

MINUTES of the meeting of Social & Economic Development Scrutiny Committee held at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Friday, 24th September, 2004 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Councillors: Mrs. S.P.A. Daniels, J.G.S. Guthrie, D.C. Taylor, P.G. Turpin and A.L. Williams

Co-opted: Mr. G. Jones and Mrs. E. Newman

In attendance: Councillor G.V. Hyde (Cabinet Member – Economic Development, Markets and Property), Councillor J.C. Mayson (Cabinet Member – Rural Regeneration and Smallholdings) and Councillor R.V. Stockton (Cabinet Member – Community and Social Development)

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors H. Bramer, M.R. Cunningham, B. Hunt and J. Stone.

12. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes for the meeting held on 11th June 2004, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. REPORT BY CABINET MEMBER - RURAL REGENERATION AND SMALLHOLDINGS

The Cabinet Member (Rural Regeneration and Smallholdings) reported on his programme area.

Councillor Mayson paid tribute to the considerable amount of work and assistance provided to him when completing complex funding applications which had allowed the Council to considerably 'punch above its weight' in terms of grants received. Members were informed that 21 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs were supported by such grants, with only a small contribution from the Council.

Members were informed that an audit trail was required to receive any grant from Advantage West Midlands (AWM) necessitating much work from officers. Concerned by the amount of time it took to process applications the Director of Policy and Community had met with AWM representatives to discuss ways to simplify the grant application process.

The Director of Policy and Community commented that the majority of funding received from agencies such as AWM was now capital and not revenue. Officers were discussing with AWM ways in which the Council could work around this.

Councillor Mayson commented that the outcome of the Haskins Review on 'Modernising Rural Delivery' was likely to have an impact in simplifying the grant application process for rural areas.

Mrs. Newman (Herefordshire Association of Local Council's (HALC) Co-opted Member) informed the Committee that through her status as a member of the English Rural Networks Panel she had been nominated to sit on the Rural Panel. One of the roles of the Rural Panel was to scrutinise AWM. Mrs. Newman therefore invited Members to channel any questions or issues regarding AWM to her so she could raise them at future meetings of the Panel.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Mayson for his report and the Committee congratulated him on his handling of smallholdings issues in the County.

16. **REPORT BY CABINET MEMBER - COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Cabinet Member (Community and Social Development) reported on his programme area, a report on which was made available at the meeting as set out at Appendix 1 to these minutes.

Following the Cabinet Member's presentation discussion took place concerning the Community Building Grants Scheme. It was noted that the scheme required Community Groups to fund a proportion of the cost of their individual schemes from their own resources. It was confirmed that grants were only made after rigorous scrutiny of their accounts.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for his comprehensive report to the Committee.

17. **REPORT BY CABINET MEMBER - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MARKETS AND PROPERTY**

The Cabinet Member (Economic Development, Markets and Property) reported on his programme area a report on which was made available at the meeting as set out at Appendix 2 to these minutes.

Following the Cabinet Member's presentation discussion took place concerning the possibility of pedestrianising Hereford City Centre. The Committee was informed that this idea was at an embryonic stage and much consultation with affected groups would need to take place before any decision could be made. The final decision would be the responsibility of the Cabinet Member (Highways

and Transportation).

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for his report to the Committee.

18. **SICKNESS ABSENCE**

The Committee was updated on sickness absence and other matters for the Policy and Community Directorate for the year 1st August 2003 - 31st July 2004.

The Director of Policy and Community reported that there had been a reduction in the number of days lost per full-time equivalent employee and that the number of days lost was still less than the current number of overall days lost per employee by the Council as a whole.

The Policy and Community Directorate still showed a high level of staff turnover. Members were informed that this was because some members of staff performed more than one role. And as members of staff left, each post was counted separately, hence the actual levers are less than those recorded.

Concern was expressed regarding the high number of stress related absences and whether this could be linked to the current situation regarding 'Job Evaluation'. The Director of Policy and Community commented that the stress related absences were generally related to a diverse number of personal issues. She reported that, when considered necessary, the Council offered a counselling service to all its employees.

