

A G E N D A

Environment Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Monday 20 April 2009**

Time: **2.00 pm**

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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Herefordshire Council

AGENDA

for the Meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee

To: Councillor RI Matthews (Chairman)
Councillor KG Grumbley (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors CM Bartrum, WLS Bowen, JW Hope MBE, MAF Hubbard, TW Hunt, PM Morgan, A Seldon, NL Vaughan and PJ Watts

	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
To receive apologies for absence.	
2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)	
To receive details any details of Members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a Member of the Committee.	
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
To receive any declarations of interest by Members in respect of items on the 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.	
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PUBLIC INFORMATION

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

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

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

The principal roles of Scrutiny Committees are to

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

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

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Public Involvement at Scrutiny Committee Meetings

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

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

1. Identifying Areas for Scrutiny

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

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

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

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

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

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

Remits of Herefordshire Council's Scrutiny Committees

Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing

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

Children's Services

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

Community Services Scrutiny Committee

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

Health

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

Environment

*Environmental Issues
Highways and Transportation*

Strategic Monitoring Committee

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

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- Inspect minutes of the Council and all Committees and Sub-Committees and written statements of decisions taken by the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members for up to six years following a meeting.
- 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.
- Have a reasonable number of copies of agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) made available to the public attending meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees and Sub-Committees.
- 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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HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 23 March 2009 at 9.30 am

Present: Councillor RI Matthews (Chairman)
Councillor KG Grumbley (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: CM Bartrum, WLS Bowen, JW Hope MBE, MAF Hubbard, TW Hunt, PM Morgan, A Seldon and PJ Watts

In attendance: Councillors PJ Edwards, TM James, JG Jarvis (Cabinet Member Environment & Strategic Housing), J Stone and DB Wilcox (Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation)

47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor NL Vaughan.

48. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

50. MINUTES

In response to a question concerning the Council's fleet management the Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) confirmed that the issue was due to be discussed at a Leaders Briefing session. The Director of Environment and Culture commented that a high proportion of vehicles used on Council business were operated through the contract with Amey and the current expectation was that Amey would be implementing a programme of vehicle renewal.

RESOLVED: That subject to the deletion of the words 'under original budget' from line 5 of Minute 40 and recording an apology from Councillor PM Morgan, the Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd March 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

Mr P McKay suggested that the Committee scrutinise the County highways Definitive Map with particular reference to work yet to be recorded, especially concerning the designation of 'quiet lanes' and 'green lanes'.

The Chairman thanked Mr McKay for the suggestion and for providing paperwork on the issue prior to the meeting.

The Chairman referred to a suggestion from Mr M Bodhingle on a similar theme raising concerns over partly adopted highways.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bodhingle for the suggestion and for providing paperwork on the issue prior to the meeting.

In accordance with the agreed procedure for public suggestions the Chairman and Vice-Chairman will research the issues raised and consider whether they should form part of the Committee's work programme.

Mr J Laws, Hereford Access for All, suggested that the Committee scrutinise the state of the pavements in the City which he said were in a hazardous state, particularly to the infirm or wheelchair users.

The Chairman thanked Mr Laws for the suggestion and, with the Vice-Chairman, undertook to research the issue and consider whether it should form part of the Committee work programme.

Councillor A Seldon (Bromyard Ward) presented a letter on behalf of a constituent suggesting that the Committee should look into the number, and condition, of development sites where work had started and now seemed to have been abandoned. He referred to one in particular in Bromyard.

The Chairman handed the letter to the Head of Planning and Transportation and requested that the matter be investigated and that he be kept informed.

52. SETTING LOCAL SPEED LIMITS

The Committee were informed of the Council's approach to considering and changing local speed limits and were provided with an update on how the Council was planning to implement the guidance set out in DfT Circular 1/2006 'Setting Local Speed Limits'.

The Interim Transportation Manager reported that the Council's approach to setting local speed limits was part of a wider Speed Management Strategy which formed a key component of the Road Safety Strategy, set out in the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The Speed Management Strategy worked alongside a Minor Safety Improvements Programme and the Road Safety Education Programme. His joint report with the Lead Engineer (Traffic), outlined: the LTP and Local Area Agreement indicator performance; the Council's approach to setting local speed limits, and the key elements of DfT Circular 1/2006. The current policies and criteria will be revised and adapted to meet the objectives of Circular 1/2009 and the report indicated the programme for the review to meet the December 2011 completion target.

During the course of debate the following principal points were noted:

- Speed limits needed to be reasonable and appropriate to the environment. In certain circumstances speed limits may need to be reinforced by the introduction of engineering works to highlight to drivers the need for the limit. Driver frustration about limits should be avoided as this could lead to inappropriate driving and accidents.
- In accordance with the protocol, consultation was undertaken with ward members and town and parish Councils over proposals for limits.
- Vehicle speed was a major issue and the Council was addressed this through speed limits and engineering works, however, road safety and driver education were also key factors.
- Speed limits needed to be enforceable and imposing further limits would require further resources by the police.
- There are pro's and con's for installing Speed Indicator Display (SID) signs which instantly informs the driver of their speed and provides monitoring

reports of actual speeds for later analysis. The Council were working with town and parish council's over their use.

- It was commented that a reduction in speed e.g. 60pmh down to 50mph, would help in meeting various targets e.g. Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI), and vehicle emissions.
- While the report highlighted that the KSI figure for 2008 was the lowest ever recorded in the County and provided confidence that the strategy was working, questions were asked over the reliability of the base data used.
- Comment was made that while the report set out the technical aspects of implementing the policy a more positive or proactive approach needed to be portrayed to the public.
- Reference was made to a new initiative being introduced in Hampshire to encourage drivers to reduce road speeds on which members requested further information.
- The Committee noted that one of Governments' priorities for action is for highway authorities to review the speed limits on all of their A and B class roads and implement any necessary changes in accordance with the Circular and its guidance by 2011. Comment was made that the Council must not be complacent and that the review programme target of 2011 was too generous. It was suggested that the Council should be aiming for 50mph roads to be reviewed by August 2009 and 30mph by the end of 2009.
- It was suggested that an urban speed limit e.g. 20mph, should be considered for whole residential estates and more information was requested on this.

The Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) summed up by: urging parish Councils to work with this authority over the use and sighting of SID signs; part time 20pmh zones near schools and in villages were being progressed subject to recourses; he had already requested a meeting with the Road Safety Partnership to discuss various aspects of road safety; the traffic order protocol was being reviewed to give greater priority to schemes arising from Killed or Seriously Injured incidents and that unfortunately a high proportion of KSI incidents occurred on the A49 which was managed by the Highways Agency.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and a further report be presented to the November 2009 Committee setting out:

1. the progress with undertaking the review to meet DfT Circular 1/2006;
2. the progress made in delivering road safety and education work;
3. indicating the issues around setting a whole estate urban speed limit;
4. how the new initiative in Hampshire works; and
5. the financial and resource implications.

53. FLOODING OF ROADS AND PROPERTIES IN HEREFORDSHIRE - VARIOUS ASPECTS

The Committee were provided with information on the recent flooding events in the County as requested by the Committee on 24 November 2008, and the resultant actions from those events.

The Acting Construction Manager presented the report which briefly set out the impact of the 2007 and 2008 flooding in the County; the Council's response to those events; the resultant data collection and analysis and the range of actions arising since those events. She commented that the 2007 events (June and July) were unusual both in their intensity, causing flash flooding as opposed to the frequently occurring fluvial events, and also their timing during the summer months. The key point about the 2007 events was the widespread flash nature of the flooding. During both events in 2008 (September and November) the County was hit by extensive heavy rainfall and, while not as severe as the 2007 events, roads were closed,

several properties were flooded and damage was caused to the highway network and drainage systems. Following both sets of events data had been collated to compile a comprehensive list of properties that had suffered flooding. There now needed to be a review of the flooding sites, consider the action response and implement any appropriate action. However, this could be a significant challenge for the Council given the level of resources currently available.

On scrutinising the report the following principal points were noted:

- While the floods had been a significant issue for the County with £3m of additional works, the Council had still been able to fulfil its original maintenance programme.
- Questioned on the Councils relationship with the Environment Agency the Committee were informed that the relationship was good and that meetings had been held at a Regional level to progress strategic flooding issues and discuss specific local schemes. However, there was always scope for improvement and it was hoped that the recommendations from the Pitt Report to government would clarify areas of responsibility and facilitate clearer plans for the longer term.
- A report containing a series of recommendations developed by those people directly affected by the floods, and drafted by the HVA, was currently being considered by the Recovery Group. The Chairman of the Council, who had chaired the HVA meeting, relayed the concerns of town and parish councils over drainage issues and requested that the local councils be kept informed of outcomes.
- Questioned on the application for a share of Defra funding for household-level flood protection and resilience measures, the Committee were informed that the application would be submitted within the next month and the outcome would be known in a few months time. Further questioned on whether residents would be able to make retrospective claims against any Defra funding, the Acting Construction Manager undertook to investigate further.
- Responding to whether town and parish councils were consulted over the local supply and storage of sandbags the Committee were informed that they were consulted over their requirements.
- It was noted that the study of flood sites could generate a significant period of investigation and capital works which would need to be prioritised for the financial year 2009/10 capital budget. If the new Floods and Water Bill brought with it additional funding then the programme may be accelerated.
- The reference to 'benefit' in appendix 1 related to the ranking as part of the flood policy. (Higher the figure the higher the ranking)
- Referring to agenda item 8 paragraph 9, that the grant allocation following the de-trunking of the A465 will be used to mitigate the winter maintenance overspend, concern was raised that the use of the grant in this way would not provide for maintenance works to be undertaken to various culverts, thereby mitigating localised flooding.
- The Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) commented that the Council were proactively investigating possible funding, including via the levee schemes, to enable further flood alleviation works to continue.

RESOLVED: that subject to the above comments the report be noted.

54. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee were advised of the financial position for the Environment Programme Area budgets for the period to 31st January 2009.

The Director of Resources representative reported that the total budget for 2008/9

had increased to £25,765,000 from the amount previously reported. The increase of £418,000 was due to A) a reduction of £28,000 in the Highways budget resulting from the re-alignment of the Head of Service budgets following the reorganisation of directorates; and B) the Transportation budget increasing by £446,000 following the allocation of the Area Based Grant.

On scrutinising the report the following principal points were noted:

- Referring to budget pressures in the Planning Services it was noted that the cost of scanning plans would be addressed to a major degree through the introduction later in the year of the new IT system for planning. This would also speed up the time taken in making planning information available on the Councils web site.
- Questioned on the low spend to 31.1.09 on the 'Land Drainage/Flood Alleviation' budget in appendix 1 the Committee were informed that this was due to the reprofiling of the maintenance budgets.
- The Committee noted that the new crematorium was now operational and, having applied a forward thinking business plan, could now offer a greater range of crematoria facilities.
- Various questions were asked concerning the setting and level of the winter maintenance budget which consistently overspent. The Director of Environment and Culture responded that it was difficult to predict the maintenance levels needed in any one winter. The Medium term financial strategy did, however, contain a reserve to off-set part of any overspend incurred.
- Questioned on the 'Big Conversation' referred to in paragraph 27, the Director of Environment and Culture reported that £75,000 had been used to facilitate consultation both within the directorate and with partners on how the many services should work together to deliver the services to the people. The Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) commented that while there had been initial criticism the event had proven to be extremely valuable.

RESOLVED: that subject to the above comments the report be noted.

At this point the Committee adjourned for 8 minutes and resumed at 11.51am

55. REVENUE MONITORING - PLANNING SERVICES EXPENDITURE ON LEGAL AND CONSULTANCY COSTS

The Committee considered information on legal and consultancy costs in the Planning Service particularly those incurred in pursuing appeals on proposals refused against officer recommendation which had been requested by the Committee at its 24 November meeting.

The Head of Planning and Transportation presented his report which was set out in three sections. Part one provided an overview of total expenditure in the areas in question in the last two financial years and set these in context against the comparable total expenditure for previous years. Part two provided an analysis of costs incurred in appeals where Committee refusal was against officer advice and he highlighted that even if successful every appeal had a cost due to officer time and resources. Part three provided an analysis of costs incurred in other cases where approval of applications/allocation of land for development had generated abnormal expenditure.

He commented that the previous high levels of development activity, and resultant increased levels of appeals, had now fallen back and lessons had been learned during this busy period.

On scrutinising the report the following principal points were noted:

- Questioned on the historically low level of budget the Head of Planning and Transportation responded that previous short falls had been supported from higher levels of income generated through the fees. This year had seen a significant down turn in applications and therefore fee income had reduced. There was also the constraint on not running the service for profit.
- While not questioning the integrity of the officers it was acknowledged that difficulty could arise when the same officer had to deal with both the application and any resultant appeal.
- A point was made that a high proportion of applications were successfully dealt with through the planning procedure and generally it was the more contentious applications that went before the Committee. As such it was right for Members to give due consideration to applications.
- The Committee noted that all bar one of the appeals set out in the appendix had been determined on written representations.
- The difference between the total expenditure, indicated in part 1 of the report, and the total of costs, indicated in Appendix 1 and 2 which indicated the abnormal costs e.g. expert advice, was due to other areas of expenditure being included in the budget.

RESOLVED: That subject to the above comments the report be noted.

56. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee were advised of progress of the 2008/09 Capital Programme for Environment within the overall context of the Herefordshire Council's Capital Programme.

The Director of Resources representative reported that the total of the Capital Programme had reduced to £21,056,000 from £21,951,000 previously notified. Brief details of the budget changes were set out in the agenda report together with a headline indication at Appendix 1 to the report.

On scrutinising the report the following principal points were noted:

- Questioned on the receipt of payments for the Ross Flood Alleviation Scheme the Committee noted that regular payment claims had been submitted to the Environment Agency and the most recent claim had been received. However, the Chairman of Strategic Monitoring Committee commented that he thought the Director of Resources was reviewing the admissible grant position.
- Questioned on the change to the budget for Safer Routes to Schools and school 20mph Zones the Committee were informed that due to delays with a number of schemes the budget had been reprofiled with any underspend being carried forward to next years budget.
- Noting the purchase of wheelie bins, referred to at paragraph 5iv, the Committee noted that responsibility for their purchase would rest with the contractor for the new waste contract. Bins would not be computer chipped and were highly likely to be made from recycled plastic.
- Responding to why there was a wide variance in the budget for Hereford City Centre Enhancements, the Committee were referred to paragraph 5ii of the report.
- In response to questions concerning expenditure on Park & Ride schemes the Committee noted that preliminary site search work had been undertaken for the South site. The Cabinet Member was unable to comment at this stage concerning the North Site.

RESOLVED: that subject to the comments above the report be noted.

**57. ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE AND REGENERATION DIRECTORATES:
PERFORMANCE FOR NINE MONTH PERIOD TO DECEMBER 2008**

The Committee received an update report on the progress towards achievement of targets for 2008-09 relevant to the Environment Scrutiny Committee and contained within the Environment & Culture and Regeneration Directorate Plans.

RESOLVED that subject to customer satisfaction data being presented in a clearer form in future reports the report be noted.

58. SERVICE DELIVERY REVIEW - UPDATE

The Committee received an oral update on the Services Delivery review.

The Interim Head of Highways reported that negotiations with Amey concerning the service delivery partnership were at an advanced stage and could only refer the Committee to the report to Cabinet on 22nd January when principals had been agreed. Meetings had been held with the unions and briefings had been given to staff. A further report would be made in due course.

59. WASTE DISPOSAL PFI CONTRACT - UPDATE

The Committee received an oral update on the waste disposal PFI contract.

The Director of Environment and Culture reported that progress was being made and an exempt report on the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Waste Arrangements, concerning the waste disposal arrangements, had been presented to Cabinet on 22nd January 2009.

60. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme.

Following the recent determination of the planning application for an open windrow greenwaste composting facility at Morton-On-Lugg it was questioned what environmental monitoring would be in place and, in view of local concerns, whether this Committee should monitor the potential impact of the facility.

The Interim Head of Culture and Leisure reported that while health officers would be monitoring the facility the contract monitoring arrangements rested with the Environment Agency.

The Director of Environment and Culture suggested that once the facility had been running for a while and monitoring had taken place the Committee could consider inviting the Environment Agency to a future meeting to discuss any issues arising.

Concern was raised that insufficient progress was being made in relation to NI186 – per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the LA area – referred to in Appendix A of agenda item 11 and it was requested that a report on progress be made.

RESOLVED: That

- 1. subject to consideration by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of those items suggested by the public under Item 5;**
- 2. the inclusion of an invitation to the Environment Agency to attend a**

future meeting to report on the environmental impact, if any, of the Open Windrow Greenwaste composting facility at Morton-on-Lugg; and

3. the inclusion of a report to the November 2009 Committee on progress in meeting NI186 target (per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the LA area)

the work programme be noted and reported to Strategic Monitoring Committee.

The meeting ended at 12.45 pm

CHAIRMAN

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE PLANNING SERVICE

Report By: Planning Service Scrutiny Review Group

Wards Affected

County-wide.

Purpose

1. To consider the findings of the Planning Service Scrutiny Review Group following the Review.

Financial Implications

2. This is dependant on decisions made in response to the review's recommendations.

Background

2. Environment Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 31st March 2008, briefly considered a suggestion made by the Cabinet Member (Environment & Strategic Housing) that a Scrutiny review be undertaken into the Planning Service. On 9th June 2008 the Committee considered a report highlighting that while the Planning Service had enjoyed wide ranging success in recent years, the challenge for the future was to respond locally to the national Planning Reform agenda. At the heart of this is the move from land use to a spatial planning system as the Council rolls out the Local Development Framework and delivers the new Growth Points agenda. The Committee agreed the terms of reference for the review and agreed the membership (see section 1.3 and 1.4 respectively in the attached document).
3. The Review Group's report setting out its approach to its task, its findings, and recommendations is attached.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT (a) the Committee considers the report of the Planning Service Scrutiny Review Group, in particular its recommendations, and determines whether it wishes to agree the findings for submission to Cabinet.

(b) subject to the Review being approved, the Executive's response to the Review, including an action plan, be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive has approved its response;

and;

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified other than those specified in the attached report.



Scrutiny Review of Planning Services

**Report by the Planning
Service Scrutiny Review
Group
March 2009**

**For presentation to the Environment
Scrutiny Committee 20 April 2009**

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF PLANNING SERVICES

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- 4 How best can the Planning function deliver the growth required up to 2026?
- 5 How can the Local Development Framework best be integrated with the Growth Points agenda?
- 6 How will the Planning Service contribute to the regeneration of the County in general and to the provision of infrastructure in particular?
- 7 Does the Planning Service have the capacity and the financial resources to deliver the wider agenda?
- 8 How best can planning policies be implemented through the development management function?
- 9 How effective are relationships between officers, members and parish / town councils?
- 10 What work needs to be done to develop processes that support and enable good communications and relationships to be established and maintained?
- 11 What service delivery arrangements will assist in the ongoing modernisation of the service?
- 12 Appendices
 1. List of Interviewees.
 2. Development Control comparison with Development Management.
 3. Results of the Planning Services Review for members survey
 4. Results of Planning Services Review survey – Town & Parish Councils.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Environment Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 31st March 2008, briefly considered a suggestion made by the Cabinet Member (Environment & Strategic Housing) that a Scrutiny review be undertaken into the Planning Service.
- 1.2. Environment Scrutiny Committee on 9th June 2008 considered a report highlighting that while the Planning Service had enjoyed wide ranging success in recent years, the challenge for the future was to respond locally to the national Planning Reform agenda. At the heart of this is the move from land use to a spatial planning system as the Council rolls out the Local Development Framework and delivers the new Growth Points agenda.
- 1.3. The Committee considered and agreed the terms of reference (the key lines of enquiry) for the Scrutiny review namely:
 - How best can the Planning function deliver the growth required up to 2026?
 - How can the Local Development Framework best be integrated with the Growth Points agenda?
 - How will the Planning Service contribute to the regeneration of the County in general and to the provision of infrastructure in particular?
 - Does the Planning Service have the capacity and the financial resources to deliver the wider agenda?
 - How best can planning policies be implemented through the development management function?
 - How effective are relationships between officers, members and parish / town councils?
 - What work needs to be done to develop processes that support and enable good communications and relationships to be established and maintained?
 - What service delivery arrangements will assist in the ongoing modernisation of the service?
- 1.4. The Committee also agreed the membership of the Review Group namely Councillors: PA Andrews (Chair); CM Bartrum; WLS Bowen; PM Morgan; PJ Watts JB Williams and RI Matthews (ex-officio as Chair of Environment Scrutiny Committee).
- 1.5. The review was undertaken between 9th July 2008 and March 2009 and was supported by Dr T Geeson (Head of Policy and Performance) as lead officer and Mr P James, Democratic Services Officer. Based on the key lines of enquiry, this report summarises the findings of the Review and contains recommendations for the Executive.
- 1.6. The Scrutiny Review Group would like to express its thanks to the people who have presented verbal evidence to the Review Group, the Town and Parish Councils and Councillors who responded to the questionnaire and those who have provided further information and or data as required.

Next Steps

- 1.7. The Review Group anticipate that, when approved by the Environment Scrutiny Committee, this report will be presented to Cabinet for consideration.
- 1.8. The Environment Scrutiny Committee would then expect Cabinet within two months of receipt of the report to consider the report and recommendations and respond to

the Committee indicating what action the Cabinet propose to take together with an action plan.

