

CO-OPERATIVE & COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting of the Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny
Committee held on Thursday, 2nd February, 2012 at 6.00 p.m. in the Civic
Offices, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors A. McClements, (Chairman), S. Bentley, N. England, K. Guy, T. Hope, A. Jhawar, Scrutiny Co-optee L. Baker-Oliver.

Also Present: Cllr Arnold England, Cabinet Member Leisure & Wellbeing; Cllr Shaun Davies, Cabinet Member Environment, Co-operative Council & Partnerships; Stuart Davidson, Community & Leisure Services Delivery Manager; Rachael Jones, Community Engagement Equalities and Action Manager; Wendy Tonge, Priority Action, Parish Liaison Manager; Stephanie Jones, Scrutiny Group Specialist; Tracy Clarke, Scrutiny Officer.

CCSC-21 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee held on the 1st December 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

CCSC - 22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors J. Loveridge, K. Tomlinson,

CCSC-23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

CCSC-24 MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY CENTRES

The Chairman reminded members that the purpose of the meeting was to scope the review of the Management of Community Centres. Two Scrutiny Suggestions had been received to review this topic, including one from the Chairman. The aim of the meeting was to provide background information about the topic to inform members' decisions about the method and scope of the review.

Copies of the presentation, information on the community centres and the scoping meeting template were tabled at the meeting.

A presentation was made by the Community & Leisure Services Delivery Manager to provide background information, budget information, a breakdown of usage, typical programmes, current initiatives and future opportunities. The following points were highlighted:

- During 2003/04 ten community centres had been transferred to other providers leaving the Council to manage five community centres including Donnington, Brookside, Watling Street, Leegomery and Sutton Hill, which were retained for their strategic importance in terms of the communities they served.

- Until the end of 2008/09 the management of the community centres sat in the Neighbourhood & Communities team but as part of the service review and restructure moved to Leisure Services from April 2009. This meant staffing levels, policies and procedures had been reviewed with the intention of making £25,000 worth of savings.
- Priorslee Community Centre which was originally outsourced has returned to Council management. The Council therefore manages six community centres.
- As part of the restructuring process, it has now been proposed to move the management of the community centres to the Priority Action Team. The Community Engagement Equalities and Action Manager explained the rationale which would be that the team was out working with, and supporting, communities and had the skills and resources to support the management of the centres and to help people to help themselves. The scrutiny review would assist in determining the direction of future work.
- The Community & Leisure Services Delivery Manager summarised the facilities available at the Council managed community centres and Members received a copy of the programme for each community centre.
- Following the start of the new administration there has been an increased recognition that the community centre is a vital part of the Co-operative Council.
- The current budget for the Community Centres is £230,000 a year including £10,500 allocated to Woodside Park Lane Centre. This covered the cost of the repair and maintenance of the centres, the operating licences, insurance and administration costs.
- Proposed savings of £14,000 would be generated from an increase in hire charges from April 2012.
- The presentation highlighted suggested areas that scrutiny may wish to look at as part of the review, including:
 - Alternative management vehicles – one size unlikely to fit all
 - Social Enterprise (individual or collective)
 - Parish Council Partnership
 - CVS Partnership
 - Co-operative pilot in Brookside
 - Watling Street expression of interest
 - Proposed transfer to Priority Action Team

Members and officers had a discussion regarding the management of the Council community centres and the models of management that could be considered.

- The Chairman said that from her own experience the management of the community centres concentrated on the physical management of the centres rather than the development of the centres' programme and the needs of the community.
- A Member asked how long the crèche at Donnington had been vacant for. The Priority Action, Parish Liaison Manager said that the crèche had been vacant for two months and had folded due to a lack of interest. However, interest in the space had been raised by St. Matthew's Church who did not have a community hall and were considering the community centre as a possible option.

- Members raised the issue that there was a lot of reliance on TCAT as a partner and asked how this is funded. The Officers explained that those adults using the facilities who are able to pay will do so.
- Members discussed the possibility of the Council exploring the transfer of community centres to local Town and Parish Councils and raised this as a model of management that they would like to consider. It was recognised by Members that the programme at Hollinswood and Randlay Community Centre had been improved by understanding what the local community needed.
- Members agreed that the needs of the communities are very different and there is not one single model of management that would suit all community centres.
- The Priority Action, Parish Liaison Manager said the aim is to support the community to ensure that the community centres work for them.

The Cabinet Members arrived at 6.35pm

- Members continued to discuss the issue of the Town and Parish Councils and said that the transfer of assets needed to be considered and where there is no loss of income to capital holdings the transfer of assets gave the parish more than just a building.
- The Cabinet Member for Leisure & Wellbeing highlighted that the Park Lane Centre is an excellent model of how things could be done differently by including the commercial sector and having an appropriate pricing structure to ensure that groups offering support that benefits the community are not deterred by the high costs of hiring the facilities.
- Members raised concerns about the access to community facilities that are joint use . This concern was echoed by the Cabinet Member for Leisure & Wellbeing who said the Council needed to ensure that it is involved in the negotiations for joint use for all new school/ community centres. Members agreed that the importance of the community centres could not be underestimated, for example Sutton Hill Community Centre has groups that have broken down the barriers to isolation.
- The Cabinet Member for Environment, Co-operative Council & Partnerships; reiterated that the community needed to take ownership of the centre with key holders and community deposits to ensure affordable access is available for all groups.
- The Community Engagement Equalities and Action Manager suggested Members should consider the role of the community centre and whether the management focus should be on making a profit or community benefit.

Following the discussion, members considered the scope for the review and agreed:

- That the review would be carried out as an in-depth review
- That the objective for the review would be to identify the range of management models and make recommendations to Cabinet on suitable options for consideration for the Council run centres.
- Members decided that they would like to visit all six Council run community centres. Members discussed the possibility of recommending a suitable model for each community centre but dismissed this due to the time constraints of the review.

- The Chairman suggested that the Members also look at some of the surveys and information collated about the community centres, including any information on the pilot scheme in Brookside. Members agreed that this was an option to be considered as well as engaging with the Brookside Improvement Group .
- Members felt it was Important to consider how the rural community centres work and look at the success they have by knowing their communities.
- Members agreed that the Parish and Town Councils know their own communities and that they would like to visit some of the Parish Councils that are successfully managing their community facilities. Cllr Bentley raised that without the Town and Parishes intervention at Ketley the Community centre would not have survived.
- The Members decided to follow the Cabinet Members recommendation that the Committee looked at an example of a charity managed community centres.
- As The Community Engagement Equalities and Action Manager had raised the question on the role of the community centre Members discussed the feasibility of considering other facilities in the area and having access to the community centres business plans and financial information. It was felt that this would be helpful in considering suitable models.
- Members decided that because Telford College of Arts & Technology was a partner providing a number of courses across the Boroughs community centres that they should be invited to a meeting with the Committee.
- The Cabinet Member for Leisure & Wellbeing recommended that the Committee invited Members of the Neighbourhood team to a meeting to discuss the value of the Community Centres from their perspective.

The Cabinet Members and Officers were thanked and left the meeting at 7.06pm

RESOLVED

- **That the review would be carried out as an In-depth review**
- **That the Scrutiny Officer would draft the terms of reference for the review for circulation to members for agreement.**

CCSC-25 NEW SCRUTINY SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

At the meeting on 5th December 2011, the Scrutiny Management Board had considered two Scrutiny Suggestions which had been referred to the Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee for consideration for the Committee's work programme.

The first suggestion related to the application of Section 106 Agreements and the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in Telford & Wrekin. The Scrutiny Management Board had recommended the inclusion of this suggestion in the work programme. Members discussed the suggestion and agreed that a report on the development of the CIL would be requested as an agenda item at a meeting later in the year. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Officer and Chairman would liaise with the service area to determine the appropriate time for this to come to scrutiny.

The second suggestion related to communication with Town & Parish Councils regarding the sale of Council assets. There was a discussion about the suggestion and the Members agreed that they did not want to include the suggestion in the work programme at this stage when the Neighbourhood Planning pilots were underway.

RESOLVED

- **That a report on the CIL would be brought as an agenda item to a future meeting of the Committee.**
- **That the second suggestion would not be included in the Forward Plan at this time.**

CCSC- 26 FORWARD PLAN

The Chairmen drew members' attention to a report on the Co-operative Council which was due to go to Cabinet on 29th March. Members agreed that this report should be included in the Committee's work programme and that the Scrutiny Officer would liaise with the Cabinet member and senior officers to request that the report is brought to scrutiny prior to Cabinet. A meeting would then be arranged accordingly.

RESOLVED

That an additional meeting of the Committee would be held to review the Co-operative Council Cabinet report and dates would be agreed by e-mail.

The meeting ended at 7.23pm

Chairman:

Date:

TELFORD AND WREKIN CO-OPERATIVE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE EMPLOYMENT SKILLS AND THE ECONOMY SUB GROUP

2 MARCH 2012

1.0 **PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the work of the Co-operative Commission sub group on Employment Skills and the Economy and to set out the proposed recommendations to be considered by the Co-operative Commission Assembly.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Council and its partners need to develop a more effective focus on attracting inward investment and support for existing businesses to boost the local economy that:
- A commercial approach to economic development is adopted through the development of an 'economic development board' to aid information sharing, monitoring, transparency and accountability.
 - Telford and Wrekin Council promotes itself as a 'Business Winning Council'.
- 2.2 Help support employers through the creation of a highly skilled, adaptable workforce equipped for the modern economy. As learning and skills are the key drivers of this we need to:
- Identify skills gaps, improve skills and boost employment in the private and third sectors, especially within Telford & Wrekin's emerging industries

3.0 **INFORMATION**

3.1 **EMPLOYMENT SKILLS AND THE ECONOMY IN THE BOROUGH**

- 3.1.1 There is a shared recognition that all aspects of 'employment, skills and the economy' make a major contribution to life in the local community and is essential in underpinning the success and sustainability of the borough.
- 3.1.2 The 16th September Co-operative Council Commission Assembly meeting identified 'employment, skills and the economy' as a theme for one of its working sub groups with a specific focus on:
- Encouraging economic investment in the borough
 - Looking at the current sector strengths and opportunities of Telford and Wrekin and building on these
 - Encouraging young people (18-30 years) to live in and contribute to the borough economy

- 3.2.1 The Employment Skills and the Economy sub group comprised of small and large businesses, education providers, social enterprises and charities all with experience of the issues impacting on 'economy and skills' within the borough. The full list of group members is attached in Appendix 1.

3.2 **Developing Key Areas of Focus**

- 3.2.2 In order to identify the key areas of focus and agreed outcomes, the sub group considered a range of information including evidence and the key messages from the Local Economic Assessment (as

outlined in Appendix 2) and direct experience from the organisations represented. This information was used to inform the identification of the key areas of focus for the group.

3.2.3 This was also informed by the Co-operative Council Community Forum meeting on 15th December. Made up of community representatives, they looked at the issues relating to 'employment, skills and the economy' in the borough and their perception of the key challenges. A member of the Commission sub group attended this session. The feedback from the Community Forum was used to develop the final recommendations of the sub group.

3.3.1 The sub group chose two main areas to focus on:

- **Attracting Businesses into the Borough** – through greater inward investment and better more effective support for existing businesses and together these can help to boost the local economy.
- **Improving Employability** – by supporting employers through the provision of a highly skilled, adaptable workforce equipped for the modern economy and employment practices. Key to this are 'learning and skills'.

3.3.2 The following recommendations have been developed to support the delivery of these areas of focus. Further information on the rationale and supporting actions are set out in Appendix 3.

3.3.3 **Recommendation 1:** 'That a more 'commercial approach' to economic development is adopted through the development of an 'economic development board' to aid information sharing, monitoring, transparency and accountability'

3.3.4 Desired Impact:

- More openness, transparency and data sharing across organisations to better understand new and emerging opportunities for securing inward investment and the provision of support to existing businesses
- Retain and support existing businesses to grow locally
- To increase MPs and MEPs understanding of Telford's 'offer' and their involvement in promoting the borough as a excellent place to do business and to invest
- For Telford to be nationally recognised as a great place to do business

3.3.5 The Local Economic Assessment indicates that key sectors in the borough are: tourism, business and professional services, advanced manufacturing and food and drink. The sub group considered that a more commercial approach to exploiting these key sectors needed to be adopted to encourage investment.

At a local level the Council would be at the core of this work and a more co-operative approach with local businesses and partners would be more successful at attracting businesses to invest in Telford, creating jobs and supporting a stronger local economy.

Further work with partners, including the Telford and Wrekin Business Board needs to be completed in order to agree which sectors this new approach needs to be focussed on.

To assist with this, the group felt that 'One Telford' (the current part of the Council responsible for attracting and nurturing inward and new investment) was currently not visible enough for new and existing business and that all opportunities needed to be better understood and activity to secure investment better coordinated from a central point. For example, the recent 154 Jaguar Land Rover development was identified as an opportunity and an area that required a quick and co-ordinated response from the Council and its partners.

Due to the state of the national economy, the opportunities for inward investment are limited and competition to attract them is strong. The borough needs to sell itself in the most effective way possible.

The group also recognised that to support this recommendation, further work would need to be completed at a national level. This focussed on the current relationships in the borough between the local authority, local businesses and central government. The group considered whether our local MPs and MEPs could do more on a national stage to promote Telford.

3.3.6 Recommendation 2: 'That Telford and Wrekin Council promotes itself as a 'Business Winning Council''

3.3.7 Desired Impact:

- Attracting new businesses into the borough
- Securing economic growth
- Potential of attracting wealth into the area by marketing the fact that executive homes are more affordable in Telford

The group felt that a competitive, pro-active sales approach could be an effective approach to attracting new business into the borough.

The current Telford 'Prospectus' is an online tool and provides prospective businesses with information and data about Telford and with key contacts too. As a first point of contact for a prospective investor, it was recognised that there was an opportunity for this to be updated and better illustrate what the borough has to offer.

