

Strategic Monitoring Committee

Date: **Monday, 21st January, 2008**

Time: **10.00 a.m.**

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

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

For any further information please contact:

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**County of Herefordshire
District Council**

AGENDA

for the Meeting of the Strategic Monitoring Committee

To: Councillor PJ Edwards (Chairman)
Councillor WLS Bowen (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors PA Andrews, WU Attfield, SPA Daniels, KG Grumbley, TM James, RI Matthews, SJ Robertson, RH Smith and JK Swinburne

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

GUIDANCE ON DECLARING PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

The Council's Members' Code of Conduct requires Councillors to declare against an Agenda item(s) the nature of an interest and whether the interest is personal or prejudicial. Councillors have to decide first whether or not they have a personal interest in the matter under discussion. They will then have to decide whether that personal interest is also prejudicial.

A personal interest is an interest that affects the Councillor more than most other people in the area. People in the area include those who live, work or have property in the area of the Council. Councillors will also have a personal interest if their partner, relative or a close friend, or an organisation that they or the member works for, is affected more than other people in the area. If they do have a personal interest, they must declare it but can stay and take part and vote in the meeting.

Whether an interest is prejudicial is a matter of judgement for each Councillor. What Councillors have to do is ask themselves whether a member of the public – if he or she knew all the facts – would think that the Councillor's interest was so important that their decision would be affected by it. If a Councillor has a prejudicial interest then they must declare what that interest is and leave the meeting room.

3. MINUTES

To approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 19th November, 2007.

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4. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY	
To consider suggestions from members of the public on issues the Committee could scrutinise in the future.	
5. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT	11 - 12
To consider the Council's performance for the first eight months of 2007-08 against the Annual Operating Plan 2007-08 and national performance indicators used externally to measure the performance of the Council; partnership performance for the first six months in delivering the Local Public Service Agreement, Local Area Agreement and Herefordshire Community Strategy; and performance against revenue and capital budgets and corporate risks, and remedial action to address areas of under-performance.	
6. ELECTIONS MAY 2007	13 - 34
To outline and consider the recent problems arising from the elections and prepare an action plan, designed to improve the service and process based on the lessons learnt from previous elections.	
7. SCRUTINY ACTIVITY REPORT	35 - 38
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To consider the Scrutiny Committees' current and future work programmes.	

PUBLIC INFORMATION

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

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

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

The principal roles of Scrutiny Committees are to

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

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

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Public Involvement at Scrutiny Committee Meetings

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

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

1. Identifying Areas for Scrutiny

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

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

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

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

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

Remits of Herefordshire Council's Scrutiny Committees

Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing

*Statutory functions for adult social services including:
Learning Disabilities
Strategic Housing
Supporting People
Public Health*

Children's Services

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

Community Services Scrutiny Committee

*Libraries
Cultural Services including heritage and tourism
Leisure Services
Parks and Countryside
Community Safety
Economic Development
Youth Services*

Health

*Planning, provision and operation of health services affecting the area
Health Improvement
Services provided by the NHS*

Environment

*Environmental Issues
Highways and Transportation*

Strategic Monitoring Committee

*Corporate Strategy and Finance
Resources
Corporate and Customer Services
Human Resources*

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

BROCKINGTON, 35 HAFOD ROAD, HEREFORD.

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COUNTY OF HEREFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of Strategic Monitoring Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 19th November, 2007 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor PJ Edwards (Chairman)

Councillors: PA Andrews, WU Attfield, KG Grumbley, RI Matthews, SJ Robertson and JK Swinburne

In attendance: Councillors JP French (Cabinet Member - Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources) and J Stone.

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors WLS Bowen, SPA Daniels, TM James and RH Smith. Councillor RJ Phillips, Leader of the Council, also sent his apologies.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor PJ Edwards declared a personal interest in agenda item 8: the Council's Policy for the Management of the Smallholdings Estate because a relative farmed one of the smallholdings.

42. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th October, 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

43. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

There were no suggestions from members of the public.

44. UPDATE ON THE STRATEGIC SERVICE DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP

Further to its meeting on 25th October, the Committee received a further update on the status of the Herefordshire Strategic Service Delivery Partnership between the Council, Amey Wye Valley Limited (AWV) and Owen Williams Limited.

In accordance with the Committee's decision of 25th October the report set out the transitional arrangements relating to the purchase of the major part of Herefordshire Jarvis Services (HLS) by Amey plc; the continuity of service delivery – stating that there had been full service continuity with no interruption to services of any kind; Amey's assessment of the programme of works for the remainder of 2007/08 and a baseline on the standards of service provision against which future performance could be assessed.

The Chairman welcomed Mr N Sharman (Head of Local Government Services, Amey plc); Mr S Gyford General Manager Amey Wye Valley Limited and Mr R Garbutt (Manager Owen Williams Ltd, Hereford Office who had been invited to make

a presentation and answer questions.

Mr Sharman introduced the presentation. This outlined the background to the standing of Amey plc and the resources available to the Company. It explained Amey's aim, specialisms and understanding of the requirements of its customers; listed successful local government partnerships it was already involved in, and noted similarities in particular with Hertfordshire County Council which also served dispersed communities. It described Amey's values, which were considered to align with the Council's. It emphasised in terms of performance that the aim was to make profit through smarter and better working, sharing the benefits with the Council. The services provided by Owen Williams and AWV contracting under the contracts with the Council were described. It also noted the new vehicles, new plant and new personal protective equipment provided since AWV had taken over the contract with the Council; and outlined steps taken during the integration period.

Mr Gyford identified the following differences in approach: suppliers paid on time; Amey's understanding of the needs of its Local Government customers; AWV felt valued by its colleagues (not just a source of cash); tangible support was received from the Group in all areas of the business; monthly contract reviews were supportive as well as challenging; plant and equipment were new; and there were real opportunities for growth.

He reported that the "Bellwin" flood remedial works could be delivered by the deadline of 22 December 2007. He added that 75% of the programmed highway works 2007/08 had been completed which meant that progress was on track.

The presentation also commented on whether there was a potential conflict of interest created by the fact that Owen Williams as consultants and AWW as contractor were both owned by Amey PLC. It was asserted that it was now commonplace for Councils to procure their consultancy support and contracting delivery as an integrated service from a single supplier. To abuse the position would be contrary to Owen Williams's values. Apart from any question of morality, the reputational risks to Amey of any bad practice would be immense, not only in Herefordshire but in all its current and potential public sector contracts. The Council and its external auditors had the ability to audit any of the work on an open book basis.

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

- The action taken to pay creditors to whom money was overdue was welcomed.
- The hope was expressed that there would be cost savings as a result of closer working with Owen Williams as they were now part of the same Company group as AWV.
- It was suggested that it should be recorded that on transition it would be more accurate to say that there had been minimal disruption to services rather than that there had been none.
- It was stated that Members had experienced difficulties in getting matters dealt with by the previous contractor and it was to be hoped that this would no longer be an issue. In reply it was acknowledged that there had been mistakes in the past. The intention was to own up to mistakes, learn from them and deliver jobs on time communicating the right information and providing careful management.
- Mr Sharman paid tribute to the staff who had transferred to AWV saying that the

Company had seconded managers to help and support existing staff but not to replace them.

- AWV was looking to engage the public more closely working with councillors and officers, being accountable for priorities at a local level and delivering a good service. A wide range of design skills and other resources were being provided by the Amey Group. There was also an eye to supporting the work on the regeneration of Hereford.
- It was requested that there should be early engagement with Parish Councils and the firm should make sure that it did what it said it would do and kept people informed. In reply it was said that the need to engage at local level was recognised and the example given of how this was done in Bedfordshire, with Amey staff operating alongside Council officers.
- It was asked what scope there was for AWV to gain external work, noting the difficulties experienced by HJS in doing so. In reply it was said that the financial position was now sound, enabling AWV to get better prices from suppliers and reduce its own tenders for works. Plans for growth, which would not impact on work under the contract with the Council, had not been finalised yet. It was thought that the most profitable area for expansion would be in highways and civil engineering in the areas surrounding the County to keep costs down and enable projects to be effectively supervised. There were no plans to look much further afield except in support of the Amey Group. It was confirmed that because of the sound credit rating prospective clients could have confidence in AWV that they had not had in HJS.
- The ongoing closure of Colwall bridge and the time taken to carry out analysis of the structure and identify a solution was raised, noting also a failure of communication with the public. It was replied that the advice was that the bridge was of particularly complex construction necessitating time-consuming analysis. It had taken 8 weeks to get agreement from Network Rail (compared with the usual 16) to get permission to gain access to the railway line. It was still expected that it would take until December to complete the assessment. This had to be undertaken by one person (although he was supported by a team that included rail specialists brought in from York and Birmingham). It was acknowledged that communication in explaining this point had been poor. It was added that as part of the process consideration had been given to the option of constructing a Bailey Bridge.
- It was asked if there had been a risk assessment of the economic impact on communities across the County of the possible loss of bridges. It was stated that this work was ongoing as part of the Asset Management Plan prioritising and costing works – noting that there were some 887 bridges in the County.
- It was asked whether the new arrangements would lead to improved working relations with the Highways Agency. AWV said that whilst nothing could be done directly with the Highways Agency there was influence with the contractors on the A49 who were drawn from the Amey Group.
- A question was asked about a programme of quarterly visits by routine/reactive gangs to parishes that had been piloted. It was confirmed that this had begun in the Southern Division, extended to the Central Division and was to be rolled out to the Northern Division in December. It was requested that Ward Members were notified.

