

REPORT OF THE MEETINGS OF CABINET

**HELD ON 17TH AND 24TH MARCH
AND 14TH AND 28TH APRIL, 2005**

Cabinet Members: R.J. Phillips (Leader of the Council),
G.V. Hyde (Deputy Leader), Mrs. L.O. Barnett, P.J. Edwards,
Mrs. J.P. French, J.C. Mayson, D.W. Rule, MBE, R.V. Stockton,
D.B. Wilcox, R.M. Wilson.

This report covers the meetings listed above.

1. DECISIONS RESERVED TO COUNCIL UNDER PART 4 OF THE CONSTITUTION

- 1.1 **Herefordshire Crime, Disorder and Drug Reduction Strategy** - Cabinet had previously authorised the Leader of the Council to agree the final version of the three year Strategy which was due to be approved by Council at its meeting on 11 March, 2003. Because of the need to consult with partner bodies the Strategy was not finalised in time for that meeting and is now attached and recommended for approval.

Cabinet recommends to Council that the Herefordshire Crime, Disorder and Drug Reduction Strategy be approved.

- 1.2 **Review of the Constitution** - Cabinet has received a report on proposed changes to the Constitution as a result of changing legislation and Council requirements. It has noted that the Constitutional Review Working Group has made proposals in relation to "Local Choice Functions"; Cabinet Portfolios; Overview and Scrutiny functions, Planning Committees, Question time at Council meetings, Commons Management; the Policy Framework; Local Area Forums, the Voluntary Sector Grants Panel; Homelessness Appeals and the restructuring of the Senior Management Team. A full schedule of amendments and revised Parts 6 and 7 of the Constitution are attached at Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of this report.

Cabinet supports the retention of a Cabinet of 10 members with the following portfolios:

Corporate Strategy and Finance (Leader)
Children's Services
Community Services
Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources
Economic Development (Deputy Leader)
Environment
Highways and Transportation
Resources
Rural Regeneration and Strategy
Social Care Adults and Health.

It also supports the retention of the Strategic Monitoring Committee and five Scrutiny Committees:

Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny
Children's Services

Community Services
Environment
Health Scrutiny.

Cabinet notes the proposal to include the Youth Service in the Community Services portfolio but is concerned that this may not be possible under the Government's anticipated Green Paper, which is expected to align it with Children's Services. If this proves to be the case, approval is sought to transfer responsibility for the Youth Service to the Children's Services portfolio. It also supports the emerging Public Health agenda being included in the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee rather than in the Health Scrutiny Committee but wishes to keep this under review.

Cabinet has welcomed changes to how questions are dealt with at Council meetings. The County Secretary and Solicitor clarified that written questions would be circulated to all Members and public but that it would be down to individual Chairmen and Cabinet Members to choose whether they wished to respond orally or circulate the answer in writing at the meeting. Members would continue to be able to ask a supplementary question so long as it introduced no new material.

Cabinet recommends to Council that:

- (a) Appendices 1, 2 and 3 to the report be approved; and**
- (b) The County Secretary and Solicitor be authorised to make any necessary textual amendments, including changes arising from the national review of responsibility for the Youth Service**

2. NOTICES OF MOTION

- 2.1 At the Council meeting held on 12th November, 2004, Councillors Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes and W.L.S. Bowen gave notice of the following motion:

"That HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL, as an important consumer and opinion leader, gives support to facilitate the promotion and purchase of foods with the FAIRTRADE Mark.

That HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL supports a fairer deal to marginalized producers by promoting FAIRTRADE products throughout the Council via its many establishments such as Leisure and Sports Centres, offices, Info Centres and encourages partner agencies such as Jarvis Catering to use FAIRTRADE products wherever possible.

The initiative involves a commitment to Agenda 21 and sustainable development by :

- *widely offer FAIRTRADE Marked food and drink options internally and make them available for internal meetings.*
- *promote the FAIRTRADE Mark using FAIRTRADE Foundation materials in refreshment areas.*
- *promote the FAIRTRADE initiative on internal communications and external newsletters*
- *allow staff to purchase FAIRTRADE products internally*
- *attract media coverage and popular support for the campaign*
- *allocate responsibility for progression of the FAIRTRADE initiative to a member of staff from Agenda 21 to liaise with the already existing steering group.”*

Urgency had not been moved and the motion stood referred to the Leader of the Council pending the Council's imminent approval of the Constitutional amendment which allocated responsibility for procurement to the Cabinet Member (Human Resources and Corporate Support Services).

