

MINUTES of the meeting of Community Services Scrutiny Committee held at Assembly Hall, Town Hall, Hereford. on Wednesday, 14th December, 2005 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:	Councillor	A.C.R. Chappell (Chairman)
	Councillor	H. Bramer (Vice Chairman)
	Councillors	M.R. Cunningham, J.G.S. Guthrie, D.C. Taylor and P.G. Turpin
	Co-opted Members	G. Jones (Tourism Sector), Mrs. E. Newman (Herefordshire Association of Local Councils) and Mr. S. Speight (Chamber of Commerce)

In attendance: Councillors Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes and D.B. Wilcox (Cabinet Member – Highways and Transportation).

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors J.M. Mayson (Cabinet Member – Rural Regeneration and Strategy) and R.V. Stockton (Cabinet Member –Community Services).

23. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Mr. S. Speight substituted for Ms. C. Jones.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

25. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That, subject to the deletion of the repeated apologies for absence, Minute Item 10, from the published minutes, the minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

There were no suggestions of issues for future scrutiny received from the members of the public present at the meeting.

27. OVERVIEW OF HERITAGE AND MUSEUM SERVICES

The Committee was provided with an overview of the Herefordshire Council's Heritage Service, the service that delivers the Council's museum provision.

The Principal Heritage Officer gave a presentation to the Committee. The following are the principal points of the presentation and following questions:

- Seven sites were open to the public throughout the County including the Museum on the Move mobile museum which visits schools and community groups and events.
- A virtual tour was available of the Old House, Hereford for those visitors which were unable to use the stairs.
- The Service has over 100,000 items in its collections which when not on display to the public need to be preserved for the future.
- The costume and textiles collection was internationally recognised.
- Items from the art collection were regularly loaned to other museums for display.
- The Museum on the Move mobile museum visits schools throughout the County as there are currently no fully accessible education facilities to host visits.
- The Museum on the Move bus is funded via a partnership with Shropshire and Worcestershire County Councils. All three Counties share one bus.
- A Community Heritage Officer aids local community groups with research activities and facilitates displays in the County's museums by local history groups.
- Officer time and support was provided to the 21 independent and small museums in the County.
- In 2006 Herefordshire Council's Museums were due to apply for accreditation, the new round of the national scheme for museum standards.
- Any finds which are dated as pre 1680 are logged on a national database.
- The project to establish a new Museum and Resource Centre was making good progress, currently 3 stores, staff offices and a research room for visitors were open. Plans were now progressing on extending the building so that all collections could be stored on one site. A Stage 1 pass of funding of £1.2m from the Heritage Lottery Fund and match funding from Herefordshire Council had been secured for this purpose and the decision on the stage 2 pass is imminent. The final stage of this project was for Hereford Museum and Library, Broad Street, Hereford to be redesigned to sole Museum use with the Library to relocate onto the Edgar Street Grid.
- The extension of the Museum and Resource Centre was scheduled to be complete by September 2007 and was not linked to progress in relocating the current library.
- The creation of the new Museum and Resource Centre had allowed: collections in commercial storage to be returned; collections to be moved from the Old House basement; the establishment and implementation of an integrated pest management system to protect collections and the Museum on the Move to be able to park on site.
- 100% of all primary schools and 94% of all state schools in Herefordshire had used the Museum Service in 2005.
- Heritage Services had 781 users per 1000 of population – this figure did include a high number of out of county visitors.
- Heritage Services had 35 members of staff and 80 volunteers.

28. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN HEREFORDSHIRE

The Committee was updated on the establishment of a Destination Management Partnership (DMP) for Herefordshire and informed how this partnership will encourage a framework for investment in the sector as well as the Herefordshire

economy. Members were also updated on the Three Choirs Festival in Herefordshire which was set to take place during 2006.

The Principal Tourism Officer informed the Committee that the West Midland Visitor Economy Strategy) launched in April 2004 recommended that DMP's should be established within its sub-regions to implement and deliver the Regional Strategy and bring together all the elements that make up the 'tourism experience' in each sub-region into one body – the DMP.

