

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

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4th October, 2006

Dear Councillor,

**MEETING OF CABINET
 THURSDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 2006 AT 2.00 P.M.
 THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, BROCKINGTON, 35 HAFOD ROAD, HEREFORD**

AGENDA (06/08)

**HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL - NOTICE UNDER REGULATION 15 OF THE LOCAL
 AUTHORITIES (EXECUTIVE ARRANGEMENTS((ACCESS TO INFORMATION) REGULATIONS
 2000 (AS AMENDED)**

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Item No	Title	Portfolio Responsibility	Scrutiny Committee	Included in the Forward Plan Yes/No
5	Revised Communications Strategy	Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources	Strategic Monitoring	Yes
7	Response to the Scrutiny Committee Review of Learning Disabilities Services	Social Care, Adults and Health	Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing	No



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. BUDGET PROCESS

To note the Council's approach to budget setting for 2007-08. *(Pages 1 - 2)*

4. DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME 2006-09

To consider the proposed Disability Equality Scheme 2006-09. *(Pages 3 - 44)*

5. REVISED COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

To approve a substantial revision of the Council's communications strategy for 2006/07 as a result of new communications channels and programmes being launched, new objectives and targets being set and the production of a wide range of communications plans to support new programmes aimed at achieving the transformation of the authority and the way it delivers services to local people. *(Pages 45 - 104)*


6. REVISED RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

To approve the revised Risk Management Policy and to decide on Cabinet's Risk Management role within the Council. *(Pages 105 - 124)*

7. RESPONSE TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REVIEW OF LEARNING DISABILITIES SERVICES

To set out the Cabinet's response to the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee's review of Learning Disabilities Services in Herefordshire Council. *(Pages 125 - 136)*

Yours sincerely,



**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
Head of Legal and Democratic Services





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BROCKINGTON, 35 HAFOD ROAD, HEREFORD.

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BUDGET PROCESS

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE

CABINET

12TH OCTOBER, 2006

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To note the Council's approach to budget setting for 2007-08.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Recommendation

That the approach to establishing the budget for 2007/08 as set out in the draft Medium-Term Financial Management Strategy be approved.

Reasons

Herefordshire Council is committed to sustainable improvements in services. The budget setting process is a key element supporting the move to excellence in financial planning and management with a Medium Term Financial Management Strategy (MTFMS) that makes sure cash resources follow corporate priorities.

Considerations

1. The budget process for 2007/08 is the first to have been preceded by a comprehensive Medium-Term Financial Management Strategy (MTFMS) providing the financial context to corporate and service planning. The MTFMS provides the framework for ensuring cash resources are linked to corporate priorities and that corporate and service planning is undertaken in the context of the likely level of resources available. Wide consultation has been undertaken and the methodology has received good support.
2. The Cabinet agreed the consultation draft MTFMS on 13th July 2006. It was used to inform the 'ground rules' that Directors were asked to follow in developing their 3-year services delivery proposals that will feed into the Corporate Plan for 2007 – 2010.
3. A members' seminar was held on 17th July 2006 to brief all councillors on the draft MTFMS and the key role it has to play in the new integrated performance improvement cycle and the nature of the ground rules being used to develop service delivery proposals.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
David Powell, Head of Financial Services 01432 383173

4. Cabinet will consider the emerging issues for the Corporate Plan 2007 –10 on 26th October 2006 alongside an updated MTFMS covering the 3-year period. The Strategic Monitoring Committee will have had the opportunity to comment on these reports at their meeting the previous week.
5. Having set the 3-year service strategy, work will then move on to developing the Annual Operating Plan for 2007/08 and the detailed budget for the year. This will take place in January / February 2007. The Strategic Monitoring Committee will also have an opportunity to comment on the more detailed service and budget plans before Cabinet receives them for decision.
6. The above process was described in the draft MTFMS document and is designed to ensure that time-consuming 'bidding' for a small amount of resource through the Budget Panel process of previous years is avoided.
7. Further members' seminars were suggested in the draft MTFMS to ensure that all councillors have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the key corporate and financial issues. Briefing sessions are also available to Group Leaders and Chairs of Scrutiny Panels if the members concerned so wish.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options

Risk Management

The draft MTFMS outlines the corporate risks along with management actions to minimize the likelihood of those affecting the Council's future plans. Risk registers are in place to support the identification of relevant factors and are regularly updated.

The approach to budget setting now adopted links corporate and service plans to financial planning. This approach is a way of managing risk by moving to a medium term financial framework rather than an annual one that places less emphasis on planning for the future.

Consultees

None identified.

Background Papers

Medium Term Financial Management Strategy.

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME 2006-09

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE

CABINET

DATE: 12TH OCTOBER, 2006

Wards Affected

All wards.

Purpose

To consider the proposed Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009.

Key Decision

This not a key decision.

Recommendations

THAT

- (a) the development of the Disability Equality Scheme be noted; and
- (b) the proposed Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan be approved.

Reasons

1. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 requires organisations across the public sector to be proactive in ensuring that disabled people are treated fairly. However, this duty is not necessarily about changes to buildings or adjustments for individuals; it's all about including equality for disabled people into the culture of public authorities in practical and demonstrable ways.
2. The tool used to demonstrate how public sector bodies will achieve this duty is the Disability Equality Scheme (DES). Local Authorities have to produce a DES by December 2006 that shows they have considered the impact of their policies, practices and procedures on disabled people.
3. Herefordshire Council has had a DES since 2002, but this needs updating to take account of the new Duty to:
 - Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the DDA
 - Eliminate harassment that is unlawful under the DDA
 - Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
 - Take steps to take account of disabled person's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other people

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Harriet Yellin, Diversity Officer, on (01432) 260216

Considerations

1. The planned programme of consultation and involvement has been carried out on schedule. This includes a comprehensive public questionnaire, an employee survey, two public meetings and some smaller, targeted workshops.
2. There has been a four-week public consultation period on the draft DES, resulting in several amendments and additional actions.
3. The results of the surveys and feedback from the public meetings have determined the eight priorities of the DES.
4. The Action Plan aims to be challenging, aspirational and realistic. In developing the actions, we have tried to pick up on specific issues raised by individuals. Having an approved Action Plan will not preclude any additional activity in the next three years where a further need is identified.
5. A number of other organisations have contacted us, viewing our progress as best practice.

Risk Management

It is a legal requirement to have a comprehensive DES in place by 5th December, 2006.

Alternative Options

None.

Consultees

Diversity Group, Disability Working Group, Disability Staff Group.

Appendix

Disability Equality Scheme 2006-09 and Action Plan.

Background Papers

None identified.

DRAFT

Appendix 1



Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009

DRAFT 22/9/06



If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call the Corporate Diversity Team on 01432 260216 or e-mail diversity@herefordshire.gov.uk.

A summary and easy-read version of this document is also available.

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1. Foreword

Herefordshire Council has both a moral and a statutory obligation to reflect the needs of a diverse population through its service provision and as an employer. As part of our overall approach to equality issues, we recognise that disabled people should have equal rights in relation to employment and services so that they can participate fully as citizens.

In developing this Scheme we are adopting the Social model of Disability as we recognise that disability is caused by the way in which society fails to meet an individual's needs. We are committed to taking positive steps to eliminate discrimination in our policies, practices and procedures. We are also keen to empower disabled people to take control of their lives, and to live independently.

We are committed to employing disabled people and providing equitable services. We believe that if discriminatory factors such as prejudice, inaccessible buildings and inappropriate employment requirements are removed, disabled people will receive good quality services and have enhanced job opportunities.

It is through this Scheme that we can ensure disabled people - irrespective of their age, race, gender and nature of disability - are fully integrated into our community.

Our aim is to fully meet our obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act and to learn from best practice, as we strive to become an excellent local authority. Disability equality is a priority for the Council as is our whole Comprehensive Equality Policy. This Equality Scheme and Action Plan sets out how we will prioritise work in this area and promote disability equality issues across Herefordshire.

Councillor Roger Phillips
Leader of Herefordshire Council

Neil Pringle
Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council

2. Introduction

Equality of opportunity for disabled people is not just about meeting a legal obligation; it is also about fairness and good sense, and a moral duty to challenge discrimination. The purpose of the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) is to make a commitment to take the needs of disabled people into account in everything we do, whether that's providing services, employing people, developing policies, communicating or consulting. This is called "mainstreaming".

This document is relevant to people who do not consider themselves disabled. It is relevant to people with chronic or progressive illnesses such as long-term depression, cancer, HIV, multiple sclerosis and diabetes. It is relevant to older people who may have difficulty walking or whose eyesight may be deteriorating. It is relevant, because where improvements are made for one group of people, they quite often make things better for everyone.

This Scheme should be read in conjunction with the Council's Comprehensive Equality Policy (CEP) which is the principal document setting out the Council's commitment to equality. The CEP, Race Equality Scheme and the Disability Equality Scheme are the documents setting out the practical steps that the Council will take to address all forms of discriminatory practice.

The Council recognises that there are cross-overs between issues of disability and other strands of diversity. People can experience discrimination and prejudice for many reasons, and there may be multiple issues which need to be addressed. We work to challenge all forms of discrimination and prejudice.

The DES is a living document which will constantly evolve. It is important to note that the actions described in the action plan are only those currently proposed, and that work towards the elimination of discrimination and achieving equity for disabled people is constantly on-going. Annual reviews of this document will ensure that it remains up-to-date and mindful of current issues.

The DES sets out the Council's overall objectives for improving and addressing disability inequalities, the 8 priority areas that we are concentrating on, and the action plan which will deliver improvements. The 8 priority areas have been identified through a comprehensive consultation and involvement process, so include the issues which are very real to the disabled community in Herefordshire. They are:

1. Access to Buildings & the Built Environment
2. Accessible Information & Communication
3. Consultation & Involvement
4. Training & Work Placements
5. Employment
6. Transport
7. Housing
8. Service Delivery

Incorporated into these priority areas are issues highlighted through the Council's Employee Disability Survey (see Section 4.3) and Equality Impact Assessments (see Section 5.3).

3. Putting it all into Context

3.1. What is “Disability”?

Throughout this document and in everything the Council does, our definition of “disability” is taken from the Disability Discrimination Act. In the DDA, a disabled person is defined as someone with a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term (more than 12 months) impact on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

A person does not have to be registered disabled to fall within this definition. Neither do they need to have a Blue Badge or have a visible physical impairment. Disability includes sensory impairment, chronic and progressive illnesses, mental health problems, learning disabilities and severe disfigurement.

3.2. Why Have a Disability Equality Scheme?

The Disability Discrimination Act requires all public bodies to develop a DES, but the law does not specify what should go into it. The Local Government Association and the Disability Rights Commission recommend that a DES should analyse our practices on access, communication, employment and service delivery. Herefordshire Council’s Scheme is intended to do more than that, so it also covers all the areas that we consider would meet the requirements of the Council and its community focus.

We hope that this DES will help us achieve a number of things:

- Promote equality so that disabled people who live or work in the county can enjoy their full human, social and political rights free from discrimination
- Embrace Herefordshire’s diversity as a source of strength and opportunity
- Meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and make sure that we are taking the needs and views of disabled people into account at all times
- Continuously monitor and improve the ways in which we deliver services to disabled people
- Ensure that we reach our performance targets in relation to the Equality Standard for Local Government (see Section 3.6)
- Meet the principles of the Social Model of Disability
- Become an Authority recognised for excellence and good practice

3.3. The Social Model of Disability

The Council has adopted the “Social Model of Disability”. This means that we distinguish between “impairment” and “disability”, and recognise that social barriers are what disable people, not their impairment. These barriers include people’s attitudes to disability, and physical and organisational barriers. The Council is therefore working towards identifying and removing as many of these barriers as possible.

One of the positive effects of adopting the Social Model is that issues of disability are seen as quality of life issues, and are not necessarily associated with health and social care.

We recognise that not everyone accepts the Social Model as the best way of viewing disability. Our decision, however, is based on best practice, which encourages statutory organisations to take this approach. The Social Model is also widely recognised as an improvement on the Medical Model which focuses on medical definitions and impairments.

3.4. Profile of Disability in Herefordshire

Information on disability in Herefordshire can be found in Appendix 1.

3.5. Profile of Disability Amongst Council Employees

According to employment records, 39 of the Council's 5,524 employees had declared a disability as at 31 March 2006. This is 0.39% of the workforce. However this figure is likely to be far higher in reality because:

- Many people do not consider themselves to be disabled
- Some people may not have declared a disability due to fear of discrimination
- The definition of disability has recently been broadened, so that people employed before a certain date may not have been covered by the law

3.6. The Equality Standard

Herefordshire Council has adopted the "Equality Standard for Local Government". The objective of the Equality Standard is to ensure that equality policy and practice is mainstreamed throughout all the Council's activities. It will also help us to meet our statutory obligations in respect of anti-discrimination laws, and it enables the authority to demonstrate that it is a good employer and offers high quality services.

There are five levels in the Equality Standard, indicating how advanced the organisation is in achieving continuous improvement in the equalities field. They are:

1. Commitment to a Comprehensive Equality Policy
2. Assessment and consultation
3. Setting equality objectives and targets
4. Information systems and monitoring against targets
5. Achieving and reviewing outcomes

The Council has been successful at Level 1 of the Equality Standard, and is aiming to reach Level 2 by March 2007. The DES will contribute towards the strand of disability in our work towards the Equality Standard.

3.7. Legal Responsibilities

Herefordshire Council will abide by all legal responsibilities including:

- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- The Building Regulations 2000
- Part 'M' Requirements (Building regulation amendments 2003)
- Fire Precautions Act 1971 and Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 as amended 1999

We will also abide by our duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 to promote disability equality and, when carrying out our functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- eliminate harassment that is unlawful under the Act
- promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons

Details of the Council's statutory requirements with regards to disability can be found at Appendix 2.

3.8. Enforcement of the Law

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) does not give the Council any statutory powers to enforce the access requirements of the Act on other organisations. For example, it cannot compel a private sector provider such as a shop to comply with the law. Instead, it is the responsibility of individuals to take action on their own behalf.

Having said this, the spirit of the DDA supports local authorities to be proactive in the community. This is supported further by the Disability Equality Duty Statutory Code of Practice, which states that from December 2006 the Council (as a planning and licensing authority) will have the power to influence organisations to comply with the DDA. Herefordshire Council is keen to be proactive in the community, and will continue to advise and support any individual who feels that they are disadvantaged due to their disability.

3.9. The Corporate Diversity Team

The Corporate Diversity Team was established in June 2005 to drive forward all issues of diversity, including disability. They work closely with colleagues from all services areas across the authority, including the Access Officer and the Legal team.

Part of their remit is to address complaints or concerns on issues relating to both Council business and in the community. They support employees and members of the public who feel they have been treated unfairly, discriminated against, harassed or bullied. They also work proactively within the organisation and out in the community to initiate projects which will improve the quality of people's lives or raise awareness of important issues.

There has been some debate regarding whether the Corporate Diversity Team should recruit dedicated officers to cover specific strands of the Diversity agenda, eg. a Disability Officer. It is agreed that each of the diversity strands (Race, Gender, Disability, Age, Sexual Orientation, Religion & Belief) all have specific issues which need to be looked at in their own right. However, with the limited resources available, it has been decided that each member of the team needs to be able to see the broader picture, and though a specialism in any area is an advantage, we need to ensure that there is no inequality between strands or a hierarchy of importance - it must be recognised that many individuals will suffer multiple discrimination.

3.10. The Complaints Procedure

- **Complaints about Council services:** There is a standard complaints procedure which is followed in the event of any complaint about Council services. This includes an appeals process.

All complaints where discrimination, prejudice or inequality are perceived are forwarded to the Corporate Diversity Team for investigation or input. Each complaint is designated to an individual officer who will contact all necessary parties and investigate. Customers' individual needs are taken into account at all times. They will seek to resolve the issue to the customer's satisfaction, and to make changes to Council services, policies or procedures, if appropriate, to ensure that problems do not arise again.

Complaints are therefore welcomed as a mechanism for identifying and removing any barriers for disabled people.

- **Complaints about discrimination in the community, private sector or other organisations:** Herefordshire Council is keen to emphasise its community leadership role by championing the cause of disabled people who have encountered discrimination. The Corporate Diversity Team supports and advises anyone who feels they have been discriminated against or treated unfairly. However they cannot provide legal advice. Many complaints have been quickly and simply resolved by the informal involvement of a Council employee.

In cases where disability discrimination is an issue, customers are often advised to contact the Disability Rights Commission. Others are directed to the Citizens' Advice Bureau or local disability organisation with expertise in the relevant issue (see Section 3.14 regarding ABLE).

3.11. Disability Groups within the Council

- The Council supports a **Disability Working Group** which champions disability equality throughout the organisation. The group has representatives from across the Authority, and ensures close co-operation between service areas.
- There is also a **Disability Staff Group** open to all Council employees. This acts as a mechanism for employees to communicate their ideas or concerns, and forms a consultation panel for new initiatives.
- Both of these groups feed into the **Diversity Group** which exists to ensure that the Council fulfils its statutory and other commitments in respect of diversity and equality of opportunity. It aims to promote and achieve equal opportunities for all regardless of race, religion or belief, disability, age, gender or sexual orientation, income or geographical location within the county. The group is led and chaired by the Director of Corporate & Customer Services, and members include officers from each Council Directorate.

3.12. Contacts in Herefordshire Council

Herefordshire Council wishes to make it as simple as possible for people to contact the right person if they have a comment to make about disability. In most cases, Info Shops or the Corporate Diversity Team can resolve issues, pass on information, or put customers in touch with the relevant person or department. However a more thorough list of contacts within the Authority is shown at Appendix 3.

3.13. What the Council Already Does (2006)

For several years, Herefordshire Council has been making progress towards eliminating discrimination towards disabled people, and providing equitable services. A list of some of the activities carried out and relevant initiatives can be found in Appendix 4.

3.14. Partnership Working

Herefordshire Council works closely with:

- Diversity officers in other organisations to share information and ideas.
- Facilitators of the independent advisory group (IAG) for disability for the West Mercia police division.
- Hereford Access for All, a local charity which works to improve and publicise access issues in the city of Hereford.
- The Involving People Team at the Primary Care Trust.

We are also represented on the following partnership groups:

- **Accessible Leisure for All (ALFA) Group:** A county-wide group established and facilitated by the Council.
- **Herefordshire Learning Disability Partnership Board:** A “wider reference group” to support people with learning disabilities.
- **Herefordshire Equality Partnership:** Partners include Police, Citizens’ Advice Bureau, Chamber of Commerce and Learning & Skills Council.
- **Regional Disabilities Awareness Network (DAN):** Focusing on Museums, Libraries and Archives.
- **“In Control”:** A national project being piloted in Herefordshire for a small group of people with learning disabilities.

The Council has Service Level Agreements with numerous voluntary and charitable organisations across the county to provide services. Examples of these are:

- Day opportunities (Age Concern)
- Welfare rights advice (Access to Benefits, Leisure, Employment (ABLE) and Citizens’ Advice Bureau)
- Advice, training support and employment opportunities for people requiring support (Workmatch)

We are currently working with Alliance Hereford (which works across all voluntary sector organisations) to set up a system of accreditation for care providers.

3.15. Funding for the DES

Diversity (which incorporates disability) is a “cross-cutting theme” within the Council’s Corporate Plan and wider, within the Community Strategy. Other themes include partnership and sustainability. This means that disability should be taken account of when we deliver all our services, and that funding for the work we do is therefore generally sourced from individual service budgets.

In addition to this, there is a small budget allocated to the Corporate Diversity Team to fund central initiatives or discretionary activities, and some of these are detailed in Appendix 4 under “Resources”. See also section 4.1.4.

4. The Priorities

The DES focuses on 8 key areas which have been identified through consultation with disabled employees and the disabled community. The Action Plan at the end of this document highlights the practical steps that we will take in each of these areas.

It is important to note that these priorities are not the only activity being undertaken. The Council already carries out many initiatives to support disabled people as part of its everyday function, and this work will continue. Some of the initiatives referred to can be found in Appendix 4.

The 8 priorities are:

1. **Buildings access and the built environment** – including access to council premises and other facilities that the council provides such as country parks.
2. **Communications** – including how we communicate with our customers and staff and providing information in accessible formats.
3. **Consultation and involvement**
4. **Training and work placements**
5. **Employment** – including recruitment and retention of disabled people and striving to become an employer of choice.
6. **Transport**
7. **Housing**
8. **Service delivery** – to include making better use of technology and one-stop-shop solutions to enable equitable access to information and services.

Each of these areas is discussed in more detail below.

4.1. Access to Buildings and the Built Environment

People are frequently disabled by the way buildings and the environment are designed or constructed. For example, reception desks too high for wheelchair users, or lack of contrast in design causing difficulties for partially sighted people. We are committed to improving physical access across all of our services to ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged. This could include public rights of way, Council offices, public toilets, playgrounds, parks and open spaces. This is not always about making alterations to buildings – it may be as simple as making small adjustments to fixtures and fittings such as doors, toilets and light switches.

Why is this a priority?

The public consultation carried out in preparation for the DES highlighted car parking, public toilets, physical access, kerbs and pavements and bus shelters as key priorities.

What we currently do

4.1.1. Rights of Way

Herefordshire Council currently ensures that all Rights of Way improvement schemes are assessed for their ability to improve disabled access before they are implemented. Annual reports are produced highlighting where improvements have been made.

4.1.2. Access Audits

An “access audit” identifies physical barriers and determines what reasonable adjustments are required to buildings and equipment to make them accessible.

The Council audits its own buildings, both public and staff areas, in order to identify what improvements need to be made.

However we also advise community buildings, churches and private sector businesses on how they might go about getting an access audit. We can provide a list of companies who carry out access audits, and can provide a checklist of points to consider for those who want to carry out an informal audit of their own premises. The Property team will also provide advice and answer questions on accessibility. This service is free of charge.

4.1.3. Projects to Alter Physical Barriers

The Council has made an on-going commitment to make improvements to the physical environment at every opportunity. Opportunities sometimes arise when large planning applications are put forward, as the Council is sometimes able to negotiate “planning gains”. These are improvements which the applicant must make to the surrounding area, and we use these situations to promote improved access to sporting or community facilities.

4.1.4. Standards for New and Existing Buildings

All new Council buildings will comply with all relevant legislation to meet the needs of disabled people. Existing Council buildings, including leased buildings, shall, where it is reasonable to do so, be improved to the BS 8300 guidelines.

There are certain Council buildings which are inaccessible due to various factors such as age, construction or layout. Where this is the case, we consider replacement of the building altogether, or substantial alterations, whichever is the most appropriate. It may be, however, that services could be delivered in a different way, rather than adapting buildings, and this option is also considered.

Access audits have been done for most Council buildings, and required actions are prioritised. The Council has an annual capital budget of £200,000 for improvements to its corporate buildings. There is also a budget of £275,000 (which comes from the Department of Education & Skills) for upgrading and improving access to school buildings.