Cabinet has noted that Hereford City has achieved Fairtrade Status and the initiative is widely supported in the market towns and villages across the County. It supports the motion and **recommends to Council that:**

- (a) **it passes a resolution supporting Fairtrade, and serves Fairtrade coffee and tea at its meetings and in offices and canteens;**
- (b) **it seeks to attract popular support for the campaign across Herefordshire to ensure that:**
 - **Fairtrade products are used by a number of local work places and community organisations; and**
 - **Fairtrade produce is readily available in local shops and served in local cafes and catering establishments.**
- (c) **the local Fairtrade Steering Group be supported; and**
- (d) **the Council’s Procurement Strategy and Code of Practice for the regulation of contracts for works, services and suppliers are revised to reflect a commitment to Fairtrade and that local Herefordshire producers and their products are used where they offer good value for money and their selection is in accordance with the Council's legal obligations.**

3. KEY DECISIONS BY INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS WHICH WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THE FORWARD PLAN

- 3.1 There were no such decisions made during the reporting period.

4. CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE (Chairman of Cabinet – Councillor R.J. Phillips)

4.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Budget 2005/06** - Cabinet has determined that the £1 million provided within the approved revenue budget for developing Older People's Services and ICT infrastructure should be allocated equally with each service area receiving £500,000. A further report is expected detailing the proposed re-allocation of resources within the current Social Care budget and the measures necessary to ensure that spending is contained within the budget approved by the Council.
- (ii) **Herefordshire Primary Care Trust - A Strategy for Success - A statement of Intent 2005/06 to 2007/08 and beyond - "Choosing Health - DoH White Paper** - Cabinet has received a report summarising the Department of Health's paper "Choosing Health" and the Herefordshire PCT's "A Strategy for Success: A Statement of Intent". Cabinet has
- approved a response to the Strategy for Success;
 - agreed to invest 50% of the salary costs involved with the post of the Director of Public Health to indicate the Council's commitment to the Government White Paper "Choosing Health". In so doing the Council seeks to be equal partners with the PCT in the work programme to be undertaken by the Director in this respect.
 - welcomed the PCT commitment to strengthen the current Section 31 arrangements and to work with the Council in agreeing LPSA2; and
 - requested Section 31 reports back on how the Council will deliver the six priorities set out in the White Paper.
- (iii) **Progress towards the Equality Standard** - The Council has statutory and moral duties in respect of diversity and equalities to reflect the needs of the County's population through both its service provision and as an employer. In particular it must meet the Local Authority Equality Standard requirements, including fulfilling the Council's statutory duties under the Race Relations Amendment Act, the Sex Discrimination Act, the Equal Pay Act and the Disability Discrimination Act. Cabinet has noted that although the Council had adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government in 2002 and has had the Equal Opportunities Policy since 1998 (reviewed in 2002) the latter was not sufficiently comprehensive to meet all the detailed requirements of the Standard. It has approved the Comprehensive Equality Policy which will replace the Equal Opportunities Policy and committed to the process of Corporate Equality Planning by means of a Corporate Equality Plan to implement the Policy, including consultation, community development and scrutiny.
- (iv) **Herefordshire Council: Review of Senior Management Organisational Structure** - Cabinet has approved new senior management arrangements and agreed that Directorates be organised in the following major blocks:-

- (i) **Children's Services** - The role of this Directorate is defined by the Children Act 2004.
- (ii) **Corporate and Customer Services** - This is a new Directorate combining the support services of Legal and Committees, ICT and Information Services, Customer Services, Service Improvement Programme and the wider policy support role within the Council.
- (iii) **Adult and Community Services** - This Directorate would fulfil the role spelt out in the Children Act for Adult Social Services and would continue to cover the Strategic Housing function as well as many of the services provided direct to the community through the current Policy and Community Directorate.
- (iv) **Environment** - There is relatively little change to this service block from that of the existing Environment Directorate apart from the transfer of responsibility for Property to the new Resources Directorate.
- (v) **Resources and Property Directorate** - This is a new Directorate designed to cover the existing financial support to the Council but bringing into this direct responsibility for the Gershon efficiency agenda and procurement and responsibility for Property Services.

