

Chief Executive's Office

Chief Executive: N.M. Pringle

**To: All Members of Cabinet:
R.J. Phillips (Leader)
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**

Your Ref:

Our Ref: NMP/CD

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15th September, 2004

Dear Councillor,

**MEETING OF CABINET
THURSDAY, 23RD SEPTEMBER, 2004 AT 2.15 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBER, BROCKINGTON, 35 HAFOD ROAD, HEREFORD**

AGENDA (03/07)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest by members in respect of items on this agenda.

3. COUNCIL TAX DESIGNATION AND CAPPING - LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1992 - COUNCIL TAX LIMITATION (ENGLAND) (MAXIMUM AMOUNTS) ORDER 2004

To finalise the allocation of budget reductions required to meet the revised budget necessitated by the Government's decision to designate the Council. *(Pages 1 - 4)*

4. CORPORATE HEALTH PERFORMANCE

To receive an update on the Council's corporate performance in relation to our National and Local Best Value Performance Indicators from 1st April, 2004 to 31st July, 2004. *(Pages 5 - 8)*

5. THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL CARE INSPECTION PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT

To receive the Commission of Social Care Inspection's (CSCI) overall performance report on social care in Herefordshire for 2003-04. *(Pages 9 - 28)*

6. AUDIT COMMISSION HOUSING SELF-ASSESSMENT

To receive the outcome of the regular performance assessment for the service block for housing. *(Pages 29 - 54)*

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Neil Pringle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "P".

**N.M. PRINGLE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Copies to: Chairman of the Council
Chairman of Strategic Monitoring Committee
Vice-Chairman of Strategic Monitoring Committee
Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees
Group Leaders
Directors
County Secretary and Solicitor
County Treasurer

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COUNTY OF HEREFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

BROCKINGTON, 35 HAFOD ROAD, HEREFORD.

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**COUNCIL TAX DESIGNATION AND CAPPING
LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1992
COUNCIL TAX LIMITATION (ENGLAND)
(MAXIMUM AMOUNTS) ORDER 2004**

**PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY:
CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE**

CABINET

23RD SEPTEMBER, 2004

Wards Affected

Countywide.

Purpose

To finalise the allocation of budget reductions required to meet the revised budget necessitated by the Government's decision to designate the Council.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation

That the budget reductions set out in paragraph 8 be recommended to Council.

Reasons

To determine a revised budget for 2004/05.

Considerations

1. The letter confirming the Secretary of State's decision to limit the Council's budget to £175,320,000 was received on 8th July, 2004.
2. As a consequence, budget reductions were required in the sum of £300,000 representing the Government's reduction in the budget of £253,000 plus the consequential re-billing costs of £47,000, net of the Combined Fire Authority contribution of 50%.
3. Mindful of the need to proceed with rebilling promptly, Cabinet agreed interim proposals for budget reductions on 15th July, 2004 and recommended accordingly to the July meeting of Council.
4. The budget reductions required were met initially from underspendings brought forward from 2003/04 as summarised in Appendix 1. In recommending such an approach, Cabinet acknowledged that it was not a wholly satisfactory way of addressing the issue. It did give the necessary stability to the Council's budget and

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Mr I Hyson, County Treasurer, on (01432) 260235

enabled the Council to proceed with rebilling but it had the disadvantage of concealing the inevitable real reductions in levels of service. A further factor was the significant level of commitments against the underspendings.

5. It was, therefore, agreed that Cabinet re-examine the proposals in the light of an analysis of commitments by the County Treasurer and the current year's budget monitoring position.
6. The attached Appendix summarises the overall position established by the County Treasurer in relation to contractual commitments, other commitments that are regarded as being unavoidable and sums that have been earmarked for specific priorities. What the summary indicates is that the original schedule could be adhered to although in practice some 70% of the sums identified as underspendings were identified as being either committed contractually or were regarded as committed on other grounds. Any balance would, of course, have been applied in meeting priority objectives.
7. The budget monitoring report considered by Cabinet on 9th September did identify some potential for underspendings in the current year, particularly those arising from the successful restructuring of an element of the Council's borrowings late in 2003/04. There was, however, also evidence of pressure on expenditure in other areas. The areas identified in the summary sheet which very clearly contradict the investment strategy contained in the medium term financial plan relate to the programme of investment in ICT and the associated e-modernisation programme.
8. Although there is an element of "rough justice" in the proposed approach, it is suggested the savings identified in the September monitoring report be utilised to offset the provisional allocation in respect of ICT and e-modernisation commitment of £93,000 but apart from these provisions the original provisional allocation to the sums required to meet the cap be maintained.
9. It is recommended that these reductions be utilised to achieve the revised budget requirement. The position for 2005/06 and beyond will be dealt with as part of the budget exercise currently underway.

Risk Management

Determining the budget reductions as recommended will minimise the impact on delivery of the Council's key objectives.

Consultees

None.

Background Papers

None.

Appendix 1

Directorate/Department	Contract Commitments £000	Other unavoidable £000	Earmarked sums £000	Currently uncommitted £000	Set aside for contribution to capping requirement £000	Total £000	Provisional allocation of capping £000
Education	791	220	358		46	1415	46
Environment		165	180		26	371	26
Strategic Housing		20	40			60	4
Policy and Community							
Community and Economic Development		219	121	25		365	26
Policy and Finance		338	15	63		416	29
Social Development		11				11	1
E Modernisation			547			547	37
Adjustment re accommodation				-21		-21	
County Treasurer	205	30		10		245	17
Support Services Housing Benefits	229					229	16
County Secretary and Solicitor		138	10	44		192	13
ICT	604	255				859	56
Chief Executive			37			37	3
Other Policy and Finance incl Dev Fund							
Development Fund			163			163	26
Corporate g W M S				105		105	
Head of Performance Management			7			7	
Civic and Chairman			14			14	
	1829	1396	1492	226	72	5015	300

CORPORATE HEALTH PERFORMANCE

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

CABINET

23RD SEPTEMBER, 2004

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To receive an update on the Council's corporate performance in relation to our National and Local Best Value Performance Indicators from 1st April, 2004 to 31st July, 2004.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation

THAT performance in relation to the Council's National and Local Corporate Best Value Indicators, from 1st April to 31st July, 2004, be noted.

Reasons

The Council has developed revised performance monitoring arrangements as outlined in the Comprehensive Performance Self-assessment document submitted to the Audit Commission. The revised arrangements ensure that the Chief Executive's Management Team, the Strategic Monitoring Committee, Scrutiny Committees, and Cabinet are all involved in the performance monitoring process.

Considerations

1. During 2004/2005 corporate performance is being reported to Cabinet at 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 monthly intervals, in line with the Council's Performance Management Framework.
2. Corporate performance for the 4 month period 1st April 2004 to 31st July, 2004 has been reported on an exception basis and only those indicators where there is a variation on the target of at least + or – 10% are highlighted.

Above target performance

3. **BV 76b Housing benefit security – number of fraud investigators employed per 1,000 caseload.** Performance has improved to 0.39 fraud investigators per 1,000 caseload against a target of 0.33. Additional resources have been recruited since the target was set based on the fact that the post is self-financing.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Kevin Lloyd, Policy Assistant, on (01432) 383401

4. **BV 76c Housing benefit security – the number of fraud investigations per 1,000 caseload.** Performance has improved to 63 fraud investigations per 1,000 caseload against a target of 38. The Benefit Investigation Unit has increased its resources by moving 2 benefit assessment officers into the unit to deal with initial fraud referrals, including those that have been identified through the new interventions regime.
5. **BV 76d Housing benefit security – the number of prosecutions and sanctions per 1,000 caseload.** Performance has improved to 9 prosecutions and sanctions per 1,000 caseload against a target of 7 and performance of 5.64 in 2003/04. The relocation of 2 benefit assessment officers has resulted in investigating officers being able to put more resources into prosecutions and sanctions.