- 1.9. The Review Group are aware that the Audit Commission are also undertaking a review of certain aspects of Planning Services which may complement the findings of this scrutiny review. Therefore in the interests receiving a complete picture it is anticipated that the report to Environment Scrutiny Committee will also include any recommendations and action plan resulting from that review.

Caveat

- 1.10. When the Scrutiny Review Group met for the first time in July 2008 the issue was the capacity of the Planning Service to address the many aspects of growth facing Herefordshire. Nine months later the service is still addressing long-term growth, but against the background of a recession. While this may free up staff capacity, particularly in development and building control and slow major developments such as the Edgar Street Grid (ESG) it also reduces income significantly. The pressure on resources has changed but continues.

2. Method of Gathering Information

2.1. The Review Group undertook a series of meetings in order to collect the evidence to complete the review. Evidence that was considered included the following:

- **Face to Face interviews** – a series of interviews took place with key Council members and officers and a representative sample of professional service users but not the public. A list of those interviewed is set out at Appendix 1
- **Survey Questionnaires** – survey questionnaires were sent to all Town and Parish Councils and all members of Herefordshire Council
- **Written evidence** - the Review Group considered a range of written evidence to assist their deliberations including:
 - ‘Councillor Involvement in Planning Decisions’ by Communities and Local Government.
 - ‘Area-based decision making (ABDM) for development control; a review by the Planning Advisory Service.
 - ‘Development Control’ and ‘Development Management’ by PJ Yates Development Manager.
 - Various information reports; guidance notes or statistics by: the Head of Planning and Transportation; the Planning Policy Manager; the Management Accounts Manager, and the Lead Officer for the review.

3. Links to the Herefordshire Community Strategy

3.1. The Planning Service supports a number of themes identified in the Herefordshire Community Strategy, the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the Corporate Plan through its work in contributing to a safe and pleasant environment to live and work, increasing the availability of affordable housing, protecting the environment and improving access to services.

3.2. The Planning Services is responsible for preparing and implementing all the elements of the Local Development Framework (LDF) in co-operation with other service areas across the Council and its partners. This ensures a consistent approach to overarching themes as climate change, community and social issues, transportation and economic development. An example of the links to the Strategy would be the relationship of the Growth Point agenda/proposed outer distributor road to the LDF.

3.3. The review Group believe the findings contained in this report will help the Service achieve its objectives.

4. How best can the Planning function deliver the growth required up to 2026?

The Planning background

- 4.1. Although growth involves employment land, essential infrastructure etc, we have focussed on the number of new dwellings to be provided. The numbers allocated to Herefordshire are derived from the national housing projections, cascaded regionally and then allocated within the West Midlands. The Council has to comply with regional policy.
- 4.2. In summary the policy background is as follows:
- 4.3. The 2004 regional spatial strategy (RSS) identified five sub-regional foci that could take the growth that the major urban areas of the West Midlands could not. One of these foci was Hereford. The RSS has evolved and in December 2007, the five foci were superseded by ten settlements of significant development (SSD), Hereford is one of these.
- 4.4. Housing numbers were allocated to each SSD by the RSS preferred option in December 2007. In the case of Hereford the allocation was 8,300 new dwellings plus an equal number in the rest of the County. In May 2008 the Planning Committee considered the matter and then Cabinet resolved not to object to a maximum of 16,600 new dwellings up to the year 2026. Cabinet however, only accepted the concentration on Hereford on the understanding that the necessary infrastructure came forward.
- 4.5. Subsequently the maxima was increased by a further 1,200 dwellings in rural areas which was agreed by Cabinet in November 2008. The numbers and distribution of new dwellings are therefore matters of both regional and Council policy. The Secretary of State will take the final decision on the RSS, including housing numbers, later this year after an examination in public.
- 4.6. If provision is not made for the necessary infrastructure, the Review Group expects Cabinet to reconsider the matter.

Local implications

- 4.7. It is important that elected members understand that the new maximum of 17,800 additional dwellings in the County between now and 2026 is not excessive either when compared with the annual rate of completions historically (@830pa.) or the forecast natural growth in population from the Council's own research team.
- 4.8. What is critical are exactly where the dwellings eventually go and the pace at which they are provided. The central issue is how to manage growth and avoid being defensive, even though the longer the recession continues the more likely it becomes that larger and more complex applications will eventually emerge. Currently, neither the Planning Service nor elected members have significant experience of these kinds of application. In addition, the available planning statistics show relatively slow performance on what are currently regarded as major applications.
- 4.9. The Review Group believes that the planning function can best deliver the growth required if:
 - All members of the Council sponsor and promote appropriate growth.
 - Town and Parish Councils and other partner organisations are kept informed and able to make considered contributions to the planning process.

- There is detailed engagement and support from bodies such as the Highways and Environment agencies.
 - Planning officers are appropriately trained e.g. on project management and planning performance agreements and
 - Local people understand the need for growth and are positively engaged in the planning process.
 - Significant shortcomings on any of these points will limit the planning function's future success.
- 4.10. The Review Group believes that the profile of the service needs to be raised. However, despite representations we are not convinced that a new planning directorate is required to achieve this. The most recent re-organisation, placing the Planning & Transportation service within the Regeneration directorate seems to be wholly positive although it is still relatively early days. The necessary profile will be achieved by the successful delivery of the growth and infrastructure required and through leading the 'place shaping' agenda.
- 4.11. However we do consider that the way in which the service is currently structured should be examined. Existing team structures, particularly in development and building control, may not be the most effective for the future and actually limit the outcomes and quality achieved. What is required for the future is the flexibility to set up staff groups across teams and disciplines to initiate, manage and deliver specific projects such as the growth point agenda or major applications.
- 4.12. The Review Group regrets that there is no clear 'master plan' for tackling all the changes facing the service. Without this there is a danger that the service will continue to live from 'hand to mouth'. Such a plan should, for instance, clearly identify the 3, 5 and 10 year implications of change for the service in terms of the capacity and skills of the staff as well as the new processes / ways of working to be adopted and the resources required. Authorities that have already handled significant change, successfully, may provide useful learning in this respect. We understand that Ashford (Kent) and South Cambridgeshire and, more generally, the Beacon Councils may have direct experience and could show Herefordshire how to achieve wide-spread support for the changes underway.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.A	That the service utilises some of the capacity resulting from the recession to work even more closely with members on the issue of growth in Herefordshire.
4.B	That particular attention, by way of consultation, is given to elected members representing wards in the city and its immediate surrounding parishes given the concentration of new houses in these areas being proposed. However this should not be at the expense of addressing the growth pressures facing the market towns.
4.C	That a master plan be prepared for the service that shows the current challenges, their phasing and the changes needed.
4.D	That the examples of authorities with significant experience in modernising and successfully handling growth be studied and appropriate lessons incorporated into the master plan.
4.E	That a seminar be arranged by the Planning Service that involves representatives from other successful planning authorities so that local councillors in Herefordshire can learn from their experience at first hand and compare the various approaches.
4.F	That a comprehensive consultation plan be developed showing how and when the public of Herefordshire will be involved in the choices facing the County.

5. How can the Local Development Framework (LDF) best be integrated with the Growth Points agenda?

Background

- 5.1. The impact of the LDF must not be underestimated. It is the plan for Herefordshire 2011-2026 and will replace the current Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and almost all other land use plans and policies in the County. For this reason elected members and the public must be given significantly more opportunities than at present to debate and discuss its content before it is finalised.
- 5.2. The Review Group understands that the LDF is a spatial plan dealing with sustainable services and is not a physical land use plan. It places much greater emphasis on work within the Council and between partners to define where services can be supported. The LDF will cover everything of importance: housing, transport, schools, employment land, green spaces etc. Crucially it endeavours to show how all these elements fit together into a strategic option that should result in a better Herefordshire. At the heart of the LDF is the core strategy.
- 5.3. This core strategy – based around the preferred strategic option – will set out what is needed to make Herefordshire a better place in which to live and work and how this will be done. This vision for a better Herefordshire will need to reflect the sustainable community strategy for the County approved by the Herefordshire Partnership as well as the 3 year action plan (local area agreement) designed to make the community strategy a reality. In future all applications for development in Herefordshire will be assessed against the core strategy. This is the greatest challenge for elected members and the Planning Service now and in the future.
- 5.4. The Review Group notes the pressure that the development of the LDF was putting on staff resources during 2008 and was surprised that senior development control staff were not more knowledgeable and involved. Now that there is considerably less pressure within the Development and Building Control teams, the opportunity should be taken to redirect appropriate resources to the LDF. This should help if the same employees have to interpret and implement its provisions in the years ahead.

The current challenge

- 5.5. The Review Group is clear that all elected members need to understand and appreciate the importance of the core strategy much more than they currently appear to do. They need to shape its content and accept the implications of their preferred option for Herefordshire, its people and the elected members of the future. Four different options have now been consulted upon
- An economic focus;
 - A social focus;
 - An environmental focus; and
 - A housing focus.
- 5.6. A preferred options paper is expected at Cabinet in the summer. Once approval is given, the core strategy based on this option will be finalised and submitted to the Government in the spring of 2010 with an examination in public and adoption anticipated towards the end of 2010. This will replace the current UDP.
- 5.7. The UDP is sometimes the cause of tension within the Council because it is not always owned by current elected members or understood by the public that they

represent. If similar tension is to be minimised in future under the LDF then current elected members need to:

- Be much more familiar with its potential content and timeline for completion.
- Demonstrate much greater interest in strategic planning.
- Be prepared to accept the consequences of their preferred option.

5.8. Elected members generally must understand the differences and similarities of the four options and communicate these clearly to partners, including town and parish councils, and the public. Unless these are achieved, the LDF will not have the clarity of intent at its core that is so essential for the future. Plain English, with the correct use of grammar and punctuation, should be used in all future documentation and consultation exercises along with appropriate charts, diagrams, graphics etc.

5.9. Communications should also be enhanced with the developers themselves. The Review Group commends the initiative taken to establish an ad-hoc agent's forum. However discussions with agents during this review indicate a general lack of awareness of what lies ahead. While understanding why the service is reluctant to discuss potential sites for growth, the Review Group believes that there are many items of joint interest to discuss over and above current issues. The move from development control to development management is a case in point.

The future challenge

5.10. Unlike the UDP, the LDF will not be underpinned by detailed control policies. At present the application of detailed policies can cause frustration. However, the same policies do provide a known structure against which all proposals can be judged.

5.11. In the absence of such detailed policy guidance (e.g. which might not include settlement boundaries) behind the LDF, the source of frustration may shift in future. The acceptability of development proposals will be assessed solely against the broader criteria of the preferred option. That is why member involvement and support for this is crucial.

5.12. Some planning decisions will always be unpopular with sections of the community. However the best way of minimising this is, as noted above, to build interest and support behind the relevant strategic plan and its interpretation, rather than wait for particular 'hard cases' at some point in the future.

5.13. Because the LDF is, arguably, less objective than the current UDP it will reduce some current frustrations (for instance permitting tourism related expansion) but cause others. Members and officers will need training in how to interpret the LDF provisions consistently and sensitively. This training and awareness needs to be extended to parish councils particularly in relation to the future of parish planning. However good this training is, the Review Group are concerned that more appeals / complaints will be generated in future with potentially increased financial consequences.

Growth point agenda

5.14. In October 2006 the Government announced that Hereford was one of around 20 growth points in England. The Review Group's understanding is that, given that housing growth is coming to Herefordshire as a result of the RSS (see section 4 earlier), it made sense to accept growth point status which provided more grant aid towards investigating issues related to that housing.

5.15. However, the initial growth point funding has been used for LDF work along with the now defunct planning delivery grant (PDG). The LDF does not have a budget of its

own and despite the receipt of pump-priming funds for the growth point initiative, work is still needed to identify readily available sites to deliver the anticipated growth. Ideally both projects can be undertaken by any staff re-deployed or from staff vacancies as a result of the recession. The Review Group's view is that the medium term financial management strategy must provide adequate funding. If this is not possible, Cabinet should give clear directions to the Director of Regeneration and the Head of Planning & Transportation about what other activities should be displaced to allow the necessary LDF and growth-point work to proceed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5.A	To ensure more member involvement in the development of the LDF, the Cabinet members' working group should be expanded to include, as a minimum, the chair of the main Planning and Environment Scrutiny Committees. Careful consideration should be given to making the working group all party.
5.B	There should be greater opportunities for all members to discuss the emerging LDF at its formative stages through regular seminars, newsletters etc. Solely using formal Scrutiny or Planning Committee meetings is insufficient for decisions of this magnitude or for members to understand the differences between the choices facing Herefordshire and the consequences of their choices.
5.C	Much greater attention should be given to plainer English, including the correct use of grammar and punctuation, and such devices as diagrams, graphics, charts in all communications concerning the LDF. The widely circulated developing options paper is overly complex.
5.D	A clear timeline for member involvement in the developing LDF should be produced and regularly updated.
5.E	The future purpose and contribution of parish planning to the LDF process needs to be discussed and agreed with Town and Parish councils so that they too can understand the choices ahead and the differences between them.
5.F	That the LDF and the growth point initiative should be funded at an appropriate level until complete.
5.G	That a structured programme of communications be commenced with developers / agents.

6. How will the Planning Service contribute to the regeneration of the County in general and to the provision of infrastructure in particular?

6.1. To some extent this general question is answered in other sections of the report. However, to re-iterate the service needs to:

- move to being a development management function rather than separate Development Control, Forward Planning etc teams;
- develop its project management skills;
- engage even more effectively with members, business groups: Town and Parish Councils, and the public;
- be seen as the deliverer of key Council objectives i.e. an enabling not a policing service.

6.2. In addition to these general points the Review Group did consider the proportionality of the paperwork required by applicants. No final views were reached, but it goes without saying that the burdens on any applicant should be minimised consistent with the need to provide good professional advice to members. i.e. is easy to use and is a cost effective service that minimises delays and delivers the required outcomes.

6.3. The service's other critical contribution to the regeneration of Herefordshire and the provision of infrastructure is to ensure that all sections of the Council and its partners are clear about the infrastructure required in the future. At present the process of consulting individual services, largely on the basis of individual applications or in relation to specific S106 agreements seems rather ad-hoc to the Review Group. All parts of the council and our partners, including parish councils, need to work together to maximise benefits of the spatial planning process. Bringing these interested parties together should be led by the Planning Service. Generally:

- services need educating to provide comments on individual applications that are in accord with planning criteria;
- services need to understand what can be provided by S106 agreements and provide consistent evidence for their requirements;
- there needs to be a ward by ward data base of costed infrastructure requirements based on council or partners plans and members priorities.

RECOMMENDATION

6.A	Consideration should be given to establishing an all-authority infrastructure group under the Head of Planning and Transportation. The purpose of this group is to ensure that all future infrastructure requirements throughout the County are identified and quantified in a structured way. In order to do this the group will need to involve partner organisations, parish councils etc.
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7. Does the Planning Service have the capacity and the financial resources to deliver the wider agenda?

Current performance

7.1. The Review Group regards the Planning Service as an important front-line service that should provide first class services. It is not a failing service and can, in our view, continue to improve. In summary according to CIPFA statistics:

- Herefordshire is the second largest unitary council in England, approximately three times larger than the third placed council. Both its geographical size and its sparsity have implications for the delivery of a planning service.
- Expenditure on planning policy is relatively low historically.
- Expenditure on development control is relatively high historically.
- As far as staff numbers are concerned, Herefordshire ranks 14th out of 33 unitary authorities for planning policy staff and 7th out of 33 for building control staff. Vacancies are not unusual in any authority.
- Herefordshire was the 4th busiest unitary planning service in 2007 also having large numbers of alleged breaches of planning consents and enforcement notices / injunctions.

7.2. Performance measured by the former best value indicators (BVPI's) of the length of time taken to determine major, minor and 'other' planning applications has improved over the last three years but is now falling and is below the internal targets set. As reported to the Planning Committee on 11 November 2008 the number of successful appeals against refusals of planning permissions has risen to a point where the Audit Commission are concerned. In 2007/08 over half of these successful appeals related to member refusals of permission against officer recommendations. There has been a significant reduction in the number of planning complaints considered by the Local Government Ombudsman.

Capacity

7.3. The Review Group notes the Head of Planning and Transportation's opinion at the start of this review that he did not have the resources necessary especially in Development Control. At that stage it was reported that each Development Control Officer handled approximately 190 applications a year against what might be regarded as a professional norm of 150. The Review Group also noted the growing pressure from ESG and the LDF. Major consultations (e.g. on the core strategy) or applications that attract public interest (e.g. wind-farms) do cause staff to be diverted from other tasks to deal with peak workloads. Despite this, no figures were ever provided to indicate the potential shortfall in capacity and the Review Group is surprised at the lack of clarity about what the changes facing the Planning Service would mean for employee numbers and competencies.

7.4. However the recession has changed the position. Planning applications and income (from fees immediately and potentially via S106 in the longer term) have dropped dramatically. In only six months the concern has gone from 'do we have sufficient planning officers to cater for the anticipated growth' to one where other authorities are reported to be making planning staff redundant. We need to ensure value for money. Therefore, in terms of local capacity the first thing to do is explore how the staff affected by the declining workload can be redeployed and, if necessary trained and developed, into the roles still required. This should mitigate against future recruitment difficulties in planning after the recession as suitable trained staff have, in the past, proved hard to retain and recruit.

- 7.5. The Review Group believes that in addition to the necessary professional development to cope with the transfer from UDP to LDF, key skills for the future include:
- Communications and consultation.
 - Presentation.
 - Partnership working.
 - Community development.
 - Political sensitivity.
 - Negotiation.
- 7.6. These skills should be identified in person specifications in future and staff trained in them now.

Financial resources

- 7.7. The Review Group notes that 2007-08 was the first year, recently, that the service has over spent (@£418k). The main elements were the costs of document scanning, consultancy fees, legal costs and a shortfall of income. We understand that there are currently no plans to increase the base budget.
- 7.8. Other local authorities have apparently invested pump-priming funds (such as PDG or growth point money) and their own funds to manage the introduction of the growth agenda. In contrast Herefordshire has used PDG and any excess income over targets to fund the LDF and match overspends on consultants (e.g. on wind-farms and major housing schemes) or legal fees when defending contested planning decisions. As previously noted there has been little progress on growth point research as a result. The recent, significant, decline in income has made the financial situation of the Planning Service even less stable than it was.
- 7.9. The Review Group is clear that the planning service cannot possibly balance its budget during 2008-09. The shortfall in income will have to be addressed by Joint Management Team (JMT) and, ultimately, Cabinet on a corporate basis consistent with other, similarly affected income streams.
- 7.10. There are future cost savings from the introduction of modern ICT and potentially project working. Other planning authorities must face the need to pay for major consultation exercises, significant consultancy fees and legal costs. The practice in other high performing authorities should be established. Subject to this, the Review Group considers a budget should be provided for these purposes. If this principle is established it could be funded by top-slicing income when this returns to levels over the relevant targets. However, these will inevitably have to be adjusted downwards so that for at least the next two years any budget will require funding from corporate sources. The budget should be under the control of the Director of Resources and be the subject of bids from the service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7.A	Performance targets that show year on year improvements in performance should be set with the aim of the service being consistently in the top quartile of comparable authorities. These should be reviewed regularly to ensure value for money and high quality services are provided.
7.B	Employees whose workload has declined recently should be considered for redeployment (with training as necessary) into those longer-term projects that were in danger of being short of resources prior to the recession.
7.C	The way in which other high performing planning authorities fund consultation exercises, consultancy fees and legal expenses be established.

7.D	Subject to the previous recommendation, a contingency budget should be established to provide limited funding for major consultations, specialist consultants or legal fees. Access to any such budget should be controlled by the Director of Resources.
7.E	The Head of Planning and Transportation should examine the balance between expenditure on planning policy and development control within the service to ensure it is correct for all future requirements.

8. How best can planning policies be implemented through the development management function?

- 8.1. It is clear that the Development Control function will be most affected when the LDF becomes the new planning framework for Herefordshire and the recession ends, potentially producing an increased number of major / more complex planning applications. What is less obvious is that there needs to be a greater degree of co-ordination between the policy formulator (Cabinet and those that advise them) and those involved in the determination of planning applications (Planning Committees and officers under delegated powers).
- 8.2. While development management will be the major area of impact, the service as a whole, needs to shift from controlling to managing development. Technically competent employees need to develop to see 'the bigger picture' driven by the core strategy that individual applications contribute to and need to be judged against.
- 8.3. A useful table has been provided by the service (Appendix 2) to explain the nature of the change from controlling to managing development. This is worthy of more detailed discussion between officers and elected members. It is essential that elected members fully understand the future position. Such follow up work should be costed and programmed.
- 8.4. Under development management, planning policies can best be developed if the initial process to approve the LDF and the follow up work address as many as possible of the normal development issues in advance of any planning application.
- 8.5. The Review Group accepts that this will mean amongst other things:
- Major partners such as the environment agency and water authorities becoming partners not consultees.
 - Town and Parish councils becoming 'bidders' for services / growth and champions for schemes rather than foci for objections.
 - More structured and consistent consultations in the locality of applications.
- 8.6. The Review Group agrees with the Head of Planning and Transportation that a key indicator of success in the future will be the lack of objections received since all significant issues have been addressed and explained prior to the application.
- 8.7. It goes without saying that employees, members, the development industry, town and parish councils and the public need to understand the changes underway much more comprehensively than they do at present. A comprehensive programme of training and awareness events will be required in the next 18 months.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8.A	The Head of Planning and Transportation should prepare a costed and timed programme for the work necessary to address the major planning issues raised during the LDF process.
8.B	The Head of Planning and Transportation should prepare and roll-out a comprehensive programme to explain development management to members, developers, town and parish councils and the public.
8.C	Staff are trained, as necessary, in the changed requirements of development management.