The Head of Human Resources has been authorised to take immediate steps to establish and resolve any arrangements for "ring fencing" and to advertise and fill the remaining vacancies.

- (v) **Annual Efficiency Statement** - Cabinet is required to approve both the corporate and service approach towards making efficiency savings and ratify that this is both robust and achievable. A forward-looking Annual Efficiency Statement (AES) had to be made available to the Audit Commission by 15th April. The Council is required to make £3,300,000 in efficiency gains with at least half of this amount releasing cash. In fact over 80% of the efficiency gains are cash releasing. The Chief Executive's Management Team has set a higher target at £3,500,000 to reflect the Comprehensive Performance Assessment requirements.

Cabinet has approved the Council's forward looking Annual Efficiency Statement, which will concentrate on efficiency savings through:

- improved procurement by building on the Council's already strong track record by identifying opportunities for alternative service provision through strategic procurement; developing partnerships or consortia as appropriate including making the fullest possible use of West Mercia Supplies and where possible to use e-procurement channels.
- improving business process through the Service Improvement Programme including: the rationalisation of office accommodation to the Plough Lane site; the elimination of duplicate activities between the Environment and Policy and Community Directorates; the identification of resources required and the timescales for the establishment of a corporate contact centre; the creation of a project to deliver a corporate document management solution and the rolling out of the ICT back office integration project to incorporate other areas of business, specifically, e-procurement, human resources and performance management.

- (vi) **Risk Management Report year end 2004/05** - Cabinet has received a report on the key risks faced by the Council and the mitigating actions being applied to control them. It has noted that the Risk Management Strategy, approved in April 2004, is being embedded as part of the Corporate Annual Operating and Service Planning processes. The Strategy is working well and is due to be reviewed in March 2006. The Council will continue to develop its approach to Risk management. It will need to be aware of issues such as any implications on Local Government from a General Election and any internal strategic issues. Areas which have already improved include: incorporation of assessment of risks into service planning; better understanding of relativity of service risks across the Council, development of a separate register for corporate risks, more frequent review of risks by Departmental Management Teams and identification of specific actions to mitigate risks. There is still scope for improvement in terms of: consistency of approach to and assessment of risks; better understanding of corporate and cross-cutting risks and presentation of information for corporate reporting.

Although Cabinet was concerned about a number of risks identified as being "high", even after control measures had been implemented, it recognised that in some cases the residual risk would remain high. It agreed that it was more important to identify the fact that a risk existed, and to manage that risk, than to try to negate the risk entirely. Cabinet also discussed the impact of employment legislation on Health and Safety and were pleased to note that a report was due to be presented in May.

Following debate Cabinet has decided that: sufficient mitigating actions are being undertaken on the corporate and significant service risks outlined in the report to safeguard the Council's business and reputation. It has agreed that no changes will be made to the existing risk management strategy for 2005/6 but that a further annual review of the strategy will be carried out in March 2006. It has requested that quarterly risk reports be made to Cabinet Members on their areas of responsibility thereby formalising existing arrangements; and that workplans be devised to assist in this process.

- (vii) **Local Area Forums** - Cabinet has received a report on feedback from the latest round of meetings which took place during January 2005. It has endorsed a suggestion that the name of the forums be changed from Local Area Forums to Community Forums to reflect a greater emphasis on the people rather than the place. Cabinet will continue to receive reports from the Forums and the Forum Chairmen informed accordingly.

- (viii) **The Annual Operating Plan 2005-2006** - As part of the new corporate planning process approved by Cabinet in September 2004, it was agreed that the Council should have an overall Annual Operating Plan to ensure that its priorities are taken forward in the first of the three years of the Corporate Plan 2005/-8 and, to that end, to provide the basis for service plans and the in-year management of performance. The Corporate Plan 2005/08 was approved by Council on 11th March, 2005. This provides the basis for the Annual Operating Plan 2005/06.