She explained that the Tourism Co-ordination Group, set up as a result of the Best Value review of Tourism, made up of representatives of all sectors in the tourism industry, representatives of the regions of Herefordshire and other statutory bodies had taken the lead in establishing the DMP in Herefordshire which consultation results showed was widely supported. Industry representatives felt that the establishment of the DMP will cut down on duplication and enable the DMP to attract external funding to help deliver tourism in the County.

The DMP is scheduled to be in place by April 2006 subject to the approval of the Councils Cabinet and the Tourism Co-ordination Groups Shadow Board.

A Member of the Committee stated that the establishment of a DMP was an important step in the development of tourism in Herefordshire. He informed Members that the DMP had wide support, contained strong representatives from the private sector and presented a common sense approach to dealing with tourism issues within the County.

The Principal Tourism Officer informed the Committee that work was already beginning in promoting next years Three Choirs Festival. A postcard will be mailed in January to 80,000 homes in the UK, to people from a database of addresses that are currently held by Herefordshire Tourism developed from persons who had previously expressed an interest in receiving information about the area, containing the logo of the Three Choirs Festival including website address and a box whereby the recipient can indicate that they would like to receive a programme for the Festival by returning the postcard. The Festival was also promoted in Herefordshire's annual visitor guide and on the Council's website.

The Chairman expressed concern that many cafes and restaurants in Hereford were closed on Sundays and not open late at night. He felt that it would be beneficial for these types of facilities to be open later generally but especially during the Three Choirs Festival when Herefordshire would attract large numbers of visitors.

Members heard that the Principal Tourism Officer was keen to work with facilities which could provide pre and post performance entertainment during the Festival. An idea was being investigated whereby members of the public could buy a ticket for a performance at the Festival and a reservation would be made for a meal at a local restaurant at a set time either before or after an event.

A representative of the Cathedral, a key venue for hosting performances during the Festival, informed Members that the Festival provided the City with an economic opportunity as research had shown that approximately 60% of visitors to the Festival would stay overnight within the location of the Festival. Therefore it would be beneficial for Herefordshire economically and socially, and the Festival as a whole, if facilities were provided for Festival goers at times which coincided with performances. He reported that a meeting was scheduled with Council representatives to discuss now the proposed City Centre refurbishment could be timed to have minimum impact on the Festival.

Comment was made that it was important that litter was cleared from the streets in order to attract tourists to the County.

RESOLVED:

That (a) the report be noted and the actions already taken to promote the Three Choirs Festival be supported;

(b) the Committee suggests that the Cabinet Member (Environment) considers ensuring that appropriate Council facilities, including car parks and public conveniences, are available to visitors at appropriate times during the Three Choirs Festival;

and;

(c) the Committee suggests that the Cabinet Member responsible for Economic Development considers encouraging local businesses to vary or extend their trading hours to cater for visitors during the Three Choirs Festival.

29. HEREFORD CITY CENTRE REFURBISHMENT

The Committee considered the consultation process that was undertaken in respect of the proposed refurbishments to Hereford City Centre.

The Economic Regeneration Officer informed Members that the designs and costings for the city centre refurbishment had been developed between Council Officers with Owen Williams and RRA Architects. The initial designs were formulated using information gained during previous work which had indicated that people were keen to see more space in the city centre so that more events and displays could take place.

He explained that the design work for the refurbishment was very detailed so a decision was taken to only consult on the general layout and paving design before completing a further consultation on the other multiple options which included lighting and planting.

In October 2005 a full public consultation commenced which included a preview of the consultation for County and City Council Members, Hereford City Partnership, Hereford in Bloom and the Civic Society on 21 October 2005. Retailers in the City were advised of the public consultation in a letter using addresses from the business rates database.

A public consultation exercise was undertaken from 22 to 29 October 2005 from a trailer in High Town and in the Old House. Available to the public were static display boards and Officers to explain the details on display. 260 consultation forms were returned, however, this does not reflect the number of people attending the consultation, many couples returned a single form and many others did not wish to complete a form. It is estimated that during the course of the consultation between 700-1000 people viewed the display.

