

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2nd March 2011

PROMOTING REDDITCH TASK AND FINISH GROUP: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Gay Hopkins, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism and Councillor Jinny Pearce, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development and Transport.
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford, Head of Planning and Regeneration and Hugh Bennett, Director of Policy, Performance and Partnership.
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report contains a summary of the Promoting Redditch Task and Finish Group's final conclusions. The Group is proposing 14 recommendations which are designed to enhance the profile of Redditch and the ability of the Council and the local authority's partner organisations to promote the town more effectively. Whilst many of the actions suggested in this report could be delivered relatively quickly, the Group is also proposing actions that could be delivered at a future date when it may be possible to commit more substantial levels of financial investment. As such, this report suggests both immediate actions that could be taken to improve perceptions of Redditch and aspirations for the future which the Council is urged to endorse in principle.
- 1.2 As this is an Executive Summary this report should be considered in conjunction with the Promoting Redditch Task and Finish Group's final report, which contains a more detailed explanation of the evidence that has been gathered by the Group and the recommendations.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

We RECOMMEND that:

- 1a) **leisure tourism marketing should be targeted at families of all cultures within Redditch and a radius of 20 miles, highlighting the attractions of the Arrow Valley Lake and Countryside Centre and the shopping opportunities;**
- 1b) **business marketing should promote Redditch's strategic and rural location, being vibrant and modern using a strap line such as "an urban lifestyle in a rural setting";**

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- 2) a significant festival and events programme should be developed and marketed cohesively to raise the profile of the town in the region;
- 3) promotional material should be developed in partnerships and through Redditch Matters;
- 4) the Palace Theatre, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre and a public arts programme should be developed with increased management resource to provide increased audiences, more events and significant installations;
- 5) the Redditch Town Centre Partnership should work to create a more rounded shopping experience in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and Church Green, with event based programmes to refresh the offer and a cohesive marketing strategy incorporating recognisable branding, key qualities and identifiers;
- 6) Redditch market should be developed to provide again a substantial marketing strategy for the town centre and develop opportunities for new entrepreneurs;
- 7) the Council should ensure that business promotion receives appropriate investment and provide an information resource fit for purpose;
- 8) the new North Worcestershire Economic Development Service and Strategy should recognise the importance of tourism to the local economy and ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the promotion of tourism in the area;
- 9) the need for the promotion of Redditch hotels as a business resource should be recognised;
- 10) consideration should be given to devising a Visitor Ambassador Scheme;
- 11) the Council should endorse the Redditch Advertiser's proposal to introduce a Redditch Community Awards programme and should work with the newspaper and other partners to deliver the scheme;

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- 12) **the Council ensure that deficiencies in road signage are addressed: location naming, systemic effectiveness and physical cleanliness;**
- 13) **the Council should actively seek to establish promotion partnerships and ensure that commercial interests have a full and effective voice; and**
- 14) **the Council should ensure that electronic promotion tools are constantly developed and exploited to the full. This should include introducing a virtual business centre and consistent provision of website payment facilities for all Council services.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Promoting Redditch Task and Finish review was established in October 2010 to assess appropriate ways to market the town both to leisure tourists and to businesses. The subject was suggested as a suitable topic for review during a work programme planning event for Overview and Scrutiny in July 2010. Members concluded that that in view of the current and anticipated challenges to the town's economy it would be timely to conduct a review of the way the town and Council promoted Redditch.
- 3.2 Four members were appointed to the Group including Councillor Graham Vickery as Chair and Councillors Andy Fry, Brenda Quinney and Derek Taylor. The review was conducted in accordance with the terms of reference set by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and has been completed according to schedule.
- 3.3 Evidence was gathered from numerous written sources as well as through consultation with a variety of witnesses including: business representatives; tourism and marketing experts; relevant partnership representatives; representatives of other local authorities; local students, community representatives, Borough Councillors; and Council Officers.
- 3.4 There were a number of positive responses which indicated that many residents were proud of the town in which they lived. However, the Group unfortunately also received a lot of negative feedback, particularly in relation to perceptions of Redditch, which would need to be tackled in order to develop a more positive profile for the town. (Further information about the evidence that was gathered and the Group's interpretations of this evidence is detailed in the Group's final report).

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4. KEY ISSUES - RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 **Recommendation 1a) We RECOMMEND that leisure tourism marketing should be targeted at families of all cultures within Redditch and a radius of 20 miles, highlighting the attractions of the Arrow Valley Lake and Countryside Centre and the shopping opportunities.**
- 4.1.1 The Group has concluded that, whilst there is no single selling point for Redditch the town has numerous assets that appeal to a family audience. Correspondingly, both the Council and relevant partner organisations should target a family audience, including families who live in Redditch and those who live in surrounding areas, when marketing the town's attractions to leisure tourists.
- 4.1.2 Marketing attractions and locations to a family audience requires an understanding of the needs of the modern family. In particular, it should be recognised in the 21st Century that families are increasingly complex, often involving an enhanced role for grandparents as well as single parenting and step-parenting arrangements. Families generally require convenience when searching for attractions to visit and considerations about entrance fees, parking availability, toilet facilities and the quality of the food available to purchase on site will influence a family's decision as to whether to visit a location.
- 4.1.3 Redditch has the largest proportion of minority ethnic groups in Worcestershire, representing 8 per cent of the local population by 2009. The Group believes that the needs and cultural experiences of the minority ethnic groups living in Redditch should be reflected in the leisure tourism offer in the local area.
- 4.1.4 Many organisations reflect this changing family structure by offering different types of family tickets. This flexibility can act as an incentive for groups that do not conform to the traditional model to visit that attraction.
- 4.1.5 There are two particular selling points that the Group agree appeal to families and should be promoted as family friendly destinations in all campaigns designed to appeal to potential leisure tourists: the Arrow Valley Park, Lake and Countryside Centre and the shopping opportunities available within the town.
- 4.1.6 The Arrow Valley Park is classified as a regional park and attracts approximately 1 million visitors per year. An external company is contracted to manage the lake and the activities that take place on the lake. At the time of writing the Council is in the process of negotiating a contract for the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre. The park is within

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walking distance of 80 per cent of residents and was identified as the most popular tourist destination in Redditch in a Pride of Place Poll, conducted in the Borough in 2007. Furthermore, expert witnesses and residents of all generations consulted during the course of the review identified the park as a key local attraction that appealed to the whole family.

- 4.1.7 There are numerous shopping opportunities available within the town which should appeal to a family audience. The Kingfisher Shopping Centre, which contains branches from a number of high profile retail outlets and is conveniently located in the centre of the town, can be easily accessed by pedestrians at a variety of entry points.
- 4.1.8 There are a number of low cost retail outlets located both in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and in the rest of the town centre. The Group recognises that often there are concerns about the potential impact that low cost retail outlets may have on perceptions of the local retail offer, particularly when compared to regional competitors such as the Touchwood Centre in Solihull. However, the Group believes that these low cost retail outlets can also be considered to be an asset to the town because they often appeal to a family audience.
- 4.1.9 There are also a number of smaller district shopping centres located in the town. The Group believes that these shops are particularly useful for families with young children. The convenient location of the district shopping centres close to local housing estates and easy accessibility ensures that young families can access essential goods without having to travel to the town centre. As such, the group believes that the district centre should be marketed as assets of the local community.
- 4.2 **Recommendation 1b) We RECOMMEND that business marketing should promote Redditch's strategic and rural location, being vibrant and modern using a strap line such as "an urban lifestyle in a rural setting".**
- 4.2.1 The Group believes that, to support the economic development of the town, businesses should be another key target audience when promoting Redditch. The needs and interests of businesses differ from the aspects of the Borough that appeal to families. As such, a separate approach to marketing Redditch to businesses should be adopted by the Council and relevant partner organisations.
- 4.2.2 The Group has concluded that there is a unique selling point of Redditch which particularly appeals to companies and should consistently feature in any campaign targeted at businesses: the central location of the Borough. Redditch is located advantageously in the centre of the country close to the M42 and the M5, the Birmingham

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conurbation and Birmingham International Airport, and also to the countryside. Indeed, business representatives have confirmed that the central location of the town is an incentive for conducting business in Redditch. As such, Redditch can be described as a gateway to Birmingham.

- 4.2.4 There is often an assumption that the association of Redditch with the location's status as a new town creates negative impressions of the area which need to be addressed through emphasising the town's heritage. However, Telford, another new town, has demonstrated that by emphasising the modern elements of a new town that facilitate effective business practice it is possible to attract companies to an area to the benefit of the local economy. In these circumstances the Group is contending that the Council should be proud of these modern links and should actively attempt to market a brand for Redditch to businesses which associates the town with economic vibrancy and modernity.
- 4.2.5 A strap line can often help an organisation to define a brand for a product. The Group feels that the strap line they have identified, "an urban lifestyle in a rural setting", encapsulates the Redditch brand that they are proposing should be promoted to businesses.
- 4.3 **Recommendation 2) We RECOMMEND that a significant festival and events programme should be developed and marketed cohesively to raise the profile of the town in the region.**
- 4.3.1 During the course of the review the Group has consistently discussed the potential for events and festivals to raise the profile of a location and to enhance civic pride in a town. Evidence gathered indicates that this represents a legitimate way to raise the profile of a town locally, regionally and, in exceptional circumstances when delivering a high profile event, nationally.
- 4.3.2 A number of events and festivals already take place in the Borough, some of which are organised by Redditch Borough Council, such as the Morton Stanley Park Festival, and other activities which are organised independently, such as the Astwood Bank Carnival. The Group agrees that there is further potential to develop a much enhanced events programme in the town which would appeal to a family friendly audience. (These suggested activities are listed in further detail in the main report).
- 4.3.3 The Group recognises that any event or festival would need to be distinctive in order to appeal to a wide audience. In this respect the activities would need to be original and appropriately marketed to

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ensure that media interest could be secured and consequently public awareness raised.

- 4.3.4 Existing events could be developed to appeal to a family friendly audience. For example, the Morton Stanley Festival takes place in the Morton Stanley Park on an annual basis. The Festival costs £15,000-20,000 to deliver and largely appeals to an audience of residents aged 24 or younger. There is the potential to expand this festival to ensure that it appeals to all generations of a family. For example, a food festival and craft fair section could be introduced to appeal to older adults. The enhanced offer at the Morton Stanley Festival could eventually help to raise the profile of the event, both in the Borough and externally, so that eventually the festival might need to move to a more high profile destination.
- 4.3.6 The Arrow Valley Park is probably the most high profile location in Redditch and it would be suitable to hold a prominent regional festival at the venue in the long-term. However, currently there are a number of infrastructure problems at the park. At present, there are no toilets, water, or electricity available outside the countryside centre and these facilities need to be brought on site when delivering events such as the annual fireworks event in November. Similarly, the town centre, particularly the road system, lacks the infrastructure required to host events and activities. These problems would need to be resolved before a significant festival or event could take place at the park, in the town centre or on the Redditch road system.
- 4.3.7 Investment would be required from the Council and the local authority's partner organisations to help fund many of the events that have been identified by the Group for delivery in Redditch. In the current economic climate it would be difficult for the Council to commit to this level of investment. However, in the long-term it will be important for the Council to address any infrastructure problems at local attractions if the appeal of those attractions is to remain competitive in the leisure tourism market. The Group recommends that in principle an enhanced festival and events programme in the Borough should be approved with an aspiration to achieve the recommended action in due course.
- 4.4 **Recommendation 3: We RECOMMEND that promotional material should be developed in partnerships and through Redditch Matters.**
- 4.4.1 Currently Redditch Borough Council utilises the Council's website and magazine, *Redditch Matters*, to inform residents about Council services and local developments. However, the Group believes that the publication could be further developed to market Redditch, particularly the events taking place in the Borough.

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- 4.4.2 The Group is keen to promote the many larger community events that take place across the Borough throughout the year and ideally would prefer for a separate calendar to be produced to promote the events taking place in Redditch. However, the Group recognises that significant expenditure would be required to produce and publish any such calendar.
- 4.4.3 An alternative option, therefore, would be to display a calendar of events in an edition of *Redditch Matters*, either for the year or for the period of time for which that edition of the magazine applied. The potential impact of this calendar could be significant. The distribution of the publication to all households in Redditch would ensure that the majority of residents could be informed about the events that would be taking place in the area and this exposure could help to increase the number of residents participating in particular events and visiting the attractions where those activities take place during the year.
- 4.4.4 The Group recognises that the many tourist attractions based within the town would not separately attract leisure tourists to visit the town for the day. In these circumstances, the Group believes that the most effective way to promote Redditch attractions would be through producing a promotional leaflet which focuses on marketing the places of interest based within the town in the form of a tourist trail.
- 4.4.5 A promotional leaflet is not currently produced by the Council or any local partner organisations. An A2 size leaflet, folding into 16 separate sections, could feature a map of the area which would be designed to highlight potential visitor attractions. Particular sections of the leaflet could also focus on specific areas of interest, such as restaurants and cafes based in the town, and a calendar of events could be incorporated into the publication. The Group is suggesting that this promotional leaflet should be published by the Council in order to market local attractions effectively.
- 4.5 **Recommendation 4: We RECOMMEND that the Palace Theatre, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre and a public arts programme should be developed with increased management resource to provide increased audiences, more events and significant installations.**
- 4.5.1 Museums, Theatres and the visual arts are all community attractions which appeal to families. In Redditch, the Palace Theatre, Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre are three prominent local attractions which have the potential to attract leisure

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tourists. The Group believes, however, that the appeal of these attractions as tourist destinations could be enhanced.

- 4.5.2 The Palace Theatre does not currently attract large audiences nor do the performances which take place at the theatre secure a significant level of secondary spend, in the form of bar sales, which would enhance the financial position of the venue. There is also no manager of the Palace Theatre at present and the Group believes that a manager is required to improve the appeal of the venue. A manager could ensure that a more commercial approach was adopted to: organising the Palace Theatre's programme, marketing the acts scheduled to perform at the theatre, and managing the bar.
- 4.5.3 Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre similarly do not currently have a manager. Unfortunately, during the course of the review the Group discovered that the appeal of the museum was constrained by negative preconceptions about the town's industrial heritage and few of the expert witnesses had or intended to visit the museum. The Group are contending that a commercial approach to managing both the museum and Visitor Centre would ensure that both venues' collections could be more effectively marketed as attractions to potential leisure tourist visitors. Due to the close proximity of these two attractions the Group believes that a manager could be appointed to assume responsibility for both the museum and the Visitor Centre.
- 4.5.4 There are numerous examples of the visual arts in Redditch and public artwork was cited as a source of civic pride by many of the community representatives consulted during the review. The Group believes that more visual art work could be displayed in the Borough. In particular, sculptures produced by local artists could be installed on many of the town's roundabouts, though there is also the potential to display the artwork in other prominent venues such as the Abbey Stadium. Sculptures have successfully been installed on roundabouts located in other parts of the country, such as Telford, indicating that it is possible to meet this objective. The installation of artwork on the roundabouts in Redditch would improve the visual appearance of the roads and would also provide distinctive features that would help visitors to negotiate the Redditch road system.
- 4.6 **Recommendation 5: We RECOMMEND that the Redditch Town Centre Partnership should work to create a more rounded shopping experience in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and Church Green, with event based programmes to refresh the offer and a cohesive marketing strategy incorporating recognisable branding, key qualities and identifiers.**

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- 4.6.1 The Group recognises that the Redditch Town Centre Partnership has already started to address some of the problems with the town centre identified as weaknesses during the course of the review. However the Group believes that there are a number of opportunities that could be delivered relatively quickly. In particular, street entertainment, which could be organised relatively easily to appeal to family audiences, could take place more regularly in the town centre.
- 4.6.3 The space available in Redditch town centre, on Alcester Street and in the Church Green area, is relatively large and there is the potential for street entertainment and activities to take place safely in this area. This programme of street entertainment would require the investment of a certain amount of resources by the partnership, particularly at the launch of the programme. However, the Group believes that the street entertainment would help to encourage an increase in footfall in the town centre, which should lead to a positive impact on custom both in the market and in shopping units located along Alcester Street as well as having a positive impact on custom in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre. In the long-term, as momentum with the street entertainment develops, it might be possible to attract sponsorship to help fund the continuing delivery of the programme.
- 4.6.4 Additional work would be required to address the negative perceptions that residents have about the town centre. In particular, the Group believes that the Redditch Town Centre Partnership should develop a positive, identifiable brand for the town centre. This brand should emphasise the fact that Redditch town centre is clean, safe, vibrant and friendly. These are all constructive, family friendly images which, if used to promote the town, would address community concerns.
- 4.6.5 There are particular features which could also be promoted to encourage more positive perceptions of the town centre. In particular, the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and the Redditch branch of NEW College are both symbols which can be utilised as identifiers of a vibrant town centre. In the long-term the market, based in a prominent central position, could also be used to promote the town centre. In addition, the close proximity of the town centre to the countryside and to local greenery could be promoted as this would help to identify the town with the aspiration to promote Redditch as providing an urban lifestyle in a rural setting.
- 4.6.6 The Group believes that the town centre brand and the identifiers detailed in this report should be consistently promoted as part of a co-ordinated marketing strategy. To ensure consistency in the way that the town centre was marketed, this brand would need to be adopted whenever the town centre was the subject of a promotional campaign co-ordinated by the Redditch Town Centre Partnership, Redditch

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Borough Council or any other local partner organisations. Through this unity in approach it is anticipated that perceptions of the town centre would gradually become much more positive to the benefit of the local economy.

4.7 Recommendation 6: We RECOMMEND that Redditch market should be developed to provide again a substantial marketing strategy for the town centre and develop opportunities for new entrepreneurs.

4.7.1 Unfortunately, the market in the town centre was consistently identified as a weakness due to the decreasing size and limited range of products available. It is anticipated that the Redditch Town Centre Partnership's plans to assess the appropriate location of the market could help to improve custom. However, negative perceptions of the market are concerning because this may deter customers not just from the market but from shopping units situated in the town centre.

4.7.2 The Group believes that there is potential to develop further the town centre's market. The space available in the centre of the town is significant and could be utilised more creatively to attract custom to the market, for example through the delivery of street entertainment. The Group is contending that to exploit the market space and to enhance the commercial viability of the market a specific strategy focussing on developing and promoting the market should be devised by Redditch Borough Council and the Redditch Town Centre Partnership. This would ensure that all potential opportunities to improve the market could be assessed and a co-ordinated approach could be adopted to managing the market in the long-term.

4.7.3 There is an opportunity in the short-term to work with the market to develop opportunities for young entrepreneurs. Managing a market stall might be a young entrepreneur's first opportunity to operate a business and learn how to manage their finances. The Economic Development Unit could work with the Council's market team to develop a programme that would provide this assistance to young entrepreneurs, although established local business representatives may also be willing to mentor young people in this position.

4.7.4 There is also the option to work with the National Market Traders Federation to address current problems with the market. The Group has been advised that the Federation has provided support to markets in other parts of the country to help address similar problems. The Redditch Town Centre Partnership and the Council's market team, in consultation with market traders, could utilise this opportunity to identify reasonable actions that could be taken to improve the market in Redditch.

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- 4.8 **Recommendation 7: We RECOMMEND that the Council should ensure that business promotion receives appropriate investment and provide an information resource fit for purpose.**
- 4.8.1 The Group recognises that the Economic Development Unit is currently working effectively to promote Redditch businesses and the facilities available in Redditch to businesses. The structure of the Unit is due to change in 2011, because a new Economic Development Team representing Redditch Borough Council, Bromsgrove District Council and Wyre Forest District Council will be introduced. As the current capacity within the Council's Economic Development Team is equivalent to 2.68 full-time members of staff, this joint team could have greater capacity to promote and address the business interests of Redditch.
- 4.8.2 However, there is the risk that the constructive proposals to promote business tourism and Redditch based businesses that are contained within this report could be overlooked following the introduction of this new team due to the complexities involved in supporting three separate local authority areas. The Group, therefore, believes that thier proposals must be effectively communicated to this new team and implemented accordingly.
- 4.8.3 In addition to relevant proposals detailed in relation to recommendations 1b, 6, 8, 9 and 13 the Group contends that there is one opportunity to enhance business competitiveness and the local economy which could be further explored by the Council directly: developing twinning links with an emerging economy. In particular, The Group believes that the town should aspire to develop twinning links with towns located in both India and China. The economies of both countries are rapidly developing and are likely to assume greater prominence in the world economy as the 21st century progresses. As a prominent manufacturer and exporting town in the West Midlands Redditch businesses have already developed a basis for working effectively with business contacts based outside the town. By establishing links with India and China Redditch could further develop this exporting base to the benefit of the local economy.
- 4.9 **Recommendation 8: We RECOMMEND that the new North Worcestershire Economic Development Service and Strategy should recognise the importance of tourism to the local economy and ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the promotion of tourism in the area.**
- 4.9.1 At present there are no Officers directly employed by Redditch Borough Council to support tourism within the Borough, though the

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Council's Communications and Economic Development Teams help to organise and deliver promotional activities on behalf of the local authority.

- 4.9.2 The Group believes that the introduction of a shared Economic Development Team will create opportunities to enhance the contribution of local government to promoting leisure and business tourism in the area. In particular, Officers currently employed by Wyre Forest District Council have already developed expertise in relation to tourism and destination marketing. To ensure that all Councils make best use of the shared service the Group believes that this expertise should be shared and applied to promote leisure and business tourism opportunities across the whole of north Worcestershire to the benefit of the local economy.
- 4.9.3 As part of the new shared services arrangements the Group recognises that it is likely that a joint Economic Development Strategy will need to be developed at an early stage in order to shape the activities of the team. The Group feels that a commitment should be made to incorporating specific tourism related objectives into this strategy.
- 4.10 **Recommendation 9: We RECOMMEND that the need for the promotion of Redditch hotels as a business resource should be recognised.**
- 4.10.1 The Group believes that the location of Redditch in the centre of the country ensures that use of the hotel facilities based in the town should be an attractive offer particularly for business tourists. There is the potential for business tourists to stay in hotel accommodation in Redditch before travelling to Birmingham, the NEC or Birmingham International Airport on business. The rail links between Redditch and Birmingham ensure that business tourists can travel relatively easily to the city without having to enter the busy road traffic.
- 4.10.2 The conference facilities and Wi-Fi access available at many of the hotels is similarly an asset which suggests that Redditch hotels should be attractive venues for business tourists. Small conferences have been held successfully in Redditch hotels in recent years, including conferences hosted by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce. The potential for business tourists to make a positive contribution to the local economy whilst attending these conferences should not be underestimated.
- 4.10.3 To an extent Redditch hotels are already promoted on company websites and the benefits of being located in Redditch are often recognised by these companies. However, the Group believes that the

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Council and relevant partner organisations should help to promote the hotels to potential business tourists because, if successful, this could have a positive impact on the local economy.

4.11 Recommendation 10: We RECOMMEND that Consideration should be given to devising a Visitor Ambassador Scheme.

4.11.1 The Group learned about the potential value of a Visitor Ambassador Scheme by assessing practices that had been introduced by Telford and Wrekin Council. A Visitor Ambassador Scheme for Redditch could help to promote local attractions and businesses to residents, leisure tourists and business contacts.

4.11.2 The Group is proposing that there should be a number of different Ambassadors for Redditch. Firstly, local residents could be invited to act as Ambassadors for their local area and to communicate the attractions of the town to friends and family. Secondly, local taxi drivers could be invited to act as Ambassadors and to provide information about forthcoming events and activities to both residents and visitors. Thirdly, local Borough Councillors and Council Officers could be invited to act as Redditch Ambassadors when performing official duties or attending meetings and conferences. Finally, the Mayor of Redditch and / or the Chief Executive of the Council could be invited to act as lead Ambassadors for the Borough on specific high profile occasions, such as town centre parades.

4.11.3 The recruitment of residents and taxi drivers as Ambassadors could be a relatively simple process, though would require some form of central co-ordination. As the publication is delivered to every household in the Borough the scheme could be launched in *Redditch Matters* and residents could be invited to express interest in becoming local Ambassadors. The scheme could also be promoted during the delivery of road show events and PACT meetings, when Council representatives have direct contact with residents. Recruitment of taxi drivers would require the Council to directly approach local taxi companies to explain the scheme, discuss recruitment arrangements and address training requirements.

4.12 Recommendation 11: We RECOMMEND the Council should endorse the Redditch Advertiser's proposal to introduce a Redditch Community Awards programme and should work with the newspaper and other partners to deliver the scheme.

4.12.1 There is not currently an awards scheme recognising the diverse achievements of the local community in the Borough. However, evidence gathered during the review demonstrated that a Community

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Awards programme can encourage civic pride and would be a family friendly event that could appeal to all generations in a family.

4.12.2 The Group does not intend to be prescriptive about the frequency of an awards programme or the exact categories that could be introduced in a Redditch Community Awards Scheme. These would need to be identified by the event organisers. However, this would represent an opportunity to recognise the many diverse achievements of Redditch citizens and consideration should be given to recognising achievements in sports, education, the arts, business, and the voluntary sector.

4.12.3 To celebrate the achievements of Redditch citizens a Redditch Community Awards presentation could take place during the course of a prominent community event, such as the Morton Stanley Festival. This would help to raise the profile of award recipients and contribute to civic pride. Furthermore, the example of the award recipients might also contribute to raising the aspirations of Redditch residents.

4.12.4 The Group believes that there would be significant support for a Redditch Community Awards Scheme. Indeed, the Redditch Advertiser, one of the local papers in Redditch, recently suggested that an awards event could take place in the Borough. Under these circumstances, the Group is suggesting that the Council should work with local partner organisations to organise and deliver a Redditch Community Awards event.

4.13 **Recommendation 12: We RECOMMEND that the Council ensure that deficiencies in road signage are addressed: location naming, systemic effectiveness and physical cleanliness.**

4.13.1 During the course of interviews with expert witnesses negative perceptions of the town's road system amongst individuals and businesses was consistently raised as a problem. The majority of witnesses suggested that many of the negative perceptions and experiences of negotiating the road system resulted from deficiencies with the signage displayed in the town.

4.13.2 In particular, it was suggested that the signs directing visitors to the industrial estates were not clear. Furthermore, businesses reported that many of the signs were regularly dirty, making it difficult to distinguish directions. Under these circumstances companies were experiencing disruptions to business as both deliveries and meetings could be delayed. To minimise the potential impact on businesses and the local economy the Group are suggesting that improvements should be made to the signs directing people to the industrial estates.