- It was asked how the debt of £3.55 million owing from HJS to its parent company and assigned to Amey as part of the transfer transaction would be treated and in particular if the burden would be borne by Herefordshire Council as client. It was replied that the set rates charged for works under the contract were independent of the level of debt. The debt would have to be cleared over time. AWV could approach this task with some enthusiasm given the overall change in working circumstances.
- Problems with the condition of paving in High Town, Hereford were raised. It was noted that this was an example of an issue where Members, acting on their own account and in response to complaints from constituents, had had to constantly press for a resolution over some time. It was stated in reply that considerable effort had been invested into finding a solution and Owen Williams and AWV were considering how improvements could be made. A new cleaning product was to be trialled.
- The cleaning of streets on the outer areas of the City was raised. AMV said that this would be looked into.

RESOLVED: That a further report on the Strategic Service Delivery partnership be made in six months time.

45. PRESENTATION BY CABINET MEMBER (CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES)

The Committee received a presentation from the Cabinet Member (Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources)

A report from the Cabinet Member on the Corporate and Customer Services part of her portfolio had been previously circulated, the section on Human Resources having been omitted by administrative error. A revised, complete report was circulated at the meeting.

The Cabinet Member referred to her report but advised that she wanted to highlight significant issues facing the Council. She highlighted the following matters:

- She noted the fact that several reports for the Committee's agenda had had to be circulated separately, having been unavailable when the agenda was despatched. She said that it was an example of the need for the Council's procedures to be followed by all staff. The inconsistency of approach to team briefings was a further example. Staff needed to follow procedures or be held to account if they did not.
- It was important for the Council to draw on best practice to achieve efficiencies, freeing resources for investment in frontline services.
- Performance needed to be challenged, noting use being made of the peer support available to Members and Officers from the West Midlands Centre for Excellence.
- Implementation of the action plan in the Investors in People Assessment, noting amongst other things the feedback from the assessors that when people were promoted it was important they were provided with the support to deliver in their new job.

- The need for development programmes for Members as recommended by the Crookall report on The Council's ICT financial and contractual governance arrangements.
- That whilst the processes for reporting bullying were considered good it was important that staff were given confidence to raise issues.
- The Business Transformation Programme needed to be progressed. Other Authorities had derived benefits from these programmes. It was important that the potential savings were generated. Issues of peripatetic working and office accommodation were interlinked with this process.
- The process of combining back office services needed to proceed in line with Government thinking. Discussions were taking place with the Primary Care Trust and the Hospitals Trust had also expressed interest. A more seamless service could be delivered. This would involve changes for staff.
- Job Evaluation and Single Status was still on the national agenda, with Councils, for example Birmingham City Council, experiencing difficulties in implementing it. Herefordshire Council had done well to have implemented Single Status.
- The Comprehensive Area Assessment would be challenging and it was important to ensure that the Council's priorities were reflected in the Agreement.
- It continued to be difficult to recruit to posts in IT and social care and there were also difficulties in Human Resources. The Council needed to develop its own staff.

In the ensuing discussion the following principal points were made:

- The Chairman stressed the importance of the Committee having material presented to it in a timely and orderly manner if it was to be able to conduct its business efficiently and effectively. This was an issue relevant to meetings across the Council. He referred also to the need to consider how frequently the Committee should meet and the optimum length of meetings.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services said that these issues would be incorporated into the report on the scrutiny process.

- In response to a question about team briefings the Cabinet Member said that improvement in the frequency of briefings was clearly expected.
- The challenge of the Comprehensive Area Assessment was discussed noting that the organisation was giving consideration to the issue.
- Clarification was sought on staffing in ICT services. The Director of Corporate and Customer Services said that the establishment comprised 73 posts, not all full time. There were 7 vacancies. There were difficulties in recruiting people with particular skills, for example information security. Consideration was given to the scope for enhancing the skills of existing staff, but this could not be to the detriment of the existing level of service.

It was asked whether the difficulty in recruiting staff with information security skills put the Council at risk and what training provision was in place. The Director further outlined steps that had been taken to provide support in this area

noting that this currently included seconded support from another local authority. Training was aimed at developing staff by progression.

- Referring to the current consultation on the location of polling stations it was asserted that the public were increasingly disillusioned with postal voting and it was likely that any move to reduce the number of polling stations would be resisted. It was added that careful regard had to be had to the distance people would have to travel to polling stations. It was important that it was easy to vote.

It was also noted that although a number of Parishes were grouped each Parish still retained its own electoral roll. This was inefficient and should be reviewed.

A question was asked about the content of the improvement plan for elections referred to in the Cabinet Member's printed report. It was stressed that the Committee had requested a report on the elections some considerable time ago and this was still awaited.

The Chief Executive suggested that a seminar for Members on the issues was needed given the range of issues involved. He commented that the all-postal vote in 2003 had been highly successful in increasing voter turn out. In 2007 complicated new rules had been introduced. Legal proceedings were pending in connection with the 2007 election and this was one of the reasons no report had been produced. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services commented briefly on these proceedings.

The Chief Executive added that the review of polling stations was a separate issue. Although the events of 2007 might reduce postal voting to some extent it was clear that a significant proportion of the public preferred the postal vote. The implication of a significant level of postal voting was that if resources were to be moved to deal with those volumes then the number of polling stations should be reduced. If the Council wanted to maintain its current provision of polling stations it would have to recognise the budgetary implications. There were also emerging difficulties in recruiting to the Polling Stations with low throughputs.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member.

RESOLVED:

That (a) the proposal for a seminar on issues raised by the 2007 elections be welcomed and it be requested that this be progressed as soon as practicable;

and

(b) that the support of the Cabinet Member (Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources) for procedures governing the production of agenda papers to be implemented and adhered to in order to facilitate the efficient conduct of business be welcomed and she be urged to pursue this matter.

46. HEREFORDSHIRE CONNECTS PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered a progress report on the Herefordshire Connects project.

Members expressed a number of concerns about the content of the report and its late publication. It was requested that a further report be prepared setting out the development of the Herefordshire Connects project in a clear sequential order with a

clear explanation of the financial position, noting that the predicted savings had significantly reduced, and clarifying any interlinkages with the Council's other major IT projects.

The Chief Executive commented on the development of the Herefordshire Connects project. He noted that the Executive would shortly be taking decisions on the project as part of the budget process and, in calling for a further report, the Committee needed to be mindful of the timing of its input into that process.

RESOLVED: that a further report be prepared for the Committee's consideration setting out the development of the Herefordshire Connects project in a clear sequential order with a clear explanation of the financial position, and clarifying any interlinkages with the Council's other major IT projects.

47. THE COUNCIL'S POLICY FOR MANAGEMENT OF THE SMALLHOLDINGS ESTATE

(Councillor PJ Edwards declared a personal interest in this item.)

The Committee considered a report on the Council's policy for the management of the smallholdings estate.

The Head of Asset Management and Property Services presented the report.

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

- It was requested that a map be made available to Members of the Committee showing the Council's holdings. In reply it was noted that a series of maps would be needed but work currently underway on the Council's holdings as a whole should enable this information to be produced in due course.
- The policy of disposing of land when prices were rising was questioned. It was replied that the policy as set out in the Asset Management Plan was to generate £10 million in capital receipts over a ten year period. This should be achieved. The policy was to rationalise the smallholdings estate by disposing of unsuitable or high maintenance property.
- It was noted that some of the documentation quoted as background papers and described as policy did not indicate when it had been produced but appeared to be out of date. It was stated that the Property Strategy as reported to Cabinet on 19 May 2005 was the Council's policy and the documents being referred to were supporting working documents.
- It was proposed that a full review of the management of the smallholdings estate be carried out and properly documented in one report, with particular reference to value for money for the whole of Herefordshire.
- It was suggested that provided that the Committee was assured that the criteria for rationalisation of the estate were in place the Committee should focus on other issues.
- It was suggested that in some instances the rental for holdings compared favourably with that for a property on the Belmont housing estate. It was asked whether sub-letting was also taking place.

In reply the Estates Manager said that the previous Cabinet Member had instructed that there should be no sub-letting and under the Agricultural Holdings Act (AHA) this was not permitted. However, there were ways in which this could be subverted. He had discussed this with fellow land agents but there appeared to be no counter. In contrast, under the new Farm Business Tenancies (FBT) control could be exercised and permission required to sub-let. The Council could exercise its discretion under an FBT to permit sub-letting but if it did do so it could charge extra rent. Forty of the Sixty-one holdings were currently held under the AHA.

In response to detailed questions the following points were made:

- That increased prices for grain would be reflected in rent reviews.
- That one notice to quit had been issued and although the arrears had now been paid that tenant would leave the smallholding in February 2009.
- Expenditure on a road at a smallholding at Burghill was clarified.
- The reasons why a particular holding at Burghill had not been let were clarified explaining the various tenancy agreement options and their implications.

RESOLVED: That a full review of the management of the smallholdings estate be carried out and properly documented in one report, with particular reference to value for money for the whole of Herefordshire, and detailing the criteria for disposal and including maps showing the location of holdings.

48. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT

The Committee considered performance for the first half of 2007-08 against the Annual Operating Plan 2007-08, national performance indicators used externally to measure the performance of the council, together with performance against revenue and capital budgets and corporate risks, and remedial action to address areas of under-performance.

Performance against Performance Indicators

The Head of Policy and Performance presented the report.

In the ensuing discussion the following principal points were made (page references are to pages of the Integrated Performance and Finance Report (IPR) circulated as a separate document):

- (p39) An explanation was sought of progress on performance indicators relating to lifestyle: 22a-g, which were marked as red (not on target). The IPR stated that a meeting had been arranged with the Primary Care Trust in November that should result in an agreed set of defined indicators and targets. The Improvement Manager replied that lead officers for each target had been agreed by the Children's Trust Board earlier in the month. Whilst considerable activity was taking place to address these lifestyle issues it was proving difficult to agree indicators that measured progress.

It was requested that a progress report be made to the Committee's next

meeting.

- It was acknowledged that the clarity of the presentation of the performance information had been improved in response to comments made by the Committee, assisting the more efficient conduct of business.
- (p40) In relation to indicator 35b HCS (No of half day sessions missed by looked after children as % of total number of sessions in primary schools) it was noted that the latest figures when available at the end of October would show high levels of absenteeism. The Head of Safeguarding and Assessment said that this was an important issue particularly given the Council's responsibility to looked after Children as their Corporate Parent. Personal Education Plans set out educational and pastoral measures to address non-attendance. The service was working closely with social workers to target improvement.
- (p51) It was noted that 5 of the 9 targets marked as amber (some progress/data not yet available so not possible to determine trend) under the priority: maximising the health, safety, economic well-being, achievements and contribution of every child related to non-attendance at school. The Head of Safeguarding and Assessment commented that although the Education Welfare Service was the lead service there was a need to work with partners to address the issues and improve performance in this area. An attendance strategy was currently being discussed with schools.
- (p39/40) Performance against target 89b (completion rate of initial assessments of children in need within 7 working days of referral) was questioned. The Head of Safeguarding and Assessment said that this was a critical indicator. The principal reason why the target was not being met was difficulty in recruiting and retaining social workers. This was a national problem. However, he considered that action that had been taken locally such as strengthening links with local colleges was proving beneficial. Staff numbers were starting to increase but as these were newly qualified staff it would take time for the full benefit to be realised. Asked about overall progress he said that following the Joint Area Review in 2005 when the Service had 46.1 Social Workers in this particular service a target had been agreed with Government Office West Midlands of 57 Social Workers in post by March 2009. This equated to 53 staff by March 2008 and the Council was on track with 52.5 staff in post. In parallel with the recruitment exercise the numbers of agency staff were being decreased. He considered that there were signs performance was improving.
- (p41) It was noted that the four Local Public Service indicators marked as red were all partnership led. Performance reward grant was attached to performance against these indicators. The Partnership Performance Management Group had not been satisfied with progress. It was proposed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman should be regularly briefed by the Chairman of the PPMG.
- (p39) The position on target 13 HCS Average length of stay in B&B accommodation for homeless households was noted.

Revenue and Capital Budgets and Corporate Risks

The Director of Resources presented the section of the report on the revenue and capital budgets and corporate risks.

The summary of the revenue budget was that there was a projected overspend of £3.259 million. This continued to be of concern given the potential implications for

2008/09 and the poor Comprehensive Spending Review Settlement for local government for 2007.

The increase in the projected overspend on the Corporate and Customer Services Directorate budget from 11.9% to 17% was questioned. The Director of Resources said that the July forecast of outturn for the year for this Directorate did not include the unbudgeted revenue implications of the Community Network upgrade (CNU) contract as this issue had not been identified at the time the report was written. The September report showed a much improved position on the Directorate's other budget headings but this was more than offset by the inclusion of the CNU position.

It was noted that the format of the finance section of the report had been amended in response to the Committee's comments. This was welcomed.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Adult and Community Services report to the next meeting on progress in identifying an agreed set of defined indicators and targets for measures of healthy lifestyles (indicators 22a-g);**
 - (b) the improvement in the clarity of the presentation of performance and financial information in response to the Committee's observations be welcomed;**
- and**
- (c) it be requested that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee be provided with regular briefings by the Chairman of the Partnership Performance Management Group.**

The meeting ended at 12.50 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT

Report By: Director of Corporate and Customer Services

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To consider
 - the Council's performance for the first eight months of 2007-08 against the Annual Operating Plan 2007-08 and national performance indicators used externally to measure the performance of the Council;
 - partnership performance for the first six months in delivering the Local Public Service Agreement, Local Area Agreement and Herefordshire Community Strategy; and
 - performance against revenue and capital budgets and corporate risks, and remedial action to address areas of under-performance.

Financial Implications

2. There are no financial implications

Background

3. The report is enclosed separately for Members of the Committee and is available to the public on request. Cabinet is to consider the report on 24th January.

RECOMMENDATION

- THAT**
- (a) **the report be noted, subject to any comments the Committee wishes to make;**
- and**
- (b) **the Committee considers whether there are any issues it wishes to refer to other Scrutiny Committees for investigation.**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Tony Geeson, Head of Policy and Performance on 01432 261855

ELECTION MAY 2007**Report By: Head of Legal and Democratic Services****Wards Affected**

County-wide

Purpose

1. To outline and consider the recent problems arising from the elections and prepare an action plan, designed to improve the service and process based on the lessons learnt from previous elections.

Financial Implications

2. The Council contracted a supplier to deliver aspects of the election. The Council is in dispute with the supplier at the present time over costs involved. The proposed action plan will have costs associated with training and re-evaluation of posts

Background

3. Strategic Monitoring Committee has requested a report following the composition of the administration following the Local Government Elections in May 2007. The Committee has been informed of the ongoing dispute with the supplier contracted by the Council. The Returning Officer was assured by the supplier that a full report would be made available following issues arising from the election. No report was forthcoming despite reminders to the supplier. It was anticipated that the outstanding issues with the supplier would have been resolved within a reasonable amount of time. Unfortunately this has not proved to be the case. The Committee was informed that any report would need to look at the overall picture and to a large degree the impact of changes in legislation immediately prior to the election which impacted on both the Council's Electoral Registration Officers and its supplier.
4. Unfortunately due to the continuing potential for possible litigation involving the Council and its supplier it is still not possible to give as full a picture as was hoped for. However, because of the lapse of time, it is prudent to provide a report at this stage to the Committee in relation to the impact on Electoral Registration, the electorate and candidates.
5. The County of Herefordshire is made up of 2 constituencies (Hereford and Leominster), 40 unitary wards (58 Councillors) and 245 Parishes (1231 Councillors). This covers 139,296 people on the Herefordshire Electoral Register of whom according to figures from the supplier over 19,000 had elected to vote by post.
6. The Electoral Registration Office is responsible for the running and organisation of the elections process from beginning to end from dealing with electoral registration of residents in Herefordshire to running Polling Day and the Count.

7. The Council's Electoral Registration Office is supported by a full time Electoral Registration Services Manager and it has a staff of 2.5 full time equivalents.
8. The election in May 2007 arose in respect of all 58 district council seats – 57 of which were contested – and Parish Councils. Herefordshire has a significantly high proportion of Parish Councils for its size and over 1200 parish councillors. 32 parish councils were contested and this was a significant increase over the previous election where only 17 parish councils were contested. This had an impact both at the nomination stage and count following the district council count.
9. This framework has been in place for some time and over that time a number of issues and concerns have developed in the electoral process as a whole that are organisational, strategic and in many cases historical such as:
 - a) Electoral nomination
 - b) Polling stations and ballot boxes
 - c) The count
 - d) Postal Votes
 - e) Changes in legislation
 - f) Lack of resources
 - g) Costs of election
10. It is within this background that the specific problems of 3 May 2007 have to be seen.
11. It is nationally accepted that there were significant problems in particular with postal votes. The problems experienced in Herefordshire were similar to those elsewhere in England. The necessary but late statutory changes which arose out of the lessons from the Birmingham City Council elections were bound to have a knock on effect on the process by increasing the workload without the necessary time frame for testing and implementation. Government was advised to carry out a pilot on personal identifier requirements but did not do so.
12. However, a number of the problems in Herefordshire seem related to the third party contractors who had various delivery difficulties causing delays in sending out postal votes and ultimately resulting in some 500 voters not receiving their postal ballot papers in time although separate arrangements were in place to enable those affected to vote at their local polling station. The Council is in dispute with the contractor.
13. Another problem appears to have been the distinction between Parish and District Council ballot papers causing the latter to be found in the former counts and leading to a few instances where these were rejected.
14. Nominations
Parishes. The publication of the notice of election triggers the start of the election period. The notice of election was required to be published by 27th March 2007 with the last day for nominations to be submitted by the 4th April 2007. Electoral

Registration have as practice and custom with Parish Clerks arranged that the Clerks place on a notice board that is open to the public nominations for forthcoming elections. Parish Clerks were informed that such notices needed to be posted in a conspicuous place. Unfortunately a small number (two notified) of parish councils did not place nominations in a conspicuous place and did not inform the Electoral Registration Office. The legal responsibility for notices of election nominations is placed on the Returning Officer and his officers. However, the practice entered into with Parish Clerks was in order to minimise the cost of elections to parish councils.