Cabinet has now approved the Council's Annual Operating Plan which aims to ensure that the year-one priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan are taken forward and provides the basis for service plans and the in-year management of performance. Printed copies of the Corporate and Annual Operating Plans will be sent to all Members, principal partner organisations

and key managers. It is also intended to produce a leaflet for all staff, summarising the Council's priorities and the most important messages in both plans. A revised suite of performance reports, based on the Annual Operating Plan, is being developed. This will integrate reporting on service and corporate performance indicators, targets and milestones, financial performance and the management of risks. Cabinet has noted the importance of cross-Directorate working and recognised that the Plan would be a useful tool to help develop good Council-wide working practices.

4.2 Report on Items of Interest

- (i) **Budget Monitoring 2004-05** - Cabinet has received a report and noted the position with regard to revenue budget monitoring as at 28th February, 2005 for programme areas in 2004/05. Cabinet has welcomed the progress towards a break even position in Older People's Services but has expressed concern at the overspend in Children's Services and the Learning Disability Service in particular. It awaits the report of the external review and recognises the need for revised arrangements with the Primary Care Trust and robust dialogue for the financial year 2005/06. It has noted that although the majority of the Education budget is passported to schools and the Council has certain statutory obligations such as home to school transport, there is some limited opportunity to examine discreet areas of spend.

The projected 2004/05 outturn for the programme areas, together with financing transactions, is an underspending of £2,896,000. The estimated value of general reserves as at 28th February, 2005 total £5 million incorporating the prudent reserve of £3 million which has anticipated some limited use of reserves for overspendings at the year-end. The £1.25 million projected saving from Financing Transactions is included in this total. The expected underspending on Waste Management is in addition to the overall total.

- (ii) **Capital Programme Monitoring 2004/05 to 31st January, 2005** - Cabinet has received a report and noted the current position of the Capital Programme forecast for 2004/05 including Prudential Borrowing and the current position regarding Prudential Indicators. Capital Programme actual spend to date is lower than expected and the position is being closely monitored to ensure no conditional funding is lost. Prudential Indicators are being monitored as required by the Prudential Code with no areas of concern to report.
- (iii) **Strategic Monitoring Committee** - Cabinet has received and noted the report of the Strategic Monitoring Committee for its meeting of 15th April, 2005. The report has been updated to include the meeting of 28th April which is the subject of separate report to Council.

**5. AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
(Cabinet Member - Councillor D.B. Wilcox)**

5.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) There were no decisions by Cabinet relating to this programme area during the reporting period.

5.2 Report on Items of Interest

- (i) **Corporate Health Performance** - Cabinet has received an update on the Council's corporate performance in relation to its national and local Best Value Performance Indicators from 1 April 2004 to 31 January 2005, reported on an exception basis where there is a variation on the target of at least + or - 10%. There were two instances of performance above target, relating to National Performance Indicators on Housing Benefit Security. Six National targets and one local target (relating to the number of recorded complaints) were below target. Cabinet thought some of the language used in the reporting of targets could be misleading to the public and has noted that there will be a final report with the year-end figures and that the reports for 2005/06 would be presented in a different format.
- (ii) **Strategic Audit Plan 2005/06 - 2008/09** - Cabinet has received a report on the process used to develop the Strategic Audit Plan for 2005/06 to 2008/09 and the Annual Plan for 2005/06. The Plan is based on potential risks with each area being assessed using 'traffic lights' signposting, with red being high risk, amber being medium risk and green being low risk. In addition, within each risk area consideration is given to residual risk for specific functions or establishments based on their last Audit opinion and current knowledge including risk management reports to the Chief Executive's Management Team. A key part of the risk methodology is that fundamental systems are always red no matter what their previous audit opinion is, as these are systems whose failure could cause major disruption or loss of reputation or financial control to the Council. In addition school bank accounts are always red because of their level of independence from the Council's control systems. The Audit Manager emphasised the link with the Council's Risk Management Strategy. In response to a question on how the resources available to the Council's Audit Services compared to other local authorities, the Audit Manager agreed to seek further information from CIPFA benchmarking services and report back. The Chief Executive assured Cabinet that the Council had a very good record in the prevention of fraud and corruption which may not be apparent from the report.

**6. CHILDREN'S SERVICES
(Cabinet Member: Councillor D.W. Rule, MBE)**

6.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Closure of St Mary's of Hope CE Primary School** - Cabinet has agreed that St Mary's of Hope CE Primary School, Hope-under-Dinmore should formally close with effect from 24th March, 2005. The closure follows a drop in the number of pupils and a request from the school's governing body. The remaining pupils have been transferred to other local schools with parental agreement and the staff found suitable alternative employment.

