

REPORT OF THE MEETINGS OF CABINET

HELD ON 7TH AND 28TH SEPTEMBER AND 12TH OCTOBER, 2006

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

This report covers proceedings of the meetings listed above. A supplementary report covering the meeting of 26th October, 2006 will be circulated separately.

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

- 1.1 No such decisions were considered by Cabinet since the previous meeting of Council.

2. NOTICES OF MOTION

- 2.1 No motions to Council were considered by Cabinet during the reporting period.

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) **Comprehensive Equality Policy** – Cabinet has received a report on the progress made in implementing the Comprehensive Equality Policy. This is the overriding document that sets out the Council's commitment to achieving excellence and meeting its responsibilities to promote equality. The policy provides the focus to ensure the Council meets the criteria to reach Level 2 of the equality standard by end of March 2007, with the aim of reaching levels 3 and 4 by 2007/08. Cabinet was reminded that this is a three year programme and that the action plan is on target. Cabinet has noted that Herefordshire had recently been recognised for its migrant workers' website and that the government office will be visiting the county, having asked for assistance with information regarding migrant workers and the changing population.
- (ii) **Early Termination Compensation Regulations** – Cabinet has received a report on the Early Termination Compensation Regulations and noted the forthcoming changes to the policy. The changes are necessary to ensure compliance with legislative requirements, but also seek to retain maximum flexibility for fair workforce management. From 1st October the new legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate on age. Government intends to revoke the discretionary provision local authorities presently have to enhance payments to employees whose employment has been terminated early either on the grounds of redundancy, for efficiency savings or upon the cessation of

a joint appointment. In the future calculations will be made on pay up to the actual week's paid and either to award a one-off lump sum payment of up to 66 weeks' pay based on a service and age-related formula or to award added years on top of the benefits payable under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for eligible employees aged 50 or over but under 65. In comparison to many private sector and some other public pensions, the LGPS was completely transparent. Cabinet expects to receive another report on the scheme later in the year. The Director of Resources intimated that, contrary to much press coverage the average pension paid by the Council was a very low figure at £4,032.

- (iii) **Rotherwas Futures** – Cabinet has received a report on the contents of the Rotherwas Futures study. The report reiterates the Council's commitment to the Rotherwas Industrial Estate and to the County. Cabinet were reminded that in 2005 a feasibility study was jointly commissioned to investigate the further regeneration and development of the Industrial Estate and provide a package of measures to make the estate more viable. Cabinet has approved a funding agreement with Advantage West Midlands (AWM) in order to progress the project. Cabinet noted that AWM will be committed to a contribution of up to £9.5 million, which is to be secured through a co-operative agreement with the Council and to which the Council will contribute the £8 million balance through developer contributions, recycling of capital receipts and the use of the Capital Programme.

(Note: This decision was called in by the Strategic Monitoring Committee because of lack of information on any potential funding shortfall and how this would be met; lack of detail of what phase 1 and 2 of the Rotherwas Scheme involves; and lack of information on what precautions have been taken in respect of inflation. As set out in the Strategic Monitoring Committee Report at Agenda Item 12 of the Council agenda, the Committee has agreed that Cabinet should not be requested to reconsider its decision to proceed with the Rotherwas Futures Project, but should be advised that the Committee requires regular reports on the progress with regard to the financial negotiations associated with the project.)

- (iv) **Direction of Travel Statement 2006: Self-Assessment** – Cabinet has received the report on the Council's draft Direction of Travel Statement which was required by the Audit Commission by the end of September. It has noted that some evidence was not available at the time the draft was considered, such as the Director of Public Health's annual report. Cabinet was advised that with regards to the arrangements for the safeguarding and assessment of children, several new permanent staff appointments had been made.
- (v) **Budget Process** - Cabinet has agreed the approach for establishing the budget process for 2007/08 as set out in the draft Medium Term Financial Management Strategy. The draft strategy sets out the framework for ensuring cash resources are linked to corporate priorities and that corporate and service planning is undertaken within the resources available. The draft Medium Term Financial Strategy has been received by the Strategic Monitoring on 16 October and it will then be presented to Cabinet on 26 October. The Director of Resources and staff were complimented on the quality of the small booklet they had produced, which gives a clear overview of the service.