In addition to this, existing businesses within the area could be ambassadors for Telford, both nationally and internationally if provided with the right tools to do so.

The borough's 'unique selling point' was recognised to be at the core of such an approach. Although a complex combination of things it was considered that a more targeted approach might be beneficial. The further exploitation of the World Heritage Site was considered as a marketing opportunity for example 'Telford and Ironbridge' as well as the potential of attracting wealth in to the area by marketing more affordable executive housing.

3.3.8 Recommendation 3: 'Identify skills gaps, improve skills and boost employment in the private and third sectors, especially within Telford & Wrekin's emerging industries'

Desired Impact:

- Ensure those entering the workplace not only have the academic or vocational qualifications that they need, but are also 'work ready'
- Ensure that education and training provision meets the future needs of Telford and Wrekin employers and is of a consistently high quality
- Ensure targeted support for those with additional needs
- A multi-agency approach to apprenticeship opportunities for all young people with relevant training and work experience to enhance their employability skills

It is essential that all parties understand the needs and expectations of businesses and what is on offer in the borough to help businesses establish the workforce they require and desire. In particular, the relationship and communication between 'training providers' (TCAT, New College, schools), 'support organisations' (Job centre Plus and Image Match) and businesses should be improved.

Volunteer work and work experience are important pathways to employment and employment goals. As well as supporting young people to understand the world of work it also enables them to understand the different pathways available to reaching their career goal - beyond just the degree pathway. More detailed information to schools would assist in addition to schools contextualising the national curriculum.

If we are to develop key sectors in the local economy and provide opportunities for innovation (which is a current Government priority) to drive economic growth, the issue of graduate supply, retention and employment will need to be addressed – ultimately how do we keep our “home grown talent”. It is important that the Council and the Universities within the Borough work together around these issues to ‘drive up’ the knowledge economy. It was recognised by the sub group that this is very much a cross cutting issue across both areas of focus; ‘attracting businesses into the borough’ and ‘employability’.

4.0 Conclusions

4.1 The sub group agreed that there is already good practice in relation to employment skills and the economy and that these could be further developed through the implementation of the sub group’s recommendations.

In addition to this, there are areas where a more co-operative approach would be beneficial and it is essential that all parties are encouraged to collectively work towards the recommendations in order to ensure they are delivered and are a success.

There are many local opportunities and strengths – excellent education and training provision, a delightful local environment, economic capacity – which should make the Borough attractive to the investor. To make these ingredients work more effectively for the benefit of the borough and core to our recommendations, is a need for better, more co-ordinated joint or partnership working.

It was suggested that the Commission Assembly consider ways in which the impact of the recommendations could be measured.

5.0 Overlap with other Commission Sub groups

- Image of Telford - that the Council promotes itself as a ‘Business Winning Council’
- Commissioning Services & Procurement – that procurement and commissioning processes are used to maximise local opportunities in terms of awarding contracts to local organisations and businesses and maximising benefit to the local economy and community including employment and training opportunities.
- Volunteering – the importance of volunteering as a pathway into work.

6.0 Acknowledgements

6.1 With thanks to the Employment, Skills and the Economy Commission group for dedicating their time and for their commitment to the cooperative approach and the developing of recommendations.

Appendix 1 - Members of Cooperative Commission Employment Skills and the Economy Sub Group

Name	Organisation
Rosie Beswick	Shropshire Chamber of Commerce
Shah Bhatti	Tan Bank Mosque
Anna Brennand	Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
Jane Brookes	Wrekin Housing Trust
Graham Clark	New College Wellington Regeneration Partnership
Sian Deane	Holmer Lake Primary School
Ian Dosser	Cap Gemini / Telford Business Board
Fay Easton	Ironbridge Regeneration Partnership
Jan Ellis	Telford College of Arts and Technology
Cllr Rae Evans	Telford and Wrekin Council
Sherrel Fikeis	Connecting Communities Group
Rose Gregory	Donnington Lifelong Learning Centre
Ann Johnson	Federation of Small Business
David Llewellyn	Harper Adams University
Steve Miller	Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
Cllr Leon Murray	Hadley Parish Council & Telford and Wrekin Council
Faith Sloan	Public & Commercial Services Union
Jayne Stevens	Parents Opening Doors
Neil Stonehouse	Phoenix School
Cllr Barry Tillotson	Wellington Town Council/Admaston House Charitable Trust
Michelle Young	Parents Opening Doors
Gary Duncombe	Job Centre Plus

Support Officers	
Jon Power	Telford and Wrekin Council
Rachel Humble	Telford and Wrekin Council

Appendix 2 – Local Economic Assessment Presentation



Telford and Wrekin Economic Assessment 2011



Telford and Wrekin Co-operative Council
Commission
Employment, Skills and Economy Working
Group
14th November 2011

Peter Smith
Head of Economy and Skills
Telford and Wrekin Council

Telford and Wrekin Economic Assessment 2011

Format

1. Context – the Council's economic development function
2. The Economic Assessment – methodology
3. The Borough economy – key facts
4. Our competitive edge
5. Barriers
6. Key recommendations:
 - a. Improving employability
 - b. Jobs growth



Context – the Council's economic development function

Economy and Skills

Service Objective: To create good quality jobs and to support residents into work

Economic Development
(20 posts)

- Business development/
inward investment (4)
- Tourism (3)
- Enterprise support (2)
- Regeneration (6)
- Markets (3)
- Funding support (2)

Skills
(37 posts)

- Adult and community
learning (6)
- Careers (24)
- Youth employment (7)



The Economic Assessment – methodology

- The brief – Identifying Telford and Wrekin's competitive advantage
- The methodology:
 - Evidence base analysis
 - Action research
 - 46 businesses, organisations and individuals interviewed
 - 3 themed discussion groups
 - Business survey – 48 responses



The Borough economy – key facts

Businesses:

- 4,500 businesses employing 81,000 people
- 20% of jobs in foreign owned companies
- Inward investors: 48 US; 28 German; 16 French; 14 Japanese
- Sectors (jobs):
 - Public 26%
 - Retail, hotels and restaurants 23%
 - Banking and finance 21.7%
 - Manufacturing 18%
- Wage levels below regional and national average
- Net inward commuting



The Borough economy – key facts

Employment:

- Unemployment (August 2011)
 - 4.3% overall (4.9% regionally, 3.9% nationally)
 - 34.3% of those aged 18-24 (29% regionally, 29.4% nationally)
- Skills
 - Attainment at 16 above national average
 - Below regional average at NVQ3 (A level) and NVQ4 (Degree)
 - Persistent problem on young people not in education/training/jobs



Our competitive edge

- Distinctive rural/urban, modern/historic environment
- Plenty of available employment and housing land
- Good road network and motorway links, low congestion
- Rail freight terminal
- I54
- Diverse and innovative manufacturing base
- Strong leisure and business tourism offer
- Excellent Research and Development enabling business cluster development:
 - Polymer research
 - Rapid prototyping and fuel cell technology – Wolverhampton Uni.
 - Food and drink – Harper Adams
- Self sufficiency and strong business networks



Barriers

- Image
- Below average business start up
- Tourism assets not linked and exploited
- Public transport to employment sites
- Strategic rail and road links
- Broadband and energy supply
- Low skill levels



Key recommendations: Improving employability

Recommendation	Council response
Improve links between schools /colleges /employers to create routes into work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers, youth employment support (including work experience) • Employability Centre • TWC support programme for those facing redundancy • Community Jobclubs • Work with regeneration contractors (e.g. Keir)
Discussion between employers and training providers to match provision with future skill needs	
Liaison with Work Programme provider to address employability	
Graduate retention scheme through employer programmes and marketing	
Focus support on hard to fill vacancies	
Targeted support for those leaving the public sector	
Community based support for newly unemployed	
Employment hubs for regeneration projects	



Key recommendations: Jobs growth

Recommendation	Council response
Ensure that Telford is an easy and cost effective place to do business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One stop shop for business 'One Business' • Business sector development – strategic employers / sector development / inward investment • Enterprise support • Business Board/ TWC procurement work
Good liaison with strategic employers	
Promote local procurement	
Business start up advice 'post Business Link' focussed on key sectors	
Enhance capacity of HE sector to attract research funding	
Targeted inward investment support	
Engage businesses in inward investment activity	



Inward Investment

- A. Build on our strengths
 - Sectors:
 - Tourism
 - Business and professional services
 - Advanced manufacturing including polymers
 - Food and drink
- B. Sector focus v clustering (or both)?
- C. Address the image problem
- D. Maximising the links with HE
 - Low carbon energy
 - Prototyping
 - Food and drink
 - Incubation
 - Knowledge Transfer Partnerships
- E. Engaging businesses



**a co-operative
council**



**Appendix 3: Employment, Skills and the Economy
Co-operative Commission Working Group**

Area of Focus	Recommendation – What do we need to focus on and what can we do differently?	Rationale – why do we think this is something that we need a cooperative approach to?	Desired Impact – what do we want to happen as a result of the recommendation?	Suggested Actions – how are we going to implement the recommendation?
Attracting Businesses into the borough	That a commercial approach to economic development is adopted through the development of an 'economic development board' to aid information sharing, monitoring, transparency and accountability	<p>The Local Economic Assessment indicates that key sectors in the borough are: tourism, business and professional services, advanced manufacturing and food and drink. It was considered by the group that a more commercial approach to exploiting these key sectors needed to be adopted to encourage investment.</p> <p>It was however noted by the group that we may not want to totally restrict ourselves to these sectors when attracting business. Telford & Wrekin Council with the Business Board need to agree that these are the 3 priority areas for focus are and what restrictions (if any) there will be.</p> <p>At a local level the Council would be at the core of this work driving it forward however a more co-operative approach with local businesses would also be more successful at attracting businesses to invest in Telford, creating jobs and supporting a stronger local economy.</p> <p>The sub group agreed that One</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All partners involved sharing intelligence to provide a short, medium and long term business plan for the area • More opportunities seized • Increased visibility of One Telford • More openness and transparency across organisations – data share • Retain and support existing business • For MPs and MEPs to see Telford in 'action' • To increase MPs and MEPs understanding of Telford's 'offer' • For Telford to be promoted as an area to do business at a national level • Executive housing is marketed as more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree priority sectors for focus - TWC, Business Board • Develop a prospects list of short, medium and long term opportunities • Develop a coordinated approach to I54 to maximise opportunities in the borough • Map out who is currently doing what and ensure that work is not duplicated across different organisations • Develop the role of the business board to include ownership and delivery of the prospects list • Review and publicise the Telford 'prospectus' • Produce an information pack a business would need/want to know if considering relocating to Telford. This can be distributed to MPs/MEPs in addition to existing businesses within the borough.

Area of Focus	Recommendation – What do we need to focus on and what can we do differently?	Rationale – why do we think this is something that we need a cooperative approach to?	Desired Impact – what do we want to happen as a result of the recommendation?	Suggested Actions – how are we going to implement the recommendation?
		<p>Telford (the current part of the Council responsible for attracting and nurturing inward and new investment) was currently not visible enough for new and existing business. It was felt that all opportunities needed to be understood and coordinated from a central point.</p> <p>The group understood that there was a need to support existing businesses and provide a co-ordinated approach to current opportunities. The recent I54 development was identified as an opportunity and an area that required a quick and co-ordinated response.</p> <p>There is a need to understand our current sectors where we may be able to exploit opportunities to promote the borough to attract businesses and therefore create jobs and a stronger local economy.</p> <p>The group had a discussion around current relationships in the borough between the local authority, local businesses and central government. The group considered whether our MPs and MEPs could do more on a national stage to promote Telford.</p>	<p>affordable with easy access to the attractive rural areas of the borough</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange frequent ‘familiarisation’ visits to Telford for MPs and MEPs to further understand Telford’s offer • Invite MPs and MEPs to the Business Board on a regular basis e.g. every 6 months • Create an Employment and Skills Partnership in conjunction with the Telford Business Board

Area of Focus	Recommendation – What do we need to focus on and what can we do differently?	Rationale – why do we think this is something that we need a cooperative approach to?	Desired Impact – what do we want to happen as a result of the recommendation?	Suggested Actions – how are we going to implement the recommendation?
		<p>To support the objectives of both inward investment and supporting existing businesses the borough's 'unique selling point' was recognised to be at the core of this approach. This is a combination of things however in order for this to be effective it was considered that a more targeted approach might be beneficial. The further exploitation of the World Heritage Site was considered as a marketing opportunity for example 'Telford and Ironbridge' as well as the potential of attracting wealth in to the area by marketing more affordable executive housing.</p>		
Attracting Businesses into the borough	That Telford and Wrekin Council promotes itself as a 'Business Winning Council'	<p>It was recognised that a competitive, pro-active sales approach could be an effective new approach to attracting new business into the borough.</p> <p>The current telford 'Prospectus' is a tool that can be updated to begin to map out what the borough has to offer – this could include jobs/opportunities/housing/funding opportunities/skills etc.</p> <p>That local business are given the tools and encouraged to be ambassadors for Telford both nationally and internationally</p>	<p>Attracting new businesses into the borough</p> <p>Economic growth</p> <p>Potential of attracting wealth into the area by marketing the fact that executive homes are more affordable in Telford</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council to consider different models to asset management to develop commercial interface e.g. joint venture with the commercial/marketing sector • (Deliver actions as per recommendation 1)

Area of Focus	Recommendation – What do we need to focus on and what can we do differently?	Rationale – why do we think this is something that we need a cooperative approach to?	Desired Impact – what do we want to happen as a result of the recommendation?	Suggested Actions – how are we going to implement the recommendation?
Employability	Identify skills gaps, improve skills and boost employment in the private and third sectors, especially within Telford & Wrekin's emerging industries	<p>It is essential that all parties understand the needs and expectation and what is on offer in the borough to help businesses establish the workforce they require with the right skills. In particular, the relationship between 'training providers' (TCAT, New College, schools), 'support organisations' (Job centre Plus and Image Match) and businesses could be improved.</p> <p>There needs to be 'wrap around support for businesses and residents seeking work' which must take into the account the needs of all residents.</p> <p>Volunteer work and work experience are important pathways to employment and employment goals. As well as supporting young people to understand the world of work it also enables them to understand the different pathways available to reaching their career goal beyond the degree route. More detailed information to schools would assist in addition to schools contextualising the national curriculum.</p> <p>Some residents are unable to access job opportunities on industrial estates due to lack of</p>	<p>That support available for residents seeking work is mapped and a means to communicate this effectively is developed (particularly the voluntary sector)</p> <p>Ensure those entering the workplace not only have the academic or vocational qualifications that they need, but are also 'work ready'</p> <p>Increase business engagement in workforce development</p> <p>Reduce long term unemployment, reduce barriers</p> <p>increase engagement of those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)</p> <p>reduce the percentage of people with no qualifications</p> <p>Raise employer demand and investment in skills, including accelerated take-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an Employment and Skills Partnership in conjunction with the Telford Business Board • Develop an employment and skills strategy for Telford & Wrekin through a collaborative infrastructure • Develop greater co-ordination and communication between businesses, training/education providers and support organisations • The partnership landscape between business, training/education providers and support organisations should be mapped, reviewed and simplified • Support available for residents seeking work is mapped and a means to communicate this effectively is developed (particularly the voluntary sector) • Build on the work currently being undertaken by the CVS

Area of Focus	Recommendation – What do we need to focus on and what can we do differently?	Rationale – why do we think this is something that we need a cooperative approach to?	Desired Impact – what do we want to happen as a result of the recommendation?	Suggested Actions – how are we going to implement the recommendation?
		<p>available transport that supports shift working</p> <p>If we are to develop key sectors in the local economy and provide opportunities for innovation (which is a current Government priority) to drive economic growth the issue of graduate supply, retention and employment will need to be addressed. It is important that the Local Authority and the Universities within the Borough work together around these issues to ‘drive up’ the knowledge economy. It is recognised by the group that this is very much a cross cutting issue across both areas of focus; ‘attracting businesses into the borough’ and ‘employability’.</p>	<p>up of Apprenticeships aged 16-24</p> <p>Ensure that education and training provision meets the future needs of Telford and Wrekin employers and is of a consistently high quality</p> <p>Ensure targeted support for those with additional needs (not just LD)</p> <p>Improving the quality of facilities and access to learning</p> <p>Graduate retention</p> <p>Increase the numbers achieving recognised qualifications at/or equivalent to NVQ levels 2 and above</p> <p>Reduce the percentage of people with no qualifications</p> <p>Employment levels – knowledge economy?</p>	<p>on arranging transport solutions to shift workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the Local Authorities current approach to working with universities in the Borough • Explore how businesses can work with educational providers to aid workforce development • Encourage the retention of graduates through practical work placements and employment programmes • Promotion of STEM – Science, Engineering, Technology & maths through schools, employers and training providers

TELFORD AND WREKIN CO-OPERATIVE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE IMAGE OF TELFORD AND WREKIN COMMISSION SUB GROUP

2 MARCH 2012

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the work of the Co-operative Commission sub group on the Image of Telford and Wrekin and to set out the proposed recommendations to be considered by the Co-operative Commission Assembly.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council, partners and community work together in new (co-operative) ways to enable **Telford to become a Conference Town**
- 2.2 That Telford & Wrekin Council promotes itself as a 'Business winning Council' (link to the Employment, Skills and Economy Commission sub group recommendations and actions)
- 2.3 That the 'joined up' Tourism Offer in Telford and Wrekin should be improved together with the co-ordination of marketing, PR and visitor information across Telford and Wrekin
- 2.4 That Council, partners and the community build on existing events and festivals to exploit and promote the assets of Telford and Wrekin, leading to a culturally vibrant place to live, work and visit.
- 2.5 That Council, partners and the community should work together to promote Civic Pride for residents of Telford and Wrekin
- 2.6 That the Co-operative Commission Assembly/Cabinet agrees the actions proposed in Section 3 of this report and that timescales and responsibilities for delivering the actions are agreed as next steps
- 2.7 That the Co-operative Commission/Council considers ways in which impact of the proposed actions is monitored and evaluated.

3.0 INFORMATION

3.1 **Improving the Image of Telford and Wrekin**

'A good place to visit and a good place to live'

Every action which supports the Image and visitor economy per se, adds value to Telford and Wrekin's quality of life for residents and businesses and to inward investment prospects. An attractive and compelling offer, high quality public realm, transport which works and places which are authentic, individual and distinctive will create success for all' (A Draft Plan for Growth for Tourism and the Visitor Economy in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford)

To genuinely improve the image of Telford and Wrekin, the group felt that we need to develop a joined up offer that celebrates the borough as a place that people and businesses want to live, work, visit and invest in and as an internationally important tourism destination.

The Co-operative Council Commission meeting held on 16th September identified the Image of Telford and Wrekin as a theme for one of its working groups along with some of the issues the group should consider including:

- Attracting inward investment
- Attracting visitors
- Attracting people to live, work and stay in the borough
- Identifying what is the unique selling point/proposition for Telford and Wrekin
- 'Branding' Telford and Wrekin
- Maximising opportunities through a 'joined up' approach
- Promoting Civic Pride

3.2 **Developing Key Areas of Focus**

The Image of Telford and Wrekin sub-group comprised of representatives of partner organisations, the community and the council. The full list of group members is attached in Appendix 1.

In order to identify the key areas of focus and agreed outcomes, the group considered a range of information including existing good practice, direct experience from the organisations represented and research relating to image, culture, tourism, events and economy. This information along with the direct experience of the group members was used to form the key areas of focus for the group, which the recommendations and actions focus on delivering:

- Increasing visitors to Telford and Wrekin (Business and Leisure Tourism)
- Increasing business investment in Telford and Wrekin
- Improving Civic Pride for residents of Telford and Wrekin

The Co-operative Council Community Forum meeting on 15th December held a workshop to look at issues relating to the Image of Telford and Wrekin. A member of the Commission sub-group attended this session, and the feedback from the workshop was used to develop the final recommendations.

3.3 **Rationale for Key Areas of Focus, Recommendations and Supporting Actions**

The agreed overarching vision of the group:

Improving the Image of Telford and Wrekin, to enable the borough to be 'A good place to live and therefore a good place to visit'.

The key recommendations and proposed supporting actions have been developed as follows in order to support achieving this vision.

3.3.1 **Recommendation 1: Telford to become a Conference Town**

Desired Impact:

- Positive impact on the Image of Telford and Wrekin for residents and visitors
- Return visits
- Inward investment
- Improved Civic Pride
- Reduction in crime and antisocial behaviour
- Good night time economy
- Employment opportunities for local people

Outputs and Requirements:

- Good and welcoming signage
- Seamless transport
- Clean streets
- Free Wifi
- Free car parking at hotels
- Improved service culture across all related sectors and excellent customer service
- Knowledgeable taxi drivers and clean taxis

The group acknowledged the evidence set out below regarding the 'value' of the events industry (Meetings and Events Manifesto for Britain) and also recognised that new investment in the sector is substantial, including Telford's Convention Quarter development - £250 million. The group feel that the time is right now with the Southwater development to acknowledge our good foundations and unite:

- Britain's event industry is worth almost £25 billion to the economy.
- The sector employs over 530,000 people in Britain and can increase employment numbers rapidly as the number of events expands without capital investment.
- The sector provides skilled employment to a diverse workforce nationally and provides an opportunity to nurture and develop creative, logistical and marketing talent.
- The Meetings and events sector is vital to over 25,000 small businesses and supports hotels, attractions, transport companies, florists, caterers, retailers, etc.
- Meetings and events contribute to infrastructure development on a national, regional and local level from both the public and private sectors.
- Events help develop diversity in our local culture and heritage providing opportunities for further destination expansion and growth.
- Meetings and events have a positive social impact on society, contributing to health and wellbeing, education, social diversity, community spirit and civic pride.
- Business visitors spend on average £131 per day – 72% more than the amount spent by leisure visitors on a daily basis, while visitors to UK exhibitions from overseas spend 193% more per day than leisure visitors.

The group felt that we have already developed a good product and have many assets, but need the Council to 'knit' the existing high quality elements together and maximise investments. We have the Southwater development and The International Centre, Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage site, central location within the UK, excellent transport infrastructure, Town Park (and HLF funded improvements), proposed investment in the Ice Rink, Sustainable Transport Fund and TCAT/University of Wolverhampton/New College.

Recommended Supporting Actions

- Agree a partnership approach to take forward this longer term vision, medium term actions and shorter term 'quick fixes'. Partners to include – hotels, businesses, Southwater, Telford International Centre, Council, Colleges and the Community.
- Ensure consistent messages across the council and stakeholders about the destination.
- Improve 'gateways' to and within the Borough:
 - Improve signage to and within the Borough - effective road signposting
 - Further explore the sponsorship opportunities of signage by local companies (e.g. 'home of The International Centre' – acknowledging our important partners)
 - Improve the Image on arrival in Telford from rail and car - something iconic – announcing you have arrived in Telford
 - Install welcome signage
 - Particular focus on the Town Centre when arriving by rail

- Make better use of the billboards at the rail station
- Develop a more integrated approach to transport
- Support a direct train service from London to Telford and link road to the M6/M54
- Review opportunities for use of the M54 service station to promote Telford and Wrekin
- Improve the 'hotel' offer
- Explore the opportunities for training taxi drivers to become local ambassadors

3.3.2 **Recommendation 2: Telford and Wrekin Council promotes itself as a 'Business Winning Council'**

(Link to Employment, Skills and Economy Commission sub group)

Desired Impact:

- Attracting new businesses into the borough
- Economic growth
- Telford to be promoted and known as an area to do business at a national level

To support the objectives of both inward investment and supporting existing businesses the borough's 'unique selling point/proposition' was recognised to be at the core of this approach. This is a combination of things however in order for this to be effective it was considered that a more targeted approach might be beneficial. The group felt that the central location of Telford should be maximised and promoted.

The Local Economic Assessment indicates that key sectors in the borough are: tourism, business and professional services, advanced manufacturing and food and drink. The group felt that a more commercial approach to exploiting these key sectors needed to be adopted to encourage investment. It was recognised that a competitive, pro-active sales approach could be an effective new approach to attracting new business into the borough.

At a local level the Council would be at the core of this work driving it forward however a more co-operative approach with local businesses would also be more successful at attracting businesses to invest in Telford, creating jobs and supporting a stronger local economy.

The group understood that there was a need to support existing businesses and provide a co-ordinated approach to current opportunities. The recent i54 development was identified as an opportunity and an area that required a quick and co-ordinated response. The group acknowledged that Telford and Wrekin is already proud to support successful businesses such as Makita, Ricoh, CapGemini, Smartwater, Golden Bear, University of Wolverhampton and Harper Adams, which are all part of the positive Image of Telford and Wrekin.

The group felt that the further exploitation of the World Heritage Site should be considered as a marketing opportunity for example 'Telford and Ironbridge'.

Recommended Supporting Actions

- Ensure good quality business sites are available and a continuum of these
- Review (and 'overhaul') the planning process in the council – to encourage business investment
- Improve co-ordination within the Council i.e. Asset and Property, Housing and Planning, Economic Development, Transport, Communications
- Allow the Economic Unit in the council the autonomy to make decisions quickly and effectively

- Enable local businesses and encourage them to be ambassadors for Telford both nationally and internationally
- Explore the opportunity of 'twinning' Telford and Wrekin with a foreign town for business opportunities. Review work already undertaken by Council and partners to assess if this could deliver the desired outcomes to encourage businesses to Telford and Wrekin and progress as appropriate
- Link to additional actions within Employment, Skills and Economy Commission Sub Group

3.3.3 **Recommendation 3: Improve the joined up tourism offer in Telford and Wrekin together with the co-ordination of marketing, PR and visitor information across the Borough**

Desired Impact:

- See also impact relating to recommendations 1, 4, and 5
In addition:
- Opportunities for higher education, good work experience and careers in tourism particularly for young people (link to Employment, Skills and Economy Commission Sub Group)
- Recognition of the increasing importance and value of volunteers (link to Volunteering Commission Sub Group)

The group looked at evidence documented in 'A Draft Plan for Growth for Tourism and the Visitor Economy in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford', which detailed that Tourism is the UK's fifth biggest industry, injecting £97 billion each year into the economy of England and supporting 2.2 million jobs and that Heritage tourism alone is bigger than the advertising, film or car manufacturing industries. Its social and educational outcomes are substantial, contributing to neighbourhood renewal and cohesion and a better quality of life and civic pride.

Locally, information provided by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, states that independent economic assessments show that the visitors to the Museum alone generate around £20m per annum of secondary spend into the local Telford & Wrekin economy each year. This figure excludes the Trust's turnover. The Museum employs around 200 local people directly and provides volunteering opportunities for around 350 local volunteers. Related jobs in the supply chain and in terms of accommodation providers, totals many thousands.

Total visits to the World Heritage Site each year are approximately one million meaning that the estimated economic benefit of total visits to Ironbridge and the surrounding area would comfortably be in excess of £35m.

The group recognised the value of using Ironbridge to draw visitors to Telford, but then to use the 'attract and disperse' model to promote all the towns within Telford and Wrekin, in order to support the market/borough towns.

The group also recognised that Telford and Wrekin can't stand still and do nothing, as we are in competition, especially from a tourism point of view.

Recommended Supporting Actions

- Ensure the sustainability and continuing effectiveness of the Tourism Unit in the Council
- Explore 'Tourism Business Improvement districts' as a stable source of tourism funding
- Strengthen the Telford Tourism Partnership – a unified approach to destination management by the public and private sectors is required.