The Director informed the Committee that while exit interviews were carried out this was not done comprehensively. She also reminded Members that the Human Resources function was monitored by the Strategic Monitoring Committee.

RESOLVED: THAT the report be noted.

19. **POLICY AND COMMUNITY DIRECTORATE 2004/05 FIRST FOUR MONTHS PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Members were informed of the performance of the non-corporate functions of the Policy and Community Directorate against their national and local performance indicators for the first four months of 2004/05. The report outlined the key areas of activity undertaken by each service for this year and detailed the main areas of activity undertaken by those services during the first four months of 2004/05.

Comments on a number of areas identified in the report for improvement had been referred to earlier in the meeting by the Cabinet Members.

RESOLVED: THAT the Directorate's first four months, 2004/05 performance indicator information be noted.

20. **HEREFORD CITY - ECONOMIC SITUATION**

The Committee received an update on the economic situation in Hereford City.

The Head of Community and Economic Development reported that since consideration of the issue by the Committee in January and February 2004 a significant amount of progress had been made in taking forward issues to address the future health and vitality of the City. This progress was outlined in the report.

Members were also informed that the approved Asda development in Hereford was proceeding, with meetings planned with architects due within the next month.

RESOLVED: THAT the contents of the report be noted.

21. **CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND TOURISM ENTERPRISE PROGRAMMES**

The Committee was updated on the Creative Industries and Tourism Enterprise programmes that were due to finish in March 2005.

The Cultural Services Manager informed Members that the Tourism Enterprise and Creative Industries programmes in Herefordshire were primarily funded by three-year grants, sourced regionally and from the European Union. Both programmes had had a significant impact on these two sectors and the wider County economy. The programmes had been entered into on the understanding that further funding may not be forthcoming and were therefore seen as stepping-stones to further development.

The Committee was informed that proposals had been made to secure funding through Advantage West Midlands (AWM) via the Rural Regeneration Zone (RRZ); however, AWM's current emphasis was on capital projects rather than revenue projects.

The Cultural Services Manager reported that if RRZ funding was not forthcoming for tourism, expenditure would drop from the current average of £500,000 per year to the sum of £100,000 provided from the Council's own budget plus possible contributions from the private sector. Tourism was worth £272 million a year to the County with 800 directly supported jobs. However, Herefordshire was the least successful destination in the West Midlands in terms of visitor spend. Appendix 1 to the report outlined which programmes would be able to continue on the reduced budget.

The Creative Industries programme was also set to see its budget vastly reduced from approximately £450,000 to £30,000 as external funding dropped out. It was reported that the Arts Council was interested in supporting this programme area. However, this would still require a large number of initiatives to be dropped unless RRZ funding was to be forthcoming. Appendix 2 to the report outlined which programmes would be able to continue on a reduced budget.

The Cultural Services Manager expressed concern that even if funding could be secured it would arrive too late to secure the long-term futures of staff on fixed term contracts.

RESOLVED: THAT the content of the report be noted.

22. **2004 RURAL STRATEGY**

The Committee was updated on the recent Rural Strategy published by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in July 2004.

The Policy and Commissioning Manager informed Members that the new Rural Strategy had been published following the recommendations of the Haskins Report on Modernising Rural Delivery. The revised strategy set out future policy direction for rural services. A number of significant recommendations were outlined in the strategy, including:

- The move to a smaller and more focused Countryside Agency
- The development of an Integrated Land Use Agency, pulling together the remit of the Countryside Agency, English Nature and the Rural Development service.
- A greater divide between policy development and delivery.
- Devolving rural delivery to the regional and local level.
- The rationalisation of rural funding streams from 100 current schemes to 3 major funding programmes.

From the West Midlands region, Shropshire County Council had been selected to be the pathfinder area.

The Committee was disappointed that Herefordshire had not been chosen as the regional pathfinder area but hoped to gain valuable feedback from Shropshire County Council as their pathfinder approach was developed and implemented.