- (vi) **Disability Equality Scheme 2006/09** – Cabinet has noted the Disability Equality Scheme and approved the action plan. It is a requirement of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 that organisations across the public sector be proactive in ensuring that disabled people are treated fairly, not just in relation to access to buildings, but in how written material is presented and in the very culture of an organisation to eliminate discrimination. It has noted that work was also being done with the Council's partner organisations. Cabinet was informed that the Council's progress on the Disability Equality Scheme was considered best practice by other organisations.

4.2 **Report on Items of Interest**

- (i) **Community Forums** – Cabinet has received the report on the June - July 2006 round of Forum meetings and noted the statistics presented. Members expressed their thanks and satisfaction to the Community Forum Co-ordinator over the style of the meetings, the way Parish Councils are notified and the advertising.
- (ii) **Treasury Management Activities 2005/06** - Cabinet has noted the Treasury Management activities for period 1st April, 2005 to 31st March, 2006 and the outturn of Prudential Indicators for the same year. The cost of borrowing was below budget, while the income from investment was above budget. Additionally, internally managed investments exceeded the index benchmark, while externally managed funds were marginally below.

5. **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE** (Cabinet Member: Councillor D.W. Rule, MBE)

5.1 **Report on Decisions Taken**

- (i) **Building Schools for the Future** - Cabinet has received a report on Building Schools for the Future and has recommended that Minster College, Leominster be selected under this initiative as the College is in need of a major improvement to its facilities. The Principal for Minster College, Mr Richard North, spoke to Cabinet supporting the proposals for the College and for the relocation of Westfield Special School on to the campus.

Cabinet has also approved the application for Wyebridge Sports College to become a City Academy, with the principal sponsor being the Diocese of Hereford. The Government Office has expressed its support for the application for Wyebridge Sports College.

6. **COMMUNITY SERVICES** (Cabinet Member - Councillor R.V. Stockton)

6.1 **Report on Decisions Taken**

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

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

7.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Revised Communications Strategy** – Cabinet has approved the revised Communications Strategy. It has noted there were some challenging targets in the strategy, which reflected the pace of change and the need to keep employees informed and engaged with changes. Cabinet has noted the value that employees put on internal communications, and team briefings have been re-launched to enable staff to feed-back their views to the Corporate Management Board. The basis of the strategy is to build an effective communications network of champions who will drive communications improvements.

7.2 Report on Items of Interest

- (i) **Integrated Performance Report** - Cabinet has noted the performance report to the end of July 2006 against the Annual Operating Plan 2006-07, together with performance against revenue and capital budgets and corporate risks. It has acknowledged that a significant amount of work had taken place since the previous report to the end of May. There had been a marked reduction in the number of indicators that had not been achieved or had not reached the target, down from 45 in May to 19. Where not all indicators are met, this can be due to partner organisations not reaching the target. The outturn figures for 2005/06 place the authority above the median for 2004/05, which shows a significant improvement in performance. The majority of indicators for the Herefordshire Community Strategy have now been identified and work is being carried out to agree them with partner organisations.

JAR Action Plan – overall it is very positive and the number of referrals has already reached the target for March 2007. The workload has increased, but this is being managed with nine new permanent Social Workers appointed since April.

Adult Social Care – any potential overspend is being actively managed in anticipation with a further contingency fund.

Corporate Risk Monitoring - the Herefordshire Connects programme had been identified as an emerging risk for the Council. However, good progress is being made and the programme is currently on schedule.

