

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL****CABINET**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2008****Regeneration & Economic Prosperity Work Programme**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY THEME</b>	<b>Economic Success Shared by All</b>
<b>CORPORATE PLAN AIMS</b>	<b>A Vibrant Local Economy</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER</b>	<b>Cllr Stephen Clee</b>
<b>HEAD OF SERVICE</b>	<b>Head of Planning, Health &amp; Environment</b>
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<b>APPENDICES</b>	<p><b>A. Regeneration &amp; Economic Prosperity Work Programme</b></p> <p><b>B. Headline Performance Indicators</b></p> <p><b>C. Family benchmarking results (to follow)</b></p> <p><i>The appendices to this report have been circulated electronically and a public inspection copy is available on request. (See front cover for details)</i></p>

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To report on the work carried out by the Regeneration & Economic Prosperity team during its first year and to agree a Work programme for the future.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **The Cabinet is asked to DECIDE to:**

**Agree the Work Programme set out in Appendix A to this report.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In 2006 an internal review took place of the Economic Development & Tourism function which, at the time, sat within the former Strategy & Performance Unit, under the leadership of the Chief Executive. Prior to 2003, the Economic Development & Tourism team were part of the former Planning & Environment Division.

- 3.2 As part of the 2006 review, Members acknowledged the synergy between the economic development function and the planning and housing functions of the Planning, Health & Environment Division, and agreed to transfer the Economic Development & Tourism function to the Planning, Health & Environment Division to maximise this synergy and to respond to the developing national agenda for regeneration.
- 3.3 The Economic Development & Tourism function was transferred to the Planning, Health & Environment Division from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 but the team did not move to Duke House until July 2007, at which time the team was reorganised as the Regeneration & Economic Prosperity Section, under the leadership of Ken Harrison who was appointed the Regeneration & Economic Prosperity Manager.
- 3.4 The remit of the team is to continue the traditional economic development activities and support for business development and growth and to continue to deliver the tourism function through the Destination Worcestershire Partnership, but also to increase the work under the broad heading of regeneration to deliver social, environmental and economic improvement and wellbeing through the creation of sustainable communities. This area of work, in particular, brings together the development of planning policy, with the very practical Development Control function and the strategic housing function to deliver an holistic approach to regeneration across the district working in the towns and in the rural areas.
- 3.5 The Mission Statement for Regeneration & Economic Prosperity, established at the time is to “provide a focus for delivering the Council’s regeneration & economic prosperity priorities through a programme of sustainable projects to create a setting for economic progress and opportunities for all of the districts’ residents, businesses, investors and visitors, continuing to deliver regeneration, economic development and sustainable tourism”.
- 3.6 The Council has always acknowledged the importance of the regeneration function and embodied ‘Promoting Economic Prosperity’ as one of the service themes in the 2003-2008 Corporate Plan with the aim to “contribute to a vibrant and balanced economy that encourages investment, supports business development and tourism and provides access to a wide range of employment opportunities and skills for local people”. In the recently adopted Corporate Plan 2008-2011 “a Vibrant Local Economy” is one of the Council’s four Corporate aims and “District wide regeneration” is one of the Council’s four priorities for 2008/09. The importance attached to the regeneration agenda is also evident in the Sustainable Community Strategy and through the Local Area Agreement and is a priority across Worcestershire through the Worcestershire Partnership.
- 3.7 The Council is mindful that the successful delivery of regeneration and economic development at the local level relies on an appropriate framework at the county and regional level, as well as an understanding of the national agenda. In recognition of this, attention has been given to helping shape regional strategies such as the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Economic Strategy which has recognised Kidderminster as both an area for growth and a regeneration area. Further, the Council is closely monitoring the development of the Sub National Review of Economic Development and has been responding to consultation documents with a view to establishing the most appropriate framework for the delivery of the economic development function across Worcestershire in the future. The Regeneration &

Economic Prosperity Manager also sits on the Regional Economic Development Officers' Group at the West Midlands Regional Assembly.

- 3.8 In order to deliver regeneration at the local level, the Regeneration & Economic Prosperity team recognise that partnership working is essential to delivery and, as well as working closely with colleagues from the Community & Partnerships Division and Property & Operational Services Division, have developed close working relationships with Advantage West Midlands (the Regional Development Agency), the County Council, Stourport Forward, Bewdley Development Trust and with the communities of the two most deprived areas in the district through the Oldington & Foley Park Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder and the similar Horsefair, Broadwaters & Greenhill Partnership.
- 3.9 The Regeneration & Economic Prosperity team are currently working on a number of strategic documents which will help to deliver Regeneration & Economic Development across the district, for example, the Rural Economic Strategy and the Kidderminster Regeneration Prospectus and already rely on policy documents and strategic information such as the West Midlands Enterprise Strategic Assessment of the district carried out in 2005, the GHK and PIEDA work undertaken on behalf of British Waterways for the Stourport basins and the Roger Evans' study undertaken for the then Opportunity Bewdley which considered opportunities for regeneration in Bewdley.
- 3.10 A report was considered by the Regeneration & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee in June 2008 which set out the regeneration, economic development and tourism activities underway at the time, together with a draft Work Programme for Economic Regeneration 2008-2014. This work programme is appended to this report for formal approval.

