

# REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE

## Meetings Held on 15th and 28th April, 2005

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### Membership:

Councillors: T.M. James (Chairman), Mrs. P.A. Andrews (Vice-Chairman), B.F. Ashton, W.L.S. Bowen, A.C.R. Chappell, J.H.R. Goodwin, Mrs M.D. Lloyd-Hayes, J. Stone, J.P. Thomas, W.J.S. Thomas.

### DEVELOPING THE CHILDREN'S AGENDA IN HEREFORDSHIRE – CHANGE FOR CHILDREN

1. The Committee currently has responsibility for the scrutiny of the Executive's implementation of arrangements for Children's Services in response to the Children Act 2004. It has received an update on progress in implementing the nationally required changes within the County.

### ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

2. The Committee has noted the Annual Efficiency Statement, setting out the approach to making efficiency savings as required by the Audit Commission.
3. It has been advised how important it is for the Council both to secure efficiency gains and then to ensure that the resources released are directed to the Council's agreed priorities. Whilst efficiencies have been made since the Council's formation, the tendency has been for resources released as a result to be used simply to augment expenditure on the service area which generated the saving, rather than being reallocated to the Council's overall priorities. The Committee has been assured that it is expected that the new Corporate Planning arrangements will help strengthen the process for allocating resources released from efficiency gains and re-directing them to the Council's agreed priorities, although it has been acknowledged that further work on the process is needed.

### RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT YEAR END 2004/2005

4. The Committee has noted the Risk Management Report, which summarises the key risks faced by the Council.

### STRATEGIC AUDIT PLAN 2005/06 –2008/09

5. The Committee has noted the process used to develop the Strategic Audit Plan for 2005/06 and the Annual Audit Plan 2005/06.

### PERFORMANCE MONITORING – CORPORATE HEALTH

6. In noting the report on corporate performance in relation to Best Value Indicators the Committee has welcomed the success in increasing the take-up of benefits by those entitled to them. As well as being important that individuals receive the benefits to which they were entitled, establishing the correct level of need in the County is important for the County as a whole in securing appropriate recognition in the Government's financial settlement.

7. Further to the Committee's report to Council in January the Committee has been informed that the new benefits processing system is in place and that, as expected, there have been some teething problems. It has been advised that these are being overcome and the new system will enable a more effective service to be delivered.

#### **REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING**

8. The Committee has noted the revenue and capital budget monitoring reports.

#### **WORK PROGRAMMES**

9. The Committee has considered its Work Programme and the Work Programmes of the other Scrutiny Committees. A scrutiny event is to be arranged in June for Scrutiny Committee Members to enable Members to shape the work programmes taking account amongst other things of the priorities in the Council's Annual Operating Plan. The need to build in arrangements for considering items of concern raised at Local Area Forums has also been recognised.

#### **THE ANNUAL OPERATING PLAN 2005-2006**

10. The Committee has considered the Authority's Annual Operating Plan for 2005-2006, which, as referred to in the Cabinet report, is designed to secure implementation of the Corporate Plan, as approved by Council in March 2005. In noting the Plan the Committee has, however, asked that Cabinet be advised of its concerns as to whether the targets in the plan could be delivered. The Committee will have regard to the Plan in determining the future scrutiny programme.

#### **REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION**

11. The Committee has noted proposed updates to the Constitution, as set out in the Cabinet report. The Committee gave particular consideration to the proposal in the report to transfer the power to determine planning applications submitted by the Council for its own schemes from the Area Planning Sub-Committees to the Planning Committee and the implication this might have for Local Members. The Committee considered it important that the Constitution should explicitly provide for a right for Local Members to speak on such applications in future

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**The Strategic Monitoring Committee recommends that the right of the Local Member to speak at the Planning Committee on planning applications submitted by the Council for its own schemes should be explicitly set out in the Constitution.**

#### **ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE INDIVIDUAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

12. The work of the Committees is analysed below as far as practicable under the following five roles for overview and scrutiny: holding the executive to account, best value reviews, policy development and review, external scrutiny, and improvement (performance management and review), the first four of which are identified as key roles in report on "The Development of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister". Issues considered by the Strategic Monitoring Committee not all of which are dealt with above because they arise from its role in fulfilling its remit to scrutinise the Policy and Finance Programme area, rather than being of Council-wide significance, are listed for completeness.

13. The Education Scrutiny Committee met on 14th March, 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	Special Educational Needs
Policy Development and Review	Teachers Workload Agreement – Monitoring of Progress Extension of banded SEN funding from primary schools into secondary schools Support provided for gifted and talented pupils Drug Education in Schools
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Year 2004 results Ofsted Inspections of Schools Capital Budget Monitoring Revenue Budget Monitoring
Other	Work Programme

14. The Environment Scrutiny Committee met on 24th January, 2005, 28th February, 2005 and 30th March, 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	Implementation of Improvement Plans
Policy Development and Review	County-Wide Parking Strategy Review
External Scrutiny	Trunk Roads in Herefordshire (Highways Agency)
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Capital Budget Monitoring Revenue Budget Monitoring Performance Indicators
Other	Work Programme

15. The Health Scrutiny Committee met on 31st March, 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Changes to Nursing Respite Services for Older People with Mental Health Problems
External Scrutiny	Presentation by Primary Care Trust Patient and Public Involvement Forums
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	
Other	Work Programme Health Scrutiny Consultations

16. The Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee met on 5th April, 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	Presentation by Cabinet Member
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Review of Home Support Services for older People Review of Accommodation, Housing and Housing-Related Support needs of People Experiencing Severe and Enduring Mental Health Problems Respite Services for People with Learning Disabilities in Herefordshire
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Revenue Budget Monitoring Performance Monitoring Report on Serious Case Reviews
Other	National and Local Changes to Scrutiny of Children's Services Work Programme

17. The Social and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee met on 31st January, 2005 and 22nd March, 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Possible Pedestrianisation of Widemarsh Street, Hereford (2) Review of Support to the Voluntary Sector – Position Statement Review of the Courtyard The Courtyard Review Update External Funding Parish Council Liaison
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Performance Indicators Adult and Community Learning – Result of Reinspection
Other	Work Programme

18. The business conducted by the Strategic Monitoring Committee at its meetings on 15 and 28 April 2005 is summarised below.

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	-
Best Value Reviews	Transport Cross-Service Review
Policy Development and Review	Developing the Children's Agenda In Herefordshire – Change for Children Annual Operating Plan Review of the Constitution
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Annual Efficiency Statement Risk Management Report Year End 2004/05 Performance Monitoring Budget Monitoring 2004/2005 Capital Programme Monitoring 2004/2005 Strategic Audit Plan 2005/06 – 2008/09
Other	Work Programme

**T.M. JAMES  
CHAIRMAN  
STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Agenda Papers of the Meetings of the Strategic Monitoring Committee held on 15 and 28 April 2005.