Areas for Improvement

6. **BV 11b The percentage of top 5% of earners that are from black and minority ethnic communities.** Performance has remained consistent with that in 2003-04 at 2.4%, although below the target of 2.75%.
7. **BV 76a Housing benefit security – number of claimants visited per 1,000 caseload.** A change to the visiting function with interventions has resulted in visits taking longer than previously. Coupled with high periods of absence and a Visitor Officer vacancy, current performance of 87 is significantly below last year's outturn of 174.25 and the target of 255 cases per 1,000 caseload.
8. **BV 78a Speed of processing – average time for processing new claims.** Although performance has improved to 49.6 days, this is still below the target of 32 days. The definition of a new claim has changed from April 2004. Previously, claims received following a change of address within a local authority's area, or where certain people had moved into work, were counted as new claims for BVPI purposes. Generally, these claims were processed quicker than people claiming benefit for the first time as a majority of the information required to process the claim was already held. These claims are now counted as changes in circumstances, so this indicator only measures brand new claims or claims from people who have been off benefit for some time, and therefore the average processing time is likely to be longer. The target was set based on the previous definition and is currently being monitored, with a possible review later in the year when national information about the impact of the new procedures for dealing with changes in circumstance is available.
9. **BV 78b Speed of processing – average time for processing notifications of changes of circumstance.** Performance has deteriorated to 11.2 days, below the target of 8 days. Again, the definition of a change of circumstance has changed from April 2004. Previously, claims received following a change of address within a local authority area, or where certain people had moved into work, were counted as new claims for BVPI purposes. These are now counted as changes in circumstances. The target was based on the previous definition and is currently being monitored, with a possible review later in the year when national information about the impact of the new procedures for dealing with new claims is available.
10. **Number of recorded complaints, both formal and informal.** The total number of recorded complaints for the period April-July was 85, against an annual target of 440.
11. **Number of recorded formal complaints.** Against an annual target of 250, the number of recorded formal complaints for the period April-July 2004 was 58.
12. **Percentage of Staff Review and Development (SRD) interviews completed in**

previous 12 months and **Percentage of agreed training plans arising from SRD interviews (LOCAL INDICATORS)**. SRDs are tracked on a rolling 12-month basis, so reporting of this indicator is for the period 1st August 2003 to 31st July, 2004. Performance for the last 12 months is currently at 61% against a target of 80%. However, this target was set against an annual outturn in 2003-04 of 71%, a figure that did not include Social Care and Strategic Housing. If the current figures for SC&SH are excluded to show a direct comparison with those figures for 2003-04, the overall figure shows a 3% improvement of 74%. Social Care and Strategic Housing will be using the "remote groups" process to improve the reporting of performance on SRDs in the future.

Risk Management

Failure to review performance and improvement activity would undermine the implementation of the Council's Performance Management Framework.

Background Papers

- Herefordshire Council's Performance Management Framework
- Best Value Performance Indicators 2003/2004

THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL CARE INSPECTION PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: SOCIAL CARE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING

CABINET

23RD SEPTEMBER, 2004

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To receive the Commission of Social Care Inspection's (CSCI) overall performance report on social care in Herefordshire for 2003-04.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Recommendation

THAT Cabinet note the report and the challenge presented for the Corporate Plan priorities and the medium term financial strategy.

Reasons

To inform the Herefordshire public of the CSCI performance assessment for 2003-04.

Considerations

1. There is a requirement to advise the public on Social Care's strengths, developments and areas for improvement.
2. The report is largely based on the July annual review meeting between the Council and CSCI. It does highlight the Older People's Service Inspection, but does not refer to the Fostering Regulation Inspection (the final report was not published in time). However, the Fostering Regulation report demonstrates Herefordshire is achieving good standards and has a service fit for purpose.
3. The commentary on Children's Services performance needs to be balanced by the comparative information across the West Midlands. The CSCI Regional Development Worker for Children's Services has undertaken a comparative analysis of performance indicators across the West Midlands Region. Herefordshire are seen as one of the best in the region in our ability to produce assessments on children within the Department for Education and Skills' (DfES) timescales and the percentage of looked after children placed for adoption in the year to 31st March. This was very positive news and demonstrates the authority's commitment to work in making appropriate long term decisions for children who are looked after.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Sue Fiennes, Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing on 01432 260048

4. The commentary on Adult Services includes concerns on equipment services. Following the annual review meeting, and the issue regarding the 7 day delivery on equipment, a review has been carried out of the activity and data has been validated by Internal Audit colleagues. This review has resulted in the indicator performance being 63%, rather than 38% reported. Procedures have been updated to take account of the validation. CSCI has been advised of the improved reporting of performance. The integrated service has a new manager and more imaginative ways of improving performance further than 63% will be examined.
5. There is a formal record of Herefordshire performance, using this CSCI report, which is provided in September 2004 and is used to inform the Social Care star ratings which are published in November 2004.
6. The CSCI approach is putting further emphasis on evidence from performance indicators and our capacity to understand our own performance, compare it with "the best" and move forward. This means that more effort needs to be put into performance management and improvement.
7. The Directorate has re-designed management arrangements to create a post of Performance Improvement Manager. This post will support the team in responding to this challenge and help focus our efforts.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options

Risk Management

The improvement recommendations are at different levels of challenge. Capacity building for adults does require both service change and investment. Increasing services for children with disabilities and improving life chances for children does depend on need and ability assessment and resources.

Consultees

Social care users, carers, stakeholders and partners.

Background Papers

Attached CSCI Annual Performance Report for Herefordshire - Appendix 1

Performance Review Report for Herefordshire

Social Services: 2004

Summary of improvement recommendations

The review of social services in Herefordshire has highlighted the following performance issues that need to be addressed over the next twelve months. Further information about the standards against which social services are assessed is contained in the detailed report.

Services for Children and their families –

- Further improving assessment practice, monitoring and evidencing improved outcomes for children including children in need
- Understanding and addressing the reasons for re-referrals, re-registrations, time on the child protection register.
- Increasing services for disabled children and their carers and improving life chances outcomes for looked after children
- Improving further the recruitment and retention of staff and foster carers
- Evidencing the Council's aspirations for excellence by building on performance strengths to extend performance towards that of the best performing Councils of similar profile, where possible.

Services for Adults -

- Promoting independence for younger adults and in particular increasing the pace of change to services for learning disabled people
- Ensuring robust capacity building for older people's services, improving quality, delivering changes to Older Peoples services and implementing the plan following the inspection in March 2004

- Implementing plans for improving the timely supply of items of equipment to ensure countywide coverage.
- Improving care management and review processes
- Promoting increased stakeholder involvement

Performance Review Report 2004
HEREFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Council has maintained its commitment to increase resources to Social Care despite a range of other pressures. The additional resources have been vital in enabling the Council to start to implement its modernising agenda. The Council has been establishing underpinning measures to improve its capacity and performance management arrangements¹. A range of strategies and plans have been developing, a number due for completion in 2004 and several new posts also due to commence during the year. A great deal of effort has been involved in driving the changes, whilst sustaining other core business. There has been some progress against the last Annual Review letter, whereas other areas have not been able to sustain their position or have not yet moved forward.