4.2. Accessible Information and Communication

This section covers many different areas, for example:

- The language we use to explain our services
- The format in which documents are available
- How we design signs
- How we layout our documents

- The images we use
- How we communicate face-to-face and over the telephone
- How we promote and advertise our services
- How we use the internet and other technologies
- How we manage information

Why is this a priority?

It is vital that we communicate clearly so that people understand how to access services and what other opportunities are available to them.

Issues around accessible information were a very high priority during public consultation, with people telling us that jargon is still being used, and that they have difficulty finding information. Suggestions for improvement included better use of the media, alternative colour schemes, design improvements to “Herefordshire Matters” (the Council’s newsletter) and a one-stop-shop for disability information.

What are we currently doing?

4.2.1. Communications Strategy

The Council has a Communications Strategy which sets out how we should communicate both internally and externally. Our communication should consistently reflect our awareness and understanding of disability equality issues. The Strategy includes clear standards on:

- The materials we use
- Minimum font sizes and type of font
- A statement offering literature in alternative formats (eg. large print, audio, Braille, easy-read)
- Use of plain English

The Authority is constantly open to ideas on how we can better communicate, and is entirely flexible in producing information in alternative formats tailored to individuals if necessary.

4.2.2. Use of the Internet

The Council is committed to providing information and services over the internet as well as in other ways. In 2001 we developed our first “Implementing Electronic Government Statement” which sets out how we are going to do this. It also specifies how we will make these services accessible to people with particular needs, for example people who use specialised software, or partially sighted people.

The Herefordshire Council’s website reflects our commitment to the highest level of web accessibility (AAA) whenever possible. Where necessary we work with partners and suppliers, promoting good practice to help us achieve this.

We also take a proactive approach by using a number of automated tools to monitor the site. These alert us to areas of concern which we then take steps to put right. This has enabled us to consistently stay in the top performing local and central government websites for

accessibility. We have also earned the Plain English Internet Crystal Mark for our website and have introduced a new vocalisation tool called Browsealoud.

How we put together the content behind the scenes makes it easier for people to find the information they want when it is needed. We use recognized information and content management standards wherever possible to promote accessible information and services on the internet and through other technologies.

4.3. Consultation and Involvement

Consultation and involvement is about finding out what disabled people think about our services and what their needs are, and using this information to improve their quality of life.

Why is this a priority?

As a local authority, we need to consult and involve disabled people in the decisions which affect their lives, so that we can shape services according to their needs. Specific projects on which we are required to consult are Equality Impact Assessments and the Disability Equality Scheme.

The frequency and methods we use to consult with disabled people are very important. Firstly, people want to be consulted in a manner they find appropriate, and there are many people who want to be involved who feel they are not being listened to.

What are we currently doing?

4.3.1. Community Involvement Strategy

The Council has a Community Involvement Strategy (2005-2008) with an action plan. This sets out how we plan to involve people who live in, work in and visit Herefordshire in decision making. The Strategy specifies that:

“Community involvement and consultative activity is accessible to and inclusive of the views of all Herefordshire people within the meaning of the current and future equalities legislation.”

The Strategy sets out principles as above, and does not detail how we are going to engage the Disabled community, which is what we are seeking to do in this document.

4.3.2. Current Methods of Consultation

Amongst the general population, the Council consults in a number of ways, for example:

- **Herefordshire Voice:** This is the Council’s citizens panel consisting of 1,200 Herefordshire residents, chosen to reflect the demographic make-up of the county.
- **Community Forums:** An opportunity for local people in 6 different locations in the county to learn about Council initiatives and raise local issues.

- **Regular Surveys:** The Council consults on a regular basis on a large number of topics and issues.

The Council has made a commitment to consistently **feed back** the results of all consultation to the public in a timely and appropriate fashion.

The Authority works in partnership with the **Involving People Team**, a jointly funded initiative with the Primary Care Trust, to develop methods of consultation with service users on issues relating to health and social care. There is also a dedicated **Public Contact Team** within health and social care which aims to collate, research and report on all types of user feedback.

The new planning system changes the way local authorities address planning issues. More community involvement is being encouraged, not just on individual planning applications but in producing development plans which address how areas will develop in the future. Herefordshire Council has developed a “**Statement of Community Involvement**” (SCI) which sets out the standards to be achieved for involving the community in these matters.

The Authority has contacts with most of the key **disability organisations** in Herefordshire and frequently seeks their input on documents and issues. To date (2006) this has been on an informal basis, and we will seek to formalise these arrangements in 2007.

4.3.3. Consultation and Involvement on the DES

The Council consulted comprehensively with disabled people in order to develop the DES. This included:

1. **Disability “Involvement Meeting”** (March 2006): An opportunity for representatives of Herefordshire disability organisations to comment on the draft public questionnaire, and to put forward their views on key priorities.
2. **Council Employee Disability Survey** (April 2006): A survey of disabled Council employees on their experience in the workplace.
3. **People’s Union** (May 2006): A session with people with learning disabilities to provide feedback on the easy read version of the Public Disability Survey, and for them to have their say on the issues it raised.
4. **Public Disability Survey** (May 2006): A comprehensive survey for the community aimed at disabled people, parents of disabled children and carers.
5. **Public Disability Forum** (May 2006): An open public meeting for disabled people, parents, carers and professionals to put forward practical ideas for how the Council could make improvements.
6. **Barrs Court School** (June 2006): A session held with the student council to provide an opportunity for them to have their say.
7. **DES Consultation** (August-September 2006): A four-week period when the public was invited to submit feedback on the draft DES, also posted directly to those who attended the Public Disability Forum and other disabled individuals.

As a result of the process above, the following has already taken place:

- Information added to the Council website on public toilets, RADAR keys (see page 29) and initiatives in place for disabled people.
- The priorities of the DES developed.
- Disabled car parking spaces regularly policed at Council buildings.
- Advice and guidance given to other Local Authorities on how to carry out consultation and develop a DES.
- Project initiated to review disability registration.
- Council employees advised about free postage of items for blind and partially sighted people.
- Instigated policy review on use of Rich Text Format documents on website.

We are seeking new ways by which to consult and involve disabled people in the development of Council services and policies. We will do this by reviewing existing policies, and researching other organisations which already do this well. The Action Plan details exactly what we will do.

4.4. Training & Work Placements

Work placements are opportunities for people to work within the Council for a short period of time and gain valuable experience.

Training refers both to the training received by Council employees and others, and to providing equitable access to training opportunities for all employees. Provision of training and development is a key strength of Herefordshire Council, and it is keen to ensure that diversity training is targeted and appropriate to people's needs and the expectations of the authority.

Why is this a priority?

1. Training Council employees in disability equality has been highlighted by public consultation and the Human Resources Equality Impact Assessment as vital to ensure that employees understand the needs of disabled customers and can work to eliminate discrimination.
2. Equitable access to training opportunities is key to ensuring that all employees can take advantage of opportunities to develop careers, maintain and enhance skills.
3. As the largest employer in Herefordshire, the Council needs to lead on providing and promoting work placements for disabled people.

What are we currently doing?

4.4.1. Recruitment & Selection Training

All managers who participate in recruitment and selection are required to undergo training. This training includes relevant equality and diversity information.

4.4.2. Monitoring of Council Training

The Council currently monitors all training to ensure that there is no evidence of disadvantage or discrimination against particular groups of employees. In fact in 2006, the percentage of disabled employees taking up training opportunities was higher than the percentage of disabled employees in the wider workforce.

4.4.3. Work Placements

Herefordshire Council are currently working in partnership with external organisations “Work Assist” (Jobcentre Plus) and Mencap to deliver an action plan to enable disabled people to carry out work placements within each directorate at Herefordshire Council.

4.5. Employment

Employment is about advertising for, recruiting, promoting and retaining employees within the Council. Herefordshire Council aims to work towards a position where its workforce is representative of the community it serves. Removing all barriers to recruitment is part of this aim.

The council also aims to become an “employer of choice” for all, including disabled people, and to have a workforce that reflects the diverse nature of the community it serves. It seeks to be an organisation where disabled people feel empowered and valued, consistent with the Council’s style and values.

Why is this a priority?

The Council has a moral, social and legal obligation to ensure that those in employment reflect the community it serves. Some barriers were highlighted by disabled people through our consultation process, some by Council employees through the Employee Disability Survey, and some by the Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) carried out within Human Resources.

What are we currently doing?

4.5.1. Recruitment Literature

Council recruitment literature highlights our commitment to equality and diversity, and is sent to everyone who requests further information about an advertised job. This increases applicants’ understanding from the outset of what their responsibilities are, and how seriously the organisation takes its obligations to eliminate discrimination and provide equitable access to employment opportunities.

4.5.2. Flexible working

The Council operates a flexitime scheme and has a Flexible Working Policy to enable employees to work flexibly where possible, whilst taking into account service delivery issues. These policies were highlighted in the Employee Disability Survey as particularly helpful to disabled members of staff.

Requests for alternative work practices such as home working, job share, and a range of other ways to work flexibly are always considered carefully, and accommodated wherever possible.

4.5.3. Reasonable Adjustments

The Council complies with legislation which requires us to make reasonable adjustments to allow disabled people to attend interviews and to take up jobs within the authority. Council recruitment literature makes this commitment clear so that we encourage applications from disabled people. We also use the "Access to Work" scheme for employees who may need extra support.

4.5.4. Action Plan to Remove Barriers

An action plan to remove barriers to recruitment is being developed through the Pay & Workforce Development Strategy (operational plan 2006-7).

4.5.5. Working with Partners

The Council is actively working with its partner - Jobcentre Plus - to ensure opportunities in employment (including work placements) are promoted to the widest possible audience, whilst ensuring that these are appropriately geared to the needs and circumstances of individuals.

4.6. Transport

Transport is defined as:

- Public transport – buses, taxis and trains
- Roads and car parking
- Community transport

Why is this a priority?

Transport is a fundamental way for many people, particularly disabled people, to experience independence. It was one of the key themes raised at every point of the public consultation, and is therefore of the highest importance to disabled people in Herefordshire.

What are we currently doing?

The Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2001-2006 seeks to improve accessibility to services and to make the transport system more accessible for disabled people. It also sets out the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 with respect to transport provision. The Council supports a number of initiatives linked to the LTP to enhance transportation and mobility for disabled people, including:

- Provision of bus timetable information in accessible formats, including telephone, mobile phone text message and internet
- The development of a Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- The establishment of Pedestrian, Access and Cycle Forum, with representation from disabled community groups

- Shopmobility schemes in Hereford, Leominster and Ledbury
- A Parking Strategy providing concessions for disabled persons
- Provision of subsidised bus services with low floor buses helping to improve access and promote social inclusion
- Bus Interchanges and access improvements
- Advice for bus drivers to recognise and understand the needs of disabled passengers
- Rail interchange infrastructure improvements within the county
- Community transport schemes providing wheelchair-accessible vehicles
- A concessionary fares scheme
- Taxi and Private Hire Licensing to improve vehicle accessibility

There are various transport initiatives which the Authority would like to introduce but are unable to because of lack of funds. They include:

- A taxi voucher scheme for disabled people who can't access buses
- Provision of free bus and community transport travel for carers on duty
- Introduction of verbal/LED announcements on buses

These schemes will be reviewed on a regular basis to see if they are feasible or if they can be incorporated into other initiatives.

4.7. Housing

The Council has a statutory duty to provide means-tested grant aid to disabled people for a range of adaptations to their homes regardless of tenure. The Council also works in partnership with Registered Social Landlords to access and develop affordable housing for disabled people.

Why is this a priority?

Housing is fundamental to people's ability to live independently, and was highlighted as important at the public events held to consult on this document.

What are we currently doing?

4.7.1. You @ Home

The Council's Strategic Housing Division operates an 'in-house' home improvement agency called "You @ Home". The agency assists disabled and vulnerable people to access a range of grants and services to enable them to live independently within their own homes. Services include a Handy Person scheme under which people can have minor works of repair, improvement or adaptation carried out at no cost following a referral from a health or social care worker.

You @ Home can also help disabled people to access appropriate benefits and to find alternative ways of funding adaptations.

4.7.2. Adaptations

The Council has a budget for mandatory disabled adaptations and also provides funding for discretionary adaptations and relocation through the housing renewal policy. Adaptations are considered following a referral from an Occupational Therapist. The Council, in partnership with Housing Associations, also funds the development of disabled

adapted properties in special circumstances to meet specific needs. Schemes providing affordable housing are developed to Lifetime Homes standards which improves the extent to which properties can adapt to meet the changing needs of their occupiers.

4.7.3. Support to Live Independently

The Council administers funding for housing-related support to enable vulnerable people to live independently. This is funded through the Supporting People Programme. Support includes both floating support (visiting people in their own homes) and accommodation-based support.

4.7.4. A Home of Your Own: Shared Ownership

The Council works in partnership with Advance Housing to provide opportunities for people with mental health problems or a learning disability to own their own home through “Ownhome” and “SOLD” – shared ownership schemes.

The overwhelming benefit to shared owners is that they get a much greater choice over the house or flat that they live in, who they live with and their location. The scheme works by buying existing properties from the open market.

4.8. Service Delivery

Service delivery is about all the services that the council delivers, and making sure that they are fair and equitable and take into account the needs of disabled users.

Why is this a priority?

Service delivery can cover many different areas. It is a priority for residents of Herefordshire as it will take into account many of the issues they have raised throughout the consultation process for this document.

What are we currently doing?

The Authority has many initiatives across its various services which aim to ensure that disabled people enjoy equitable access. Many of these are detailed in Appendix 2 and 4.

However we do need to ensure that core standards are adhered to across the whole organisation. All relevant service areas carry out Equality Impact Assessments (see Section 5.3) and any gaps identified are turned into practical actions which make clear reference to specific disability equality objectives, priorities and outcomes. The key actions are incorporated into the Service Plans developed by individual Service Managers, and these in turn are monitored by the performance management process within the council.

However there is more we can do to improve the services delivered to disabled customers, and these are detailed in the Action Plan.

5. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

It is vital that we monitor, evaluate and review this Scheme in order to meet our duties under the Disability Discrimination Act. In addition, we need to ensure that the Scheme is effectively implemented in order to achieve the targets in the Improvement Plan and to achieve the Local Authority Equality Standard (see section 3.6).

The Scheme and its Action Plan will be continuously monitored by the Disability Working Group (see Section 3.11). Performance against the action plan will be regularly reviewed at the Corporate Diversity Group and reported into Council every six months. All actions in the Action Plan have a named officer in order to make this process easier to monitor.

We are required by law to review the document annually, and to fully review and develop it every three years. Both the annual reviews and updated Disability Equality Schemes are public documents and will be available in hard copy, alternative formats as required, and on the internet.

A range of other measures and performance monitoring criteria is already in place, and some of these are listed below:

5.1. Consultation and Involvement

The DES has been developed by involving people across the county. These include individual members of the public, disabled Council employees, and representatives from voluntary and community organisations. All of these have contributed their time and expertise to help refine and develop the Scheme.

Consultation and involvement with the disabled community will be on-going (see the Action Plan for further details), and will continue to be a key feature of our three-yearly DES review.

5.2. Monitoring

Equality does not mean providing the same service for everyone or treating every person in the same way. It is about adapting the service when and where appropriate to meet the needs of diverse groups of people. If the Council does not know who its customers are, it will not know whether disabled people have equitable access to services and information.

Monitoring the people who use our services enables the Council to assess if the service is discriminating against certain groups and whether people are getting what they want and need. It is a means of ensuring high quality, appropriate services.

The Council has introduced a standard “diversity monitoring” form which will be used by all the different services. It is a tick-box form which asks questions about ethnicity and nationality, disability, sexual orientation, gender, age, and religion and belief. This will help to give us a clear picture of who our customers are, and to identify if there is higher or lower uptake by certain groups of people (eg. disabled people).

5.3. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

An EIA is an analysis of a Council service or policy. Its purpose is to ensure that every service and policy for, or delivered to, the general community is appropriate and accessible and does not, however unwittingly, disadvantage or discriminate against any group.

By law, we are required to assess all services and policies for possible racial discrimination. However the Council has broadened the scope of its assessments to disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion and belief, geographical location and income.

EIAs help us to identify any possible areas where discrimination or disadvantage may occur. This leads to actions which help us to prevent this happening. The actions are added to each individual Service Plan, and monitored by the Head of Service.

5.4. Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs)

One of the ways of measuring how Herefordshire Council performs is through the use of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs). These are targets which help us to make continuous improvements in efficiency and effectiveness of services. They are a good way of comparing local results with other authorities.

There are several BVPIs which relate to disability, and these can be found in Appendix 5, along with our actual results.

5.5. Service Focused Performance Indicators

Services will have their own performance indicators which will provide information on how well we are serving disabled customers. As a minimum, all services should know how many of their customers are disabled and what their needs are in relation to that service.

5.6. Building Access Action Plans

The Access Action Plans that are being developed at service level will include the involvement of disabled service users in monitoring access solutions. These plans will need to be produced as evidence in Health and Safety audits and in inspections to provide evidence of compliance with the DDA and impact assessments related to the Equality Standard.

Appendix 1: Disability in Herefordshire

The following information has been sourced from the 2001 Census. Further information can be found in the “State of Herefordshire Report 2006” (available from the Herefordshire Partnership website).

Estimated numbers of disabled people in Herefordshire - 2001			
Type of disability	Moderate	Serious	Total
Any	18,410	7,780	26,200
Locomotive	13,950	5,460	19,410
Personal care	8,410	2,030	10,440
Sight	2,590	1,060	3,650
Hearing	6,660	580	7,240
Communication	1,460	560	2,020

- 18% of people (all ages) living in Herefordshire described themselves as having a long-term illness, health problem or disability, which limits daily activities or work. Proportions increase with age.
- It is estimated that more than 26,000 adults (aged 16 and over) in Herefordshire have at least one disability and that nearly 8,000 of these could be categorised as having a serious disability. Locomotive disabilities are the most common, followed by personal care.
- 8% people living in Herefordshire people said that their general health was “not good”.
- 4% of people aged 16-74 in Herefordshire described their working status as “permanently sick or disabled”.

% of people with limiting long-term illness according to their urban/rural location	
Urban	47 %
Rural Town	11 %
Rural Village	22 %
Rural Dispersed	20 %
Total	100 %

- In August 2004, 6,775 people in Herefordshire were claiming Disability Living Allowance. The Department for Work and Pensions publish claim rates for each Local Authority area, which for Herefordshire is 4% of the 2001 total population.
- In August 2004, 5,645 people over 65 years old in Herefordshire were claiming Attendance Allowance (the DWP publish this as 17% of the 65 and over 2001 Census population).
- 3.9% of Herefordshire’s dependent children have a limiting long-term illness. (A dependent child is a person in a household aged 0 to 15 (whether or not in a family) or a person aged 16 to 18 who is in a family with parents).

According to the Herefordshire Council’s Client Index System, 5,178 Herefordshire residents had a current Blue Badge in July 2006.

Appendix 2: Statutory Responsibilities

The table below lists the activities which the Council is required to carry out by law.

Service Area	Action	Progress
Corporate	Publish a three-year Disability Equality Scheme by December 2006 including consultation and involvement of disabled people	Completed
Corporate	Review Disability Equality Scheme annually and publish results	Scheduled in
Corporate	Meet Best Value performance indicators	
Corporate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate unlawful discrimination • Eliminate unlawful harassment • Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons • Take account of a person's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than others 	
Corporate	Make all public areas accessible or, where this can't be achieved, ensure that services are delivered equitably to all	50% of public areas in Council buildings accessible as at March 2006
Employment	Monitor the number of disabled employees within the authority.	
Social Care	Assessment and care management function to ensure that those people who require services have a comprehensive assessment, care plan and services arranged and commissioned to meet eligible needs. We can also offer a direct payment to service users in lieu of services	This is the core function of Social Care and therefore is on-going practice. Clients receive copies of their assessment and care plan. We regularly review the care plan and care package that the service user is receiving.
Social Care	Liaise with a range of providers to ensure that appropriate services are commissioned.	We have "block & spot" contracts in place with a range of providers that are reviewed.
Social Care	To financially assess those people in receipt of services to set appropriate charges	The welfare rights team can become involved to maximise people's income.
Social Care	Duty to provide information regarding services available	Leaflets to the public are currently being reviewed.

Service Area	Action	Progress
Social Care	Set procedure for considering representations including compliments, comments and complaints	System is in place to monitor and deal with complaints
Social Care	Carry out carer's assessments for those carers who provide regular and substantial care	These assessments are tied into the care management process. Carers receive copies of their assessments and where appropriate services are arranged. Again, regular reviews of carers' needs are undertaken.
Procurement	Requirements of the DDA are a part of all contracts and commissioning arrangements	
ICT	Ensure that ICT technology provision and electronic publishing environments comply with the DDA	Council website is progressing towards AAA compliance. New tools and technologies are assessed before procurement against AAA compliance checklists.
Housing	To administer Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants in accordance with the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996	
Housing	To administer the discretionary assistance available through The Herefordshire Council Housing Renewal Policy 2006-2009 including Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants, Relocation Assistance, Targeted Minor Works Assistance (general power under Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002)	

Appendix 3: Contacts within Herefordshire Council

Issue	Officer	Service Area	Contact Details
Access to buildings and the built environment	Colin Birks	Property Services	01432 261980 csbirks@herefordshire.gov.uk
Adult social care: - Physical disabilities - Older people - Learning disabilities - Mental health	Kath England Sue Dale Catherine Nolan Sue Bennison	Adult Social Care Adult Social Care Adult Social Care Adult Social Care	01432 261682 kengland@herefordshire.gov.uk 01432 373200 cnolan@herefordshire.gov.uk 01432 361600 sbenniso@herefordshire.gov.uk
Children and young people	George Salmon	Commissioning & Improvement	01432 260802 gsalmon@herefordshire.gov.uk
Communications, public relations, council literature	Robert Blower	Communications	01432 383510 rblower@herefordshire.gov.uk
Consultation and involvement	Martin Heuter	Herefordshire Partnership	01432 383032 mheuter@herefordshire.gov.uk
Discrimination, disadvantage, complaints, compliments, ideas, DES	Harriet Yellin	Corporate Diversity Team	01432 260216 hyellin@herefordshire.gov.uk
Employment and training	Jocelyn Hughes	Human Resources	01432 260232 jahughes@herefordshire.gov.uk
Herefordshire Matters	Robert Blower	Communications	01432 383510 rblower@herefordshire.gov.uk
Housing	Richard Gabb	Strategic Housing	01432 261902 rgabb@herefordshire.gov.uk
Info Shops and customer services	Rachel Bayley	Info in Herefordshire	01432 260433 rbayley@herefordshire.gov.uk
Libraries, heritage and museums	Kate Murray	Cultural Services	01432 383602 kmurray@herefordshire.gov.uk
Licensing	Suzanne Laughland	Environmental Health and Trading Standards	01432 261675 slaughland@herefordshire.gov.uk
Parks, countryside, leisure facilities	Tony Featherstone	Parks & Countryside	01568 798321 afeatherstone@herefordshire.gov.uk
Planning	Chris Botwright	Forward Planning	01432 260133 cmjbotwright@herefordshire.gov.uk
Public transport	Jim Davies	Highways & Transportation	01432 260948 jrdavies@herefordshire.gov.uk

Issue	Officer	Service Area	Contact Details
Sport	Jan Perridge	Sports Development	01432 260329 jperridge@herefordshire.gov.uk
Tourism	Jane Lewis	Cultural Services	01432 383068 jlewis2@herefordshire.gov.uk
Website	Ellen Pawley	Knowledge Management, ICT Services	01432 260771 elpawley@herefordshire.gov.uk
Work placements	Kim Thompson	Human Resources	01432 261903 kcthompson@herefordshire.gov.uk

Appendix 4: The Current Situation (2006)

For several years, Herefordshire Council has been making progress towards eliminating discrimination towards disabled people, and providing equitable services. The list below shows the progress that has already been made. None of these activities are required by law.