- (ii) **Employee Opinion Survey 2006** – Cabinet has received the report on the Employee Opinion Survey and was pleased to note that nearly half the workforce had taken part in the survey with a 48% response rate. Cabinet has noted that 94% of Staff Review and Developments (SRD) were being carried out annually, compared to the local government average of 88%. Morale in the workforce is up from 41% to 55%. Recruitment links with schools and colleges along with the Council's newly formed central recruitment centre have improved the speed and efficiency of recruitment to Council posts.
- (iii) **Health and Safety Annual Report** – Cabinet has received a report summarising the key activities of the Health and Safety Service, including Occupational Health, over the last twelve months. It has noted that considerable work had been carried over the last 12 months. Changes have

been made to the structure of the service allowing more flexible working across Directorates and provision of specialist support and advice. As a result of a recent audit of the service systems were found to be sound and the recommendations of the audit have been considered by the Health and Safety Committee and the Senior Management Team. Action plans to address any short and long term issues are to be put in place.

- (iv) **Local Government Pension Scheme – Response to Initial Consultation on Four Options** - Cabinet has endorsed the proposed response to the initial consultation exercise being undertaken by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Cabinet supports Option A of the DCLG report, which is very similar to the current pension scheme, that is a final salary scheme based on an accrual rate of final salary per year of membership, with a tax free lump sum payment.

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

8.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Land at Belmont** – Cabinet has received a confidential report on the acquisition of land off Dorchester Way, Belmont, known as “The Pond Area” and has agreed a way forward to resolve the longstanding issues concerning the adoption of the former landfill site area at Belmont.

9. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION Cabinet Member - Councillor D.B. Wilcox)

9.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Rotherwas Futures** - A report on this item is to be found at paragraph 4.1 (iii) of this report.
- (ii) **Rotherwas Access Road** - Cabinet has given approval to proceed with the implementation programme for the Rotherwas Access Road. A package of measures outlined in the Rotherwas Futures report sets out an approach to funding, developing and regenerating the industrial estate, along with possible housing developer contributions. Cabinet has noted that the Compulsory Purchase Order for the road scheme had been confirmed.

10. RESOURCES (Cabinet Member - Councillor R.M. Wilson)

10.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Revised Risk Management Policy** – Cabinet has approved the Revised Risk Management Policy. This has been considered and commented upon by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee and the Corporate Management Board. The policy further develops the Council’s approach to risk management and has a Member and a senior officer to champion and take responsibility for embedding risk management throughout the Council in compliance with good practice. Cabinet will carry out an annual review of the Risk Management Policy ensuring appropriate action is taken on the Council's highest risks. Risk management will become part of the Integrated Performance Report.

10.2 **Report on Items of Interest**

- (i) **Ombudsman and Complaints and Compliments Monitoring 2005/06** – Cabinet received the report on the Ombudsman's Annual Letter 2005/06. The figures for complaints and compliments recorded including complaints determined by the Local Government Ombudsman and the Complaints Panel for the year ended 31st March, 2006. Cabinet has noted that there were no reports of maladministration against the Council by the Ombudsman.

11. **RURAL REGENERATION AND STRATEGY** (Cabinet Member - Councillor J.C. Mayson)

11.1 **Report on Decisions Taken**

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

12. **SOCIAL CARE ADULTS AND HEALTH** (Cabinet Member Councillor Mrs. L.O. Barnett)

12.1 **Report on Decisions Taken**

- (i) **Response to the Scrutiny Committee Review of Learning Disabilities Services** – Cabinet has agreed a response to the Scrutiny Committee's review of Learning Disabilities. The review was undertaken in order to gain a fuller understanding of the operation of the learning disabilities' services, its demands and the factors behind the recent budget pressures. The review provided the Cabinet Member (Social Care, Adults and Health) with guidance on the current and future service needs, service models and the allocation of resources. Cabinet has welcomed all the recommendations outlined whilst noting that some of the recommendations were already being undertaken.

12.2 **Report on Items of Interest**

- (i) **Adult Social Care Improvement Planning** – Cabinet has noted a report on the progress to date with the Adult Social Care Improvement Plan and was advised that the Commission of Social Care Inspection (CSCI) has agreed additional support from the Department of Health, by way of a significant financial contribution, to finance external expertise to drive forward improvements. A number of proactive steps have been taken to improve service delivery and capacity within Adult Services.

COUNCILLOR R.J. PHILLIPS
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL