

**COMMUNITY AND LEISURE SERVICES POLICY & SCRUTINY PANEL  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN**

**11<sup>th</sup> November 2004**

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**PRESENT:**

Councillors: J Baker (Vice-Chairman), A J Buckley, Mrs L Hyde, Mrs R L Lewis, Miss M A Mason, M J Shellie, R Wheway.

**Observers:**

Councillor N J Desmond, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services; Councillor Mrs H E Dyke; Councillor Mrs J Fairbrother-Millis; Councillor J A Shaw; Councillor Mrs F M Oborski; Councillor M B Kelly.

**CM.410 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B T Glass.

**CM.411 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES**

There were no appointments of substitutes.

**CM.412 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor R Wheway declared a personal interest as he is a children's play consultant.

Councillor Mrs F M Oborski declared a personal interest as she is Chairman of the Wyre Forest Youth Strategy Skateboarding Sub-Committee

Councillor M B Kelly declared a personal interest as he is a member of the Wyre Forest Leisure Community Association Ltd.

**CM.413 MINUTES**

**AGREED:**

**The minutes of the meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2004 be confirmed as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chairman.**

**CM.414**

**PRESENTATION ON THE WORK OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SECTION, CULTURAL, LEISURE AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES DIVISION**

The Chairman welcomed Lesley Fox, Community Development Manager who delivered a presentation on current and future development and project work within the Community Development Section, Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services Division.

Mrs Fox advised the panel that the main focus of the section was the involvement of people in the issues that affected their lives. The section had been operating since 2000 and had addressed many areas, including health, anti-social behaviour, social and sporting activities. She provided the following information:

The section was divided into four areas:

- Arts Development
- Countryside and Conservation
- Play Development
- Sports Development

The section has twelve full time and four part time staff. Four of these posts were externally funded; these were short term projects of between one and five years duration.

Arts Development's key project this year has been the Kidderminster Arts Festival, which received two years external funding through the Arts Council. They held regular workshops on drama and art, working with schools. These were generally externally funded. They also worked with the other sections to organise holiday activities, for example the recent trip to see Blood Brothers at the Hippodrome during half term.

Conservation and Countryside section received the English Nature SSSI Award in 2003, national recognition of their achievements. They managed some of the County's most important nature reserves and had recently established a new one, bringing the total to ten. They operate diversionary activities, such as the Far Out Club, and liaise with the Urban Safety group to help address problems such as motorcycling and arson within the reserves.

Play Development currently operates five after school clubs. This service is subject to an internal review as increasingly they were competing with, rather than complementing, private

provision and were suffering staff retention problems.

Sports Development conducted much of their work in conjunction with other Districts in Worcestershire. They were able to draw on Lottery funding so a budget of £5,000 generated £15,000 expenditure. They worked to build links with families and young people through their Active Communities projects. The section employed a full-time football coach and a part time rugby coach.

The Community Development section worked with a number of Community Development Projects. The success of the Broadwaters Mill Partnership was highlighted, with the group standing on their own feet and bringing in funding and liaising with the Parks Department. It was hoped that a similar model could be used in Brinton Park, Kidderminster.

Mrs Fox explained that the section's work had a demonstrable effect on crime statistics, particularly by targeting summer holiday activities to "hot spot" areas.

*Councillor J A Shaw arrived at this point (6.18pm).*

External funding was important to the section and they worked hard to bring in as much as possible. £214,000 has been raised so far this year, with another £145,000 hoped for by March.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Fox for her presentation and invited questions and comments from the Panel.

- (a) Members expressed concern at the impact fear of litigation had on the operations both of the section and of the organisations it supported. They acknowledged that there was a compensation culture, but wondered whether it was possible to obtain overarching public liability insurance cover which organisations could buy into.
- (b) Members were also concerned at the impact of child protection issues and the requirement for police checks. The Cultural Services Manager explained that the Council was currently reformulating the Child Protection Policy with a specific view to operational aspects so that groups would have something they could use and so that it was up to date with current best practice guidelines.
- (c) Clarification was sought regarding the two sports coaches that were funded by Sport England. It was explained that the football coach worked in conjunction with Kidderminster Harriers Football Club and the rugby

coach works in conjunction with the Carolians. Both worked closely with schools' sports co-ordinators. The need for a rugby coach was identified as a result of an audit conducted by schools into teacher expertise and student demand.

- (d) Members were informed that the current funding arrangements with Sport England expired in April 2005 but that a new core funding programme through to 2009 was due to start and there was potential for the District to gain from this.

**CM.415                    12 MONTH REVIEW OF BEWDLEY ALCOHOL RESTRICTION ZONE - JULY 2003 TO JULY 2004**

The Strategy, Partnerships and Communications Manager introduced PC Nigel Barter, Beat Manager for Bewdley, who gave a verbal presentation on the history and operation of the Bewdley Alcohol Restriction Zone.

PC Barter provided a brief history of the implementation of the Alcohol Restriction Zone (ARZ). He has been Beat Manager for Bewdley since January 2001 and had noted there was a problem with disorder, particularly in association with underage drinking, in the town. An ARZ in Bewdley was proposed in January 2002 and took 18 months to set up. This process involved consultation with residents, businesses, Wyre Forest District Council and Bewdley Town Council, as well as gathering of statistical evidence from Police files to support the plans. A visit was made to Kinver, where South Staffordshire District Council were also setting up an ARZ.

In July 2003 the Bewdley ARZ came into existence, with 48 signs being erected around the town and a good deal of publicity both before and prior implementation. The main power that the zone created was that people could now be asked to dispose of drink, with refusal being an arrestable offence. In the case of persistent offenders, written warnings could be issued.

Statistics showed that there has been a reduction in disorder in the town centre since the introduction of the ARZ and the independent survey showed that the public perceived it as being a success. The Strategy, Partnerships and Communications Manager clarified that although violent crime had gone up within the zone this was against a background of a rise across the District and indeed nationally.

The Chairman thanked PC Barter and invited questions and

comments from the Panel.

- (a) Concern was expressed that Members representing Wribbenhall had not been consulted even though part of the zone fell within the boundaries of Wribbenhall ward.
- (b) The proposed widening of the zone was discussed and particular mention was made of dispersal areas, in particular The Queensway and the Millennium Gardens, as well as the Shaw Hedge Road Play Area as this was the site of the proposed Skateboard Park. PC Barter confirmed that the Police would make representations in support of the inclusion of Shaw Hedge Road and Millennium Gardens in an extended zone, but stressed that the focus was on the town centre.
- (c) A member queried whether the Council could be of any assistance in enforcing the ARZ using local bye-laws. The Planning, Property & Commercial Solicitor reported that the main issues restricting the use of bye-laws were police manpower and the level of fines able to be imposed.
- (d) Concern was expressed that there was an assumption that young people must be in the wrong and Members felt that the assumption must be that most were reasonable and would respond to reasonable requests. PC Barter confirmed that he had undertaken outreach work, in particular visiting the Youth Club and explaining that the zone is aimed at the minority who caused trouble, not the entire youth population of Bewdley. He stressed to the Panel that problems occurred with people of all age, not just young people. Concern was expressed that the questions asked in the independent survey appeared to concentrate on young people.
- (e) The concept of ARZs was welcomed by Members and it was felt that there was a need for them in several areas of the District. The Cabinet Member, whilst praising the excellent scheme in Bewdley, recommended caution be exercised so as not to dilute the effectiveness of the zones. He urged an incremental approach, working closely with the Police.

#### **CM.416**

#### **SKATEBOARDING**

Councillor Shellie, as Chairman of the Task & Finish Group, presented a report on Skateboarding provision within the District. Councillor Shellie thanked the officers involved in the review for their assistance, as well as all those who had offered

assistance, of whom there were many. He stressed that the Group, mindful of its tight time-scale, opted to take a strategic overview of provision within the three main towns and avoided concentrating on particular areas and schemes.

Councillor Shellie noted that provision was currently planned, or in place, in both Bewdley and Kidderminster, leaving Stourport as the only town with no planned provision. The Group had highlighted the Fun Box project, which was providing a good service with minimal funding, something they would like to see continued in the future.

Members raised the following questions and comments:

- (a) Concern was raised that there were several groups from whom evidence was not apparently sought. Councillor Shellie said that whilst the Group had numerous witnesses, the Group as a whole felt it wanted to look at the issue strategically and not concentrate on individual areas and schemes.
- (b) Members were concerned that there seemed to be a focus on activities, such as skateboarding, that were male dominated and it was important to also consider the needs of girls.
- (c) Members commented that it was important to involve young people in the design and planning process as the perceived ownership of the resulting project had a positive affect in reducing vandalism.

The Panel considered the recommendations presented by the Task & Finish Group and adopted them, subject to the amendment of that relating to any excess funds arising from the development of skateboarding facilities in Brinton Park, Kidderminster. The Task & Finish Group had recommended that any excess be diverted to 'pump prime' provision in Stourport-on-Severn, however the Panel felt it more appropriate that this funding be used within Brinton Park.

The Panel therefore made the following recommendations:

**RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet**

- (a) **That skateboarding provision be made strategically in Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn.**
- (b) **That, as Stourport remains the only strategic location without any funding allocated to the project, the**

Panel recommend that a service option be put forward for the Stourport project for £5,000 which could be allocated to Stourport Forward as 'pump priming' funding.

- (c) That consideration be given for the diversion of any potential savings from the Brinton Park skateboarding project to contribute to the overall development and improvement of Brinton Park.
- (d) That consultation takes place with young people regarding any potential projects and that young people be involved in fundraising for skateboarding schemes.
- (e) That provision of the Fun Box should compliment the strategic sites and go out to the rural areas and be used for special events and partnership working. The Panel recommends that a service option for £3,500 be put forward, which would fund a programme of events throughout the year.
- (f) That the Young People's Strategy be pursued through the Youth Strategy Group and that other needs and expectations be addressed through this process, for example the needs of girls, other facility provision and the growing youth population in the Spennells Area.

#### **CM.417 MANAGEMENT OF SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRES**

The Cultural Services Manager explained that the Wyre Forest Leisure Community Association Ltd contract for the management of sports and leisure centres was in its second year of operation and that there had previously been Scrutiny Reviews conducted of the centres.

The Chairman of the Environment & Economic Regeneration Policy & Scrutiny Panel reported that her Panel was conducting a review into the evening economy and the programming of acts at the Glades Arena would be looked at in conjunction with that review.

Members agreed that there was no need to conduct a full review given that there were no reports of any major problems.

**AGREED:**



- 1) **A report on the operation of the Wyre Forest Leisure Community Association Ltd contract for the management of the Council's sport and leisure centres be provided for the next meeting of this Panel.**
- 2) **A further review be considered in 12 months' time.**

**CM.418 STRATEGIC REVIEW OF THE DISTRICT'S PLAY FACILITIES**

The Cultural Services Manager provided a history of the Council's play strategy. She explained that a substantial amount of work had been done previously on the issue in Scrutiny Committees and that the Council was currently two years into a five year capital programme. The previous Scrutiny Review had agreed to reduce the number of play areas from 17 to 10, but a number more were due to come into Council control through Section 106 agreements.

Councillor R Wheway raised the fact that the issue was not so much the facilities as whether children could play and highlighted the fact that many play opportunities fell outside formal play facilities. He also reported that the Health & Safety Executive had recently accepted that taking risks was part of growing up and was concerned that there was an over-emphasis on safety which inhibited provision of play facilities. He offered to prepare either a briefing paper or a presentation on the issues as he saw them for the next meeting.

The solicitor explained that any such presentation would need to be mindful of the terms of reference of the Panel and the Cultural Services Manager explained what areas fell within the remit of the Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services Division.

**AGREED:**

**Councillor Wheway be asked to prepare a presentation on Children's Play, suggesting specific areas for scrutiny, for the next meeting of the Panel, liaising with officers regarding the Terms of Reference of the Panel.**

**CM.419 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Work Programme of the Panel was considered and the following points made:

- a) The Chairman of the Environment & Economic

Regeneration Policy & Scrutiny Panel informed the Panel that Cinema Provision fell within the remit of the Environment & Economic Regeneration Policy & Scrutiny Panel and therefore would be considered by that Panel.

- b) The Panel discussed a future presentation on Street Wardens. It was acknowledged that this would need to occur at the January 2005 meeting of the Panel in order to allow scope to make recommendations to Cabinet in time for the budget process. It was highlighted that a key issue is the funding of Street Wardens through social housing rents and whether this could be transferred to Council Tax.
- c) It was suggested that, at the March 2005 meeting, the Panel may wish to receive a presentation from the Leisure Services Manager regarding her role, along the lines of that received from the Community Development Manager at this meeting.

**AGREED:**

- a) **The Strategy, Partnerships & Communications Manager be asked to arrange a presentation on Street Wardens for the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2005 meeting of this Panel.**
- b) **The Leisure Services Manager be asked to prepare a presentation for the Panel for the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2005 meeting of this Panel.**

The meeting ended at 8 p.m.