- **Complaints Procedure:** Customers no longer have to formally write to the Council to make a complaint. Complaints, comments and compliments can be made by telephone, e-mail or face-to-face. Complaints can also be made on behalf of someone else. Complaints and comments are monitored by disability as well as other personal information, in order to develop an understanding of underlying discrimination or unfavourable treatment.
- **Website Accessibility:** The Council website has earned the Plain English Internet Crystal Mark for providing clear information. It has also been designed to meet the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) A-level standard.
- **RADAR Keys:** Keys are now available at a reduced price from all Herefordshire Tourist Information Centres and Info Shops. RADAR, (Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation) is a national network of disability organisations and disabled people formed in 1977. The National Key Scheme offers independent access to disabled people to around 7,000 locked public toilets in the UK.
- **Elected Member:** We have an Elected Member (a Councillor) with Diversity as part of their remit (this includes disability).
- **Resources:** In addition to the dedicated Diversity Team, some funds have been allocated for work on disability issues. The funds have been used to support small-scale community projects such as:
 - ABLE's resource book for disabled people
 - Hereford Access for All's directory of restaurants and cafés in Hereford City
 - Advisory leaflet developed by Herefordshire People's Advocacy for people with learning disabilities
- **Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs):** The Council is already in the third year of its EIA process. Although local authorities are obliged by law to carry out EIAs in relation to race, Herefordshire Council has broadened their scope to cover many different strands of diversity, including disability.
- **Service Planning:** All Council services are required to mainstream equality issues into their service planning as a result of carrying out a thorough Equality Impact Assessment.
- **Corporate Service Improvements:** Numerous Council initiatives are in place to benefit the disabled community, such as free bus travel throughout the county, concessionary prices at Halo facilities, assistive technology in libraries and museums, and grants to enable people to adapt their home.
- **HR Policies:** There is an on-going programme of review for all Human Resources policies to ensure that they comply with current legislation, and that they reflect the Council's commitment to equality of opportunity.

- **Accessible Information:** Newly printed Council documents and literature carry an “alternative formats” statement, offering the document in different formats upon request. Guidance is in place to help Council staff with translation (eg. Braille) and interpretation (eg. British Sign Language).
- **“Two Ticks” Disability Symbol:** The Council is an authorised user of the symbol which, amongst other things, guarantees disabled people an interview if they meet the essential minimum criteria for the post.
- **Interview Letters:** All letters encourage applicants to request any special requirements to enable them to attend interviews.
- **Job Descriptions and Person Specifications:** There is a focus on competencies in order to attract as wide a range of applicants as possible.
- **Working with Local Partners to Improve Employment Opportunities:** The Council works closely with JobCentre Plus, Connexions and Community Service Volunteers (CSV) to increase the number of people in work placements within the authority.
- **Monitoring:** Whilst some monitoring of the various “diversity strands” (ie. disability, race, gender, etc) is statutory, Herefordshire Council carries out far more extensive monitoring across various service areas. The aim of the monitoring is to ensure that service uptake, recruitment and promotion, etc. is equally accessible to all our customers, and will highlight any areas of concern or possible discrimination so that we can tackle them.
- **Training:** Induction training for all new Council employees includes an afternoon session on equality and diversity, which includes disability.
- **Bus Travel:** Herefordshire Council exceeds its statutory requirement to provide free bus travel for disabled people, by extending the hours of travel to include any time of day and across county borders. Also, in order to make life simpler for those with limited mobility, where appropriate bus contracts specify a “hail and ride” service so that people can access and exit buses closer to their destination.
- **Disabled Car Parking:** Herefordshire Council is one of very few authorities in the UK to offer 3 hours free parking in its Council car parks to Blue Badge holders.
- **Taxis:** All additional taxis to the current fleet are required to provide disabled access.
- **Employment Legislation:** Regular seminars update our Human Resources staff on changes to employment and equality legislation.
- **Housing:** The Council works with housing associations to ensure that people who need adapted properties are prioritised when one becomes available, and also prioritises disabled applicants for social housing in previously adapted properties.
- **Management Competencies:** The Council’s key managers are required to understand equality and diversity issues, and are monitored through a management competency called “Respecting Customers and Colleagues”.

Appendix 5: Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs)

The table below lists the national BVPIs which relate to disability, with a brief description of what they actually measure.

BV Ref	Indicator	Description
2a	Equality Standard for Local Government (see Section 3.6)	The level of the Equality Standard for local government to which the Authority conforms in respect of gender, race and disability.
11c	Top 5% of earners: with a disability	Percentage of the top paid 5% of staff who have a disability. (excluding those in maintained schools.)
15	Percentage of ill-health retirements	The percentage of local authority employees retiring on grounds of ill health as a percentage of the total workforce.
16a	Percentage of employees with a disability	The percentage of local authority employees with a disability.
16b	Percentage of economically active people who have a disability	The percentage of the economically active population in the local authority area who have a disability.
156	Buildings accessible to people with a disability	The percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for, and accessible to, disabled people.

The table below shows the Council's recent performance and its future targets against these BVPIs.

BV Ref	Indicator	2003/04 Actual	2004/05 Actual	2005/06 Actual	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
2a	Equality Standard for Local Govt	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 2	Level 3
11c	Top 5% of earners: with a disability	Indicator not introduced until 2005/06		0%	1%	1.5%	1.5%
15	% of ill-health retirements	0.06%	0.14%	0.38%	0.04%	0.04%	0.04%
16a	% of employees with a disability	0.6%	0.42%	0.39%	1.35%	1.5%	1.5%
16b	% of economically active people who have a disability	7.8%	7.8%	7.8%	7.8%	7.8%	7.8%
156	Buildings accessible to people with a disability	28.2%	32%	45.9%	55%	60%	68%

Disability Equality Scheme (DES) Action Plan 2006-2009

This Action Plan is divided into the 8 priority areas of work identified in the DES. There are other initiatives which are currently in place, and these can be found at Appendix 4 (what we do over and above the law) and Appendix 2 (our statutory duties).

Action	Lead Officer	Why	Target Date
1) Buildings Access and the Built Environment			
Gain commitment from Jarvis that diversions around works are fully accessible	Head of Highways/Property Services Manager (Colin Birks)	To ensure that disabled people can access diversions	January 2007
Ensure that new public seating in High Town is appropriate	Regeneration Officer (Alan Ronald)	To provide comfortable places to sit and rest	October 2006
Publish plan of works for improving pavements and dropped kerbs in villages	Highways (Stewart Barton)	To keep the public informed about planned works	October 2007
Publish plan of works to improve accessibility of Council buildings	Property Services Manager (Colin Birks)	To keep the public informed about planned works	December 2006
Continue with 3-year programme of refurbishment on public toilets	Property Services Manager (Colin Birks)	To improve public toilet facilities	October 2009
Publish plan of works for public toilets on Council website	Property Services Manager (Colin Birks)	Advise public about work due to be carried out	December 2006
Review feasibility of substantial improvements to disabled toilet facilities	Property Services Manager (Colin Birks)	To identify how we can provide access to highly accessible toilet facilities in the county	December 2009
Investigate feasibility of automatic doors to the rear of the Butter Market	Property Services Manager (Colin Birks)	To improve access to the market	December 2006
Work with partner organisations to improve accessibility of leased buildings (eg. improvements to leisure centres)	Property Services Manager (Colin Birks)	To provide more easily accessible public facilities	On-going
Investigate feasibility of accessible gym and specialist trainer at Halo facilities	Property Services Manager (Colin Birks)	To provide specialist gym facilities for disabled people	December 2006

Action	Lead Officer	Why	Target Date
Investigate benefits of using DisabledGo in Herefordshire	Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin)	To provide accurate information about accessibility to make it easier for disabled people to plan trips and journeys	March 2007
Undertake improvements to disabled toilet facilities in Town Hall	Property Services Manager (Colin Birks)	To allow for more space and better facilities for disabled users	April 2007
2) Communication			
Finalise and promote guidance on written communication throughout the authority	Head of Communications (Robert Blower)	Council literature will use plain English, offer alternative formats, use appropriate images and font sizes	March 2007
Develop Plain English workshops for Council employees	Knowledge Manager (Ellen Pawley)	To make all Council communication easier to understand	December 2007
Develop Disability pages on Council website to form a central point of information	Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin)	To provide a central focus for information relating to disability	On-going (review October 2007)
Seek funding for and, if possible, carry out publicity campaign to stop people parking on dropped kerbs and pavements, or illegally using disabled parking spaces	Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin)	To improve access to pavements and disabled parking spaces for disabled people	December 2008
Enable registration of disabled people on Council website	Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin) and Knowledge Manager (Ellen Pawley)	To improve ease of registration and develop an additional on-line facility	March 2008
Achieve RNIB accreditation for the Council website	Knowledge Manager (Ellen Pawley)	Improve accessibility and useability for disabled people	March 2007
Mark the International Day of Disabled Persons	Assistant Diversity Officer (Lynsey Radmore)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote the DES To raise awareness of local disability groups To improve understanding of disabled people and what they can do 	3 December 2006 and December 2008
Formalise mailing list (stakeholder database) of local disability organisations	Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin)	To ensure that all appropriate groups are informed /involved when relevant	April 2007

Action	Lead Officer	Why	Target Date
3) Consultation and Involvement			
Clarify consultation arrangements with local disability organisations	Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin) and Senior Community Involvement Officer (Martin Heuter)	To ensure that local groups are consulted and have the opportunity to shape services	May 2007
Review guidance for Council consultations to ensure that all employees are aware of the needs of disabled people including building in a sufficient consultation period	Senior Community Involvement Officer (Martin Heuter)	Future face-to-date public consultations will be held in accessible venues, with small working groups, and appropriate timing	June 2007
Use Edgar Street Grid proposal to trial methods of involving disabled people in planning developments	Team Leader Local Planning (Chris Botwright) and Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin)	To ensure that disabled people are able to contribute fully and consistently to future planning developments	September 2007
Develop a panel of people from minority groups to consult on a regular basis	Senior Community Involvement Officer (Martin Heuter) and Senior Researcher (Tony Cramp)	To gauge the views of specific groups on service development and evaluation	December 2007
Involve disabled people in the review of the Council's electronic consultation methods	Senior Community Involvement Officer (Martin Heuter)	To ensure that electronic consultation methods are appropriate and accessible	December 2007
Review success of the Involving People team in involving disabled people in Council consultations, and research best practice in other organisations	Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin)	To find ways of improving our current procedures for involving disabled people	April 2008
4) Training & Work Placements			
Create new work placements for disabled people in each Directorate and promote them effectively	Assistant HR Officer - Media & Promotions	To promote the Council as an employer of choice for disabled people, which will in turn raise the profile of the authority	April 2007
Investigate feasibility of tailored training for Council employees on disability equality	Human Resources Officer - Organisation Development (Liz Wallace)	To ensure that employees understand Council's approach to disability and are able to better support customers	December 2007

Action	Lead Officer	Why	Target Date
Review all corporate training events to ensure that disability equality issues are taken account of	Human Resources Officer - Organisation Development (Liz Wallace) and Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin)	To mainstream issues of disability across all training	April 2008
Instigate management development provision incorporating newly developed disability equality issues	Human Resources Manager Organisation Development and Workforce Planning (Amanda Attfield) and Human Resources Officer - Organisation Development (Liz Wallace)	To ensure that managers understand disability equality and are better able to support customers and colleagues	April 2007 onwards
Ensure that Elected Member development training incorporates disability equality issues	Democratic Services Manager (Christine Dyer) and Equality & Diversity Manager (Carol Trachonitis)	To ensure that our community leaders understand disability equality and are better able to support customers and colleagues	December 2006
5) Employment			
Review recruitment and selection guidance for managers to incorporate information on employing disabled people	Human Resources Officer – Recruitment (Sheila Thompson) and Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin)	Support for disabled employees highlighted through employee survey	December 2006
Advertise all Council job opportunities on the Disabled Workers Cooperative website and the Herefordshire Learning Disability Partnership website, and research other possible media (eg. local newsletters)	Recruitment Team	Increase awareness of jobs at Herefordshire Council amongst disabled people, and raise our profile as a disabled-friendly employer	April 2007
Review guidance available for disabled employees or those who become disabled when in employment, to include the services available to them	HR Manager, Employee Relations (Terry Smith) and Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin)	Support for disabled employees highlighted through employee survey	April 2007

Action	Lead Officer	Why	Target Date
Review recruitment and selection guidance for managers to explore possibility of being flexible with job descriptions to enable more disabled people to take up posts within the Council	Human Resources Manager Organisation Development and Workforce Planning (Amanda Attfield) and Human Resources Officer – Recruitment (Sheila Thompson)	To think flexibly about how we develop and promote job roles, and to increase the number of disabled people who are able to apply for jobs	December 2007
Consider how best to promote jobs or part of jobs to disabled people	Assistant HR Officer (Media & Promotions)	To increase the number of disabled people who are able to apply for jobs	December 2007
Review and promote policy on sick leave and time-off for treatment, check-ups, etc.	HR Manager, Employee Relations (Terry Smith)	To ensure that employees are treated fairly and are aware of what they are entitled to	December 2007
6) Transport			
Review contracts with bus operators to ensure that it is a requirement for them to be committed to the Council's value of treating people with fairness, courtesy and respect	Public Transport Manager (Jim Davies)	To ensure that contractors comply with Council policies on equality and good customer service standards	March 2007
Consult the disabled community on accessibility and demand for taxis	Licensing Manager (Suzanne Laughland)	To ensure that we provide taxis according to local need	December 2008
Develop and promote a chart of recommended journey prices for taxis	Licensing Manager (Suzanne Laughland)	To ensure that disabled people can use taxis confidently	March 2007
Investigate feasibility of providing voluntary training for taxi drivers on how to handle wheelchairs	Licensing Manager (Suzanne Laughland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To give taxi drivers more confidence in driving disabled passengers To make pick-up and drop-off times quicker for driver and passenger To prevent injury to drivers handling wheelchairs 	December 2007
Produce public information leaflet about taxis on customer service standards and where to seek advice	Licensing Manager (Suzanne Laughland)	So that people know what standards of service to expect and how they can complain if necessary	March 2007

Action	Lead Officer	Why	Target Date
Improve access at Herefordshire rail stations by implementing the proposals in the Local Transport Plan	Team Leader Integrated Transport (Amanda Barton)	To enable disabled people to have equitable access to train services	On-going
Review complaints procedure and monitoring for community transport schemes to clarify if improvements are required	Team Leader, Transportation Planning (Steve Burgess)	To ensure community transport continues to meet users' needs	December 2007
Improve the clarity of public transport timetables by complying with recommendations made by ATCO ¹	Public Transport Manager (Jim Davies)	To make timetable information more accessible	December 2006
Implement annual programme of bus stop improvements to make them more accessible	Public Transport Manager (Jim Davies)	To enable easier access to bus services	On-going
Ensure subsidised bus services are operated by low floor, accessible vehicles wherever possible, through the procurement process	Public Transport Manager (Jim Davies)	To ensure services are accessible, and meet target for 80% of contracts for subsidised services to be operated by accessible vehicles	March 2007
7) Housing			
Seek funding for advertising adapted properties in greater detail	Home Point Manager (Jamie Burns)	To ensure that disabled people are given relevant information about vacant properties	September 2007
Investigate the feasibility of providing an advocacy service to coordinate awareness of and access to adapted properties	Head of Strategic Housing Services (Richard Gabb)	To ensure that disabled people have access to suitable accommodation	September 2007
Where appropriate and feasible, incorporate adapted housing into new housing developments	Enabling Manager (Jane Thomas)	To increase availability of adapted housing	On-going (review March 2008)
Develop clearer guidance and leaflets on how to access disabled adaptation and related services	Private Sector Housing Manager (Denise Bradley-Lloyd)	To maximise awareness and ease of access to grants and advice services around adaptations	March 2007

¹ ATCO: Association of Transport Coordination Officers

Action	Lead Officer	Why	Target Date
8) Service Delivery			
Ensure that all contractors and partners are committed to the council's value of treating people with fairness, courtesy and respect	Director of Resources (Sonia Rees)	The Council have a responsibility to promote access within services it commissions as well as those it delivers directly	December 2007
Work towards improvements in Adult Social Care as set out in the Adult Social Care Service Action and Improvement Plan	Head of Adult Social Care (Stephanie Canham)	To ensure that the service continues to deliver timely, appropriate and high quality services to disabled people	On-going
Corporate Diversity Team to work closely with new Community Partnership Manager at Halo	Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin) Halo Chief Executive (Jon Argent)	To ensure that the needs of disabled people are taken into consideration in all of Halo's service provision	On-going
Increase the annual numbers of disabled users to Council owned leisure facilities by 100% from the 2005/06 baseline	Halo Chief Executive (Jon Argent) and Parks, Countryside, & Leisure Development Manager (Tony Featherstone)	To improve the opportunities for disabled people to engage in leisure activities based in publicly funded facilities	25% 2006/07 50% 2007/08 76% 2008/09 100% 2009/10
Work with Sports Development Team to develop sports information for disabled people	Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin)	To improve and promote sporting opportunities	December 2008
Gain the involvement of disabled people in the planning, development and implementation of all new parks initiatives supported by the Council	Parks Development Manager (Fran White) and Principal Leisure & Countryside Recreation Officer (Ruth Jackson)	To ensure that the needs of the disabled people are fully incorporated into the Parks planning process	Set up of reps for each ongoing scheme by 2007/08
Monitor the number of comments, complaints and compliments registered by disabled people. We will also develop procedures for monitoring our effectiveness in dealing with the comments and complaints	ICT Client Account Manager (Sandra Silcox)	To identify any patterns of discrimination and to ensure that complaints are dealt with effectively	October 2007
Complete the London 2012 "Pre Games Training Camps" criteria questionnaire	Audrey Rust	To become one of the venues for olympic/ paralympic teams	Jan 2007

Action	Lead Officer	Why	Target Date
Prepare a London 2012 strategy for Herefordshire	Audrey Rust	To highlight areas of support needed from various sectors in order for Herefordshire to accommodate an olympic/paralympic team	Jan 2008
Research possibility of summer exhibition and fun day for disabled people and their families	Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin)	Opportunity for young people and their families to have fun, make contacts and source information	December 2007
Investigate increasing availability of social opportunities for disabled people, particularly young people during school holidays	Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin)	To prevent feelings of loneliness and isolation	March 2008
Investigate feasibility of providing gardening and decorating support for disabled people	Diversity Officer (Harriet Yellin)	To aid independent living	March 2008

REVISED COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

CABINET

12TH OCTOBER, 2006

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To approve a substantial revision of the Council's communications strategy for 2006/07 as a result of new communications channels and programmes being launched, new objectives and targets being set and the production of a wide range of communications plans to support new programmes aimed at achieving the transformation of the authority and the way it delivers services to local people.

Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in Herefordshire in an area comprising one or more wards. It was included in the Forward Plan.

Recommendation

THAT the revised Communications Strategy be approved.

Reasons

Although there is a communication strategy for 2006/07 currently being implemented, the communications unit has set challenging new targets for productivity which substantially expand its activities now and further to 2008.

Considerations

1. A substantial revision of the 2006-07 communications strategy has been undertaken to take account of increased levels and channels of communication and challenging new targets for 2006 to 2008.
2. New, robust and measurable internal communications channels have been launched together with feedback systems to provide a strategic management tool for directors and senior management. A leadership forum is organised quarterly with the aim of building a community of leaders to help drive the transformation of the council.
3. Productivity continues to improve, in terms of media coverage, producing information and responding to media enquiries. Specific communications plans have been produced for several key projects and a government relations programme will be tasked with achieving a better deal for Herefordshire in terms of funding for locally

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Robert Blower, Head of Communications, on (01432) 383510

delivered services.

4. The strategy is the basis for building an effective network of communications champions across the council who will help shape and drive communications improvements and act as ambassadors for good communications practice. A communications tool kit is included in the strategy, which will help managers make the most effective and appropriate use of internal and external communications channels.
5. The strategy will develop dedicated Member communication channels geared towards providing the information that Members want, and in the form and to the frequency they need it. Content and frequency of Members' newsletter and service updates, will be upgraded and new guides to becoming a Councillor, and for new Members, will be produced along with a new induction programme and a communications toolkit for elected Members.
6. The revised communications strategy does not depend on increased funding for communications activity over the 2006-08 period of implementation.

Risk Management

Weekly updates on communications activity and progress, together with monthly performance management reports, together with reference to the corporate and directorate risk monitors and risk management elements within individual programmes are essential elements in managing risk associated with the communications strategy.

Alternative Options

A possible alternative option is to continue to implement the current communications strategy without the more demanding objectives outlined in the revised strategy.

Consultees

Corporate Management Board and the Communication Network (comprising communications professionals in all directorates)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Action Plan for Communications

Background Papers

None identified.



Communications Strategy 2006-08

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Communications Strategy 2006-08

Primary objectives

To achieve a positive awareness, across all the diverse communities of the county, of the range of council services and how to access them, of the local democratic process and how to engage in it, and of the council's progress and performance relating to the vision and priorities for Herefordshire.

To foster a shared understanding and support among all employees, managers and elected members for a unified council, its vision, values, priorities and improvement strategies in order to create a strong foundation for transformation, culture change and performance improvement.

To increase pride and confidence in the county to citizens and work with our strategic partners to market the qualities of Herefordshire to key external audiences in support of tourism, business opportunities, regeneration, fair funding and internal investment.

To enhance the reputation of the council among key local and national stakeholders and opinion formers, including local, national and professional media.

Stakeholders

Citizens - as stakeholders in the council and the county, as users of services and as taxpayers, including all of our diverse communities, however 'hard to reach' or specialist their information needs.

Elected members of the council - in their roles as representatives of the community, decision makers and custodians of the council's corporate reputation.

Council employees and our strategic partner employees - as a critical success factor in the delivery of the transformation vision and public services, and as ambassadors for the organisation and the county

Our partners - in other areas of public service, in business and voluntary organisations with whom the council will create and maintain effective working partnerships for the benefit of the community as a whole

Other local authorities and the organisations that represent them - to share information and best practice in achieving value-for-money effective public services

Central and regional government and their departments and inspection bodies - as funding and improvement agencies helping us to continually improve our services

Framework

Herefordshire Council's communications operates within a framework, which aims to ensure that it is geared towards achieving engagement with stakeholders inside and outside the council, but also takes a leadership role in encouraging communication between council departments and across partner and stakeholder groups.

<p>INTERNAL</p> <p>The framework aims to encourage the sharing of information, understanding and views between management levels and front line services, and between departments across the council.</p>	<p>1. Across</p> <p>2. Upwards</p> <p>3. Downwards</p>	<p>Service units should be given the tools to communicate across the council, obtain the information they need from other units to deliver joined up working to customers and market themselves effectively to their service users and their colleagues within the council</p> <p>To employ feedback management systems to support a 'bottom up' approach to culture change, so that employees have confidence that their views, ideas and concerns are listened to and acted upon by management</p> <p>Management should have confidence that internal channels are guaranteed to communicate the vision and priorities clearly and consistently to all parts of the council</p>
<p>EXTERNAL</p> <p>In addition, the framework aims to encourage the two-way flow of information and understanding between the council and its diverse communities, and promote communication between stakeholder groups and communities.</p>	<p>4. Inwards</p> <p>5. Outwards</p> <p>6. Around</p>	<p>All of the communities in Herefordshire need to be given the means by which to engage effectively with the council and influence the course of service development and the plans for the county</p> <p>The council should communicate effectively, and market its services, to all stakeholders and all diverse communities, promoting the vision and priorities for the county, as well as information on the full range of council services and how to access them, and the democratic process and how to engage in it.</p> <p>The council needs to take a lead in promoting good communications around and between the county's stakeholder groups, diverse communities and our partnership organisations, and help build the tools and capacity for the county to market itself effectively.</p>

Responsibility for communications

Elected members

Elected members are a vital link in the communications between the council and the diverse communities it serves and fulfil a leadership role in communicating and influencing on behalf of the authority, whilst working closely with the agreed protocols for communication.

Corporate management board

The chief executive and corporate management board will be responsible for demonstrating active leadership in communication - supporting communications principles and adhering to communications protocols as agreed. They will communicate visibly their strategic thinking, decisions and developments to heads of stakeholders using the appropriate established communications channels.

Heads of service and key managers

Heads of service and key managers will work closely with the corporate communications function to ensure that the communications strategy, channels, principles and protocols are implemented in their areas of responsibility. They will ensure their teams are aware of the communications strategy and understand and support the communications principles and protocols. Using and adhering to established channels of communication, they will ensure that their teams receive important information accurately in good time and foster an environment in which employees feel able to express their views, raise concerns, questions and ideas openly and positively without fear of recrimination.

Communications network

A recommendation of this communications strategy is that a representative communications network is re-established to influence the development of communications channels and services, co-ordinate communications activity in line with the communications strategy and ensure the adherence of protocols in their areas of operation.

Everyone

Everyone within Herefordshire Council has a personal responsibility for communicating effectively and appropriately, sharing ideas and information, raising concerns constructively, using our established internal communication channels, and getting the message across positively to, and listening to, our stakeholders.

Communication programmes

A large number of individual communications strategies, programmes and developments have been or are being put together to support the primary objectives of the communications strategy. The accompanying action plan details all the individual programmes and sets targets and identifies evaluation.

Communicating with employees

Transformation

A communications strategy supporting the overall transformation of Herefordshire Council is in development, its aims are:

- To increase employee confidence in how the council will lead the transformation and how its change programmes will benefit them and their customers.
- Achieve awareness, understanding and support, among all managers, employees and elected members of the council, of the benefits to be attained by the transformation programme and vision
- To win recognition, from citizens, partners and other key stakeholders, for the improvement in services the transformation will deliver.
- To develop design for the 'strategic staircase' or 'road map' - an easily assimilated overview of how the key change programmes will transform the council.

Vision and Values

Formulate with the transformation board a process, which will include use of representative focus groups and engage senior management team to:

- Promote and establish the transformational vision
- Gauge understanding of transformation and change programmes in order to identify issues to be addressed
- Contribute to the creation of a new values set that prepares the organisation to achieve its transformation vision.

Communications network

To build an effective network of communications champions across the council who will help shape and drive communications strategies and programmes and act as ambassadors for good communications practice.

Communications calendar

To produce an annual communications calendar which helps to support a strategic planning approach to campaigns and avoids 'clashes' in events planning

Internal communications channels: Weekly Updates

To provide weekly reports to cabinet, the corporate management team, heads of service and communications champions on communications programmes and progress as well as press coverage.

Internal communications channels: News & Views

To maintain a robust and measurable team briefing system that provides positive and effective dialogue between managers and their teams and will be recognised by employees as their most valued information channel

To implement new feedback systems to provide a strategic management tool for directors and senior management

Internal communications channels: First Press

To establish an employee news package that is guaranteed to reach everyone across the council - a 'fit for purpose', news leaflet that delivers key information to all employees, on time to budget, each month and replacing Core News (previously quarterly distribution).

Increase return on investment (more readers and engagement at no more cost)

Internal communications channels: First Press Online

To complement the First Press newsletter with a detailed electronic version, again available monthly, for all colleagues with access to the intranet, which will be published on time to budget.

Internal communications channels: Talking Point

To organise regular 'talking point' sessions with the leader and the chief executive to enable employees to raise questions, ideas and concerns

Internal communications channels: Leadership Forum

To re-launch and re-brand the managers forum as the leadership forum with the aim to:

- Create a community of leaders

- Engage key managers in leading and driving the vision and priorities of the council
- Platform for visible leadership
- Provide a valuable networking opportunity for managers
- Celebrate success and achievement
- Build mutual understanding and respect across the service areas and the partnership

Internal communications channels: Notice boards

To develop a strategic approach to managing notice boards as an effective communications resource

Internal communications channels: Intranet

To develop relevant and useful content for the intranet – to help encourage the resource to be a well-used and well-regarded communication and information tool

To create a range of value-added applications that are structured around the needs of users and support improved performance across the council.

Internal communications channels: Inside Track

To provide topical and pertinent news daily and electronically, designed to help employees and members understand key issues as they develop, relate them to corporate objectives and respond with their own views and ideas.

To counter ‘information overload’ by providing a focused and direct service to employees as they need it.

Internal communications channels: Horizontal communications

To develop horizontal communications programmes and techniques that enable the sharing of information, best practice and jointed up working, develop mutual respect between service areas and the concept of the ‘internal customer’

Management competencies

To ensure that communications skills and responsibilities are embedded in management competency framework

Employee communications toolkit

To create a communications tool kit, which provides guidance and guidelines to help managers make the most effective and appropriate use of internal and external communications channels

Employee communications toolkit: House style

To develop a consistent house style for the written word, address terminology issues for diversity and produce clear guidelines.

Employee communications toolkit: Plain language

To produce guidelines for the use of plain language, supported with a collection of simple alternatives, which if used alongside the council's house style, will help the council to avoid complex language in our published documents and web site.

Employee communications toolkit: Defamation

Produce policy and checklist that safeguards against libel and slander in all council communications and channels

Employee communications toolkit: Publications

To produce specifications to enable officers to commission design and print cost effectively and professionally and ensure our publications are as accessible as possible to all our diverse communities

Employee communications toolkit: translation

Incorporate existing guidelines on translation and interpretation to promotes improved accessibility to council services to more of our diverse communities and provides added confidence for service areas to provide translation and interpretation

Employee communications toolkit: Event management

To produce a simple guide to managing external or internal events - covering every key stage and aspect, including venue, audience, layout, staging, message, invitations, guests, equipment, insurance, parking, branding, promotion and evaluation. To the support service areas in organising professional public events

Employee communications toolkit: Letter writing guide

Produce a general guide for letter writing to help ensure a clear and consistent approach. It will enable the council to apply consistent style and principles to letter writing; how formulas can make letter writing easier and

more efficient; making letters easier to understand, in ways that support a positive reputation for the council.

Employee communications toolkit: Council reports

To produce guidelines on how the toolkit, including the use of plain language, can be used in the writing of council reports

Employee communications toolkit: Marketing strategies

To produce a marketing and communications strategy guide and template
To help marketing and communications professionals ensure a consistent, professional and measurable approach to marketing strategies across the council

Employee communications toolkit: Email protocols

Integrate current email protocols into the communications toolkit

Employee communications toolkit: All user emails

Revise and promote policies on mass distribution emails within the council to maximise potential for conveying information quickly and reducing inappropriate use.

Employee communications toolkit: Presentations

Produce guidelines for producing and delivering presentations – including a *power point* users' guide

Employee communications toolkit: Corporate identity

To review the council's brand and corporate identity in order to ensure maximum recognition for the activities and achievements of the authority and bring the council together into a single, consistent, coherent and cohesive identity – underpinning one council, one vision, and one brand.

Design

Review in-house design profitability and opportunities to improve return on investment to achieve a better return investment in the brand (higher visibility and recognition by stakeholders; reduced expenditure on print and design)
More effective use of corporate identity to achieve better return on marketing investment

Communication and schools

Create a proactive and positive communications framework with schools that adds value and confidence to the relationship with the council; improves two-way information flow; helps to promote further the performance of schools;

maintains a positive image of education in Herefordshire; and support schools in the marketing of their services; and dealing with media enquires and issues.

Pay and Workforce

A new communications strategy for the pay and workforce development strategy In order to support the transformation vision – promoting organisational development, flexible working, employee establishment, diversity and key work streams

Members' communications

To develop dedicated member communication channels geared towards providing the information that members want and in the form and to the frequency they need it.

Members' publications

Upgrade content and frequency of members' newsletter and service update, produce a guide to becoming a councillor, and a guide for new members.

Members' induction

Design induction programme for new councillors and returning councillors.

Members' toolkit

Design a comprehensive communications toolkit for elected members. It will include techniques to support elected members in communicating effectively with citizens and working positively with media

Communicating with citizens and partners

Herefordshire Connects

To achieve among all stakeholders, a high level of awareness, understanding and support for the vision and the benefits to be attained by the council's business transformation project - Herefordshire Connects. To build a wider awareness for the council's innovative approach to customer service

Customer service

To promote council services and how to access them and increase external and internal awareness and understanding of the customer services strategy

To promote the customer complaints system externally and internally to help embed customer relationship management and complaints handling systems

Children and young people

Formalise communications structures and channels across the directorate and key partnerships and develop a specific communications strategy for children and young people's services – include support for JAR improvement plan and the change for children programme - links progress to the transformation programme

Adults and Community Services

A new communications strategy for adult and community services, which includes communications support for the adult social care improvement plan and development of services within the directorate - links progress to transformation programme

The Big Move

To achieve awareness, understanding and support for the cost and service benefits to be attained by the move by most office-based staff to a single, modern site and the adoption of new flexible working, and win recognition, from citizens, partners and other key stakeholders, for the improvement in services it will deliver.

Citizen Publications: Herefordshire Matters

To increase frequency of the citizen publication from 4 to 6 times a year; improve return on investment in overall promotion of the council; build citizen readership, support and regard for the publication; and improve readability and accessibility of content and design.

Citizen Publications: Guide to the Council

To produce a citizens' guide to council services which promotes the full range of council services and how to access them, and the local democratic process and how to engage in it.

Citizen Publications: Guide to Herefordshire

Produce a high quality guide to promote Herefordshire as a destination for business, inward investment and tourism (with third party publishing house, providing it is cost neutral to the council)

Citizen Publications: Annual Report and Summary

Produce high-quality corporate document that reviews and promotes the advance of the council's vision and priorities in an easily assimilated way, and publishes the statement of accounts in a clear design format. And to re-produce content and design in a simplified statement of accounts – a pocket summary - to promote the council's clear vision, priorities and progress.

Citizen Publications: Council Tax Leaflet

Produce an easy to read summary of council tax and precept matters

Citizen Campaigns: Pride in Herefordshire

To increase the percentage of citizens who feel proud of Herefordshire and are happy to live here

Citizen Campaigns: Finance

To promote the council's approach to finance as encapsulated in the medium term financial management strategy

Citizen Campaigns: Direct Debit

A campaign to persuade citizens and businesses in Herefordshire to pay their taxes by direct debit – the aim being to reduce significantly for citizens the time, hassle and inconvenience associated with paying in cash or by cheque, and reduce materially for the council the costs associated with processing payments by cash, cheque or standing order.

Citizen Campaign: Local democracy

Develop a campaign to promote local democracy and how to engage in it more effectively, ensure citizens understand how they can influence decisions and how their views are sought and taken into account. Including promotion of scrutiny workings and recommendations, community forums and participation in local elections.

Citizen Campaigns: Livestock Market

To promote an understanding of the need to relocate Hereford livestock market for the benefit of the majority of the community. Ensure that the recommendations for the location of the new livestock market are announced in a co-ordinated and controlled manner – making sure that those most likely to be affected by the news receive it first and directly from the council.

Crisis Communications

To develop a robust crisis communications strategy to ensure the communications unit is equipped and prepared to work with key partners to ensure that all people are safeguarded at times of emergency.

Industrial action

To establish communications plans to minimise the impact of any future dispute, ensuring the council can convey important and relevant information to citizens quickly in line with its commitment to protect the vulnerable

Communicating with the media

Media: Communications Protocols

To promote and embed working protocols that govern and guide the way the council communicates with the media, its citizens, employees and partners. The protocols will be pinned to a legal framework and will include governance of communications during the run up to elections, commercial transactions, referendums and promotion of scrutiny. The aim is also to improve responsiveness of the council to the media

Media: Performance

To increase the productivity of the communications unit with increased numbers of press releases and statements produced by the communications unit; to ensure press releases are packaged professionally and have strong news value; to maintain a responsive press enquiry service for local, professional and national media and generally increase the volume of positive press coverage.

Media: Evaluation

Investigate a performance and media management system for the press office

Media: Criticism

Develop an objective, proactive and constructive approach to press and public criticism – ensuring the organisation is equipped to capture the value in criticism to use as a means of continual improvement

Media: Induction

Prepare inductions to the council for new journalists and arrange visits to the communications unit.

Media: Customer Service

Develop a set of customer care standards for the media

Media: Virtual Press Office

Develop a 24-hour virtual press office service using the council's web site

Media: Copyright

Explore copyright issues relating to use of newspaper cuttings internally and investigate cost reductions in this area

Communicating with government

Government Relations: Framework and strategy

To create a government relations framework and strategy, a stream of which will be to promote a 'fair deal for Herefordshire' – increasing levels of government funding in locally provided services.

Equality, performance and development

Equality

To promote diversity in the workplace, helping to ensure that awareness of diversity becomes embedded in all activities and functions; ensuring equality and diversity issues are accommodated in the communication strategy and toolkit and working closely with the diversity team in promoting the importance of equality impact assessments

Freedom of information

To promote council responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act

Cost savings

To ensure that new communications programmes and activity are implemented in line with the need to deliver recurrent and cumulative cash-releasing savings annually. Raise performance productivity as regards use of resources, including the achievement of best value for money

Customer responsiveness

Develop new customer service standards for the communications unit in order to deliver an enhanced communications and marketing service to the directorates and service areas

Staff review and development

To create a comprehensive skills development matrix for the key areas of performance in the communications unit in order to promote key skills in respect of the effective planning, performance management and delivery of services.

Winning awards

To improve the reputation of Herefordshire Council through the winning of national prestigious awards, managing corporately the production of consistently high quality award submissions

Performance Indicators

Monthly

Number of press releases and statements
Volume of press coverage achieved
Volume of press enquiries responded to
Percentage of enquires responded to before deadline
Ratio of positive to negative press coverage

Use of the intranet daily news and press watch services

News & Views implementation

Hit rates and visitor numbers for the web site (subject to web analysis software)

Customer satisfaction indices for design
Profit and loss account for design work (compared with previous year)
External and internal revenue split

Sickness absence rates in the communications unit
Telephone answering response times
Budget management

Annually

Whether employees feel that communication is getting better, that they feel better informed, that morale and job satisfaction is improved (employee opinion survey)

Actual response levels to the employee opinion survey
Readership and credibility of *First Press* (employee opinion survey)
Effectiveness of *News & Views* (employee opinion survey)
Use of the intranet by staff (hit rates and employee opinion survey)

Whether citizens feel informed and involved (subject to citizen panel and annual customer satisfaction survey)

Customer satisfaction indices for the press office (media survey)
Use of the web site (web analysis software)

Return on investment in design

Communications channels and tools available

It is generally not recognised just how many communications channels and tools are currently available for use in informing and involving a wide variety of audiences.

The following table outlines around 50 official and unofficial channels; how they work, their frequency, the audiences they address, the benefits to the council and how they will be developed further by the communications strategy.

Channel	Audience	Activity	Frequency	Benefit	Development
Media Press releases Press enquiries	All	Promotion of news through radio, television and print media nationally and locally Managing issues	Potential 24 hours	Better informed audiences – danger that staff hear news of the council from the media rather than the council	Increased promotion of the council through larger volume of press releases, responsive service for media enquiries and more targeting of information
Ward members	Citizens Business Partners	Two way liaison and consultation	Daily	Better informed audience – intelligence on local issues – local leadership	Protocols for elected members to be agreed – improved communication with members
Executive members	Citizens Business Partners Government Media	Leadership role in promoting strategic issues	Daily	Demonstrating community leadership and accountability	Improved communication with members
Word of mouth (via staff)	Citizens Partners	Word of mouth is highly regarded information sources	Daily	A powerful communication channel if used positively 6,000 potential ambassadors for the council and the county	Need to improve internal communication and keep staff in the picture Staff to feel informed and valued
Web site	Citizens Members Employees Partners Government	An key information and communication tool, available 24:7, for potentially a global audience	Daily	A promotional window for the council and the county	Opportunity for content to reflect the council and the county as dynamic and vibrant
Intranet	Employees	Important information tool on council policies and developments	Daily	Potentially a cost effective means of supporting managers and staff with relevant information	Content needs to be structured around the needs of users – such as online induction and managers' tool kit
Service staff directory	Employees	Directory of staff, structure and hierarchy	Daily	Helps staff locate each other	Needs updating after restructuring
Electronic news service	Employees	Daily news service on the intranet home page	Daily	Employees informed before they read about it in the media	Current 'latest news' box to be developed into a prominent and well used intranet application

AEMU	Employees Members Schools	Email to all email users list	Daily	Can get a message to 70 per cent of staff quickly (those with access to the intranet and a personal computer	Not as potent as it could be due to its over use of low level information Sometimes used inappropriately Requires governance
Email	Employees Citizens Members Partners Government	A personal communication on a specific issue	Daily	Provides a targeted means of conveying relevant information	Can be a powerful communication tool if used positively and sensitively Email guidelines to be promoted
Letters	Citizens	Communicating with individual citizens on specific issues	Daily	Provides a personalised response to a specific query or concern	Can be a powerful communication tool if used positively and sensitively Letter writing guidelines to be available
Service and staff directory	Employees Members	Helps individuals locate officers, their responsibilities and their position in structure	Daily	An essential directory for all employees with access to the intranet	Depends on service areas updating information (although this process is complex and not widely known)
Press watch	Employees Members	Press cuttings are updated regularly and available on request	Daily	Internalises in service areas responsibility for how council services are reported	Availability to be determined – while managing any copyright implications
Communication update	Cabinet Directors Heads of Service	Update on press releases and coverage and upcoming communication projects A reporting tool for progress on communication	Weekly	Regular summary of communication work and issues – early warning system for forthcoming media coverage	Is cascaded to managers beyond its formal distribution – a question as to whether it needs to be developed for wider circulation
Leadership letters	Key managers	Occasional letter outlining important developments	Various	Direct and informative communication	Can cut across other channels if not integrated into communication plans
Consultation	Citizens Business Partners	Canvassing of opinion face to face, by questionnaire or electronic consultation	Various	Data helps drive service improvement	Better co-ordination of consultation and communication activity

News & Views team briefing	Employees	Face to face discussion of developments – plus feedback management system	Monthly	Internal communication channel most favoured by staff – gives management an overview of staff concerns	Positive reaction by staff but not all managers are implementing News & Views – monitored to improve cascade effectiveness
News & Views Feedback	Employees	Electronic and print out distribution to teams	Monthly	Provides responses to the questions and concerns raised by staff in the previous month	The challenge is to turn around approved responses in good time after the initial questions
First Press (Highlights)	Employees	Hard copy news leaflet delivered to employees with payslips. Only regular communication guaranteed to get to all employees	Monthly	Promotes awareness, understanding and support for council priorities.	Expand to two sides of single A4 sheet so that it can be collated by machine
First Press (Online)	Employees	Electronic and extended version of the news leaflet	Monthly	Promotes use of the intranet with links to further documents as required	Being developed as a means of channelling audience to important information on the intranet
Directorate and service area newsletters	Specific service teams	A variety of print and electronic newsletters are produced	Various	Promotes local understanding of service area priorities	Support local newsletters with corporate templates to help consistent design and house style
Staff review & development (SRD)	Employees	Annual or six monthly review and planning of performance & development	Six monthly	Links individual targets and performance to the service and corporate plan	Communications needs to be recognised as a staff skill and responsibility – linked to SRD process
Service leaflets & publications	Citizens Members Employees Partners	Publishing information on council services and how to access them	Various	Promotes take up of services	Needs a consistent and professional look to reflect a positive image of the council – specifications on corporate identity to be promoted
Reception areas	Visiting citizens, businesses, members, employees and other organisations	Front line interaction with visitors	Various	Promote better understanding of council services and how to access them	Needs a consistent and professional look to reflect a positive image of the council – specifications on corporate identity to

					be promoted
Notice boards	Employees	Distribution of information – promoting events to staff	Various	Reminds staff of key programmes A supporting rather than key communication channel	Needs audit and management of the council's notice boards to ensure they are getting messages to staff effectively
Committee meetings	Citizens Members Partners	The standing committees have a quasi-judicial role in terms of planning and regulation	Various	Promote better understanding of democratic process and how to engage in it	Communications to become more closely involved in key papers at an earlier stage to help promote the process
Cabinet Full Council	Citizens Members	Decision making	Various times		Communications to become more closely involved in key papers at an earlier stage to help promote the process
Scrutiny Strategic monitoring	Citizens Members Partners Employees	Probe and hold to account council decisions and review performance	Various times	Demonstrates accountability and transparency in council decision making – although potentially confusing for some citizens	Specific communications plans and protocols to be developed to support the promotion of scrutiny and its work
Leadership Forum	Key managers	Create new community of leaders Share best practice in leadership Harness ideas and support of key managers	Quarterly	Involves managers who have a strong leadership role in driving transformation Delegates benefit the council by their contribution as well as themselves in leadership development	Steering group established to develop the forum Feedback from delegates collected in order to influence further forums
Talking Point	Employees	Chief executive engages employees on key issues	Quarterly	Leadership and engagement given more emphasis Credible channel for disseminating information	Attendance needs to be boosted in some areas of the authority

Herefordshire Matters	Citizens Members Employees	Update citizens on council services and decisions	Quarterly	Promote better understanding of council services and how to access them	Frequency too low to build a viable relationship with citizens – needs 6 editions per year but at same cost
Corporate plan and operating plan	Citizens Employees Members	Promotes strategic direction and progress on priorities	Annually	Leads service planning and development	Individual areas of the plan require specific promotion to build employee understanding
Members newsletter	Members	Promotes to all members developments of interest	Quarterly	Informs members about council programmes	Frequency too low to keep members fully informed
Service update	Members	Promotes to all members developments of interest	Quarterly	Informs members about council programmes	Frequency too low to keep members fully informed Possible combination with member newsletter
Community forums	Citizens	Engages citizens on issues of local relevance	Quarterly	Promote better understanding of democratic process and how to engage in it	Will develop with partnership working with police Needs stronger promotion
Staff Induction	New employees	Gives new employees an overview of council services, projects and policies	Various	Potentially introduces new starts to council vision, values and priorities	Transformation vision and messages to be promoted Values to be clarified
Member induction	Newly elected members	Sets the scene for the profile of Herefordshire, key issues, ethics, policy framework, council services and structures.	Following local elections	Provides an early understanding of how local government operates in Herefordshire.	New induction programme being agreed for May 2007
Employee Opinion Survey	Employees	Surveys all employees on work issues	Annually	Information on staff morale and job satisfaction	Feeds into service planning
Member working groups	Members		Various	Engages members in the improvement of the authority	
Council and community events	Citizens	A wide range of events that address specific or wider communities	Various	Shows the council taking a lead in promoting a local sense of community	The council's role in organising or funding events needs to achieve more recognition
Council tax	Citizens	Communicates	Annually	Potentially	The challenge is to

leaflet	Members Employees	the council tax rate and how it was spent		builds citizen understanding of how the council is funded and where the money is spent	make the information relevant and accessible for the widest possible audience
Report and Accounts (Full Report)	Accountants and auditors Partner organisations Elected members Local and regional government community	To produce a high-quality, corporate document that reviews and promotes the advance of the council's vision and priorities and publishes the statement of accounts in a clear design format.	Annually	Gives the in-depth picture on the financial health of the council – of great interest to strategic partners	
Report and Accounts (Summary)	Citizens	To produce a simple summary of accounts and a review of progress over the year	Annually	Demonstrates accountability and promotes understanding of where funding comes from and where it goes	A summary document is available on request and on the web site – the main findings need to be promoted more widely
Whistle blowing charter	Employees	The principle is that service users and the public interest come first. Employees can raise concerns about service provision, the conduct of officers or councillors	At any time	The charter provides a means of exposing internally any form of wrongdoing, such as inappropriate treatment of children or adults, or discrimination, fraud and corruption.	A simple charter promoted through a leaflet and the intranet (based on the established policy) will help encourage the internal raising of any employee concerns.
Freedom of Information	Media Citizens Stakeholders	The provision of information to citizens, the media or any other interested party in accordance with the FOI Act.	At any time	The efficient management of FOI requests helps present the council as open and accountable	The communication unit to work closely with FOI officers to ensure co-ordination of press statements with press FOI requests
Rumour	Media Employees	The unofficial and inevitable activity of passing on comment that	At any time	There are no benefits to the council in this activity	Increase frequency and penetration of official communication (internally and

		may not be accurate			externally) to help avoid development of rumour and speculation
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Full communications programmes details - including objectives, targets and evaluation - are available in the action plan appendix.

There are full communications plans available for most of the projects outlined in the action plan and are available on request,

EMPLOYEES			
What	Why	How	Targets
<p>Transformation: Project</p> <p>To increase employee confidence in how the council will lead the transformation and how its change programmes will benefit them and their customers</p> <p>To achieve awareness, understanding and support, among all managers, employees and elected members of the council, of the benefits to be attained by the transformation programme and vision</p> <p>To win recognition, from citizens, partners and other key stakeholders, for the improvement in services the transformation will deliver.</p> <p>To develop design for the 'strategic staircase' or 'road map' - an easily assimilated overview of how the key change programmes will transform the council.</p>	<p>Encourage the organisation in delivering significant benefits for employees, citizens and partners</p> <p>To help the authority meet its future challenges - including increased citizen expectations, internal skills and capacity shortages and financial pressures.</p> <p>Further areas of work proposed for communications include:</p>	<p>Produce an action plan that promotes to employees the formation of the transformation structure, role and its work in developing the vision, values and the 'strategic staircase' or roadmap.</p> <p>Develop and promote to individuals in the change boards a shared understanding of communication principles and build formal communications structures between the various boards.</p> <p>Update Herefordshire Connects communications strategy to take account of its new positioning and links to other change programmes</p> <p>Update the Big Move communications strategy, linking the accommodation strategy closely to the transformation programme</p> <p>Develop communications strategy for children and young people's services, which includes support for the improvement plan</p> <p>Develop communications strategy for adult and community services, which includes support for the improvement plan</p> <p>Develop customer services communications strategy, which promotes advances in customer service as part of the transformation programme</p> <p>Develop communications strategy for the pay and workforce development strategy, including support in promoting organisational development, flexible working, employee establishment, diversity and other key work streams</p> <p>Agree communications support for member reference group (which will co-ordinate the transformation programme across cabinet portfolios and inform and involve members in the transformation programme.</p>	<p>Sep 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p>

EMPLOYEES			
What	Why	How	Targets
<p>Transformation: Vision and Values</p> <p>Formulate with transformation board a process, which will include use of representative focus groups and engage senior management team to:</p> <p>Promote and establish the transformational vision</p> <p>Gauge understanding of transformation and change programmes in order to identify issues to be addressed</p> <p>Contribute to the creation of a new values set that prepares the organisation to achieve its transformation vision.</p>	<p>A vision for transformation and how it will benefit citizens, partners and employees has yet to be crystallised</p> <p>The council does not yet have a clear, understood and shared value set that supports its ambitions and the change imperative</p>	<p>Vision</p> <p>To crystallise transformation vision as determined by transformation board</p> <p>Produce internal and external communications plan to promote vision</p> <p>Use plain language to ensure the vision and its elements are meaningful, memorable and marketable for all stakeholders</p> <p>Agree description with strategic partners</p> <p>Launch new vision and values</p> <p>Measure understanding of vision in staff survey and citizen survey</p> <p>Re-evaluate and amend communications plan</p> <p>Values</p> <p>Research values of high performing, customer service driven organisations</p> <p>Produce internal and external communications plan to promote values</p> <p>Work with HR to research different values currently at Herefordshire</p> <p>Employee change teams (include senior and key managers) to identify and discuss possible values</p> <p>Consultation with strategic partners and citizens</p> <p>Feed in results to re-branding programme</p> <p>Launch new vision and values</p> <p>Measure understanding of vision in staff survey and citizen survey</p> <p>Re-evaluate and amend communications plan</p>	<p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p> <p>Jan 2007</p> <p>Oct 2007</p> <p>Nov 2007</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p> <p>Jan 2007</p> <p>Oct 2007</p> <p>Nov 2007</p>
<p>Communications network</p> <p>To build an effective network of communications champions across the council who will help shape and drive communications strategies and programmes and act as ambassadors for good communications practice.</p>	<p>To encourage everyone to promote a positive understanding of the organisation to citizens, partners and employees</p> <p>Ensure the network influences development of communications programmes</p>	<p>Recruit communications network</p> <p>Develop mechanisms for keeping the network informed and closely involved in communications planning and activity</p> <p>Understand how the corporate function can best support and empower communications activity across the council</p> <p>Establish regular meetings to agree key programmes</p>	<p>Sep 2006</p> <p>Sep 2006</p> <p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Nov 2006</p>

EMPLOYEES			
What	Why	How	Targets
<p>Communications calendar</p> <p>To produce an annual communications calendar</p>	<p>Helps support a strategic planning approach to campaigns and avoids 'clashes' in events planning</p>	<p>To produce a 'skeleton' calendar based on key events and consult with service areas to complete. Add national events where applicable.</p>	<p>Sep 2006</p>
<p>Internal communications channels: Weekly Updates</p> <p>To provide weekly reports to cabinet, the corporate management team, heads of service and communications champions on communications programmes and progress as well as press coverage.</p>	<p>To inform and engage senior members and management in communications plans and activity</p> <p>To identify and share information on upcoming important or contentious issues</p> <p>To act as a regular and transparent reporting mechanism – logging productivity and progress</p> <p>To enable senior members and managers to influence readily and quickly the work of the communications unit</p>	<p>Create a format for weekly communications reports and agree a shared production cycle with the communications team</p> <p>Provide links for further information as required</p> <p>Ensure the update is consistently distributed each week and that potentially controversial issues are reported sensitively</p> <p>Establish weekly briefings and discussions on forthcoming media issues with the leader.</p> <p>Seek feedback on format, frequency, content and distribution of the communications update</p> <p>Implement improvements</p> <p>Link with First Press Online to share information relevant to all employees (such as press coverage)</p>	<p>Mar 2006</p> <p>Jun 2006</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Jun 2006</p> <p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p> <p>Jan 2007</p>

<p>Internal communications channels: News & Views</p> <p>To maintain a robust and measurable team briefing system that provides positive and effective dialogue between managers and their teams</p> <p>To be recognised by staff as most valued information channel</p> <p>To implement new feedback systems to provide a strategic management tool for directors and senior management</p>	<p>The team brief is the most effective means of internal communication.</p> <p>A robust face to face briefing system will promote effectively the council's priorities and themes internally and is more likely to engage staff in the vision and priorities of the organisation</p> <p>The council will be equipped to listen to and act on the views and ideas of staff for the benefit of the authority</p> <p>Encourage a culture where staff can raise questions and concerns as well as ideas</p>	<p>The News & Views system was launched and is in the process of being embedded.</p> <p>Consult HR, SMT and CMB – monitor and report implementation monthly</p> <p>Produce a six monthly review of implementation with recommendations</p> <p>Measure employee reaction in employee opinion survey</p> <p>Devise training module if required</p> <p>Steadily grow number of team briefs implemented: 50 per month 100 per month 150 per month</p> <p>Ensure a timely response to all questions raised by employees each month</p> <p>Review design and structure of feedback to make more accessible</p> <p>Implement improvements</p>	<p>Apr 2006</p> <p>Monthly</p> <p>Sep 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Nov 2006 Apr 2007 Sep 2007</p> <p>Monthly</p> <p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Feb 2007</p>
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EMPLOYEES			
What	Why	How	Targets
<p>Internal communications channels: First Press</p> <p>To establish an employee news package that is guaranteed to reach everyone across the council</p> <p>To produce a 'fit for purpose', news leaflet that delivers key information to all employees, on time to budget, each month and replacing Core News (previously quarterly distribution).</p> <p>Increase return on investment (more readers and engagement at no more cost)</p>	<p>Improve direct employee communications in order to increase awareness, understanding and support for the council's vision, values, priorities and objectives.</p> <p>To show the council is investing in communicating with employees, boosting the percentage of colleagues feeling informed about the council; and, in being informed first and directly, colleagues will feel more valued, which will influence job satisfaction levels.</p> <p>To promote pride, confidence, a sense of belonging and team spirit across the council, encouraging an increased mutual understanding and respect for the work of colleagues in other service areas, more joined-up working and sharing of best practice.</p>	<p>Increase frequency to support the required pace of change</p> <p>Improve editorial content to make it relevant and accessible for every employee</p> <p>Enhance design, and use full colour, to help employees feel the council is investing in keeping them informed and engaged</p> <p>Distribute with each pay slip each month – with more detailed online version. Because every employee demands their payslip, they will also receive their copy of First Press.</p> <p>Payroll to accommodate a 1/3rd A4 leaflet in the payslip envelopes - provided the news leaflets are delivered to payroll by the 15th of the month, ready for distribution to 5,800 employees by 25th of the month.</p> <p>The design of <i>First Press</i> will aim to encourage employees to read it straight away, rather than put it to one side for later.</p> <p>Achieve high scores for readability, relevance and credibility for the news leaflet and electronic newsletter in the eyes of staff; aiming for a 50 per cent score in the first benchmarking</p> <p>Readability ratings rising to 70 per cent</p> <p>Readability ratings rising to 90 per cent</p>	<p>Jun 2006</p> <p>Monthly</p> <p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Nov 2007</p> <p>Nov 2008</p>

<p>Internal communications channels: First Press Online</p> <p>To complement the First Press newsletter with a detailed electronic version, again available monthly, for all colleagues with access to the intranet, which will be published on time to budget.</p>	<p>To address ‘information overload’ for employees by fulfilling an ‘air traffic control’ role, alerting colleagues to what is important and directing them to further information on the intranet as they need it, which also serves to encourage greater usage of the intranet.</p> <p>To support the overall objective of adding value to communications by achieving a substantially enhanced return on investment compared with the previous employee publication.</p>	<p><i>First Press Online</i> (the electronic version) will cover the same subjects as the news leaflet but in more detail and will be accessible to colleagues with a personal computer at work (about 70 per cent of employees).</p> <p>Readers will be encouraged, via hyperlinks, to access supporting documents elsewhere on the intranet.</p> <p><i>First Press Online</i> will also use crisp and simple design, with good use of photography and full colour. It will reflect the design values of the hard copy news leaflet version.</p> <p>Photography will be of a professional quality and creative.</p> <p>The online version will seek to engage and deliver something for everyone. Balance will be managed across directorates and service area.</p> <p><i>First Press Online</i> lends itself to online staff surveys on specific issues – such as car parking or flexible working.</p> <p>Popular among majority of contributors (level of demand for inclusion) Feedback forms cut out from <i>First Press</i> news leaflet returned (qualitative) Intranet surveys on general communication issues (quantitative) Employee opinion survey will benchmark readership, relevance and credibility across all the diverse audiences within the council.</p>	<p>Jun 2006</p> <p>Monthly</p> <p>Nov 2006 Nov 2006 Ad hoc Nov 2006</p>
<p>Internal communications channels: Talking Point</p> <p>To organise regular ‘talking point’ sessions with the leader and the chief executive to enable employees to raise questions, ideas and concerns</p>	<p>Boosts visibility of leadership and engaged colleagues at all levels in the council’s important programmes and culture change initiatives.</p>	<p>Talking point sessions will be organised in order to attract and engage as many employees as possible</p> <p>Performance measures to be established: how many people attend, number of contributions, feedback after event and employee opinion survey</p>	<p>Quarterly</p> <p>Nov 2006</p>

EMPLOYEES			
What	Why	How	Targets
<p>Internal communications channels: Leadership Forum</p> <p>To re-launch and re-brand the managers forum</p> <p>Create a community of leaders</p> <p>Engage key managers in leading and driving the vision and priorities of the council</p> <p>Platform for visible leadership</p> <p>Networking opportunity for managers</p> <p>Celebrate success and achievement</p> <p>Build mutual understanding and respect across the service areas and the partnership</p>	<p>To engage key managers and harness their ideas and contributions for the benefit of the organisation</p> <p>Provides a means of forward planning important and 'cross-cutting' initiatives, with key managers</p> <p>Helps key managers to influence initiatives and prepare their service areas for change</p>	<p>To support a new culture for leadership, and an active environment at the forum to drive change, communication, contribution and performance, the name of the forum should be changed from managers' forum. It is proposed that it should be called: The Leadership Forum.</p> <p>The forum will be organised quarterly:</p> <p>Feedback on each forum will be gathered and used to influence the next forum</p> <p>Guest speakers will be engaged to share experiences and best practice in leadership</p>	<p>Jul 2007</p> <p>Oct 2007</p> <p>Jan 2008</p> <p>Apr 2008</p> <p>Jul 2008</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Internal communications channels: Notice boards</p> <p>To develop a strategic approach to managing notice boards as an effective communications resource</p>	<p>Make most effective use of the boards in terms of placement, management and updating of content and best use of assets</p> <p>Most staff notice boards are cluttered and out of date</p>	<p>Audit current notice boards across the council</p> <p>Establish who has management responsibility for each board</p> <p>Ascertain whether they are situated where there is maximum footfall</p> <p>Develop policies that govern content and updating of notice boards</p> <p>Rationalise and re-position notice boards for maximum effect</p> <p>Launch new branded council notice boards</p>	<p>Jan 2007</p> <p>Jan 2007</p> <p>Jan 2007</p> <p>Feb 2007</p> <p>Apr 2007</p> <p>Jun 2007</p>

<p>Internal communications channels: Intranet</p> <p>To develop relevant and useful content for the intranet – to help encourage the resource to be a well-used and well-regarded communication and information tool</p> <p>Create a range of value-added applications that are structured around the needs of users and support improved performance across the council.</p>	<p>To ensure that employees are able to find the relevant, up to date information, policies and guidelines they need to manage and improve their performance</p> <p>Will ensure the intranet adds value in terms of providing a trusted, easy-to-use central resource for sharing information and learning</p> <p>Will help all new employees to become aware of the council's vision and values, how it operates, key contacts, code of conduct, policies, benefits and training opportunities</p>	<p>Online Induction</p> <p>Develop a structure of information that prepares new employees online for, and introduces existing employees to, the organisation they work for.</p> <p>Manager's toolkit</p> <p>Develop a structure of information that supports managers with the full suite of policy and guideline documents – including performance, budget and people management – links to management competency framework.</p> <p>The online induction and managers' toolkit will structure information around the needs of users, so it will be easily accessible and contained within a simple menu structure</p> <p>The communication unit will work closely with ICT and HR through the planning and implementation stages</p>	<p>Draft: Dec 2006 Implement: Mar 2007</p> <p>Draft: Feb 2007 Implement: Jun 2007</p>
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<p>Internal communications channels: Inside Track</p> <p>To provide topical and pertinent news daily and electronically, designed to help employees and members understand key issues as they develop, relate them to corporate objectives and respond with their own views and ideas.</p> <p>To counter 'information overload' by providing a focused and direct service to employees as they need it.</p>	<p>The service is fast and immediate, ensuring that all employees and members with a personal computer have access to news first and as it happens.</p> <p>Available directly via the home page, it will significantly increase the chance that news and announcements affecting employees will be read</p> <p>The launch of a news service that is updated several times a day ensures that the intranet reflects a council that is vibrant, dynamic, modern, open and communicative.</p> <p>Creates a 'killer application', which will increase substantially the level of intranet usage by staff and members.</p>	<p>A daily electronic news service will add value with:</p> <p>Important announcements from the corporate management board (supported if necessary by a all staff email with a link into the item)</p> <p>A 'news tower' based on press releases (with images if appropriate) will contribute to the flow of news for employees</p> <p>Employees with access to the intranet will always receive information before they read about them in the press.</p> <p>Key additions to the site - reports, research and documents - will be given their own news item, with hyperlinks to the document, or for example, a relevant announcement in a government website.</p> <p>There will be summaries of news articles from the external media, with a link to an electronic press cuttings service.</p> <p>Important events inside and outside the council will be promoted.</p> <p>The all-staff email facility will then be reserved for urgent announcements directly from the corporate management board.</p> <p>Review of effectiveness through benchmarking and employee opinion survey</p>	<p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Evaluate using web site analysis software – tracking usage</p> <p>Nov 2007</p>
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<p>Internal communications channels: Horizontal communications</p> <p>To develop horizontal communications programmes and techniques that enable the sharing of information, best practice and jointed up working, develop mutual respect between service areas and the concept of the 'internal customer'</p>	<p>Build on improved 'downwards' and 'upwards' communications within the authority by developing effective 'across' communications and information sharing to support the 'one council' vision, promote joint working and help dismantle silo cultures.</p>	<p>Develop guidelines to help each service area to share information about its customers, its services and its scope Consult communications network on expectations Create intranet guidelines for service areas to market themselves to the rest of the council, including intranet reporting and updates Provide guidelines for service areas to produce presentations on their work Create online forms for service areas to identify what information they need from other service areas to serve their own customers better Agree templates for internal service standards - consult with service areas Develop system for monitoring requests for information and responses (principle, if one service area needs information from another service area to provide a better service then they should have it) Produce plans and guidelines for presentations Integrate horizontal communications opportunities in the News & Views team brief system, setting targets for 'guests' from other service areas Feature key service areas in the employee newsletter First Press and promote service area presentations in the electronic news service Benchmark quality of horizontal communication in staff survey and set performance improvement targets</p>	<p>Jun 2007 Jun 2007 Aug 2007 Aug 2007 Aug 2007 Sep 2007 Sep 2007 Sep 2007 Nov 2007 Nov 2007 Nov 2007</p>
<p>Management competencies</p> <p>To ensure that communications skills and responsibilities are embedded in management competency framework</p>	<p>Promotes leadership through communication, clear vision and priorities, joint working, information sharing, diversity, active feedback, ideas, and helps promote compliance and performance management.</p>	<p>Discuss with HR how the new communications, framework, principles and channels can be supported in the management competency set (management competency questionnaire already contains section on interactive communication)</p> <p>Links to plans for an online managers' toolkit and the employee communications toolkit.</p>	<p>Feb 2007 Mar 2007</p>

EMPLOYEES			
What	Why	How	Targets
<p>Employee communications toolkit</p> <p>To create a communications tool kit, which provides guidance and guidelines to help managers make the most effective and appropriate use of internal and external communications channels</p>	<p>Empower staff to communicate success efficiently</p>	<p>The communications tool kit to include: house style, plain language dictionary, better letters guide, public events management, power point and presentation guide, email protocols and guide, publications guide, access guidelines to channels like team brief, in-house newspaper, citizens' publication, all staff email, intranet, web site</p> <p>The toolkit will be compiled in two stages: Guidelines and tools for the written word Guidelines and tools for design and corporate identity</p>	<p>Dec 2006 Mar 2007</p>
<p>Employee communications toolkit: House style</p> <p>To develop a consistent house style for the written word</p> <p>To address terminology issues for diversity and produce clear guidelines</p> <p>To provide a 'quick grammar guide' to try to avoid some common errors.</p>	<p>Herefordshire Council is a major 'publishing house' in its own right, producing hundreds of leaflets, flyers and reports.</p> <p>A house style will help ensure that written communication is clear and professional.</p> <p>It will save the council time and money: streamlining production for printed or electronic material, cutting down on expensive author's corrections.</p>	<p>Consult the communications network and diversity team on a comprehensive house style in drafting the house style</p> <p>Incorporate modules on correct diversity terminology</p> <p>Incorporate a simple 'grammar guide' to correct common errors</p> <p>Ensure linkages across other elements in the communications tool kit</p> <p>Publish tool kit</p>	<p>Jun 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p>

<p>Employee communications toolkit: Plain language</p> <p>To produce guidelines for the use of plain language, supported with a collection of simple alternatives, which if used alongside the council's house style, will help the council to avoid complex language in our published documents and web site.</p>	<p>By using simple and clear language, we address the information needs of local people and enable them to engage with us more easily.</p> <p>Plain language speeds up communication and avoids confusion - helping us become more efficient as a council.</p>	<p>Draft and consult on the plain language guide and dictionary</p> <p>Produce training module to build awareness and understanding of how the increased use of plain language support the council's objectives in becoming more effective and more efficient in its use of resources</p> <p>Publish tool kit</p>	<p>Jul 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p>
<p>Employee communications toolkit: Defamation</p> <p>Produce policy and checklist that safeguards against libel and slander in all council communications and channels</p>	<p>Avoid potential damage to the council's reputation and finances</p>	<p>Provide easy-to-use guidance for all officers involved in writing or commissioning publications or design work (including the web site and intranet) on issues of libel, slander, copyright, reporting restrictions (children and young people), data protection and use of photography.</p>	<p>Dec 2006</p>
<p>Employee communications toolkit: Publications</p> <p>To produce specifications to enable officers to commission design and print cost effectively and professionally</p> <p>To ensure our publications are as accessible as possible to all our diverse communities</p>	<p>The council is a publishing house in its own right and in order to produce consistently professional publications it requires a house style and design guidelines</p>	<p>Draft and consult on the publications guidelines</p> <p>The guide will cover every aspect of publication production, from setting objectives, briefing the designer, accessibility, equality and diversity issues, plain language, use of photography and graphics, advertising and promotion, as well as distribution and evaluation</p> <p>Publish tool kit</p>	<p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p>

<p>Employee communications toolkit: translation</p> <p>Incorporate existing guidelines on translation and interpretation</p>	<p>Promotes improved accessibility to council services to more of our diverse communities</p> <p>Provides added confidence for service areas to provide translation and interpretation</p>	<p>Consult with diversity team on integration of translation and interpretation guidelines for community language and human-aided communication</p> <p>Integrate with the communications tool kit and publish</p>	<p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p>
<p>Employee communications toolkit: Event management</p> <p>To produce a simple guide to managing external or internal events</p>	<p>Organising events can often fall to people who have had little previous experience. A checklist will take the mystery out of organising events.</p> <p>Empower officers to promote services professionally</p>	<p>Draft in consultation with diversity team and communications network</p> <p>A comprehensive checklist will cover every key stage and aspect, including venue, audience, layout, staging, message, invitations, guests, equipment, insurance, parking, branding, promotion and evaluation.</p> <p>Publish tool kit</p>	<p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p>
<p>Employee communications toolkit: Letter writing guide</p> <p>Produce a general guide for letter writing to help ensure a clear and consistent approach</p>	<p>Will enable the council to apply consistent style and principles to letter writing; how formulas can make letter writing easier and more efficient; making letters easier to understand, in ways that support a positive reputation for the council.</p>	<p>Develop principles for letter writing and composition, establish formulas and structures for conveying information clearly, set guidelines for consistent use of type and plain language.</p> <p>Consult diversity, the communications network and customer services</p> <p>Publish as part of the communications toolkit</p>	<p>Sep 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p>

<p>Employee communications toolkit: Council reports</p> <p>To produce guidelines on how the toolkit, including the use of plain language, can be used in the writing of council reports</p>	<p>Make council reports more accessible and promote more citizen engagement in the local democratic process</p>	<p>Work with democratic services to review templates and guidelines for council reports in line with new written word and design guidelines</p> <p>Publish as part of the communications tool kit</p>	<p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p>
<p>Employee communications toolkit: Marketing strategies</p> <p>To produce a marketing and communications strategy guide and template</p>	<p>To help marketing and communications professionals ensure a consistent, professional and measurable approach to marketing strategies across the council</p>	<p>Draft comprehensive guide to producing marketing or communications strategies in-house – consult with communications network</p> <p>Provide training module to accompany the guide and provide presentation as part of the council’s certificate of management programme</p> <p>Publish as part of communications tool kit</p>	<p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p>
<p>Employee communications toolkit: Email protocols</p> <p>Integrate current email protocols into the communications toolkit</p>	<p>Puts all communications guidelines in one place for easy accessibility</p>	<p>Discuss with ICT on how email protocols can be further promoted within the council as part of the new communications toolkit</p> <p>Publish as part of the communications toolkit</p>	<p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p>
<p>Employee communications toolkit: All user emails</p> <p>Revise and promote policies on mass distribution emails within the council to maximise potential for conveying information quickly and reducing inappropriate use.</p>	<p>An all-staff email is potentially an effective communications channel. But if the email is not read, then its effectiveness is negated.</p>	<p>Policies to be drafted in consultation with ICT</p> <p>Publish as part of the communications toolkit</p>	<p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p>

<p>Employee communications toolkit: Presentations</p> <p>Produce guidelines for producing and delivering presentations – including a <i>power point</i> users' guide</p>	<p>Will help employees to produce presentations more easily and quickly, providing an efficiency gain for the council</p>	<p>Draft presentation toolkit in consultation with design, to adhere to reviewed corporate identity guidelines, with diversity team, to ensure accessibility of information, and the communications network. Publish as part of the corporate identity toolkit</p>	<p>Sep 2006 Mar 2007</p>
<p>Employee communications toolkit: Corporate identity</p> <p>To review the council's brand and corporate identity in order to ensure maximum recognition for the activities and achievements of the authority</p>	<p>A well maintained visual identity should deliver economies of scale and build brand equity.</p> <p>If integrated with new values, the identity will send a clear signal to employees and customers that Herefordshire is committed to positive change.</p> <p>To bring the council together into a single, consistent, coherent and cohesive identity – underpinning one council, one vision, and one brand.</p>	<p>Identify full list of brand applications for review Rationalise several sub brands and identities (current fragmented approach confuses our customers, projects an unprofessional image that is costly to maintain). Agree clear brand values for Herefordshire Council – linked to vision and priorities Formulate highly specified visual identity guidelines to enhance promotion and control of council identity (not to change the logo) Agree strong strap line to promote council's vision and progress Produce web and intranet based style guide Publish new corporate identity tool kit Produce internal marketing strategy to promote the revised identity guide Produce training module for employees who commission print or design Framework to promote and police internally the visual identification policy Establish a licensing agreement for internal and external users of the corporate identity</p>	<p>Sep 2007 Jan 2007 Feb 2007 Mar 2007 Mar 2007 Mar 2007 Mar 2007 Apr 2007 Apr 2007</p>

<p>Design</p> <p>Review in-house design profitability and opportunities to improve return on investment</p> <p>Achieve a better return investment in the brand (higher visibility and recognition by stakeholders; reduced expenditure on print and design)</p>	<p>Greater capacity and profitability in design</p> <p>More effective use of corporate identity to achieve better return on marketing investment</p>	<p>Review print and design revenues and profitability</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to build capacity, profitably</p> <p>Produce marketing strategy to increase business for design</p>	<p>Mar 2007</p> <p>May 2007</p> <p>Jul 2007</p>
<p>Communication and schools</p> <p>Create a proactive and positive communications framework with schools that adds value and confidence to the relationship with the council; improves two-way information flow; helps to promote further the performance of schools; maintains a positive image of education in Herefordshire; and support schools in the marketing of their services; and dealing with media enquires and issues.</p>	<p>Supports the improvement strategy for children and young people's services</p> <p>Ensure schools are supported with communications advice and activity as required</p> <p>Improve information flow</p> <p>To promote an understanding of school related services and how to access them</p> <p>Promote the reputation of education within the county and nationally</p>	<p>Agree a set of principles for a communications framework to support the schools (including consultation with HASH).</p> <p>Provide a communications tool kit for schools, backed with a publicity advice service on researching, packaging and placing positive news stories (adding value to the stakeholder relationship).</p> <p>Agree a forward plan based on the school year to ensure we plan effectively for publicity opportunities.</p> <p>The communications unit will also provide an issues management service, acting as a cushion between the school and the media, providing advice, formulating statements and managing press enquiries and press conferences on their behalf.</p> <p>A crisis management plan for schools to produced to ensure that the council and all and any of its schools knows what to do in the event of a serious incident, and works together to respond to media requirements.</p>	<p>Jan 2007</p> <p>Mar 2007</p> <p>Mar 2007</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>May 2007</p>

<p>Pay and Workforce</p> <p>A new communications strategy for the pay and workforce development strategy.</p>	<p>To support the transformation vision Promotes organisational development, flexible working, employee establishment, diversity and key work streams</p>	<p>Establish regular briefings and progress reviews with the directorate Ensure the directorate is represented on key communications and marketing working groups Draft communications strategy and set targets Secure agreement with management teams Implement strategy in line with transformation vision</p>	<p>Oct 2007 Jan 2008 Feb 2008 Feb 2008 Mar 2008</p>
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<p>Members' communications</p> <p>To develop dedicated member communication channels geared towards providing the information that members want and in the form and to the frequency they need it.</p>	<p>Ensure that effectiveness and frequency of members' communications reflect the pace and change at Herefordshire Council</p>	<p>Identify members' group to establish views and needs on communications</p> <p>Members' survey to secure quantitative data on communication perceptions and requirements</p> <p>Draft members' communications strategy</p>	<p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p>
<p>Members' publications</p> <p>Upgrade members' newsletter and service update</p> <p>Becoming a councillor</p> <p>New members' guide</p>		<p>Upgrade members' newsletter and service update and increase frequency from quarterly to monthly</p> <p>Details how citizens can become councillors, the election process, the role and responsibilities as well as a run down of council services.</p> <p>Induction documentation compiled and ready to be printed in time for local elections</p>	<p>Dec 2006</p> <p>Oct 2006</p> <p>May 2007</p>
<p>Members' induction</p> <p>Design induction programme for new councillors and returning councillors.</p>	<p>Inducts new members on ethnics, standards, legal duties, protocols and council business</p>	<p>Working closely with democratic services and key operations in directorates across the council, an induction programme is put together with the agreement of group leaders</p>	<p>Oct 2006</p>
<p>Members' toolkit</p> <p>Design a comprehensive communications toolkit for elected members</p> <p>Include communications protocols for members as part of this toolkit</p>	<p>Techniques to support elected members in communicating effectively with citizens and working positively with media</p>	<p>Organising ward surgeries and ward walks</p> <p>Partnership working with local organisations</p> <p>Media relations and using the communications protocols</p> <p>Public speaking and events management</p> <p>Engaging diverse communities and equality and diversity guide</p> <p>Using email and building a web site</p> <p>Representing the views of constituents to the council</p>	<p>Jan 2007</p>

CITIZENS			
What	Why	How	Targets
<p>Herefordshire Connects</p> <p>To achieve among all stakeholders, a high level of awareness, understanding and support for the vision and the benefits to be attained by the council's business transformation project - Herefordshire Connects.</p> <p>To build a wider awareness for the council's innovative approach to customer service</p>	<p>Supports the vision is for every Herefordshire citizen to have access, at a time and location that is convenient to them, and by any means that suits them, to a single point of contact where they can communicate with a real person, who is trained and empowered to respond effectively to their request across the full range of public services available.</p> <p>Linked to transformation vision and suite of communications strategies for transformation</p>	<p>The communication strategy to be revised in line with the emerging transformational vision for Herefordshire Council</p> <p>The organisation culture required to deliver the vision is also to be mapped out and defined so that the desired behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs can form the basis for objectives and targets in the long-term communications and culture change strategy.</p> <p>Staff opinion survey will provide an opportunity to evaluate staff awareness, understand and support for the transformation project and new ways of working, and will help adjust messages, channels and other activity.</p> <p>Level and nature of responses through the team brief system and the intranet will also help the communications strategy take account of and adjust to levels of awareness, understanding and support.</p> <p>Press coverage on the issue will be evaluated for positive coverage. Feedback forms on staff and partner open days and presentations will also provide evaluation.</p>	<p>Sep 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p> <p>Sep 2006</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

<p>Customer service</p> <p>Promote council services and how to access them</p> <p>Promote customer complaints system</p>	<p>To increase external and internal awareness and understanding of the customer services strategy</p> <p>Ensure services are rooted in solid understanding of public and customers needs and wants</p> <p>Help to embed customer relationship management and complaints handing systems</p>	<p>Develop communications strategy to promote customer service developments</p> <p>Promote the development of a better, faster and more responsive service to individual customers</p> <p>Develop the Info customer service brand in line with corporate identity guidelines</p> <p>Promote service promise and customer service standards through leaflet set and web site</p> <p>Customer satisfaction rates at 55 per cent</p> <p>Develop supporting communications strategy</p> <p>Customer satisfaction with how their complaint was handled</p>	<p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Sep 2007</p> <p>To be determined</p>
<p>Children and young people</p> <p>Formalise communications structures and channels across the directorate and key partnerships</p> <p>Develop a specific communications strategy for children and young people's services – include support for JAR improvement plan and the change for children programme - links progress to the transformation programme</p>	<p>To support the transformation vision</p> <p>To support the improvement programme with focus on internal communications and a strategy to deliver an enhanced reputation in the professional media, particularly to aid recruitment.</p>	<p>Establish regular briefings and progress reviews with the directorate</p> <p>Audit current communications and marketing activity within children and young people's services</p> <p>Audit stakeholder relationships and media contacts</p> <p>Ensure the directorate is represented on key communications and marketing working groups</p> <p>Draft communications strategy and set targets</p> <p>Secure agreement with management teams</p> <p>Implement strategy in line with transformation vision</p>	<p>Oct 2007</p> <p>Jan 2008</p> <p>Jan 2008</p> <p>Jan 2008</p> <p>Feb 2008</p> <p>Feb 2008</p> <p>Mar 2008</p>

CITIZENS			
What	Why	How	Targets
<p>Adults and Community Services</p> <p>A new communications strategy for adult and community services, which includes communications support for the adult social care improvement plan and development of services within the directorate - links progress to transformation programme</p>	<p>To support the transformation vision</p> <p>To support the improvement programme with focus on internal communications and a strategy to deliver an enhanced reputation in local and professional media.</p>	<p>Establish regular briefings and progress reviews with the directorate</p> <p>Audit current communications and marketing activity within children and young people's services</p> <p>Audit stakeholder relationships and media contacts</p> <p>Ensure the directorate is represented on key communications and marketing working groups</p> <p>Draft communications strategy and set targets</p> <p>Secure agreement with management teams</p> <p>Implement strategy in line with transformation vision</p>	<p>Oct 2007 Jan 2008</p> <p>Jan 2008 Jan 2008</p> <p>Feb 2008 Feb 2008 Mar 2008</p>
<p>The Big Move</p> <p>To achieve awareness, understanding and support for the cost and service benefits to be attained by the move by most office-based staff to a single, modern site and the adoption of new flexible working, and win recognition, from citizens, partners and other key stakeholders, for the improvement in services it will deliver.</p>	<p>Supports commitment to make efficient use of funds, saving operational, lease or high maintenance costs associated with older buildings.</p> <p>Promotes 'one council' ideal; flexible and efficient working; share best practice; and achieve our ambitions to provide excellent, joined up and continually-improving services</p>	<p>Develop and implement a wide ranging communications programme for the council's accommodation strategy</p> <p>The staff opinion survey will provide an opportunity to evaluate staff awareness, understand and support for the accommodate move and new ways of working, and will help adjust messages, channels and other activity.</p> <p>Level and nature of responses through the team brief system and the intranet will also help the communications strategy take account of and adjust to levels of awareness, understanding and support.</p> <p>Press coverage on the issue will be evaluated for positive reportage and reflection of the key messages.</p>	<p>Feb 2006</p> <p>Sep 2006</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Citizen Publications: Herefordshire Matters			
To increase frequency of the citizen publication from 4 to 6 times a year.	To capitalise on what is the council's only direct and regular form of communication with citizens to build understanding of, and improve satisfaction with, the council and the services it provides	Specify that all advertising that targets the citizens of Herefordshire should be placed with the citizen publication. Exceptions to be cleared by communications.	Nov 2006
Improve return on investment in overall promotion of the council.	It is the prime means of getting across the council's priorities and themes without distortion	Set editorial policy with a clear set of objectives related to the council's priorities and campaigns for the year.	Nov 2006
To build citizen readership, support and regard for the publication	To ensure the publication is as inclusive as possible (including those who are hard of sight).	Provide content that is welcomed by readers, improves the overall service of the council and is not seen as 'political' in nature. Feature citizens as part of the council service.	Feb 2007
To improve readability and accessibility of content and design.	To position the publication as adding value to life in Herefordshire	Proposal to increase frequency from 4 to 6 issues a year – to be funded by increased advertising (from council directorates, partners and local business)	Mar 2007
Revamp design and content in line with citizen information needs		Redesign using the council's new publications and corporate identity guidelines	Sep 2008
		Help increase customer satisfaction rate to 60 per cent	

<p>Citizen Publications: Guide to the Council</p> <p>To produce a citizens' guide to council services which promotes the full range of council services and how to access them, and the local democratic process and how to engage in it.</p>	<p>By improving familiarity with the range of services provided, the council will improve favourability and satisfaction with the council</p> <p>Enhance understanding of the council's 'total life' service, which impacts positively quality of life for all our diverse communities in Herefordshire.</p>	<p>To use the 'life events' format to improve access to services by structuring information on council services around customer needs and what makes sense for them, rather than the council's own organisational structure. Provide contact details for all major services Use the Herefordshire Matters brand (a special edition of the publication) Promote pride and celebrate the quality and diversity of life in Herefordshire (festivals, events, iconic buildings, street markets, parks, leisure centres, theatres, walks and more) which is facilitated by the council Promote partnership working with other organisations and encourage joint working within the organisation by providing transparency of structure Publicise customer service standards and complaints procedures Promote the consultation framework and Herefordshire Council's principles governing consultation</p> <p>Help increase customer satisfaction rate to 60 per cent</p>	<p>Feb 2007</p> <p>Sep 2008</p>
<p>Citizen Publications: Guide to Herefordshire</p> <p>Produce a high quality guide to Herefordshire (with third party publishing house, providing it is cost neutral to the council)</p>	<p>To promote Herefordshire within the county and to external destination decision makers</p>	<p>To work with an established partner with a good reputation for producing well supported destination publications.</p> <p>The publication will be funded entirely by external advertising and must be of no cost to the council.</p>	<p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Mar 2007</p>

<p>Citizen Publications: Annual Report and Summary</p> <p>Produce high-quality corporate document that reviews and promotes the advance of the council's vision and priorities in an easily assimilated way, and publishes the statement of accounts in a clear design format.</p> <p>To re-produce content and design in a simplified statement of accounts – a pocket summary - to promote the council's clear vision, priorities and progress.</p>	<p>Supports the medium term financial strategy, promoting positive messages concerning the council's financial management and stability and its strong progress against its vision and priorities</p> <p>The pocket summary can be carried and referred to by elected members, managers, partners and key stakeholders, and made readily available to interested citizens.</p>	<p>Full annual report and pocket summary to be written, designed and approved and distributed</p>	<p>Sep 2006</p> <p>And each year thereafter</p>
<p>Citizen Publications: Council Tax Leaflet</p> <p>Produce an easy to read summary of council tax and precept matters</p>	<p>Sets out for citizens the rates, bands, discounts, exception and payment options as well as an overview of how the money is spent in support of services</p>	<p>Produce an easy to read and relevant council tax leaflet on time to budget</p>	<p>Mar 2007</p> <p>Annual</p>
<p>Citizen Campaigns: Pride in Herefordshire</p> <p>To increase the percentage of citizens who feel proud of Herefordshire and are happy to live here</p>	<p>The council's efforts to build pride in the county will be well received by citizens</p>	<p>Pride index to track citizen 'feel good' factor about the county and the council (benchmark to be set through citizen survey)</p> <p>Help increase customer satisfaction rate to 60 per cent</p>	<p>Mar 2007</p> <p>Sep 2007</p>

<p>Citizen Campaigns: Finance</p> <p>To promote the council's approach to finance as encapsulated in the medium term financial management strategy</p>	<p>To build citizen confidence in council financial management</p> <p>To foster an internal and external understanding of the serious financial challenges for the future and the need to take prudent steps ahead of significant pressures on funding</p>	<p>Communicate through media activity and publications the key messages for the medium term financial management strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong and prudent financial management Significant and growing pressures on funding Resource challenges of delivering services through a large and sparsely populated area Entrepreneurial approach to income from property, assets and trading Challenges posed by the changing population profile <p>To promote the new financial culture and sound financial management as a non-negotiable to all managers</p>	<p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Citizen Campaigns: Direct Debit</p> <p>A campaign to persuade citizens and businesses in Herefordshire to pay their taxes by direct debit. The aim is to reduce significantly for citizens the time, hassle and inconvenience associated with paying in cash or by cheque, and reduce materially for the council the costs associated with processing payments by cash, cheque or standing order.</p>	<p>Establish key benefits to citizens and business of paying by direct debit</p> <p>Identify the blocks to paying by direct debit and how to overcome them</p> <p>Link the 'saving time' message with 'spending time' with the county's attractions (prize draws for leisure activities)</p> <p>Engage and reward staff for their role in promoting the uptake of direct debit.</p> <p>Win an award for an effective and innovative marketing campaign.</p>	<p>Launch campaign</p> <p>Increase percentage of citizens paying council tax by direct debit from 56.82 per cent to 60 per cent</p> <p>Increase percentage of businesses paying business rates by direct debit from 49.76 per cent (Dec 2005) to 53 per cent</p>	<p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Apr 2007</p> <p>Apr 2007</p>

CITIZENS			
What	Why	How	Targets
<p>Citizen Campaign: Local democracy</p> <p>Develop a campaign to promote local democracy and how to engage in it more effectively</p>	<p>To ensure citizens understand how they can influence decisions and how their views are sought and taken into account.</p> <p>Promote scrutiny workings and recommendations Promote community forums Promote elections</p>	<p>A wide ranging communications strategy to be developed</p> <p>Link with member communications programme</p> <p>Support implementation of community involvement strategy</p> <p>Percentage of Herefordshire adult residents who feel that the council does enough to give local people the opportunity to influence decisions (annual satisfaction survey)</p>	<p>Jan 2007</p> <p>To be determined</p>
<p>Citizen Campaigns: Livestock Market</p> <p>To promote an understanding of the need to relocate Hereford livestock market for the benefit of the majority of the community</p>	<p>To show how the council recognises the extreme sensitivity of the issue and has gone the extra mile to ensure there has been sufficient public communication, consultation and contribution relating to the location of the market.</p>	<p>Ensure that the recommendations for the location of the new livestock market are announced in a co-ordinated and controlled manner – making sure that those most likely to be affected by the news receive it first and directly from the council.</p> <p>Cabinet report informs the communications plan</p> <p>Distribution list to be compiled (members of the public with an interest in the location of the market (including campaigners); local MPs and MEP; Herefordshire councillors; parish councillors in the north east quadrant; auctioneers and other interested parties).</p> <p>Letters to be drafted Press announcement to be drafted Single page briefs on transport, property, planning, and legal issues to be prepared.</p>	<p>To be determined</p>

