

**AWC Members Workshop
2nd April 2008, Holyrood Lacemill**

**Review of Opportunity Events
Summary of Findings**

Worksheets

Aims

Stimulate debate & discussion about local issues, and solutions to local problems.

Increase public engagement in Community Development.

Administration of a scheme aimed at funding local improvements

Priority 1 Highest, 3 lowest
1
2
3

Priority 1 and 2 were very close, only one vote between them.

Procedure and Content

3 events – one in each town – Ilminster, Crewkerne, Chard.

Events open to all.

Voting limited to residents from area event is being held in.

Displays shown by applicants.

Presentations given by applicants.

5 votes per person.

1 vote per project.

Soapbox session for the public to raise issues of concern.

Wednesday evenings at 7.00pm.

	Keep	Remove	Improve
	7	0	3
	6	1	3
	9	1	1
	10	0	1
	9	0	1
	7	0	3
	7	1	1
	4	6	1
	6	0	3

Composition and Role of Committee.

Forum comprises District, County and Town Councillors.

Chaired by the Mayor of town the event is being held in.

All Forum members assist in the Q&A sessions at the soapbox.

Area West Committee Members of the Forum form an Area West Sub-Committee.

The Sub-Committee is delegated to approve the grants.

Other Area West Committee Members are welcome to attend but have no specific role.

Keep	Remove	Improve
8	0	2
8	2	0
4	4	0
9	1	1
9	0	1
8	2	0

Allocation of Funds.

Divide the total amount allocated to all Opportunity Events in proportion to the %ge of population in each if the 3 areas.

Divide the total amount allocated to all Opportunity Events in proportion to the no of wards in each if the 3 areas.

Equal allocation across the 3 towns.

Keep	Remove	Improve
5	1	1
1	2	2
3	2	2

10 members attended, on some issues more than one vote per Member was cast, hence total no of votes cast greater than 10.

Workshop Exercise.

1) Do you think the venues and locations are suitable?

- *Venues too small.*
- *Not enough space to move around.*
- *Events held in larger towns, disadvantages villages.*

Size of venue.

- * People were turned away.
- * Largest venues available were used.
- * Existing venues could work if event was split into 2 sessions – afternoon and evening.
- * Village venues would be too small.
- * Hold a combined event at Westlands.

Type of venue

- * Community, not commercial premises should be used.
- * Schools may be better is used during school holidays – no conflicting use.

Layout of venue.

- * Displays could be located in a different area to rest of event.
- * Are the displays needed?

Access to venue.

- * Transport to venues is not good in the evening.
- * People from rural areas/villages cannot get to evening events.
- * Accessibility of events for people with children/disabled/shift workers etc.

2) Do you think there are better ways of getting people to show their support for projects?

- *Larger groups can influence voting.*
- *Only those attending event can vote.*

Voting procedure.

- * Use ballot card, 5 votes to 5 different schemes, anything else is spoiled paper and not counted.
- * Use a ballot box to ensure secret voting.
- * Only elected Area West Members should vote on projects after listening to the procedures, not the public.
- * Do not use internet/postal voting.
- * People came to vote for one project but had the opportunity to use their extra votes to support other projects.
- * How many people attended who had not decided on what they were going to vote for?
- * People should have to hear the presentations before voting.

Nature of event.

- * Immediacy of the event is very important.
- * Listening to all the presentations gives attendees the chance to hear what is going on in the community.
- * Events got the community talking.
- * Might be imperfect but it was democracy in action.

3) Do you think the events run for the right length of time?

- *Too long sitting through all the presentations.*
 - *Too short to allow people time to see the displays.*
 - *Should be run over two days, allowing people to 'drop in'.*
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- * Length of time was just right.
 - * Running two sessions would be difficult for presenters.
 - * The number of presentations dictated the time, if there were less presentations the event would be shorter.

4) Is £5000 a good maximum level for the grant?

- *Give smaller grants to more organisations.*
 - *Groups should have to provide some of their own/matched funding.*
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- * £5000 is a good maximum.
 - * There should be a minimum of £500.
 - * Groups should provide some of their own funding.
 - * Level is linked to members Frontline Grant – Frontline Grant provides small grants, Opportunity Events provide medium grants, AWC Community Grants provide large grants. If the Frontline Grant pot is reduced then the Opportunity Event grant level should be reduced to ensure that there are small grants available.

5) Should we ask groups for more information on themselves and their projects?

- *Financial details of groups and projects.*
 - *Information on funding already receive.*
 - *Information on deliverability of projects.*
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- * Checks need to be made and information made available to the public, if possible.
 - * Info should be made available, but only to Members.
 - * Strengthen project vetting process by Members.
 - * Ward members should have an influence on what projects are allowed to go through to the Opportunity Events.
 - * Develop criteria to assist officers in shortlisting projects.
 - * Need to ensure new start ups are able to come through.

6) Events are not just a funding exercise, they can and should enhance services across the District. Should proposals to enhance services be looking at; SSDC services only, SSDC and SCC services or all local services?

- * Should be all local services, but SCC Members need to be present.
- * It would be good if SCC Members would come on board and bring their money with them.
- * The soapbox event should be brought back to encourage comment on service delivery.
- * Town meetings and Area West Committee are the forums for discussion of service enhancement.