9. How effective are relationships between officers, members and parish / town councils?

9.1. We will deal with each of these groups in turn although there are obvious links between them all. The Scrutiny Review Group wishes to record its thanks to the Council's Research team. It developed, conducted and analysed the surveys of Herefordshire councillors and parish clerks, who were requested to respond on behalf of their council, upon which much of this section is based. The results, including 'free text' comments are at Appendix 3 & 4.

9.2. Response rates were 50% for councillors and 48% for parish clerks. These are excellent for surveys of this sort. The Review Group wish to thank all those concerned, but are disappointed that only half of the Council could find time to express their views on such an important subject. While the results are certainly sufficient to produce statistically valid conclusions, the Review Group would have wished that more of their colleagues had responded on an issue that affects all members of the Council.

Relationships between officers and members

9.3. Those officers with whom we discussed this issue believe that there are generally good professional arrangements and good working relationships. From the member perspective, as the survey results show (Appendix 3), 90% of those who responded i.e. 26 of the 29 were satisfied with their working relationship with the Planning Service. The Review Group believes that this is a good indication of a fundamentally effective relationship.

Relationships between officers and town / parish councils

9.4. As the survey results show (Appendix 4), responses were received from 64 of Herefordshire's 134 town and parish councils (48%). Of these, 79% felt that they were adequately informed about planning applications and 81% were satisfied with their working relationship with the Planning Service. When asked about planning officers attending meetings, the preference was on request (47 responses) and / or for complex issues (34 responses). As this particular question was multiple choice, there is clearly some overlap between the two responses.

9.5. While Herefordshire Council has targets for the time taken to approve applications, one potential area for improvement is to take more account of the cycle of town and parish council meetings.

9.6. The Review Group considers that the current Parish Compact will need reviewing in light of the LDF. The compact is intended to guide the relationship between the county and parish councils, including their respective roles in spatial planning. These roles will clearly change as the LDF replaces the UDP.

Relationships between the Council and agents

9.7. The Review Group deliberately sought the views of those involved in the development industry in Hereford. Officers had already taken the initiative and convened meetings of a voluntary agents' panel to discuss matters of mutual interest. The Review Group commends this initiative. The officers believe the relationship is working well overall. Member direct contact with agents is, understandably, limited, but it does appear to the Review Group that agents regard neither officers nor members particularly positively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9.A	Planning staff should take account of the committee cycles of town and parish councils when seeking their views on local applications.
9.B	That the Parish Compact be reconsidered in light of the emerging LDF.
9.C	Consideration should be given to placing an agents panel on a formal basis.
9.4	That member guidance and training continues to emphasise the need for appropriate speech and behaviour to officers.
9.D	That any formal agents panel present a report on its deliberations to the Environment Scrutiny Committee e.g annually.

10. What work needs to be done to develop processes that support and enable good communications and relationships to be established and maintained?

10.1. The Review Group considered this question from a number of perspectives. Considerable time was spent on S106 funding which might now be somewhat academic during the current recession. The Review Group notes that the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee (21 November 2008) has also received a report on this topic.

S106

10.2. The Review Group's recommendations are set out below. A number relate to the current lack of clarity about this source of funding.

10.3. The Review Group notes the following views from agents:

- The amounts sought appear inconsistent and there is no tariff.
- The Council needs to be better at pulling together and making sense of all the bids produced. This can appear disorganised and may be wasting officer time and effort. (Recommendation 6.1 refers).
- There is potentially an adverse affect on small developments. (S106 agreements are not limited to large developments, but are also applied to single property developments).
- The recession may result in applications being resubmitted to avoid payments agreed at the height of the market.

10.4. The Review Group also supports the intentions of the Head of Planning and Transportation to appoint a Section 106 Officer.

Members

10.5. There is a general dissatisfaction with the limits on member involvement in the early stages of major development in their wards. Under the new LDF arrangements this dissatisfaction may grow as detailed control policies cease, major applications increase and if development management is seen to exclude members. The existing statutory training for members is insufficient and our earlier recommendations are intended to address this (Recommendations 5.2 and 8.2 refer) but may add to pressures on the member training & development budget.

10.6. Some members, particularly those who had attended Planning Summer School events, felt that this training opportunity should continue. If this form of training were re-instated then it is essential that attendees pass on what they have learned to other members.

Customer and user focus

10.7. The Review Group notes that there is apparently no capacity within the service currently to answer general points contained in letters of objection, or enquiries, or acknowledge their receipt. Acknowledgements and substantive responses should be provided in future in a timely fashion, in line with the Council's existing customer care standards. Our impression is that response rates for calls and letters need to improve and an annual service report could prove to be a useful publicity tool.

10.8. Notwithstanding the introduction of better ICT to the service in the near future, responses should be given in the form preferred by the public rather than that which is most convenient or cost effective for staff.

- 10.9. Our recommendation relating to the agents' forum should improve the current position, particularly if it is used, as we would advocate, to listen as well as to explain / educate. The Review Group notes that there is currently no process for collecting customer feedback from any section of the community. This is essential, particularly in light of the introduction of a Comprehensive Area Agreement (CAA). A systematic approach to collecting, analysing and using such information should be introduced as soon as possible.

Enforcement

- 10.10. There is a degree of dissatisfaction amongst members with the shortcomings of the enforcement function and this is reflected in the survey results. The Review Group considers that the enforcement function should be more pro-active and visible in future, but also be proportional. We need re-assurance that the soon-to-be introduced ICT system will make it easier to track outstanding conditions, but would remind all other members that conditions that cannot be enforced should be avoided. Officer advice can be given on this point.

Consultation results

- 10.11. The two surveys conducted for us by the Council's Research team give some further clues as to what needs to be done to establish even better communications and relations than currently exist.
- 10.12. These surveys – of county councillors and parish clerks – give a remarkably consistent view.
- 10.13. When asked 'do you feel adequately informed about planning applications' 74% of councillors and 79% of clerks to town and parish councils said 'yes'. Perhaps accounting for the 'no' responses, a number of specific improvements were suggested including:
- Providing more initial information on the application.
 - Clarity over the process by which Councillors get items onto Planning Committee agendas.
 - The need for progress reports to avoid members chasing officers.
 - More time be given to town and parish councils.
 - Increasing the amount of explanation given to town and parish councils, perhaps including the past planning history of the site.
 - Clarity about S106 arrangements for town and parish councils.
 - The need for up to date plans and maps.
 - More knowledge of parish boundaries so that the correct councils were consulted.
- 10.14. When asked 'have you been adequately trained?', 81% of councillors who responded said 'yes' compared with only 23% of clerks. A follow up question 'do you think that town and parish councils (your council / in your area) have been adequately trained?' resulted in only 23% of councillors saying 'yes' compared with 36% of clerks. Based on these results the Review Group concludes that, despite the Planning Services' successes in the past, there is still a significant training need amongst town and parish councils. Perhaps this should focus on those councils that have yet to participate. The changes to the planning system that we have described earlier mean that this local knowledge and expertise needs enhancing rapidly. The training programme should be developed by the Planning Service and promoted as a Herefordshire Council initiative. To encourage attendance by town and parish council members this could be organised on an area basis e.g. north, city and south.

- 10.15. For members the following issues were highlighted for training:
- S106 agreements.
 - Declarations of interest.
 - On the future / LDF / regional spatial strategy.
 - Planning considerations.
- 10.16. Town and Parish Councils highlighted a need to understand more about officer-delegated powers; planning considerations and discretion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10.A	A guide should be prepared for members on what can be paid for by S106 agreements. Amongst other things the guide should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear responsibilities for chasing contributions when the trigger points are reached. • How liability to pay transfers if sites are sold on or subdivided. • The treatment of interest / inflation proofing.
10.B	Local members should have more say at an earlier stage in what happens to S106 funds derived from developments in their wards. Consideration should be given to 'top slicing' income to supplement, not substitute for, the financing of permissible local aspirations under the parish plan.
10.C	There should be transparency about what S106 funds are spent on, what remains to be spent and what it is earmarked for. National guidance on the use of such funds should be followed consistently.
10.D	A final statement should be prepared for the public, local member and agents identifying how S106 money derived from each development was spent.
10.E	That a dedicated S106 officer be appointed as soon as it is appropriate.
10.F	The size of the member training budget be increased in light of the potential, future training needs identified in this report.
10.G	Notice is taken of the survey results reported here to improve communications and relationships in the future including acknowledging letters, providing progress reports, up to date maps and identifying the correct parish council for each application.
10.H	A training programme be developed and offered to town and parish councils by the Council
10.I	Standards should be set for acknowledging letters and telephone calls. Members and the public value personal contact and replies.
10.J	A systematic approach to collecting, analysing and using customer feedback should be introduced as soon as possible.
10.K	In view of member dissatisfaction, the enforcement service needs to be more visible and pro-active. The new ICT system should be used to report regularly on its activities and members kept informed when visits and decisions have taken place.

11. What service delivery arrangements will assist in the ongoing modernisation of the service?

- 11.1. In addition to all the points made earlier in this report, the Review Group wishes to comment further, and finally, on three specific elements of service delivery:
- ICT.
 - Accommodation.
 - Committees.

ICT

- 11.2. The Review Group have received a demonstration of the new ICT system to support the Planning Service. The demonstration outlined the background to the project, the phases of its implementation and an indication of how the public and officers will interact with the system. The Review Group wish to thank the Council's Project Manager and representatives from APP, Civica and Deloitte for attending and informing the Group.
- 11.3. Based on the demonstration the Review Group feel the new system will be a vast improvement and has much to commend it and should lead to a much improved service. A suggestion the Review Group have registered with the Project Manager for consideration is to include a facility enabling the public and Councillors to see the status of enforcement action concerned with a particular application and report any outstanding issues to the relevant Officer.
- 11.4. The Review Group note that the new ICT system for the Planning Service is only part of what has been termed 'the single environment platform' which is, in fact, an application that covers parts of both the Environment & Culture and the Regeneration directorates. While we are assured that it supports service delivery, we need to be re-assured that it will also meet wider corporate requirements through the performance management and risk application being implemented to a similar timetable.
- 11.5. The Review Group is pleased that the new planning system is to be funded corporately (including ongoing licensing fees) but it is clearly sensible that the Planning Service itself supports its implementation and use. We expect the 'go live' date of June 2009 to be met and expect the Environment Scrutiny Committee to monitor achievement.
- 11.6. It is regrettable that the public / users were not involved in the procurement process. The Review Group believes that members should now be involved in its implementation and set up period, getting a feel for the new system, and expressing a view as to its look and usability in what we believe is known as a 'sand pit' or 'test bed' environment.
- 11.7. Future ICT strategies should not allow systems, like the current MVM one, to become unsupported ever again. Planning is a major frontline service; old systems pose unacceptable reputation risks and may adversely affect the service's efficiency and effectiveness.
- 11.8. We understand that the new planning system allows access to and submission of planning applications 'on line' and, bases on the demonstration, we understand that objections can also be submitted in a similar way. We note that it has been reported that Herefordshire currently has the lowest on line application rate of any authority excluding the Isles of Scilly. However, as our survey shows, while the majority of

councillors (96%) prefer to be notified about planning application by e-mail, the majority of parish clerks (88%) prefer letters. While ICT produces considerable cost benefits to the Council, and may become our preferred communications channel, the Review Group is clear that the public should be able to choose, and remain with, their preferred method of contact.

- 11.9. The Review Group strongly supports the introduction of a document management system under a separate Herefordshire Connects work stream and urges its speedy implementation and swift roll out to the Planning Service. Considerable time and cost is currently being incurred by scanning off site. We believe that such systems integration will bring benefits. We have not explored these but trust the officer judgement on this matter. The introduction of both systems should bring with it a fundamental review and revision of the administrative systems within the service (business process re-engineering) including, we believe, the introduction of a single support team. Such changes are necessary if the service is to remain cost-effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO ICT

11.A	The new 'single environment platform' should be configured to meet the wider corporate requirements through the performance management and risk system as well as service needs.
11.B	A report should be made to the Environment Scrutiny Committee on the implementation of the system no later than September 2009.
11.C	As a matter of urgency, interested members, should have access to the new system as it is being developed and have the opportunity to give their opinions on its look and feel.
11.D	A full explanation of the new system's functionality, in plain English, should be provided to members and courses run to encourage its use amongst them and parish councils.
11.E	Future ICT strategies should prevent a repetition of systems becoming unsupported by their suppliers unless there is an adequate replacement available.
11.F	The principle that the public are able to choose their preferred type of communication should be adhered to. This is basic good customer care.
11.G	A compatible document management system should be introduced as soon as possible.
11.H	The business processes within the planning service should be reviewed and restructured for maximum efficiency and effectiveness alongside the introduction of ICT. Serious consideration should be given to a single administrative /support team for the whole service.

Accommodation

- 11.10. The Review Group is not convinced that the separate Planning reception at Garrick House benefits the service, although there may be corporate advantages and it is in line with the Council's current customer services policy. In particular it has been put to us that there has been no significant reduction in telephone calls to Planning staff, as calls are not resolved by Info-by-Phone. We question the benefits of this additional layer between the public and planners.
- 11.11. The Review Group would like to see all the Planning Service in one location. We believe that this would provide far greater opportunities for greater involvement in LDF as well as efficiency gains. Herefordshire is fortunate in that it has retained an holistic Planning Service of all major disciplines. However, we restate our conviction

that what is needed for the future is to merge and mix the current good staff into project teams and change traditional structures.

- 11.12. The Review Group supports the service's new location within the Regeneration directorate.

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO ACCOMMODATION

11.I	The benefits of the current Planning reception arrangement should be clearly demonstrated by the forthcoming, revised customer services strategy.
11.J	Without prejudice to the previous recommendation, the joint accommodation strategy should ensure that all other elements of the Planning Service are co-located.

The current Committee system

- 11.13. The Review Group recognised right from the start that this was a subject that could have dominated its examination of the service delivery arrangements. It did not. The views of both the chairman of the Planning Committee and the current Cabinet member (Environment and Strategic Housing) were sought and are understood. However, our survey of Council Members (of whom 50% responded) produced very few comments at all, either for or against, significant changes to our area-based system. From this we conclude that there is little appetite for change within the current Council, but that this should be kept under regular review.
- 11.14. The facts are as follows: appreciating that each authority varies in its geographical, population and number of planning application submissions, Herefordshire is in a small minority of planning authorities (14%) that have an area committee model. Only 7 of 46 unitary planning authorities have area committees. We understand that it is a relatively expensive system involving three separate officer teams and report writing, plus staff attendance for up to four committees each month. As resources are demonstrably limited, this may be financially unsustainable in the long run. Equally, the reduction in the number of planning applications on agendas currently could make the area committee process look inefficient. However, we have not seen any evidence that the current system slows down the application process or makes meeting the target turn-round times more difficult.
- 11.15. More significant in our view is that the three teams of Development Control officers could have different cultures. That is unacceptable. We have already recommended that their administrative support should be merged. Resources should be reviewed to support strategic areas and reflect the volume and complexity of applications in each area.
- 11.16. We are not going to consider the merits of the current system as opposed to a variety of alternative models. However, we consider that supporters of the current system may overstate the opportunities it provides for active member involvement in local issues (limited by law). Arguably a single committee would allow more active member engagement locally, but potentially, a loss of local knowledge on the committee itself.
- 11.17. Public engagement, if measured by attendance, is generally varied depending upon the type/size of application being considered. It is hard to see how a single committee could improve this and advocates for this model may underestimate the

need for more frequent meetings and / or more delegation if it were to be adopted. We note that the new Planning Act 2008 may require more delegation to officers anyway and consider that its implications should be explained to members before its various stages are implemented.

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM

11.K	The relative costs of the area based committee system and a single committee should be established and benchmarked against other authorities. The Executive should review the results on a regular basis.
11.L	The implications of the Planning Act 2008 need to be explained to all members as part of the proposed training programme, particularly in advance of the enactment of its various elements.

List of Interviewees

Councillors

Councillor TW Hunt	Chairman of Planning Committee
Councillor JG Jarvis	Cabinet Member – Environment and Strategic Housing

Officers

Mr Andrew Ashcroft	Head of Planning and Transportation
Mr Greg Evans	Management Accounts Manager
Mr Akif Kazi	Programme Manager – Herefordshire Connects.
Mr Mark Tansley	Planning Area Officer -Northern Team Leader
Mr Mike Willmont	Planning Area Officer – Central Team Leader
Mr Simon Withers	Planning Area Officer – Southern Team Leader
Mr Peter Yates	Planning Policy Manager

Users of the Service

Mr G Burton	Burton & Co Brimfield, Ludlow
Mr T Ford	Axys Design, Hereford
Mr C Goldsworthy	St Owen Street, Hereford
Mr A Jamieson	Jamieson Associates, Hereford

Herefordshire Council

Planning and Transportation

Development Management Team

May 2008

Development Control (what we used to do)

- Purpose: to minimise harm, enhance environment, process applications
- Restricted to land use matters
- Restricted to considering specific application types
- Consults others
- Asks, "What does the policy say?"
- Primacy of Development Plan
- Requires interpretation of national, regional and local policies
- Focussed on separate environmental, economic, social and resource issues raised by proposal
- Asks: "Is this good enough to approve - or bad enough to refuse?"

Development Management (what we do now)

- Purpose: to manage development to maximise planning objectives: "Place shaping"
- Includes all spatial issues in RSS, LAA and SCS
- Includes working with partner agencies to deliver development including key infrastructure
- Consultees become partners
- Asks: "What are we trying to achieve?"
- Looks beyond the DP to the LAA and SCS
- Calls for the same interpretation, *plus evaluation of the proposal against spatial vision, objectives and policies*
- Focus on sustainability and the likely outcomes of proposals
- Asks: "Can this proposal help to achieve our spatial vision and objectives?"

P.J.Yates
Development Manager
May 2008

Appendix 3

Report of Planning Services Review for Members survey

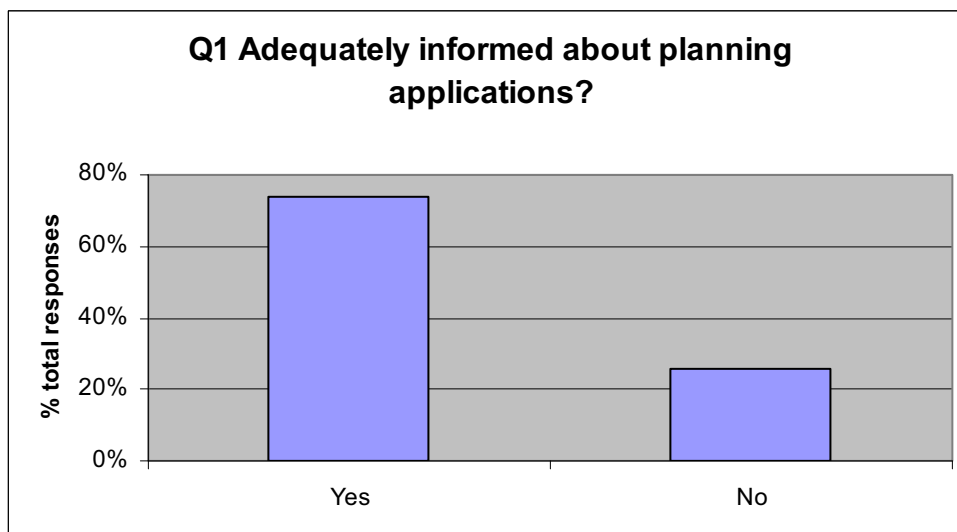
The environment scrutiny committee is reviewing the planning service and wish to establish the views of all the members of the council. For this reason, Planning Services Review for Members survey was launched on 23rd of July 2008. A questionnaire was sent to all council members and the survey was live till 16th of September 2008. The responses received by 22nd of September 2008 were included in this analysis and the responses received after this date were not included in this report.

This full report summarises the findings of the Planning Services Review survey for the members and also includes lists of free text comments in the appendices.

Total number of respondents to this survey was 29. Unless otherwise stated, all the proportions in this report are given as a percentage of the number of respondents to each question.

Q1 Do you feel adequately informed about planning applications in your ward? If no, what specific improvement(s) would you like to see?