CITIZENS			
What	Why	How	Targets
<p>Crisis Communications</p> <p>To develop a robust crisis communications strategy</p>	<p>To ensure the communications unit is equipped and prepared to work with key partners to ensure that all people are safeguarded at times of emergency.</p> <p>Compliance with Civil Contingencies Act 2004</p>	<p>Work with partners to deliver annual programme of risk assessment, emergency planning and exercising.</p> <p>Maintain service continuity planning and management within the council.</p> <p>Develop a robust crisis management system to prepare the council and strategic partners to respond professionally to major incidents or issues.</p> <p>Identify risk areas</p> <p>Identify key personnel and spokespeople, plus back up personnel, and secure home contact details to produce contact list</p> <p>Put spokespeople through media training</p> <p>Work with emergency planning to agree incident guidelines</p> <p>Produce incident protocols (a tighter version of the general press protocols) and specific guidelines</p> <p>Integrate with incident contact list</p> <p>Stakeholder contact list</p> <p>Produce an incident book with contacts, guidelines and responsibilities (hard copy and electronic (password protected))</p> <p>Secure corporate endorsement</p> <p>Test systems in exercise with emergency planning</p> <p>Review incident book and guidelines</p> <p>Log guidelines as part of the communications tool kit</p> <p>Share crisis management system with the local government community</p> <p>Gain recognition in professional press</p> <p>To provide advice to businesses and other organisations on effective communications within the community in the event of an emergency.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Jan 2007</p> <p>Jan 2007</p> <p>Feb 2007</p> <p>Feb 2007</p> <p>Feb 2007</p> <p>Feb 2007</p> <p>Feb 2007</p> <p>Mar 2007</p> <p>Apr 2007</p> <p>Jun 2007</p> <p>Jun 2007</p> <p>Jul 2007</p> <p>Sep 2007</p> <p>Nov 2007</p> <p>Jan 2008</p>

<p>Industrial action</p> <p>To establish communications plans to minimise the impact of any future dispute.</p>	<p>To ensure the council can convey important and relevant information to citizens quickly in line with its commitment to protect the vulnerable</p>	<p>To be able to distribute, where the council is able, details of services that may be exempt, or delivered despite industrial action, as well as information on services that will not be available</p> <p>To ensure we keep informed citizens, employees and elected members.</p> <p>To support switchboard and our Info services, which will come under pressure with requests for information from the public</p>	<p>Sep 2006</p>
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MEDIA			
What	Why	How	Targets
<p>Media: Communications Protocols</p> <p>To promote and embed working protocols that govern and guide the way the council communicates with the media, its citizens, employees and partners.</p> <p>The protocols will be pinned to a legal framework and will include governance of communications during the run up to elections, commercial transactions, referendums and promotion of scrutiny</p> <p>To improve responsiveness of the council to the media</p>	<p>To present a professional, co-ordinated and consistent approach that supports stakeholder relationships.</p> <p>Working protocols will support and govern all communications activity within the council – including press relations.</p> <p>Without clear protocols that guide officers and elected members, the council's reputation is vulnerable.</p> <p>Working protocols with help the council to respond more efficiently to media enquiries</p>	<p>The protocols drafted with the support of legal services, consultation with other affected parties, such as the communications network</p> <p>CMB, the leader and group leaders to consider</p> <p>Full council support to ensure the protocols are bought into</p> <p>Integrate into the communications toolkit to guide officers</p> <p>Integrated into the employee code of conduct</p> <p>Share and promote established working protocols with the local government community</p>	<p>Oct 2006</p> <p>Nov 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006</p> <p>Jan 2007</p> <p>Mar 2007</p>

Media: Performance			
To increase productivity with increased numbers of press releases and statements produced by the communications unit	To increase the volume of positive media coverage on council vision, priorities, decisions and services	To increase from an estimated 180 a year in 2005/06 to 500 a year in 2006/07 and building to 1000 a year by 2007/08	Ongoing
		Difficult to increase productivity beyond 1000 a year without increasing staff costs – but improved targeting will improve coverage further	Ongoing
To ensure press releases are packaged professionally and have strong news value	Strong news value, linked with appropriate messages, will help secure 'share of voice'	Percentage of press releases used by the media to be maintained at 90 per cent plus	Ongoing
To maintain a responsive press enquiry service for local, professional and national media	Helps to build a positive working relationship with the press and ensures the council promotes key messages	Volumes of media enquires have risen by more than 300 per cent over the course of 2006. The communications unit will continue to ensure journalists' deadlines are met 99 per cent of the time	Ongoing
To increase the volume of positive press coverage	Promotes understanding of council services, decisions and direction	Volume of press coverage to increase from estimated 1,000 press cuttings a year in 2005/06 to 2,000 a year in 2006/07 to 3,000 a year by 2007/06	Ongoing
To establish evaluation systems to measure percentage of positive to negative press coverage	High volume of largely positive media coverage influences citizen satisfaction rates	Establish 80 per cent positive or neutral coverage against 20 per cent negative by 2007/08	Ongoing
Increase volume of broadcast reports featuring Herefordshire Council	Provides for more impartial and in-depth coverage of council issues; has more credibility than some print media and has a growing audience	Increase volume of broadcast (radio and television reports) featuring the council and the county from estimated 200 per year in 2005/06 to 500 in 2006/07 to 600 a year by 2007/08	Ongoing
		Increase customer satisfaction level to 60 per cent	Sep 2007

<p>Media: Evaluation</p> <p>Investigate a performance and media management system for the press office</p> <p>Shared software system helps track issues and responses</p>	<p>To improve management of media activities and enquiries</p> <p>Provide sophisticated performance management information</p>	<p>Evaluate performance management systems currently on the market</p> <p>Recommended decision</p> <p>Implementation (depending on cost efficiencies secured elsewhere in the communications budget)</p>	<p>Jun 2007</p> <p>Sep 2007</p> <p>Apr 2008</p>
<p>Media: Criticism</p> <p>Develop an objective, proactive and constructive approach to press and public criticism</p> <p>Capture the value in criticism to use as a means of continual improvement</p>	<p>Helps to prevent conflict escalation, understand more about stakeholders' needs, avoid defensiveness and turn critics into supporters.</p> <p>Helps position the council as a mature, progressive and learning organisation. Turning criticism around improves self esteem and morale</p>	<p>Develop a set of principles around listening to and visibly acknowledging the existence of conflict; objectively assess criticism, show acceptance if justified and robustly engage if it is not; secure third party endorsements and build positive relationships.</p> <p>Promote internally the essential function of the media to raise concerns on behalf of local people; further internalise press criticism in the service areas through use of press cuttings analysis, agree a positive approach to criticism and buy in of service teams.</p>	<p>Oct 2006</p>
<p>Media: Induction</p> <p>Inductions for new journalists and visits to communications</p>	<p>Increase understanding of respective roles and needs</p>	<p>Formal induction programme to be created and implemented</p>	<p>Dec 2006</p>
<p>Media: Customer Service</p> <p>Develop a set of customer care standards for the media</p>	<p>Helps ensure we meet journalists' information requirements to deadline</p>	<p>Consult press informally on their changing requirements</p> <p>Create a customer satisfaction questionnaire</p> <p>Set benchmark for improvement</p> <p>Structure press office around requirements</p> <p>Establish monitoring systems</p> <p>Report on performance</p>	<p>Jan 2007</p> <p>Feb 2007</p> <p>Apr 2007</p> <p>Apr 2007</p> <p>Apr 2007</p> <p>Oct 2007</p>

<p>Media: Virtual Press Office</p> <p>Develop a 24-hour virtual press office service using the council's web site</p>	<p>Increase and improve access to the communications unit, council information and decisions for journalists and the public</p> <p>Provide the communications unit with early warning of developing issues (as questions are raised out of usual office hours).</p>	<p>Consult press on requirements Scope out the service and set performance indicators Develop solution with ICT services Develop daily on line news service for press and the community Agree process to log committee papers (with democratic services) Compile media briefing notes on key issues Agree working practices with press office (out of hours response) Launch of service Monitor usage and customer satisfaction and performance Digital on line photography service (promoting royalty-free, high-quality images of Herefordshire and council services) News exchange agreements (build community on-line news service) Integrate with crisis management and emergency planning Market the system to other local authorities</p>	<p>Jan 2007 Mar 2007 Jan 2008 Jan 2008 Jan 2008 Feb 2008 Feb 2008 Feb 2008 Mar 2008 Oct 2008 Oct 2008 Oct 2008 Nov 2008</p>
<p>Media: Copyright</p> <p>Explore copyright issues relating to use of newspaper cuttings internally</p>	<p>Keep service areas informed and provide research resource but reduce expenditure</p>	<p>Investigate alternative but less costly means of making press coverage available to internal audience Secure savings and launch new service</p>	<p>Nov 2006 Apr 2007</p>

GOVERNMENT				
What	Why	How	Target	
<p>Government Relations: Framework and strategy</p> <p>To create a government relations framework and strategy.</p>	<p>To promote a 'fair deal for Herefordshire' – increasing levels of government funding in locally provided services.</p>	<p>Develop government relations strategy</p>	<p>May 2008</p>	
		<p>Encompass identification of agreed policies, issues and opportunities that need to be progressed in support of the development of the county, the identification of key individuals who have an influence in terms of these issues, a contact strategy and management system involving lead members and executive officers, systems for evaluation of activity, and a series of programmes, integrated where appropriate with planned media activity, to enhance the reputation of the council with national and regional government.</p>		
	<p>To promote the outstanding return on investment achieved at Herefordshire – and opportunities for further improvement if fair levels of funding were provided</p>		<p>Research perceptions and attitudes among key influencers in national and regional government</p>	<p>Jan 2008</p>
			<p>Produce stakeholder analysis – identifying those who will have a strong influence on and a strong interest in how Herefordshire is funded – to inform the communications strategy</p>	<p>Feb 2008</p>
			<p>Map out income streams received by all public service providers – how much, where from, what for, in what form or formula, and how long do they last</p>	<p>Mar 2008</p>
			<p>Compile understanding of how allocations are determined and the 'triggers' or 'rules' for securing funding</p>	<p>Mar 2008</p>
			<p>Compare with national and regional averages and other unitary councils and neighbours</p>	<p>Apr 2008</p>
			<p>Quantify what the shortfall means in real terms for local people</p>	<p>Apr 2008</p>
<p>Share experiences in applying for funding – detailing who we deal with, how decisions are made, feedback received and possible misconceptions or prejudices</p>	<p>May 2008</p>			
		<p>Link to government relations strategy</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	

EQUALITY, PERFORMANCE & DEVELOPMENT			
What	Why	How	Target
<p>Equality</p> <p>To promote diversity in the workplace, helping to ensure that awareness of diversity becomes embedded in all activities and functions</p> <p>Ensure equality and diversity issues are accommodated in the communication strategy and toolkit</p> <p>To work closely with the diversity team in promoting the importance of equality impact assessments</p> <p>The communications unit to achieve Level 2 of the Local Authorities Equality Standard.</p>	<p>Help build understanding and support for equality and diversity as a central and mainstream issue for the council</p> <p>Make the council as accessible as possible to as many communities as possible</p> <p>Meet existing and new statutory requirements in respect of race, disability & gender, age, religion or belief and sexual orientation.</p>	<p>Ensure equality and diversity issues are accommodated in the communication strategy and toolkit</p> <p>Work closely with the diversity team in publicising their programmes and activities, including training modules, consultations and working groups</p> <p>Challenge local media on inappropriate reporting of diversity issues</p> <p>To complete year 3 equality impact assessments. Development and implementation of monitoring system in place. Unit attended diversity training Action plans monitored and embedded in service plans DMT quarterly progress reports</p>	<p>Dec 2000</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Sep 2006</p> <p>Dec 2006 Jan 2007 Mar 2007</p>
<p>Freedom of information</p> <p>To promote council responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act</p>	<p>Shows Herefordshire Council is responsive to requests for information</p>	<p>Internal communications strategy to promote FOI behaviours Continued monitoring of register Ensure the unit achieves 100 per cent response to Freedom of Information requests within 20 days</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<p>Cost savings</p> <p>To ensure that new communications programmes and activity are implemented in line with the need to deliver recurrent and cumulative cash-releasing savings annually</p> <p>Raise performance productivity as regards use of resources, including the achievement of best value for money</p>	<p>To support the £135K Gershon cash and efficiency savings target across the directorate</p> <p>To support the medium term financial management strategy in keeping down council tax increases</p>	<p>Review all individual cost areas to identify saving opportunities</p> <p>Streamline processes, assets and structures - securing efficiency savings in several areas of communications activity</p>	<p>Sep 2006</p> <p>By Mar 2007</p>
<p>Customer responsiveness</p> <p>Develop new customer service standards for the communications unit</p>	<p>To deliver an enhanced communications and marketing service to the directorates and service areas</p> <p>Link to media satisfaction study</p>	<p>Develop and promote communications customer satisfaction standards</p> <p>Customer satisfaction index for press release production</p> <p>Customer satisfaction index for design and print</p> <p>New customer service standards to be agreed and implemented</p> <p>New corporate voice network operational</p> <p>Number of telephone calls answered as a % of all telephone calls received</p> <p>% of telephone calls answered in 15 seconds</p>	<p>Jan 2007</p> <p>To be determined</p> <p>95 per cent</p> <p>80 per cent</p>

<p>Staff review and development</p> <p>To create a comprehensive skills development matrix for the key areas of performance in the communications unit</p> <p>To promote key skills in respect of the effective planning, performance management and delivery of services.</p>	<p>To drive continuous improvement in standards of services</p> <p>To develop positively the skills and experience of all staff within the communications unit</p>	<p>Clearly defined requirements within job descriptions and person specs (job evaluation done)</p> <p>Skills matrix developed</p> <p>Continuance of comprehensive programme of training and development</p> <p>All SRD interviews carried out</p>	<p>Apr 2006</p> <p>Jan 2007</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>100% return of staff SRD</p>
<p>Winning awards</p> <p>To improve the reputation of Herefordshire Council through the winning of national prestigious awards</p> <p>To submit as many realistic award submissions as possible: but based on a corporate decision</p> <p>To manage corporately the production of consistently high quality award submissions</p>	<p>Raise profile and regard among opinion formers, locally as well as within the local, regional and national government communities.</p> <p>Raise morale of employees</p>	<p>Project plan to be agreed by CMB</p> <p>Project manager in the service area will gather evidence to support submission.</p> <p>Communications support will ensure the final bid is produced professionally and in line with corporate guidelines.</p> <p>To submit 10 award entries during 2006/07 and achieve 2 nominations</p>	<p>Oct 07 and ongoing</p>

REVISED RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: RESOURCES

CABINET

12TH OCTOBER, 2006

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To approve the revised Risk Management Policy and to decide on Cabinet's Risk Management role within the Council.

Key Decision

This is not a Key decision.

Recommendations

THAT

- (a) the revised Risk Management Policy be approved; and**
- (b) the risk management role of Cabinet be determined.**

Reasons

The revised Risk Management Policy further develops the Council's approach to this important issue and ensures compliance with good practice.

Considerations

1. As part of the consultation process the revised Risk Management Policy has been considered by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee and Corporate Management Board and their comments added.
2. There are no financial implications with regards to the approval of the revised Risk Management Policy.
3. The CPA Use of Resources Key Lines of Enquiry gives great importance to the role of risk management.
4. In line with good practice the Council has a Member and a senior officer to champion and take responsibility for embedding risk management through out the Council.
5. Cabinet needs to determine its role within the risk management process. As part of

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Tony Ford on (01432) 260425

their discussion they might want to consider the following roles:

- determine and approve the Council's Risk Policy;
- carry out an annual review of the Council's Risk Management Policy;
- ensure that the Council is taking appropriate action on its highest risks;
- consider risk management at part of the Integrated Performance Reports; and
- ensure that Risk Management is embedded across the Council.

Risk Management

Failure by the Council to consider and approve a revised Risk Management Policy could impact adversely on the Council's aspirations to improve its Use of Resources Score.

Alternative Options

There are no Alternative Options.

Consultees

The Audit and Corporate Governance Committee

Corporate Management Board.

Background Papers

- ICT 's Project Risk Management Protocols.
- Use of Resources Key Lines of Enquiry

RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

Report By: PRINCIPAL AUDIT MANAGER

Wards Affected

Countywide.

Purpose

To present to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee the revised Risk Management Policy for Herefordshire Council (as attached) for comment and its submission to Cabinet for consideration and approval.

Financial Implications

None.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT subject to any comments by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee the Risk Management Policy is submitted to Cabinet for consideration and approval.

Reason

1. The revised Risk Management Policy further develops the Council's approach to this important issue and ensures compliance with good practice.

Considerations

2. The CPA Use of Resources highlights the criteria for judgement in relation to Risk Management as:
 - The organisation has adopted a risk management strategy/policy that has been approved by members. (Level 2).
 - The risk management strategy/policy requires the Council to:
 - identify corporate and operational risks
 - assess the risks for likelihood and impact
 - identify mitigating controls
 - allocate responsibility for the mitigating controls (Level 2)
 - The Council maintains and reviews a register of its corporate business risks linking them to strategic business objectives and assigning ownership for each risk. (Level 2).

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Tony Ford on 01432 260425

- Member responsibility for corporate risk management is identified in the terms of reference of one or more committees as appropriate. (Level 2).
 - Reports to support strategic policy decisions, and project initiation documents include a risk assessment (Level 2).
 - The risk management process is reviewed and updated at least annually. (Level 3).
 - The risk management process specifically considers risks in relation to significant partnership and provides for assurances to be obtained about the management of these risks (Level 3).
 - All appropriate staff are given relevant training and guidance to enable them to take responsibility for managing risk within their own working environment (Level 3).
 - The members with specific responsibility for risk management have received risk management awareness training. (Level 3).
 - Members with responsibility for corporate risk management receive reports on a regular basis and take appropriate action to ensure that corporate business risks are being actively managed, including reporting to full Council as appropriate. (Level 3).
 - A senior officer and member jointly champion and take responsibility for embedding risk management throughout the Council. (Level 4).
 - The Council can demonstrate that it has embedded risk management in its corporate business process; (Level 4) including;
 - strategic planning
 - financial planning
 - policy making and review
 - performance management
 - All members receive risk management awareness training (Level 4).
 - The Council considers positive (opportunities) as well as negative risks (threats). (Level 4)
3. The risk management guidance has been developed by utilising the Risk Management protocols used by ICT on it major projects such as Herefordshire Connects.
 4. The Head of ICT and Customer Services has confirmed that ICT would be able to produce a standard template for the Risk Register and Action Log in excel that could be utilised corporately.
 5. As the next meeting of this Committee is in November the draft policy has been presented to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee earlier in the consultation process than would be the norm. Subject to any comments from this

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Committee, arrangements will be made to present the draft policy to Corporate Management Board and Senior Management Team. Once cleared the final draft policy will be presented to Cabinet for comment and approval.

6. Once approved it is anticipated that the new procedures would be implemented corporately at the next monthly review carried out by Corporate Management Board and Directorate Management Teams.
7. It is envisaged that Risk Management Training for Key Managers will be completed by the end of October 2006.

Risk Management

8. Failure by the Council to consider and approve a revised Risk Management Policy could impact adversely on the Council's aspirations to improve its Use of Resources Score.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- ICT's Project Risk Management Protocols.

RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

Introduction

1. Risk management is about the *“identification, analysis and control of the threats or opportunities that affect the achievement or execution of the Council’s strategic and operational objectives”*. It is also the successful management of the control environment in which the decision making process is undertaken, such that positive risks are taken in order to innovate and improve service provision.
2. This policy is a living document, which seeks to identify and manage risk within Herefordshire Council.
3. Risk management is vital to the reputation of the Council as it demonstrates good vision, awareness and leadership. It supports the Council’s strategic and corporate priorities enabling it to meet its statutory duties and objectives by identifying issues that may stop them being achieved whilst at the same time highlighting any opportunities that occur.
4. The risk management policy sets out the governance framework at the Council detailing roles and responsibilities from the executive level, through to specific staff and individuals throughout the Council.

Our approach to the Governance of Risk

5. Our overall aim is to embed the culture of risk management throughout the Council both at a corporate level and within operational/service delivery arrangements.
6. Risks are managed every day as part of normal business activity. Risk management is not just about eliminating risk but about dealing with and reducing the circumstances in terms of its impact and probability (likelihood). A critical success factor in embedding a risk management culture is the commitment of Members, Directors and Heads of Service.
7. The Council will regularly review arrangements for ensuring that risk management is integrated at all levels throughout the authority. Evidenced by:
 - member and senior management commitment and involvement evidenced by the identification of a Member champion, and a lead director responsible for risk management corporately
 - a policy endorsed by Cabinet and Council for the integration of risk management within the Council service/performance management and financial frameworks.
 - risk management monitoring, review and embedding driven by Senior Management Team. Including liaison with key officers with specific agendas such as health & safety and business continuity.
 - a Corporate Risk Register which links in with the Council’s high-level strategic priorities and objectives. Directorate Risk Registers linked to the Corporate Risk Register and Council operations.
 - accountability for risk management at all levels – including the identification of risk owners for all risks.
 - an established risk assessment process, supported by targeted training and a user guide.

- regular review and monitoring by the Council to ensure that processes are relevant and reflect best practice.

Risk Management Statement

8. Herefordshire Council recognises that the development of policy, delivery of objectives and management of services attracts risks. In reviewing the effects of management strategies and policies, the Council will continue to:
- identify, assess and manage (opportunities and threats) risk;
 - safeguard the Council's assets; and
 - enhance the delivery of its services to the community.

Aims and Objectives

9. Risk management is about making the most of opportunities (making the right decisions) and about achieving objectives once those decisions are made. This is achieved through preventing risks, reducing risks, transferring risks or living with risks. The Council's aim is to ensure that risk management becomes a natural component of its management processes.
10. The Council's objectives are to:
- continue to raise awareness of the need for risk management in all areas of service delivery, integrate it into the culture of the Council and embed it in the performance management framework;
 - manage risk in accordance with best practice;
 - anticipate and respond to changing social, financial, environmental, technological and legislative requirements;
 - minimise injury, damage and loss arising from exposure to risk.
11. The Council will achieve these objectives by:
- continue to include risk management as an integral part of its management processes and day-to-day operations through corporate, directorate and service plans;
 - ensuring sound systems of internal control;
 - continue to incorporate risk management into major service reviews including best value and project management;
 - continue to prepare contingency plans in areas where there is a potential for serious adverse effects on service continuity;
 - regularly monitor and review arrangements;
 - ensuring that the Council responds to and meets its legislative responsibilities in relation to the management of risk.
12. The Council has prepared a User Guide (Appendix 1 refers) to ensure that the aims and objectives of this Policy are implemented consistently throughout the Council. The risk management policy has the full support and commitment of the Council, Cabinet and Corporate Management Board (CMB).