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- 4.13.3 The Group contends that improvements should also be made to the signage indicating the location of the Palace Theatre. Unfortunately, the signs advertising the location of the theatre on the main arterial roads and highways were not considered to be prominent or particularly appealing by a number of the expert witnesses consulted during the review. The Group believes that more prominent signage would help to: enhance recognition of the attraction; enable external visitors to locate the Theatre; and encourage local residents to consider visiting the venue more frequently. The Group therefore believes that Worcestershire County Council's Highways department should be urged to improve the signage directing visitors to the Palace Theatre.
- 4.13.4 Similarly, the Group have specific concerns about the signage displayed at the town's bus station. Unfortunately, the signage that is currently displayed in the Bus Station was considered to be confusing by external witnesses visiting the town for the first time, as there was a lack of clear directions available to enable customers to determine where their bus stand was located. The Group is urging the Council to work with relevant partner organisations to improve the clarity of the signage in the Bus Station.
- 4.13.5 Concerns were also expressed during the review about the information shelters that are located on the main arterial roads in Redditch, which provide information about the town to visitors. The Group believes that these information shelters should be retained, as they are a useful reference point for leisure tourists visiting the town. However, the value of the information shelters is dependent upon ensuring that the information provided is up to date and easy to read. The Group therefore urges the Council to ensure that the details displayed on the information signs is updated and regularly cleaned.
- 4.14 **Recommendation 13: We RECOMMEND that the Council should actively seek to establish promotion partnerships and ensure that commercial interests have a full and effective voice.**
- 4.14.1 It is likely that the promotional partnerships that the Council chooses to work with or to operate in order to promote local attractions will change in the long-term as the needs of the local community changes. In the first place the Group considers that it would be useful to establish a partnership that represents the whole Borough.
- 4.14.2 There are a number of existing partnerships which already work in support of the town's interests, particularly the Redditch Partnership, the town's Local Strategic Partnership, the AiR Partnership (Arts in Redditch) and the Redditch Town Centre Partnership. However, the Group recognises that whilst marketing certain aspects of Redditch

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may be important to these bodies they have been established to address specific issues. Under these circumstances the Group agrees that allocating responsibility for promoting Redditch to these partnerships would be inappropriate and distract partners from their primary focus.

- 4.14.3 A bespoke Redditch marketing partnership could more actively focus on promoting Redditch attractions and businesses. The Group agrees that businesses based in the Borough, representatives of local attractions and community representatives could be recruited onto this body to ensure that both commercial interests and local aspirations were addressed by the partnership. In the long-term this partnership could consult with other promotional bodies and the Chamber of Commerce to ensure that the full interests of Redditch stakeholders is recognised. Ultimately, to ensure that this partnership operated effectively it would need to be businesslike and involve no outlay.
- 4.14.4 A number of expert witnesses during the course of the review suggested that promotional partnerships worked most effectively when the level of Council involvement was restricted and the number of councillor representatives on the partnership was limited. Active participation by businesses in organising and delivering this type of partnership would ensure that companies would have an effective voice capable of promoting commercial interests.
- 4.14.5 A new partnership would inevitably require some investment of resources. However, the model of the Redditch Town Centre Partnership could be replicated when establishing a promotional partnership to ensure that these resource implications are limited. Significantly the Redditch Town Centre Partnership has not been awarded a budget by the Council but has managed to develop a programme of events and propose actions which should lead to improvements to the town centre. It is likely, however, that Officer support will be required in order for the Partnership to operate effectively. This support could, as with the Redditch Town Centre Partnership, be provided by an Officer in addition to their existing responsibilities.
- 4.15 **Recommendation 14: We RECOMMEND that the Council should ensure that electronic promotion tools are constantly developed and exploited to the full. This should include introducing a virtual business centre and consistent provision of website payment facilities for all Council services.**
- 4.15.1 In the past decade information technology and the ability to communicate with other people using electronic promotional tools has constantly developed and is likely to continue to do so for the

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foreseeable future. Many of these tools are now utilised by organisations to promote a corporate brand. At a strategic level Redditch Borough Council needs to ensure that, like other organisations, the local authority's information technology continues to be updated, in order to utilise the opportunities presented by these new forms of technology to assist businesses and residents and to improve the efficiency of service delivery.

- 4.15.2 The Group has identified a number of opportunities that could be addressed by the Council more immediately. Firstly, the Group is suggesting that a virtual business centre should be introduced, to be hosted by Redditch Borough Council. This virtual business centre would reflect the valuable work of the Economic Development Unit. Many businesses may not have the time or resources to engage with Economic Development Officers in person, though might appreciate access to some of the guidance that could be provided by the unit online. The Group believes that as a brand a virtual business centre is likely to appeal to businesses as it communicates the type of assistance that the source can provide to businesses. It is envisaged that by using this branding the Economic Development Unit could potentially engage with a wider audience than at present to the benefit of the local economy.
- 4.15.3 Secondly, the Group is suggesting that it should be possible for customers to book and pay for all Council services online. Expert witnesses have confirmed that online booking arrangements offer convenience for leisure tourists. Currently, however, it is only possible to make online booking and payment arrangements for some Council services. Furthermore, whilst it is possible to pay to attend a particular venue using a credit card at some venues this facility is not always available for every service or function.
- 4.15.4 The introduction of online booking for services where the arrangement is not currently available should be relatively easy to accomplish, particularly as the Council has the technology and expertise required. The Group is, therefore, proposing that a consistent approach should be applied to all Council services.
- 4.15.5 Finally, the Group recognises that increasingly people identify further information about a location and the facilities available at a location by undertaking a search on the internet. Indeed, the potential implication of these search results to leisure tourism, business tourism and ultimately to the local economy are such that the Group urges the Council and relevant partners to make sure that every effort be made to ensure that references to Redditch businesses and attractions feature prominently in internet search results.

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5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The introduction of a promotional leaflet to advertise attractions based in Redditch, as suggested in relation to recommendation 3, would require financial investment by the Council. It is estimated that it would cost approximately £5,000 to produce and distribute 50,000 copies of a promotional leaflet. The Group recognises that this represents significant investment in the current economic climate. However, the Group believes that this investment would be justifiable because an effective leaflet could have a positive long-term impact on the local economy.
- 5.2 In relation to recommendation 4, the suggestion that sculptures should be installed on the roundabouts in Redditch may have financial implications. The Group accepts that an established artist or sculptor is likely to require a substantial fee to produce quality artwork that could be installed on the town's roundabouts. Under these circumstances the Group is suggesting that the work of young artists and art students who are studying at local colleges and universities should be utilised. Young artists will be keen to secure public exposure for their artwork. By working with young artists the Council will potentially help them to launch their careers, though without accruing significant financial costs.
- 5.3 The Group is suggesting that a Visitor Ambassador Scheme, as suggested in relation to recommendation 10, could be delivered at relatively little cost to the Council. The Ambassadorial Scheme which has been proposed is simpler than Telford and Wrekin Council's programme and should require limited expenditure. The Council might potentially accrue some costs when launching the review, particularly during the initial recruitment phase as there would need to be investment of Officer time and resources. However, the Group believes that these costs would be offset in the long-term as the number of visitors to attractions promoted by the Ambassadors increase.
- 5.4 Similarly, the Group is anticipating that a Redditch Community Awards event, as suggested with regards to recommendation 11, could be delivered at relatively little financial cost to the Council. Through working in partnership to deliver the event costs could be shared between partners and support provided in kind. Community champions would need to be identified to propose award categories and to assess submissions. However, this would not be an onerous task and it is a role that some residents might be prepared to assume in a voluntary capacity. Consideration could also be given to securing sponsorship from a local business which would help to fund delivery of the event and enable the Council to recoup any initial start-up costs.

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- 5.5 The Group has recognised that many of the actions they are suggesting would potentially require significant expenditure and this has been recognised, where relevant, throughout the Group's final report. In particular, in relation to recommendation 2 the suggestion that the infrastructure problems at the Arrow Valley Park should be addressed would potentially be a costly exercise to complete. However, the Group is suggesting that this action, like many of the more ambitious suggestions detailed in the report, should be endorsed in principle at this stage with a view to delivering the project at a later date once the funding required is available to support the project.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The installation of sculptures on the roundabouts located within Redditch would need to be undertaken in accordance with legal requirements. Consideration would need to be given to the appropriate size of the sculptures and the location of any artwork on the roundabout. In particular, it would be necessary to avoid installing features that might distract or obscure the view of drivers as this could have implications for road safety. Worcestershire County Council's Highways Department may be able to provide further guidance about specific requirements for the installation of artwork on the roundabouts.
- 6.2 Further information about the legal and planning application requirements for the installation of sculptures on the town's roundabouts has been requested from the Council's Planning department.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Group's suggestions, particularly recommendations 1a, 1b, 5 and 6 are designed to influence the Council's strategic approach to marketing Redditch and attractions based within the Borough. Relevant teams at the Council would need to focus on: promoting leisure tourist attractions based in the Borough to families; advertising the strategic location of Redditch to businesses; and utilising the branding, including the key qualities and identifiers, suggested in relation to recommendation 5 to market the town centre. Furthermore, a marketing strategy for the town's market will need to be developed if recommendation 6 is approved.

8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

The Group's recommendations support the Council's objective for Redditch to be an enterprising community. Indeed, many of the recommendations encourage actions that should have a beneficial impact on the local economy. Furthermore, the introduction of a

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Community Awards process would enable the Council to recognise the achievements of local residents and businesses and would demonstrate the degree to which the local community really is enterprising.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 The delivery of high profile events, as suggested in relation to recommendation 2, might expose the Council and relevant partner organisations to certain risks. In particular, there is the potential for financial risks to arise from delivering large, high profile events. However, the Group are not suggesting that sizeable new events should be delivered immediately. Instead, they are suggesting that at present the Council should concentrate on expanding existing events, such as the Morton Stanley Festival. This should enable the Council to develop expertise in relation to managing the risks associated with delivering large events which will help to minimise those risks in the long-term as and when the town's events programme expands.
- 9.2 Similarly, a number of events might have health and safety implications and it is likely that these would vary from case to case. Careful management of each event would need to take place in order to address these implications and to minimise the risks to the Council as well as to event participants.

10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are numerous implications for local customers arising from this report. These implications are detailed in relation to each of the recommendations.
- 10.2 An article detailing the work of the Promoting Redditch Task and Finish Group is due to appear in the March 2011 edition of *Redditch Matters*. This article will provide residents with further information about the work of the Group, their final recommendations and the potential implications for the town's profile. The report will also be made available for the consideration of the public in due course on the Overview and Scrutiny web pages of the Council's website.

11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

The Group is suggesting that the marketing of leisure tourist attractions based in the Borough should be aimed at a target audience of families from all cultures. Indeed, the Group believes that the cultural traditions and experiences of all groups resident within the Borough should be reflected in the Borough's events programme. This is based on

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recognition that Redditch has the largest proportion of minority ethnic groups in Worcestershire, representing 8 per cent of the local population by 2009. By reflecting the needs and experiences of the whole community the events programme should help to develop community cohesion and understanding between different ethnic groups.

12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

No specific value for money, procurement or asset management implications have been identified.

13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY

- 13.1 The Group's proposal, in relation to recommendation 2, that Redditch should have a significant festival and events programme, may have implications for climate change. Popular events and festivities could attract a large number of participants, including visitors from outside the Borough. Many participants might be tempted to visit the venue of an activity by car, potentially leading to an increase in carbon emissions during the course of the event.
- 13.2 To reduce the impact of these events on the level of carbon emissions in the town the Council and other event organisers should consider working with public transport representatives over the delivery of these activities. For example, bus and coach companies could be invited to introduce additional bus services during the course of the event, including services connecting the train station to the event venue. This would ensure that attendees, including both Redditch residents and external visitors, could visit the event using public transport, thereby helping to minimise the potential impact of the events programme on carbon emissions.
- 13.3 In order to host larger, high profile events within the Borough in future years the Group are suggesting that in the long-term the Council should invest in improving the infrastructure in place in the Arrow Valley Park. These improvements to the infrastructure in the park would need to be conducted in a manner that would not undermine the biodiversity of the park and lake, particularly in Stitch Meadow.

14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 The Group is suggesting, in relation to recommendation 4, that consideration should be given to employing bespoke managers for the Palace Theatre as well as Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey respectively.

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- 14.2 During the course of the review the Group were advised that the local authority's Leisure Services were in the process of being reviewed as part of the ongoing shared services programme between Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council. As part of this process it has been recognised that enhanced management arrangements would be in the commercial interests of the Palace Theatre and Forge Mill Needle Museum. It has also been acknowledged that the delivery of a continuously improving visual and performing arts programme requires the Council to invest in additional resources. The Group recognises the value of these services and the important contribution that these Officers could make to the performance of arts and cultural services in Redditch.

15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

No specific governance or performance management implications have been identified.

16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

- 16.1 A number of expert witnesses reported during the course of the review that Redditch was perceived to be unsafe, particularly in the town centre. This perception does not appear to correspond with local statistics which indicate that levels of crime and anti-social behaviour have been decreasing in the area and that Redditch is a relatively safe town in which to live. Many of the Group's recommendations, focusing upon promoting a more positive image of Redditch and of the town centre, might help to address these concerns.
- 16.2 As part of this process the Group are suggesting that more events, including street entertainment, should take place in Redditch. Consideration may need to be given to the security arrangements that would be required for each activity. In this context, the Council may need to work closely with relevant partner organisations, such as the West Mercia Police Force and the Redditch Community Safety Partnership, to ensure that these security arrangements are appropriate.

17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct health inequalities implications. However, the Group did discuss the type of food that might be available at local events taking place in the Borough. Members were keen to ensure that a variety of food options, particularly healthy eating options, were available during these events. Healthy eating and good quality food

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have been identified as having significant appeal to families, who would form the target audience for local events. The provision of healthy food options during local festivities would therefore help to appeal to families when marketing local attractions to leisure tourists.

18. LESSONS LEARNT

Members have considered a large amount of evidence and interviewed a considerable number of expert witnesses during the course of this four month review. This included gathering evidence during the final month prior to the deadline for presentation of the Group's report for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Unfortunately, as a consequence the time available in which to prepare the Group's final report and Executive Summary was very limited. In order to avoid these difficulties in future years it is suggested that evidence gathering during Task and Finish exercises should be completed no later than a month prior to presenting a Group's recommendations.

19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 19.1 Community Engagement formed a significant part of the review. In particular, it was considered important to obtain an understanding of public perceptions of Redditch as well as residents' support for any attempts by the Council and partner organisations to promote the Borough.
- 19.2 The local community was engaged in the review through a variety of methods. This included: consultation with two local residents represented on the Redditch Budget Jury; consideration of feedback to a questionnaire, *What you like and dislike about living in Redditch*, provided by local students who attended the Local Democracy Day event at the Town Hall in October 2010; receipt of comments from the Chair of the former Redditch Borough Tenants Panel; comments submitted by 20 mature students during a focus group meeting, which took place at NEW College; and feedback from five local Borough Councillors.
- 19.3 Significantly, the majority of community representatives who were consulted during the course of the review reported that they were proud of Redditch and were keen to address negative perceptions of the town. As part of this process there was support for further action being taken to promote Redditch, including by Redditch Borough Council.

20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

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Portfolio Holder	No.
Chief Executive	Yes, at a meeting of CMT.
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	Yes, at a meeting of CMT.
Deputy Chief Executive/Executive Director – Leisure, Environment and Community Services	Yes, at a meeting of CMT.
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	Yes, at a meeting of CMT.
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	Yes, the Director was interviewed as part of the review process and considered the report at a meeting of CMT.
Head of Service	Yes, at a meeting of CMT.
Head of Resources	Yes, at a meeting of CMT.
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes, at a meeting of CMT.
Corporate Procurement Team	No.

21. WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards.

22. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Promoting Redditch Task and Finish Group – Final Report.

Notes from meetings of the Promoting Redditch Task and Finish Group.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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