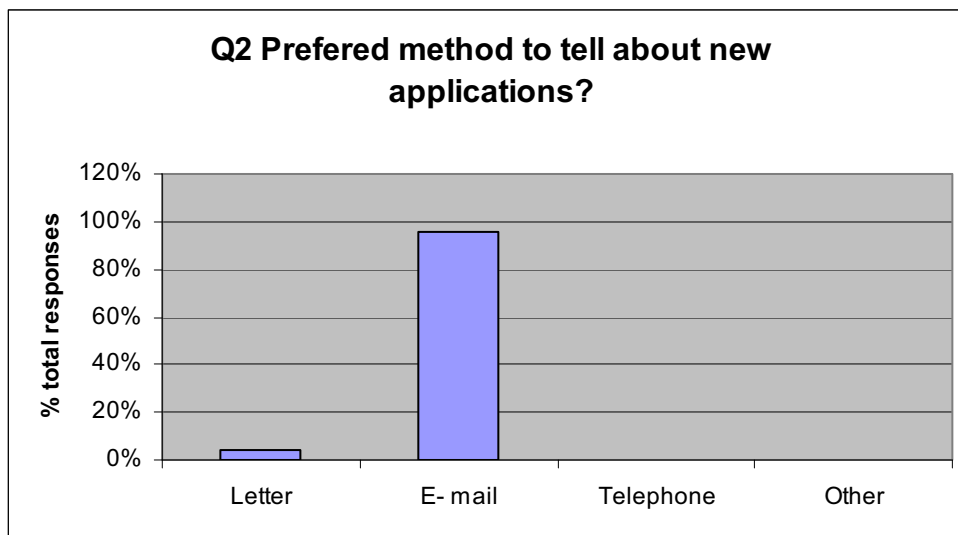
	Number	%
Yes	20	74%
No	7	26%
Not answered	2	
Total responses	27	



There are 15 comments listed in the appendix 1.

**Q2 How do you prefer planning officers to tell you about new applications?
(Tick one box only)**

	Number	%
Letter	1	4%
E- mail	24	96%
Telephone	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Not answered	4	
Total responses	25	



There are 5 comments listed in the appendix 2

**Q3 Have you been adequately trained in planning matters?
If no, what subjects would you like any future training events to cover?**

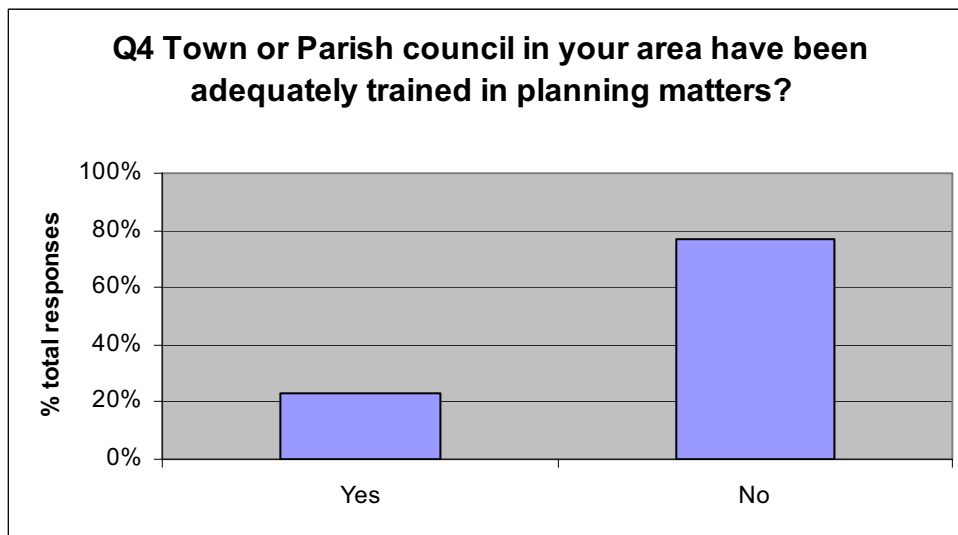
	Number	%
Yes	22	81%
No	5	19%
Not answered	2	
Total responses	27	



There are 15 comments listed in the appendix 3.

**Q4 Do you think that town and parish councils in your area have been adequately trained in planning matters?
If no, what subjects do you think would be of most use to them?**

	Number	%
Yes	6	23%
No	20	77%
Not answered	3	
Total responses	26	



There are 24 comments listed in appendix 4.

Q5 what improvements, if any, would you like to make to the way in which Herefordshire Council’s Planning Committees are run?

There are 23 comments listed in appendix 5.

Q6 Are you satisfied with the working relationship you have with Herefordshire’s planning service?

If no, what would improve the working relationship?

	Number	%
Yes	26	90%
No	3	10%
Not answered	0	
Total responses	29	



There are 11 comments listed in the appendix 6.

Q7 Are there any other comments you would like to make which are relevant to this review of planning services?

There are 19 comments listed in the appendix 7.

Appendix 1 – Comments for Q1

1. initial notification of applications is adequate

2. **Information on progress of applications is never forthcoming voluntarily-** it is necessary for me to contact the planning officer for progress report. I believe the oms should be on the planning officer.

All previous applications on site should be noted down then we would be able to look at application in its complete state. ie. A planning application for a parish doesn't seem important but if site has been previously extended it would be helpful to know. (within 21 days period)

Find it strange that each application is accompanied by a form (when e-mailed to ward member) requiring its completion and agreement by sub-committee chairman for a report to committee. **Any member should have the right to ask for it to go to committee** if in their ward and if based on proper planning grounds. (A member of the public receives this consideration)

Generally speaking Yes.

I am only emailed the very broadest terms of an application. I would wish to receive or have the link to the full application to research online. Also not all the info is in one location and I end up going between Blueschool Street and Garrick House.

In general the day to day applications are sent through when appropriate. It is the long term and for reaching decisions made by senior officers/cabinet members that are not discussed at the initial stages. ie. Communication with large companies/housing.

Individual notifications should include some indication of what is proposed.

More information needed on the initial planning application notification (via email) i.e more details reference the description and location.

On line pictures would be helpful.

Only adequate not fully informed.

See comments no. 6

There needs to be a change in to format of informing chairman for an agenda new to committee.

Usually but there have been exceptions.

We are governed by the office of the dept of PM. we are not free to change or need to now. However, when the UDP march 2007 expires in about 2-3 years time, government may have changed the system again.

Would like to be informed after the consultation period the recommendation instead of having to chase this up.

Appendix 2 – Comments for Q2

By weekly plans list as now, members can then follow up if necessary.

I prefer letters but can cope with emails, just!

Individual letter/emails for each area.

No preference- however to avoid being prejudicial and any changes now

Please put address of subject premises/location in email heading for application

Appendix 3 – Comments for Q3

All aspects of planning

But that is my opinion. Use UDP (???) common sense. Have not impressed with training sessions to date.

But Those info new systems of planningwould be welcome.

But, There is always scope for further training for example on **106 agreements** and how they work. Parish councils also need help and information on these.

Changes in **section 106** procedures particularly where the members fits into the process

I consider that it would be beneficial for further training in planning matters- including changes in planning issues **like 106 agreements** and a thorough 'back to basics' on material planning considerations.

It would be beneficial for new members to receive more than a brief overview of planning which should include its relationship to the UDP (or RSS when in place)

New SPD

pps 8- rollout programme of the mobile phone operations. They do send on plans that the average councillor never see.

Section 106 agreements. Suddenly the committee officers very concerned about these. More information - such as a seminar might provide would be useful.

The initial hardship is when a newly elected member has to make decisions on behalf of the ward when they really have not had enough in site into the planning process.

Too many seminars already.

Training has been repetitive with much used 'case studies' . I would refer to look at Incoming legislation RSS. & realistic plans for the shire county.

we keep training within the capacity of own time. Planning officers are there to help us 'how??' to know their business and we can help them too.

Yes, although improvements always possible.

Appendix 4 – Comments for Q4

1. Case studies of applications relevant to their situation. 2. detailed examination of relevant parts of the UDP.

106 issues & affordable housing. I get asked often by parishes on how they can use **106 to help** implement parish plans.

106 monies and how delegated decisions are reached. The perception that all planning come to sub committees or main planning. The ways government influence local decisions regarding planning.

All aspects of planning

All subjects

Basic training in the rules

City council most members are Twin halted (???), but training would be useful for new members, & refresher for old hands!

Differences **between prejudicial and personal interests. What are planning reasons?** All planning training should be compulsory.

Don't know.

However, while it would be useful for them to understand the process. Sometimes the PC common sense approach can be useful and reflects peoples view in an application as applied to how well it reflects our policies.

It is not their job to be trained in planning matters. Consultation with the Parish council is about awareness that Planning officers would now be aware that is the required limit of this purpose.

New SPD

Notes to each councillor + talk to each council.

Only town clerks and their assistants have had adequate training

Parish councillors should receive training similar to Q3 above. In particular what planning officers would like to see by way of appropriate and relevant comments and how to reference the appropriate area of the planning documents i.e.UDP etc.

Parish councillors would feel more secure in their role if more training would be given.

Process including **declaration of interest**. Need to make representations based on council's resolution, not individuals' views and /or informal sub-committee. Need to understand main principles of policy, and all presentations must be based on these.

Need to be persuaded that their views count & will be heard. Need to know they can come & speak at sub-committee. Provided council has so resolved.

Reasons to refuse an application that are **valid 106 agreements**

some basic planning training for parish councillors should be mandatory

Specific training on how Parish Councils can be heard ie. how to influence decisions when they matter to the parish

Structured approach/planning consideration/UDP/sec **106 SPD**

The situation has improved but **declarations of interest** still need to be taken more seriously and should be more strongly emphasised. At the beginning of meetings.

However, the majority of parish councillors are far better informed on planning matters and the local plan than when I was first elected. More training about the local frame work would also be useful.

Think PCs are UDP + Common sense

Training in: Planning protocol in relation to committee meetings. (When the PC makes a representation -speakers). Planning issues in general - **material planning considerations**.

Appendix 5 – Comments for Q5

1. **Visuals are very poor**; other councils have proper screens etc with sound system.

2. We do not get the full text of letters etc. not full info.

Agenda can sometimes be too long.

Allow flexibility on 3 mins, Allow objections and support use of projector/slides etc rather than the just verbal, Allow planning committee to make recommendations to Environment committee scrutiny & also to link better into licensing ie. caravans req 2 committee approvals.

Area sub committees are vital proposals for their abolition and all going to main planning are ludicrous!

By restructuring the area system, **one committee** is a formula adopted and in practice by a greater number of LPAs. It saves money; officer time gives greater influence to local members and other benefits.

Chaired in a more timely manner, in particular central sub committee

Happy with current area/main planning committee systems

I think the present system is satisfactory.

I would **separate political groups** to encourage more robust examination of applications at meetings.

In general, Central sub planning committee is run excellently.

It has been brought to my attention that speakers feel disadvantaged when a site visit has been asked for and they have already spoken. They feel members are likely not to

remember what has been said because the next meeting is not until the next month. Members to consult normally with officers before meetings.

More balanced and more professional. Less growling. **Presentations of photos and drawings needs to be much better-frequently barely distinguishable.**

Mostly I find the committee satisfactory, however 1. Presentations tend to be a run through out proposal-highlighting the key policies and the issue against there could be useful. 2. **Quality of maps, photo + plans often not good** when put on to an overhead projector.

None.

Only one comment- that members should be encouraged (in debates) to stick to the key issues- otherwise very lengthily meetings result and items at the end of the Agenda then have to be debated early evening (with members of the public still waiting).

Sometimes the agendas are too heavy. Less items going more time for debate.

Suggest that, for electoral purposes, some councillors may not be correctly focussed on applications in their own wards and may focus on issues which are from a majority of residents rather than acceptable from a planning viewpoint? One committee only with greater delegated powers in view of latest changes in planning law.

That planning officers be taught how to address a meeting. How to talk into a microphone. The sequence of a hearing in excellent. Debate is good. Regretfully, members often to now know they are not representing their electorates-their job is semi judicial of an '?????'

The area sub committees are essential to keep local members involved on the planning process

The committees should be run in **non political themes.** The most experienced members should lead.

They seem to be run very well and the public speaking element is both effective and well managed. The often robust debate in northern area is good for democracy and accountability.

Train planning officers in presentation and how to deal with debate without appearing

Appendix 6 – Comments for Q6

But think we all need to remember we are servants of the public and sometimes this is ignored.

Earlier notification of problems or contentious decisions. Perhaps a dialogue on identification of contentious elements would help.

However, improvements always possible. I feel this is an area were an excellent working relationship could give huge benefits to the service provided by councillors+ planning officers to our community. In an ideal world planning officers + members would never disagree!

I feel the officers do not fully understand our role and look upon us as an irritation.

I find the planning service very helpful and the officers always friendly and courteous. I support their recommendation in my ward 95% of the time.

I think we are well served by our planning officers, but moving staff around is not helpful!

It individually takes time to establish mutual trust.

Role of enforcement. We only have 1 officer & he is spread for this.

The ability to get all relevant details of an application on screen

There isn't a working relationship.

Would prefer planning application files to be made available on request at Brockington for a couple of days which are mutually convenient.

Appendix 7 – Comments for Q7

1. Previously the notification of planning application to ward councillors had tick boxes. * Bring to committee ** Keep me advised on progress. In "keeping ward councillors advised", the review group might establish what is Good Practice, Normal Practice, Accepted Practice, Best Practice in other authorities. In this authority, normal practice is that planning officers keep councillors advised very reluctantly.

1. The elected members must decide what comes to committee -not the officers. 2.

Planning sub committees' must be retained. 3. There is an obvious move to reduce applications coming to committee in an attempt to close them down.

As a member of Hereford city council planning committee I feel that I am adequately informed only because I am a member of the unitary. But I know that those who are solely parish councillors feel 'left out of the loop'.

Do not move to one planning committee .the decision is as good as the report and the standard varies. I have a perception that no one ensures standard, consistency. see last Northern area planning re s106 agreements for how applicants were treated. the new tariff system should improve s106 aspects. The update sheet sent round at the committee should be emailed late afternoon the day before as often on a complex case you need time to think some of the late information. More attention needs to be paid to stimulating good architecture. I dread to think what residents of the future will think about our contribution to social architecture- estates of red brick boxes.

Every applicant should be treated with respect. Local members work closely with officers. Every application on to 'own merit' should be carefully considered ' "material consideration" sometimes ignored.

Having acquired the Taylor review of rural economy and affordable housing that spells at a vision of a living, working, sustainable countryside. I would like other members to have the chance of reading this because it advocates for change in the way Authorities view planning for the future.

Hope that comments raised will be taken into consideration and this is not just a paper exercise.

I think the system works very well.

I think there is a conflict of interest when councillors want to support their local communities and planning policies made this difficult. When going against officers recommendations clear reasons should be given ie. An exception to policing doesn't like the policy.

Local members could sometimes benefit from more information about enforcement matters. Members of the public often phone their local members and expect him or her to know. We realise that the enforcement officers have a huge workload. A brief update about a contentious issue would sometimes be very helpful either by phone or email. Not always possible, I know.

No

Some members do not show proper courtesy or regard to planning officers. Some members do not have proper regard to planning policies etc. Some members do not appear to benefit from training. In short one of the weakest links in the system of planning is the members.

Speaking at sub-committees by applicants/objectors needs to be changed. The present system may lead to unfairness in that the speakers may put forward their views and the application subsequently deferred with the decision subsequently taken at a meeting with different attendees. (eg. The Holmer Industrial Estate application was determined 3 months after the speakers gave their views, but helping 2 local members (+others) not hearing their views, but helping to determine the application some 3 months later!)

The diagrams/plans that appear in agenda are of little or no help. Can there be improved please?

The maps included with the individual application notes are not informative enough.

The use of up to date maps. ie some maps are as much as 15 years out of date and do not have previous planning permissiaries included in them.

What is the "Growth points agenda"? Imperative that the LDF improves the balance presentation of the countryside and allowance for new homes when/where this community as a whole wants them.

With so many changes, I think a DVD would be useful, rather than rounds of reports & paper work.

Yes, the new planning proposals for 2/3 years time needs to provide for achieving at least a 10 year development planning policy. That accounts with the council. I don't think the march 2007 UDP was sufficiently understood by the members who voted for it, and now ruled by it. The objectives of HFD council are not profited in the UDP
eg 1. Attracting new businesses into county.

2. Not providing for exec housing to match new business.
3. Not providing enough business dev parks/estates.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

	Councillors	Clerks
Overall response	29/58 – 50%	64/134 – 48%
Q1 do you feel adequately informed about planning applications?.....	Yes 74% No 26%	Yes 79% No 21%
Suggestions for specific improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ More initial information ❖ The process by which councillors get items onto committee agendas ❖ Progress / recommendations are not volunteered but have to be chased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Lack of time ❖ Lack of explanation ❖ Section 106 agreements ❖ Maps & plans being out of date ❖ Lack of knowledge of parish boundaries. Wrong things sent ❖ Historical information needed
Q2 How do you prefer to be informed about planning applications?	Letter 4% E-mail 96%	Letter 88% E-mail 11%
Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Repeat of initial information point 	
Q3 Have you been adequately trained?	Yes 81% No 19%	Yes 32% No 68% Q4
If no, what subjects would you like training in?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Section 106 agreements ❖ RSS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Delegation, planning considerations, discretion
Q4 Do you think that town & parish councils (your council) have been adequately trained?	Yes 23% No 77%	Yes 36% No 64% Q5
If no, what should training cover?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Section 106 agreements ❖ Declaration of interests ❖ The future, LDF ❖ Planning reasons 	
Q5 What improvements would you like to make to the way that HC planning committees are run	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Visual aids / plans / maps ❖ Agendas ❖ Presentations by officers ❖ Politics ❖ Four mentions of single v area committees – balanced 	Q6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ More notice / time to be given ❖ Less delegation to officers ❖ Taking notice of PC views ❖ Location of committee meetings

		❖ 3 minute limit on speaking
Q6 Are you satisfied with the working relationship with HC planning service?	Yes 90% No 10%	Yes 81% No 19% Q7
Comments		❖ Communications ❖ Ignoring PC views ❖ Providing explanations ❖ Enforcement
Q7 Are there are any other comments you would like to make?	❖ Repeats visual aids / plans / maps point. ❖ Support for area committees	Q8 ❖ Enforcement ❖ Ignoring PC views ❖ Early input to large developments / proposals
Q3 (Clerks only) If a planning officer were available how would you like them to attend meetings		On request = 47 Complex issues = 34

Note:-

Similar overall response rates between Councillors and Parish clerks.

Q1 Similar proportion of councillors and clerks feel adequately informed about planning applications.

Q2 A major difference in how Councillors (e-mail) and Clerks (letter) prefer to be informed about planning applications.

Q3 A difference in perceived training needs; the majority of councillors feel they have been adequately trained, a majority of clerks do not feel adequately trained.

Q4 Councillors do not feel that parish councils have been adequately trained, parish clerks agree with them.

Q6 Similar proportions of councillors and clerks are satisfied with their working relationship with the planning service.

Appendix 4

Report of Planning Services Review survey

Herefordshire Council is reviewing the planning service. Town and Parish Councils have important roles to play in the planning process where Parish clerks play major role. To find out the views of parish clerks, Planning Services Review survey has carried out from 16th July to 16th September 2008. A questionnaire was posted to all Parish clerks on 16th of July 2008 and the responses received by 22nd of September 2008 were included in data analysis. The responses received after this date were not included.

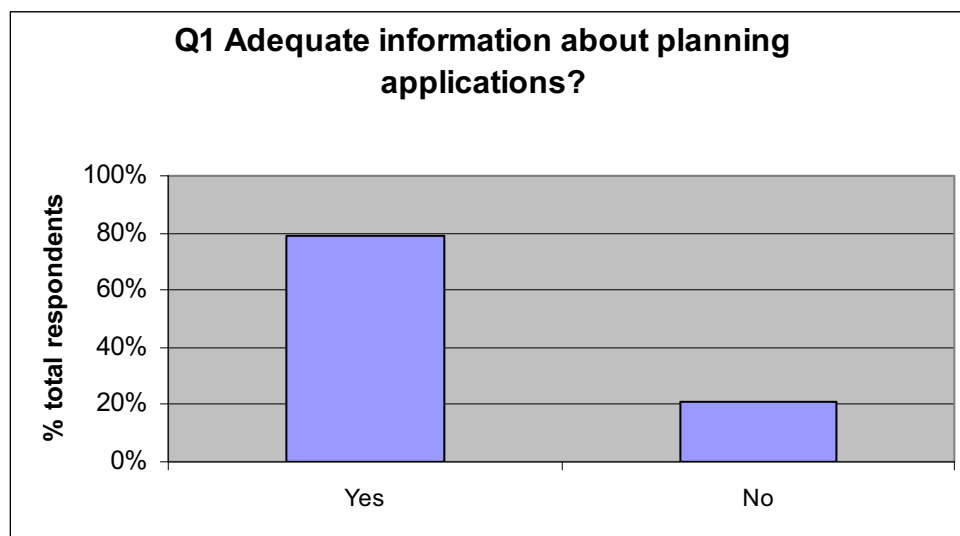
This full report summarises the findings of the Planning Services Review survey for the parish clerks and also includes lists of free text comments in the appendices.

Total number of respondents to this survey was 64. Unless otherwise stated, all the proportions in this report are given as a percentage of the number of respondents to each question.

Q1 Do you feel adequately informed about planning applications in your Council's area?

If no, what specific improvement(s) would you like to see?