National priorities and strategic objectives

Improvements observed since the previous annual review

- Several strategic developments include the roll out of the Child Concern model which is a major change programme and will underpin developments over a 2 year period and into the future, and includes clearer eligibility criteria; the strategy to increase the range of community family support and partnership working which is setting the scene for a formal Partnership Board in 2004/5.
- A number of performance indicators underline the importance placed upon improving life chances of Looked After Children (LAC). In respect of (A1), stability of placements measured by the percentage of LAC with 3 or more placements in a year, performance improved and is strong, Of health checks (C19), the completion rate was slightly down from last year but still within a good performance level. The Council has also performed comparatively well towards the Government target for looked-after care leavers going in to employment, education and training (A4), though performance was less good than last year. The number of Final warnings of LAC (C18) remained acceptable though performance indicates the challenges that are present.

¹ Applies equally to services for adults

Areas for Development:

- The number of LAC remains comparatively high compared to other Councils in the Region and the comparator family. This has wide implications for resources, for instance the Council is to be congratulated on having maintaining full allocation of cases to social workers, but will remain challenged if the number of LAC cannot be reduced. There are modest targets for reduction by 2006 within the roll out of the Child Concern model, though the immediate forecast is for an increase in numbers. The 2006 target would still be above the current national average
- The Council accepts the requirement and plans to complete the improvements in respect of four outstanding Victoria Climbié Inquiry (VCI) issues covering: management information about referrals; accommodation to support assessments; guidance on children moving from overseas and governance/ systems to review referral and assessment arrangements. Work is not due for completion until later this year, whereas the urgency of this is underlined in that this is one of only 5 West Midlands Councils which has not completed all VCI improvements. Development of a model and implementation of audits are delayed since the Joint Review action plan 2003. The Council recognises that interagency audit will also be required following the current intention to begin with an audit of internal referrals.
- Whilst the Council has continued to work hard (despite adoption team staffing difficulties) to try to ensure that adoption is achieved where it is the appropriate outcome for LAC, fewer adoptions were completed by April, but a number were completed subsequently.

Cost and Efficiency

Improvements observed since the previous annual review

- Increased external placement costs put pressure on a tight budget with a resultant overspend but this was contained within manageable limits. The relative spend on family support services increased.
- Average costs of foster care are low compared to nationally and family placements comprise the majority of placements, with 93.3% of all LAC and 100 % of young children living in family placements.

Areas for improvement

- The high proportion of LAC will continue to challenge limited resources and the ability to change the balance towards other family support and preventative services. Whilst a reduced number of residential placements are currently used (down from 19 to 11 in the last period), all externally provided, there was a further large increase of £500 per week in their average costs. Unit cost indicators suggest that the cost of residential services is particularly high when compared with other similar councils. This underlines the need for measurable progress against targets in the Council's strategies to reduce LAC numbers and develop alternatives to external residential care.
- To ensure that placement options are maintained, a range of strategies needs to be implemented and monitored for the recruitment and support of new foster carers. From a net loss of 32 in 2003/4, the age profile of many existing foster carers indicates the need for planning and action to avoid a shortfall in the near future. The Council also recognises that it needs to increase the number of salaried foster carers who are able to meet the complex needs of many LAC.

Effectiveness of service delivery and service outcomes

Improvements observed since the previous annual review

- The completion of initial assessments within timescales has again improved slightly to just over three quarters and completion of core assessments from 71% to 88.7 %,
- The number of children on the child protection register has been held low although forecast to rise by 10%. The council maintains 100% allocation of all children who are on the register and of those Looked After. All are allocated to qualified social workers.

Areas for improvement

- Not all statutory requirements for reviews of LAC within timescales were met, with about 5% of reviews being completed within two weeks after the due date, representing those for about 9 –10 children.
- PI's for a number of life chance issues that had improved at the time of the last review had fallen back in 2003/4.

- PI's for educational outcomes (that is, the proportion of LAC achieving 1 or 5 GCSE's) were lower and below local targets in some cases. Compared with other Councils with similar performance profiles, the out turn for A2 (1 GCSE) was 52% compared to 75%. The current local public service agreement (LPSA) for looked after children supports the council's efforts on the 5 GCSE target which is extremely ambitious against a small cohort, requiring achievement by 15 children next year. The out turn in 2003/4 was 4.35% compared to the best 2-starred Council at 26.7%. National targets on education for LAC and care leavers stipulate that 15 per cent of LAC should achieve 5 GCSE's. A further national target is that 75 per cent of care leavers should be in appropriate education, training or employment, Herefordshire's out turn having dropped from 76% to 69%, and the best other Council achieving 100%. The Council therefore needs to continue to focus on its action to improve these outcomes commensurate with the profile of each group
- LAC school attendance absences of at least 25 days (C24) doubled in 03-4, with 68% of other Council's reporting lower levels of absence. It is important that every possible measure is taken with partners to understand and improve on this target, which is reported to be in part associated with health needs of LAC.
- In 2003/4 the long-term stability of placements (PI D35) had improved but has dropped significantly to below that level and well below the planned level of 76%. The best performing 2-starred Council achieved 100% whereas Herefordshire's out turn was 49%.

Quality of services for users and carers

Improvements observed since the previous annual review

- Aftercare services are available to out of county care leavers and offer a range of services
- Child & Adolescence Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provides most MH services for adolescents and further CAMHS developments are proposed including services for young people with autistic spectrum disorders and the development of Lead clinicians roles.

Areas for improvement:

- Smooth transitions between child and adult services are vital. Protocols between CAMHS and Adult services should be further developed to build on the existing basis in mental health, and arrangements for the transition process for children with disabilities should also receive focus.

- The proportion of children who are repeatedly referred to social services (27.6%) remains above an acceptable level. Additionally, despite some improvement this year, the level of child protection re-registrations remains high, (84% of Council's have a lower rate) yet the target is modest and below Government expectations. The duration on the register is also higher than desirable.

These indicators highlight a significant issue, which needs to be understood and addressed by plans and targets. The issue is underpinned by the already reported and acknowledged need to adopt audit standards, audit assessment processes and outcomes and improve referral, assessment and care planning. The Annual Review report 200/3 said " A more consistent quality of assessment and care planning for children across the service was required, which focussed on outcomes and, for children on the child protection register, identified clearly what had to change in order to secure their safety and welfare. " Maintaining 100% allocation of cases against the volume of demand may also have impacted on the ability for active work to move cases forward, and the availability of appropriate packages of care.

- Adoption Support Regulations were due to be fully met by April 2004. 71% of councils reported full compliance, whereas Herefordshire reported further development being required in respect of groups for parents and children and support arrangements. Difficulties of recruitment to this area of work are widely recognised and recruitment remains a challenge, which impacts on developing services.

Fair access

Improvements observed since the previous annual review

- There is effective 24 hour 7 days a week access to services and advice.
- The Child Concern model (CCM) promotes eligibility criteria across all agencies and extends their responsiveness.
- The percentage of children contributing to a statutory review improved to 89.5%

Areas for improvement

- The Council is aware of the need for monitoring of data from CCM referrals to give information about Children in Need (CIN) and for auditing referrals, which resulted in decisions to take No Further Action. This will increase understanding of sources of inappropriate referral and quality assure the appropriateness and consistency of decision making.

- Arrangements should improve and increase transition pathway planning and review.
- The use of direct payments to children and carers of disabled children should be increased.
- An implementation plan is required following the Independent Reviewing Officer guidance.

Capacity for improvement

Improvements observed since the previous annual review

- A raft of preparation and strategies are in place or planned
- Social care benefits from strong commitment and interest of the Council, and strong leadership of the Director.
- Performance management has been strengthened by the appointment of a corporate performance management lead and a Performance Improvement Manager in the Directorate.
- Resources have been committed to review management information system needs including cross- agency information, and a more effective replacement system is being given high priority.
- The adoption of the inter-agency Child Concern model (CCM) has been a significant investment for the future.

Areas for improvement

- Following the roll out of CCM, the Council will have to play a leading role in driving the cultural change needed towards the Child Concern model, developing stakeholder involvement, monitoring and adjusting processes to ensure safe and secure care, and reducing the number of LAC. A small staff team is overseeing a raft of strategies to change services/curtail costs and divert resources to prevention and services for children in need.

The Council continues to face recruitment and retention issues, which require the capacity to develop work force strategies. The delivery of service and change is meanwhile challenged by the impact of vacancies in small teams, and especially in respect of qualified or specialist staff. Monitored attention will be needed to sustain the level of family placements given competition from independent agencies and known other factors.

- Pending replacement, effective management is hampered by the previously identified difficulties of the case management information system. This is now planned to be implemented by end March 2005. The Council knows it needs to extend and embed the performance management culture and the use of data to improve performance. ²
- A clear, multi-agency commissioning strategy is vital, as is progress on delivering more of the options to avoid external residential placements.

SERVICES FOR ADULTS AND OLDER PEOPLE

The council has begun the process of responding to the Government's priorities to promote independence. From a historically low position, the Council has increased spending on services for older people. An inspection of services for older people took place in March 2004 and plauded this development amongst a number of positives for the future. The judgement of the inspection was that services showed promising prospects and were serving some people well. Effective and committed relationships have been developed with health service partners so that there is greater mutual recognition of the shared responsibilities, though there remains a significant challenge due to the financial and other demands to which partners have also to respond.

Increasing the number of people supported at home and modernising services for vulnerable adults, particularly those with learning disabilities must be the central thrusts to improving outcomes for service users. Last year's annual review judgement of uncertain prospects reflected the implications of the disappointing out turn against several adult performance indicators (PIs) and the concerns about resourcing and capacity. There have been some dips in out-turn in adult services, whilst other PIs have risen slightly or maintained an acceptable or good performance. One indicator – D54, delivery of equipment within 7 working days, at 38% failed to achieve a key threshold for performance.

National priorities and strategic objectives

Improvements observed since the previous annual review

- A number of strategic partnerships have been developed, notably the Health and Care, Joint planning and Partnership unit. Some pooled budgets have been established, including those for the integrated Mental Health service and the Learning Disabilities team. Since the previous annual review, additional strategic partnerships have been established with Hillside Intermediate Care, Community Equipment and the SHAW transfer. There are now 6 Section 31 agreements across a range of adult services.
- Valuing People strategies have been submitted and were generally evaluated positively. A revised and more inclusive partnership board is being established in 2004.
- The council has identified and published the ethnic monitoring data to comply Race Relations (Amendment) Act Part 3. The published data does not identify any significant issues in respect of equality in employment and training opportunities.

- The Council and its partners have worked together to minimise delayed transfers from the acute trust and have plans to sustain this position whilst developing more preventative services. The reimbursement grant has funded additional places including interim care, and equipment, and staff.
- The development of extra care housing is vital to implement change strategies away from institutionalised care. The Council is to be congratulated for securing a Department of Health capital contribution towards a local initiative - a major scheme that should start to deliver homes in 2005.

Areas for improvement

- Sustained progress on the strategy for older people's services has not yet been significantly reflected in outcomes on a number of targets. PIs B11 and C28, indicators on intensive home care provision show an out turn at half the national target and low comparatively. For (C32) - older people helped to live at home - the PI demonstrated increased numbers in 2003 /4. (However, potentially affected by the revision of the indicator, the 04/05 plan forecasts a considerable reduction that would be well below the LPSA target). The registration of the service and proposed change of role of the in- house home care service, when achieved, will provide capacity to support people through re-ablement and rehabilitation.

Cost and efficiency

Improvements observed since the previous annual review

- The improved position in arrangements with health partners enabled beneficial use of the reimbursement grant to fund interim care places and extra social work time. There has been notable progress in the use of Health Act flexibilities including 6 S31 agreements.
- Against a difficult financial position the Directorate made significant progress in reducing the over-commitment brought forward from 2002/03. Council has invested additional much- needed revenue and capital resources in social care.
- B12 the average cost of providing intensive social care reduced

Areas for improvement

- Commissioning the volume and quality of required services whilst controlling costs remains a challenge. The purchase of a number of services is comparatively costly, including unit costs for home care (B17), which are reported as slightly reduced since 02/03 but still in

the most costly 3% nationally. Block purchasing is going to be introduced and needs to be successful in managing this market. (B15) Mental Health Residential /Nursing Home care costs are higher than for all comparators. (B14) costs of Residential /Nursing Home care for people with learning disabilities, are forecast to rise next year from £514 to £545; given the high number of such placements (219) this has significant financial implications.

- The Inspection of services for older people identified as a significant issue the need for a clear commissioning strategy based on improved market management information, an agreed model of care, signed up to by stakeholders and setting appropriate rates for levels of service. The historically high level of residential and nursing home placements was due to a lack of alternatives for older people. In order to meet this volume of placements, the Council has needed to work within a tight fee structure, hence average costs are low comparatively, a factor which now impacts on the ability of services to meet the needs of people with increasingly complex needs. The market needs to be developed to reflect the changed context of care. In the next year the implementation of the contract with SHAW plans to refocus the former- Council provided care homes.
- The capacity for contract monitoring needs to be extended, as planned, to assure value for money and appropriate provision of service across all user groups.

Effectiveness of service delivery and service outcomes

Improvements observed since the previous annual review

- The take up of direct payments (C51) is comparatively good and developments are in hand including a project officer. It is recognised that offering services through direct payments represents a significant culture change for many staff. Grant Funding was secured to employ a Welfare -to -work co-ordinator, increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The Council has used a local public sector agreement (LPSA) to introduce a highly successful signposting service.
- The arrangements with Health partners have avoided recharges as a result of delayed transfers of care (DTC) and some additional intermediate care places were developed.
- In 2003/4 the Council completed all but the final details of the transfer of its older persons' homes to an independent provider, part of its longer term strategy to increase specialist provision especially for people with dementia.

Areas for improvement

- Whilst the use of intermediate care increased, this was provided largely as step down facilities from acute care. The Council and health partners are planning to address the difficulties that delayed the implementation of services to prevent admissions to acute hospitals. The range of services will be further increased by maximising the effectiveness of community hospitals and increasing non- residential intermediate care.
- User choice will be promoted by achieving widened scope in the use of direct payments to service users including older people
- Whilst the aim is to promote independence, the indicators of performance for people with learning disabilities being helped to live at home (C30) show reduced and low performance in comparison with other authorities in the West Midlands or the comparator family. This Council has a high number (219) of people with Learning Disabilities in residential or nursing home care, also a financial challenge given increasing average costs (£514). Work is underway to reduce unnecessary, historic, out of county placements but in- county capacity is currently limited and there is a lack of capacity for individualised services that are able to promote independence. The Council recognises the need to increase capacity to develop and implement delivery strategies and champion the changes to modernise all service areas.