The Risk Management Process

13. The full integration of risk management into the culture of the Council can only be achieved through the full commitment and understanding of all stakeholders. These stakeholders can be defined as follows:
 - Leader and Cabinet Members;
 - members of scrutiny Committee and other elected members;
 - Corporate Management Board;
 - Heads of Service; and
 - all Council officers.
14. All these stakeholders have a role to play in the control environment within which the Council operates, whether in connection with the setting of policy and decision making, the challenge process of accountability, the implementation of the Council's objectives, the setting of internal controls or the provision of a safe working environment.
15. Ultimate responsibility for the delivery of the Council's objectives rests with the Council, Cabinet, Chief Executive and Directors. However, in order to take the agenda forward the Council has identified a Member Champion and a Director with lead responsibility for risk management corporately.
 - Member Champion: Cabinet Member (Resources)
 - Director with Lead Responsibility: Director of Resources.
16. CMB has elected the Senior Management Team (SMT) to steer the continuing development of the overall approach and to provide a mechanism for ongoing monitoring and review. The responsibilities of the SMT need to be clearly understood and have been defined as:
 - monitoring and reviewing the Risk Management Policy and Corporate Risk Register and Action Plan.
 - identify and analyse cross cutting corporate risks and report to CMB.
 - support their Directorates in identifying, analysing and monitoring their risks (opportunities and threats).
 - champion and raise awareness of risk management and ensure that the process becomes embedded in the culture of the organisation.
 - ensure synergy with other "risk" systems, e.g. Health & Safety, Civil Contingencies, business continuity and project management.
 - ensure regular updating of the Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers.
 - ensure that cross cutting corporate risks are appropriately managed, reporting to CMB as appropriate.
 - monitor and review Directorate Risk Registers and Action Plans.
 - ensure that risk management is fully integrated into the Council's Integrated Performance reporting.
 - ensure that reports to support strategic policy decisions and project initiation documents include a risk assessment.

Risk Appetite

17. The Council evaluates risks on the basis of the likelihood of them occurring and the impact of the consequences if they do. A standard set of evaluation criteria is used to assign a score to both likelihood and impact and the resultant risks are then plotted as depicted in the guidance (Appendix 1 refers)
18. Risks are treated in accordance with the Council's "risk appetite", that is the level of risk the authority deems to be acceptable. While all risks should be judged on their own merit, managers also have the responsibility to manage their risks as they see fit. Nevertheless, good practice suggests that any risk classified as "high" should be deemed to require immediate management attention with the aim of treating it, either to reduce the level of threat or maximise the opportunity that may arise from it.
19. If management chooses to take no further action and accepts the level of any high risk as it stands, the justification for this decision must be recorded within the risk register and an appropriate risk owner allocated to monitor and report on the status of the risk on a regular basis.

Identification of Risk

20. The identification of risk operates on a top-down bottom-up approach.

Corporate

21. The CMB have a responsibility to set the overall framework and establish and monitor the corporate risk register supported by SMT. Corporate risks are those that might impact on the high level, medium to long-term, goals and objectives of the Council together with those cross cutting issues that have potential to impact significantly on service delivery and business continuity. These will be incorporated within the normal cyclical planning and resource allocation processes.
22. The CMB will have a responsibility to ensure that Directorate Management Teams analyse risks and produce risk registers and action plans specific to their service areas, whilst making the necessary connections to issues that have a corporate effect.

Directorate

23. At directorate or operational level the monitoring and identification of risk lies with Director through their Directorate Management Teams and forms part of their service planning process. These are the risks that will be encountered as a result of daily activity. Due consideration must be given to the need to involve other directorates in decision making processes in order to mitigate risk.
24. Risks should be identified by considering the opportunities and threats to the successful delivery of each of the objectives and activities of the Council.
25. Each identified risk should be allocated a risk owner, responsible for the day-to-day management and monitoring of that risk.
26. Directorates need to identify the appropriate level at which risk registers, monitoring and reporting should be undertaken.

Categorisation of Risk

27. Risks fall into a number of categories as described in the guidance (Appendix 1 refers). The categories describe the nature of the risk, indicating how the risk arises and consequently the sort of control measure needed to mitigate the risk. These categories can be applied to both Corporate and Directorate risk registers.
28. The examples used are aimed at giving an indication as to the types of things that could be categorised under these headings. Each risk should be allocated to the one category it best fits into.

Review of Policy

29. This policy will be subject to annual review.

September 06

MANAGING RISK

A Practical Guide to Risk Management in Herefordshire Council

- ...Putting people first
- ...Preserving our heritage
- ...Promoting our county
- ...Providing for our communities
- ...Protecting our future

Quality life in a quality county

MANAGING RISK

Contents

The five steps of the risk management cycle	1- 5
Risk Register	6
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The five steps of the risk management cycle are:

Step 1: Risk Details

On the Risk Register enter the following Risk information

- **Council Objective/Operation-** Enter the Council objective/operation the potential risk is linked to.
- **Risk Type-**Chose from – Political, Financial, Management, Resource, Environmental, Social, Technical or Other.
- **Risk description-** Brief description of the perceived risk. Typical risk phasing could be: *Loss to, Failure of, Failure to, Lack of, leads to, resulting in...*
- **Potential Impact-** describe the likely impact of the risk on the Council objective, project or operation
- **Likelihood-** Select the appropriate option from the table 1 below, very Likely –4, Likely-3, unlikely –2 or very unlikely 1

Table 1		
Likelihood Rating	Score	Description
Very Likely	4	Is expected to occur in most circumstances i.e. there is a more than 75% chance of occurrence
Likely	3	Will probably occur in most circumstances, i.e. there is a 40 –75% chance of occurrence.
Unlikely	2	May occur in exceptional circumstances i.e. there is a 10-40% chance of occurrence.
Very Unlikely	1	Is never likely to occur i.e. a less than 20% chance of occurrence.

- **Impact assessment** –Select the appropriate option from the table below, Catastrophic 4, Critical 3, marginal 2, and negligible 1

Table 2		
Impact Rating	Score	Detail Description / Examples only
Catastrophic	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One or more fatalities • Service disruption for more than 5 days • Adverse national publicity • Financial loss up to 75% of budget. • Litigation almost certain and difficult to defend • Breaches of law punishable with imprisonment
Critical	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive, permanent injuries, long term sick • Service disruption 3-5 days • Adverse local publicity • Major injury to individual/several people • Litigation to be expected • Financial loss up to 50% of budget • Breaches of law punishable by fines only
Significant	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sever injury to individual/Several people • Service disruption 2-3 days • Needs careful public relations • Financial loss of up to 25% of budget

Table 2		
Impact Rating	Score	Detail Description / Examples only
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher potential for complaint, litigation possible Breaches of regulations / standards
Negligible	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No injuries beyond first aid level No significant disruption of service capability Unlikely to cause any adverse publicity Financial loss of up to 10% of budget Unlikely to cause complaint / litigation Breaches of local procedures / standards

- **Risk score** This is ascertained by multiplying the likelihood score by the impact assessment score. As set out in table 3

Table 3					
		Impact			
		1	2	3	4
Likelihood		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
Very Likely	4	LOW-4	MEDIUM-8	HIGH-12	HIGH-16
Likely	3	LOW-3	MEDIUM-6	HIGH-9	HIGH-12
Unlikely	2	LOW-2	LOW-4	MEDIUM-6	MEDIUM-8
Very Unlikely	1	LOW-1	LOW-2	LOW-3	LOW-4

- **Risk Owner**-Identify the risk owner, which **must** be either, CMB, a Director, a Head of Service

Step 2: Identifying mitigation Strategy

Complete the following:

- **Potential mitigation Strategy**- describe what action will be taken to prevent the risk, reduce the risk, transfer the risk or no action to be taken and why.
- **Cost of Mitigation**- Identify any associated costs for the identified mitigation strategy.

Step 3: Mitigating Action

Complete the following:

- **Action Reference**-Action Log reference number for associated action required;
- **Action Owner**- Identify the actual person who has been nominated to carry out the action, please ensure that this person has been informed;
- **Action Description**- Description of action required;
- **Action Status**- Select the appropriate option, closed, or open; and
- **Date last updated**- enter date last updated or date closed;

Step 4: Action log

Complete the following details on the Action Log:

- **Action Reference**- Action Log reference number for associated action required;
- **Date logged**- enter date action is entered on action log;
- **Completed**- Chose option yes or no;

- **Description of Action-** Description of action required;
- **Target Date** – enter target date for completion;
- **Priority-** Chose from options high, medium or low; and
- **Assigned to-** Identify the actual person who has been nominated to carry out the action, please ensure that this person has been informed

Step 5: Monitoring

In order to ensure that this process is effective Corporate Management Team and each Directorate Management Team must review their risk register on a monthly basis, and confirm:

- all current risks been reviewed and any additional action/s identified have been entered on the Action Log;
- that the Action Log has been reviewed and actions are on track for completion within agreed deadlines.
- whether any risks need to be removed, due to time limitation i.e. end of a specific project;
- whether any new corporate or directorate risks have been identified that need to be added to the register, e.g. any risks identified on Committee reports that are viewed as strategic to the directorate;
- that the risk register is up to date for new and existing risks;
- whether any operational risks been identified by heads of service/key managers that could, if not managed become a risk for the directorate; and
- that updated risk registers have been entered onto the Risk Register Cluster file after updating and review.

Managing Risk – Risk Register



Corporate/Directorate/Function/Project: _____

Chief Executive/Director/Project Owner: _____

Risk Details								Mitigation Strategy		Mitigating Action				
Council Objective	Risk Type	Risk Description	Potential Impact	Likely hood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Owner	Potential Mitigation Strategy	Cost of Mitigation	Action Ref	Action Owner	Action description	Action Status	Date last updated

122

Signed: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

Managing Risk – Action Log



Corporate/Directorate/Function/Project: _____

Chief Executive/Director/Project Owner _____

123

Action Reference	Date Logged	Target date	Completed	Priority (H,M,L)	Assigned to	Comments

Signed: _____ Position: _____

Date: _____

RESPONSE TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REVIEW OF LEARNING DISABILITIES SERVICES

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: SOCIAL CARE, ADULTS AND HEALTH

CABINET

12TH OCTOBER, 2006

Wards Affected

County-wide.

Purpose

To set out the Cabinet's response to the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee's review of Learning Disabilities Services in Herefordshire Council.

Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in Herefordshire in an area comprising one or more wards.

It was not included in the Forward Plan however inclusion in the agenda gives the required notice in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2000.

Recommendation

THAT the response to the Scrutiny Committee's review of Learning Disabilities Services be approved.

Reasons

The Scrutiny Committee's review was designed to gain a fuller understanding of the operation of learning disability services, the demands on the service and, in particular, the factors behind the significant budget pressures that had become apparent over recent years.

In addition, the Committee examined the existing change project plans and reviewed the current balance of services.

The Review's aim was to provide guidance to the Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults and Health) on the current and future service needs and service models and the allocation of resources.

Recommendations from the review have been considered and an action plan prepared.

Considerations

1. Learning disability services for adults are operated as an integrated service between the Council and the Herefordshire PCT under a Section 31 agreement, with the Council as the lead agency. These arrangements are to be reviewed (along with those for mental health and community equipment services) by the end of March

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Stephanie Canham, Head of Social Care - Adults on 01432 260320

2007.

2. For a number of years, the service has been unable to meet demands within the level of resources allocated, and the Council and PCT have invested additional resources. Despite this, the difficulties in maintaining services within budgets have persisted.
3. Against this backdrop, the Adult Social Care & Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee decided on 2nd December 2005 to divide into 3 groups to look at the main areas of service provision in more depth over a 3-month period between March - June 2006. These groups were:
 - Accommodation and Support;
 - Day Opportunities;
 - Assessment and care management.
4. Following the formation of the Adult and Community Services Directorate in the restructuring of Council departments, the Director commissioned a parallel Needs Analysis project in older people's services to investigate the longer term future demands on Council services and resources up to 2020. Adult learning disability services were included in the analysis to anticipate the resource implications for the Council. This will result in recommendations about future service models and their costs.
5. The Scrutiny review group was given a series of presentations about the national and local service context, covering demography, demand for services, changing expectations, threats to existing funding, assessment and care management, accommodation and support and day opportunities.
6. Members then conducted a series of visits to services and met the Valuing People Partnership Board (which represents the major stakeholders in learning disabilities) to begin to develop recommendations.
7. The work of the Scrutiny Committee, and the intelligence gained from the Needs Analysis work will combine to inform the development of a detailed Commissioning Plan for the integrated services. Preparation work on the plan has already begun, and will soon be able to specify the commissioning and procurement intentions of the Programme Board for Learning Disabilities and the Joint Commissioning Group of the Health and Care Partnership. Cabinet will ensure consistency between these work streams. A copy of the Scrutiny Committee report is available in the Members' room.
8. The Scrutiny Committee's report is welcomed as an important and timely contribution to the consideration of the issues facing the Council in learning disability services. The report has been carefully considered and the response to the specific conclusions and recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee's report are highlighted in bold type below for information and are followed by the Executive's proposed response. The corresponding action plan is shown in Appendix 1.

Scrutiny Recommendations/Executive's Response

9. **An over-arching aim of the Directorate's Learning Disability Service should be adopted that seeks to support individuals to live as full and independent lives as possible, based on the premise of "ordinary lives" and social inclusion.**

This recommendation is predicated upon the basic principles in the White Paper, Valuing People (2001). Social inclusion is also a fundamental aim embraced in the Herefordshire Community Strategy and as such is accepted and endorsed without reservation. This has implications for the Council and its partners in the Herefordshire Partnership that extend well beyond the responsibilities of health and social care. Although the agenda for social inclusion will, in the short term, be driven by social care, the aim is to highlight the role of the community as a whole and to ensure that this is translated into real support for people with learning disabilities. The recommendation is fully accepted.

10. **Appropriate accommodation is the key to achieving this aim. The Council and its partners should explore all opportunities for providing different options for accommodation and support for people with a learning disability.**

At present, a disproportionate amount of the learning disabilities pooled budget is consumed in providing residential care. It is understood that this imbalance between residential care and more independent living options is not the case in many other authorities, and that the need for a wider range of options is voiced consistently by groups of people with learning disabilities. As such, the principle behind this recommendation is accepted.

11. **All the Council's existing sites providing services for people with a learning disability must be reviewed, with a view to using capital receipts for developing alternative accommodation.**

It is accepted that it is appropriate to keep the use of the Council's resources under constant review in order to ensure the most efficient use of assets. This recommendation will be referred to the Cabinet Member for Resources, for consideration.

12. **Examine the possibility of providing an extra care housing model for people with a learning disability.**

In order to provide the range of options to meet a range of needs, it is accepted that extra care housing could indeed have an important role to play.

13. **Following the needs analysis, engage partners in the independent sector to develop the balance of community and residential services for people with a learning disability.**

The need to change and develop services is accepted in order to meet demands for services and secure best value. It is preferable to see developments progressed through a partnership arrangement with one or more key providers, in order to ensure capacity to respond to changing needs.

14. **Develop a greater understanding of the costs of individuals' care arrangements, using the In Control Model.**

The pilot project for In Control will ensure that a more equitable approach is developed to the allocation of resources to meet a range of needs. The project is founded on a Resource Allocation System that is based on levels of need and is transparent to service users, carers and staff.

- 15. The Council move away from a building-based day opportunities model and work with the voluntary and independent sector to develop more opportunities for choice and inclusion. Better understanding of the unit costs of providing transport and a range of in-house services is required.**

This recommendation is entirely consistent with Valuing People principles and the direction already adopted in the service. Once again, the approach should be through partnership arrangements between the Council and the Third Sector, who are better placed to bring in other funding streams to widen the range of options for users. Unit costing of services is being developed and will inform the commissioning of future services. The recommendation about the unit costing of transport is accepted, and Directorate transport budgets should be targeted at those whose needs cannot be met by public transport. Service users who can travel independently should be encouraged to do so, but there will continue to be a need for transport provision for those less able to travel independently and safely.

- 16. Models of provision should be developed which maximise funding streams.**

This recommendation follows the principle of rebalancing the responsibilities for commissioning learning disability services between statutory health and social care bodies and other government institutions, (as well as society as a whole). The comments under recommendation 11 apply equally here – that third sector partners in particular, can access resources that statutory agencies cannot.

Moving away from registered residential provision to more independent living will promote access to other funding streams e.g. housing benefit/supporting people.

- 17. The Council should use its wider inclusion and disability and diversity strategies to support the social inclusion of people with learning disabilities.**

It is proposed that this recommendation is endorsed in full. The conclusion of the Needs Analysis work also highlights the enormous potential within Council and Herefordshire Partnership strategies and services to enhance the social inclusion of this group and other groups with social disadvantages. There are some practical steps being adopted by the Valuing People Partnership Board to make this a reality. The Community Strategy will be used as a vehicle.

- 18. That the Executive's response to the Review, including an action plan, be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive has approved its response.**

This response is being made to the first available meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

- 19. That a further report on progress in response to the Review then be made after six months with consideration then being given to the need for any further reports to be made.**

A further report will be made as requested after six months. This will have the benefit of further consideration of the Needs Analysis and Commissioning Plan work.

Financial Implications

The Needs Analysis work will include costings of future models of service. This will identify the financial implications both for the Council and the Primary Care Trust.

Alternative Options

Not applicable.

Risk Management

The Learning Disabilities Programme Board has both commissioning and Section 31 responsibilities for the services. This Board will monitor the current and future pressures on the services and the pooled budget and report risks to the Joint Commissioning Group and the partner agencies.

The Programme Boards will form a key feature of the Public Service Trust arrangements for joint commissioning and monitoring services.

Consultees

None at this stage.

Background Papers

Report by Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Committee – Review of services to People with a Learning Disability.

Herefordshire Council Executive response to the review of Learning Disability Services – Action Plan – October 2006 - 2007

	Recommendation	Summary of Cabinet/Cabinet Member Response	Action	By Who	By When	Target/Success criteria	Progress
a	An over-arching aim of the Directorate's service should be adopted that seeks to support individuals to live as full and independent lives as possible, based on the premise of "ordinary lives" and social inclusion.	Accepted. Tackling social exclusion is a fundamental aim of the Council and Herefordshire Partnership	This has been adopted as the fundamental principle behind the Joint Commissioning Plan for Learning Disabilities, which will be signed off by the Programme Board.	Stephanie Canham	November 2006	Commissioning Plan to demonstrate the mechanisms to rebalance from residential care to supported living alternatives, and from specialist, centre-based day services to community based opportunities.	
b	Appropriate accommodation is the key to achieving this aim. The Council and its partners should explore all opportunities for providing different options for accommodation and support.	Accepted.	This will be apparent in the Accommodation and Support section of the Commissioning Plan and in the recommendations of the Needs Analysis report. There will be specific plans to reduce the reliance on registered residential care, and increase the range of tenancies	Stephanie Canham and Lydia Bailey	December 2006	Commissioning Plan to demonstrate the mechanisms to rebalance from residential care to supported living alternatives.	

			with support and owner occupation.				
c	All the Council's existing sites providing services for people with a learning disability must be reviewed, with a view to using capital receipts for developing alternative accommodation.	Referred to Cabinet member for Resources	The Council will engage in a tendering exercise for in house residential provision as part of the modernisation work. This will form part of the Commissioning Plan. The Council's current policy is that capital receipts are managed corporately and redirected to Council priorities.	Sonia Rees	November 2006	The tendering exercise will specify which sites could be released for capital receipts or to develop accommodation.	
d	Examine the possibility of providing an extra care housing model for people with a learning disability.	Accepted	Extra care housing will be considered for people in the lower dependency bands. The approach will be two-fold: to seek ECH places within developing schemes for older people, and to examine the effectiveness of specialist ECH schemes for people with learning disabilities in Birmingham and other authorities.	Stephanie Canham and Lydia Bailey	April 2007	The Council's Housing Strategy will specify the need for ECH for people with learning disabilities.	
e	Following the needs analysis, engage partners	Accepted.	The actions for this follow those of (c)	Stephanie Canham	October 2007	Partners are selected for the	

	in the independent sector to develop the balance of community and residential services.		above. The exercise will seek partners in the third sector and private sector to work with the Council to achieve this new balance of services. This will follow the Funding and Procurement Guidelines agreed with the Alliance.	and Lydia Bailey		development of Accommodation and Support services and contract details finalised.	
f	Develop a greater understanding of the costs of individuals' care arrangements, using the In Control Model.	Accepted.	The In Control pilot project Resource Allocation System will link resources to needs for those receiving an individualised budget. The pilot project evaluation will determine the implications for commissioning future services..	Stephanie Canham and Catherine Nolan	April 2007	A transparent Resource Allocation System for individualised budgets is developed and evaluated.	
g	The Council move away from a building-based day opportunities model and work with the voluntary and independent sector to develop more opportunities for choice and inclusion. A review of the unit costs of	Accepted.	An analysis of current service configuration provides a baseline for change. The Day Opportunities Modernisation section of the Commissioning Plan will show in more detail where and how the reconfiguration of	Stephanie Canham and Laura Ferguson	February 2007	The Commissioning Plan will be developed to specify the mechanisms to modernise services in each locality.	

	providing transport across the County and a range of in-house services is required.		<p>services will occur. Examination of unit costs will be an integral part of this exercise.</p> <p>The transport consequences of these changes will be analysed as part of this exercise to ensure maximum use of public/existing forms of transport.</p>	Stephanie Canham and Laura Ferguson	March 2007	The transport implications of these plans will be included.	
h	Models of provision should be developed which maximise funding streams.	Accepted.	<p>All sections of the Commissioning Plan will aim to encourage alternative funding streams into learning disabilities support. This will include access to capital and revenue for supported living, and opportunities to expand employment and training through generic sources.</p>	Stephanie Canham	April 2007	Additional funding streams achieved	
i	The Council should use its wider inclusion and disability and diversity strategies to support the social inclusion of people with learning disabilities.	Accepted	<p>The Valuing People Partnership Board has close links with the Council's Diversity Team, and joint initiatives will continue.</p>	Stephanie Canham & Senior Management team			

j	That the Executive's response to the Review including an action plan be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive has approved its response;	Accepted	To be reported to Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee Dec 2006	Cabinet member for Social Care	Dec 2006	Scrutiny Committee receive report	
k	That a further report on progress in response to the Review then be made after six months with consideration then being given to the need for any further reports to be made.	Accepted	A progress report will be made as requested.	Cabinet Member for Social Care	April 2007		