- (ii) **Bromyard, Sure Start Project** - Cabinet has received an update on the Sure Start Project in Bromyard. It has agreed that the project should proceed on the current HOPE site and be funded by a combination of DfES grant, European Object 2 money and funding from the Education Capital programme. It has authorised the Council's Property Services Team to manage the project and agreed that public investment interest in the site be secured through a right for the Council to take over the project by a 20 year lease if HOPE fails to provide the services throughout that period.
- (iii) **Amalgamation of Hunderton Infants and Junior School** - Cabinet has approved the publication of a statutory notice to close Hunderton Junior and Infants Schools, and open a new three form entry Community School serving the 3-11 age range. The merger of the two schools is proposed to improve primary school provision in one of the most deprived wards of the County.

7. COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (Cabinet Member - Councillor R.V. Stockton)

7.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) There were no decisions by Cabinet relating to this programme area during the reporting period.

8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MARKETS AND PROPERTY (Cabinet Member and Deputy Leader - Councillor G.V. Hyde)

8.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Leominster Industrial Estate Access Road** - Cabinet has received a confidential report and noted the analysis of cost increases for the construction of the Leominster Industrial Estate Access Road. It has agreed that provision be made to meet the shortfall in funding from the Capital Programme, incorporating the underspend from the construction of Twyford Court Industrial Units on the Rotherwas Industrial Estate and noted that a Close Down report for the scheme will be presented to the Major Highways Projects Board and that the report will be used to inform ongoing and future major schemes.

9. ENVIRONMENT (Cabinet Member: Councillor P.J. Edwards)

9.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Carbon Management Action Plan** - In July 2004 the Council was chosen to take part in the development of a Carbon Management Action Plan (CMAP) that defines the steps that the Council will take to secure emissions reduction of at least 1.25% per year from 2005 to 2012. The CMAP forms an important stage in addressing issues of climate change introduced under the revised "key lines of enquiry" within the CPA Corporate Assessment from 2005/06. The CMAP also provides an important contribution to the emerging Herefordshire Partnership Climate Change Strategy and generates bankable financial savings contributing to the Council's obligations to generate efficiency savings. Cabinet has approved the adoption of the CMAP allowing the Council to sign the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change, thereby joining 74 other local authorities in England who have signed to date.

10. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION
Cabinet Member - Councillor R.M. Wilson)

10.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Public Rights of Way Strategy** - Cabinet has approved the Public Rights of Way Strategy. The production of the strategy was one of the actions arising from the 2001 Best Value Review of the Public Rights of Way Service. It details where resources should be focussed; how to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act; business plans with targets; an enforcement policy and strategy; the creation of an Asset Register and how to promote Public Rights of Way. The strategy targets the Council's principal priorities which contribute to the Herefordshire Plan. The strategy will guide the Rights of Way service to become proactive and more able to meet the pressures placed upon it by new and existing legislation.
- (ii) **Local Transport Plan Programme Budgets 2005/06** - In December 2004, the government allocated Herefordshire a total of £10,459,000 for Local Transport for 2005/06. This is made up of allocations for Maintenance (£7,559,000) and integrated transport projects (£2,900,000). These funds will be spent in accordance with both local and national priorities.
- (iii) **Leominster Industrial Estate Access Road** - A report on this item is to be found at paragraph 8.1(i) of this report.
- (iv) **Widemarsh Street, Hereford - Proposed Experimental Pedestrianisation Scheme** - Cabinet has considered a report on an experimental traffic scheme to achieve partial pedestrianisation and an improved pedestrian environment in Widemarsh Street and High Street.

Between July and October 2004 Widemarsh Street (south of the ring road) and High Street were closed to traffic while essential maintenance was undertaken to the gas mains. Surveys during these works, and consultations afterwards indicated that there might be considerable support for pedestrianisation of the area. The proposed scheme would prohibit traffic entering that part of Widemarsh Street and High Street between 10.30 am and 4.30 pm, seven days a week. It is expected that, for the period of the experiment, manually operated gates would be used to prevent access. Signs would be erected and the prohibition would be enforceable even if the gates were left open. Cabinet has asked that sufficient signs be placed before Coningsby Street and Blackfriars Street to warn drivers of the restriction.