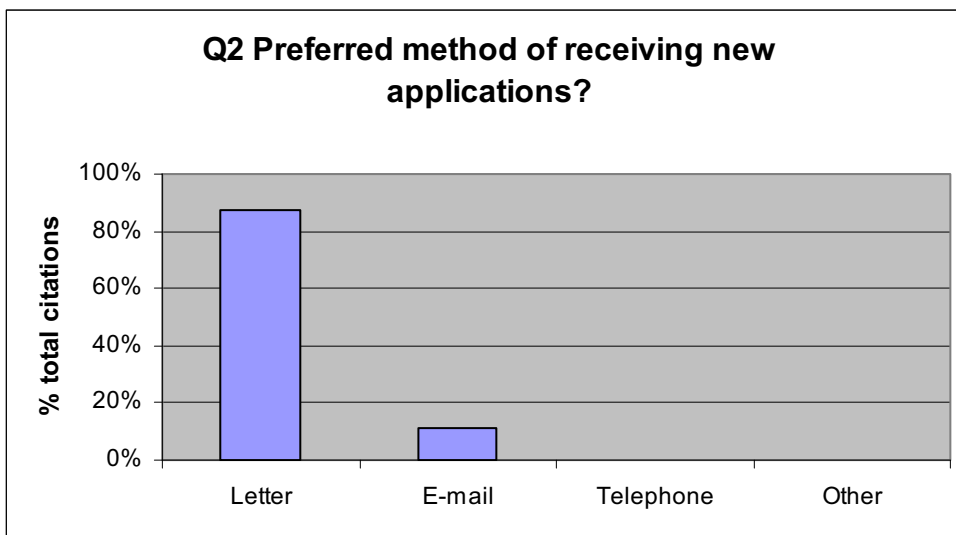
	Number	%
Yes	49	79%
No	13	21%
Not answered	2	
Total responses	62	



There were 18 other comments made.

**Q2 How do you prefer Herefordshire Council to tell you about new applications?
(Tick one box apply)**

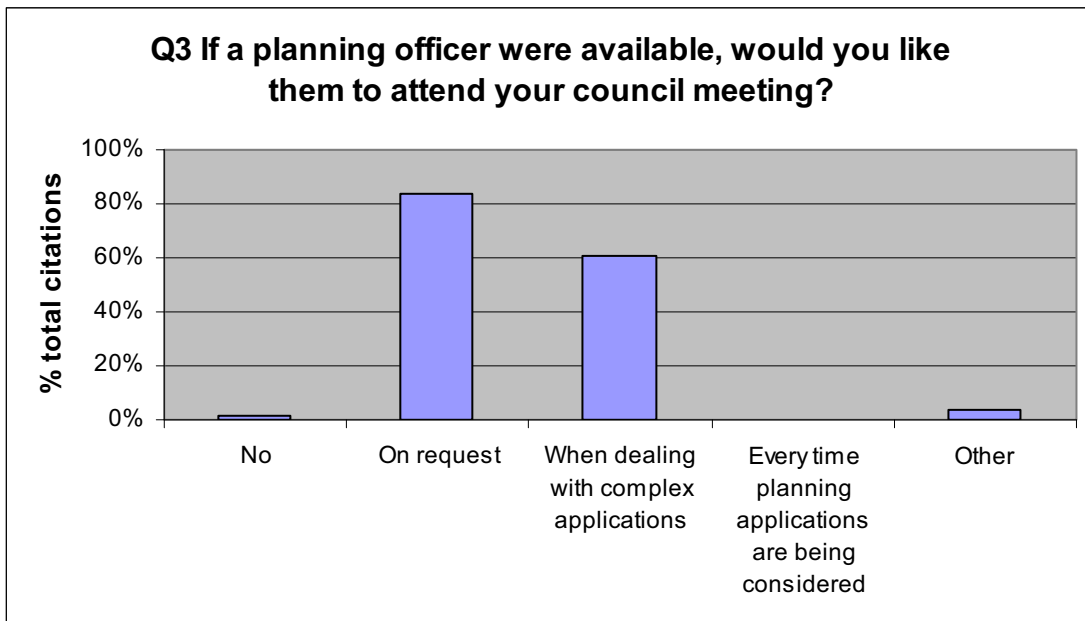
	Number	%
Letter	56	88%
E-mail	7	11%
Telephone	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Not answered	1	
Total responses	64	



4 comments were made explaining their answers.

Q3 If a planning officer were available, would you like them to attend your Council meeting? (Tick all that apply)

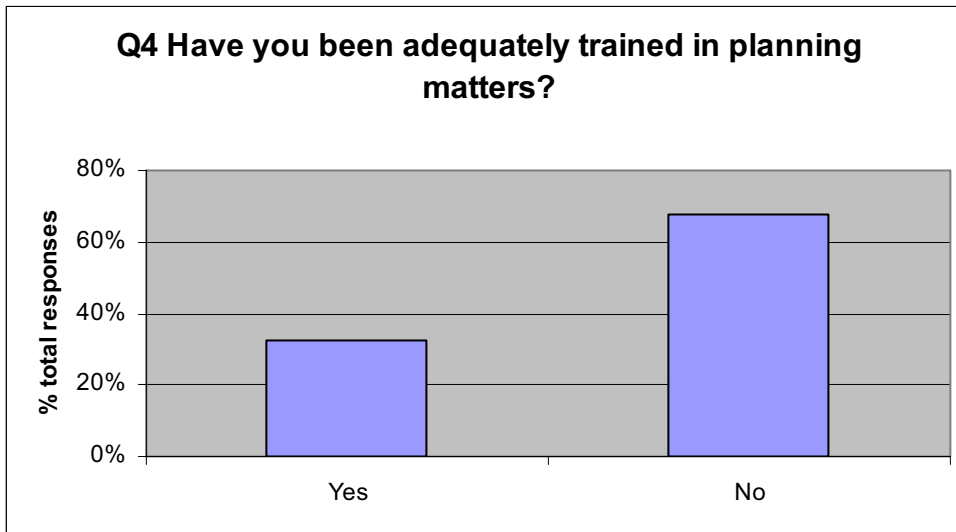
	Number	%
No	1	2%
On request	47	84%
When dealing with complex applications	34	61%
Every time planning applications are being considered	0	0%
Other	2	4%
Not answered	8	
Total responses	56	



There were 8 other comments made.

**Q4 Have you been adequately trained in planning matters?
If no, what future training would you like?**

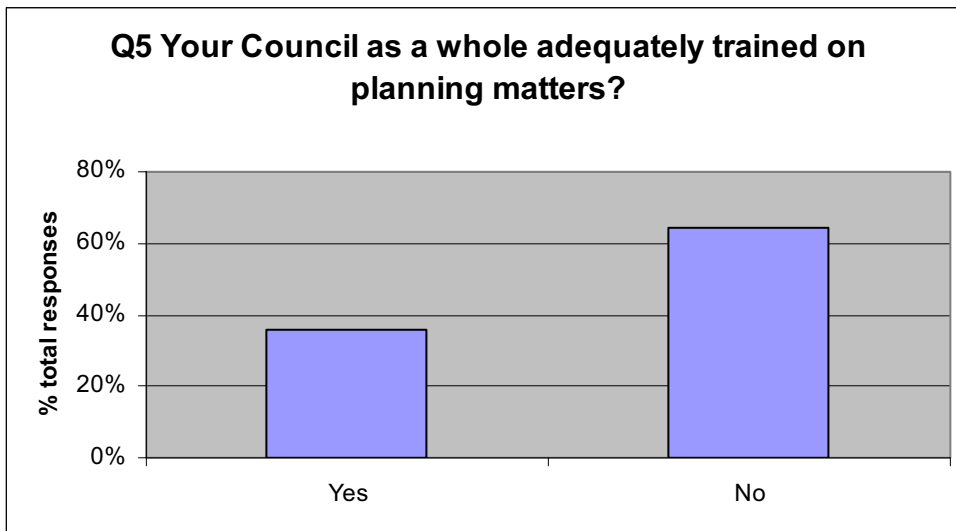
	Number	%
Yes	19	32%
No	40	68%
Not answered	5	
Total responses	59	



43 comments were made.

**Q5 In your opinion, do you think your Council as a whole has been adequately trained in planning matters?
If no, what subjects would be of most use to them?**

	Number	%
Yes	20	36%
No	36	64%
Not answered	8	
Total responses	56	



There were 39 comments made.

Q6 What improvements, if any, would you like to make to the way in which Herefordshire Council’s Planning Committees are run?

There were 45 comments made.

Q7 Are you satisfied with the working relationship you have with Herefordshire’s planning service?

	Number	%
Yes	48	81%
No	11	19%
Not answered	5	
Total responses	59	



21 comments were made.

Q8 Are there any other comments you would like to make which are relevant to this review of planning services?

There were 34 comments made.

Appendix 1 – Comments for Q1

Although sometimes it is a **bit short notice**

If an application is approved when we have recommended rejection, or rejected when we have recommended approval, **we should be informed** of the precise reasons for the difference, including references (i.e paragraph number of local plan etc)

More interaction first level of planning application-106- we would like to have involvement in this as the community of (XXXXX) have large housing developments 7 we have no say in any of this.

N.B There are normal passes in case of certification of development and notification of decisions but there I am sure, we no minor omissions which happen in the best run system.

Need more time to comment for major ones

Note: **But only within our boundaries, would appreciate knowledge of contentious applications in adjoining parishes.**

On the whole, the system works, but there have **been occasions when applications have not been received. (XXX and XXX)**. Parish councils would like **more time** to consider applications, so extend notification would be appreciated.

see answers to Q8

Some times 'HIT' or @MISS@ being sent to **appropriate parish council.**

Speedier return of decisions/more time and **clearer indications of how decisions are arrived at and who by (planners or committee)** plus better co-ordination with Parish Councils who should be able to help Planners and take some of the burden, especially with their localised knowledge.

The XXX council is adequately informed about planning applications. However, specific improvements could include becoming involved in pre application discussions relating to larger developments well in advance of the application being submitted. In addition the XXX council would like further influence in decisions relating to the use of S106 monies raised from developers and suggests that participative community involvement in the decision making relating to S106 funding should be actively explored.

The website needs to be updated faster. **Update your maps of local areas as many are years out of date.**

XXX council would like copies of section 106 Agreement on various applications and would like to be involved in the s 106 process at an early stage so that local input could be considered.

We are kept reasonably well informed and are given adequate time for consultation, but often **HDC planners is not adequately informed about parish boundaries.**

Some applications have been sent to neighbouring p.c's

We encounter two problems. Sometimes we are asked to comment on applications **outside but close to our boundary.** Some cases we are not. If an application is modified or re-submitted in a different way the consultation rounds often fails.

We generally are adequately notified about applications but **sometimes key information has been missing.** For example when a new house was requested for an agricultural worker we did not receive supporting reports which we would have disputed as incorrect. We were not informed of the significance of outline permission and consequently a house was built that should never have been approved. The house is now a white elephant and will continue to be an issue since we are sure the owner will seek.

We need to have the plans etc for each application on-line from Hereford council as soon as the application is received by the Parish. Either change on line system or delay sending application.

would like any relevant historical information regarding the application (ie previous applications)

Appendix 2 – Comments for Q2

But only if plans are available on line at the same venue
Have already requested council notice as soon as applications are received
It is useful for councillors to view all plans
With an email if there is anything urgent or out of the ordinary]

Appendix 3 – Comments for Q3

Also if there are contentious issues
Annually
Attendance as required and requested for controversial or unusual applications.
Can only be achieved if adequate staff are available, (at no cost to Parish council)
Clearly not practical for all applications but desirable for lodge/controversial cases.
This point has already been thoroughly covered in your consultation on involvement of local committee and I hope previous is now in train for this.
This would be very rare in this parish.
To update on changes in planning guidance and to discuss area of concern.

Appendix 4 – Comments for Q4

1. It would help to have similar training sessions to those availability to county councillors
2. To **explain the delegation system**.
A reasonably detailed resume of planning law, in particular the constraints under which officers work, and the guidelines etc. **Which lead them to make the decisions they make** (in printed form, for reference- a training course is not necessary)
PLEASE NOTE: This has been filled in by the clerk and I believe it to express views which reflect the views of the council.
A trainings session for all parish councillors would be useful.
All councillors are 'volunteers'
An insight into **planning considerations/processes** would be useful.
Annual updates on the planning process and how the XXX council can make informed comments.
Any training valuable to Parish clerks training is provided by HALC but anything by HPDC would be welcomed.
Any which would be relevant to clerks and Parish Councillors
As to what is/what is not permissible. The amount of discretion and flexibility that is allowed.
Becoming clerk from new is daunting- planning matters were non existent within the Parish Council and one learns from experience. There is no guide available and questions are answered but not the consequences or alternatives given. A booklet/guide/ or contact point made known. A short training session for a Parish Council could be effective.
Been a clerk 10 years and except for some HALC training have never had any training on planning matters. So any would be welcome.
Brief training in corporation with other local councils.
But I shall continue to encourage Parish Councillors to attend HALC training on

planning.

But the core strategy changes everything and new training will be required

Compulsory training for all councillors.

don't know

general planning issues

Guidance, information, legal requirements

How to assess which relevant policy to the application.

I have good working knowledge of planning matters but additional training would be useful, particularly if it could be accredited.

Need to know which planning officers are in each area need to be kept up to date with changes in policies eg when UDP policies are being superseded by LDF policies.

None- Not my job. knowledge gained through experience and asking questions is adequate to do job of Parish clerk.

ongoing training - locally based with other clerks in the area/ have involvement

ongoing training on subject matter

Only through HALC. Any other training are offered? What about new regulations?

Parish councillors learn by experience. They are more able to take a view similar to a planning committee as opposed to planners; ie. They think more globally. Sometimes, they do attend planning training seminars but they are not, and never will be planners.

Perhaps a seminar could be arranged for all councillors to attend to be briefed in what is currently the objectives 7 accepted planning of Herefordshire council.

Perhaps an annual seminar for clerks and parish councillors where training and consideration of shared experiences can occur, plus ad hoc meetings where necessary with planning personnel (eg in the case of complex or controversial planning applications.)

Some, we are attending various training courses run by HALC

Suitable training to fulfil the planning committee roles.

The chairman of our Parish Council has a good knowledge of planning matters and as Parish Clerk I rely on his input & experience, further training for the parish clerk may be relevant in the future.

The role of the Parish Council in planning matters

The training is in position. Councillors just need to attend.

There are adequately trained parish councillors available.

There are certain assets of the current UDP that are not easily understood or "Layman"-prior to the acceptance of the forthcoming LDF it would be helpful to have a presentation(s)/briefing on its content and application. It would be helpful to have a planning 'aide memoire' to assist in decision making/inclusion of helpful comments etc when responding to planning applications.

Training course (short) for councillors would be useful. E.g. a HALC evening services.

Training on site for planning related matters

Training on what powers planning /council's may have on obtaining beautiful community improvement as part of conditions approving planning developments eg developers pay for play equipment/adventure park/part fund village hall etc

Updates of changes of policies and procedures

We ask advise as necessary.

We think that there could be a case for regular (6 monthly) briefings on any new issues and a reminder about basic principles. We have learned through experience and my Councillors are happy about that route. However, we have failed to understand and grasp the relevance of the situation on a few occasions (refer to Q1).

What training is available?

When planning refers to obscure reference numbers, only known to them. A brief explanation or 'Planning Info Sheet' would be very useful

Appendix 5 – Comments for Q5

As answer to Q4 (6)

Basics: ie. how close to a property can you build can you complaint if your view is spoiled etc

Broader spectrum

But request further visit to council meeting in future

Can't judge but understand from the press that the nation is short of trained planners.

As for parish councillors/clerks, no doubt they could use more knowledge.

Committee should take the professional advice of there officers.

Compulsory 1 day training on dealing with planning issues & their relationship with the UDP. Should be part & parcel of being A P Councillor.

Don't know wherever training courses are suggested there are never any show of hands.

General training would be helpful. see Q4

HALC/planning services to arrange more frequent training sessions on all aspects of planning.

I'm sure the pc would benefit from understanding what policies apply to which area:
UDP

in house training by planning officers on general planning issues

localised training - possible grouped with other parish councils

Many members of the XXX council are dual hatted and have training from

Herefordshire council. Additional training for other members focusing on the role of parish councillors would be welcome.

More liaising with officers on the LDF not just paperwork to be circulated but face to face discussions.

More understanding of correct procedures through meetings (minutes taken)

Most Parish Councillors have several years of experience and we able to handle the majority of applications.

None- not their jobs- unnecessary expenditure to implement.

Not in a position to say

not qualified to comment

Presumably you are asking about the skills and knowledge of the officials in Hereford Council. We do not feel able to comment, but we have not had cause to think that there has been evidence of a shortcoming. Sometimes we have felt that the attitude and interpersonal skills have been lacking but this has been the exception rather than the rule.

Role of Parish Councils

See Q4 (4)

Seminar on planning procedures and key criteria

Through HALC. although will need training in new regulations.

To understand the UDP

Training has been, and still is, non existent for Parish Councils

Training is on going

we all need updating on what is currently the accepted way for ward.

We prefer to rely on the expertise of the planning dept to make the right decisions.

what applications are acceptable and reasons for refusal (failure to support)

Appendix 6 – Comments Q6

As above & not waste tax payers money going against advice & subsequently losing appeals.

Better notification/information as to when /which applications will come before the relevant planning committee.

Clearer explanation of reasons behind decisions (on line access would be sufficient)

Decisions should not be made through delegated powers. The comments/opinions of parish councils (being at grass- root level) should not be dismissed without proper consideration.

Do the planning officers answer the question "Have you an interest to declare?" Do the planning committee members always answer the main questions about applications before voting ie. Does it inform to policies, any local issues, impact on adjoining properties, community benefits and any developer contribution.

Enforcement officers should be visibly accountable for enforcing planning decisions made.

From the occasional planning committee which I have attended, it would seem that some members are biased, uninformed or disinterested. Some are highly involved. Preparation and understanding of each case would appear vital.

Greater use of local (parish/town) councils and improved inter-action with councillors (county/parish/town), planners and clerks.

I do not have the information on this which would allow me to make any relevant comment.

I think the planning committee should **take notice of Parish Councils Opinions** and comments

Improved advertising of meetings better arrangements of floor space

Minutes of meetings taken.

More applications to be determined by planning committee rather than by individual planning officers.

More notice of meetings (hearings) please. Perhaps a list of meetings to all councils in advance

More notice to be taken of the parish council's views & comments. The planning officers seem to wield too much power.

No experience of attending HPC's meetings.

No issues at all. Always good prompt service

Non political

Non technical summaries of for example, environmental impact assessments or flood risk assessments would be very welcome as some of these documents can be inaccessible to members and the public.

None (8)

Northern Area planning meetings to be held in the North of the county - not

Hereford. There is an inconsistency in planning decisions inadequate training on your behalf.

Not happy about 'Heads of terms' payments being considered on single applications as the receipt of money connected with approving an application is open to misconception of neutrality.

Not in a position to judge, but site visits should be routine in conservation areas. not qualified to comment

Perhaps the structure could be explicit to us.

Planning officers should be available for appointments if necessary.

Speaks at site meetings. Make weight given to local opinion.

Take greater note of the views of Parish Councils.

The Parish councils are no longer advised on what dates they are being held.

The 3 minutes allowed to speak at planning meetings when controversial issues were discussed the time should be extended

The possibility of the **southern area committee occasionally meeting in the south** to enable more people to attend to see how the system works (It would also reduce the cost of mileage)

They need to follow the relevant policies as well as Parish Councils.

Three minutes is rarely an adequate time. More than one speaker should be allowed, and visual aids should be permitted.

Timescales to respond are sometimes 'tight'

Timing flexibility to avoid extra council meetings

We would like to see consistency of results.

When we have attended a public meeting (for example XXX) we have been satisfied that we were given a chance to make our points. However, our points were ignored.

We are concerned that too many decisions are delegated and do not come up to committee for airing. For example our agricultural house (refer Q1) was approved under delegated powers. A new house on a green field site in green belt should not have been approved in this way.

Would welcome having **an explanation when decisions are made contrary to the views of the Parish Council.**

Appendix 7 – Comments for Q7

Basic planning generally o.k. Enforcement areas to be very weak and/or ineffective

By and large, **constant communication** is needed to help explain the wide discrepancy in opinion between planners and the lay PCs

Communication could be improved. Officers do not follow through queries, complaints or items for an enforcement officer to look into. **Officers do not ring back** when requested to do so, or let us know results of items looked into.

For if yes, However the relationship has been **one sided with nothing coming from the planning service.**

I am very satisfied with the working relationship I have with Officers

In some cases the **planning committee ignores the parish council's views** and opinions which are fairly obtained for the benefit of the whole community.

Council 1 feel that **more notice needs to be taken of local people with local knowledge. Better communication, fast communication.**

Link to question 6

Local knowledge is generally ignored and attendance by the planning officers would improve this at planning meetings.

Need to be told why our comments are not taken into account in view of our local knowledge + empathy

Not entirely. The Parish council after makes detailed submissions on more complex applications, only to receive months later, a decision notice which does not appear to have been influenced in any way by their submission and without any accompanying explanation. It would be helpful if officers would remain in communication with the council during the planning process and **at the very best offer an explanation to why they have taken a different view at the end.** It would also be very helpful if planning officers would always be open to comments by Parish Councils and prepared at least to listen to these comments. While some officers are excellent in this respect, there are other officers inclined to brush aside queries or comments from the Parish Council on the basis that they are the professionals and the Parish Council are only amateurs. Once again this matter has been very fully dealt

with in the best consultation.

Officers have recently changed and it would be helpful to have regular surgeries to discuss area of mutual interest.

Planning officers always helpful & cooperative. v important to have matters explained thoroughly.

Some personalities are easier than others.

They do seem to be under pressure through lack of staff and time taken to respond to enquiries. Cannot do everything within 'remits' unless adequate staff.

They will not listen to parish councils who have good local knowledge.

Very

We need to have more interaction in the very first instance regarding large developments. Parish councils is an elected body and they should have more involvement in all large applications.

We would like the planning and enforcement staff to be more responsive to our requests and reports and we would like faster results from our enquiries and complaints. This may mean a change in priorities but probably means additional staff.

We are especially concerned about enforcement matters. We have two significant issues being investigated but progress is very slow. One issue is concerning the residential occupation of farm buildings and probably requires a visit to the site out of working hours which does seem to be a very unpopular activity for Hereford Council staff. If there is no intention to follow up our reports then there does need to be a meeting between HC planners and our Parish Councillors to resolve the issue.

When contacted, they are usually very helpful but there seems to be a lack of full collaboration, perhaps because of time constraints, which could be improved, there - by helping all concerned and lifting some of the burden from those most hard pressed. Working relationships are professional and satisfactory.

Appendix 8 – Comments for Q8

1. Feed back can be slow if applications are rejected

2. transparency by the planners and the invitation for local involvement are essential with UDP

Decisions to tax developers for beneficial purposes.

3. It sometimes seems that planners are fearful of an appeal or referral to the Inspectorate which is a political appointment. Compare this with the Judiciary and government driven ideas.

A summary of broad guide lines of what is acceptable ie approved square meter expansion etc. would be useful accepted insulation thickens etc.

Although have always found officers helpful Admin support seems to be lacking.

Decisions are very slow in being sent over and unless an officer is available no body to know what is going on.

As a Parish Council we are very much involved in enforcement. We are the unofficial eyes of Hereford Council. **Enforcement** is probably the most unattractive part of the planning workload and therefore should be staffed with suitable staff to deal with difficult issues and difficult people. It might be helpful to clarify the role of the Parish Council and the enforcement officers and reinforce the activity in both organisations. I have been asked to point out that we are in no way criticising individuals in any of our responses and any shortcomings are, we feel, the result of the policies and structure rather than the individuals.

Better consultation and listening to local councils **and take into account what they say** as we feel very un listened to. When this survey is complete we would like to hear the results and your findings.

From Q7, given our relative lack of resources, could more/better use be made of town/parish councils/clerks in the planning process? This may be especially so given the county's geographical spread and the difficulties for planners based in Hereford of being aware of all the resources and local geographical issues of the many and often remote locations around the county.

If the planning officer's **decision is contrary to the parish council's** comments an application to why the decision appears it ignore local opinion.

It would be helpful if the planners responded to letters in a reasonable time.

More notice **of long term possible developments**.

More transparency, classification, better communication involving Parish councils. We have no input into **large developments only when the application comes to the Parish council for comment**.

No (2)

Our parish council almost invariably makes a site visit to consider planning applications and makes its comments after much deliberation. I would like to see this effort acknowledged in the decision especially if this goes **against the recommendation of the Parish Council**.

Parish council has lost confidence in the ability of the planning officers + the committee and in their implementation of policy. and their **rejection of the parish council's opinions**.

Parishioners are expressing their concerns that some applications are taking more than 6 weeks to process

Perhaps more through checking of applications before sending out. We receive many applications with false statements or questions most completed.

Planning officers should be more professional accurate and not voice personal opinions when presenting to the committee.

Relevant Councillors should come to XXX Parish Council meetings.

Relevant parish councillors to be notified and invited to attend site meetings.

See 6 above (2)

Some times local councils + residents feel that planning officers do not appreciate 'local issues'.

That committee take more notice of input given from Parish Council's when local application is made within villages. Local knowledge regarding road, land, and other relevant local aspects should not be dismissed out of hand

Those planers are far more intent on implementing central government directives than listening to the concerns and views of attached residents.

The ability of Parish councils to leave an input at the time of decision making by the council planning committee.

The XXX council is unsure how the planning service will change in relation to the LDF, in particular what will be the relationship between a parish plan and the LDF.

Herefordshire Council should work with Parish Council during the period of change.

Also, how can we ensure that local people have more say **on major developments**

that are planned for Hereford including 8000 houses and the ESG site- more participative forms of community involvement should be mandatory for larger developments? Applications should be accessible to parish councils in an electronic format compatible with data projection and this has the potential to save time and resources and there should be a facility to allow real time comments to be submitted by Parish councils as they consider the applications.

The main factor is the short time allowed for consultation. Earlier dispatch of papers with notice of applications by email would greatly help.

We are always given the impression that **the views of the Parish Councils are**

insignificant.

We consider that the service has improved over recent years

We have experienced planning applications sent to the wrong Parish and similarly received applications that are not ours. At Parish Council level the majority of councillors do not know a thing about planning. Education is a good thing but you can lead a horse to water - you can't make it drink.

Where planning applications are refused then resubmitted we are not made aware of the reasons for the original refusal.

Whilst it is felt that consultation about new applications could be handled efficiently by e-mail, there is concern that all document would then have to be downloaded and/or printed off on A4 size paper. The consideration of planning applications by parish councillors at open meetings necessitates all relevant documents and - most importantly - drawings being made available without recourse to the **use of magnifying glasses!** Councillors realise that the Government's moves towards e-planning might offer financial rewards for Local Planning Authorities, but they feel that this should not result in poorly resourced Parish Councils having to incur additional expenses. Responses via-email are preferred by this particular Parish Council, and it would be appreciated if case officers and others involved would always quote their e-mail addresses on any correspondence.

Would appreciate understanding how total mechanism works e.g timing process, which makes what decisions. When does appeal take over etc.

Yes. **Faster response to parish councils** after decisions has been made by officers or sub committees. Occasionally need extension to the 21 day consultation to fit around meetings.

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ON-STREET PARKING**Report By: On-Street Parking Scrutiny Review Group****Wards Affected**

County-wide.

Purpose

1. To consider the findings arising from the Scrutiny Review of On-Street Parking.

Financial Implications

2. This is dependant on decisions made in response to the review's recommendations.

Background

2. At the meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee on 25th February 2008 the Committee considered a report with regard to on-street parking controls with a suggestion that the Committee may wish to consider undertaking a review to determine whether any improvements could be made. The Committee agreed to form a scrutiny review group and appointed its membership. The terms of reference for the review were drawn up by the Lead Officer for the Review and is incorporated into the attached report at section 1.6.
3. The Review Group's report setting out its approach to its task, its findings, and recommendations is attached.

RECOMMENDATION

- THAT (a) the Committee considers the report of the On-Street Parking Scrutiny Review Group, in particular its recommendations, and determines whether it wishes to agree the findings for submission to Cabinet.**
- (b) subject to the Review being approved, the Executive's response to the Review including an action plan be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive has approved its response;**
- and;**
- (c) a further report on progress in response to the Review be made after six months with consideration then being given to the need for any further reports to be made.**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified other than those specified in the attached report.



Scrutiny Review of On-Street Parking

**Report by the On-Street
Parking Scrutiny Review
Group
April 2009**

**For presentation to the Environment
Scrutiny Committee 20 April 2009**

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ON-STREET PARKING

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Method of Gathering Information
- 3 Current policies and possible improvements drawn from best practice elsewhere
- 4 How we manage the streets in terms of residents and non-residents parking
- 5 Whether and how charges for on-street parking could facilitate the on-going support of a park and ride system in Hereford City and other sustainable travel improvements
- 6 The extent to which on-street parking controls can support the LTP objective of reducing congestion in Hereford City
- 7 The relationship between on-street and off-street parking and in particular how the physical capacity of the highway network impacts on this relationship.
- 8 The potential impact in Hereford of new enabling technologies that could support a shift in behaviours and help to promote a sustainable approach to accessing the City Centre
- 9 The current provision for on-street cycle parking and whether it is sufficient

Appendices

1. Environment Scrutiny Committee report 25th February 2008
2. List of Interviewees.
3. Residents' Parking Scheme – Policy & Criteria

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The On-street Parking Scrutiny Review Group were tasked with examining the way in which the Council manages on-street parking within the County and how this fits with the aspirations of the Herefordshire Local Transport Plan 2006/7-2010/11 (LTP) of developing “a sustainable and integrated transport system”.

Throughout the Review Group’s investigations and deliberations it became clear that tackling one area of parking provision in isolation of how it integrates with the rest of the transport network would be an inappropriate and potentially disruptive approach. In general, parking charges are regarded by the public as a “cash cow” for the council, disappearing into a general pot without trace. Without first tackling this misconception, the introduction of on-street parking charges would be a political hot potato too hot to handle, particularly in the current economic climate. A clear link between paying for parking and the transport improvements that the income can pay for needs to be developed before any more charges are introduced. A key recommendation of this report is the ring-fencing of income from parking so that it can provide an investment budget for sustainable transport options for the same area as the money is spent in. Understanding that the public need to see that their money is being spent on improvements that increase accessibility and reduce environmental damage, is a fundamental cornerstone of this report. If done successfully, it should garner support and promote a more sustainable approach to accessing our town centres.

There are areas of the council’s management of on-street parking that clearly need reform. The current system for providing residential parking permits has been recommended for significant change (Section 4). The proposed new system should provide much more flexibility for householders, whilst removing the potential for easy misuse and abuse of the visitor’s permit. Dealing with visiting tradesmen, town centre commercial loading bays, the signing and lining of parking restrictions, collection of parking data and the amalgamation of small schemes are all areas where specific recommendations are made by this report.

The Review Group were keen to examine how the introduction of new technology could improve the service the council offers. There was convincing evidence that the use of mobile phone technology could help deliver significant improvements in a way that could also promote the increased use of sustainable modes of travel, a key outcome in every priority area in the LTP. It may also be used as an alternative to “pay on exit” machines in car parks, negating the need for costly additional staffing. There are other technologies available as evidenced by the introduction of the Oyster card for London Transport, but the Review Group were unable to access sufficient local knowledge to assess their efficacy.

There has been one over-arching theme that the Review Group has returned to throughout this process; Herefordshire needs a detailed and strategic plan for the future provision of parking which provides for increased accessibility of our town centres. This should first be developed for Hereford city where the need is greatest and, once improvements are secured, the approach should be rolled out to the market towns. This strategy should provide for the gradual development of a network of sustainable parking options whilst promoting modal shift within a traffic reduction framework. It should set clear outcomes for the reduction in congestion and should be fully integrated with other areas of transport services such as school travel plan implementation & public transport provision. Parking should become easy to use, clearly signposted and above all, should not be seen as problematic.

The Review Group have found this process both fascinating and frustrating, but we hope that the following report adds to the debate about how we accommodate our cars without increasing the traffic.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Environment Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 25th February 2008 considered a report (Appendix 1) by the then Acting Head of Highways and Transportation with regard to on-street parking controls and a suggestion that the Committee may wish to consider undertaking a review to determine whether any improvements could be made.
- 1.2. The Environment Scrutiny Committee was informed that Council's Countywide Car Parking Strategy formed part of the Council's Local Transport Plan that set out the overall transport strategy for the County. The current strategy identified that during the period of the current Local Transport Plan, consideration would be given to the introduction of on-street charges in central Hereford to contribute to managing demand and provide revenue funding to support Park and Ride or other sustainable transport improvements. Proposals were being developed for park and ride facilities for Hereford and it hoped to bring forward a scheme to serve traffic entering the City from the North in 2009. In addition, the Council had over recent years continued with a programme of Residents Parking Schemes in residential areas close to the centre of Hereford, and in appropriate locations in the Market Towns, to deter commuter and shopper parking and help enable residents to park. Given the number of schemes that had now been introduced, it was suggested it may be appropriate to review the extent to which they had been successful and whether there were any improvements that could be made to how the schemes were operated and enforced.
- 1.3. The Committee agreed to undertake a review and appointed Councillors: MAF Hubbard (Chairman) RI Matthews; PM Morgan; A Seldon; PJ Watts and JD Woodward. The Lead Officer for the review was Peter Cross (Environment & Culture Support Manager) supported by Paul James, Democratic Services Officer.
- 1.4. Following further consideration by the Chairman of Environment Scrutiny Committee Councillor JD Woodward was appointed to provide Hereford City ward representation.
- 1.5. Based on the report to Scrutiny Committee the Lead Officer prepared a terms of reference (the key lines of enquiry) for the Scrutiny review which were presented to the first meeting of the Review Group.
- 1.6. The Terms of Reference were agreed as:
 - To review the current policies governing on-street parking in the light of any areas of concern that have been expressed, and to identify improvements drawn from best practice elsewhere that could be made to help achieve the policy objectives better.
 - To examine how we manage the streets in terms of residents and non-residents parking in Hereford City (and the Market Towns) to ensure that the treatment of both groups is equitable, to identify the extent to which the current arrangements are successful, to identify whether there are any improvements that could be made to how the schemes are operated and enforced.

- To examine whether and how charges for on-street parking could facilitate the ongoing support of a park-and-ride system in Hereford City and/or other sustainable travel improvements.
- To examine the extent to which on-street parking controls can support the LTP objective of reducing congestion in Hereford City.
- To examine the relationship between on-street and off-street parking and in particular how the physical capacity of the highway network impacts on this relationship.
- To examine the potential impact in Hereford of new enabling technologies (such as those based on smart cards) that could support a shift in behaviours and help to promote a sustainable approach to accessing the city centre.
- To review the current provision for on-street cycle parking and whether it is sufficient.

The Review

- 1.7. Whilst it may appear on the surface that On-Street Parking is a particularly dry subject, the members of the Scrutiny Review Group have regularly commented how engaging this process has been.
- 1.8. In early discussions during the review, it became clear that many of the central issues influencing on-street parking are concentrated within Hereford City and it is for this reason that the Scrutiny Review Group decided to concentrate its efforts on addressing the city's issues. The recommendations are not necessarily immediately transferable to the market towns, with the possible exception of changes to the Residents' Parking Schemes. Dealing appropriately with Hereford should give sufficient experience that can be rolled out to the market towns as they develop.
- 1.9. The Scrutiny Review Group would like to express its thanks to the people who have presented verbal evidence to the Review Group, those who have provided further information and or data as required and to the committee clerk, whose excellent notes, organisational skills and guidance made this process much easier.

Next Steps

- 1.10. The Review Group anticipate that, when approved by the Environment Scrutiny Committee, this report will be presented to Cabinet for consideration.
- 1.11. The Environment Scrutiny Committee would then expect Cabinet within two months of receipt of the report to consider the report and recommendations and respond to the Committee indicating what action the Cabinet propose to take together with an action plan.

2. Method of Gathering Information

- 2.1. The Review Group undertook a series of meetings in order to collect the evidence to complete the review. Evidence that was considered included the following:
- 2.2. **Face to Face interviews** – a series of interviews took place with key Council officers and a representative sample of service users and interested parties. A list of those interviewed is set out at Appendix 2.
- 2.3. **Written evidence** - The Review Group considered a range of written evidence to assist their deliberations including:
- a) Herefordshire Council's Parking Policy, Parking Enforcement Protocols, Appeals & Representation Protocols, Countywide Car Parking Strategy, Residents' Parking Schemes – Policy & Criteria, Herefordshire Congestion Assessment and Hereford City Centre Regeneration Strategy – A 10 Year Ambition.
 - b) Technical Notes written for Edgar Street Grid Ltd on Parking for Developments and a Report of Parking Surveys.
 - c) Follow up written information was provided by a number of interviewees at the request of the Review Group.
 - d) Information was also received from Worcester City Council and Staffordshire County Council on resident's parking schemes and policies on the introduction of on-street parking charges.
 - e) Individuals from a range of backgrounds/interests also provided written evidence and opinions for the Review Group to consider,

3. Current policies and possible improvements drawn from best practice elsewhere

- 3.1. The council's current Countywide Parking Strategy forms part of the Local Transport Plan 2006/7-2010/11(LTP) that sets out the overall transport strategy for the county. An extract is provided as part of Appendix 1. This recognises the important role that the parking policy can play in developing a sustainable and integrated transport system for the county. The current strategy identifies (at section 9.7) that, during the period of the current LTP, consideration will be given to the introduction of on-street charges in central Hereford to contribute to managing demand and to provide revenue funding to support park-and-ride or other sustainable travel improvements.
- 3.2. Charging for on-street parking is contained in the LTP for future consideration, but the Review Group have only received an outline on its possible introduction from the then Acting Head of Highways and this only looked at possible income generation. No consideration was given to the effects of introducing charges or how this supports a wider strategic parking policy, which does not appear to be in existence. The Group are unaware of any real business case having been compiled to support the introduction of on-street charges. The potential of on-street parking charges supporting Park & Ride developments for the city is still relevant, but with no detailed costing available, it is not possible to assess how successful this would be. There is clearly a role for parking charges, both on and off-street, in encouraging visitors to the city to use the Park & Ride service once it is in place.
- 3.3. The Countywide Car Parking Strategy states that parking can "play a major role in supporting the development of a sustainable and integrated transport system". Current council policy is to control on-street parking by means of limited waiting restrictions, with exemptions provided to local residents' through various residents' parking permit systems. All on-street parking is currently completely free of charge which did raise basic questions for the Review Group on how sustainable this approach actually is? The following opinion was expressed during the review, "How can Hereford complain of congestion when you invite the world into your medieval town centre to park on the streets for free?" Conversely, in a county where much of the rural population have to rely on their cars to access the services in their town centres, does it become unsustainable for the town centres to price them off the roads without first providing a viable alternative? This "chicken & egg" situation became a central issue in the deliberations of the review group.
- 3.4. The complexities of an integrated transport system can be experienced on the roads in Hereford on a regular basis. An incident in one part of the city can cause gridlock elsewhere and similar can be said for the provision of parking. To radically alter the current management of parking over too short a time frame could easily lead to unknown and undesirable consequences. On-street parking spaces represent about 15% of those available to the public in Hereford city centre, any proposals to change their management needs to be approached with the utmost care and must take account of the stated aim within the all the LTP key objectives of "increased use of sustainable modes of travel".
- 3.5. The Review Group heard compelling arguments that any recommendations arising out of the review should take account of the Principles set out in the recently published "Hereford City Centre Regeneration Strategy" namely:
 - Build on the County's distinctiveness
 - Ensure sustainability and consideration for the environment

- Next Generation (planning for the needs of young people)
 - Based on Quality and Good Design
 - Community Cohesion
- 3.6 Further to this, a desire was expressed to attract *people* to the city centre, not necessarily their cars and, above all, that parking should not be seen as a problem. This would require a more flexible approach to our streets and how they are designed, especially with the expansion of residential areas within the ESG and living “over the shop” schemes, which by their nature would have dwellings with few or no parking spaces provided.
- 3.7 Throughout the Local Transport Plan and the other policy documents taken into consideration by the Review Group, sustainability and reduction in CO2 emissions are recurring themes. The provision of on-street parking and its management clearly needs to be considered within a wider traffic reduction framework, enabling modal shift from the car to more environmentally friendly modes of transport, but this can only be done by providing viable alternatives that are easy, safe and pleasant to use as part of an overall strategy.
- 3.8 For clarity, it is necessary to define the three types of car park as: city centre – car parks within or on the “inner ring road; edge of centre – car parks within easy walking distance of the centre; city boundary – car parks placed on the outskirts of the city, usually park & ride or park & cycle facilities.
- 3.9 The complete lack of city boundary car parks in Hereford was considered by the Review Group to be a major stumbling block to the development of more sustainable parking habits for the people who need to access the centre. This severely limits the potential of “park & walk”, “park & cycle” and “park & ride” options for visitors to the city. Substantial environmental enhancements along the routes from car parks into the city centre were also considered to be essential if we are to develop a more sustainable attitude to visiting Hereford. Walking into town should be a pleasurable experience, not a trudge along unattractive, cluttered and polluted tarmac corridors. These aesthetic considerations were of particular concern to interviewees representing the views of community groups. Herefordshire residents’ quality of life is one of the main features of the County’s distinctiveness which needs to be built on.
- 3.10 Throughout the deliberations of the Review Group, there was a lack of hard evidence about the people who use the parking provision in the city. Various unsubstantiated figures were offered regarding the number of car journeys that occur within the city and where they originate from. Little is known about who is actually parking within our city centre, where they come from and the purpose of their journey. The Review Group consider that this basic information is crucial to the planning of future provision and our ability to target those people whose car use could, by the provision of attractive alternatives, be considered unnecessary. Some information is available from surveys conducted by ESG Ltd, but this deals purely with capacity issues within car parks and is dated September 2007. More recent information showing a substantial reduction of income from Hereford’s car parks indicate that this ESG survey data may now be out of date. No information is available about on-street parking apart from the overall number of spaces available which frustrated our efforts.
- 3.11 Much is made of the traffic problems in Hereford, but in general the Review Group did not find the experience of using the road network in Hereford to be any worse than other county towns. Indeed, subject to accidents or road works, waiting times in Hereford seem to be far less compared to elsewhere. Outside the morning & evening rush hours and the afternoon school run, driving into Hereford is generally extremely easy with parking readily available, although it could be better signposted for those that do not know

the city. There is clearly a need for a reduction in the levels of congestion during peak hours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3.a	The Review Group recommends the Executive commission detailed research into the use of car parks within Hereford City.
3.b	Using the data collected at 3a above, the Review Group recommends that the Head of Planning and Transportation ensures a detailed parking strategy is developed in the Hereford Area Plan (see 7.a below).
3.c	The Review Group further recommends that all future provision of parking should be developed within a traffic reduction framework for town centres. Parking should be seen as an opportunity for increasing the accessibility of the City & our Market Towns. It is essential to develop this mindset before future planning takes place.

4. How we manage the streets in terms of residents and non-residents parking.....

Residents' Parking Scheme

- 4.1 The policy and criteria for Herefordshire Council's Residents' Parking schemes is set out in Appendix 3 of this report. The Review Group would like to highlight that the policy states "Full consideration of a scheme will only be undertaken if a majority of residents support the introduction of a residents' parking scheme." The Review Group would argue that changes to a scheme's management should not require majority support, if the council considers the introduction of a solution to a problem is necessary. The technical expertise and experience of our officers should be relied upon when solving management issues and deciding on the boundaries of a given scheme. Given the benefit of hindsight, the Review Group do not consider it appropriate to allow individual roads within a proposed new scheme area to opt out of a particular scheme. If a majority of residents vote for a scheme, within the boundaries defined by officers, who are now experienced in these matters, then the scheme should go ahead in its entirety. Letting individual roads opt out creates management difficulties, due to the transfer of the problem to those streets, which result in expensive consultation procedures having to be run for a second time to re-include opted out roads.
- 4.2 The Review Group heard a wide range of opinion and experiences about the operation of the various residents' schemes by the council and have identified a number of areas of concern which have led to a clear set of recommendations for change
- 4.3 Currently, each house in a residential parking area can apply for one parking permit for a car registered at that address and one visitor's permit that can be displayed on any car that happens to be visiting.
- 4.4 Visitors' permits appear to be the area of greatest contention. Currently their use is incredibly flexible giving rise, in some quarters, to a strong defence for their retention. However the flexibility of this permit also provides plenty of scope for misuse and outright abuses. The Review Group heard compelling evidence from officers investigating challenges to penalty charge notices about the difficulty they faced in proving clear abuses of the system. Common practise in a two car household is that the second car has the visitor's permit permanently displayed, giving rise to the widespread practise of informal "borrowing" of the neighbours' visitor permit when a third permit is required. Technically this is misuse of the system. The Review Group is of the opinion that were we to be starting from scratch, the current residents' parking scheme would not now be introduced.
- 4.5 The current system does not adequately provide for tradesmen & peripatetic essential workers (doctors, community midwives, etc.) visiting a two car household. The Review Group consider the current system of tradesmen phoning the Parking Manager to request relaxation of enforcement whilst they work on a property, to be too informal a management system to deal with this regular and growing problem. Tradesmen need access to a system that will guarantee their ability to park without penalty at the property they are working on, particularly where the refurbishment works require more than one vehicle to be on site at one time.
- 4.6 The Review Group stress the need for the council to promote the fact that residents do not have a right to park outside their home. The Queen's highways are for the movement of traffic and any schemes for the facilitation of parking exist to prevent obstructions, they do not confer a right on any individual to park in any particular place, kerb-space is available to any road

user, subject to any waiting restriction that may be in force and the laws of obstruction.

- 4.7 The Review Group heard that the geographical size of a residents' parking scheme area was crucial to its efficient operation. Schemes with too small a defined area do not provide enough kerbside spaces to give residents a chance of finding a space, particularly where the scheme is within or close to the historic core of the city. The Review Group felt that there was a strong case for the amalgamation of co-existent small schemes.
- 4.8 The Review Group heard persuasive arguments from local residents who live in areas that are highly sought after by short term shoppers or visitors to other local services that dedicated residents' only bays should be introduced on stretches of kerb-space to allow for some possibility of them finding a space should they be required to use their cars during the day. However, the Review Group did not agree with assertions regarding the placement of these bays close to the homes of residents registered with the scheme, as this would imply a right to park in a particular spot.
- 4.9 The Review Group heard from a community sports group based at premises within a residential parking scheme that was not included in the consultation exercise when the scheme was introduced. Since residents' parking began, the effect on the group had been quite devastating. Regular informal meetings during the week have had to be completely abandoned and matches now had to be arranged for Sundays when no parking restrictions apply. Further, their group had diminished in size from over 100 members to 30 within a year of the parking scheme commencing, with many people commenting that the difficulties with parking had led them to join other groups without the same problems.
- 4.10 The Review Group heard a lot of criticism of the maintenance of "signs & lines" denoting the various Traffic Road Orders which are essential to effective enforcement. The Parking and Civil Enforcement teams have a difficult enough job dealing with irate members of the public, who often become abusive on receipt of a Penalty Charge Notice, without then experiencing problems collecting the fines because a particular line or sign does not comply with legal requirements.
- 4.11 It was recommended to the Review Group that consideration be given to a review of the on-street waiting times within the inner ring road. As many of these spaces are very close to the presumed destination of the visitor, a free parking limit of 2-3 hours was considered too long. These spaces should be prioritised for a high turnover rate, maximising visitors' chances of finding somewhere to park without having to wait too long.
- 4.12 It has also come to the attention of the Review Group that commercial loading bays in our town centres may be discriminating against small locally owned businesses where the turnover of the business does not support the investment required to own a commercial vehicle. Small retailers, often owned & run by local families will use the family car as the business support vehicle. When these businesses try to use commercial loading bays to deliver essential goods to their premises, their vehicles are judged to be non-commercial by Civil Enforcement Officers and issued with penalty charge notices. Technically, loading bays are not available for parking and the period of time available for loading is strictly limited. In practice, a commercial vehicle can park in a loading bay for as long as the time restriction allows and will not receive a penalty charge notice. Conversely, a small business owner can be physically unloading their car and yet be required to move immediately if they are found to be doing so by a Civil Enforcement Officer. The Review Group considers this issue needs addressing as a matter of priority for all loading bays in all town centres, either by registering vehicles owned by small

businesses or relaxing the restrictions to enable an ordinary vehicle appropriate loading/waiting time.

- 4.13 A New Residents' Parking Scheme – best practise in other authorities reveals a commonly used residential parking scheme based on issuing a maximum of two residents' permits to identified cars registered at each address with a maximum of 50 daily "scratchcards" per year per household available for the use of visitors. Overall, residents' parking schemes should cover their costs, and provide for some investment in alternative travel modes and the provision of infrastructure. Consideration should be given to charging considerably less for the first permit than the second, thereby rewarding people for more sustainable approaches to car ownership. Examples of best practise of this type of scheme are readily available, of particular merit is the scheme considered by Bristol City Council Cabinet (17/11/07). The Review Group would suggest the following price levels: first permit - £25, second permit - £40 and £1.50 for daily scratch cards. Discounted permit rates of up to 100% on the first permit for cars with very low emissions should also be considered. This scheme also allows for the immediate cancellation of permits issued to a resident that moves out of a residential scheme area, allowing the new occupant immediate access to permit parking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.a	The Review Group recommends that a new residents' parking scheme as outlined in 4.13 above is introduced for all existing schemes to eliminate the issuing of a visitors' permit that can be used on any vehicle.
4.b	It is recommended that the introduction of the new residents' parking scheme should be accompanied by clear promotional material explaining why the changes are deemed necessary and highlighting the increased flexibility the new scheme provides for two car households and emphasizing that residents do not have a "right" to park outside their house.
4.c	The Review Group recommends that tradesmen be permitted to purchase visitors' scratchcards directly from the council whilst working on properties within a residential parking area. Proof of the property owner's residency and the nature of the work should be required
4.d	Other essential peripatetic service providers will normally be able to deliver their service within the currently available free on-street parking time restrictions.
4.e	It is recommended that the boundaries of proposed new schemes should be defined by officers using their experience. Individual roads within a proposed scheme should not be allowed to opt out of the whole scheme.

4.f	The Review Group recommends that the residents' schemes in East Street and Castle Street be amalgamated. In future, where small schemes exist for particular or historic reasons and, in the opinion of officers they would be usefully amalgamated, then this should be taken as a management decision and will not require a majority vote of residents.
4.g	The Review Group recommends the introduction of resident only parking bays in roads within the historic core of the medieval city where residents' schemes exist and specific problems are encountered with a high volume of short stay parking for shopping. The number of spaces provided should only be a proportion of the number of permits issued to the street and should not be collocated with individual addresses. In future it may become necessary to provide resident only bays on edge of town centre roads also.
4.h	Where community group premises exist within a residents' parking zone which does not have access to off-street parking, the Review Group requests that the Parking Team work with the group to enable them to purchase a supply of daily scratchcards at a discount for events/matches set in advance. The parking team will need to ensure the necessary checks are in place to prevent misuse of these permits.
4.i	The Review Group recommends the Head of Highways undertake an immediate review of deficiencies in the signing and lining of restricted parking areas within the county. Where deficiencies are found that a programme of works is instigated to rectify them. Further, that a prioritised system of fault reporting be set up in conjunction with the Civil Enforcement Teams to ensure effective future maintenance.
4.j	The Review Group recommends the Head of Highways instigate a review of the restricted waiting times within the historic core of Hereford city with the aim of reducing these down to more appropriate times to promote a higher turnover.
4.k	The Review Group recommends that the Head of Highways introduce a county-wide relaxation of the restrictions applied to commercial loading bays in town centres to facilitate their use for un/loading by locally owned small businesses that use their private vehicles for business support. Alternatively, that a county-wide scheme of private vehicle registration be instigated for these businesses to enable them to use the commercial loading bays, whichever method is most effective and least costly.

5. Whether and how charges for on-street parking could facilitate the on-going support of a park and ride system in Hereford City and other sustainable travel improvements.

- 5.1. The Review Group heard conflicting evidence about the possibility of income from on-street parking charges being able to support the costs of a park & ride scheme. The recent introduction of limited on-street charges in Worcester was, in the opinion of their Civil Enforcement Team Leader, too low to fund park & ride.
- 5.2. Set-up costs for the infrastructure of on-street parking charges mean that for the first few years of operation, charges would simply fund their own introduction. The Review Group accepts that in the longer term, there would be some income that could off-set other sustainable travel options for the visitor to Hereford city, but there was a strongly held view by both the Review Group and many of the people it interviewed that the alternative options should be in place *before* charges are introduced.
- 5.3. Much of the work of the Review Group was carried out whilst the current national recession was developing and we have therefore been unable to take full account of how the recession is changing footfall in Hereford city and elsewhere. It is clear that there has been a downturn in the number of people accessing the city centre which has been alluded to in the reporting of lower than normal income from car parks in the city. The introduction of on-street charges at this stage is likely to increase the pressures already being felt by retailers and businesses operating in town centres across Herefordshire and is therefore not considered an option at this stage.
- 5.4. The Review Group considered the future possibility of individual roads within a town centre developing plans to improve the design of the local environment to promote the economic regeneration of the immediate area. Such community-led plans may wish to examine the possibility of paying for the improvements through the introduction of on-street parking charges for visitors. The Review Group thought this to be a more appropriate use of potential income from on-street charging schemes as the relationship between the charge and what it is paying for is more instant.
- 5.5. The Review Group discussed alternative approaches to the funding of park & ride and other sustainable travel schemes. It was generally felt that income from parking schemes, both on & off-street should be ring-fenced to provide a regular investment budget for strategic environmental improvements and developing sustainable travel options for the visiting public. The Review Group believes that, properly promoted at the point of payment, this approach would allow the public to understand why charges were being made for car parking. Ring-fencing of this nature should have a geographical relation to the improvements paid for; thus, money charged for car parking in Ledbury should pay for environmental improvements to Ledbury and not simply disappear in to the council's general expenditure.
- 5.6. The Review Group accepts that on-street parking charges are an inevitable part of a truly integrated approach to developing a sustainable transport system for our city and market towns. Their introduction will never be popular, but this can be greatly ameliorated by the way in which it is done. Clearly linking payment for any type of parking with real outcomes in the improvement of the environment and sustainable travel options for the area were seen as the way forward.

RECOMMENDATION

5.a	The Review Group cannot recommend the introduction of on-street parking charges at this current time. Future introduction of on-street parking charges should be detailed in the parking strategy (3.b & 7.a) to encourage modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport.
5.b	The Review Group recommends that should community-led plans be forthcoming regarding the re-design and regeneration of individual streets within the city centre, then consideration should be given to funding these up front and then recouping the costs by the introduction of charges within the streets that have benefitted.
5.c	The Review Group recommends that all future income from parking of any sort be ring-fenced to provide a regular investment budget for strategic environmental improvements that promote sustainable travel options within the geographical location that the income is earned. Outcomes from this investment strategy should be promoted at point of payment for parking services.

6. The extent to which on-street parking controls can support the LTP objective of reducing congestion in Hereford City

- 6.1. The Local Transport Plan states there are over 400 on-street parking spaces available in Hereford city representing 15 % of publicly available parking provision. These are *all* subject to restrictions on the amount of time a vehicle is allowed to park after which a penalty charge notice can be issued by a Civil Enforcement Officer, time limits vary between 1 and 3 hours.
- 6.2. To assess whether further controls, such as the introduction of parking charges for on-street parking spaces, would support the LTP objective of reducing congestion in Hereford city, the Review Group attempted to gain an understanding of why congestion occurs in the first place. Throughout the Review Group's investigations, various theories were proposed as to why congestion was such a problem. The widely held belief that Hereford requires a second river crossing to take through traffic away from the city was a recurring theme, but this did not answer another widely held belief that the majority of the car journeys in Hereford start and end within the boundaries of the city, signifying that the through traffic may not be the cause of the problem.
- 6.3. Congestion is clearly at its worst during the morning and evening rush hours with a very busy period for the "school run" between 15.00 – 16.00hrs. Outside of these times, notwithstanding road works and other incidents, waiting times due to congestion were not considered to be onerous. Indeed it was also generally accepted that Hereford did not have a serious congestion problem during the school holiday periods, suggesting that a relatively small reduction in the amount of traffic can have a significant benefit on congestion levels.
- 6.4. The Review Group heard of the excellent work being done under the School Travel Plan initiative introduced by central government, requiring all schools to have a Travel Plan in place by 2010. Whilst 86% of Herefordshire schools have got a plan, the Review Group saw little evidence of their effective implementation and hence little effect on congestion levels. This is exacerbated by parental choice under the national admission to school policy leading to a high percentage of Herefordshire parents exercising their choice not to send their children to their "catchment school", increasing the likelihood of large numbers of children being transported to school by car.
- 6.5. Entitlement to free school travel requires primary pupils to live more than 2 miles and secondary pupils more than 3 miles from their catchment school. These distances were set in 1875 and the Review Group thought it highly unlikely that modern parents would require the children to walk such distances. The discretionary ability for the Council to extend this eligibility would be prohibitively expensive and would do little to address parental concerns over the safe delivery of their children to school.
- 6.6. The LTP also identifies over 2500 public off-street car parking spaces with almost another 5000 privately owned non-residential parking spaces also available, with the vast majority of these spaces distributed close to or inside Hereford's medieval city centre. The provision of such a large number of parking spaces, whether privately owned or publically controlled, must be influencing congestion levels.
- 6.7. The LTP also states "The Council will seek to redress the balance of total public to private non-residential parking supply, particularly within Hereford, through the use of planning controls", but the Review Group found little evidence that this had been strategically thought through and applied.

6.8. Although there were some anecdotal opinions about drivers circulating the city streets trying to find a space to park in, the review Group found no evidence to support the view that the provision of on-street parking in Hereford city was increasing the congestion experienced on our roads. Indeed it is the stated belief of several members of the Review Group that Hereford's difficulties with congestion are not nearly as bad as the generally held public perception of the problem. A well thought out, strategic policy approach to congestion in Hereford that includes better implementation of city school travel plans; a reduction in the number of privately owned parking spaces and the development of city boundary car parks with attractive routes linking them to the centre needs to be dovetailed with the introduction of on-street parking charges at the right moment to promote modal shift.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6.a	The Review Group recommends that increased on-street parking controls in the form of charges should only be introduced when viable sustainable alternative options for city boundary parking are already in place. It is at this point that charges could be used to promote the sustainable alternatives and promote congestion reduction.
6.b	The Review Group recommends that a targeted campaign of school travel plan implementation and monitoring be carried out within areas considered to be experiencing high levels of congestion, notably Hereford city.
6.c	The Review Group recommends that the Head of Planning and Transportation Services draw up an action plan to redress the balance of total public to private non-residential parking supply in Hereford. This could form part of the Hereford Area Plan recommended in section 7 below.

7. The relationship between on-street and off-street parking and in particular how the physical capacity of the highway network impacts on this relationship.

- 7.1. During the Review Group's deliberations, it became increasingly clear that the relationship between on-street and off-street parking was a complex one. The level of car parking provision, its geographical location and the way in which it is priced and paid for all contribute to how efficient the system is and how successful the service is at enabling people to access the facilities they need to. The physical capacity of the highway network, much criticised in Hereford for its inability "to cope", is also seen as a lynchpin to the successful operation of a market town. Access to a town's services should be easy, well signposted and pleasant to use and should encourage users to opt for more sustainable modes of travel to reduce congestion.
- 7.2. As has been explored in section 6 above, on-street parking in Hereford is a fairly small, but significant proportion of the publicly available parking spaces (15%), but when taken as a proportion of the total number of parking spaces, including the privately owned non-residential provision, the proportion is far less significant (5.3%). By definition, the on-street parking available to the visitor is geographically located as city centre or edge of centre, but so is the majority of the off-street parking provision too. The presence of a large long stay car park at Merton Meadow priced at an incredibly reasonable £1 per car per day does nothing to encourage commuters to explore alternatives to driving into the centre of town; indeed parking here is cheaper than using the bus, actively discouraging commuters from changing their habits.
- 7.3. The extensive provision of parking of all types close to Hereford city centre encourages the public expectation of being able to drive freely into a medieval town without hindrance and at little cost. The result is that the physical capacity of the highway is placed under pressure during peak demand.
- 7.4. The Review Group was disappointed to discover that there is no purpose built long stay city boundary parking provision at all and is of the opinion that whilst this remains the case, little can be done to encourage modal shift as there are simply no alternatives. It is clear that this lack of a strategic approach to the provision of parking that encourages modal shift within a traffic reduction framework is yet to be developed in Herefordshire.
- 7.5. The Review Group welcomes the development of a park & ride facility to the north of Hereford, but has heard some evidence to suggest that its effect will only be felt when similar facilities are developed on more of the main routes into the city and that these should not be limited to park & ride. Park & cycle facilities with secure overnight cycle storage should be included within these new schemes with new payment systems to reward regular users (see section 8 below). This is in line with the Key Outcomes in the LTP.
- 7.6. Once these other options are in place, the council should actively seek to reduce the availability of long term parking at city centre and edge of centre sites, both publicly and privately owned. High quality medium term parking (up to 4 hours) should be developed on edge of centre sites, with attractive routes linking them with shops and services. Only short term parking should be available within the historic core of the city. All parking should be available on the more flexible payment system outlined in section 8. Consideration should be given to increasing parking charges close to the centre, whilst decreasing charges for city boundary car parking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7.a	The Review Group recommends that the Head of Planning and Transportation Services instigate the development of a comprehensive parking strategy as part of the Hereford Area Plan. This document should provide the policy behind an achievable parking strategy which slowly develops a network of sustainable parking options that promote modal shift within a traffic reduction framework for Hereford City followed by the Market Towns. New payment systems, behavioural change and congestion reduction should form key outcomes for the parking strategy.
7.b	The Review Group cannot make any recommendations to change on-street parking strategy in isolation of off-street parking provision. To do so would be counterproductive and would not form an integrated approach.
7.c	The Review Group recommends that the routes connecting all medium stay car parks (edge of centre) be examined for potential environmental improvements to ensure that these are perceived as safe and pleasant to use.

8. The potential impact in Hereford of new enabling technologies that could support a shift in behaviours and help to promote a sustainable approach to accessing the City Centre.

- 8.1. The Review Group was only able to gather information from one company regarding new enabling technologies and this centred on the use of mobile telephones to pay for parking services. The Chairman of the Review Group did meet with a company developing smart card payments services, but it was evident that this technology was still at development stage and the costs of introduction would be prohibitive. However, the information gathered about the potential of mobile phone technology was extremely promising.
- 8.2. The Review Group heard that it is possible to pay for many different services using the mobile phone provider's charging system, but the high level of fees taken by the companies meant that this could not be considered as an option for parking fees.
- 8.3. Alternatively, it would be possible to develop a system using a credit/debit card pre-registered via a website to a particular mobile telephone number. Using the standard SMS text procedure, a visitor to an on-street parking space or car park would text the location of the car parking space, the duration of their stay and their vehicle registration number. The charge could then be automatically taken from the credit/debit card. The system could be set up to send a reminder text when their parking charge was due to run out, giving the visitor the option to extend their payment to the limit of any time restrictions applicable. Civil Enforcement Officers could be provided with a hand held mobile device that would provide up to the minute information on what spaces had been paid for by which car.
- 8.4. Information received by the Review Group suggests that this type of system would not cost a fortune to set up and is already well within the operational capabilities of current technology. Guaranteed response rates function at all times with built-in capacity to enable efficient functioning even in extreme circumstances – the rescue efforts during the July 7th London bombings were co-ordinated using this system.
- 8.5. A benefit of this type of payment system is the flexibility it can provide in offering both the "carrot" and the "stick" to encourage behavioural change to more sustainable methods of accessing the centre of towns. If a mobile phone payment system was adopted in the new park & ride facility, it would be possible to automatically allow the person who used park & ride all week to access their workplace, a free period of parking at the weekend for family shopping as a "reward" for behaviour that reduces congestion and emissions. If on-street parking charges are introduced, it would be possible to still offer anyone registered with the system, say, one on-street parking slot in town per week free of charge, which would reduce opposition to the introduction of charges. If that same person wished to park on-street on a daily basis, the "stick" could be introduced by increasing charges for unsustainable behaviour.
- 8.6. It would also be possible to offer discounts on higher city centre parking charges according to how often they are used, favouring the occasional visitor and encouraging the more regular user to park in city boundary car parks, thereby encouraging modal shift as stated in *all* of the Key Outcomes for Herefordshire in the LTP.
- 8.7. The Review Group heard many requests from interviewees about "pay on exit" car parks, with retailers reporting that many sales are lost because shoppers are rushing back to their cars before their ticket runs out. The successful introduction of a mobile phone payment service would negate the requirement for the expensive new machinery with staffing that pay on exit

car parks require and, as stated in 8.3 above, the system would even send a text to remind you to top up your parking payment if you were running late, without requiring your return to the car park.