The committee will note that there is a very limited period of eight days between notices of election and submission of nominations. The advice to Parish Clerks will in future elections re-emphasise the need to contact the Electoral Registration Office if they are unable to comply with the legal requirements. In one of the parishes alluded to, the notice was placed in the Village Hall rather than on the notice board outside the Village Hall.

Electoral Registration staff had to process over 1500 nominations for the parish Council elections from the close of nominations on the Wednesday 4th April 2007 and to produce a statement of persons nominated by the Tuesday 10th April 2007 less than 4 full working days. Electoral Registration Officers were, if able, assisting potential candidates, dealing with enquiries and during this period were working from 7.00 a.m. to 11.30 p.m. and often beyond to ensure nomination statements could be published. This was despite additional support from other officers within Legal and Democratic Services assisting with this process. All nominations had to be checked in terms of the candidate and proposers.

District Council. The same time constraint applied to candidates for the District Council election and the same checks carried out. This appeared to go relatively smoothly but the same numbers were not involved as in the parishes. In addition candidates for District Council elections are also usually supported by an election agent who is an officer within the political party concerned.

15. Polling stations and ballot boxes

Polling stations. A polling station review has been conducted and the Cabinet agreed not to adopt the proposal set out in the review. A further review is taking place and a report to Cabinet is due in March 2008.

In relation to the May 2007 elections the booking of polling stations and the appointment of polling station staff was organised prior to the election taking place. However, a number of concerns arose namely that whilst contact can be made with both polling station venues and polling station staff a significant number of stations and a number of polling station staff did not confirm availability until late in the process. Presiding Officers are required to manage and ensure good conduct of the election within the precincts of the polling station and with the support of a poll clerk. Electoral Registration Officers had difficulty in recruiting the number required to assist with the election. It is proposed to keep in contact with Presiding Officers by twice yearly training and refreshers. Whilst there were a number of opportunities for polling station staff to receive training these dates were fairly close to polling day. A small number of polling stations appeared to be inappropriate or have access problems. This is one of the criteria in terms of the review in that access is required. The polling station with access issues was located in a school. Whilst schools are required by statute to be used as polling stations on occasions this has left the school to

nominate the location of the polling station within its school buildings. The poll took place on a normal school day.

Ballot boxes. Ballot boxes are collected by Presiding Officers usually 2 or 3 days before polling day and advice given to keep them secure. There were difficulties on collection of ballot boxes as a result of the problems incurred with postal votes and the rolling programme of registration on the register of electors. The ballot boxes are required to contain certain material including the register of electors and ballot papers for the polling station concerned. The delivery of ballot papers by the supplier was scheduled for 23rd April 2007 but due to delays by the supplier and the legal requirement that the electorate can register for an election up to the 18th April 2007 these were not received until 27th April 2007. Previously the electoral register that was finally published on 31st December in any given year would be the register for election purposes. The changes in legislation now allow registrations on the elections register to take place 11 days before polling day. This requires the electoral register to be updated in addition to postal votes and ballot papers. The Electoral Registration Officers were not able, despite their best endeavours to update all registers for ballot boxes within the timeframe set. However all ballot boxes issued eventually received an up to date copy of the Electoral Register. This necessitated Presiding Officers having to make another journey to collect their ballot boxes and for a number of ballot boxes to be delivered to Presiding Officers by council staff.

Despite these difficulties all polling stations were manned with appropriate ballot boxes.

At the close of poll Presiding Officers are required either to deliver ballot boxes to a set location and for them to be delivered to the count, or for the Presiding Officer to deliver to the count directly. The count took place following the close of polling stations at 10.00 p.m. on 3rd May 2007 at Halo Leisure Centre.

Unfortunately an experienced Presiding Officer had taken a ballot box home rather than delivering it to the location where transport was waiting to collect and deliver to the count. The Electoral Registration Services Manager was contacted and made aware of the missing ballot box by the driver. Contact was made direct to the Presiding Officer and he was requested to deliver the ballot box immediately to the count. This was carried out and the ballot box delivered within approximately 15 minutes. The ballot box was checked, as with all ballot boxes on arrival, for signs of tampering.

16. The Count

Parishes. The count for parish and town councils took place on Friday 4th May 2007 at Halo Leisure Centre in Hereford. Some 32 parishes were contested. During the parish council count some ballot papers for the District Council election had been discovered. Unfortunately they could not be counted as all the Declaration of Results had taken place and no other votes can be considered. This is extremely unfortunate and it can only be attributed to human error. Such ballot papers should have been identified from the verification of ballot papers from the ballot boxes from the count the night before. There may be a suggestion that the count which starts at 10.30 p.m. and did not finish until 5.00 a.m. should take place on the next working day and the count for parish council elections to take place on the following working day.

Priority to the parish council count is usually given to the town councils as these are where the majority of votes are cast. This can cause frustration to those waiting to hear the results of other parish councils. Consideration could be given that town councils are counted first followed by parish councils in strict alphabetical order.

District Councils. The count took place following the close of poll at Halo Leisure Centre Hereford on Thursday 3rd May 2007. Count staff were requested to attend from 9.30 p.m. and each table was allocated a count supervisor. Every effort was made throughout the evening to inform candidates of which tables were dealing with the count of a particular ward. Announcements were made over the announcement system provided by the leisure centre. Refreshments were made available to candidates and media. The count was partially delayed due to scanner failure of the supplier with regard to verification and also that postal votes could be lodged at any polling station. This is a delay which is likely to re-occur as a result.

Count supervisors were required to manage a table to verify the number of ballot papers to ensure that so far as reasonable it tallied with the Presiding Officer ballot paper account. The ballot paper account is a legal requirement as is the verification process. Once verification has taken place then the count can take place and the declaration of results made by the Returning Officer. In addition to ballot boxes the postal votes also had to be counted and verified.

A significant number of local authorities are now holding their counts on the next working day due to the lateness of verification and then the count being able to proceed speedily.

17. Postal Votes

The council had over 19,000 postal votes processed by its supplier. The supplier relied on sub-contractors to carry out its printing. Data supplied was not inputted correctly. Parish council ballot papers were supplied in the same colour as the Districts. Ballot papers were not received until 27th April 2007. Ballot papers for a ward and seven parishes were missing. Electoral Registration Officers informed them and re-prints were not received until Saturday 28th April 2007. Officers worked over the weekend to ensure delivery. On a subsequent issue of postal votes similar issues arose the outcome of which is approximately 500 postal votes were not able to be issued. The Returning Officer had to implement contingency plans to permit as many of the electorate to vote by instructing Presiding Officers and arranging for the media to inform the electorate of changes and how to exercise their vote. A further report on the outcome of outstanding issues with the supplier will be made available to the committee once the resolution of the potential litigation is achieved.

18. Changes in legislation

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 received the Royal Assent in July 2006. The regulations supporting the Act did not come into force until 1st January 2007.

The major changes from the legislation as a result of previous postal vote elections were numerous. There was a requirement that all existing and new postal voters had to supply two personal identifiers. These are the voter's signature and their date of birth. The personal identifiers have to appear on the postal vote security statement (PVS) that accompanies a postal vote. The Returning Officer has to then match the two sets of personal identifiers before the ballot paper is able to be added to the count.

All councils had to collect the personal identifiers from existing postal voters and computer software was needed to assist with matching personal identifiers at the election. The full implementation of this system had not been piloted despite concerns raised by Electoral Registration Officers across England. The system was therefore untested and in effect the May election was the pilot for future elections as the Electoral Commission have confirmed that postal votes are here to stay. The expectation is that all postal votes will be 100% verified by the above system.

Another significant impact is the electorates right to register as an elector up to 11 days before the poll. This was time consuming and took officers away from activities in relation to polling day.

In effect the Electoral Commission have agreed that the late introduction of significant legislation in an election year was not appropriate. The Electoral Commission have issued a paper in December 2007 (attached at Appendix 2) on electoral administration in the United Kingdom and indicates that electoral administration in its current structure is at "breaking point" (page 6) and that there should be a "no change" period of at least one year until after May 2008 (page 9) to ensure such changes are properly resourced.

19. Resources

It is clear both nationally and locally from the recent elections that there needs to be a fundamental review of the officers required to support elections within the Electoral Registration Office. The service was stretched to its limit. Officers within Electoral Registration worked excessive hours to deliver the election to the extent that on occasions they were unable to function effectively.

It was only as a result of the commitment of Electoral Registration Officers and additional support provided across Corporate and Customer Services that the election and count were able to take place on 3rd May 2007. Experiences in other areas indicate that counts were postponed because of difficulties with verification and indeed in Scotland where similar suppliers were used for verification of postal votes over 100,000 voters were disenfranchised.

Additional resource was identified for electoral registration prior to the election and Electoral Registration has recently been able to recruit an additional officer. However this may not be sufficient in light of the Electoral Commission's fundamental review of Electoral Registration Services. Actions contained within the Action Plan identified the need for resources and the re-evaluation of posts and looking at other measures to provide support around election time when the service is at breaking point.

20. Costs of elections to Parish Councils

32 Parish Councils were contested in May 2007 which totalled 181 seats.

Parish Councils perception is that they should not be required to meet the costs of their elections. The Council has taken the view that the Parish Councils should bear the costs of their elections and this should be reflected in the precept set by the Parish Council. The Parish Councils have been informed of the cost to the Parish Council and it is suggested to them that they should assume that a vacancy may be contested in any one year. The Council and the Herefordshire Association of Local

Councils (HALC) have agreed that the costs to Parish Councils will be 50% of the total costs of the election. The Parish Councils have the option to set their precept either to bear the cost in one council tax year or to apply it proportionally between elections. It is not simply a case of billing and receiving payment within 30 days. The Council continues to work with HALC and other Parishes in this regard.

Action Plan 2007-2008

21. Following the elections an internal review was carried out and the action plan attached at Appendix 1 drawn together. In particular the planning for a 'model election' which would provide a blueprint for any further elections. The Herefordshire Electoral Registration Office has pulled together a lot of the problems with the electoral process and as well as the lessons to be learnt from the 3 May 2007 experience.
22. The Action Plan 2007-2008 (Appendix 1) is fundamental and in development in so far as it is added to on a regular basis as new issues arise. It is intended to summarise the actions and activities required to improve the service based on previous elections experiences. For example, following discussions with HALC to receive its observations and agree where increased co-operation would improve delivery.
23. It is anticipated that the Action Plan 2007-2008 will be reported back to all Stakeholders on a regular basis and will be available on the Council's website

RECOMMENDATION

- THAT**
- (i) the Action Plan 2007-2008 be noted and received**
 - (ii) for Strategic Monitoring Committee to consider further actions or improvements for consideration**
 - (iii) a further report from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to Strategic Monitoring Committee on conclusion of legal issues with the supplier**

Appendices

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Appendix 1 – | Action Plan 2007-2008 |
| Appendix 2 - | Electoral Commission's Assessment of issues and challenges facing electoral administration in the UK (published December 2007) |

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

Issue	Action	Who	By When	Progress
Planning	With support from Corporate Programmes, develop a project plan for annual tasks, and a project plan for elections-specific tasks including identification of resources required and timescales.	FN	19/12/07	First meeting to discuss project to take place 19.12.2007
Annual Canvass				Completed
Review of Polling Stations		CM	13/12/07	Report to Cabinet on 13th December 2007
Staffing	Recruitment of Deputy Manager (Electoral Registration Services)	FN/CM	12/12/07	Interviews on 12/12/07.
	Review of roles and responsibilities within the service team (including revisions to JD/PS as appropriate)	CM/FN	21/12/07	JD/PS has been reviewed – in the process of being evaluated
	From project plans, identify numbers and timing of temporary staff requirements for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominations process • Issue and processing of postal votes • Staffing Polling Stations • Count 	FN	19/12/07	Seeking resource for Project Manager. These will be covered in the project.
	Recruit and develop a pool of in-house staff to be called on to carry out specific support roles during elections.	JJ		JJ had spoken to Sally Coulter – Members were keen to include requirement to assist at elections in JDs. SC to follow up. SC also looking how Research employ casuals.
	Explore with HR the potential for including a requirement to assist at elections within job descriptions.	JJ		
	Identify agency staff interested and able to undertake election support work			
	Identify requirements for info by phone to take calls re nomination process. Electoral register and postal votes (e.g. software links/permissions, script for call operators)	FN		Meeting with Gina Lane & Lesley Hack – see below for further info.

Issue	Action	Who	By When	Progress
Training	Develop programme of training for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parish Clerks Temporary staff Refresher training for permanent staff Develop 'handbook' to support above.	FN	30/11/07	Meeting held with Lynda Wilcox and feedback received on 03/05/07 elections
Communications	Liaise with Communications Unit to develop a communications strategy to cover both annual tasks and specific requirements around the range of elections. (To include key dates, register of electors process, notices of election & nomination packs on website and publication of notices of election in local press)	FN	31/01/08	Meeting to be arranged with RB including EP, GL, LH
Resources	Ensure access to appropriate scanners/printers/high-volume copiers	FN	31/12/07	FN to get info from Sandra Dallimore
	Review requirements for polling booths/boxes following polling station review	CM	31/3/08	On-going
	Review Post Office support requirements and negotiate revised service agreement	CM		Now have an account manager in place.
	Ensure ICT support requirements are specified within SLA.	FN/CM	31/01/08	Highlight web provisions, ICT links required, need technical discussion as part of process. Postal votes – provide lockable rooms at Thorn – need access to building out of hours. Meeting required with ICT.
	Review software requirements/options and prepare exceptions business case if necessary	FN/CM	31/01/08	In progress
Postal Voting	Review process with Opt2vote	AM		On-going
House name changes	Explore options for this activity to be passed to another service.	FN	22/11/07	Temp has been employed to catch up with backlog.

Electoral administration in the United Kingdom – the Electoral Commission’s assessment



The Electoral Commission is the independent statutory body set up by the UK Parliament in 2000. Following seven years of monitoring and assessing elections, we set out in this report a series of fundamental issues and challenges facing electoral administration in the UK.



The Electoral Commission’s aim is integrity and public confidence in the UK’s democratic process. In support of that goal we want to see complete and accurate electoral registers supported by a well-run electoral registration process, and well-run elections and referendums which produce results that are accepted.

We have outlined here our views on three key issues that we believe need to be addressed to support public confidence:

- the delivery structure for elections¹
- the integrity of elections, and
- legislation for elections

The Electoral Commission has a statutory duty to report on the administration of elections. We have reported on elections across the UK since 2001. Our reports have covered a full cycle of elections, including two UK Parliamentary general elections; those examining the May 2007 elections considered the implementation of large scale electoral administration reform following the Electoral Administration Act 2006.



We have produced this status report to summarise our views about the key challenges facing those who manage elections and referendums, and to help governments and legislators, political parties, Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers across the UK in considering the health of current electoral processes and the legal framework for elections.

The most important challenge facing all of those involved in running elections and referendums is to reaffirm a shared commitment to putting electors at the heart of electoral policy and decision making.

Background

The independent Electoral Commission, established in 2000, has powers to provide advice and assistance to Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers, but no power to direct them in the conduct of their duties. Since 2006, we have also had powers to set performance standards for elections and electoral registration, and to monitor the performance of electoral officers against those standards.

We may make recommendations for changes to electoral law, but the development, enactment and implementation of policy and legislation is the responsibility of the relevant governments and legislators.

Since 2001, we have reported on the conduct and administration of:

- two UK Parliamentary general elections
- the 2004 European Parliamentary elections
- two sets of elections each to the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly
- local government elections across the UK
- a regional referendum in the North East of England

Across this full cycle of UK elections we have provided guidance and training support for those who run elections and referendums, as well as working with police and prosecutors to support the integrity of our elections. We have also evaluated more than 150 local electoral pilot schemes, and developed close relationships

with international electoral management bodies.

Alongside significant reform of the UK's election legislation, the last seven years have seen increasing and sustained public interest in the way electoral registration, elections and referendums are run and delivered.

At this stage in a period of reform and modernisation of electoral administration that has included the establishment of the Electoral Commission itself, now is a useful time to reflect on the key issues of electoral administration practice and legislation that we and others have identified in recent years.



Our assessment

The Electoral Commission wants to ensure that the UK has well-run elections and referendums which produce results that people accept. We need a concerted effort to improve performance. We want to see significant improvements to ensure that elections are run to consistently high standards across the UK.

We want to see improvements to long-established procedures and processes as well as to new and amended procedures that have followed recent legislative change. We are taking steps to support improvements in practice across the UK on:

- explaining to people how to get on the register of electors, and how voting systems work
- making sure all stages of elections and referendums are fully accessible
- organising and managing vote counts
- dealing with candidates/the nomination process

The Electoral Commission will monitor progress on these issues through our election reporting and performance standards assessments.

We must also grasp and resolve some significant structural and strategic issues in order to ensure that the UK's crucial, but often undervalued, electoral administration function is given a solid footing for the future.

Most importantly, we call upon all those involved in elections – including governments, legislators, political parties, Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers, and the Electoral Commission itself – to reaffirm a shared commitment to putting the interests of electors firmly at the heart of electoral policy and decision making. For its part, the Electoral Commission commits itself to do so.



Delivery structure for elections

The pattern of electoral systems across the UK has become steadily more complex during the last 10 years, as devolution has increased the number of elected bodies.

Before 1999, the only sets of elections which did not use the first-past-the-post system were local government elections in Northern Ireland and elections to the European Parliament in Northern Ireland. In 2007, there are five different electoral systems in operation across the UK. Only three sets of elections use first-past-the-post: elections to the UK Parliament, and local government elections in England and in Wales.

The legal and administrative arrangements for running electoral services – including electoral registration and the conduct of elections – vary considerably across the UK.

In England and Wales, compiling the register of electors is the

responsibility of Electoral Registration Officers, who are normally senior local government officers, based in and funded by each local authority. In Scotland, Electoral Registration Officers are appointed and funded by each local authority, but in all but one instance the role is carried out by Assessors who are also responsible for property valuation for council tax.² In Northern Ireland, responsibility for the register of electors lies with the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland, who is an independent statutory office holder appointed by the Secretary of State and funded by the Northern Ireland Office.

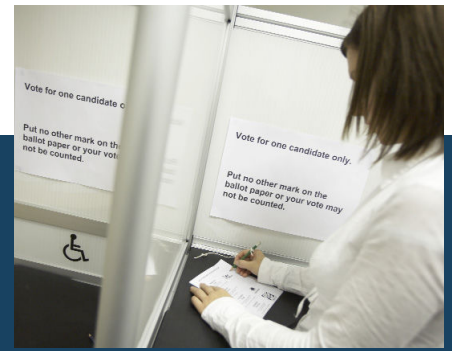
In England, Scotland and Wales, conducting elections is the responsibility of Returning Officers, who are appointed by individual local authorities.³ In Northern Ireland, this too is the Chief Electoral Officer's responsibility.

When undertaking these roles, both Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers are acting as independent officers of the Crown.

Funding and oversight arrangements vary between

different sets of elections. The costs of running UK Parliamentary elections, elections to the European Parliament and elections to the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly are met by the UK Government. Elections to the National Assembly for Wales are funded by the Assembly itself. The costs of running elections to local authorities, including the Greater London Assembly, are met by the relevant authorities themselves.

At elections to the European Parliament, 12 Regional Returning Officers are appointed to coordinate the management of the elections. At elections to the Greater London Authority, a Greater London Returning Officer is appointed and funded by the Authority to be responsible for London-wide procurement and training as well as coordination of Local Government Returning Officers. The Chairman of the Electoral Commission is responsible as Chief Counting Officer for the overall conduct of any national or regional referendum and for certifying the result. In each of these instances, the Regional Returning Officers, Greater



London Returning Officer and Chief Counting Officer have been given explicit powers to direct the work of Local Government Returning Officers.

Over the past few years, the Electoral Commission and professional associations including the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers, the Society of Local Authority Lawyers and Administrators in Scotland, and the Association of Electoral Administrators have observed and highlighted the fact that this complexity leads to significant difficulties, including:

- problems in following all the requirements of electoral law completely or correctly, and in achieving consistency in the administration of election processes and procedures
- loss of control by Returning Officers who have outsourced the delivery of their statutory responsibilities to external contractors
- late delivery of postal ballots

It is increasingly clear that the current structure for running elections cannot always be relied on to cope effectively

with the demands of a modern electoral system. Although we continue to see examples of excellent electoral management, we also continue to identify evidence of electoral services being delivered in a disjointed and inconsistent manner. We have noted that some Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers have not been able to provide their electoral services teams with sufficient support or resources to discharge their functions effectively; and some of these teams are not properly equipped in terms of their staffing, skills and support.

With the increasing complexity of the election process in recent years, the division of responsibilities between Returning Officers and their external suppliers has in many cases become seriously unbalanced. Many Returning Officers outsource responsibility for carrying out administrative processes to suppliers such as software companies and printers, but they must not do so in a way which leaves them unable to properly discharge their legal responsibilities for the overall management of the election. However, given the small number of suppliers

currently able to deliver complex electoral products, Returning Officers often feel it is difficult to put pressure on their suppliers to deliver what is required.

Key issues for the future – delivery structure for elections

In 2007, two significant independent reviews – the Eleventh Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life⁴ and the Commission’s own independent review of the Scottish elections conducted by Ron Gould CM⁵ – have identified significant structural issues that hinder effective and consistent management of key electoral administration functions. These have included:

- the fragmentation and complexity of the legal framework for elections
- concerns about inconsistent application of electoral legislation by statutory office holders
- lack of transparency and unclear lines of accountability for the actions of Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers
- lack of timely and effective planning, coordination and project management capacity



- complicated, opaque and inconsistent funding arrangements for elections and electoral registration

In many areas across the UK we have noted concerns that the current structure for the delivery of electoral administration is stretched to breaking point, and we believe it is insufficiently robust and coordinated to meet the challenges of elections in the twenty-first century. We have noted both the degree of variation inherent in the current structure and the growing calls from political parties, candidates and electoral officers for more consistency and direction across the UK. Elections are inconsistently resourced and supported, and we do not believe that the current structure provides a suitably robust mechanism for effectively delivering high standards of service for electors.

We will continue to provide comprehensive guidance and advice to Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers, and will strengthen our role providing oversight and assurance across the electoral administration process. We are developing a performance standards framework that will

be designed to support self-improvement. Our approach will continue to be guided by the principle of putting the elector first.

However, the important issues highlighted here and by others have far-reaching implications for the delivery of elections across the UK. Failure to accept and address the concerns set out above will only increase pressures on electoral administration structures. It is time to conduct a wide-ranging and open debate on the structure of electoral administration, encompassing all parts of the UK, rather than considering individual elements of the electoral process in isolation.

The Electoral Commission therefore plans to lead a detailed examination of the structure of electoral administration in the UK, to identify the fundamental principles and requirements for electoral administration and explore how they might best be delivered. In particular, we expect this work to address the key structural issues identified above. We will seek to undertake this examination in a consistent and impartial manner across the UK, and will

seek to reflect the views of all those who have a stake in the delivery of electoral services: central, devolved and local government; elected representatives, legislators and assemblies; Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers; political parties and others who take part in elections; and above all electors.

We will also take account of established international standards and principles for the conduct and administration of elections, and examples of current effective practice from across the UK.

We aim to publish our initial findings by the summer of 2008, and expect this to provide the basis for further discussion and decisions about the future of electoral service delivery across the UK.



Integrity of elections

Since the Electoral Commission was established in 2000, we have contributed to and reflected on the wide public debate about declining levels of participation in elections. We have delivered coordinated nation-wide public awareness campaigns to support electoral registration and effective participation in elections. We have supported efforts to identify and remove unnecessary barriers to voting, but we have made clear our view that the most significant drivers for participation relate to the strength and effectiveness of political party and candidate campaign activity.

We support efforts to increase participation, provided that any changes are demonstrably secure and well planned, and retain public confidence. However, we have consistently made clear our view that the need to maintain public confidence in the integrity of elections means that security must not be sacrificed for the sake of convenience.

As the Commission and many other commentators have

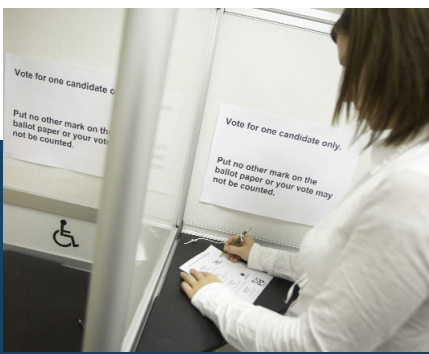
highlighted on numerous occasions, the UK's electoral systems are rooted in nineteenth-century practices and legislation. Many of these practices have provided the basis for historically high levels of public confidence in the integrity of elections. However, this confidence has been dependent on a significant degree of trust in, and from, individual participants – electors, political parties, candidates and electoral administrators. Increased scrutiny and focus on the mechanics and processes of elections mean that trust alone is no longer sufficient to secure confidence in the integrity of elections.

The development and widespread acceptance of international standards for running elections which command public confidence has also highlighted the need for individual countries to ensure their own voting processes and laws measure up well against these standards.

Recent reforms, most notably to the postal and proxy voting system, have begun to improve the integrity of some of our electoral processes.

In Northern Ireland, the Electoral Fraud Act 2002 introduced individual voter registration, where electoral registration applications are made by individuals rather than by the head of the household, and also introduced requirements for photographic identification at polling stations. These changes have improved public confidence in the integrity of electoral processes in Northern Ireland, and since 2002 we have noted there a more accurate and robust register of electors and elections largely free from allegations of fraud.

From 2007, there has been a requirement in England and Wales to collect individual signatures and dates of birth from electors wishing to vote by post or by proxy and to check the details on a sample of returned postal votes; this has led to a decrease in the scale of allegations of malpractice being made in connection with postal voting. We look forward to the introduction of this requirement in Scotland as soon as possible.



This legislative change has been supported by continued proactive policing and good cooperation between the Commission, electoral administrators, police forces, the Associations of Chief Police Officers in England, Wales and Scotland, and the relevant prosecution agencies.

However, we are not satisfied that sufficient steps have been taken to systematically and comprehensively address potential weaknesses across the electoral administration process. In particular, we have strongly argued since 2003 that individual voter registration should be made mandatory in Great Britain as it is now in Northern Ireland, to ensure that the wider electoral process is underpinned by a robust and accurate register of electors. Despite acceptance by the UK Government of the principle of individual registration,⁶ following extensive debates in both Houses of Parliament during the passage of the Electoral Administration Bill in 2006, no such change has yet been introduced. We continue to call for the Government to take this issue forward.

Key issues for the future – integrity of elections

To ensure that levels of public confidence in the integrity of elections are maintained, we need action to demonstrate objectively and beyond question that all parts of the electoral process are secure and safe from fraud, including: electoral registration; voting – whether in polling stations, or by post or by proxy; and counting the votes.

We will continue to ensure that findings and lessons from the experience in Northern Ireland – where individual registration has been in operation since 2002 – can be used to inform a realistic and robust plan for implementing individual registration in Great Britain. We acknowledge that the process of moving towards a consistent and coherent system of individual registration across the UK will require significant changes, not least for electors themselves, and will not be entirely free from risk, including risks to overall registration levels. Translating in-principle support for reform into an effective operational system will require detailed and robust planning, and appropriate long-term resource commitment.

Meanwhile, we call on the Government to consolidate recent improvements to the absent voting process by moving to 100% checking of returned postal ballots to require that personal identifiers are checked on all returned postal ballots. In Scotland, this checking of identifiers should be introduced at 100% after May 2008.

Any improvements to ensure confidence in electoral integrity should consider UK electoral administration as an integrated whole, from electoral registration to the count and declaration of result, rather than as individual isolated processes. We will continue to scrutinise both established practices and new proposals, to ensure that mechanisms for protecting the secrecy and integrity of the ballot and for effectively establishing electors' identities are in place from registration through to the voting and counting process. We will seek to ensure that future changes to electoral processes take account of international standards and obligations.



Legislation for elections

The structure for the delivery of elections is most obviously tested through the implementation of new legislation and procedures. Some degree of procedural change has been introduced in every year since 2004, and in each of these years we have reflected on the implications of late legislation and disjointed implementation. Legislation, particularly more detailed rules and regulations established in secondary legislation, has often been finalised so late that guidance has had to be changed or withdrawn, and key administrative decisions have been delayed or rendered impossible to achieve.

The implications of fragmented, ambiguously drafted or poorly planned legislation have also been highlighted in recent years, including problems implementing the policy of requiring electors to sign before being issued with a ballot paper in polling stations, and potential difficulties holding elections during the annual electoral registration canvass period.

Key issues for the future – legislation for elections

Following the significant reforms of recent years, we recommended a ‘no-change’ period of at least one year until after May 2008, to help embed recent changes and give those who run our electoral processes a chance to ensure that proper resources are devoted to planning and managing the new procedures.

We call on governments to commit to further improving their capacity to develop and deliver effective legislation, including aligning legislative and administrative schedules and setting out a realistic timetable (in consultation with electoral administrators and the Electoral Commission) for the delivery of significant administrative changes. Governments must also ensure they seek and take full account of the expertise and professional advice of practitioners and others when considering the feasibility of administrative changes. Governments and legislators should also ensure that all legislation for significant changes is in place at least six months before the election (or electoral registration activity) at which it is intended to have effect.

Finally, we again urge governments to undertake a fundamental review of UK electoral law, with a view to simplifying and consolidating the legal framework for elections. We have continually pointed out that efforts to draft twenty-first-century technology into nineteenth-century legislation do not work. The nature of the challenge that the introduction of technology poses to the UK’s electoral norms and practices has been underestimated in the past and cannot be ignored any longer. In particular, given the use of electronic counting technology at statutory elections in Scotland and London in recent years, the UK Government must establish clearly how it will address technical, operational, and security challenges within the overarching legal framework for elections.



Conclusions and challenges for the future

Since the Electoral Commission was established, more than seven years ago, we have taken a proactive role in identifying key issues for elections in the UK. In this report we have set out our assessment of the key issues and challenges for electoral administration that we believe need urgently to be addressed by all those involved in the delivery of elections, including governments, legislators and the electoral administration community.

The Electoral Commission will lead a detailed examination of the structure of electoral administration in the UK, and aim to publish our initial findings by the summer of 2008. It is the responsibility of the government of the day to establish the legal framework and provide funding for the delivery of elections, and we therefore call on the UK and relevant devolved governments to contribute to this examination, and to take an active part in discussion and debate about the future of electoral service delivery across the UK.

Since 2002 we have urged the UK Government to articulate a

strategy for the development and modernisation of electoral processes. We again call upon the Government to make a positive commitment to developing and clearly articulating its long-term vision and strategy for elections, and to provide more immediate assurance about the short- to medium-term direction of electoral administration in the United Kingdom.

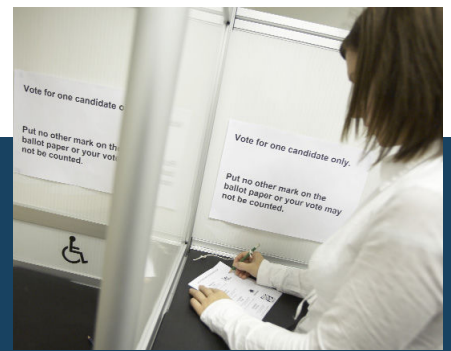
Electoral modernisation pilot schemes should not be the Government's priority when much remains to be done to provide a sound legislative basis, address the integrity of the register of electors, and raise the basic standards of our core electoral services; the Commission does not support any further piecemeal pilot schemes in the absence of a robust, public strategy that has been subject to extensive consultation.

Any vision for elections in the UK should reflect international standards and norms of electoral practice, and should focus above all on placing voters at the heart of the system. Its development should be based on cross-party input and expert practitioner advice. It should address all of the issues

identified in this report, and in particular should include:

- an open and wide-ranging debate about the most appropriate and effective structure for the delivery of elections across the UK
- a systematic approach to ensuring public confidence in electoral integrity, addressing the electoral process as a whole
- a commitment by governments to rationalise electoral legislation and to improve their capacity to develop and deliver effective legislation

Electoral administration in the UK is at a cross-road: it is under closer examination than ever before, but it is inconsistently managed, under-resourced and under-supported. The future debate that we aim to support must begin with an acknowledgement of these issues and a willingness to address the challenges constructively. Above all, it must reflect in words and actions a commitment to put the interests of electors and voters first.



- 1 In this report, unless otherwise indicated, use of the terms 'elections' or 'electoral administration' should be taken to include the electoral registration process as well as the conduct of the poll.
- 2 Dundee City Council has appointed one of its own officers as Electoral Registration Officer.
- 3 In England and Wales, at a UK Parliamentary election, an Acting Returning Officer is appointed to carry out the duties of the Returning Officer.
- 4 Committee on Standards in Public Life, Eleventh Report: *Review of The Electoral Commission (2007)*.
- 5 The Electoral Commission, *Scottish elections 2007: The independent review of the Scottish Parliamentary and local government elections 3 May 2007 (2007)*.
- 6 Official Record HC Deb 13 June 2006 Vol. 659 Col. 661. See also: Cm 7272, The Government response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life's Eleventh Report: *Review of the Electoral Commission (2007)*.

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We are an independent body set up by the UK Parliament. Our aim is integrity and public confidence in the democratic process. We regulate party and election finance and set standards for well-run elections.

The
Electoral
Commission

SCRUTINY ACTIVITY REPORT**Report By: Director of Corporate and Customer Services****Wards Affected**

County-wide

Purpose

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

Financial Implications

2. None

Background

3. This report summarises the matters considered by the Scrutiny Committees since the last report by this Committee to Council. It is intended to help keep Council aware of the work being undertaken.
4. The work of the Committees is analysed below in accordance with the following two roles for scrutiny based on a University of Birmingham categorisation.

Holding the Executive to Account	Developing Policy
Questioning members of the Executive	Pre-Decision Scrutiny – commenting on decisions about to be made
Call-ins – Scrutinising decisions before they take effect	Policy Reviews and Development
Scrutinising decisions after they are made	External Scrutiny
Management of Performance	Health Scrutiny
Ensuring Corporate Priorities are Met	
Budget Scrutiny	
Community and Area Scrutiny	

5. The business considered by the Scrutiny Committees is set out below. Each Committee has also considered and rolled forward its work programme.

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

	Holding the Executive to Account	Developing Policy
Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing 10 December 2007	Revenue Budget 2007/08 Performance monitoring Learning Disability Services Improvement Plan Widemarsh Workshop Update	Presentation by Registered Social Landlords Learning Disability Services – Tender for Accommodation and Support Partner
Children's Services 22 January 2008	Presentation by Cabinet Member (Children's Services) Annual Performance Assessment Arrangements for school meals provision Budget Monitoring Performance Monitoring	Review of Provision of School Places Youth Service Update Targeted Youth Support and Positive Activities
Community Services 17 December 2007	Performance Monitoring Revenue Budget Action Plans for Cultural Services Inspection: Review of Hereford City partnership; The 18-35 Review and the Review of Museums and Cultural Centres Courtyard Centre for the Arts - Action Plan	Rotherwas Futures
Environment 3 December 2007 2 January 2008	Performance Monitoring Call-in of Cabinet Decision on Colwall Railway Bridge	Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation Polytunnel Developments

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

	Holding the Executive to Account	Developing Policy
Health 6 December 2007		Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Health Protection Agency Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2007 Primary Care Trust Update Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust Update Development of Local Involvement Network Review of Elderly Falls Mental Health Services

6. Issues of particular note include:

- **Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee has received presentations from the Marches Housing Association Limited and Herefordshire Housing Limited, a presentation from Festival Housing Ltd having been made to the Committee in October 2007. These are the three Registered Social Landlords with most properties in Herefordshire. The Committee has invited Herefordshire Housing Ltd to provide a further update in six months time.

- **Community Services Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee has considered an update on the Rotherwas Futures Project. It has recommended that the Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services) give further consideration to: the development of a marketing strategy for attracting further businesses to Rotherwas; improving the provision of broadband facilities at the estate; ensuring that proper flood alleviation measures are put in place to protect and enhance the value of properties on the estate; the range of buildings on the estate particularly the possibility of 'flexible buildings', ensuring that companies can grow; the Council's future requirement for office space and the potential for an energy from waste site. It has asked that a report on broadband provision to the estate be made to the next meeting and a report on broadband provision to the County be included in the Committee's work programme for a future meeting.

- **Environment Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee considered the call-in of the Cabinet decision to approve expenditure to provide a temporary bailey bridge over the sub-standard bridge in Colwall carrying the B4218 if the results of an assessment report showed, on deliberation, that such a solution was the most appropriate means of opening the bridge to normal highway traffic.

The Committee agree the need for a temporary crossing. However, they strongly recommended that Cabinet: seek urgent clarification as to the legal responsibilities on both Council and owners of non Council owned bridges over which a highway runs; considers representation to the Health and Safety Executive on Network Rail's failures to adequately maintain Colwall Railway bridge; agree that the final decision on the temporary crossing is treated as a key decision; and treat the matter as urgent in view of the detrimental effect on the local community.

- **Health Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee received a presentation on the annual report of the Director of Public Health 2007 and issues arising from it. The Committee has requested further reports providing greater depth on Stroke Services and Sexual Health.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

WORK PROGRAMMES

Report By: Director of Corporate and Customer Services

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To consider the Scrutiny Committees' current and future work programmes.

Background

2. A report on the Scrutiny Committees' current work programmes will be made to this Scrutiny Committee quarterly. A copy of this Committee's own work programme will be made to each of its scheduled meetings. Copies of the current work programmes are attached.
3. Should Members become aware of any issues they consider may be added to the scrutiny programme they should contact the Chairman to log the issue so that it may be taken into consideration when planning future agendas or when revising the work programme.
4. The Committee's attention is drawn to the following two requests from the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee:
 - (16 November 2007) – "that the Strategic Monitoring Committee be requested to revisit the review that had been carried out in respect of ICT".
 - (30 November 2007) – " that Strategic Monitoring Committee be requested to review the control of asset management processes and procedures and actions which are taken against officers who do not adhere to these rules".

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the current Work Programmes serve as a basis for further development, subject to any comment the Committee wishes to make.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

Strategic Monitoring Committee – work programme 2007/08

21 January 2008	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electoral Registration Issues • Integrated Performance Report (including update re indicators 22a-g) • Work Programme
31 January 2008	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herefordshire Connects
Late January/Early February TBC	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Performance Management Progress Report • Smallholdings Policy • Accommodation Strategy • ICT Services Executive Action Plan – progress report /cross reference with request from Audit and Corporate Governance Committee • Pay and Workforce Development Strategy monitoring (inc Staff Opinion Survey) • Comprehensive Equality Policy • Review of Constitution • Scrutiny Development Plan • Analysis of Complaints to the Ombudsman – Planning • Work Programme
18 February 2008	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue budget consideration • Corporate Plan and Annual Operating Plan • Work Programme
10 March 2008	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Performance Report • Draft Community Strategy Action Plan • Work Programme
28 April 2008	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Performance Report • Community Strategy Action Plan Monitoring • Annual Efficiency Statement • Service Plan Monitoring/Proposals • Progress Report on Strategic Service Delivery Partnership • Work programmes

Other issues

- Review of Provision of School places
- User Satisfaction Surveys.
- Review of the Constitution.
- Gender Equality Scheme Monitoring (reported March 2007 6 month/annual).
- Comprehensive Equality Scheme Action Plan monitoring.
- Scrutiny of Police/Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
- Consideration be given to requesting further information on areas of concern identified in minute 86 13 June 2007 - Integrated Performance Report – as part of developing future work programmes, in particular the overall approach to delivering targets in the LPSA and LLA.
- Electoral Registration issues - polling station reviews
- Scrutiny Process (suggestion from member of the public)
- Definition of Senior Citizens (Request from member of the public)

Further additions to the work programme will be made as required

Adult Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2007/08

	Potentially to be scheduled
Scrutiny Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The modernisation of day opportunities for older people (final report) Transition from leaving care to adult life (final report)
April 2008	
Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Performance Monitoring Executive's Response to review of transition from leaving care to adult life Adult Social Care Fairer Funding – update Contract Monitoring Arrangements – Executive's Report Detail of Satisfaction Survey of people receiving home care services Learning Disabilities Service Improvement Plan – Progress Report
June 2008	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Herefordshire Housing Ltd – Progress Report Presentation by Cabinet Member
Scrutiny Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Herefordshire Home Point Housing Allocations Policy
Other issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home Care Services 	

Further additions to the work programme will be made as required

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - Work Programme 2007/08 at January 2008

21st April 2008	
Officer Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles on future provision of School places – update. • Capital Budget Monitoring. • Revenue Budget Monitoring • Performance Digest • Behaviour and Discipline Management in Herefordshire Schools – progress against the action plan. • Committee Work Programme.
Scrutiny Reviews	
7 July 2008 (provisional date)	
Officer Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by Cabinet Member (Children's Services). • Capital Budget Monitoring. • Revenue Budget Monitoring • Performance Digest • Committee Work Programme.
Scrutiny Reviews	
29 September 2008 (provisional date)	
Officer Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Budget Monitoring. • Revenue Budget Monitoring • Performance Digest • Committee Work Programme.
Scrutiny Reviews	
8 Dec 2008 (provisional date)	
Officer Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Budget Monitoring. • Revenue Budget Monitoring • Performance Digest • Committee Work Programme.
Scrutiny Reviews	
30 March 2008 (provisional date)	
Officer Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Budget Monitoring. • Revenue Budget Monitoring • Performance Digest • Committee Work Programme.
Scrutiny Reviews	

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman are discussing with the Director of Children's Services possible future items on

- Extended Schools
- Early Years provision.
- School transport particular reference to Yellow Bus scheme
- School meal provision and kitchen facilities.

In consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman the Director of Children's Services is working up a programme of open seminars for Committee Members based on defined themes.

Community Services Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme as at January 2008.

18th April 2008	
Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on the relocation of the Livestock Market • Budget • Performance Monitoring • Edgar Street Grid – Update • Market Towns Christmas Lighting – position report. • Broadband provision to Rotherwas Estate. • Scoping Statement for a scrutiny review of Herefordshire’s Future Economic Policy. • Scoping Statement for a scrutiny review of Community and Safety Drugs Partnership • Action Plans Monitoring: Cultural Services Inspection; Review of how to retain 18-35 yr olds in Herefordshire; Review of Hereford City Partnership; Review of Museums and Heritage Centres.
Scrutiny Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To report the findings of the Scrutiny Review of the Agreement with Halo Leisure Trust • To report the findings of Scrutiny Review of Tourism with specific reference to Tourist Information Centres
1st July 2008 (Provisional date)	
Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget • Performance Monitoring • Action Plans Monitoring: Cultural Services Inspection; Review of how to retain 18-35 yr olds in Herefordshire; Review of Hereford City Partnership; Review of Museums and Heritage Centres. • Broadband provision to the County – Update report. • Consider Executive’s response to the Scrutiny Review of the Agreement with Halo Leisure Trust • Consider the Executive’s response to the Scrutiny Review of Tourism
Scrutiny Reviews	

Further additions to the work programme will be made as required.

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME - AT JANUARY 2008

10.00am Monday 25th February 2008	
Officer Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Environmental Management (GEM) • On-street parking in Herefordshire. • Highway and Footway maintenance. Following consideration of the Herefordshire Satisfaction Survey and monitoring of Performance Indicators the Chairman and Vice-Chairman have identified this issue for further Committee consideration. • Committee Work Programme
9.30am Monday 31st March 2008	
Officer Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Household Waste Recycling in Herefordshire: Executive Response to Scrutiny Review and Action Plan. • Review of Travellers Policy. To report the findings of the Scrutiny Review. • Capital Budget Monitoring • Revenue Budget Monitoring • Report on Performance Indicators • Committee Work Programme
Scrutiny Reviews	
10.00am Monday 9th June 2008 (provisional date)	
Officer Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations by Cabinet Members. • Capital Budget Monitoring • Revenue Budget Monitoring • Report on Performance Indicators • Committee Work Programme
Scrutiny Reviews	

Note:

Environment Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 3rd December 2007 noted that Member seminars were being arranged on the themes of: Waste collection and disposal and the Local Transport Plan.

Items for consideration as the programme is further developed:

- Scrutinising progress with the Local Transport Plan (LTP2) and any associated issues.
- The effect on Herefordshire of changes to the Single Farm Payments system (e.g. hedge cutting, drainage ditch clearance)
- Implications arising from the 'Better Regulation Agenda' (concerning regulatory inspections and enforcement – within the context of this Committee).
- Any specific issues arising from Council Strategies or Plans.
- Contribute to policy development of LTP3.
- Consideration of revised/reviewed Flood Defence Policy. Safety on the A49 and A465 trunk roads – the Director will update the Committee as appropriate.

Health Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2007/08

To be scheduled	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning of provider services • Annual Health Check - finalise Annual Healthcheck Commentaries (including presentations from health bodies as necessary) • Elderly Falls Review – Report • Cancer Services
April 2008	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on the Local Involvement Network (LINK) • Changes in the Management of Mental Health Services • Reconfiguration of Mental Health Services • Public Service Trust Update • Update on specialist Children’s Services Development • Stroke Services (Director of Public Health report) • Sexual Health (Director of Public Health Report) • Local Delivery Plan 2008/09
Scrutiny Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to health 1) for ethnic minorities – Scoping Statement • Access to Health 2) Scoping Statement

Other issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors’ potential role in managing public expectation within their constituencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stroke Services (further update in due course)
Proposal to look at the long-term implications for people in the county of having an inappropriate diet.

Further additions to the work programme will be made as required