcohol Strategy.

#### **Communication**

The newly merged support team will be facilitating the communication of the Implementation Groups (including alcohol, domestic violence, drugs, anti-social behaviour and road safety groups) up to and back from the main Strategic group. Members of the support team also facilitate links to other groups, such as the Housing Ambition Group, Herefordshire’s Race Equality Group and the Children’s Fund.

## **6. Herefordshire Cultural Consortium**

“Ambition: Develop Herefordshire as an active, vibrant and enjoyable place to be”

### **Membership**

Members of the Herefordshire Cultural Consortium come from a range of backgrounds and organisations to include; Hereford College of Art and Design, The Courtyard Theatre of the Arts, Halo Leisure, Herefordshire Sports Council, Business Link, the Voluntary Sector Assembly, Herefordshire Council and the voluntary sector. The areas covered by the representatives of the Ambition Group are: the arts, sport, libraries, heritage, tourism and recreational countryside. A representative from the Museums Forum has also recently joined the Consortium. The associate membership continues to increase in numbers with more voluntary organisations and individuals becoming involved. The Cabinet Member (Community and Social Development) attends this Ambition Group. The Consortium meets quarterly.

### **Strategic work and research**

The Herefordshire Cultural Strategy was reviewed during 2003, and went through a rigorous consultation and development process. The Strategy is now finalised, and

reflects new opportunities available for people wishing to take part in cultural activities across Herefordshire, and changes to the wider policy arena. The strategy provides a framework for future developments, and is inclusive of arts, tourism, heritage, libraries, sport and recreation in its framework.

The Consortium's Action Plan for 2004/2005 has also been completed, giving a list of key projects taking place in Herefordshire that fulfil the aims of the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy.

Both documents will soon be available on the Herefordshire Partnership website.

### **Communication and disseminating information**

In order to promote effective communication both into the Herefordshire Cultural Consortium and out to organisations and the public, since January 2003 the Ambition Group has produced seasonal newsletters, distributed in hard copy through partner organisations, public buildings and on the Herefordshire Partnership web site. All publications of the Ambition Group, to include the Annual Action Plan, Final Report, and supporting documents and strategies are published on the Herefordshire Partnership web-site.

In addition, members of the Cultural Consortium have shown an interest in visiting Cultural communities across Herefordshire. Members will soon be visiting Bromyard on a tour incorporating: the Bromyard Centre; Conquest Theatre; Heritage Centre; and the Historic Society. The aim of the visit is to see how culture plays a part in and affects local communities, and to identify future needs and opportunities.

### **Network links**

The Herefordshire Cultural Consortium continues to support the Herefordshire Rivers Leader+ project, with members on the Local Action Group and one of the members chairing the Project Appraisal Committee. A member of the Ambition Group sits on the Objective 2 ARCH Steering Group to help identify and prioritise projects in line with the County's Cultural Strategy and Cultural Consortium Action Plan. A member of the Herefordshire Cultural Consortium is on the Parish Plans contact group, with the remit to support the community in compiling their plans, respond to requests for services and make note of trends and needs to re-assess the Cultural Consortium's priorities.

## **7. Herefordshire Learning Partnership**

"Ambition: Provide excellent education, training and learning opportunities in Herefordshire for all ages"

The Herefordshire Learning Partnership is a newly formed group, arising from a merger between the Herefordshire Partnership Education Ambition Group and the Herefordshire Lifelong Learning Partnership. There is a requirement for Learning Partnerships to be in place across the Country.

### **Membership**

Membership of the Learning Partnership includes the Learning and Skills Council, Voluntary Sector Assembly, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership; Herefordshire Colleges; Herefordshire Schools; Herefordshire Council; Connexions; Jobcentre Plus; Herefordshire Group Training Association; Robert Owen Society; and University College Worcester. The Group meets every 6 to 8 weeks.

The main group is supported by a number of sub-groups where more detailed work is undertaken, including Skills for Life (basic skills), 14-19 age group, special needs, employment based skills, Higher Education, and adult and community learning. Some of these are new groups in the process of being established, and some have already been meeting for some time. There are clear communication lines up to the main group.

Since the first meeting of the Learning Partnership in December, important time has been devoted to ensuring the mechanics of the group are correct, the sub-groups are appropriate and the communication lines are in place. The Partnership is now beginning to focus on development work.

### **Strategic work**

The Learning Partnership has been requested to oversee the Strategic Area Review of Learning (STAR), by the Learning and Skills Council. These reviews are being undertaken across the Country and are formal in nature, needing to adhere to nationally set timetables and standards. They are wide ranging in nature, and effectively review levels of need alongside current learning provision across the County. The review will continue until Spring 2005, with formal consultation periods. It is expected that a set of recommendations and actions will emerge.

The Learning Partnership will then use the STAR findings and recommendations as the base for their Learning Strategy and annual action plan in 2005.

### **Communication and networking**

The Learning Partnership is establishing clear lines of communication with and through its sub-groups, and has published its first newsletter, called "Learning Line", outlining current projects and initiatives. The Learning Partnership has a representative on the Objective 2 ARCH programme and the Rural Regeneration Zone, and is regularly represented at quarterly regional meetings where all twelve West Midlands-based Learning Partnerships are present. This forum encourages regional networking and supports LPs working together on regional projects (eg Rural Regeneration Zone projects).

## **8. Social Inclusion and Anti Poverty Ambition Group (SIAPAG)**

"Ambition: To Reduce Poverty and Isolation in Herefordshire"

### **Membership**

The membership of this Ambition Group includes representatives from service provider and user groups across the voluntary sector and statutory bodies. Facilitation for the group is provided from within the Herefordshire Partnership Support Team and administrative support comes from this team and from the Community Legal Partnership. The Ambition Group has formed a number of task groups, which are addressing specific priority areas.

### **General**

#### **Involving excluded groups in decision making and consultations**

This group is in the final stages of developing a list of accessible meeting rooms and venues, which will be widely available and can help voluntary and community groups as well as statutory agencies.

**Raising Awareness**

This group has negotiated a regular column in the Hereford Journal written by a member of the Ambition Group, giving advice on inclusion issues.

**Identifying and Addressing issues which are particular to Rural People**

This group is working to produce baseline data on rural areas and issues and to provide this in a useful format to decision makers and workers. A leaflet on Rural Social Inclusion in Herefordshire is currently in print, giving information on rural isolation, access to information and services, transport, jobs and money, housing and health and social care.

**Networking**

The group and its support officer make direct links to a number of other groups and networks, often acting as a challenger and to ensure that social inclusion issues have been considered. Current networks include links to the Objective 2 ARCH programme, a representative on the Rural Regeneration Zone Pillar Group for community regeneration, links to the Race Equality Partnership and joint work with the Community Development Ambition Group on community involvement. The group is also looking at how it can strengthen its social inclusion input with other Ambition Groups.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the report be noted.**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- None identified.