

A G E N D A

Strategic Monitoring Committee

Date: **Friday, 14th October, 2005**

Time: **10.00 a.m.**

Place: **The Council Chamber,
Brockington, 35 Hafod Road,
Hereford**

Notes: Please note the **time, date** and **venue** of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

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**County of Herefordshire
District Council**

AGENDA

for the Meeting of the Strategic Monitoring Committee

To: Councillor T.M. James (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs. P.A. Andrews (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors B.F. Ashton, W.L.S. Bowen, H. Bramer, A.C.R. Chappell,
J.H.R. Goodwin, Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes, J.P. Thomas and W.J.S. Thomas

	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive apologies for absence.	
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest by Members in respect of items on this agenda.	
3. MINUTES To approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 26th September, 2005	1 - 4
4. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY To consider suggestions from members of the public on issues the Committee could scrutinise in the future.	
5. STAFF OPINION SURVEY 2005 To provide an update on the initial findings of the Staff Opinion Survey 2005.	5 - 8
6. BUDGET CONSIDERATION 2006/07 To respond to a request from the Chairman of Strategic Monitoring Committee for clarification of the role of Scrutiny in relation to the preparation of the annual revenue and capital budgets.	9 - 14
7. CAPITAL STRATEGY To note the current position regarding the Council's revised Capital Strategy.	15 - 18
8. BEST VALUE REVIEWS To note the position in relation to Best Value reviews.	19 - 20

9. REVIEW OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE PLAN	21 - 22
To consider the work undertaken to date on the review of the Herefordshire Plan, and the next steps in the review process.	
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To note the terms of reference of reviews of the Council's Strategic Service Delivery Partnership and ICT services.	
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To consider the work being undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees.	

PUBLIC INFORMATION

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Council has established Scrutiny Committees for Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing, Childrens' Services, Community Services, Environment, and Health. A Strategic Monitoring Committee scrutinises corporate matters and co-ordinates the work of these Committees.

The purpose of the Committees is to ensure the accountability and transparency of the Council's decision making process.

The principal roles of Scrutiny Committees are to

- Help in developing Council policy
- Probe, investigate, test the options and ask the difficult questions before and after decisions are taken
- Look in more detail at areas of concern which may have been raised by the Cabinet itself, by other Councillors or by members of the public
- "call in" decisions - this is a statutory power which gives Scrutiny Committees the right to place a decision on hold pending further scrutiny.
- Review performance of the Council
- Conduct Best Value reviews
- Undertake external scrutiny work engaging partners and the public

Formal meetings of the Committees are held in public and information on your rights to attend meetings and access to information are set out overleaf

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Public Involvement at Scrutiny Committee Meetings

You can contact Councillors and Officers at any time about Scrutiny Committee matters and issues which you would like the Scrutiny Committees to investigate.

There are also two other ways in which you can directly contribute at Herefordshire Council's Scrutiny Committee meetings.

1. Identifying Areas for Scrutiny

At the meeting the Chairman will ask the members of the public present if they have any issues which they would like the Scrutiny Committee to investigate, however, there will be no discussion of the issue at the time when the matter is raised. Councillors will research the issue and consider whether it should form part of the Committee's work programme when compared with other competing priorities.

Please note that the Committees can only scrutinise items which fall within their specific remit (see below). If a matter is raised which falls within the remit of another Scrutiny Committee then it will be noted and passed on to the relevant Chairman for their consideration.

2. Questions from Members of the Public for Consideration at Scrutiny Committee Meetings and Participation at Meetings

You can submit a question for consideration at a Scrutiny Committee meeting so long as the question you are asking is directly related to an item listed on the agenda. If you have a question you would like to ask then please submit it **no later than two working days before the meeting** to the Committee Officer. This will help to ensure that an answer can be provided at the meeting. Contact details for the Committee Officer can be found on the front page of this agenda.

Generally, members of the public will also be able to contribute to the discussion at the meeting. This will be at the Chairman's discretion.

(Please note that the Scrutiny Committees are not able to discuss questions relating to personal or confidential issues.)

Remits of Herefordshire Council's Scrutiny Committees

Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing

Statutory functions for adult social services including:

Learning Disabilities

Strategic Housing

Supporting People

Public Health

Children's Services

Provision of services relating to the well-being of children including education, health and social care.

Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Libraries

Cultural Services including heritage and tourism

Leisure Services

Parks and Countryside

Community Safety

Economic Development

Youth Services

Health

Planning, provision and operation of health services affecting the area

Health Improvement

Services provided by the NHS

Environment

Environmental Issues

Highways and Transportation

Strategic Monitoring Committee

Corporate Strategy and Finance

Resources

Corporate and Customer Services

Human Resources

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- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting. (A list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
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- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the Council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title.
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COUNTY OF HEREFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

BROCKINGTON, 35 HAFOD ROAD, HEREFORD.

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COUNTY OF HEREFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of Strategic Monitoring Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 26th September, 2005 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor T.M. James (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs P.A. Andrews (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs. P.A. Andrews, B.F. Ashton, W.L.S. Bowen, H. Bramer, J.H.R. Goodwin, Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes, J.P. Thomas and W.J.S. Thomas

In attendance: Councillors P.J. Edwards, D.J. Fleet, Mrs. J.P. French, R.I. Matthews, J.C. Mayson (Cabinet Member Rural Regeneration and Strategy), Mrs. J.E. Pemberton, R.J. Phillips (Leader of the Council), Ms. A.M. Toon, D.B. Wilcox and R.M. Wilson

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor W.J.S.Thomas declared a personal interest in Agenda item 4: Call-in of Cabinet decision on relocation of the livestock market.

21. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 1st July, 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22. CALL IN OF CABINET DECISION TO RELOCATE THE LIVESTOCK MARKET

(Councillor W.J.S Thomas declared a personal interest.)

The Committee considered Cabinet's decision on the relocation of the livestock market which had been called in by three Members of the Committee.

On 1 September, 2005 Cabinet had identified a preferred site for a new rural business park which would incorporate a new livestock market in a location at Stretton Sugwas on land owned by the Duchy of Cornwall Estate. Cabinet's decision notice and the report made to Cabinet as amended at the meeting were appended to the report.

The stated reasons for the call-in were:

- There are alternative sites.
- Environmental Issues - flooding
- No survey has been done to discover if rural business units needed.
- There is no definition of 'Rural Industries'
- Cost. There are no indications of the cost to the Council of developing a site outside our ownership.

At the Chairman's invitation the Leader of the Council made some opening remarks. He explained that it was important to recognise that Councillor J.C. Mayson, Cabinet Member (Rural Regeneration and Strategy) had only recently been given the responsibility for managing the relocation of the livestock market as part of his Cabinet portfolio following the illness and subsequent untimely death of the late Councillor G.V. Hyde. He then emphasised that in debating relocation it was important that there was acceptance of the two principles which the Council, for a number of years, had agreed should underpin the relocation of the livestock market: that the market should be relocated and a site identified to the north west of Hereford City (the north west quadrant).

The Cabinet Member (Rural Regeneration and Strategy), reiterated that as he had newly assumed responsibility for the relocation of the livestock market he was aware that he was not as familiar with the detailed history as some other Members present. He placed on record his concern about the criticism which some Members had made of the Duchy of Cornwall Estate, and disassociated himself from that criticism. He then advised the Committee that he would be recommending to Cabinet that the consideration of a site should start again, with certain provisos.

It transpired that since the identification of a preferred site a number of other options had emerged in the north west quadrant. Councillor Mayson reported that he intended to propose to Cabinet that all options in the north west quadrant should be examined with full public consultation. He cautioned, however, that whatever location was ultimately chosen it was likely that someone would object. It was to be hoped that the public consultation would, however, help to reduce discontent.

In the course of discussion the following principal points were made:

- That the Hospital Farm site at Burghill which had at one time been identified as the preferred site had been ruled out, apparently for the sole reason of public opposition, yet even though the site at Stretton Sugwas was attracting more opposition Cabinet seemed willing to pursue it.
- That whilst much of the business for the livestock market would be generated along the A438 Brecon Road it was important that there was also a convenient link to the A49.
- That a report to the Unitary Development Plan City Centre Working Party in February 2001 had identified some 45 sites and examined each in detail. Some were in the north west quadrant most of which had defects. The report had ruled out the land at Stretton Sugwas now identified by Cabinet as the preferred option. The Cabinet Member indicated that he was aware of the report but reiterated that the search for a site should be in the north west quadrant. Hereford Market Auctioneers had clearly indicated this to be their preferred location.
- Councillor R.I. Matthews Local Member for Credenhill Ward welcomed the statement of the Cabinet Member (Rural Regeneration and Strategy) that he intended to investigate alternative sites and consult. He expressed regret that this had not happened in the first place and stressed that it was essential to clearly explain proposals to the public and get public support. There were very strong arguments such as visual impact and noise which meant that the site at Stretton Sugwas should not be pursued.
- The Leader of the Council commented that the Unitary Development Plan which had been drawn up following wide consultation had reflected the view that the

livestock market should be relocated to the north west quadrant. He noted the changes facing agriculture but observed that the livestock industry remained important for the County. The Council was legally obliged to provide a market and would do so. It was his hope that in relocating the market consideration could also be given to whether anything could be done to enhance the contribution to the economic vitality of Hereford City and the County. Wherever the livestock market was located he hoped that there would be a park and ride facility to ensure that the link between the city and the market was maintained.

- That the earlier assessment in 2001 of options to the north west of the City had finally concluded that there were two possibilities: land to the west of Beech Business Park and the Hospital Farm site at Burghill. However, the Beech Business Park site was on the Yazor gravels and a Councillor stated that the Environment Agency had indicated that it would oppose any site on the gravels. The Hospital Farm site was the best option.
- That it was important to see what other uses could be associated with the relocated market.
- That if the livestock market was relocated to the Hospital Farm site consideration should also be given to developing the site as a park and ride site.
- There was support for the conclusion reached in 2001 that any site should be in Council ownership or readily capable of acquisition at or close to agricultural land value with limited hope value attached.
- Concern was expressed at the delay in identifying a site for the livestock market and that as a consequence the development of the Edgar Street Grid, which was of such significance to the City, was also being delayed. In response the Cabinet Member advised that he would hope to complete the consultation process on options within six months.
- It was suggested that a rural business park as proposed at Stretton Sugwas would not be viable. In reply the Cabinet Member commented that that would be a matter for the Duchy of Cornwall Estate.
- Councillor Ms A.M. Toon as a Local Member for Three Elms Ward expressed concerns about the Stretton Sugwas proposal and emphasised the need for openness in discussion of the options. She also suggested that there would be benefit in a seminar for Members to ensure that they too were fully aware of the issues.
- That the report to Cabinet on 1st September had not been detailed enough and any report analysing future options needed to be detailed and robust, including a clear assessment of the costs of each of the options and in particular the cost to the Council of developing a site outside its ownership.

RESOLVED:

- (a) **that Cabinet be recommended to start again, as the Cabinet Member (Rural Regeneration and Strategy) had indicated that he proposed to do, and consider alternative sites, with full public consultation;**

and

- (b) in considering alternative sites Cabinet needed to be mindful of environmental issues such as flooding and terrain, consider carefully whether it was realistic to seek to link a livestock market to a rural business park and ensure that the report to Cabinet on options would be detailed and robust including a clear assessment of the costs of each of the options and in particular the cost to the Council of developing a site outside its ownership.

The meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

STAFF OPINION SURVEY 2005

Report By: Head of Human Resources

Wards Affected

None

Purpose

1. To provide an update on the initial findings of the Staff Opinion Survey 2005. A headline report with benchmark data will be available mid-late October 2005.

Financial Implications

None.

Considerations

2. The Staff Opinion Survey 2005 was run during July. In previous years the survey had been conducted in September. It was moved this year so that the results could be used as part of the corporate planning process.
3. The Staff Opinion Survey is one of a range of measures used within the Council to monitor and manage human resources performance. Other measures include Leaver Surveys, Corporate Health Best Value Performance Indicators (e.g. Sickness Absence, Ill Health and Early Retirements, Equalities) and local indicators (e.g. Staff Review and Development completion, labour turnover).
4. 40% (918) of employees took part in the survey compared to 38% in 2004 and a fifth returned the survey form electronically using this new way to give views. There is a 95% statistical probability that the results are within +/- 2.5 percentage points of the true proportions of opinions of all employees within the Council. For example, if 65% of respondents agreed with a statement, it means that there is a 95% probability that between 62.5% and 67.5% overall agreed with the statement.
5. The work the Council has done and is doing to improve has clearly made a difference to what employees think. In many areas of the survey the message from employees is that things are getting better. Some of the improvements over the past year which have led to the positive results have included
 - A Pay and Workforce Development Strategy is now in place, around the themes of Leadership, Organisation Development, Skills Development, Pay and Reward, Resourcing.
 - Job Evaluation and Single Status have now been implemented with a range of support mechanisms in place for employees.
 - Management Competencies are in place and are being rolled out.
 - Staff Review and Development has improved hugely – now well over three

Further information on the subject of this report is available from David Johnson Head of Human Resources on 01432 383055

quarters of employees have a review at least annually. The SRD process is firmly linked to the Council's performance management cycle.

- A Council-wide review of recruitment has been undertaken with a recruitment centre being planned for launch in April 2006.
- Improvements to communications have been implemented, for example, the Chief Executive and Leader now regularly hold Talking Point sessions for all employees. Further improvements are being planned.
- The Council has signed up to achieving the Investor in People Standard.
- A programme of Diversity awareness is in place.
- A new Directorate structure is taking shape, and is being fully communicated to employees as things progress.

6. Some of the areas where responses by employees are significantly more positive than in either of the last 2 years are:

- More employees think the Council is good to work for – 65% against 59% in 2004, and more agreed that morale in their work area is generally good.
- More employees think that their targets and standards are achievable – 67% against 61% in 2004 and improved over previous years.
- More people are confident that they will still be working for the Council in 12 months time – 61% in 2005 against 51% in 2004, and more agreed that the Council is committed to supporting employees through job evaluation implementation.
- More people agree communications in their service are working well - 63% in 2005 against 58% in 2004. Over two thirds agree that the organisation communicates with employees regularly when going through change, 69% against 63% in 2004.
- Confidence in immediate managers continues to be high. Confidence in senior management has improved with 40% stating they feel senior management decision making is fair compared to 31% in 2004.
- Over two thirds agreed they have a Staff Review and Development discussion annually, and the quality of the discussion has also improved. Employees were also far more confident that there were opportunities for development.
- More agreed that the Council takes into account the views and diverse needs of its service users, that the Council is open, honest, and accountable to all its customers and that customer/client relationships are well managed.

7. There were two main areas where employees said things had not improved:

- In 2004 62% felt that they could meet job requirements without working long hours, compared with 56% in 2005 (mostly in the mid/upper pay ranges).

- Fewer were satisfied with their physical work environment –70% in 2004, 65% in 2005.
8. Staff Opinion Surveys are carried out annually by many Local Authorities. To get a picture of how we fare by comparison, the results are checked annually against other Councils. We compare well against the average for local government in many areas, including:
- the Council being a good employer, and providing recognition for a job well done;
 - understanding about job priorities and objectives, being kept informed about plans and priorities and being involved in decisions and being consulted over changes;
 - training opportunities, having adequate resources for the job, and physical work conditions, work-life balance.
9. The areas where we do not seem to compare so well are:
- employees are not so inclined to tell people the Council is a good place to work;
 - equal treatment irrespective of gender;
 - opportunities for personal development within the Council, earnings levels, and intention to stay with the Council in 12 months time (though turnover at around 9% - significantly below the Unitary Council average of 15.2%).
10. A Core News Special was issued to employees at the end of September. A presentation on the main findings and priorities for improvement will be given to the Managers Forum on 12 October. Managers will again be asked to involve employees in giving ideas on how they think things can and should be improved. Managers will be asked to ensure output is fed into the Service Planning process, to shape and deliver improvements for service users, as part of *Action for a Better Herefordshire* summed up by the Ps and Qs - Putting people first, Providing for our communities, Promoting the County, Protecting our future, Quality life in a Quality County.

Risk Management

11. The Survey is a key management process, part of the Council's performance management. It contributes significantly to developing the Corporate Plan, Pay and Workforce Development Strategy and shaping priorities for management action. If the Survey contents are not noted and publicised, it may lead to employee's lack of confidence in the Survey (ie their views) not being taken seriously, and this may impact adversely on motivation, morale and consequently, performance.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the content of this report be noted.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Employers Organisation for Local Government, *People Skills Scoreboard 2005*.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from David Johnson Head of Human Resources on 01432 383055

BUDGET CONSIDERATION 2006/07**Report By: Chief Executive****Wards Affected**

County-wide

Purpose

1. To respond to a request from the Chairman of Strategic Monitoring Committee for clarification of the role of Scrutiny in relation to the preparation of the annual revenue and capital budgets.

Background

2. The consideration of the annual revenue and capital budget needs to be seen in the context of the Medium Term Financial Plan which was initially prepared for the period 2004/05 to 2007/08 and which recognised that investment in the order of £7 million would be required over the four year period. Priority is reflected in the Plan as set out in Appendix 1 which is an extract from the revenue budget report to Council made in March, 2005.
3. The position is made more complicated by the uncertainty surrounding the position regarding central government support. The initial planning in relation to the 2005/06 revenue budget was based on the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 2004. At face value, it did seem likely that there would be some conflict between the need for investment in services reflecting the Council's priorities, the settlement itself and the balancing need to counter increases in council tax. In the event, the significant savings on which the Council consulted based on the Comprehensive Spending Review 2004 were offset by a number of injections into the revenue budget, the majority of which were expressed at the time to be for the financial year 2005/06 only.
4. The further influencing factor is the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). Although the Council maintained its position as a "Good" authority at the last review, the revised methodology reflected in CPA 2005 could see this performance re-assessed at the "Fair" level. The Council faces significant expenditure pressures if it is to maintain its performance in relation to the Environment block of services and still further investment if it to improve its performance in relation to Social Care (Adults) and Social Care (Children). Whilst it is important that the Council continues to examine areas for efficiency and for service improvement, it needs to continue to apply resources to achieving its priorities through its Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy.
5. Other performance considerations include the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA). Such performance reward grant as is received, in the two years starting in 2005/06, will be available to assist in securing wider performance gains in non-LPSA services in addition to additional pump priming the second round of LPSA. The regular LPSA reports have been prepared on the assumption that all PRG earned from LPSA1 will be invested in LPSA 2. The one-off nature of this grant means that it

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
N.M. Pringle, Chief Executive, on 01432 260044

is inadvisable to use it to offset council tax increases or fund recurring spending commitments.

6. The clear pressures on the budget over the remainder of the Medium Term Financial Plan period to 2007/08 make the alignment of budget resources to the Council's objectives absolutely essential. The recent announcement of the postponement of the Comprehensive Spending Review until the summer of 2007 would indicate little if any change to the underlying resourcing of the Council through Government grant until at least 2008/09. The current consultation on formula grant allocation may however have an impact on the level of Revenue Support Grant. With limitations placed on the ability to raise additional resources through council tax, a re-alignment of existing patterns of spending will also be required. Although the Service Improvement Project will remain a key driver in re-engineering the way services are delivered, a more fundamental review of base budget provision will also be required. The review will need to reflect a number of elements to ensure that it is robust and challenging including:
 - the statutory requirement to provide current services or otherwise and the **level** of statutory provision in some high profile services
 - the extent to which current service provision contributes to the key priorities of the Council as reflected in the forthcoming Corporate Plan for 2006 - 2009
 - opportunities to redirect spending on service areas which are not considered to be a high corporate priority to higher priority areas
 - opportunity to increase income by reviewing charges including charges for discretionary services where appropriate
 - the identification of efficiency savings within services with no visible impact on service performance.
7. The capital programme must not be seen in isolation to the revenue budget and the Council has made an initial commitment to £5 million of prudential borrowing in each of the next three years. In the context of budgetary constraints, the focus of capital spending to those projects that deliver significant gains in terms of corporate priorities becomes even more important. Cabinet recently considered the Council's Capital Strategy setting out the key principles for the use of capital resources. The impact of capital investment in securing long term revenue savings is also very important.

Budget Panel

8. The Council has now approved the use of a Budget Panel as a means of providing detailed analysis of the budget and budget pressures. Given the financial challenges of the 2005/06 budget, it was agreed that that process would continue to provide the base for budget consideration but that a more inquisitorial approach would be adopted. Once the broad financial parameters within which the budget was to be set were established by Cabinet, then the Budget Panel would examine the base budget and relevant cross cutting issues of each Directorate with both the Director and relevant Cabinet Member(s) being required to justify expenditure, to describe the service pressures and to react as to how the budget might be confined within the known financial parameters.

9. To that end, the Council took the following action:
- it appointed a Budget Panel with a membership as indicated later in this report (paragraph 11)
 - it agreed that a higher profile be given to the role of Cabinet Member(s) in receiving representation from other Members of the Council on their own priorities for the revenue budget. That could either be in written form, or by pre-arranged appointment. *NB There was very little activity on the part of other Members of the Council to feed into that process.*
 - wider briefings of all Members of the Council, perhaps most appropriately through seminars be undertaken. It was agreed that the most effective timing for those seminars would be after the CSR 2004 announcement and after the announcement of the 2005/06 settlement in late November.
10. It has been consistently accepted that the Budget Panel formed to undertake the examination of the individual budget presentations should be representative of political groups, the Executive and Scrutiny.
11. It was also important that the group should be contained to a size which would enable the “inquisitorial” approach to be effective. The membership established for the 2005/06 budget was the Leader of the Council, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Strategic Monitoring Committee and the four political group leaders with no substitutes being permitted. Two of the group leaders, namely the Leader of the Council, Councillor R.J. Phillips, and the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor T.M. James, were appointed both by virtue of their group leadership and office. It was, therefore, agreed that the Leader of the Council appoint up to two further members, neither of whom should hold a major service portfolio. It was also recommended for the first time in considering the 2005/06 budget that trades unions representatives be invited.
12. Past procedure has been for the Budget Panel to report on its findings and make initial recommendations to Cabinet for consideration. That maintained the principle that responsibility for the recommendations on the budget to Council ultimately lie with the Executive itself although it should be subject to Scrutiny prior to consideration by Council. The opportunity has been retained, therefore, as with previous years, for the Strategic Monitoring Committee to offer views on the budget prior to Cabinet making its recommendations to Council. In earlier years, the opportunity was given to individual Scrutiny Committees to contribute to the budget process. However, that had the effect of establish a list of irreconcilable demands from individual Scrutiny Committees which the Strategic Monitoring Committee then had to balance against the available finance. It was not felt therefore in those previous years that that method of working contributed significantly to the budget process.