Cabinet discussed various aspects of the proposal, including: access for Emergency vehicles; operation of the gates; signing; imposing a 10 mph speed limit, traffic calming measures; increased traffic on West Street and East Street; safety of pedestrians when road re-opens; need for a ring road; coaches turning from West Street into Broad Street; option to abandon the scheme earlier if not proving successful; effect on buses, taxis and cyclists; and enforcement. Cabinet welcomed an offer from the Chairman of the Social and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee to review the trial towards the end of the experimental period.

Despite some concerns about traffic from Bewell Street and the effect the closure may have on the Cathedral and businesses on Broad Street and King Street the Cabinet broadly welcomed the proposals and agreed that the following experimental Traffic Regulation Orders be introduced during the summer of 2005, immediately following conclusion of the High Street element of the Eign Gate enhancement works, for a minimum period until at least 31st December 2005:

- a) Prohibition of Driving Order - the effect of which would be to prohibit the driving of any vehicles between the hours of 10.30am and 4.30pm daily as follows:
 - i) Widemarsh Street (U80000)
from its junction with the A438 Newmarket Street in a southerly direction to its junction with the High Street.
 - ii) High Street (U8000)
From its junction with the U80000 Widemarsh Street in a westerly direction for its whole length to its junction with the U80000 Broad Street.
 - iii) Exemptions will be included for emergency services vehicles and for vehicles that have legitimately entered Bewell Street.
- b) 20 mph Speed Limit - the effect of which would be to impose a maximum speed of twenty miles per hour on the U8000 Widemarsh Street and High Street from its junction with A438 Newmarket Street to its junction with Broad Street.
- c) Berrington Street/West Street/Aubrey Street - further investigation and appropriate consultation to see if traffic management measures are needed to address concerns of potential congestion of pedestrianising Widemarsh Street.

11. HUMAN RESOURCES AND CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES (Cabinet Member - Councillor Mrs. J.P. French)

11.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Corporate Voice and Data Network Business Case for Improvement and Development** - The Council is facing a growing demand for, and investment in, new ICT solutions to both enable and improve the delivery of services. Council has already approved significant capital funding for this key project and the consideration of future voice and data communications. The business case focuses on the additional investment required to enable the implementation of the new network and realisation of the considerable ICT efficiencies and savings identified. Some of the means of addressing this investment have been addressed earlier by the identification of £500,000 additional revenue for ICT Services. Cabinet has endorsed the proposed direction for the new network and approved the detailed investment required.

**12. RURAL REGENERATION AND SMALLHOLDINGS
(Cabinet Member - Councillor J.C. Mayson)**

12.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) There were no decisions by Cabinet relating to this programme area during the reporting period.

**13. SOCIAL CARE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING
(Cabinet Member Councillor Mrs. L.O. Barnett)**

13.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Herefordshire Five Year Supporting People Strategy** - The Council is the Administering Authority for the Supporting People Programme in Herefordshire and is required to submit a Five Year Supporting People Strategy to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) no later than 31st March, 2005. The Strategy has been developed with reference to ODPM guidance. It sets out to critically examine current service provision and focus services and investment on local need and strategic priorities. In doing so, the Strategy also aims to illustrate how the Council and its partners plan to meet the identified needs and priorities and how it proposes to fill gaps in knowledge and understanding of needs. Cabinet has noted that the strategy has been developed against a background of considerable challenge to the future funding of the programme nationally and, more specifically, within Herefordshire, which could see a loss in Supporting People Grant of around £1,850,000 over the five year strategy period and further losses beyond that. It has endorsed the approach to managing the implications of the distribution formula and approved the Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010 for Herefordshire, for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by 31st March, 2005.

13.2 Report on Items of Interest

- (i) **Reductions in Delayed Hospital Discharges** - Cabinet has welcomed a report on the reduced numbers of delayed discharges from hospitals (both Hereford Hospitals Trust and community hospitals) which shows that the numbers of delays associated with social care are comparatively low. The Director of Children's Services has agreed to brief Members on future initiatives including the partnership Grant for Older People with an indicative grant of £500,000 for 2006/07 and which requires match funding, and the priorities identified following the recent award of an additional £500,000 budget.

**COUNCILLOR R.J. PHILLIPS
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**