

BRIEFING NOTE

To: Neighbourhood Scrutiny and Performance Panel

Date: Thursday 17 August 2006

Re: Situation Analysis and Way Forward for Walsall Illuminations

1. Background

Following the stakeholder visioning workshop held on 7 June, SQW Ltd. has presented its final report on the future development of Walsall Illuminations, incorporating the views of delegates at the workshop.

This completes the work of the consultants engaged to undertake a situation analysis and way forward for Walsall Illuminations. Their work is documented in the following three reports:

- Vision XS Ltd.: Walsall Illuminations Experience Analysis Report (already circulated). This report includes the findings of research undertaken by Vision XS into the visitor experience at Walsall Illuminations and proposals for the future development of the event incorporating the following key elements: content and design of the show, experience quality, learning accessibility, space planning, visitor flow, secondary spend capacity, capital investment and amenity planning.
- SQW Ltd. Interim Report: A Situational Analysis of the Walsall Illuminations (copy attached with this briefing note). This report considers the wider strategic context for the study and, in particular, the region's strategic direction for tourism and the development of the visitor economy, presents an overview of the qualitative views taken from stakeholder consultations, assesses the current economic impact of the event and identifies a number of key strategic issues including setting of objectives, product development, resourcing, staffing and structures, strategic focus and location for further discussion at the subsequent stakeholder visioning workshop.
- SQW Ltd. Final Report: Strategic Recommendations on the Walsall Illuminations (copy attached with this briefing note). This report outlines a strategic direction, vision and objectives for Walsall Illuminations and presents recommendations for developing the event covering a review of Vision XS's proposals, funding, increasing the economic impact, phasing, management and branding/name.

2. Proposed Vision and Core Objectives

SQW Ltd. has suggested that an appropriate Vision for Walsall Illuminations would be as follows:

By 2012, Walsall Illuminations will be a modern, interactive visitor attraction that appeals to adults and children alike and draws in large numbers of visitors from Walsall and across the Midlands. The event will continue to celebrate the culture and heritage of Walsall, but will also showcase the innovative and creative side of the town.

The core objectives, for the next three to five years, would be:

- To secure the investment required to develop the event into a modern visitor experience.

- To develop the Illuminations into an event that reflects not only the history and culture of Walsall, but also presents a dynamic and progressive image of the town.
- For Walsall Illuminations to enhance its status as one of the Black Country's most popular visitor attractions, by growing local and regional visitor numbers year-on-year.
- To double the economic impact of the Walsall Illuminations by making much stronger links between the Arboretum and the town and its traders and attracting increasing numbers of visitors from outside the town.

3. The Next Stage

It is envisaged that a report will go to the meeting of Cabinet on 18 October 2006 to make recommendations for the future development of Walsall Illuminations. Members of the Neighbourhood Scrutiny and Performance Panel are, therefore, requested to consider the above reports and make their initial recommendations for inclusion in the report to Cabinet on the following issues:

- Strategic direction (SQW Final Report)
- Proposed vision and core objectives (SQW Final Report)
- Development of the event content (Vision XS Report and SQW Final Report)
- Funding the event (Vision XS Report and SQW Final Report)
- Increasing the economic impact (SQW Interim and Final Reports)
- Phasing of product improvements and investment (Vision XS Report and SQW Final Report)
- Management (SQW Final Report)
- Branding/Name (Vision XS Report and SQW Final Report)

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24th July 2006