

MEETING:	GENERAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	10 DECEMBER 2012
TITLE OF REPORT:	UPDATE TO THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY TASK & FINISH GROUP REPORT ON TOURIST AND TEMPORARY EVENT SIGNAGE
REPORT BY:	Richard Ball, Assistant Director Place Based Commissioning

1. Classification

Open

2. Key Decision

This is not a key decision

3. Wards Affected

County-wide

4. Purpose

To note the contents of the report and to seek the views of the General Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the draft Policy and Guidance Notes, arising since the Task & Finish Review.

5. Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) the report and progress is noted; and
- (b) The committee provide a view on the draft policy and guidance notes

6. Key Points Summary

- In July 2011 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a task and finish group to review Tourist Signage
- The review was completed in March 2012. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the findings and recommendations and in April 2012 wrote to the executive requesting a response to the recommendations

- The executive responded in July 2012 setting out an action plan and timetable which was approved by the committee with a request for an update after 6 months.
- This report and attachments provides an update on progress.

7. Alternative Options

- 7.1 The alternative option is to retain the current guidance notes and policies. However these have been reviewed and considered to be out of date, unsupportive of local business and non-reflective of the current emphasis on community engagement.

8. Reasons for Recommendations

- 8.1 Overview and Scrutiny has recognised that the current Tourist Signage policy needs revising. The views of the committee on the proposed policy and guidance notes would be welcome.

9. Introduction and Background

- 9.1 In July 2011 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a Task and Finish group to undertake a review of Tourist Signing (Brown Signs). At the first meeting of the group the scope was reviewed and Temporary event signage was added as it had a close bearing on the subject. The final agreed scope for the review was therefore:

- The review Tourist signing policy
- To review Tourist signing delivery
- To review the guidance provide on temporary event signage
- To review the temporary event signage delivery

10. Key Considerations

- 10.1 In July 2012 the Overview and Scrutiny committee considered the findings of the Task and Finish Group set up to review Tourism and temporary event signage policies and delivery. Eight recommendations were put forward by the task and Finish Group along with executive's response. The executive's responses included a number of actions and timetable which has been updated and is attached in the supporting documents.
- 10.2 After consideration, it was decided the best way to move forward was to compile a package of guidance notes covering tourist signage, business signage and temporary event signage under an overarching policy. The guidance notes will provide clear advice and directions to business and organisation wishing to apply for signage adjacent to and on highways. In regards to business signage and temporary event signage, Herefordshire Council are setting out what they will not enforce against as technically, signage on or adjacent to a highway needs to be authorised.
- 10.3 The draft policy consultation is now underway and has included local ward members, parish councils, local tourism businesses, The Council for the protection of Rural England, Amey Herefordshire and the Planning service. Useful discussions have also been carried out with Visit Herefordshire who are supportive of the direction of the policy and are helping with the consultation. The consultation is due to end on the 21st December 2012. However due to Parish Council meeting timetables is has been agreed that parish Councils can submit comments up to the 17th January 2013. Based on this a revised timetable has been produced.

10.4 The draft policy along with the 3 supporting guidance notes have been attached to the report and comprise of the following:

- Draft Tourism signage and Temporary event policy – this sets out the general direction Herefordshire council are taking which is to provide greater support to business whilst ensuring protection for the environment and road safety, along with greater involvement of local communities
- Draft Tourist Signage Policy – this has been considerably simplified and provides far more support to local businesses. The emphasis is on encouraging business to apply for signs rather than acting as a deterrent which often results in illegal signs and excess clutter. A requirement to involve the local community in the decision making process has been introduced. This will ensure greater local engagement and will give communities a direct say in the installation of infrastructure which affects the areas they live in and from which business operate from.
- Draft temporary event signage – the previous differences between commercial and non-commercial events has been removed and the requirement to remove signs after an event has finished has been strengthened.
- Draft business signage – this a new form of signage designed to encourage those business that either do not meet the criteria for brown signs, or wish to have something more individual than a brown sign, to apply for direction signs. The emphasis will be on the look of the signs to make sure they fit with the environment and, similar to temporary event signage, it will set out what Herefordshire Council's Highways and Planning services will tolerate and not enforce against. Local community organisations will have a key role in the decision making process alongside officers

10.5 The emphasis on all three documents is to encourage rather than discourage groups, business and organisations to apply for signage which will in turn reduce the increasing proliferation of clutter, improve road safety and help promote rural businesses. Those organisations wishing to run events will have clarity around what is expected of them and clear guidance on how to ensure the signage element of event organisation is carried out safely and in a way that ensures the event is well promoted and signposted. There is a far greater role for local communities who will be part of the decision making process and for the first time will have a say on what signage is erected in their areas. Costs for signage will be kept to a minimum with the emphasis being on covering expenses rather than making a profit.

11. Community Impact

11.1 The current procedures do not involve local communities in the decision making process in respect of new permanent signage. In light of the fact that very often it is businesses based within rural communities applying for signs it seems clear that local people should have a say. The new policy and guidance notes for business and tourism signage therefore puts local communities very much in the decision making process and applicants will need the support of local parish councils and ward members for their proposals. This will be a new role and therefore parish councils and ward members are being consulted.

12. Equality and Human Rights

12.1 There is no Equality or Human Rights Impact

13. Financial Implications

- 13.1 There are no additional cost implications for the authority. New signs will need to be paid for by the applicant.

14. Legal Implications

- 14.1 Given that signage erected on the highway must comply with the relevant highway regulations the Council, as highway authority, cannot authorise the erection of signage that is not in compliance with these provisions. However, it does have discretion to take enforcement action, depending on the circumstances.

15. Risk Management

- If agreed, the new policy and guidance notes will help provide greater clarity around what is expected, hence helping to reduce sign clutter, improve road safety and help promote rural businesses.
- If agreed, the new policy and guidance notes require the full involvement of local parish councils and ward members in the decision making process. Risks around the fact that local communities vary in size and capacity will be managed through ensuring that their views are taken into account as part of any consultation and subsequent implementation.
- If declined, the risk of retaining the current out of date guidance notes and policies is that these will not support local business, nor reflect the current emphasis on community involvement.

16. Consultees

- 16.1 The draft policy is currently out to consultation with Parish Councils, Local Ward Members, Tourism businesses, Chamber of Commerce, CPRE and the Areas of Outstanding natural Beauty. Visit Herefordshire, Highways and Planning Services have also been consulted

17. Appendices

- 17.1 Draft Tourism and Temporary Event Policy

Draft tourism signage policy

Draft temporary event guidance notes

Draft business guidance notes

18. Background Papers

- 18.1 Executive response to Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish group recommendations