Quality of services for users and carers

Improvements observed since the previous annual review

- Assessments and Waiting times for Assessments (D55), a new indicator, showed that performance at 70% is above the average of the comparator family. Assessment and review are vital care management processes in targeting and delivering appropriate and effective care.
- New posts of customer services officers have been established to signpost older people to services across the community. Signposting has been very successful and has provided a range of alternatives to people who do not meet the criteria for services provided by the Council.
- The percentage of people receiving a statement of their needs and how they will be met (PAF D39) has improved though from a very low level.

Areas for improvement

- Community equipment services (PAF D38 and 54) are not providing a timely service nor is the target in line with government expectations. The Council will be seeking to make significant improvements to reach outlying areas. Performance in delivery of equipment within seven days failed to meet the threshold.
- Care management in adult services faces some critical challenges; not least the need to improve the quality of care plans to better reflect needs and intended outcomes. The proportion of people receiving a statement of need should be at or near 100%, whereas the plan is low at 86%. Performance in reviewing (D40) has improved but at 50% is low against comparators (61.4% average) and the proposed improvement to 55% is a modest target); improvement in the completion of reviews would support and protect service users whilst ensuring the Council's resources are effectively deployed.
- In purchasing residential and nursing care, the proportion of places which are in single rooms has decreased, unlike in Councils in the comparator family and nationally. This is well below the national average and worse than all but one authority in the comparator family. Market management and further development of the relationship with the independent sector needs to ensure it responds to the changing nature of the demands for care. The Council recognises the need for privacy and dignity are examples of this, especially in view of the complex needs of many service users and the profile of these issues may need to be raised in arranging, contracting and commissioning services.

Fair access

Improvements observed since the previous annual review

- Carer assessments (PAF D42) showed significant improvement as a result of dedicated resources (up from 5.9 to 22.6%). However this is still below comparators and the plan shows little increase
- The planned reductions in the percentage of assessments leading to service (E50) were achieved, a significant issue which had formerly been a concern.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of assessments of carers needs to improve. The Older Peoples service inspection identified that carers' assessments need to be integrated into the assessment of need, in a holistic and meaningful manner, and the Council needs to address this whilst sustaining and improving the provision of assessments.

- The proposed replacement of the Management information system will improve the capacity to implement the Single Assessment Process with partners.
- There is a need to improve information and accessibility for older people and people from Black or minority ethnic communities (BME).

Capacity for improvement

Improvements observed since the previous annual review

- The approval by the Council of the business case for older people provides a good foundation on which to build change.
- Performance management processes and capacity are developing under the committed corporate objectives that have recognised the need for increased resources and improved training provision including enhancing performance management support at Directorate level. A training plan has been developed this year
- The Council's corporate objectives are supportive of many aspects underpinning social care improvement.
- There has been successful development of partnerships to deliver improved outcomes and this has been reflected in the use of HAF.
- The commitment of increased resources for staff training has been evidenced in the numbers of trained staff proportionate to several national targets, thus improving the quality of the Council's own skills base.

Areas for improvement

- The most significant challenge to improvement is in the ability of the Council and its partners to invest in older person's services, resourcing remaining low comparatively even after increases in the past two years. Capping has added further constraints, however, the Council has indicated its intent to prioritise social care over the next 3 years. The pace and scale of change needed for alternative, enabling services for older people and the move away from residential care presents capacity challenges for managers and partners, and will be heavily reliant on achieving robust, sustainable development of the independent sector. Dementia care strategies are a recognised focus and general commissioning strategies are being developed. The Council and Health partners will need to consider further capacity building and service improvement strategies and programmes across the care sector especially in view of the growing numbers of older people in rural areas.

- The modernising agenda for services for Learning Disabled people is stretched at management and implementation levels, threatening the capacity to provide detailed plans to improve services consistent with the Valuing People agenda and its targets.
- Stakeholder and Corporate plans need to ensure they promote inclusivity e.g. of lifelong learning, not only education of the young, and championing of the modernising agenda for people with Learning Disabilities.

Lynette Ranson
Business Relationship Manager, 21st August 2004

Performance Review Report for Herefordshire

Social Services: 2004

Summary of improvement recommendations

The review of social services in Herefordshire has highlighted the following performance issues that need to be addressed over the next twelve months. Further information about the standards against which social services are assessed is contained in the detailed report.

Services for Children and their families –

- Continuing to improve assessment practice and monitoring and evidencing improved outcomes for children including children in need
- Understanding and addressing the reasons for re-referrals, re-registrations, time on the child protection register.
- Increasing services for disabled children and their carers
- Improving life chances outcomes for looked after children
- Continuing to improve recruitment and retention of staff and foster carers
- Evidencing the Council's aspirations for excellence by building on performance strengths to extend them to the extent of the best performing Councils of similar profile, where appropriate.

Services for Adults -

- Promoting independence for younger adults and in particular increasing the pace of change to services for Learning disabled people
- Ensuring robust capacity building for older people's services, improving quality, delivering changes to Older Peoples services and implementing other aspects of the plan following the inspection in March 2004
- Implementing plans for improving the timely supply of items of equipment
- Improving care management and review processes
- Promoting greater stakeholder involvement

AUDIT COMMISSION HOUSING SELF-ASSESSMENT

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: SOCIAL CARE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING

CABINET

23RD SEPTEMBER, 2004

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To receive the outcome of the regular performance assessment for the service block for housing.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Recommendation

THAT Cabinet note the report and the implications for delivery locally.

Reasons

To enable Cabinet to understand the range of the assessment areas and the challenges in relation to improving housing services in Herefordshire. This is also necessary because the housing assessment is directly related to the CPA performance assessment for the Council.

Considerations

1. It is important to note that the strategic housing self-assessment has been confirmed as assessed at four against the key themes contained within the report. This reaffirms the excellent rating for housing and Herefordshire Council. It should be acknowledged that this is particularly pleasing given that the strategic housing services had only been in place for 18 months at the time of the inspection.
2. The report identifies areas for improvement which present challenges in the period ahead. These are completing the housing strategy, the pressure of the provision for homelessness, producing improved customer information, completing the best value review of private sector housing and conducting a private sector stock condition survey.
3. Housing Strategy - work is well underway on the housing strategy including essential housing needs information which will inform the final strategy.
4. Bed and Breakfast - Strategic Housing, through the use of capital funding and Supporting People revenue funding, is developing additional temporary accommodation to enable the Council to cease the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, however, homelessness trends indicate a need for continued

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Sue Fiennes, Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing on 01432 260039

investment in this area.

5. Additionally the Council is currently negotiating on the commencement of a homeless to home floating support service in partnership with Shelter which aims to prevent reporting homelessness and support homeless families.
6. Customer Leaflets - the need to expand and improve a range of public leaflets is recognised and this work is underway.
7. Private Sector Best Value Review - the review is progressing and will be concluded during Spring 2005.
8. Private Sector Stock Condition - resources have been identified to undertake a private sector stock condition survey which will be commissioned in the new year with a view to commencement in April 2005.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options

Risk Management

The development of these and other housing improvements is considered to be dependent on a range of resources including financial and every effort will be made to secure improvements wherever possible. This assessment means that the excellent score will remain effective for the purpose of CPA reporting.

Consultees

Staff, stakeholders and Strategic Housing Managers

Background Papers

Audit Commission - Regular Performance Assessment - Appendix 1

Regular Performance Assessment

Herefordshire Council

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Introduction to Regular Performance Assessment

- 1 As part of its commitment to strategic regulation, the Commission has developed a risk-based approach to ensure that inspection and improvement work is targeted where it will have most value. This approach will use 'regular performance assessment' (RPAs) of those council services for which the Commission has responsibility, primarily housing, environment and cultural services (previously 'libraries and leisure') as part of this process.
- 2 The Commission's view is that inspection scores should 'time out' after three years following their publication. This means that inspection scores which have not been replaced 'naturally' by further inspection activity in the same service or sub-service block, eg generated through improvement planning, will begin to fall out of the CPA numerical model in 2004 (other than for 'excellent' councils). This could lead to score changes without these necessarily reflecting real changes in service quality, up or down.
- 3 Regular performance assessments will enable the better use of resources by:
 - ◆ providing an opportunity to confirm existing CPA service scores (in housing, environment and culture) without the need for a full inspection; and
 - ◆ providing relationship managers with detailed, service-level information to inform the annual audit and inspection plan negotiations and so better target any improvement/inspection activity.
- 4 The detailed information collected through the RPA process, along with other available data, will help with complex decisions on inspection and improvement activity, leading to better risk-based planning and targeted and proportionate inspection and improvement activity. This approach will help to make the best use of councils' and the Commission's resources.
- 5 The approach to RPAs, based on a self-assessment against existing (and public) service criteria and key lines of enquiry, can of itself promote improvement and learning as councils identify their strengths and weaknesses at a service level. This will equip both councils and the Commission with evidence to undertake informed discussions in respect of which services and sub-services are working well and which are working less well.
- 6 RPAs have been designed in such a way as to also provide some insight, albeit at a high level, of the quality of service across the whole of the service area, including areas which have not been previously inspected.
- 7 This RPA covers the service block for Housing. This service block has three elements - Strategy and Enabling, Community Housing Services and Housing Management Services. All three elements will be covered for Councils with a housing stock, whereas for councils that have transferred their stock only the first two are relevant.
- 8 To ensure that the service score remains eligible to be included in the CPA improvement reporting in December 2004, the outcome of this RPA will either be:
 - ◆ to ratify that the score should stand; or
 - ◆ to recommend that an inspection should be carried out and reported on by 31 October 2004.

Background and Context for Herefordshire

- 9 The last housing service inspection – ‘Homelessness and Housing Advice’, dated August 2001 will time out during 2004. In that report the inspectors judged that the service was excellent and would probably improve further. There has been no further substantive service inspection in the last three years and there is no regular inspection due to take place and report by 31 October 2004.
- 10 In November 2002 the Council transferred its housing stock to a newly created registered social landlord – Herefordshire Housing. At the same time the Council contracted out Homelessness and Housing Advice services to the same housing company under an agency agreement.
- 11 In addition to Homelessness and Housing Advice covered by the previous inspection, this RPA will cover other areas of strategic and community housing in order to provide a more holistic view, albeit at a high level.

Executive Summary

- 12 We agree with the council’s self assessed scores of four¹ against Quality of Service, Demonstrated Improvement and Strategic Capacity to improve.
- 13 There is clear political and managerial support for a strong strategic housing function within the County. This role has become distinct since the stock transfer as a result of profile raising activities undertaken by the authority which have been designed to ensure a common purpose and understanding amongst officers, members and stakeholders. Since transfer, it is clear that the strategic housing section has established its own identity and it now has a full complement of staff in post.
- 14 The changing environment, future priorities and challenges facing the strategic housing section as they relate to Herefordshire are well understood by senior managers and members. Councillors are also very clear about their housing responsibilities since the stock transfer.
- 15 There is evidence of a joined up approach to the agendas of housing, health and social care, for example the Department of Health will be helping to fund a large planned extra care scheme in the County.
- 16 The Council demonstrates focus on local priorities, for example significant additional resources are being allocated to the older person’s client group. This is a demographically significant and growing sector of the population in Herefordshire.
- 17 Work is well under way for the new housing strategy with extensive, high quality housing needs data collected and priorities agreed. Negotiations are taking place with strategic partners to achieve equitable contributions for funding shared ambitions.

¹ As part of their self assessment, councils are asked to score each key element on a scale of 1 - 4, where 1 = mainly weaknesses, 2 = weaknesses outweigh strengths, 3 = strengths outweigh weaknesses and 4 = mainly strengths.

- 18 One of the greatest challenges is the increasing demand for homeless accommodation and services. This manifests itself currently in an over-reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation especially for single people, which is recognised as undesirable. There is a shortage of temporary accommodation for the homeless. The Council is responding positively to this challenge in a number of ways including the development of an innovative partnership with Shelter to provide support and independent legal advice to the homeless throughout the process from the decision on their homelessness to the provision of settled accommodation. A proactive private sector leasing initiative is also showing positive results.
- 19 Choice based lettings are proving to give greater choice and empowerment to customers and the Council were one of the original 27 pilots for this initiative. Positive and negative feedback and experience gained by the Council and it's partners since the start of the scheme gathered from users, staff and stakeholders is now being used to enhance the service and to deploy resources to best effect.
- 20 The Supporting People Inspection in September 2003 gave uncertain prospects for improvement. The Council have responded positively to this with a robust implementation plan to take forward the recommendations, many of which are now in place.
- 21 There is clear understanding of the challenging issues facing the private sector renewal section and activities are targeted and prioritised accordingly. For example the two lowest scoring wards in the county under the indices of deprivation, are proactively targeted for resources. The Housing Renewal policy published in 2003 actively promotes the maintenance, improvement and energy efficiency of all residential property. The Council is aware that its private sector stock condition survey is out of date and has plans to address this in the current financial year.
- 22 A number of activities are designed to achieve value for money in strategic housing services, for example best value reviews, robust assessment of costs against service, maximisation of access to alternative sources of funding and cost benefit justification of decisions such as recruitment.
- 23 Performance management improvements have been made in the last eighteen months, with a head of performance appointment made and service managers trained and fully engaged. As a result of this the Council can now readily identify good and poor performance quickly and respond appropriately.
- 24 The strategic housing section clearly has a challenging agenda but, based on Herefordshire's current plans, is well placed to improve the way it works and the services it provides to local people.

Judgement

- 25 Based on the evidence obtained during the performance assessment we have concluded that in respect of the service block for housing, the service score given to Hereford Council for their last housing service inspection – 'Homelessness and Housing Advice' in August 2001 should remain effective for the purposes of CPA improvement reporting.

Mandy Day – Housing Inspector

Date of inspection: 18 May 2004

Email: m-day@audit-commission.gov.uk

Report

Quality of Service		
Strategy and Enabling	Strengths	Areas of improvement
<p>1. Create a well-informed and viable housing strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 'Herefordshire Plan' in place, revised 2003, – overarching community strategy. Plan contains ten Ambitions – one of which is 'Meet Herefordshire's accommodation needs'. All Housing related plans and strategies contribute to this ambition. ◆ Partnership based 'Housing Ambition group' (linked to ambition in Herefordshire Plan) responsible for producing Housing Strategy. ◆ Housing Strategy in place since 2002/03 deemed 'very good' by GOWM. ◆ Full time Housing Market Research Officer employed ◆ Extensive, high quality, housing needs data collected (26 local surveys since 2001, recent partnership rough sleepers count). ◆ Currently recruiting additional resource to help deliver homelessness action plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Current housing strategy document is out of date - pre-dates stock transfer - but - New Housing Strategy being written to be Fit for Purpose. GO-WM confirm date for submission of new draft strategy late May/Early June 2004.