- Conduct a strategic review of our ‘product’ to ensure it is fit for purpose and market accordingly
- Develop new offers and packages for both Business and Leisure tourists, working with the leisure, food and drink sectors
- Encourage business/conference tourism opportunities particularly leading from the new Southwater £250m investment at TIC
- Use business tourism to generate leisure stays and spending – free time delegate information/extra nights/partners/returns as leisure tourists
- Promote and ensure the effective use of the new leisure tourism and business tourism branding. See Appendix 2 illustrating the recently developed logos.
- Build on the nationally recognised brand that is the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site - use of the Ironbridge symbol and name in marketing literature
- Use Ironbridge to draw people to Telford and then disperse to other areas i.e. market towns – ‘attract and disperse’
- Plan and agree ‘destination’ marketing and management to develop the ‘place’ with key stakeholders
- Use the proximity of the River Severn and The Wrekin to offer opportunity for external audiences to “place” Telford and Wrekin in their mind and develop “propensity to visit”
- Present a ‘clear’ offer focusing on strong clear ‘consumable’ visitor products
- Aim for VisitEngland ‘attract brand’ status
- Strengthen and develop the Visitor Information Centres at the Ironbridge Gorge and Southwater in order to meet the needs of our visitors

3.3.4 **Recommendation 4: Build on Existing Events and Festivals to exploit and promote the assets of Telford and Wrekin, leading to a culturally vibrant place to live, work and visit**

Desired Impact:

- Generate overnight stays and return visits
- Greater use of local suppliers and artists
- Improved access for local community
- Increased volunteering opportunities
- Telford and Wrekin to be seen as a culturally vibrant place to live, work and visit

The group looked at evidence supplied in the West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy, which detailed that events and festivals are viewed as a key part of delivering an authentic experience and a significant driver in the growth of the short breaks market. There has been a huge growth in events and festivals over the last 10 years – 40% of all visitors to the UK take part in an event or festival during a short break to the UK. A competitive edge can be created in this market by adding value through exploitation of the strong leisure brands in the region that convey world-class culture – Ironbridge, as a World Heritage Site, is clearly key to this offer.

The group also felt that Telford and Wrekin has a real asset in the Town Park. It is a large, well-used park, that has been externally recognised by the Heritage Lottery Fund and as such has received over £2million external funding. The Town Park is an asset that should be maximised in terms of its potential to provide an annual programme of high quality events.

It is also important for Telford and Wrekin to be seen as a culturally vibrant place to live and to visit, and for our communities to have access to high-quality arts & cultural provision. This clearly fits with the wider Tourism agenda and making the most of the assets we have like the Town Park, The Place, etc.

Recommended Supporting Actions

- Identify and deliver the opportunities arising from London 2012
- Build on the legacy of the Torch Relay in Telford and Wrekin
- Identify and deliver the opportunities arising from the Diamond Jubilee in 2012
- Focus on the potential of the Town Park – build an effective annual events programme
- Consult and work with community groups to develop new cultural services for the people of Telford and Wrekin

3.3.5 **Recommendation 5: Promote Civic Pride for residents of Telford and Wrekin**

Desired Impact:

- Encourage residents, in particular young people, to wish to live and settle in Telford and Wrekin and positively promote Telford and Wrekin
- Improve community cohesion amongst the many diverse communities in Telford and Wrekin
- Improve the community's sense of identity – as individuals and as a community – the connections they feel with where they live and the people they live among

It should be noted that all actions outlined in recommendations 1 to 4, will have a positive effect on the Civic Pride felt by Telford and Wrekin residents.

The group recognised that, although this is an important key area of focus, they were not able to explore it in depth and that they would recommend that it is an important area that requires further attention. This was further evidenced by the Community Forum feedback.

Information contained within A Cultural Strategy for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, states that Telford and Wrekin is thought of as a 'new town', created in 1968, however, the borough includes several market towns that pre-existed this: Wellington, Dawley, Donnington, Madeley, Oakengates, Ironbridge, and Newport. (In fact, Telford and Wrekin was originally Dawley New Town created in 1962 which led to the forming, in 1962, of what was originally Dawley Chamber of Commerce and is now Shropshire Chamber of Commerce). These historic market towns each have their own unique identity steeped in heritage, which the group felt needed to be recognised in addition to the development of the Town Centre, in order to improve the Image of Telford and Wrekin and therefore the civic pride felt by residents.

Culture and heritage is acknowledged as playing a critical role in the regional economy by contributing to quality of life, place making, the image of Telford and Wrekin and local pride. There are key groups of people who are less likely to participate in activities that lead to civic pride – these are most likely to include older people, ethnic minority communities including migrant workers, people with a limiting disability, longer-term unemployed people, those in lower socio-economic groups and people in rural areas. Some of the reasons are – transport limitations; financial barriers; limited awareness; lack of digital access; a lack of confidence in engaging. These are the areas that would need a co-operative approach in order to address and improve.

Recommended Supporting Actions

Working **with** community groups, via appropriate engagement methods, to:

- Set up a working group of appropriate community representatives, partners and council with a specific remit to focus on improving/promoting civic pride and identity of those who live in Telford and Wrekin.

- Consider increased support to market towns and build on community engagement. In addition build on the 'regeneration forum' to enable borough towns to co-ordinate and work together more effectively
- Explore/re-visit the 'Telford Totems' project - a trail from the station in and around Telford, celebrating local people and that could also be used as an educational tool
- Celebrate who and what Telford & Wrekin is and the community of T&W
- Establish a baseline of how 'proud' residents are with Telford and Wrekin (using existing data or consider commissioning a survey) and measure on an annual basis to understand the impact of the actions

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The group recognised that financial resources are limited and that improving the Image of Telford and Wrekin could be more effective if a more coordinated and co-operative approach was taken. The recommendations outlined above are seen as a step towards improving the coordination of activity and sharing of resources and good practice.

5.0 OVERLAP WITH OTHER COMMISSION SUB GROUPS

Employment, Skills & and Economy - Telford and Wrekin Council promotes itself as a 'Business Winning Council'

Appendix 1 Image of Telford and Wrekin Commission Sub Group Members

Graham Clark	Wellington Regeneration Partnership
Sherrel Fikeis	Connecting Communities Group
Tony Jemmett	Jemmett Manley and Associates
Steve Miller	Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
Paul Shuttleworth	Radio Presenter
Cllr Clive Elliot	Telford and Wrekin Council
Arul Selvaratnam	Standards Committee, Telford and Wrekin Council
Richard Partington	Telford and Wrekin Council
Rev Keith Osmund-Smith	Co-ordinating Chaplain and Interim Street Pastor Co-ordinator
Mike Lowe	Dawley Regeneration Partnership
Katie Foster	Telford Tourism Partnership
Corin Crane	Telford and Wrekin Council

Group Support:

Clare Hall-Salter	Telford and Wrekin Council
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Telford Tourism Partnership



**Visit
Ironbridge**



**Meet
Telford
& Shropshire**

TELFORD AND WREKIN CO-OPERATIVE COMMISSION
REPORT OF THE VALUES AND COMMUNICATION SUB GROUP
2 MARCH 2012

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the work of the Co-operative Commission Values and Communication sub group and to set out the proposed recommendations to be considered by the Co-operative Commission Assembly.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Co-operative Commission Assembly/Cabinet agrees the recommendations proposed in Section 4 of this report, and that these are implemented by Telford and Wrekin Council, working in partnership with other organisations in the Borough as appropriate.

3.0 INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Cooperative Commission Assembly meeting held on 16th September 2011 identified Values and Communication as a theme for one of its working groups along with some of the issues the group should consider (see Appendix (i))
- 3.2 The Values and Communication sub group had a broad membership, including representatives from partner organisations, Parish Councillors, members of voluntary sector and community groups and head-teachers. The full list of group members is attached in Appendix (ii).
- 3.3 At their first meeting, the group focused on developing proposals for a set of co-operative values for both the Council and the wider community. In developing their proposals, the group considered the International Co-operative Alliance's definition of co-operative values and examples of values adopted by other co-operative organisations, such as Oldham Council (a member of the Co-operative Council network).
- 3.4 Using this information along with their own direct knowledge and experience, the group members worked together to agree 6 draft co-operative values. As the group wanted the values to be adopted not just by the Council but more widely across the Borough, each value includes two statements. The first statement starting 'we will' explains what each value means for both officers and members of the Council, whilst the second statement starting 'we would like everyone to' sets out how the values apply to the wider community.
- 3.5 The group then consulted both the Employee Commission and the residents' Community Forum on the draft values in December 2011. Following a request from members of the Employee Commission, the group also agreed that all Council employees be given the opportunity to give their views on the draft values through the Employee Commission's own survey, which was carried out during January 2012. A summary of the feedback on the draft values is attached in Appendix (iii).
- 3.6 The group then reviewed the feedback received, carefully considering all suggested changes in wording. As a result, the group agreed a revised set of 4 co-operative values, which are attached in Appendix (iv). The group also developed a number of additional recommendations relating to the values (see Section 4), again reflecting the feedback received from residents and Council employees.
- 3.7 The other major focus for the group was to consider how the Council communicates and consults with people and how this could be improved. To help develop their recommendations, the group invited officers from the Council that lead communication and engagement to talk about the Council's current approach. To give a different perspective the group also asked the Chair of the

Brookside Improvement Group to share their experiences of communicating and consulting with their community at a very local level.

3.8 The group also considered feedback from the Community Forum meeting in December 2011, where residents were asked to give their views about how the Council communicates and consults with them and to suggest improvements. The group also reviewed the results of a number of focus groups that the Council had previously run, which focused specifically on communication. A summary of the feedback from the Community Forum and the Council-run focus group that the group considered is shown in Appendix (v).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The group identified four key areas of focus:

- Co-operative values;
- Communication;
- Consultation;
- Co-operative borough.

4.1.2 For each area of focus, the report sets out the desired impact and the recommendations with rationale.

4.2 Co-operative Values

4.2.1 Desired Impact:

- Co-operative values adopted and put into practice across the Council and the wider community

4.2.2 Recommendations and rationale:

Recommendations:	Rationale:
<p>That the Council adopts the proposed co-operative values in Appendix (iv) and promotes these within the Council and across the Borough. Supporting recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask the Council's Co-operative and Community Scrutiny Committee to develop proposals for assessing how well the values are being put into practice, to include considering whether an independent ethics committee should be established to oversee this; - Deliver a communication and training programme for employees and the community to educate people about the values and help to embed them; - Review the values after 12 months. 	<p>The group felt that having a clear set of co-operative values was fundamental to the Council becoming a Co-operative Council and in the longer-term moving towards a co-operative Borough. They recognised that people would need to be educated about the values and that embedding them would be a 'journey' that would take time and effort. The group stressed the need to keep the values under review and to regularly take stock of how well they are being put into practice. They did not want to be too prescriptive about how the Council should do this, but felt that it would be useful for the Council's Co-operative and Community Scrutiny Committee to help develop this.</p>

4.3 Communication

4.3.1 Desired impact:

- People communicated with in a clear, simple and timely way (see values);
- People find it easier to communicate with the Council;
- People more aware of the Council and its services.

4.3.2 Recommendations and rationale:

Recommendations:	Rationale:
Investigate the use of phone applications that enable people to report issues and access information, for example via barcode scanning	The group discussed a new fault reporting phone application developed by Lewisham Council and also opportunities for communicating information via barcodes that can be scanned and decoded by mobile phones. They felt that these might make it easier for people to interact with the Council or to understand and recall information. These phone applications could be particularly useful for communicating with school-age children and their parents.
Use existing contacts to widen awareness of the Council and the services on offer	The group suggested that the Council broadens out the range of information provided to specific target groups. For example, instead of just sending information to Flex Card holders about leisure services, the Council could also provide a broader range of information about the Council and its services.

4.4 Consultation

4.4.1 Desired impact:

- People involved in decisions that affect their lives and feeling that the Council listens and is prepared to take on new ideas (see values);
- More people getting involved and sharing their ideas (see values);
- People more aware of opportunities to get involved.

4.4.2 Recommendations and rationale:

Recommendations:	Rationale:
Offer the option of face to face interaction wherever possible and research which other methods of consultation, such as the Internet/social media, will be most effective for which people.	The group felt that talking face to face with people was very important, particularly as not everyone has access to or the skills to use the Internet/social media. They recognised the value of other methods of consulting and that different people prefer different methods (see also Appendix (v)). They felt that the Council should understand the target audience when planning consultations to avoid making assumptions about people's preferences, for example that all young people have a preference for social media.
Publish and promote a forward plan of upcoming consultations with clear start and finish dates	The group discussed the importance of feeding back to people after consultations and telling them about future opportunities to give their views (see also Appendix (v)) and that whilst some people would be willing to look for this themselves, for example through the Council's Website, the Council should also be proactive about keeping people informed. The group recognised that there might be cases where it would take a long time to respond to a consultation – but that there should still be regular updates in these cases, even if it is to say that decisions have not yet been made.
Develop an online progress tracking tool for consultations (with the option of using the contact centre to provide updates for those without Internet access)	
When consultations close, publish, promote and feedback to participants what will happen next with target timescales where possible (if implementation is likely to be lengthy, identify a target 'next step' date)	
Provide more rewards for people who take part in	The group recognised that it would not always be

consultations or sign up for social media	appropriate for the Council to offer financial rewards, but felt that the Council could offer a broader range of other rewards, including contributions from partners, for example the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.
Get the most from consultation events by consulting on more than one thing at a time, promoting upcoming consultations and always giving people the opportunity to share whatever is important to them (even if this is not directly relevant to the main consultation topic), for example by having a suggestion box at each event with a standardised post-card.	The group suggested that there was scope for the Council to join up and better co-ordinate consultations (see also Appendix (v)).
Ensure that wherever possible Councillors attend consultation events alongside relevant Council officers to inform people about whether implementations are realistic	Linking to the proposed co-operative values, the group felt it was important that the people that make decisions attend events and are open with and are accountable to people about what can and cannot realistically be done.