#### **4.0 UPDATE OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES**

- 4.1 In the relatively short period of time the Regeneration & Economic Prosperity team have been in existence, there have been a number of significant areas of work underway which are briefly summarised below:

##### **4.1.1. Regeneration in Stourport –on-Severn**

The Council has worked closely with British Waterways in the award winning historic restoration of the canal basins area funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). In parallel with this work, the Council is also working closely with British Waterways and AWM to secure, through compulsory purchase, land off Bridge Street to provide a pedestrian link from Bridge Street through to the Basins to build on the tourism potential which had previously been identified in the PIEDA and GHK studies. In partnership with the County Council and Stourport Forward, public realm improvements have been undertaken on Bridge Street, including new pavements, carriageway surfacing, public art and street furniture. Also in conjunction with Stourport Forward, the Council has developed the Stourport Pride initiative and, with the support of the Town Council, is currently initiating a number of projects to improve the Riverside Meadows environment. Further, in partnership with English Heritage, the Council is administering grant funding for the repair of historic buildings through the Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas initiative. Officers are also looking at ways of bringing forward comprehensive development of 23 and 24 Bridge Street which remains an ongoing concern of Town and District Members.

**4.1.2 Regenerating Bewdley**

Prior to Stourport Bewdley was the first of the two market towns to benefit from the Market Towns Initiative; Opportunity Bewdley was established in 2003 and in 2007 was replaced by its successor organisation, Bewdley Development Trust (BDT). Regeneration opportunities in this historic market town are more limited than elsewhere but the Council works closely with BDT to bring about some of the vision identified in the original Roger Evans' study. To complement this, the Council commissioned a piece of urban design work by Taylor Young and it is the combination of these two pieces of work that form the foundation for the current multi agency partnership, looking at the redevelopment of the health centre and associated facilities, including St. George's Hall. With Opportunity Bewdley, the Council assisted in the implementation of Shop Front Grant Scheme, worked closely with the Environment Agency on the Severnside North & South improvements following the Flood Alleviation work and is currently looking at opportunities for the long term sustainable future of Bewdley Development Trust.

**4.1.3 Rural Regeneration**

A Rural Economic Strategy is currently in the final stages of being developed and follows consultation with the rural Parishes and the public. The Council is also involved in the "Grow the Wyre" project with the Forestry Commission, which focuses principally on facilities within the Wyre Forest but, indirectly, supports the further development of rural economic opportunities.

**4.1.4 Connecting Kidderminster – Prospectus for Regeneration**

This is a major piece of work for the Regeneration & Economic Prosperity Section and has been developed with financial assistance from Advantage West Midlands and Worcestershire County Council. The prospectus focuses on the wider Kidderminster area and includes a number of opportunities for future redevelopment, both large scale and small. The Prospectus has a long lineage dating back to 2005 when West Midlands Enterprise carried out a piece of work which acted as a health check for the development of a Kidderminster Economic Strategy. This, in itself, developed from a piece of work looking at the opportunities and challenges of the Stourport Road economic corridor (SREC) and stems from the desire to re-position the wider Kidderminster area in terms of public funding opportunities. The draft Regeneration Prospectus is also due for consideration at this Cabinet meeting and will put forward for public consultation a number of exciting opportunities for the heart of the district.

Since the original regeneration strategy in 2005, there have already been a number of significant developments which have assisted the continuing improvement of the wider Kidderminster area, including the Oldington & Foley Park Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder and its parallel, the Horsefair, Broadwaters & Greenhill Partnership, the restructuring of the Kidderminster Town Centre Partnership and, in March 2008, the joint appointment of a Kidderminster Town Centre Manager with the private sector owners of Weavers' Wharf, Hendersons. New developments are taking shape on the ground, for example, the recent opening of the Morrisons Store and the significant public realm improvements linking to the town centre and there are a number of opportunities which it is anticipated will come forward in the near future, not least the Council's own KTC3 project at the former Magistrates' court.

The Council has also launched a £20,000 initiative in the current financial year to incentivise the take up of vacant shop premises in Kidderminster and also in Stourport and Bewdley through development of an Empty Shops Strategy.

#### **4.1.5 Economic Development**

There have been a number of recent employment opportunities developed within the district, including FinePoint on the Stourport Road, Easter Park on the Worcester Road and the occupation of vacant offices in Green Street.