Strategy and Enabling	Strengths	Areas of improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Priority given in housing strategy to supplement mainstream funding with other sources. ◆ Active working with strategic partners to achieve equitable contributions for funding shared ambitions. ◆ Plethora of consultative and informative meetings, surveys and fora in a variety of forms to involve users and stakeholders in determining priorities. 	
<p>37</p> <p>2. Deliver the housing strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Following options appraisal – stock transfer - set out in Housing Investment Strategy. ◆ Achieved transfer of stock to Herefordshire Housing in November 2002. ◆ Ongoing performance management arrangements in place to ensure that tenant promises are met. ◆ Many multi agency partnerships in place, both delivering services and initiatives such as energy efficiency. ◆ Structures exist to monitor progress against targets and KPIs, including Scrutiny Committee, Herefordshire Partnership Management Board, Directorate Mgt teams, Staff Review and Development meetings and 1-2-1s. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ SMART action plans exist within old housing strategy but now out of date – latest 2002/03. New action plans being developed in conjunction with new strategy.

Strategy and Enabling	Strengths	Areas of improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Council driving diversity agenda, researching needs of significant groups, especially travellers and E European temp agricultural workers. 	
<p>3. As part of the housing strategy, seek to match the supply of appropriate housing with local need</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Corporate 'Development Impact Group' in place consisting of planners, legal, strategic housing and others, to maximise opportunities for planning gain. ◆ Strategic housing and Ambition group contributed to production of UDP. ◆ SPG produced 2001 to enhance delivery of affordable housing, to be updated 2004. ◆ Positive use of S106 agreements has provided additional affordable housing in the county. ◆ Good relationships exit with RSL partners. ◆ Council are developing a 5 year Capital expenditure programme to link with development programme and provide steer for RSLs on priorities. This should help to achieve a needs led rather than site led environment. ◆ Award winning empty property strategy. ◆ Proactively seeking to meet needs of different client groups eg LCHO for people with LD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Overall shortage of affordable housing in the county. ◆ Some key members of staff in the enabling team were lost and some new members have only limited development experience.

Strategy and Enabling	Strengths	Areas of improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reviewing sheltered accommodation with a view to remodelling/extra care. ◆ Researching CBL data to assess whether best use of stock being made. ◆ Learning from experience, the Council is regrouping areas of choice in CBL to better facilitate development of areas highlighted in UDP. ◆ DOH funding has been successfully sought and obtained to help deliver a large extra care scheme in the county. ◆ The enabling team has been restructured to ensure the delivery of this high profile project. 	
<p>4. Establish effective strategic planning arrangements for housing-related support services funded through Supporting People</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Supporting People Inspection in September 2003 gave 'Good' rating for services. ◆ Supporting People Shadow Strategy rated Good by ODPM with clear links to other plans. ◆ Services developed and review process under way. ◆ Positive partnerships with providers. ◆ Good progress in drafting the 5 year strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Supporting People Inspection in September 2003 gave 'uncertain' prospects for improvement but the Council has responded positively to this.

Strategy and Enabling	Strengths	Areas of improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A robust implementation plan has taken forward the recommendations of the SP inspection last September and has either addressed or is in the process of addressing the perceived weaknesses. ◆ Innovative partnership being developed with Shelter to support the homeless throughout the process, leveraging in independent legal advice and assistance. 	

Community Housing Services HOUSING NEEDS	Strengths	Areas of Improvement
<p>1. Develop and publish the homelessness strategy and update it regularly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Extensive review of homelessness informed the strategy. ◆ Homelessness Strategy produced through consultative process with stakeholders, partners and homeless people. ◆ Local PSA entered into to bring faster improvement in priority area to reduce repeat homelessness. 	
<p>2. Provide appropriate support to homeless people and those at risk of homelessness (across all tenures) to help them sustain tenancies or home ownership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Previous AC inspection complimented customer focus. ◆ Homelessness and Housing Advice contracted out to Herefordshire Housing at stock transfer. Existing staff transferred with service. ◆ Homepoint established to be central info source. ◆ Offices located in main towns, surgeries in others. ◆ New service standards being developed. ◆ PIs for advice services under review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Service standards developed and on display but out of date. ◆ Statistics reflect increasing use of B&B in first three quarters of 2003/04.

Community Housing Services HOUSING NEEDS	Strengths	Areas of Improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Range of written information, available in different formats including access to info in different languages. ◆ Plans to develop Housing Advice Strategy for the County. ◆ Council undertaking review of B&B, hostel accommodation. ◆ Plans to locate options officer in each Homepoint office. ◆ SMART actions/targets in homelessness action plan to reduce/prevent homelessness. ◆ Council hold quarterly review meetings with Agency to ensure that quality of service is maintained following the transfer of a historically good service to their contractor. 	

Community Housing Services	Strengths	Areas of Improvement
<p>HOUSING NEEDS</p> <p>3. Administer homelessness applications in an efficient, effective and sensitive manner and in line with the relevant legislation, Codes of Guidance on homelessness and Allocations and the Priority Needs Orders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Protocols in place with relevant agencies including RSL forum, Herefordshire Housing, MAPPP. ◆ Homeless decisions audited and appeals/review process in place. ◆ Hostels subject to inspection against a standard. ◆ Homeless applicants receive priority cards for CBL. 	
<p>4. Ensure the availability of temporary accommodation of a suitable nature and location and support the needs of those placed in such accommodation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Development in progress to provide additional temporary accommodation, with SP funding for tenancy support. ◆ Hostel standards inspected by Private Sector Housing Enforcement team. ◆ Plans to decommission accommodation with shared facilities. ◆ Length of stay in B&B reducing (BVPI183a and b). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Despite improving BVPIs, recognised over-reliance on B&B for temporary accommodation especially for singles. ◆ Shortage of temporary accommodation and some accommodation still in use with shared facilities.

Community Housing Services HOUSING NEEDS	Strengths	Areas of Improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Floating support services provided for homeless. ◆ Private sector leasing scheme proactively targets owners of empty homes as identified by Council tax records. This has resulted in additional units of accommodation being made available to the homeless. 	
<p>45. Effectively administer the local registration scheme for housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Consultants engaged January 2004 to review Allocations policy (following stock transfer and CBL) - new policy scheduled for consideration by members in June. ◆ Agreement in place for common CBL based housing register between the Council and five HAs. ◆ Information for applicants readily accessible to those with English as first language, including Braille. ◆ Quarterly monitoring reports produced. ◆ Appeals process in place. ◆ Applicants use Homepoint to keep themselves informed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No indication on Homepoint literature 'How to apply for a home in Herefordshire' or 'Complaints and Appeals' of how to obtain the information in other languages. ◆ Some partner HA's housing a greater percentage of homeless (priority cards) than others.

Community Housing Services	HOUSING NEEDS	Strengths	Areas of Improvement
<p>6. Secure settled accommodation according to local allocation policies which, as a minimum, comply with the relevant Housing Acts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ All five partner landlords have committed their whole stock to CBL. ◆ Applicants can access housing in the whole county from one point – no need for nominations. ◆ Little or no matching required as bidding process negates need. ◆ A project board with all partners represented oversees the effectiveness of CBL, receives performance reports and develops policy/enhancements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Growing understanding of support needs through CBL but still requiring further work. 	
<p>7. Increase choice to housing applicants in accordance with the target set by ODPM of all authorities having a Choice- Based Letting scheme in place by 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ CBL in place since 2002. ◆ Appropriate mix and balance of housing sought through SPG. ◆ Homebuy, DIYSO and mortgage rescue schemes in place and in development. ◆ Homepoint used to promote S/O vacancies. 		