4.5 Co-operative Borough

4.5.1 Desired impact:

- People empowered with the skills to help themselves and their communities (see values)
- Organisations working together to support their local communities and to encourage people to do more to help themselves.

4.5.2 Recommendations and rationale:

Recommendations:	Rationale:
Continue to run and promote the Community Forum set up by Rights and Fairness Telford (RAFT) to give residents the opportunity to get involved in local decision-making, and ensure that members of the Community Forum are kept informed about what has happened as a result of their involvement	Group member Andy Smith reported to the group that the first meeting of the Community Forum on 15 December 2011 was well supported with over 50 people taking part and a lot of interest and enthusiasm. The group felt it was important to keep up the momentum and make sure that members of the Forum got regular feedback to sustain their interest and promote a long-term relationship. The group also stressed the need to feedback regularly to members of the Forum, to include emails to all members and updates as meetings at agreed milestones.
Build on the success of existing community groups, such as the Brookside Improvement Group, working in partnership to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Run training to develop similar skills and capacity in other parts of the Borough (to include sharing the learning from Brookside) and investigate running an active citizenship learning programme aimed at individuals who want to get involved in their community; - Set up a mentoring programme to support people who want to set up groups in their own areas; - Carry out a mapping exercise of community involvement across the Borough and using this to promote the training, support and mentoring set out above in parts of the 	The group were keen to promote Brookside Improvement Group as a local success story and to use this as a 'prototype' to roll-out to other areas. The group also recognised that not everyone would want to get involved through a community group; therefore they felt there was also a need to offer training and support to individuals who wanted to be more active in their community. The group stressed that the size and diversity of Telford meant that any training, support and mentoring should be adapted to suit different areas. The group felt it was important to continue a dialogue between groups and where things don't work to see this as positive learning opportunity rather than a failure. The group suggested that help available should be actively promoted in areas with less community involvement

Borough where community involvement could be improved	and fewer established groups although they did stress that any mapping exercise should be short and focused.
Meet with Town and Parish Councils via the Parishes Forum to discuss how Town and Parish Councils can get involved with the proposed co-operative values and how the Council can support Town and Parish Councils to communicate better with local residents about what is happening in their local areas.	The group felt it was important that Town and Parish Councils were aware of and involved with the proposed co-operative values. They also felt that Town and Parish Councillors had an important role in communicating information to local residents, although the group had had mixed personal experiences of this.

5.0 OVERLAP WITH OTHER COMMISSION SUB GROUPS

- Commissioning Services and Procurement – that the Commission holds the Council to account to ensure that the values are embedded in all that it does.

Appendix i - The following list identifies some of the issues associated with this working group that were discussed at the commission meeting on the 16th September.

1.1. Local community involvement

1.2. Work with other co-operative councils –

- What does success look like here
- Best practice – what can we use
- Doing with rather than to!

1.3. How are we going to structure our agencies to achieve co-operative working?

- Want to achieve a ‘creating and co-operative ‘ borough
- Council as facilitator?
- Have clear values/messages
- Communication is key
- Need some ‘quick wins for communities’
 - o Show change/difference we’re making
 - o Deliver on promises – engagement is key
- What is the vision? – about the people of T&W – is about the communities we serve
- How are we going to measure success

1.4. How are we going to achieve success as a co-operative? How will we know we’ve made a difference?

1.5. Fairness – how are we going to prioritise? Explain why things have been prioritised

1.6. Communication and engagement –

- Face to face engagement
- Going out to local communities
- Joined up engagement from public sector
- People power – supporting people to do things for themselves
- Developing new ways to consult and engage
- Communication – plain English, improve mechanisms

1.7. Communication -

- Communication about proposals and plans – general issue about communication between partners/communities
- More face to face talking to each other
- Isolation, people working alone

1.8. Relationships –

- Relationships between Parish & Town Councils and Borough Council – needs to be enhanced to support – suggestion for commission to look at it to start new relationships
- Encourage Parish councils to engage with communities
- Need to engage communities and keep people on board
- Public sector to deliver joint engagement
- Challenge to bring people together – need to bring different communities together

1.9. Role of communities in helping themselves – link to community engagement

1.10. Communication, engagement and empowerment –

- Face to face communication
- Joined up engagement
- Going out to local communities
- People power – supporting people to do things for themselves
- New ways of consulting and engaging

- Underpinning – all commission priorities communication –
- Language – use of plain language
- Methods and mechanisms

1.11. Principles and values – approach relationship between Council, partners and the community

Appendix ii - Members of Cooperative Commission Values and Communications Sub Group

Shah Bhatti	Tan Bank Mosque
Graham Clark	New College Wellington Regeneration Partnership
Julia Clarke	Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust
Sian Deane	Holmer Lake Primary School
Cllr Rae Evans	Telford & Wrekin Council
Cllr Ann-Marie Houghton	Hadley Parish Council
Paul Kalinauckas	Black Country Re-Investment Society
Cllr Jim Loveridge	Stirchley & Brookside Parish Council
Steve Miller	Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
Rev Keith Osmund-Smith	Coordinating Chaplain & Interim Street Pastor Coordinator
David Parker	Newport Regeneration Partnership
Tina Rogers	Brookside Improvement Group
Arul Selvaratnam	Standards Committee, Telford & Wrekin Council
Rev'd Andy Smith	Telford Christian Council
Neil Stonehouse	Phoenix School
Steve Wall	Sutherland School

Support Officers

Felicity Mercer Telford and Wrekin Council
 Parvinder Chana Telford and Wrekin Council

Appendix (iii) - Feedback on Draft Co-operative Values (Community Forum and Employees)

Value	Comments
<p>• Ownership</p> <p>We will – be accountable for our own actions and empower people with the skills to help themselves</p> <p>We would like everyone to – take action and responsibility for themselves and their community</p>	<p><u>Feedback from Community Forum (C) and Employees (E):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree (Ex9) - Sounds good/reasonable (Ex6) - This should already be part of our values/intrinsic to Council (Ex4) - Everyone should take responsibility for themselves (Ex3) - Some people will not take action/responsibility – how will you empower them? (Ex3, Cx1) - Need to take action if people don't meet our expectations (Ex2) - This is social responsibility (Ex2) - (Employees) not always accountable for actions – these can be instructions from Councillors (Ex1) - People can't take responsibility in the face of big business (Ex1) - Using the word 'accountable' leaves Council open to being criticised if we do something that does not please everyone (Ex1) - Should also be about empowering organisations e.g. 3rd sector? (Ex1) - Still too much silo working and problems batted between services at Council (Ex1) - Some groups cannot take ownership – homeless, vulnerable, disabled (may need to involve advocates/carers) (Cx1) <p><u>Feedback from Group Members:</u></p> <p>Amend value to read 'We will – be accountable for our actions and empower people by giving them the skills to help themselves by developing a culture of social responsibility/we would like everyone to – take action and responsibility for themselves and ownership of their community' (Rae Evans)</p>
<p>• Involvement</p> <p>We will – involve people in decisions that affect their lives and listen and respond to what people tell us</p> <p>We would like everyone to – get involved, share their views and challenge the way we do things</p>	<p><u>Feedback from Community Forum (C) and Employees (E):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sounds good/reasonable/needed (Ex11) - Not realistic to consult on everything – add 'where possible', need to be clear with people when and how they can get involved (Ex5) - Need to manage expectations – giving a view doesn't always mean it will be accepted and acted upon, there are conflicting demands (Ex5) - Should be/we are already doing this (Ex4) - Agree (Ex3) - Residents may not feel comfortable challenging the Council (Ex2) - Consultations don't reach a wide enough audience (Ex2) - How do you get the community to engage/challenge? (Ex2) - Needs to be more than token questionnaire (Ex1)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficult to do this on top of other work (Ex1) - Need to offer ways and means to do this (Ex1) - Should start from top at Council (Ex1) - We have elected members as the people's way of deciding how things get done (Ex1) - Professionals are paid for knowledge – please don't take all decision-making away from them (Ex1) - Engaging doesn't always produce answers (Ex1) - As an employer too? Involve employees in decisions that affect their work (Ex1) <p><u>Feedback from Group Members:</u> Amend value to read 'We will – seek to involve our partners and people in decisions that affect their lives and listen and respond to what people tell us/We would like everyone to – get involved, share their views and challenge the way we do things' (Rae Evans)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairness <p>We will – be open to everyone by understanding and responding to different people's needs</p> <p>We would like everyone to – treat each other as equals</p>	<p><u>Feedback from Community Forum (C) and Employees (E):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could merge 'Fairness and Respect' (Ex1) - Add 'realistic' here? (Ex1) <p><u>Feedback from Group Members:</u> Amend value to read 'We will – respond to everyone's needs in a fair and consistent way/We would like everyone to – treat each other as equals' (Rae Evans)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect <p>We will and we would like everyone to – respect and care for others, be willing to compromise and value the different ideas and skills that people bring</p>	<p><u>Feedback from Community Forum (C) and Employees (E):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could merge 'Fairness and Respect' (Ex1) <p><u>Feedback from Group Members:</u> Amend value to read 'We will and we would like everyone to – respect and care for others and value the different ideas and skills that people bring' (delete 'willing to compromise')(Rae Evans)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Togetherness <p>We will – work together with the community to reach a consensus for mutual benefit</p> <p>We would like everyone to – work with and support others</p>	<p><u>Feedback from Community Forum (C) and Employees (E):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No specific reference to young people? – include them/value their perspective? (Cx1) - Community is about local geographic areas, sub-communities can lead to divisions (Cx1) - Could key parts be incorporated into 'Involvement'? (Ex1) <p><u>Feedback from Group Members:</u> Amend value to read 'We will – work together with and for our communities engaging them to reach a consensus and mutual benefit from what we do/we</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness <p>We will – be open about how we work and make decisions, communicate in a clear, simple and timely way and be prepared to change and take on new ideas</p> <p>We would like everyone to – be open about what they want to improve in their community and willing to talk with us</p>	<p>would like everyone to – work with and support others’ (Rae Evans)</p> <p><u>Feedback from Community Forum (C) and Employees (E):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add honesty to this value (Ex1) <p><u>Feedback from Group Members:</u></p> <p>Amend value to read ‘We will – be open and honest in the way we work and make decisions, communicate in a clear, simple and timely way and be prepared to change and take on new ideas/we would like everyone to – be open and clear about what they want to improve in their community and willing to talk with us’ (Rae Evans)</p>
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Other comments:

Suggested additions to values:

- Something missing – honesty/integrity – say one thing and do another (Cx1)
- What about honesty and realistic? (Ex1)

Other suggestions/comments:

- Values are strong – a more concise and direct version will get the message across to people, we want to understand and ‘live’ them, there are too many values (Ex1)
- No reference to overall working restraints – financial, conflicting demand, manage expectations (Cx1), similar concerns expressed by a number of employees that we might not be able to always deliver these values
- Soft: how to measures? How do you do it? Benchmarking (Cx1 and Ex2)
- Need an ethics/scrutiny panel to check values are being put into practice – membership should be by interest/ability (Cx1)
- If this change comes about, it would lead to great benefits but it will need a major culture change (Cx1)
- Will only be successfully implemented with community involvement (Cx1)
- Incentives/building relationships ongoing (Cx1)
- Could we make it clearer that ‘we’ refers to ‘the Council’/ Who are ‘we’? Councillors? Employees? Both? (Ex2)
- Use service planning as a way for all areas to say how they will meet values (Ex1)
- All ‘we would like everyone to’ statements are patronising (Ex1)
- These values could be completely radical or utterly meaningless (Ex1)
- Shouldn’t these have been written to involve employees from the start? (Ex1)
- Set out values clearly in job descriptions (Ex1)

Appendix (iv) - Co-operative Values

- **Ownership**

We will – be accountable for our own actions and empower people with the skills to help themselves

We would like everyone to – take action and responsibility for themselves and their community to the best of their abilities

- **Openness & Honesty**

We will – be open and honest in the way we work and make decisions and communicate in a clear, simple and timely way

We would like everyone to – be open and honest about what they want to improve in their community

- **Involvement**

We will – work together with the community, involve people in decisions that affect their lives and be prepared to listen and take on new ideas

We would like everyone to – work with and support others, get involved and share their views to help us develop the way we do things

- **Fairness & Respect**

We will – respond to people's needs in a fair and consistent way

We will and would like everyone to – respect and care for themselves and others, value the different ideas and skills that people bring and treat each other as equals

Appendix (v) Communication and Engagement – Summary of Community Feedback

Issues/comments raised about current approach to communication and engagement:	Source:
Consultation: outcomes already in mind, not listening, Council does things then tells us	CF/FG
Internal communication inefficient – queries don't get answered, individuals get passed around	CF
Uncertainty about terms of engagement/consultations	CF
(Not enough) feedback after consultation	CF
Community Panel: good way of getting views and built-in feedback	CF
Communities are motivated when issues directly affect them – need a different approach to individual/local issues than issues of wider relevance	CF/FG
Communication/engagement could be better co-ordinated – within Council and joined-up with partners (services repeating things seems to happen a lot – stop duplication)	FG
Need information in different ways – needs to fit lifestyle	FG
Suggested Improvements/Changes:	Source:
Accountability for issues raised and not addressed – more information about who's responsible for what (named officer/members) so we know who to direct queries or concerns to	CF/FG
Train staff so that they know who to pass queries to and communicate progress/action	CF
(Better) liaison between officers and members	CF
Consult people more before doing things – more time for consultation	FG
Feedback after consultation and check regularly with the public that messages are getting out	CF/FG
Greater use of Internet/social media e.g. Twitter/I-phone apps – information punchy/brief (but remember not everyone has access)	CF/FG
Try different ways of engaging/communicating face to face: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use word of mouth: Doctor's surgeries, supermarkets, Parish Councillors; - Have a presence at community centres/shopping malls; - Link in with local groups/organisations e.g. BIG, churches; - Road-shows in various parts of the district (at time of Fun days etc) – increase knowledge of what Council does; - Use arts and celebrations as a means of engaging; - Tap into local youth clubs, sport in schools; - Work with Community Support Officers; - Open days to Council offices; - Annual Citizens' Conference. 	CF/FG
Make sure there is a good age spectrum – involve/include more young people	CF/FG
(Bring back) Insight magazine and use other people's magazines	CF/FG
Increase co-ordination of communication/engagement within Council and join up more with PCT/voluntary organisations/partners to reduce duplication	CF/FG
Devise a locally-based communication model and tell people in advance what's happening in their local area	FG

Key

CF – Community Forum

FG – Focus Group (run by Council to understand issues about communication)

TELFORD AND WREKIN CO-OPERATIVE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONING SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT SUB GROUP

MARCH 2012

1.0 **PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the work of the Co-operative Commission sub group on Commissioning Services and Procurement by the Council and its partners and to set out proposed recommendations to be considered by the Co-operative Commission Assembly.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To increase engagement and understanding of the voluntary sector's role and to work co-operatively to better exploit commissioning/procurement opportunities through the voluntary sector, that:
- a Voluntary Sector Engagement Group is established
 - the Council undertakes a review of how and what it procures and commissions with the voluntary and community sector.
- 2.2 To simplify the procurement process and ensure that the process is transparent to widen the pool of potential providers thereby maximising opportunities and increasing local choice. That:
- the freedoms and flexibilities within European and Best Value statutory guidance are used to maximise the **local** opportunities in terms of awarding contracts to local organisations and businesses and maximising the benefit to the local economy and community including employment and training opportunities
 - the Council considers looking at alternative service delivery models as appropriate
- 2.3 That the Council consider using the Co-operative Commission to hold the Council to account to ensure that the Co-operative values, once approved are embedded in all that it does – including procurement

3. **INFORMATION**

3.1 **COMMISSIONING SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

- 3.1.1 There is a recognition that commissioning and procurement by the Council and other public sector organisations is important to local companies and the voluntary sector – decisions, and how they are made, can have a significant, direct impact on the community and the local economy.
- 3.1.2 The Co-operative Council Commission Assembly meeting held on 16th September identified commissioning services and procurement as a theme for one of its working groups along with some of the issues the group should consider including:
- Co-operative procurement strategy
 - Different models of service provision
 - Simplified partnership approach to engage a wider group of providers

3.2 Developing Key Areas of Focus

3.2.1 The Commissioning Services and Procurement sub-group comprised of representatives from small and large businesses, education providers, social enterprises and charities all with experience of the issues around commissioning and procurement. The full list of group members is attached in Appendix 1.

3.2.2 In order to identify the key areas of focus and agreed outcomes the sub-group considered a range of information including the following evidence:

- How the Council Plans its services and budgets
- How the Council currently procures and commissions – and the associated legislative framework
- The West Midlands Framework for Jobs and Skills

3.2.3 The Co-operative Council Community Forum meeting on 15th December considered commissioning and procurement by the Council. This Forum organised by Rights & Fairness Telford, was an opportunity for local residents to express their views on the five themes of the Commission.

3.2.4 Feedback from the forum, the information presented to the group (2.2.2) together with the participants own experience, was used to form the key areas of focus for the group.

3.3 Rationale for Key Areas of Focus

3.3.1 The sub-group agreed that there were two main areas that they would like to focus on:

- **Voluntary Sector Engagement** – That the Council increase engagement with and thereby understanding of the voluntary sector's role and to work co-operatively to exploit all commissioning/procurement opportunities through the voluntary sector to improve outcomes for the community
- **Co-operative Procurement** –To simplify the procurement process by the Council and ensure that this is transparent to widen the pool of potential providers thereby maximising opportunities for local businesses and increasing local choice.

3.3.2 The recommendations have been developed to support the delivery of the identified areas of focus. Further information on the rationale and key actions to support these recommendations is set out in Appendix 2.

3.3.3 **Recommendation 1:** 'That a Voluntary Sector Engagement Group is established'

Desired Impact:

- Improved outcomes for service users through better, evidence based commissioning
- A Co-operative Council which supports co-operatives, mutuals and other service delivery models
- Development of a commissioning process to enable engagement with the voluntary sector
- Better targeted community support

3.3.4 To enable the Council to better understand the impact that its spending decisions has on local organisations, the sub group discussed the development of a group which would provide a sounding board for consultation on the future funding arrangements for this sector with particular focus on the end user and impact on their needs. This would be an important step in the Council adhering to new Best Value statutory guidance with regards to engagement with the voluntary and community sector.

A first step to achieving this would be to explore and review current commissioning arrangements between the Council and the voluntary sector and assessing their effectiveness in supporting local capacity and opportunities, for example, “social reinvestment” by not for profit organisations. This should also look to ensure that the Council fully understands the voluntary and community sector offer.

3.3.5 Recommendation 2: ‘That the Council undertakes a corporate review of its process of spend with the voluntary and community sector’

Desired Impact:

- To develop a better, more consistent process around how the Council procures and spends with the voluntary and community sector. Impact will be maximised if this review is reported effectively
- Improved Value For Money
- Better outcomes for service users

The group felt that ‘intelligence’ held by service providers within the third sector should be better used to inform commissioning arrangements to ensure that spending decisions are informed by user ‘need’. This information should be used at the beginning of the commissioning/procurement process and not at the end.

A review of the process of Council spend with the sector would enable the Council to better manage its commissioning arrangements and understand the impact of any (de)commissioning decisions.

3.3.7 Recommendation 3: ‘That the freedoms and flexibilities within European and Best Value statutory guidance are used to maximise the **local** opportunities in terms of rewarding contracts to local organisations and businesses and maximising local employment and training benefits’.

Desired Impact:

- Benefits to local people
- Consistency across procurement practices
- Support for local people/business
- Understand rationale for procurement
- Consistent use of terminology

As one of the largest organisations in the borough, the Council should recognise the potential of its spending power locally and the social impact this may have.

The Council should aim to further enable local third sector and private organisations to understand how they can become a supplier to the Council.

The group discussed the level of consistency around commissioning activity by the Council and that there was a need to ensure that local benefits are always realised and agreed that this was an area that needed to be explored further. If processes are updated they need to be well communicated and signposted. The Council should then test whether this is understood by partners, local organisations and businesses.

3.3.8 Recommendation 4: ‘That the Council considers looking at alternative service delivery models as appropriate e.g. co-operatives’

Desired Impact:

- Benefits to service users where a service may have previously been cut/stopped

As funding for services becomes more of a challenge it is recognised that there are some services that may no longer be affordable to deliver. Customer need should be core to this and assessed as part of this process.

Different service models could be piloted with the voluntary sector in the event that the Council feels like it needs to look at alternative options. Careful consideration should be given around the benefits and dis-benefits of operating a service in any new way.

Any decision should consider the impact on employees and should support/nurture the contribution that employees can make to running/improving services. A key principle of the co-operative approach.

- 3.3.6 Recommendation 5: 'That the Council considers using the Co-operative Commission to hold the Council to account to ensure that the co-operative values, once approved are embedded in all that it does – including procurement'

Desired Impact:

- Possible adoption of Co-operative values across all organisations
- Improved quality of working relationships
- Delivery of the Commissions approved recommendations/actions within set timescales.

The co-operative values that have been developed are a good reflection of the way we want to work going forward and it is beneficial that Telford and Wrekin will have its own unique set of values as opposed to the national set of co-operative values. In adopting these values, the Council needs to ensure that they are "lived".

As well as the values, it is important that once the Commission's recommendations are endorsed, they are delivered in practice and that the Council is held to account on this through the Co-operative Commission Assembly.

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 This group has found that there are already effective working relationships between the Council and its voluntary and community sector partners. In a number of areas a more co-operative approach would be beneficial around commissioning and procurement – particularly the Council understanding the impact of its commissioning and decommissioning decisions.

Such an approach will increase the possibility of sustaining services in a period of shrinking public sector resources and the opportunity to improve outcomes for local people. As well as the outcomes for direct services users, other improved outcomes include the impact on the local economy by enabling and supporting local businesses to become suppliers to the Council and other public sector organisations and to ensure that other opportunities, such as apprenticeships for local people, are maximised.

To be effective the principles and values of co-operative working need to be embedded in how the Council functions, in particular its relationships with its partners and the local community. The Commission may have a future role in ensuring that this is achieved.

5.0 Overlap with other Commission Sub Groups

- Values and Communication – that the Commission is used to hold the Council to account to ensure that the co-operative values are embedded in all that it does.

6.0 Acknowledgements

6.1 With thanks to the Commissioning Services and Procurement Commission sub group for dedicating their time and for their commitment to the co-operative approach and the developing of recommendations.

Appendix 1 - Members of Cooperative Commission Commissioning Services and Procurement Sub Group

Name	Organisation
Lyn Brayne	Citizens Advice Bureau
Jane Brookes	Wrekin Housing Trust
Adrian Collins	Telford & Wrekin Services
Cllr Rae Evans	Telford & Wrekin Council
Mick Lloyd	Council for Voluntary Service
Heather Osbourne	Age UK
Rev'd Andy Smith	Telford Christian Council
Cllr Barry Tillotson	Wellington Town Council/Admaston House Charitable Trust
Steve Wall	Sutherland School
Wayne Gethings	Wrekin Housing Trust
George Kinnell	Council for Voluntary Service
Hilary Knight	Age UK

Support Officers	
Jon Power	Telford and Wrekin Council
Rachel Humble	Telford and Wrekin Council

**Appendix 2 - Commissioning Services and Procurement
Co-operative Commission Working Group**

Area of Focus	Ref	Recommendation – What do we need to focus on and what can we do differently?	Rationale – why do we think this is something that we need a cooperative approach to?	Desired Impact – what do we want to happen as a result of the recommendation?	Suggested Actions – how are we going to implement the recommendation?
Voluntary Sector Engagement	1.	That a Voluntary Sector Engagement Group is established.	<p>To provide a sounding board for consultation on the future funding arrangements for this sector – to enable the Council to better understand the impact its spending decisions has on organisations with particular focus on the end user and impact on their needs. This would be an important step in the Council adhering to new Best Value statutory guidance in terms of engagement with the CVS.</p> <p>To explore and review commissioning arrangements between the Council and the voluntary sector. Exploring whether our current arrangements are effective in supporting local capacity and opportunities i.e. “social reinvestment” by not for profit organisations. This should also look to ensure that the Council fully understands the VCS offer.</p>	<p>Outcomes for service users (sustained level of quality of service?)</p> <p>Co-operative Council to support co-operatives and mutuals</p> <p>Development of a commissioning process to enable engagement with the voluntary sector</p> <p>Better targeted community support and commissioning services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with VCS Chief Officer Group (COG) to develop this group (is this going to be an extension of COG?) • Develop a terms of reference for the Voluntary Sector Engagement Group (see above) • COG to communicate effectively what voluntary groups have to ‘offer’ • Explore ways of communicating with the VCS forum through CVS • Create an ‘Observatory’ role of the CVS to aid communication and data sharing

Area of Focus	Ref	Recommendation – What do we need to focus on and what can we do differently?	Rationale – why do we think this is something that we need a cooperative approach to?	Desired Impact – what do we want to happen as a result of the recommendation?	Suggested Actions – how are we going to implement the recommendation?
Voluntary Sector Engagement	2.	That the Council undertakes a corporate review of its process of spend with the VCS.	<p>To enable the Council to better manage its commissioning arrangements with the VCS and understand the impact of any (de) commissioning decisions.</p> <p>‘Intelligence’ should be better used to inform commissioning arrangements to ensure that spending decisions are informed by user ‘need’. This should be fed at the beginning of the commissioning/procurement process and not at the end.</p>	<p>Results of the review are reported effectively</p> <p>Improve Value For Money</p> <p>Outcomes for service users (sustained level of quality of service?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of current process undertaken • Map current spending with this sector. • Communicate milestones of review effectively with VCS
Co-operative Procurement	3.	That the Council consider using the Co-operative Commission to hold the Council to account to ensure that the Co-operative values, once approved are embedded in all that it does – including procurement	<p>The co-operative values that have been developed are a good reflection of the way we want to work going forward and it is beneficial that Telford and Wrekin will have its own unique set of values as opposed to the national set of cooperative values.</p> <p>It is important that the values, once endorsed, are adopted and delivered in practice – not just good intentions.</p>	<p>Delivery of all recommendations/actions within set timescales</p> <p>Possible adoption of Co-operative values across all organisations</p> <p>Quality of working relationships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council should benchmark itself against other Co-operative Councils. • Use the Co-operative Community Forum as a ‘check point’ as to whether the values have been adopted and communicated clearly. • Review of actions on a regular basis

Area of Focus	Ref	Recommendation – What do we need to focus on and what can we do differently?	Rationale – why do we think this is something that we need a cooperative approach to?	Desired Impact – what do we want to happen as a result of the recommendation?	Suggested Actions – how are we going to implement the recommendation?
			<p>This is also true for all of the recommendations that will be endorsed by the Co-operative Commission Assembly.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set realistic timescales for all actions and recommendations • Invite other Co-operatives to undertake a 'Peer Review' e.g. Manchester • Offer a 'Peer Review' to other co-operatives
Co-operative Procurement	4.	<p>That the freedoms and flexibilities within European and Best Value statutory guidance are used to maximise the local opportunities in terms of rewarding contracts to local organisations and businesses and maximising local employment and training benefits</p>	<p>As one of the largest organisations in the borough, the Council should recognise the potential of its spending power locally and the social impact this may have.</p> <p>To enable local third sector and private organisations to understand how they can</p>	<p>Benefits to local people</p> <p>Understand rationale for procurement</p> <p>Consistency across procurement practices</p> <p>Support for local people/business (job creation?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council should consider adopting the West Midlands Framework for Jobs & Skills • The Council seeks to better understand the how and where 'social reinvestment' by contractors is

Area of Focus	Ref	Recommendation – What do we need to focus on and what can we do differently?	Rationale – why do we think this is something that we need a cooperative approach to?	Desired Impact – what do we want to happen as a result of the recommendation?	Suggested Actions – how are we going to implement the recommendation?
			<p>become a supplier to the Council. As one of the largest organisations in the borough, the Council should recognise the potential of its spending power locally and widest social impact this may have.</p> <p>The group also discussed the level of consistency around commissioning – to ensure that these local benefits are always realised. The group agreed that this should be explored. If established the process needed to be communicated, well sign posted. The Council should then test whether this is understood across partners, local organisations and businesses.</p>	<p>Understand rationale for procurement</p> <p>Consistent use of terminology</p>	<p>evaluated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The Council should seek to improve transparency in its procurement and commissioning practices. •Establish effective methods of communication around changes to procurement •Adopt a standard approach to commissioning •Support local business and economy though procurement and commissioning •Clarify terminology around procurement and commissioning communicate this effectively •Hold monthly procurement opportunity meetings and promote

Area of Focus	Ref	Recommendation – What do we need to focus on and what can we do differently?	Rationale – why do we think this is something that we need a cooperative approach to?	Desired Impact – what do we want to happen as a result of the recommendation?	Suggested Actions – how are we going to implement the recommendation?
					forthcoming procurement opportunities e.g. 'Find it in Sandwell'
Co-operative Procurement	5.	That the Council considers looking at alternative service delivery models as appropriate e.g. co-operatives	<p>As funding for services becomes more of a challenge it is recognised that there are some services that may no longer be affordable to deliver.</p> <p>Customer need should be assessed as part of this process and where appropriate the impacts of service cuts need to be considered.</p> <p>Different service models could be piloted with the voluntary sector in the event that the Council feels like it needs to look at alternative options. Careful consideration should be given around the benefits and dis-benefits of operating a service in any new way.</p>	<p>Benefits to service users where a service may have previously been cut/stopped</p> <p>Any decision should consider the impact on employees – and should support/nurture the contribution that employees can make to running/improving services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas for a pilot • Commence alternative service delivery model pilot • Undertake a comprehensive risk assessment around different service delivery models

TELFORD AND WREKIN CO-OPERATIVE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE VOLUNTEERING SUB GROUP

2 MARCH 2012

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the work of the Co-operative Commission sub group on Volunteering and to set out the proposed recommendations to be considered by the Co-operative Commission Assembly.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 A more joined up strategic approach is taken in relation to developing and delivering volunteering activity within the Borough, and that a **Strategic Volunteering Group** with representatives from voluntary public and private sector organisations is established.
- 2.2 That the Strategic Volunteering Group has an initial focus on developing a coordinated approach to developing volunteering around 4 key areas;
- Promoting volunteering
Recognising and Valuing Volunteers
Promoting and Sharing Good Practice
Reducing barriers to Volunteering
- 2.3 That the Co-operative Commission Assembly/Cabinet agrees the actions proposed in Section 3 of this report, and that these actions form part of the initial work programme for the Strategic Volunteering Group, or are actioned by Telford and Wrekin Council as appropriate.
- 2.4 That the Strategic Volunteering Group considers ways in which the impact of the proposed actions and the work of the group is monitored and evaluated.
- 2.5 That Telford and Wrekin Council develops a Strategic Volunteering Policy across the organisation to ensure consistency for volunteers that support the delivery of Council services.

3.0 INFORMATION

3.1 **Role of Volunteering**

There is an agreed recognition that volunteering makes a major contribution to all aspects of life in the local community and supports the delivery of services in both the voluntary and public sector. Volunteering brings benefits to both the individuals that volunteer in relation to building confidence, developing skills and building social networks, and to the organisations that are supported by volunteers, many of which wouldn't be able to operate without the input of volunteers.

The Co-operative Council Commission meeting held on 16th September identified volunteering as a theme for one of its working groups along with some of the issues the group should consider including;

- The need to have a more joined up approach to coordinating activity
- Maximising opportunities through communication and engagement
- Developing the skills of Young People
- Promoting civic participation and volunteering

3.2 **Developing Key Areas of Focus**

The volunteering sub-group mainly comprised of voluntary sector organisations and groups with experience of volunteering, these groups included large organisations such as CVS along with smaller resident led groups such as Brookside Improvement Group. The full list of group members is attached in appendix(i).

In order to identify the key areas of focus and agreed outcomes the group considered a range of information including existing good practice, direct experience from the organisations represented and research relating to volunteering. The group also considered the West Midlands Volunteering Development Council report 'Volunteering Matters in the West Midlands 2010', which involved an audit of activity carried out across the West Midlands in relation to volunteering, this document identified a number of gaps in relation to volunteering practice within Telford and Wrekin. This information along with the direct experience of the group members was used to form the key areas of focus for the group.

The Co-operative Council Community Forum meeting on 15th December held 3 workshops to look at issues relating to volunteering. A member of the Commission sub-group attended this session, and the feedback from the workshops was used to develop the final recommendations. The key areas of focus were shared at these sessions and the workshop participants supported these key areas.

3.3 **Rationale for Key Areas of Focus and Supporting Actions**

The agreed overarching vision for volunteering in Telford and Wrekin as agreed by the group was to **develop and retain a diverse range of enthusiastic and motivated volunteers within Telford and Wrekin, who feel valued and are able to use and develop their skills through volunteering.**

The key areas of focus and proposed supporting actions have been developed as follows in order to support achieving this vision. Appendix (ii) provides a summary of the rationale for the key areas of focus, desired impact and further suggested actions.

Promoting Volunteering

Desired Impact:

- Raise awareness of the benefits of volunteering
- Increase number of volunteers
- Broaden the range of individuals who volunteer to ensure representative of the community
- Improve the image of volunteering and voluntary organisations

The group identified the need to have a consistent approach to promoting volunteering across the Borough. It was recognised that individual organisations carried out some good work in relation to promoting volunteering, however a greater impact could be achieved through a joint campaign.

It was felt that there were still some misconceptions around volunteering and a need to develop a more diverse group of volunteers, particularly in relation to encouraging Young People to volunteer.

Recommended Supporting Actions

- Develop a joint campaign across the Borough to promote the benefits of volunteering based on case studies of volunteers and those receiving services including a coordinated approach to celebrating 'National Volunteers Week'.
- Develop links from organisation's websites, including Telford and Wrekin Council, to the national volunteering website 'Do It' to promote volunteering opportunities
- Create a single point to access volunteering opportunities on Telford and Wrekin Council's website to promote volunteering opportunities and the impact of volunteering

Recognising and Valuing Volunteers

Desired Impact:

- Ensure volunteers feel valued
- Improve retention of volunteers
- Promote the benefits of volunteering to potential volunteers via 'word of mouth'

The group identified recognising and valuing volunteers as one of the key ways of reducing the barriers to volunteering. Organisations identified that some volunteers do not see themselves in a volunteering capacity, and others can feel 'undervalued' which can lead to issues around retention. Individual organisations have their own mechanisms for acknowledging the contribution of volunteers and may have their own 'reward' system. However, it was felt that there was a need to acknowledge the large contribution that volunteers make to Telford and Wrekin as a whole and that this could be done through a joint volunteer award ceremony and through a greater celebration of national volunteer's week.

Recommended Supporting Actions

- Hold a joint annual ceremony to acknowledge and celebrate volunteers and their achievements

Promoting and Sharing Good Practice

Desired Impact:

- Improving practice by sharing lessons learned between organisations
- Reduce duplication and improve effectiveness for organisations and volunteers
- Increase number of volunteers

It was recognised that there is already good practice taking place across the Borough and that some mechanisms already exist to promote and share good practice including the Telford and Wrekin Volunteer Organisers Forum (supported by CVS) and iVolunteer (a social action website and interactive tool that connects voluntary organisations, volunteers and charities). However, a study in 2010 by the Institute for Volunteering found that managing volunteers is usually part of a wider role and that 56% of those with responsibility for co-ordinating volunteers spend less than a quarter of their time doing this. Telford and Wrekin Volunteer Centre highlights areas for development within the organisations it supports and also identifies examples of good practice.

There was a perception that there currently isn't consistency in the support to volunteers that are involved in the delivery of Telford and Wrekin Council services, it is therefore proposed that the Council develops an overarching policy in relation to volunteering as outlined in recommendation 2.5.

Further development of the Telford and Wrekin Volunteer Organisers Forum and promotion of iVolunteer were seen by the group as 2 effective ways of promoting good practice. Also, the promotion of the services to be provided through CVS at their new 'hub' was also seen to be a good opportunity to promote good practice, further information relating to the role of the CVS Volunteer Centre is included in appendix (iii).

Recommended Supporting Actions

- Improve networking between organisations through the development of the existing **Telford and Wrekin Volunteer Organisers Forum** (supported by CVS) and the promotion of iVolunteer (interactive website)
- Promote the CVS hub to organisations when established
- Share good practice in relation to employer supported volunteering and corporate social responsibility as developed by Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
- Develop a web-based guide to resources available to support good practice

Reducing Barriers to Volunteering for Individuals and Organisations

Desired Impact:

- Reduce the potential barriers to volunteering
- Reduce the potential barriers to organisations using volunteers
- Increase the number of volunteers and number of organisations working with volunteers

There are seen to be a range of barriers to volunteering that can relate to organisations, individuals or to the systems and processes that volunteers need to adhere to before they can take up their volunteering role. Anecdotal evidence from the organisations within the group also identified a range of barriers including the costs and time required for appropriate checks to be carried out on volunteers. Further information relating to the barriers to volunteering are included in appendix (iv). A number of the other recommendations also have the potential to contribute towards reducing these barriers; however, a simple action that the Council could take to support volunteering across the Borough is to assist with Criminal Record Bureau checks at a reduced cost. It is also recommended that a further piece of work is carried out with organisations and residents within the Borough to identify the barriers to volunteering locally.

Recommended Supporting Actions

- That the Council carry out CRB checks on behalf of small voluntary organisations at a reduced cost (£5). The Council currently carries out CRB checks on behalf of a range of organisations for a cost of £30, this current charge applies to both businesses and voluntary organisations.
- That research is carried out locally to identify the barriers to volunteering for individuals and within organisations, and appropriate actions are developed to address these barriers (through the Strategic Volunteering Group)

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The group agreed that there is already good practice in relation to volunteering across Telford and Wrekin, local case studies are included in appendix (v). The Borough has a wide range of organisations that are supported by volunteers. These organisations vary in size including large national voluntary organisations, locally based organisations and small residents groups. The valuable role that volunteers play in supporting sports clubs and public sector services was also recognised.

There was recognition that financial resources are limited and that volunteering in the Borough could be more effective if a more coordinated approach was taken. The recommendations outlined above are seen as an initial step towards improving the coordination of activity and sharing of resources and good practice. A key challenge for the group was accessing reliable data on the number of volunteers within the Borough. It was recognised that although this information would be useful, particularly in relation to monitoring the outcomes of the recommendations, collation of this data is challenging. It was suggested that the Strategic Volunteering Group consider ways in which the impact of the recommendations could be measured.

5.0 OVERLAP WITH OTHER COMMISSION SUB GROUPS

- Employment, Skills & the Economy – the importance of volunteering as a pathway into work.

Appendix i - Members of Co-operative Commission Volunteering Sub Group

Anna Brennand	Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
Jan Ellis	TCAT
Cllr Rae Evans	Telford & Wrekin Council
Rose Gregory	Donnington Lifelong Learning Centre
Ann Johnson	Federation of Small Business
Mick Lloyd	Council for Voluntary Service
Cllr Jim Loveridge	Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council
Mike Lowe	Dawley Regeneration Partnership
Tina Rogers	Brookside Improvement Group
Hannah Roy	Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust
Paul Shuttleworth	Radio Presenter
Cllr Angela McClements	Telford & Wrekin Council
Beverly Harris	Telford & Wrekin Volunteer Centre (CVS)
Ella Sips	Council for Voluntary Service
Jayne Stevens	PODS Telford
Kathryn Poli	Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust

Support Officers

Rachael Jones	Telford and Wrekin Council
Parvinder Chana	Telford and Wrekin Council

Appendix ii - Co-operative Commission Working Group – Volunteering- Overview

Area of Focus	Recommendation	Rationale	Desired Impact	Supporting Actions
Overarching recommendations	<p>Establish a Strategic Volunteering Group to look at the 4 key areas below.</p> <p>Develop a joint approach to monitoring and evaluating the impact of the recommendations on volunteering across the Borough</p>	<p>There is existing good practice within the Borough, however organisations don't currently plan together and there could be increased effectiveness by identifying areas where resources could be joined up.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a more strategic approach to developing volunteering, to enhance the sharing of resources and information and to more effectively measure the impact of volunteering. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult Chief Officers Group and Local Strategic Partnership on proposal and to agree role and membership of the group. • Develop terms of reference for group and agree coordination arrangements
Promoting Volunteering	<p>Develop a joined up approach to promoting volunteering opportunities and the benefits and outcomes of volunteering.</p>	<p>Resources are limited within organisations and a more joined up approach should lead to a greater impact in recruiting volunteers, currently organisations promote volunteering on an individual basis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the image of volunteering • Increase numbers and retention of volunteers • Broaden the diversity of volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through Strategic Volunteering Group develop a joint campaign linked to national volunteer's week (June 2012) and throughout the year • Improve communication around volunteering opportunities by linking to 'Do it' website and the Council developing an area on it's website for volunteering.

Area of Focus	Recommendation	Rationale	Desired Impact	Supporting Actions
Recognising and Valuing Volunteers	Develop a joint annual celebration event to recognise the contribution of volunteers	There is a need to promote the contribution of volunteers across the Borough, show the diversity of opportunities available and support volunteers to feel valued.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support volunteers to feel valued • Promote range of volunteering opportunities available • Increase the numbers and diversity of people volunteering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through Strategic Volunteering Group develop a joint celebration event linked to national volunteer's week (June 2012) and throughout the year • Share good practice through Volunteer Organiser's Forum on recognising and valuing volunteers
Promoting and Sharing Good Practice	<p>Improve the existing networks for sharing good practice, strengthen links between organisations that are supported by volunteers</p> <p>Develop a consistent policy for volunteers supporting the delivery of Telford and Wrekin Services</p>	<p>Good practice already exists in the Borough but some organisations do not currently access the support available.</p> <p>There is a perception that the experience for volunteers supporting Council Services isn't consistent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve volunteering experience for individuals • Improve practice across the Borough • Reduce duplication and enable the sharing of resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop the existing Telford and Wrekin Volunteer Organisers Forum • Promote the use of iVolunteer • Promote the CVS hub • Develop a web-based guide to resources available to support good practice • Collate information on practice across the Council and develop an appropriate overarching policy
Reducing the Barriers to Volunteering	Gain an understanding of local barriers for volunteers and organisations and to take a strategic approach to	The cost of CRB checks was identified as a key barrier for some small organisations. There were seen to be misconceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the barriers to volunteering for individuals and organisations • Increase the number of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council to consider carrying out CRB checks on behalf of small organisations at reduced cost

Area of Focus	Recommendation	Rationale	Desired Impact	Supporting Actions
	dealing with these	around the bureaucracy relating to volunteering, these could be addressed through sharing good practice	volunteers and organisations working with volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1691 138 2051 339">• Strategic Volunteering Group to coordinate research into barriers locally, identify actions to remove barriers and share good practice



The Volunteer Centre is the public face of Telford & Wrekin Council for Voluntary Service (CVS). It supports individuals into volunteering, as well as meeting the infrastructure support needs of the voluntary sector. As the only volunteer development agency, within the borough of Telford & Wrekin, it has to meet 6 core functions:-

Six Core Functions

1. Brokerage

- offers guidance to individuals from all sections of the community on volunteering by offering face to face interviews, telephone interviews, email etc
- matches individual's skills and their motivation for volunteering to available volunteering opportunities
- signposts and refers volunteers
- inputs local volunteering opportunities onto an internal database (Vbase) and onto the national volunteering data base (www.do-it.org.uk)
- ensures that information on the database is current and up to date by regularly reviewing the information with the sector.

2. Marketing

- promotes the many benefits of volunteering to all sections of the community by displays, visits to groups, and by the use of social networking such as facebook
<http://www.facebook.com/VolCentreTelford?ref=ts>
- provides a variety of ways to find out about volunteering opportunities:- one to one interviews, telephone interviews, talks to groups, posting opportunities onto its own website <http://www.telfordvc.tandwcvcs.org.uk/> and the national volunteering website www.do-it.org.uk

3. Developing Volunteering Opportunities

- increases diversity and quantity of local volunteering by working with organisations to create more flexible and varied opportunities.

4. Good Practice Development

- provides a local source of information about relevant legislation
- provides information and training on good practice for volunteers. All trainers are qualified to at least PTLLS (Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector) and the Volunteer Centre Manager is a member of the IFL (institute for Learning)
- facilitates networking and partnership working amongst Volunteer Managers including the Telford & Wrekin Volunteer Organisers Forum and the group on the Social Action network i-volunteer
<http://www.i-volunteer.org.uk/groups/telford-wrekin-volunteer-organisers-forum/>

5. Campaigning

- provides comment to decision-makers on the significance of volunteering in effecting positive change and improving the quality of life

- campaigns against barriers to volunteering

6. Strategic Development

- participates in local and regional partnerships to ensure volunteering is considered in planning and strategic thinking. The Volunteer Centre manager is Chair of the regional Volunteer Centre Network and sits on local partnerships such as the Recruitment and Redundancy Group, Telford 2012, The County Sports partnership, Greenshoots, Parks for People, Community Learning Partnership.
- The Volunteer Centre is currently developing a skill based Employee Volunteering Scheme to generate unrestricted funds for the brokerage function.

Staffing Levels

The Volunteer Centre currently operates with two members of staff:-

Post 1. Volunteer Centre Manager 28hrs

The Volunteer Centre Manager has overall responsibility for the 6 core functions and for the management of the Volunteer Centre, its staff and volunteers and has direct operational responsibility for 4 functions, namely:

- Good practice development
- Development of volunteering opportunities
- Policy response and campaigning
- Strategic development

Post 2. Client Information & Advice Officer 18hrs

This member of staff undertakes the 2 core functions of:

- Brokerage of volunteering opportunities
- Marketing of volunteering

Volunteer 1. Customer Services Volunteer

This role involves following up after the client has visited the Volunteer Centre to see if they are currently volunteering or require further assistance.

Volunteer 2. Data Base Volunteer

This role involves regularly reviewing and updating the data on Vbase

In addition to this the Volunteer centre receives 10 hours admin support from Telford & Wrekin CVS

Quality Marks

The Volunteer Centre and Telford and Wrekin CVS have a number of quality marks in recognition of the comprehensive support they offer to the voluntary sector

Volunteering England Quality Assurance

Telford & Wrekin Volunteer Centre is a Volunteer Development Agency member of Volunteering England. In order to maintain this membership the effectiveness of the six core functions is measured every three years through a robust quality assurance process. This entitles the use of the dynamic “V” logo as a visible symbol of an accredited Volunteer Centre to the community.



Telford and Wrekin Volunteer Centre received 100% for the measurement of each core function. The Volunteering England assessor wrote;

“This is an excellent portfolio that has been thoughtfully constructed with relevant and appropriate evidence. It demonstrates what can be achieved by a small individual VC. The evidence points to a well respected VC that has good relationships with the organisations that it serves and who are well represented in local and regional fora. All core functions are well evidenced. This is particularly noteworthy as the Business Plan identifies that 90% of VC time is spent undertaking the brokerage function. The VC should be proud of what it has achieved.”

Source: Report on Telford & Wrekin Quality Assessment December 2010

The Matrix

The Volunteer Centre also holds the Matrix quality assurance mark for Information Advice and Guidance.



“The Volunteer centre has effective systems in place to ensure clients and organisations receive the best support and service they can offer. “

Source: Matrix Accreditation review report February 2010

Quality Marks for Telford & Wrekin CVS

Telford & Wrekin CVS has also achieved the **PQASSO** quality assurance system to ensure that the whole organisation adopts a continuous cycle of monitoring, evaluation and improvement. It has also been awarded the **NAVCA Quality Award** (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action) after a recent assessment process. This is a rigorous, externally audited, evaluation of the quality of services offered to voluntary and community groups by local support and development organisations that are members of NAVCA. The NAVCA approved award is assessed against the NAVCA Performance Standards and once awarded, the Quality Award is valid for three years.

Appendix iv - Barriers for Organisations/Groups

- Lack of funding for organisations/groups to recognise and support volunteers
- Few organisations with a dedicated Volunteer Manager
- Engaging with people in rural areas
- Reluctance of some volunteers as they have been signposted to volunteering from another agency
- Limited resources to support volunteers
- Insurance issues for younger people causes barriers for groups/orgs to take on young people
- Organisations not ready for an influx of volunteers
- Organisations not ready for developing additional opportunities
- Stereotypes associated with volunteering
- People not wanting to do something for nothing but not realising the benefits of volunteering
- Space in order to accommodate volunteers
- Many organisations are not fully resourced or skilled in providing meaningful personal development for volunteers
- Taking on volunteers can be costly as once they are keen to develop they move on to paid work quite quickly
- Difficult to get volunteers to commit long term

Barriers for Individuals

- Opportunities through training/education not readily available to help people understand what volunteering is
- No progression pathway after the volunteering opportunity is completed
- Lack of funding opportunities to kick start volunteering opportunities and the support related to this
- People not being aware of the opportunities available and where
- A mismatch between the opportunities desired by the volunteer and the opportunities available
- Over the top red tape and bureaucracy to approve volunteers
- Peer pressure from other young people that stops those interested in volunteering pursuing opportunities
- Financial/ constraints that stops people from volunteering
- Lack of confidence stops people from volunteering
- Opportunities not available in the times to suit volunteers if they are in other paid employment
- People who don't 'conform' aren't encouraged to volunteer

Appendix v - Volunteering - Case Studies

<p>Name of organisation/group:Telford and the Wrekin Citizens Advice Bureau</p>
<p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens Advice service helps people to resolve their legal, money and other problems through information and advice and by influencing policy makers. We provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to anyone on their rights and responsibilities. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination. Service aims are: • To provide the advice people need for the problems they face <p>Improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives</p>
<p>Volunteer Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment – skills gained as a volunteer adviser are transferable to a number of jobs in customer services, care, advice etc • General work experience and development of skills and knowledge including IT skills. • Work experience for Law graduates and under-graduates – CAB adviser qualification reduces length of legal training contracts • Enhanced confidence, self esteem, self-worth etc • Sense of purpose, achievement and fulfillment. Making good use of skills and experience gained from work and life in general. Sometimes making something positive from negative experiences. • New friends & sense of belonging • New challenges • Sense of perspective • Relief of boredom
<p>Organisation/group Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased capacity – use of volunteers allows us to help many more clients. We have volunteer advisers, receptionists, admin support, social policy workers etc. We wouldn't have an 'open door' service without volunteers • Wider range of life experiences, languages, specific knowledge etc that contribute to the total pool of organisational knowledge, learning and development • Diversity – interesting and stimulating working environment • Ability to understand and represent the whole of the community – and be seen to represent the whole community • Increased efficiency – making most cost-effective and efficient use of paid 'expertise' • Caring and committed work force that is driven by client need • Skilled pool of potential employees
<p>Lessons Learned:</p> <p>The role of the volunteer adviser is very demanding – takes a long time to train and develop experience and is always somewhat nerve-racking. We know that volunteers need thorough training and consistent 'hands on' support from a paid supervisor. Volunteer advisers do not generally like working in isolation for example</p>

at outreach. We know that if good support is not available for volunteer advisers the quality of advice provided for clients drops.

- The volunteer adviser role is not suitable for the short-term volunteer. It takes at least a year of 6 – 10 hours per week to gain the adviser qualification and at least 6 hours per week to maintain skills level required. Therefore our potential volunteer pool is limited.
- Cost of training volunteer advisers is high – approx £2,500 per volunteer. We need to ensure that the organization is getting something back for this investment. This means we have to be selective in taking on new volunteers – we don't have the resources to take on short-term volunteers looking for a few weeks work experience.

What Works:

Essential that all staff and trustees understand and value volunteering. No 'us and them' attitudes. Helps if all paid staff have some experience of being a volunteer themselves as understanding volunteering is not easily taught.

Flexibility to match volunteers needs with organizational needs. Finding ways to harness what volunteers can offer in order to provide benefits for clients within the organizational framework.

Need to understand that volunteering is not a gift – it is an exchange. Find out what the volunteer wants to achieve from their volunteering and be clear and honest about whether or not the organization can deliver this.

Making sure that volunteers have meaningful roles that give them job satisfaction and real sense of worth without creating too much pressure – getting this balance right by providing plenty of support.

Keeping volunteers informed about the whole organizational picture not just the issues that directly affect their volunteering. Good, effective communication

Developing a sense of 'ownership' – volunteers need direct links with management and Trustees in order to feel involved and empowered to contribute fully to the organisation.

Pathways:

The training and experience is the most important thing that we provide and is highly regarded by potential employers. We also provide references for current volunteers. We advertise our own vacancies amongst volunteers and other CAB vacancies as they arise.

We don't have spare resources to provide help with CV's, interview practice, job-search etc and it is not what our charity funding is provided for so could be classed as misuse of charity resources if were to do so.

However volunteers can have free access to the internet for job-searching and volunteers and staff often assist other volunteers in their own time.

Numbers of Volunteers:

Approx 80 excluding Trustees.

Additional Information:

Two of our volunteers have been offered full-time jobs in the past week. Whilst we are delighted for them they will be sadly missed by colleagues here and our clients.

We are concerned that in the current economic and political environment there is a growing dependence on volunteers whilst at the same time the potential pool of volunteers is diminishing through rising retirement age and changes to welfare benefits. There is a distinct shift to short-term volunteering for work experience which does not work cost-effectively for highly skilled volunteering roles such as CAB advisers. Thus our volunteer costs are rocketing just to maintain our current levels. As the funding diminishes where are the long-term volunteers and the funding for recruitment and training going to come from to develop volunteers to take on even more demanding roles currently provided by paid staff. This, for me, is the most significant and pressing issue.

**Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee
Forward Plan 2011/12**

MEETING DATE	AGENDA ITEM	LEAD MEMBER/ OFFICER	ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES
25 th July 6.00pm VIP Suite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operative Council and Co-operative Commission report • Work Programme <p>Written reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operative models in other authorities • Small Business Loans Fund model • Communications Strategy 	Shaun Davies Richard Partington	
12 th September 6.00pm Scrutiny Meeting Room	First Point for Business – single point of contact for businesses to access support services	Charles Smith Peter Smith	Andrew Meredith Corin Crane
9 th November 6.00pm Scrutiny Meeting Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concessions policy in leisure • Arthog Remissions Policy 	Angie Astley Arnold England	Stuart Davidson
1 st December 6.00pm Scrutiny Meeting Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concessions policy in Leisure – modelling of options • Arthog Remissions Policy complaints 	Angie Astley	Stuart Davidson
2nd February 2012 6.00pm Committee Room 2	Scoping meeting for review of Management of Community Centres	Jonathan Rowe Arnold England	Stuart Davidson Rachael Jones
21 st March 2012 6.00pm Scrutiny Meeting Room	Co-operative & Employee Commission Reports	Shaun Davies Richard Partington	Jon Power Debrah Byle

MEETING DATE	AGENDA ITEM	LEAD MEMBER/ OFFICER	ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES
Forward items			
1. Social Deprivation			
2. Environmental maintenance			
3. Working with Town & Parish Councils			
4. Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy			