

**COUNCIL**  
Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2009

# **Regeneration & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee**

## **Annual Report 2008/2009**



**1. Forward by the Chairman**

This has been a particularly busy year for the committee with the ongoing work of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Review Panel being progressed alongside the other work of the committee.

I am particularly grateful to the LDF Panel who have put in hours of additional work and coped with committee documents of over 200 pages in length.

I am very grateful to Town Council representatives; Jamie Shaw and June Salter from Stourport and Jan Adams and Liz Davies from Bewdley who have contributed much to our deliberations.

A special mention must be made of the work of Noel Holdstock who retired this year having so ably led the work of the Forward Planning Section.

For the main committee meetings I think the highlight of the year were the two presentations given by pupils of King Charles 1 High School who had been working closely with Ken Harrison on the Kidderminster Regeneration Prospectus. They attended on the same day as the Mobile Phone Mast Operators who showed great interest in the "Bluetooth" link for the Olympic Games proposals they put forward. The two young ladies who presented on Kidderminster regeneration and managed in an incredibly competent manner when their powerpoint presentation failed deserve a particular mention as they coped in a way that put many so-called professionals to shame!

I would like to thank my Vice Chairman, Councillor Peter Dyke for his support (particularly if I arrive 5 minutes late for a briefing having rushed from County Hall), Sarah Sprung for her efficiency, support and cheerfulness and the membership of the committee for their hard work and good humour throughout the year.

Councillor Mrs Fran Oborski  
Chairman, Regeneration & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee

We list below the activities in which the Committee has been involved:

**2. LDF:**

- i) Revised Local Development Scheme
- ii) Core Strategy Preferred Options
- iii) Site Allocations Issues and Options
- iv) Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan
- v) Annual Monitoring Report 2007/08
- vi) Waste Core Strategy

The LDF Review Panel met six times during the municipal year to consider proposals for consultation exercises, comments received from consultation activities and proposed officer responses.

The Panel have worked consistently hard during the course of the year, and have contributed much to the development of the Core Strategy and associated documents.

It was particularly pleasing to see that in addition to consultation responses from key stakeholders a number of local residents had also taken time to put their views across.

**3. Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)**

Regular updates with regard to this item were presented to the LDF Review Panel, who agreed for the RSS to be added to its work programme as it is so closely associated with the LDF process.

With regard to the development of RSS Phase 2 Members noted that the Examination in Public (EiP) of the strategy was due to commence at the end of April 2009 with discussion on proposals for Worcestershire due to take place in June 2009.

**4. Conservation Area Appraisals:**

Over the course of the year the committee has considered briefing papers in relation to several of the districts conservation, namely;

- i) Bewdley Local List
- ii) Broome Conservation Area
- iii) Church Street Conservation Area
- iv) Rural Areas Local List (Phase 1)

Due to the in-depth local knowledge of local Members a number of suggestions were put forward in relation to the consultation documents prepared for each of the areas.

**5. Wyre Forest Rural Economic Strategy**

Members noted that there were key strategies and initiatives in place that focused on the development of the District's urban areas but no such documents were in existence that focused on the economic issues of the District's rural areas, which made up 85% of the district.

Members considered the Draft Rural Economic Strategy and made the following points:

- i) Work needed to be undertaken on how dependant rural areas were on migrant workers.
- ii) The sale of local produce should be encouraged both in local areas and at local supermarkets.

The Rural Economic Strategy was subsequently approved and adopted by Council on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

**6. Kidderminster Regeneration Prospectus**

Members considered the development of the Kidderminster Regeneration Prospects at various points during its development, including;

- i) Assessment of feedback received from the first round of consultation
- ii) Consultation phase II – draft Prospectus
- iii) Final Proposals

Members were particularly pleased with the amount of responses received from members of the public in relation to the development of the prospectus and noted that residents had identified certain geographical areas of Kidderminster, for example the British Sugar Site, Crown House and Comberton Hill.

The Committee were delighted to welcome pupils from King Charles School to the February meeting of the Committee. Pupils gave their views on the development of a regeneration prospectus and what they liked about Kidderminster and what they felt could be improved.

Members noted that much of the feedback received on the Prospectus focused on establishing more 'people' spaces within the town and establishing a 'community identity'.

It was recommended to Cabinet in February 2009 that the Kidderminster Regeneration Prospects be adopted, the document was formally adopted by Council on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

**7. Mobile Phone Mast Roll out Plans**

As a result of a scrutiny review conducted by the Mobile Phone Task and Finish Group in 2005, each year the relevant scrutiny committee receives a presentation from the mobile operators association and representatives from the mobile phone companies on the proposed roll out plans for the district.

For the majority of operators no new sites were required, whilst for some further work was taking place to establish site sharing.

Further updates will continue to be provided to the relevant scrutiny committee.

**8. Wyre Forest District Public Realm & Streetscene (Control of Street Furniture Policy)**

As Council has been working with the County Council to agree a partnership approach in Wyre Forest, that will enable Wyre Forest District Council to take over future responsibility for dealing with the granting of permission for tables and chairs etc to be placed on “certain categories of the public highway” a Policy had to be developed to govern arrangements.

The Committee considered the draft Policy and recommended that a public consultation be undertaken, Cabinet subsequently approved this action.

Following the period of public consultation, the draft policy was presented to the committee. Members noted that as a result of the comments received on the draft policy operating hours had been extended.

It was recommended to Cabinet that the policy be adopted. The policy received approval by Council in February 2009.

**9. Climate Change Strategy**

A series of recommendations were put forward to Cabinet in October 2008 recommending that a Climate Change Strategy be developed to replace the Sustainability and Affordable Warmth Strategies.

In April 2009 the Committee considered the draft Climate Change strategy and recommended its approval. On 20<sup>th</sup> May 2009 Council will be asked to formally adopt the Strategy.

**10. Redundant School Sites**

Members noted that the number of mainstream schools in the District had dropped from 45 to 30 as the three tier system of first, middle and high schools was replaced by a two tier system of primary and secondary schools.

It was understood that Wolverly High School would be completely re-built under the Building Schools for the Future Programme. Queries were raised as to where the new building would be situated on the site.

Members noted that the disposal of redundant school sites would begin to gather pace as all new builds were due to be completed by 2013/14.

It was agreed that regular updates should be provided to the relevant scrutiny committee in order that developments in this area could be monitored.

**11. Employment & Economic Prospects Review Panel**

This review panel was established by the Committee in July 2008 with the aim of understanding the current and future economic prospects for the district, including employment sectors and the type of developments likely to be required.

The current economic situation has undoubtedly impacted upon the review process, the panel has heard evidence from:

- i) Job Centre Plus
- ii) Private recruitment agency
- iii) British Sugar Site Representative
- iv) Training Providers

The panel is now summing up the evidence that it has heard to determine the way forward.

It is expected that the panel will present recommendations to the relevant scrutiny committee at the beginning of the 2009/10 municipal year.