RESOLVED: THAT the report be noted.

23. **PROPOSED COURTYARD THEATRE REVIEW GROUP**

The Committee considered undertaking a Scrutiny Review into the funding arrangements of the Courtyard Theatre.

Members discussed the draft scoping statement for the review, including the proposed terms of reference as attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

RESOLVED:

THAT (a) a review of the funding arrangements of the Courtyard Theatre be undertaken and the scoping statement as attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved;

(b) Councillors H. Bramer, Mrs S.P.A. Daniels, J.G.S. Guthrie and J.

Stone be appointed to serve on the Courtyard Theatre Review Group; and

(c) Councillor J. Stone be appointed as Chairman of the Courtyard Theatre Review Group.

24. **MONITORING OF 2004/2005 REVENUE BUDGETS FOR SOCIAL, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AREAS PERIOD 1-5**

The Committee was advised of the actual net revenue expenditure against budget for the Social, Community and Economic Development programme areas to period 5 of the financial year 2004-2005.

The Principal Accountancy Manager presented the report, a detailed monitoring report was attached at Appendix 1. The report showed the revised budget, including carried forward over and underspends from 2003/04 with actual performance, variances and projected out-turns for the main service areas within Social, Community and Economic Development.

The Principal Accountancy Manager identified three service areas with variances, these were:

- Parks and Countryside – the overspend of £161,000 incurred during 2003/04 had been written off against the commuted sums reserve. For 2004-2005 an extra £79,000 had been allocated to the service, however, it was unlikely that this would fully address the budget shortfall.
- The Youth Service underspend continued due to problems with staff recruitment. This also impacted on operational budgets in the current year as the reduced staff numbers led to uncompleted projects.
- The Director of Policy and Community reported the Youth Service was proving to be a very difficult area to recruit in and that was a national problem. A Government Green Paper on the future of the service was expected to be published shortly.
- The Leisure Services Contract's also showed a deficit due to unanticipated maintenance costs during the year. A recovery plan had now been put in place to enable the deficit to be reduced in full over the next 2 to 3 years.

RESOLVED: THAT the position be noted.

25. **FESTIVALS REVIEW - PROGRESS REPORT**

Further to its recent review of festivals, the Committee received a report on progress following this year's festivals.

The Chairman read a short statement on the Ross International Festival:

“The Ross International Festival brought something very special and unique to Herefordshire which makes it extremely sad to hear that it has

become insolvent.

We've worked with the organisers for a number of years to support the Festival and only last year agreed a three-year funding package to give it some kind of financial stability, at least in the medium term.

Herefordshire has a fine tradition of festivals which appeal to all sections of the community and adds to the vibrancy and cultural diversity of the County.

The Ross-on-Wye International Festival was well loved by many people and had become a key element to the county's cultural calendar."

The Cultural Services Manager informed the Committee that the Ross International Festival was due to meet its creditors and that she was unable to comment further at this time. The Herefordshire Photography Festival was currently taking place and she hoped it would be a successful festival. It had not been Herefordshire's turn to host the Three Choirs Festival this year.

Members were informed that the Leominster Festival had reported a 9% increase in ticket sales and had been attended by 2,500 people despite being a very small and self-contained festival. The Cabinet Member (Community and Social Development) congratulated the organisers of the Leominster Festival and echoed its call for new, younger volunteers to aid the organisers so that the festival could build on its current success.

An Annual Review of the Ledbury Poetry Festival was due later in the year but it was already estimated that 5,000 people had attended this year's festival. The Festival had learnt from previous years and it no longer overlapped events in order to increase attendances. The Cultural Services Manager repeated that the Ledbury Poetry Festival still wished to enter into a Service Level Agreement with the Council for the festival in order for it to increase its financial stability and aid its planning.

The Cabinet Member (Community and Social Development) reported Herefordshire's success in 'Britain In Bloom' and the Committee congratulated its local organisers.

RESOLVED: THAT the position of the County's Festivals be noted.

26. **POSITION STATEMENT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CROW ACT 2000 (RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO)**

The Committee was advised on the current position on the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW) in respect of service responsibility within the Social Development portfolio area.

The Countryside and Leisure Development Manager reported that the CRoW Act was a complex piece of legislation and that responsibilities under the Act fell across two Directorates (Environment and Policy and Community).

In relation to conservation and wildlife, he reported that those sites directly managed within the Parks and Countryside Service, were deemed stable with management regimes that were likely to lead to progressive enhancements of

both species and habitats.

In relation to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), he reported that the Council's obligations with respect to the production, adoption and publication of the statutory AONB Management Plans had been successfully met in full.

He further reported that a project to survey newly designated access land and those Section 9 Commons which fell into Council ownership within the next two years had been initiated. This exercise also incorporated conservation and wildlife assessments. When the work was completed it would form the basis of a report to Cabinet on the Council's newly acquired legal and property obligations and provide options for the resourcing framework that would be required to discharge the Council's duties.

The Countryside and Leisure Development Manager reported that Leaders briefings on the further implications of the Act were being prepared for the autumn.

RESOLVED:

THAT (a) the report be noted;

and

(b) the Committee be advised of future developments following the proposed Leaders briefing on corporate progress.

The meeting ended at 11.47 a.m.

CHAIRMAN

ANNUAL REPORT BY CABINET MEMBER - COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Wards Affected

County Wide

Purpose

1. The Cabinet Member reported as follows on the progress and achievements within the area of Community and Social Development and the challenges of the forthcoming year.

Achievements & Challenges

Adult and Community Learning

The Lifelong Learning Development Unit (LLDU) restructure is now implemented. This was initiated following the Adult Learning Inspection (ALI) of January 2003. A Quality Assurance framework will now apply to all courses and provision from the start of the autumn term.

The ALI will be reinspecting the Council's Adult and Community Learning service in the week commencing December 6th 2004. LLDU has been working to address the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection and has received a number of monitoring visits from the designated lead inspector. The indications are that the LLDU is making satisfactory progress in addressing these weaknesses and is hopeful of a satisfactory outcome in December.

During the previous academic year a total of 550 learners were enrolled on a variety of courses. The LLDU has recently accessed £415,818 of European Social Funds, which is available to spend over the period September 2004 to December 2006. This more than doubles the amount of money to support courses and activities and will be spent in bring learning opportunities to disadvantaged communities within the county.

Herefordshire Learning Partnership

The Herefordshire Learning Partnership acts as the ambition group for the Herefordshire Partnership. During the past year it has implemented a review and has been relaunched to make it a more effective forum for bringing together organisations representing learning across all age groups and sectors.

It has developed a three-year development, and one-year business plan and has received funding from the LSC to support staff involved in implementing these plans.

Key activities this year have been the management of a mapping exercise to identify what adult and community provision exist, and where; the production of 'Learning Link' the Learning partnership newsletter; a Rural Learning Conference and a

successful 1st stage submission to European Social Funding for the 'Teddy Bear' transnational project.

The Learning Partnership is currently being consulted by Learning and Skills Council's as part of its Strategic Area Review (StAR). The implementation of the proposals arising out of this process will present the biggest challenge over the next year for the Learning Partnership and its constituent organisations.

Voluntary Sector Review

Over 30 structured interviews have been held with Council officers and representatives of the voluntary sector infrastructure organisations. The programme of interviews should be concluded by the end of the month. The review has involved a major benchmarking exercise, and is expected to be completed towards the end of October.

Community Buildings Grant Scheme

Under the scheme grants of up to £15,000 are available for Community Buildings across Herefordshire to assist with:

- Work that is needed in order to comply with legal requirements (such as disability access or for Public Entertainment Licences)
- Extensions that allow additional activity
- Extensions that aid the expansion of an existing activity.

Grants of up to £500 are available to assist towards the cost of feasibility studies.

A total of £56,751 was distributed among eight community facilities across the county through last years Community Buildings grant scheme. A further £14,858 was awarded from the 04/05 due to the quality of applications received: See Appendix 1 for details

The closing date for applications for 04/05 Community Building's scheme is Friday 26th November 2004. Applicants will be informed of Herefordshire Council's decision by Friday 4th February 2005.

Voluntary Sector Grant Scheme 2004

The budget for voluntary sector grants for 2004/2005 was £165,000

The closing date for the 1st round of applications was the 9th January 2004 and 30 applications were received. The funding requested in this round amounted to £415,840.00. A total of £143,971 was allocated during the 1st round.

An unclaimed grant of £3,075.00 has been returned to the pot, leaving a total of £24,164 to be distributed in the 2nd round.

The closing date for the 2nd round of applications was the 31st March 2004 and 26 applications were received. These funding requests amounted to £109,898.25. A total of £24,655 was allocated during the 2nd round. See appendix 2 for details.

External Liaison – Achievements

- The Herefordshire Youth Games, organised by the Sports Development Team and held in July 2004, involved 23 schools and over 500 children in a hectic day of competition. Sports included football, rounders, tennis, tag rugby, orienteering, cricket and new age curling. This is the fourth annual Games organised for local schools.
- The Sports Development Team has been successful in attracting a grant in excess of £100,000 from Sport England and Big Lottery Fund's joint Active England Programme. The South Herefordshire Activity Promotion and Education Scheme (SHAPES) will provide a diverse range of activity sessions over the next three years, and will also provide training and mentoring opportunities for people who wish to know more about health, fitness and exercise. There will be opportunities for Herefordshire residents to gain recognised qualifications, and the Coordinator will work with community groups to identify what activities people would like to see in their local area.
- The Herefordshire Community Safety & Drugs Partnership carried out their three-year audit and public consultation in August 2004. Attendance by the public was very high and some excellent feedback received. The Partnership will be holding their conference, as part of this audit process, in November.
- Three Race Equality awareness sessions have been organised for the end of September, and all places taken up, from both Council staff and partner organisations.
- The Sports Referral Project which commenced in June is gaining momentum, with initial uptake very positive. The target group are those who are at risk of problematic drug use, as evidence suggests that participation in sport can make a positive contribution towards reduction in crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. Many clients are already becoming engaged with local clubs, and taking part in activities from fishing to karate.
- In April 2004, the Leisure Development Group, facilitated by External Liaison, successfully negotiated a reduced pricing policy for carers accompanying an individual to an activity at Halo leisure facilities. Through discussion and partnership working, the group agreed with Halo a definition for a carer. They impressed upon Halo the benefits to numerous individuals and to their own business of offering a concession to those supporting someone who would not be able to access that activity without their support.

Challenges

- Funding for the Children's Rights & Advocacy Services continues to be a challenge. The service currently extends only to children in the looked-after system, with virtually no funding available for development or project work. Minimal funding is secured until 2006 through an SLA with Connexions, Social Services and Education, however External Liaison is currently appealing to the Corporate Parent Group for support in finding core funding to put the service on a secure footing.
- As the team continues to expand, there may be issues around accommodation. Despite new, externally funded posts allowing for accommodation, IT and

telephone charges in their budgets, allocation of desk space within Plough Lane is uncertain. Such uncertainty in itself may delay the recruitment process.

- A Criminal Justice Intervention Programme (CJIP) Coordinator has been successfully recruited to the External Liaison team. The challenges facing him in the next twelve months include recruiting two members of staff, sourcing suitable office accommodation and establishing inter-agency working protocols.
- The part-time Girls' & Women's Football Development Coordinator is currently contracted only until the end of March 2005. Without someone in post, opportunities for Herefordshire women in football are scarce, as are the benefits that accompany participation in a team sport and physical activity. Funding applications are currently being developed to enable the post to continue on a full-time basis.