The Economic Development & Tourism Manager continues to provide support for business and business growth and, working with Advantage West Midlands has secured the improvement of estate roads at Sandy Lane Industrial Estate and, more recently, has been pleased to be working in partnership with Advantage West Midlands and Stourport Forward to find a sustainable base for the future of Stourport Forward with the offices and café at the end of Mart Lane opposite the Tontine.

Business start up grants are still offered and, in the previous financial year, 13 of the targeted 20 grants were awarded.

The Council has now held its third successful Business Leaders' Forum in September 2008, chaired by Dr Richard Taylor MP and bringing together the Leader of the Council, senior Officers and business leaders from the district, together with County Council and other public and voluntary sector colleagues, looking at the vision for the future and how businesses in the district can continue to flourish and grow with the right economic and environmental conditions present.

Following advice from a Worcestershire based marketing consultancy, a marketing and promotional plan for the District as a business location is to be developed for approval.

The Council is a partner in Worcestershire County Council's Property Service which, since September 2008, is being delivered by the Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The Service maintains an electronic database of available commercial property in the County that affords prospective occupiers/investors to the area the opportunity to see at first hand details of all types of relevant available sites and properties the District (and County). The Regeneration & Economic Prosperity team will be working with the Chamber of Commerce and commercial property agents to ensure that the database is regularly maintained.

#### **4.1.6 Tourism**

The Council's tourism function is undertaken in conjunction with Destination Worcestershire which brings together partners and businesses across Worcestershire to promote tourism in the county.

The district continues to operate the Tourist Information Centre in Bewdley which was recently scored amongst the highest marks in the country for its services, following a mystery shopper survey. The Council continues to promote its attractions such as the Safari Park, the Severn Valley Railway, the canal basins, the Wyre Forest, the Arboreta as a mainstay of the local economy.

**5.0 DELIVERY OF REGENERATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM IN THE FUTURE**

- 5.1 Attached to this report at Appendix A is the proposed work programme for the Regeneration & Economic Prosperity team for 2008-2014 which sets out key areas of work for the Council for that period. They will, of course, continue to be unforeseen areas of work which the team will need to remain involved in; recent examples of these include the Sub National Review of Economic Development, scrutiny exercise into the future of the Kidderminster Driving Examination Centre and the future of rural Post Offices.
- 5.2 In November 2008, the Council will undergo an Audit Commission inspection into regeneration which will also, no doubt, produce a number of recommendations for service improvement which will also have to be taken on board by the team.
- 5.3 Performance management remains a key element of regeneration delivery and a number of key headline indicators are set out at Appendix B, together with existing National Indicators and Local Performance Indicators and this will act as a benchmark for assessing the success of service delivery into the future.
- 5.4 In order to help shape regeneration activities in the future and in order to improve its self awareness, the Council has undertaken a short benchmarking survey of its main family group, the results of which are included at Appendix C.
- 5.5 Further, Members may well have been aware of the joint exercise with the Kidderminster Shuttle highlighting the development of the Kidderminster Regeneration Prospectus with a series of features to stimulate public interest and invite views and comments under the heading of 'Kidderminster – Be Part of It'. This campaign continues with the consultation on the draft Prospectus as a valuable means of community engagement. In September the Council also undertook a Citizens' Panel Survey, the headline results of which should be available for reporting via a verbal update with this report.

**6.0 LEGAL & POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no legal and policy implications arising directly as a result of this report.

**7.0 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising directly as a result of this report.

**8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Through the Financial Strategy 2008-09, the Council has currently set aside a sum of £40,000 in support of the economic development function and £25,000 in support of the regeneration function. In addition, sums of money have been made available for the Empty Shops Strategy (£20,000), Grow the Wyre (£45,000 over three years) and Stourport Pride (£25,000).

- 8.2 At its meeting in July, Cabinet also agreed to allocate LABGI (Local Authority Business Growth Incentive) monies from the 2008 award for the 2008-09 financial year (£40,000) and for the next two financial years, 2009-10 (£38,000) and 2010-11 (£20,000).
- 8.3 Through its partnership work, the Council has also levered in match funding in support of a number of initiatives, e.g. £25,000 from Stourport Forward for Stourport Pride, £40,000 from Worcestershire County Council and AWM in support of the Kidderminster Prospectus and £368,000 from AWM for the improvement of Sandy Lane Estate.
- 8.4 Given the priority attributed to the Regeneration and Economic Development function through the Corporate Plan and in the Sustainable Community Strategy, Cabinet will, no doubt, consider the future funding of these activities through the Financial Strategy for 2009-10 and beyond.

**9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Regeneration & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee 25<sup>th</sup> June 2008
- Draft Kidderminster Regeneration prospectus
- Draft Rural Economic Strategy
- Roger Evans' report
- Taylor Young Design advice for Bewdley
- Empty Shops Strategy

**10.0 CONSULTEES**

Head of Financial Services

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