The Committee was informed that from the returned consultation forms approximately 60% favoured option 2, 20% option 1 and 20% were against both. Details of the options were attached at Appendix 1 to the report. A copy of the report

detailing the options was forwarded to Members prior to the meeting.

The following are the principal points from the ensuing discussion:

- The consultation was not available online. However, the second stage of the consultation process would be available on the Councils Website.
- After hearing that some business consultation forms were returned un-delivered and the fact that many businesses had their rates paid by regional centres the Committee felt that any correspondence relating to the next stage of the consultation process should be hand delivered.
- Businesses within the Hereford City ring road were consulted.
- Meetings were taking place with utility service providers to ensure that any essential works which needed to take place could be timed with any refurbishment to help prevent future disruption.
- The telephone boxes currently sited in High Town were under discussion with BT.
- An agreement had been made with the Three Choirs Festival that no work would take place in the main area of the City during the Festival.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

30. ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORATE

Members were advised of the current structure and delivery arrangements for the Adult and Community Services Directorate.

The Director of Adult and Community Services informed the Committee that his new Directorate comprised of elements of the former Policy and Community Directorate and Social Care and Strategic Housing Directorate. The Directorate was formed as a result of a senior management restructure in early 2005.

He explained that the Directorate was currently still being established and it was anticipated that a new management structure would be confirmed in early 2006. Currently services were being managed through the existing management structure which was outlined in Appendix 1 to the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

31. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Committee were informed on the available performance indicators position and provided with information about current performance management work within the Community Services Division of the Adult and Community Services Directorate.

The Performance Improvement Manager explained the amended report style and briefly took Members through the data which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. He highlighted underperformance in the Community Youth Service (CYS) but explained that he expected performance to improve with the implementation of new positive partnership working arrangements.

The following are the principal points from the ensuing discussion:

- Concern was expressed regarding the lack of resources within the Parks

Contract Budget. It was suggested that plastic vandal proof benches be used to replace aged timber ones. Although these benches were known to be more expensive than their timber counterparts the Committee considered their durability to be worth the extra initial capital outlay.

- Concern was expressed regarding the performance of the CYS. A view was stated that the voluntary sector could be made to feel more apart of the CYS culture. The Committee decided that they would like to receive a report from the CYS Manager on this issue.
- The Committee were keen to establish if there was any increase in alcohol related crime and disorder with the recent introduction of the Licensing Act.
- It was clarified that HAND stood for Herefordshire Against Night-time Disorder.

RESOLVED:

That (a) the report be noted;

and;

(b) the Community Youth Service Manager report to the next meeting of the Committee regarding the relationship between the CYS and the voluntary sector.

32. ST. KATHERINES SITE - UPDATE

Members were updated about the current position regarding progress in developing The Masters House, St Katherine's, Ledbury into an integrated library and Info Shop.

The Interim Head of Community Services informed the Committee that an independent Conservation Report had revealed that some parts of the Masters House building dated back to the early 15th Century and therefore recommended that only certain areas of the site should be subject to alteration. It was believed that it would be possible to work with English Heritage to gain listed building consent to go ahead with the alterations prior to the relocation.

Additionally special provision needed to be made to the St Katherine's development to incorporate provision for ICT development and the expansion of the current network upgrade project.

Members heard that all of these issues had delayed the commencement of the project to summer 2006.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

33. WORK PROGRAMME 2006/07

The Committee considered a new work programme for 2006/07.

The Chairman informed the Committee of the draft work programme formulated after consultation with the Director of Adult and Community Services and attached at Appendix 1 to the report. He stated that much of the work programme had been kept clear so that the Committee could consider the most current issues for scrutiny within its remit at a particular time.

In preparation for the March meeting of the Committee, the Chairman stated that he

hoped that the Committee would undertake a tour of the new swimming pool in Leominster.

The Chairman noted that it had already been agreed to consider an item concerning the CYS at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the inclusion of the Community Youth Services item, the work programme be approved and recommended to the Strategic Monitoring Committee.

The meeting ended at 7.26 p.m.

CHAIRMAN