2006/07 And Beyond

13. It is important that the budget process does not concentrate solely on 2006/07 revenue and capital budgets. It is also important that the Budget Panel takes into account the medium term financial planning needs of the authority both in terms of its capacity to finance the longer term programme and also in relation to the impact on services. The Budget Panel will, therefore, require spending needs to be addressed wherever practicable over a three year period. In the current circumstances, given

the postponement of the Comprehensive Spending Review, it is realistic to focus that programme primarily on the financial years 2006/07 and 2007/08. There are a number of important reasons for this approach.

- The need to align expenditure within a strategy for council tax and the priorities within the Corporate Plan.
- The need to plan expenditure in a way which is consistent with both the newly signed LPSA2 and the proposed Local Area Agreement.
- To ensure that the Council can plan both increases and decreases in service delivery levels in line with likely resources, incorporating the responsible use of the Council's Reserves.
- To ensure that future expenditure implications of current decisions are reflected at an early stage in the budget.
- To ensure that if the Council should wish to take advantage of the flexibility afforded by the recent introduction of prudential guidelines for borrowing in support of capital spending, that this can be financed as part of the longer term revenue budget.

Conclusion

14. The current process established for the consideration of the revenue and capital budget does give a significant role to Scrutiny both through the membership of the Budget Panel itself but also through the process of formal consultation with the Strategic Monitoring Committee. It is important to note, of course, that the Strategic Monitoring Committee includes within its membership the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each of the Scrutiny Committees. It is important to constantly review whether or not the Budget Panel process is enabling the right input to the revenue and capital budget and it is important that that should be subject to regular review. The appointment of Mrs. Sonia Rees as Director of Resources provides the opportunity for a fresh look to be taken at the current method of compiling the budget. Given the current budget timetable and the likely announcement of the settlement towards the end of November, it would not be possible to undertake such a review in time to contribute to the 2006/07 revenue budget. What is therefore proposed is that the Director of Resources be asked to undertake a prompt review of the budget process and to bring recommendations forward to both Cabinet and Strategic Monitoring Committee for the conduct of the revenue budget for 2007/08.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Strategic Monitoring Committee considers how it might clarify its role in relation to the revenue and capital budget process for 2006/07 and participates in a review of that process in time for the financial year 2007/08 following the appointment of the Director of Resources.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified

**EXTRACT FROM REPORT OF THE MEETINGS OF CABINET
CONSIDERED BY COUNCIL ON 11TH MARCH, 2005**

8. A number of priorities emerged from last year's budget considerations with a number of principles being established in setting the current year's revenue budget and the MTFP. These are as follows:
- (a) The underlying principle of the medium-term financial strategy is that the Council would intend to maintain the real purchasing power of current revenue budgets throughout the life of the plan period.
 - (b) An acceptance that the Education budget will largely be driven by a national agenda which has seen investment in Education above the level of inflation throughout the life of this Council. The emphasis within that investment is on passporting cash to schools. The Council wish to support that approach whilst recognising that that does create difficulties for funding central support for schools, particularly in a Council with Herefordshire's characteristics.
 - (c) There will be a need to continue to strengthen the Social Care budget through the medium-term financial plan period if the Council is to maintain improvement in this key area of its performance. This is particularly true in the area of care for older people where the Council spends significantly below its FSS.
 - (d) The Council has been postponing investment in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), partly because of its poor and inconsistent inheritance but also because of the difficulty of making judicious investment in those areas based on the occupation of existing accommodation. Investment cannot however be further postponed without the Council risking failure in the way it works and delivers services to the public.
 - (e) The Council needs to address its performance in relation to highways, transport, planning and waste. This will require prudent investment and the generation of that investment may require the Council to support significant changes in the pattern of provision.
 - (f) There is a need to continue to resource activity, which is of direct benefit to the community. Past inspections have led to criticism of levels of investment in adult learning and libraries. The Council needs to maintain resources for these services if it is to continue to offer them. If it is unable to maintain those minimum levels of service then it needs to consider in some cases whether to continue to maintain the services at all in some areas.
 - (g) The Council needs to continue to strive for efficiency. It would be foolish to pretend with an organisation of the size of the Council, delivering the range and breadth of services that it does, always maintains 100% efficiency. There is however a recognition that the amount which can be driven out by traditional approaches to improving efficiency are unlikely to be sufficiently significant to support the Council's medium-term financial plan. Cabinet has therefore agreed to look at two specific projects as an alternative to traditional approaches to economies and efficiencies. These approaches are now

embodied in the work through the Service Improvement Programme and Procurement initiatives. That is not to say, however, that the traditional approaches would not continue.

The Service Improvement Programme (SIP) - this programme is intended to take a fundamental look at the way in which the Council operates. It will seek to address the prospects for savings by entirely changing operational process. It is believed that there are significant opportunities for efficiency savings. Cabinet has agreed in principle to pursuing this approach, ensuring that savings generated are freed to support the Council's MTFP rather than individual Directorate and Departmental activity.

- (h) Accommodation - the Council's current occupation of accommodation is inefficient both in terms of the actual occupation of space but also in terms of maintenance and loss of staff time. Again Cabinet has approved in principle a process for managing the accommodation requirements of the Council in a way that will be at least cost neutral and hopefully over the planned period will make a modest revenue return for reinvestment.
- (i) In addition, Cabinet considered the extent it wishes to resource any additional borrowing required as a consequence of the Prudential Guidelines. The MTFP reflects a provisional spend of £5,000,000 per annum. The position will be reviewed annually.

CAPITAL STRATEGY

Report By: County Treasurer

Wards Affected

County-wide.

Purpose

1. To note the current position regarding the Council's revised Capital Strategy.

Financial Implications

2. As detailed in the attached Cabinet report dated 29th September 2005.

Background

3. Performance in relation to the delivery of the approved capital strategy is reported to both Cabinet and Strategic Monitoring Committee on a regular basis. The report considered by Cabinet on 29th September 2005 is appended. The detailed Strategy is enclosed separately for Members for the Committee and is available to the public on request.

RECOMMENDATION

- THAT**
- (a) **the contents of the attached Cabinet report dated 29th September 2005 be noted;**
- and**
- (b) **the Committee considers whether there are any issues it wishes to be brought to Cabinet's attention.**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Cabinet on the Capital Strategy – 29th September 2005.

CAPITAL STRATEGY

SEPTEMBER 2005

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE

CABINET

29TH SEPTEMBER, 2005

Wards Affected

County-wide.

Purpose

To approve the Council's revised Capital Strategy.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision.

Recommendation

THAT the Strategy be approved.

Reasons

Cabinet is required to approve the medium term strategy for capital investment. This will serve to influence capital programme considerations in future years. The strategy also provides a comprehensive view on all capital issues.

Considerations

1. The Capital Strategy has been updated and is included in an appendix to this report. The purpose of the document is to give the Council a detailed overview of the capital programme over the medium to long term and the resources available to fund it.
2. There are several key issues within the Strategy which are worth highlighting for consideration:
 - The Capital Strategy is intrinsically linked to the Herefordshire and Corporate Plan and their objectives and priorities. It is important, however, to ensure current investment pressures, which are not always prominent in such plans, are fully recognised. There needs to be a balance, therefore, between the investment in existing assets and in new initiatives.
 - The relaxation of borrowing powers through the Prudential Code has had a significant and positive impact on the Council's capital programme.
 - Prudential borrowing within the constraints of capped Council Tax increases.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Steve Cameron, Principal Financial Policy Manager (01432) 261865

- The policy of increasingly seeking to fund assets over their actual life will continue, thus minimising the build up of debt over the long term.
 - A realisation that there are several major strategic issues which will be affecting the capital programme in the future, not least the Edgar Street Grid, Local Area Agreement, office accommodation and associated projects.
3. The Strategy is reviewed annually following the setting of next year's capital programme. The national finance settlement will have a bearing on this, as will the revisions made to the Corporate Plan. Affordability and the investment 'gap' as always will be the key concerns and the Council will continue to search for new funding streams and innovative ways in procurement to address these. This will be particularly relevant for investment in schools and the public infrastructure required for the Edgar Street Grid project.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options.

Consultees

Not applicable.

Risk Management

The Council needs to take a strategic view on investment issues to ensure there is proper alignment with the Herefordshire and Corporate Plans. It also needs to ensure that short-term investment decisions do not adversely impact on longer-term requirements and affordability concerns are properly taken account of.

Background Papers

Capital Programme Report to Cabinet February 2005

BEST VALUE REVIEWS

Report By: Corporate Policy and Research Manager

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To note the position in relation to Best Value reviews.

Financial Implications

2. None

Background

3. At its last meeting, the Committee asked for clarification of the approach of the Council to Best Value reviews of its services and functions.
4. The statutory requirement for local authorities to carry out such reviews remains in force. However, in 2002 the previous requirement for all functions to be reviewed on a five-year cycle was revoked. In the words of the ODPM guidance (Circular 03/2003), this was to "...enable them to focus on priority areas arising from their CPAs and other considerations."
5. The broad principles for Best Value reviews remain:
 - **challenge** why, how and by whom a service is being provided
 - **compare** performance with others, taking into account the views of both service users and potential suppliers
 - **consult with** local stakeholders as to their experience of local services and their aspirations for the future
 - use fair and open **competition** wherever necessary as a means of securing efficient and effective services
6. The guidance goes on to say that,

"Authorities should...adopt a proportionate approach to their review programming: it should focus on the areas that present the most serious challenges and biggest opportunities for service improvement. Where authorities have completed a Comprehensive Performance Assessment, they will be expected to draw up a review programme which reflects their pattern of strengths and weaknesses, and include this in their Performance Plan."

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Steve Martin, Corporate Policy and Research Manager
on 01432 261877

7. Following the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2002, an Improvement Plan was drawn up, performance against which has been reported regularly to the Committee. This has been substantially completed (as confirmed by the Council's external auditors).
8. The Council's Corporate Plan is now its Best Value and Improvement Plan. It therefore provides the basis for Best Value review. Examples of areas that should meet the Best Value requirements include the Service Improvement Programme and the associated Customer Service Strategy, the Accommodation Strategy and the Pay and Workforce Strategy.
9. Progress against the Corporate Plan is charted in the integrated performance reports to Cabinet and this Committee.
10. It is for the Committee and subject scrutiny committees to consider which areas of the Plan, including the elements that relate to Best Value review, should be the subject of particular attention in their own forward work programmes.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

REVIEW OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE PLAN

Report By: Herefordshire Partnership Manager

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To consider the work undertaken to date on the review of the Herefordshire Plan, and the next steps in the review process.

Financial Implications

None

Background

2. The original Herefordshire Plan was developed in 1999 with a 10-year Vision. In 1999 it was agreed that it would be updated in 2003, and that there would be a wider review in 2005, to test that the Vision and Ambitions are still appropriate. It is this wider review that is now being undertaken.
3. Work has been completed on the first part of the review. This has included:
 - a review of strategies and other documents that guide the work of organisations in Herefordshire, together with an examination of the environmental, social and economic sustainability of current plans and activity;
 - consultations with a wide range of groups during April to help us hear the views of, and confirm the priorities for people who live in, work in and visit the County (These groups have included: Faith groups, Farmers, Market Towns groups, Older people, Parish Council Networks, People with disabilities, Young people, and Ambition Groups of the Herefordshire Partnership);
 - The Herefordshire Conversation on 13th June in Hereford. This event brought together local people with service providers, to discuss the results of the document analysis and group consultations, in themed and facilitated workshops.
4. From these activities and consultations a set of objectives have emerged. The Herefordshire Partnership Board considered the work and consultation activity undertaken so far on the Herefordshire Plan, and how they saw a new Herefordshire Plan and Partnership taking shape, based on these objectives. The Board agreed that there is clearly a need for a simpler Herefordshire Plan, which is easier to read and implement, and is more action orientated. Undoubtedly it must reflect the views of local people and organisations and remain a strategic planning document for Herefordshire. To this end the Board agreed the following points:

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Jennifer Watkins, Herefordshire Partnership Manager on 01432 260239

- There will be a revised, simpler vision for the Herefordshire Plan, which reflects: where we want to be in 2020; the outcomes from the consultation; and, the Local Area Agreement. The new vision is:

“Herefordshire is a place where people, business and an outstanding natural environment will together bring about sustainable prosperity and well being for all”.

This may be recognised as the same vision as the Local Area Agreement.

- Merger of the current Golden Threads in the Herefordshire Plan and the cross cutting themes in the Local Area Agreement
 - The new Herefordshire Plan will be structured around the four themes of the Local Area Agreement. These are:
 - (a) Economic development and enterprise
 - (b) Safer and stronger communities
 - (c) Children and young people
 - (d) Healthier communities and older people
 - The outcomes agreed within the Local Area Agreement will form the major part of the work plan for the Herefordshire Partnership.
5. The structure of the Herefordshire Partnership will now be revised to reflect the new Plan and be based on a robust performance management framework to accurately identify and measure the difference working in Partnership can make.
 6. Over the next month the Herefordshire Partnership Support Team will be undertaking further work on the new Plan and Partnership, including meeting with Chairs and facilitators of Ambition and other Partnership Groups.
 7. A draft Herefordshire Plan and a first proposal for a new Herefordshire Partnership structure will be circulated for consultation in November 2005. Consultees will involve those already involved in the first stage, and any other group or organisation who may be effected by the changes. Specific consultation meetings will be held with Ambition Groups and other Groups, and a specific Members briefing will be held on 22nd November 2005 in the Council Chamber.
 8. After the consultation period the feedback will be analysed and changes made as appropriate. New ways of working in the Herefordshire Partnership will also be confirmed. The new Herefordshire Plan will be launched in early 2006.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the work undertaken and consultation proposals be noted, subject to any comments which the Committee wishes to make.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Jennifer Watkins, Herefordshire Partnership Manager on 01432 260239

SCRUTINY REVIEW WORK

Report By: County Secretary and Solicitor

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To note the terms of reference of reviews of the Council's Strategic Service Delivery Partnership and ICT services.

Financial Implications

2. The cost of any work will be met from within existing resources.

Background

3. In April this Committee agreed to include in its work programme scrutiny reviews of ICT services and the operation of the Council's contract with Herefordshire Jarvis Services (HJS). In July the Committee agreed that the scope of the reviews and the appointment of Review Groups would be finalised following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee.
4. It was agreed that it would be beneficial if the review of HJS was expanded to include Owen Williams, the holder of the technical services consultancy contract with the Council, who together with HJS and the Council form the Strategic Service Delivery Partnership.
5. Scoping statements setting out the terms of reference for the two reviews are appended.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

REVIEW:	Strategic Service Delivery Partnership	
Committee:	Strategic Monitoring Committee	Chair: Councillor James
Lead support officer:	Frank Smith – Project Manager	

SCOPING

Terms of Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review the Strategic Service Delivery Partnership between Herefordshire Jarvis Services Limited, Owen Williams Limited and Herefordshire Council. • To review the nine high level Aims and Objectives contained in the Service Delivery Agreement (as appended) • To review the “Value for Money” aspect of the Partnership • To review the shareholding arrangements of the Joint Venture Company

Desired outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish that the aims and objectives contained in the Service Delivery Agreement are being met • To establish that the Council is getting value for money • To establish that the Partnership is meeting the priorities of the Council’s Corporate Plan • To make recommendations to improve service delivery

Key questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the method of measurement of the Aims and Objectives • Consider the method of measurement of value for money • Consider the ability of the Partnership to meet the aims of the Council’s Corporate Plan • Review the successes of the Partnership

Timetable	
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
Agree approach, programme of consultation/research/provisional witnesses/dates	September 2005
Collect current available data	October 2005
Collect outstanding data	November 2005
Analysis of data	November 2005
Update to Strategic Monitoring Committee	November 2005
Final analysis of data and witness evidence	November 2005
Prepare options/recommendations	November 2005
Present Final report to Strategic Monitoring Committee	December 2005
Members	Support Officers
Councillors Mrs PA Andrews, H Bramer, J.H.R Goodwin, T.M. James (Chairman) J.P. Thomas, W.J.S Thomas	F Smith – Project Manager C Smith – Environment Directorate Support Service T Brown- Members Services

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES from Schedule 8 from SDA

- **Deliver the Council's service outcomes within the available financial resources.**
- **Improve the processes by which we achieve the objectives of the Council.**
- **Productivity improvement (Whole Cost).**
- **Enhance the perception/customer satisfaction of all services delivered directly or indirectly by the Council.**
- **Cross fertilisation of Cultures through learning and sharing.**
- **Deliver quality local services that are responsive to local needs**
- **Sound Commercial and Financial Management.**
- **Safety: 'ZERO TOLERANCE' to accidents**
- **Quality product - 'Right first time' principle.**

REVIEW:	ICT SERVICES	
Committee:	Strategic Monitoring Committee	Chair: Councillor B.F. Ashton
Lead support officer:	Julie Holmes – Head of Service, Corporate and Customer Services	

SCOPING

Terms of Reference

This review covers

- Report on the progress of the corporate network replacement project.
- Report on the progress of the key corporate systems and projects.
- Report on the progress of security incidents and resultant actions in period.
- Report on the progress of disaster recovery plans.
- Report on the progress of performance against key performance indicators such as network uptime, helpdesk calls logged/resolved/outstanding, number of unique visitors to the website, etc.

Desired outcomes

- For the ICT Service funding arrangements to be fully examined in an open and transparent way (subject to confidentiality).
- Following the review to advise the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources on the most appropriate framework for sustaining an effective ICT Service for Herefordshire Council and those partners it supports.
- To consider how best to balance both the need for robust Corporate security and disaster recovery procedures with the delivery of the Authority's broad service objectives.
- To consider following the review advice to the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources on the wider benefits or otherwise of the ICT Service to the people of Herefordshire.

Key questions

- Consider what means of measurement can be used to judge the success or otherwise of the ICT Service.
- By examination of the individual benchmark reports recently produced into both the client satisfaction and infrastructure of the ICT Service to identify those improvement opportunities.
- To consider the views of those users of the Service on the future direction of the ICT Service.

Timetable	
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
Agree scope	September 2005
Assess currently available information	January 2006
Undertake publicity of the review, set option	January 2006
Final confirmation of interviews of witnesses	January 2006
Carry out programme of interviews	February 2006
Interim report	February 2006
Final analysis	End February 2006
Recommendations	March 2006
Present Final report to Strategic Monitoring Committee	March 2006

Members	Support Officers
BF Ashton (Chair) WLS Bowen, KG Grumbley, TM James, Ms AM Toon	TBC

SCRUTINY ACTIVITY REPORT**Report By: County Secretary and Solicitor****Wards Affected**

County-wide

Purpose

1. To consider the work being undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees.

Financial Implications

2. None

Background

3. This report summarises the matters considered by the Scrutiny Committees since the last report by this Committee to Council. It is intended to help keep Council aware of the work being undertaken.
4. The work of the Committees is analysed below as far as practicable under the following five roles for overview and scrutiny: holding the executive to account, best value reviews, policy development and review, external scrutiny, and improvement (performance management and review).

Summary

5. The Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee is to hold a short, formal meeting on 17th October, 2005 followed by an informal homelessness scrutiny event for members of the Committee and key stakeholders.
6. The Childrens Services Scrutiny Committee met on 3 October 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Briefing on School Support
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Inspection of Fostering Service
Other	Review of Co-opted Membership

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Tim Brown Committee Manager (Scrutiny) on 01432 260239

7. The Community Services Scrutiny Committee met on 5 October 2005 in the evening in Ledbury and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	Presentation by Cabinet Members (Rural Regeneration and Strategy) and (Community Services).
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Herefordshire Festivals 2004/05 Youth Matters – Green Paper Ledbury Library and Tourist Information Service Review of The Courtyard Centre for the Arts
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Community Services Performance Report
Other	-

8. The Committee's scrutiny review of how to retain 18-35 year olds within Herefordshire or attract them to the County is progressing.
9. The Environment Scrutiny Committee met on 26th September 2005 to consider the Environment Agency's management of flood risk on main rivers in Herefordshire, highlighting to the Agency a range of issues affecting the County. This was a further example of the Committee's work in scrutinising external agencies following its scrutiny of the Highways Agency's management of trunk roads in Herefordshire.
10. The Committee is to hold a further short meeting in 24 October to consider progress with the voluntary code of practice for the use of polytunnels in Herefordshire, the biodiversity conservation strategic framework and budget and performance monitoring reports.
11. The Health Scrutiny Committee met on 22 September, 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Follow up to Review of The Management of the outbreak of Legionnaires Disease in Herefordshire
External Scrutiny	Presentations by the Chief Executives of the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust and the Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust. Update on Reviews of Communication and GP Out of Hours Services
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	
Other	Response to National Health Service Organisational Change Presentation on Health Commission Health Check

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Tim Brown Committee Manager (Scrutiny) on 01432 260239

12. The Committee's scrutiny reviews of Communication and GP out of hours services are progressing.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