Parks, Countryside and Leisure Development - Achievements

- The refurbishment of nine fitness suites with major financial benefits accruing from a robust procurement process.
- The award of Woodland Grant Schemes and Certification for Council Managed Woodlands.
- 10 year Management Plan approved for Queenswood.
- Significant progress with Aylestone Park project including £100k commuted sum secured via Planning Policy.
- Very good Lottery Inspection Reports for Ledbury Leisure facilities.
- Improved Quest Assessment scores for all inspected leisure sites.
- Updated for best ever results on Britain in Bloom entrants across the County.

Challenges

- Continuing deficit budget position on Grounds Maintenance.
- Resourcing CPO of Belmont land.
- Resourcing future obligations under Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000.
- Continuing pressure to provide incremental support to In Bloom Initiative.
- Restructuring of Halo asset base.

Cultural Services - Achievements

H.Art week taking place between 11-19 September. A showcase of visual arts and crafts produced throughout the county. Includes 34 exhibitions and special events; 47 open studios; 11 gallery shows.

Herefordshire Walking Festival – June, with over 60 different walks, and over 1300 walkers. Compared to last year there was a significant increase in the number of booked places despite the weather not being favourable. 31% of walkers were from a non-Herefordshire postcode, with the visitor from furthest away coming from Barbados.

Capital improvements at the Record Office, specifically catering for visitors with disabilities. The final stage of the work is the disabled toilet which is due to be in place for the launch of the improvements on the 30th September - the eve of the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Herefordshire Cultural Strategy – produced and well received as an easy to follow and attractive document. To accompany this document is advice to organisations and groups running cultural projects on how to measure the difference initiatives make.

Friar Street – building work started with the support of Heritage Lottery money to create a “state of the art” store for objects and to increase access to the artifices. 3rd Phase lottery application submitted for education resource and final development.

Village Art Markers – Arts Team received Lottery funding for a project in villages to work with an archivist and artist to create distinctive sign / public art for the area.

Youth Arts Charter – working with a number of partner organisations to develop a charter for working with young people. Nearing final completion.

Archaeology Week – Heritage Services run a series of events throughout the week which were very well received.

Public Art – consultation to the public on Rotherwas public art project.

Coming up – Hereford Contemporary Crafts Fair, Open Day at the Record Office; User Group Consultation at the Record Office; Flavours Awards Ceremony; Establishment of a Cultural Ambassador Scheme; Winter Walking Festival; Autumn Tourism Forum.

Challenges

Uncertainty over external funding for Creative Industries, Tourism Enterprise and the final phase of Friar Street. Applications or proposals currently submitted.

Income from TIC centres facing challenges e.g. reduction of commission on bus passes.

As non-statutory service vulnerable to budget reduction.

Not enough space at the Record Office to hold new archives.

Customer Services, Libraries and Information – achievements

- Opened Bromyard Centre (Jan 04)
- Extended opening hours at libraries
- New INFO point at Garrick House

- Training and Development Programme
- Long – Service presentation and recognition
- Agreement on future for Kington Library and INFO point
- Conservation plan for St Katherines, Ledbury
- On-line reservation system set up
- Free reservations policy being implemented.

Challenges

- Vision and funds for Hereford
- Re-structure and organisational change for 150 staff
- Implementing career programme
- Efficiency savings to meet budget target
- Delivery of multi access to services at Libraries and INFO
- Diversity impact requirements
- Meeting compliance with DD Act
- Improvement corporately in call handling
- Rural service, Revised mobile services, community Access Points

Community Youth Service – Achievements

- Move from Bromyard Youth Centre in to new premises in Bromyard Centre
- Refurbishment and re opening of Ledbury Youth Centre
- Busiest ever summer programme at Bodenham Sailing Centre, with new fully accessible boats and facilities for young people with disabilities.
- Expansion of Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme to all High Schools
- Achieved full funding programme for Ross Creative Learning Centre (we now have to deliver it)
- New Roots programme – wide range of music activities and development across Herefordshire delivered in part through the youth service
- Successful partnership with Rural Media to deliver the Youth Times programme and Insite on line magazine (youth portal / gateway)

APPENDIX 1

- 3 new trainee youth workers appointed (to address skills and workforce shortage)
- Hinton Youth Centre refurbishment funding has been achieved in partnership with local residents association.
- Dinedor Youth Camp has been successfully passed to the newly established Herefordshire Outdoor Trust (HOT) who have received their major grant from the Lottery.