Community Housing Services HOUSING NEEDS	Strengths	Areas of Improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 'You@home'scheme developed to promote cross tenure grant aided repairs and adaptations. 	
PRIVATE SECTOR FUNCTIONS	Strengths	Areas of improvement
1. Set a long term strategic approach to improve living conditions in the private sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Private Sector Stock Condition Survey produced 2001. ◆ Housing Renewal Policy published March 2003 for 03-06, supports Housing Strategy and Herefordshire Plan in promoting maintenance improvement and energy efficiency of all residential property. ◆ Targets set for BVPI 62 and 64 and also for local PIs. ◆ Two lowest scoring wards in indices of deprivation targeted for resources. ◆ Home Improvement Agency in Place (Anchor). ◆ Empty Property Strategy identifies lower than average percentage (1.9) of empty properties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Private sector stock condition survey is out of date and has not been updated on an annual basis, although there are plans to address this during 2004/05.

<p>Community Housing Services</p> <p>PRIVATE SECTOR FUNCTIONS</p> <p>2. Engage effectively with residents and landlords about the management and maintenance of their properties</p>	<p>Strengths</p>	<p>Areas of Improvement</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Active Private landlords' forum in place, meeting every two to three months. ◆ Systematic customer satisfaction surveys from HMO landlords and tenants used to gauge effectiveness of financial assistance and enforcement processes. ◆ Feedback from users receiving financial assistance and in relation to contractor quality. ◆ Complaints used to drive improvements to services ◆ HMO registration scheme. ◆ Inspection of HMO's and privately rented accommodation planned/carried out on risk basis. ◆ Landlords code of standards for private rented housing. ◆ Tenants consulted and informed when enforcement action taken against their landlords. ◆ Efforts made by private sector renewal section to engage with hard to reach groups appropriate to local context eg travellers, East European migrant workers. 	

Community Housing Services	Strengths	Areas of Improvement
<p>PRIVATE SECTOR FUNCTIONS</p> <p>3. Provide and manage financial and other forms of assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Housing Renewal policy sets priorities. ◆ County wide HIA with SP funding and strategic housing budget funding. ◆ BVR under way - private sector housing - will explore VFM and cost effectiveness. ◆ Local PI Targets set and met for grant administration process. ◆ Grant procedures have appropriate audit and authorisation channels. ◆ Annual audit checks on grant awards. ◆ Prince 2 awareness training corporately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Too early to see results from the best value review of private sector housing.
<p>4. Deliver an effective enforcement approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Policy framework in place for private sector enforcement. ◆ HMOs and other private rented accommodation proactively inspected on a risk basis. ◆ Income generated from eg HMO registration scheme used to supplement services (£28k during Year 1). 	

Community Housing Services	Strengths	Areas of Improvement
<p>PRIVATE SECTOR FUNCTIONS</p> <p>5. Secure effective partnership working</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Multiple partnerships in place. ◆ Ward based renewal initiative includes Anchor, You@Home, Energy Advice Centre, OTs and others. 	
Demonstrated Improvement		
<p>49</p> <p>Strategy and Enabling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Restructured and augmented Housing Policy and Strategy Team following stock transfer, including Information and Performance Officer to improve performance management. ◆ Ensures influence on regional agenda by representation on key groups of key housing and planning officers. ◆ Forward capital investment planning and prioritisation shared with key partners to encourage response to Councils strategic priorities. ◆ Strategic housing managers now sit on housing ambition group to develop further understanding of roles and opportunities. 	

<p>Community Housing Services PRIVATE SECTOR FUNCTIONS</p>	<p>Strengths</p>	<p>Areas of Improvement</p>
<p>Community Housing Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ As a result of a recommendation in AC Housing and Homelessness Report to have better representation from elected members and external stakeholders on BVRs, all BVRs since included broader representation. ◆ Electronic service delivery achieved in SPLS. 	
<p>Community Housing Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Comprehensive improvement plan implemented by Supporting People Team following inspection last September results include more focussed priorities, new provider forum, process maps. ◆ New Services commissioned for homeless families including 34 units of furnished temporary accommodation. ◆ Recycled SP funding has enabled support for six additional units of transitional housing for women fleeing domestic violence. ◆ Client specific housing plans developed eg LD housing Strategy, others in progress eg mental health. Offenders. ◆ Choice based lettings one of 27 pilot authorities. 	

Strategic Capacity to Improve	
Ambition	Specific long term ambitions for housing clearly expressed and supported by a robust corporate planning framework.
Priorities	Directorate Service and Improvement Plan reflects priorities derived from formation of housing and other related strategies. These in turn show how stakeholders were involved and consulted.
Focus	Improvements in Strategic Housing shaped around customer needs. Focus maintained by inclusion of strategic housing as a standard agenda item on directorate management team, by member briefings and housing newsletters.
Capacity	Consultants and secondments used to augment capacity in Strategic housing. Advantage taken of joint funding opportunities to increase capacity eg Homepoint. Capital receipt from stock transfer will assist strategic housing to meet capital investment priorities.
Performance Management	Corporately new Performance Management Framework launched May 2003 in response to CPA, and new post Head of Performance Management appointed September 2003. Reporting structures and systems in place to manage organisations and individuals. Consistent approach to PM now embedded and all managers trained. Performance information routinely provided to members and service users. Staff appraisal system in place with team and individual targets linked to national and local PI's for the service.

Strategic Capacity to Improve	
	<p>Risk Management Strategy in place, linked to service planning. BVR for Enabling complete, BVR for Strategic housing in progress.</p>
Learning	<p>Yearly staff opinion survey conducted, results collated, shared and improvement suggestions made Training needs analyses conducted and factored into personal development plans. Themed Directorate Managers conferences held. In January Strategic housing presented half day session for members on their roles post transfer. Feedback and consultation process in place plus directorate employs a complaints officer.</p>
Future Plans	<p>To become 'excellent' in CPA terms at next assessment Influence on Regional Housing Strategy via engagement Ability to adapt plans to changing circumstances eg 5 Year capital investment plan, reviewed in light of loss of LASHG.</p>

Appendices

Documents reviewed

Before going on site we reviewed various documents that the council provided for us. These included:

- ◆ their self assessment;
- ◆ a variety of strategy documents including housing investment strategy, homeless strategy and action plan, and the Herefordshire Plan;
- ◆ Supporting People Inspection Improvement Plan;
- ◆ service documents including policies, protocols, information leaflets and newsletters;
- ◆ choice based lettings partnering agreement;
- ◆ relevant committee reports and extracts;
- ◆ performance reports; and
- ◆ minutes of key meetings.

Reality checks undertaken

When we went on site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. Our reality checks included:

- ◆ interviews with staff members;
- ◆ visit to Homepoint offices;
- ◆ tour of schemes and developments including Pomona Place;
- ◆ telephone calls to stakeholders; and
- ◆ a review of performance information available through other agencies, eg BVPIs.

List of people interviewed

Sue Fiennes	Service Director
Richard Gabb	Head of Strategic Housing
Adam Russell	Housing Strategy Manager
Jane Thomas	Enabling Manager
Denise Bradley Lloyd	Private Sector Housing Manager