Not so well

- Not currently on track to achieve 4 Key targets set by DfES
- Recruitment

Future challenges

- Recruitment, Recruitment, Recruitment (still on 12% vacancy rate)
- Achieving new quality standards and targets as set by DfES (we are not currently on track)
- Ofsted / JAR (Joint Area Review - pilot inspection for all Children's Services) inspection probably due in 2005
- Children's Services / Children's Bill changes to structure of organisations delivering to young people.

Directorate Support Unit

Achievements

- DSU co-ordination of Directorate office re-locations to Plough Lane.
- Appointment of new Directorate Facilities Officer to manage Modern Records Unit and to lead on GEM, Health & Safety, Data Protection, Freedom of Information, etc. across the Directorate.
- Revised newsletter format for Performance Reports to Scrutiny.

Challenges

- FOI implementation
- P&C Support Services review outcome/implementation, etc.

Appendix 2

ANNUAL REPORT BY CABINET MEMBER – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MARKETS AND PROPERTY***Progress during the year******Twyford Court Units, Rotherwas***

New units at Twyford Court, Rotherwas were declared open on Friday, 25 June 2004. The completion of the six new units and associated roads is one of the first completed projects funded with Rural Regeneration Zone funding in this area. The units have taken six months to construct and cost around £1.3 million with funding coming from Advantage West Midlands, Objective 2 European Regional Development Fund and Herefordshire Council.

New Internal Estate Roads, Rotherwas

Two new internal roads have been completed utilising AWM funds on Rotherwas linking Holme Lacy Road to Netherwood road and a further link from Netherwood Road to Southern Magazine site. These roads will allow the Southern Magazine site to be developed once the Rotherwas Access Road has been constructed.

Rotherwas Business Centre

Planning permission has been secured for the Rotherwas Business Centre which will include 14 offices and 10 light workshop units. Work is continuing to try to put together a funding package for the scheme.

Opening of the Leominster Industrial Estate Access Road

The newly completed Leominster Industrial Estate Access Road was officially opened by Tony McNulty MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport on Thursday, 9th September 2004. This £5 million scheme will open up 30 acres of new employment land on the Leominster Enterprise Park which should help to create up to 500 new jobs.

Rotherwas Access Road

The Council has successfully secured planning permission for this scheme and is now working to secure the funding to enable the scheme to proceed at the earliest possible opportunity. In March 2004 the Council took a delegation to the Minister, Tony McNulty MP to press the case for funding for the scheme. An application for funding for the scheme has subsequently been submitted to the Department of Transport and a decision is anticipated during December of this year. A petition in support of the scheme is currently being put together and it is anticipated that a further local delegation will go to see the Minister to promote the scheme at the end of October.

Edgar Street Grid

The Council and Advantage West Midlands are continuing to develop proposals for the 100 acre Edgar Street Grid site to the north of the existing historic City Centre. The Council has adopted a Masterplan for the site and key proposals have been integrated into the Herefordshire Unitary

Development Plan. The Council and Advantage West Midlands are working together to establish a Joint Venture Company to take the proposals forward to implementation. Work is commencing on site acquisition and an early task for the Joint Venture Company will be the selection of appropriate private sector development partners.

City of Living Crafts

The Council has continued to develop projects in the City Centre as part of the City of Living Crafts Programme.

Council's Capital Programme - The Council has approved approximately £1 million in its capital programme, for a range of City Centre Enhancements over the next few years. Schemes included are Eign Gate refurbishment, Shop Front Grant Scheme, Initial works on High Town/High Street and Victoria Footbridge refurbishment.

Eign Gate Refurbishment - The Council has commissioned options for the refurbishment of Eign Gate which will go out to public consultation in the Autumn of this year with a view to being implemented early in 2005.

Hereford Cathedral - The Council is working with the Cathedral to develop a Heritage Lottery bid for the Regeneration of Cathedral Close and associated Cathedral buildings. A Project Planning Grant has been secured with a view to submitting a full bid for Heritage Lottery funding later this year. In the interim, a schedule of remedial works has been completed in the Cathedral Close. New turf and top soil has been laid, improvements have been made to the surfacing of the paths and pot holes have been filled.

Castle Green - The Council has commenced work on putting together a team to develop a Heritage Lottery bid for a major refurbishment of Castle Green and its environs.

City Partnership

Cynthia Spaul has now been appointed by the Hereford City Partnership as the new Hereford City Manager. She is already working on a range of initiatives which should support the health and vitality of the City.

South Wye SRB Programme

The South Wye SRB Programme continues to perform well with £2.6 million of SRB money being drawn down attracting over £5 million of other funding and 30 Projects are currently being supported. The highlight of the year as always being the South Wye Big Event on the 4th September 2004. We are continuing to work with the Partnership and AWM to try to identify a sustainable way forward once the current SRB Programme comes to an end in 2006.

- Overall relationships have been built with key partners in South Wye, i.e. Asda and George Wimpey, in order to best benefit the local community.

- 600 people have volunteered and 2 community facilities have been completed. A further 2 are underway this year.
- Police reported a significant reduction in crime during the period.
- Over 9,000 people attended the Big Event
- The programme has spent £2,614,908 SRB funding to date and attracted £4,337,273 other public funds and £998,056 of private funds.
- 30 projects are currently being supported.
- The Promoting Positive Behaviour Project has reduced the need for fixed term exclusions at Hayward High School.
- The South Wye literacy project has assisted 400 learners since 2001
- A holiday scheme run by the community development team provided 280 places for children's activities, which was booked up within 48hrs.

Challenges for year ahead –

- The Programme entering its final stages of funding and is focusing on exit strategies this coming year.
- Each project has been asked to submit a forward plan detailing what happens when SRB funding ends in 2006, and the partnership is currently looking to purchase an asset which will provide an income stream and which will be of benefit to the local community.
- They are also in discussion with ASDA regarding community facilities on the new site as well as Health provision.
- The partnership are acutely aware that they need to identify additional sources of funding in order to continue with the work in South Wye, and the forward strategy group are working towards producing an action plan for the future of the programme.

Development of new Economic Development Strategy

During the year work has commenced on developing a new Economic Development Strategy for the County. Consultants EDAW have been appointed to develop the Strategy guided by representatives of key organisations in the Herefordshire Partnership including the Council. A series of consultation events were undertaken which involved Council Members, Herefordshire Partnership, Parish Councils and businesses. Final work on the Strategy is now being completed and the new Strategy will be in place by the end of this year. The work has provided a very useful analysis of the issues currently facing the County and will provide a framework for agreeing shared priorities to ensure the future economic health of the County.

Visit by AWM Chairman – Nick Paul

AWM continues to be an important funding partner for the Council in delivering its local economic development priorities. Whilst the revenue position of AWM is currently constrained, their ability to invest in capital schemes is something we need to take full advantage of in Herefordshire. We have continued to try to build effective working relationships with AWM at the highest level. In May Herefordshire Council hosted a tour of the County for AWM Chairman Nick Paul and secured his support for key projects such as the Edgar Street Grid, Rotherwas Access Road and Leominster Access Road.

Challenges for the next year

The challenges for the forthcoming year really relate to building on the progress we have made on the issues/projects summarised above. Key priorities will continue to be taken forward in the Market Towns and Hereford City including Edgar Street Grid, Rotherwas Access Road, the development of Leominster Enterprise Park.

The context for this activity will be the new Economic Development Strategy and the Herefordshire UDP will also play an important role in driving the allocation of the central employment land. In particular there will be an opportunity to bring forward a new business park in Ross on Wye.