- 8.8. Implementing a cashless payment system that requires individuals to pre-register predicated a level of interaction between service provider and user. By definition, most users that pre-register will have a degree of local connection, either by living or working locally or by being a regular visitor to our county. The dialogue that would need to occur for such a system to work should be taken as an opportunity to promote modal shift to more sustainable approaches to travel. Such a system will not suit everyone and a cash system will always be required for the occasional visitor, but in the long term, it is possible that unforeseen benefits would emerge in a similar way to those that have emerged with the introduction of the “Oyster” card in London.
- 8.9. The Review Group recognises that the detail of any such scheme would be complex, but that cashless systems are already in operation elsewhere, notably at Westminster City Council, and could be used as examples of best practice to enable the development of a scheme of excellence. Further, a system that actively promotes behavioural change in line with the stated policy aims of the LTP, but still provides the flexibility that people require, will be more readily accepted by the general public. This would provide a more integrated approach to our local transport network and enable people to access the facilities they need to whilst reducing the impact of this on the environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8.a	The Review Group recommends that the Head of Highways investigates the development and implementation of a mobile phone cashless payment system for all of the county’s car parks as outlined above. At the outset, this system needs to be developed to ensure it has the capacity for automatically rewarding sustainable behaviour and applying penalties for unsustainable use of the transport network. Further, when on-street charges are introduced in the future, the Review Group recommends that this system has the ability to provide all registered users with one free parking period per week, ameliorating the effects of charging and ensuring access to services is maintained.
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9. The current provision for on-street cycle parking and whether it is sufficient

- 9.1. The Review Group received information that promoted cycling as one of the most sustainable modes of personal transport, being cheap with zero CO2 emissions and offering substantial health benefits. With two thirds of all car journeys being less than 3 miles which would take the average cyclist 15-20 minutes, cycling could be an extremely effective method for reducing traffic and easing congestion. During the rush hour over short journeys, cycling is often the fastest way to get around our towns and city.
- 9.2. From the information obtained during the review the Review Group commends the on-going work for the introduction of new cycle parking facilities in the county.
- 9.3. The Review Group did not receive any information that provided a definitive answer to whether the provision of on-street cycle parking is sufficient. The gradual increase year on year of cycle journeys within Hereford, suggested that it may not be which was corroborated by the personal experience of the Chairman of the Review Group. The Review Group was informed that there was currently a moratorium on the installation of cycle racks at new locations within High Town, Hereford, although some existing racks are to be replaced to accommodate cycles with wider handlebars. Locations on the periphery of Hereford centre were being investigated, with plans to add to the provision at health centres and doctors' surgeries as well as improved facilities in Ledbury and Leominster.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1	The Review Group recommends that the current moratorium on new cycle parking facilities in High Town, Hereford, be lifted and further sites for additional parking be investigated and introduced.
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ON-STREET PARKING

Report By: **ACTING HEAD OF HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION**

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To highlight the Council's current policy with regard to on-street parking controls and consider whether it may be appropriate for this Committee to undertake a review to determine whether it would wish to recommend any improvements.

Financial Implications

1. None as a result of this report

Background

2. The Council's Countywide Car Parking Strategy forms part of the Council's Local Transport Plan that sets out the overall transport strategy for the County. This recognises the important role that the parking policy can play in developing a sustainable and integrated transport system for the County. It encompasses the Council's current approach to the management of both on and off-street parking. A copy of the strategy is attached as Appendix 1 for reference.
3. During 2004, this Committee carried out a detailed review of the previous strategy. That review considered the full range of issues relating to car parking from strategic policy to more detailed implementation issues. It also included comprehensive consultation with stakeholders. The recommendations arising from that review helped with the development of the current strategy that was subsequently incorporated into the Local Transport Plan.
4. The strategy sets out a countywide approach to the management of the Council's off-street car parks. This includes detailed area strategies for Hereford and the Market Towns to ensure that car park management is tailored to recognise local needs. It is not considered necessary to review this aspect of the current strategy at present.
5. There are over 1600 on-street parking spaces available in the main centres of the County, all of which are currently free and generally controlled by means of limited waiting restrictions. Within Hereford there are over 400 spaces, representing 15% of publicly available parking provision for the City Centre. Decriminalised parking enforcement was introduced some years ago throughout Herefordshire and the Council employs a team of Parking Attendants to undertake enforcement of parking restrictions.
6. The current strategy identifies that during the period of the current Local Transport Plan, consideration will be given to the introduction of on-street charges in central Hereford to contribute to managing demand and provide revenue funding to support Park and Ride or other sustainable transport improvements. The Council is currently developing proposals for

park and ride facilities for Hereford and it is hoped to bring forward a scheme to serve traffic entering the City from the North in 2009. The Committee may wish to consider the approach that should be taken to this aspect of the strategy.

7. In addition, the Council has over recent years continued with a programme of Residents Parking Schemes in residential areas close to the centre of Hereford, and in appropriate locations in the Market Towns, to deter commuter and shopper parking and help enable residents to park. Given the number of schemes that have now been introduced, it may be appropriate to review the extent to which they have been successful and whether there are any improvements that could be made to how the schemes are operated and enforced.
8. The Committee may wish to consider the approach they would wish to take to reviewing the recommending any improvements to the Council's policy in relation to the management of on-street parking.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee consider whether to undertake a review of the Council's policy in relation to on-street parking controls.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Appendix 1: Extract from Herefordshire Local Transport Plan 2006/7

**Extract from Herefordshire Local Transport Plan 2 – 2006/7 – 2010/11.
Countywide Car Parking Strategy. Pages 137 to 143**

9.7 Countywide Car Parking Strategy

9.7.1 Introduction And Overview

Parking policy can play a major role in supporting the development of a sustainable and integrated transport system. The availability of parking space is known to be a key factor in determining people's choice of mode for a particular journey. Together with improvements in alternative modes to provide the "carrot", strategies for parking supply and control can offer an important tool manage demand to encourage a modal shift away from the private car towards more sustainable modes.

Park and Ride can also form an essential part of such a package by offering an alternative to the car for the final part of a journey to a centre. It can therefore enable further demand management measures to be applied within the centre to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors.

The important role parking policy needs to play in addressing Herefordshire transport issues is recognised and this strategy seeks to manage both on and off street parking to maximise the benefits to the people of Herefordshire. This means balancing competing needs of shoppers and visitors against the needs of those who rely on a car to get to work and need all day parking. Charges are used to help to manage the use of the available space to balance these demands. The strategy is integrated and consistent with the objectives of other local strategic plans and recognises how important the car is for travel in this rural county.

Car Parking Strategy has a significant role in delivering the overall aims of the Local Transport Plan. The following table highlights the key linkages between the overall Shared Priorities, Key Outcomes that we have identified for Herefordshire and elements within the Car Parking Strategy.

9.7.2 Policy Linkages

Table 9.7A: Parking Policy Linkages

Shared Priorities	Key Outcomes	Car Parking Strategy Contribution
Delivering Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to jobs & services • Increased use of sustainable modes of travel • Assets maintained well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of convenient and accessible parking for disabled people • Development of Park and Ride
Tackling Congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced congestion • Assets maintained well • Supported and enabled economic development • Increased use of sustainable modes of travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Park and Ride • Improved signing reduce congestion caused by searching for spaces
Safer Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved safety • Assets maintained well • Increased use of sustainable modes of travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decriminalised parking enforcement to improve flow of traffic and improve road safety
Better Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarded environment • Reduced congestion • Increased use of sustainable modes of travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charging strategy to support demand management, encourage use of sustainable modes and deter commuter parking close to centres • Improved signing reduce congestion caused by searching for spaces

9.7.3 Developing The Strategy

During 2004, the Council's Environment Scrutiny Committee carried out a detailed review of this strategy. This review considered the full range of issues relating to car parking from strategic policy to more detailed implementation issues. Comprehensive consultation was carried out to inform the review. This included a public session where the Review Team questioned six key witnesses from stakeholder groups and heard evidence of best practice from elsewhere. The consultation carried out included:

- A questionnaire to key organisations, Town and Parish Councils;
- Press statements inviting comment on the Strategy;
- Evidence submitted by key sections of the Council including. tourism, economic development, planning and the County Treasurers;

- Benchmarking information from the Midland Parking Managers Forum.
- Local Councillors were invited to submit their observations.
- Town or Parish Council meetings.
- Public examination meeting
- Focus group sessions to provided qualitative information regarding the likely views of members of the general public.

The review identified that the overall strategy needs to provide appropriate parking for the following market segments.

a) Visitors / Shoppers / Tourists

The Strategy should allow for short stay parking on and off street close to shopping areas, improved signage and provision of Park and Ride for Hereford.

b) Workers / Commuters

Long stay parking should be located further from centres. Location and management of such spaces should encourage use of alternative forms of travel for journeys to work and support Park and Ride in Hereford.

c) Residents

Residents Parking Schemes will be introduced in areas close to centres, subject to local support. Such schemes will be designed to deter long stay commuter and shopper parking which can cause problems for resident wishing to park near where they live.

In developing a Countywide Car Parking Strategy the review identified the need to take account the following key constraints:

- Government Transport Policy
- Overall Local Transport Plan strategy
- Land use planning guidance and policy
- The need to maintain financial income to the Council
- The need to carry out fair and effective enforcement
- The resources available for improving quality, maintenance and signing

The recommendations of the review have been used in the development of this strategy.

Strategy Elements

9.7.4 Transport Policy

The overall parking policy supports the Council's aim to encourage the use of alternative forms of transport to the private car. However, it is recognised that in a predominantly rural county like Herefordshire, many journeys will continue to be undertaken by car and the overall supply of parking needs to be adequate to support the economic vitality of Hereford and the Market Towns.

Funding for capital improvements to the local transport network is available through the Local Transport Plan allocation. However, many essential measures to address the transport needs of the County, such as Community Transport and Park and Ride, require ongoing revenue funding to make them work. Income generated from Car Parking provision and enforcement will be used to support the objectives of the Local Transport Plan. This may enable additional funding to be made available to support sustainable transport projects, such as Park and Ride, Community Transport, public transport, cycling and walking. It may also be appropriate to use such funding to improve the quality of signing and car parks themselves.

9.7.5 Supply & Quality

There must be sufficient parking capacity and turnover of spaces to meet the economic vitality safety and access objectives set out above for the county. A sample of council car parks are surveyed quarterly to establish occupancy levels and this information will be used to determine the need for additional spaces.

There should be sufficient overall parking supply to support economic activity. However, this should be managed and located so as to support Local Transport Plan objectives to reduce congestion and encourage the use of alternative forms of transport, such as Park and Ride. Within Hereford, new parking supply should be provided in the form of Park and Ride with charges and management of car parks in the City carried out to maximise Park and Ride use and reduce congestion.

The following key principles will be followed:

- Residents should generally be able to park in residential streets. Residents parking schemes will be introduced to achieve this.
- Car parks need to be well signed, attractive, easy to use and well maintained. Quality is largely determined by available budget and under the council's Asset Management Plan, a recommended maintenance programme has been identified for treatment of surfaces, signs and lines.

- In setting charges, consideration will be given to increasing these sums in order to enable improvements to be made to the quality of the car parks.
- The Council recognises that car parks represent a significant property portfolio. As part of the Council's ongoing role of property management, the profitability, capital value and strategic worth of Council owned car parks will be considered to ensure the use of such land for car parking continues to meet corporate aims.

9.7.6 Charging

In considering the level of charges in Council controlled car parks the following key principles will be followed:

- Some free parking is required in most centres, either on or off street, with more being required where alternatives to the car are less readily available.
- A "Zonal" policy with short stay charging for inner car parks to help visitors and shoppers find spaces convenient to town centres is appropriate for Hereford.
- Any charges must be reasonable in comparison with neighbouring towns.
- Any charges must be in simple multiples of common coin denominations.
- Charges will be reviewed at each car park periodically

Current charges in Council controlled car parks are available on the Council's website at www.herefordshire.gov.uk.

9.7.7 Approach To Different Types Of Parking Provision

Off-street parking:

Public Off Street Parking

Across the County there are over 4500 public off-street spaces available in Hereford and the five Market Towns of Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye. Hereford has the largest number of spaces (over 2500) all of which are covered by a charging regime. Outside Hereford, charges are made in certain car parks in all of the five Market Towns of Ledbury, Ross-on-Wye, Kington, Leominster and Bromyard.

The current supply of public off-street parking is considered to be broadly adequate to meet the needs of the Market Towns, although recent redevelopment within Bromyard has indicated a possible need for more publicly available parking provision. Within Hereford there is concern that demand for parking exceeds supply. Car parks within the Inner Ring Road are effectively full during the week and on Market Day car

parks north of the Inner Ring Road are also effectively full. However, a particular deficiency has been identified on the south side of the City Centre which results in longer journeys for vehicles searching for a parking space. In addition, the current ratio of Private Non-Residential to Public Parking is 60:40 in Hereford, this significantly weakens the ability for parking to act as a tool for demand management.

The approach to the provision and management of off-street car parking seeks:

- To support the economic vitality of Hereford City and Market Towns by providing land close to commercial centres where those who wish to access shops and services can park their cars.
- To ensure parking of vehicles does not obstruct the public highway.
- To support the overall transport strategy for the County.
- To help relieve Hereford City and Market Towns of traffic congestion.

We will manage off-street parking as follows:

- Zonal charging structures for Council controlled car parks in Hereford.
- Charges in selected public car parks in all five Market Towns.
- Provision of some free parking in market towns to support the local economy
- Concessionary Parking Scheme for local pensioners based on 'Home Town' Zones.

On-street parking,

There are over 1600 on-street parking spaces available in the main centres of the County, all of which are currently free and generally controlled by means of limited waiting restrictions. Within Hereford there are over 400 spaces, representing 15% of publicly available parking provision for the City Centre. Decriminalised parking enforcement has been introduced throughout Herefordshire and the Council employs a team of Parking Attendants to enforce parking restrictions.

The approach to the management of on-street parking across the County seeks:

- To ensure the safe and free flow of traffic that is essential to economic vitality and business growth.
- To provide for access for servicing for businesses
- To provide residents parking in appropriate locations
- To ensure effective and sensitive enforcement of restrictions
- To provide for disabled people to park and effective enforcement, to prevent obstructions that can impact upon disabled people, bus services and effective loading / unloading by businesses.

- To ensure that on-street parking enforcement supports economic activity by ensuring effective turnover of short-stay parking for shoppers and visitors in the centres of towns.

We will manage on-street parking as follows:

- Decriminalised Parking Enforcement.
- During the period of this Local Transport Plan, consideration will be given to the introduction of on-street charges in central Hereford to contribute to managing demand and provide revenue funding to support Park & Ride or other sustainable transport improvements.
- The introduction of Residents Parking Schemes in residential areas close to the centre of Hereford, and in appropriate locations in the Market Towns, to deter commuter and shopper parking.
- The use of limited waiting restrictions within the centres of Market Towns.

Private Non-Residential Parking

The availability of a parking space is an important factor in determining a commuter's choice of mode. A reduction in the availability of private non-residential spaces can be achieved in the longer term through the use of planning controls. Whilst there are over 7000 such spaces in the County's main centres, the majority are located in Hereford City (almost 5000). The scope for controlling the provision of new spaces is mainly confined to Hereford where it is most likely that alternative modes to the private car are available for journeys to work. Parking Standards are currently under review and will be developed to support the aims of the Local Transport Plan and the Unitary Development Plan.

Hereford City Centre has been identified as an area within which a reduction of up to 100% may be applied to the number of spaces required as part of any new development. Developer contributions may therefore be raised in lieu of the provision of parking spaces and the money used to contribute to alternative transport facilities. The Council will seek to redress the balance of total public to private non-residential parking supply, particularly within Hereford through the use of planning controls.

AREA STRATEGIES

The following paragraphs summarise the approach to applying these principles in Hereford and the Market Towns

9.7.8 Hereford

Hereford is the county town, attracting large numbers of workers, shoppers and business trips and also a significant number of tourists. The need here is primarily to manage the available spaces. By managing the cost and supply of car parking within the City parking policy can contribute to managing car use and promoting the use of alternatives to the car where they are available and support the development of Park and Ride.

Studies and consultation have highlighted a concern that in Hereford demand for parking exceeds supply and it is proposed that additional capacity be provided through the addition of Park and Ride facilities. Car parks within the Inner Ring Road are effectively full during the week and on market day car parks north of the Inner Ring Road are also effectively full.

During 2004/5 a detailed feasibility study was carried out into the provision of Park and Ride for Hereford. This concluded that there is a convincing business case for providing Park and Ride for the City and that priority should be given to developing a site to serve traffic entering the city from the North first to be followed by provision South of the City, as these represent the highest and second highest likely demand for Park and Ride use based on traffic flows and surveys of potential users. The Hereford Transport Review also recommended that two further sites should be developed in the longer term to serve demand from the South West and North East of the City and the relative priority for these proposals will be developed during future LTP periods.

Due to the high demand for parking space in the City, there is also a need to manage the available spaces better to reduce the amount of circulating traffic searching for a space and contribute to reducing congestion.

The following points summarise the approach to be taken in Hereford:

- Three charging zones (central, middle and outer) with charges close to the centre set to encourage short stay parking for shoppers and deter long stay commuter parking
- Park and Ride facilities will be developed to provide additional parking supply for the City and support modal shift for journeys to the City Centre

- During the period of this Local Transport Plan, consideration will be given to the introduction of on-street charges in central Hereford to contribute to managing demand and provide revenue funding to support Park & Ride or other sustainable transport improvements.
- Improvements will be made to direction signing to car parks and it is hoped to introduce dynamic signing as part of developing an Intelligent Transport System for the City to highlight the availability of spaces and reduce congestion.
- Season tickets are made available in the outer and middle zones only with costs based on a discount compared to parking daily five days a week fifty weeks a year.

9.7.9 *Ross-On-Wye*

Ross combines the functions of a market town with those of a tourist attraction and a “gateway” to other places. Charges in Council controlled car parks are set to reflect the fact that there is significant demand for parking by both visitors and local people wishing to access jobs and local services. Charges for car parks closer to the centre are set to encourage short stay and a turnover of spaces to support the local economy with longer term parking allocated to car parks further from the centre. There are no on-street charges.

9.7.10 *Ledbury*

Ledbury is a thriving market town with a significant tourist draw. It is important to manage the parking to ensure that visitors are well catered for. Charges in Council controlled car parks are set to reflect the fact that there is significant demand for parking by both visitors and local people wishing to access jobs and local services. There are no on-street charges.

9.7.11 *Bromyard*

Bromyard is a small market town that serves mainly its local population and people from the surrounding rural areas. The current charges are set to ensure spaces are usually available near the centre whilst keeping enough free parking spaces for those not wishing to pay but willing to walk a little further. Redevelopment of land previously used for off-street car parking over recent years has indicated a need to provide additional off-street parking spaces to meet current demand. The Council is

investigating opportunities to provide additional car parking to support the local economy.

9.7.12 Leominster

Leominster serves as a commercial and administrative centre for north Herefordshire in addition to providing several tourist destinations. The town is well provided with conveniently located car parks but it is important to ensure a reasonable turnover of spaces particularly for shoppers and visitors to support the local economy. Where charges are made in Council controlled car parks, the level of charges are set to reflect the need to support the economy of the town. There are no on-street charges.

9.7.13 Kington

Kington is the smallest of Herefordshire's Market Towns with council car parks. It is important here to ensure an adequate supply of parking, including both on and off street spaces. Where charges are made in Council controlled car parks, the level of charges are set to reflect the fact that demand for parking is mainly local in nature and is required to support the local economy. There are no on-street charges.

9.7.14 Residents Parking

Near town centres and employment areas it is not always possible for residents to find a parking space due to use of limited on street space by commuters and shoppers. The availability of such spaces for commuters and shoppers can also undermines the overall parking strategy that seeks to manage the supply and cost of parking to make best use of available space and promote a shift to more sustainable forms of transport.

To overcome these problems, Residents Parking Schemes have been introduced in a number of areas, particularly in Hereford, in consultation with residents. Further schemes will be introduced where there is local support. Such schemes restrict use of on-street spaces to resident permit holders only.

It is, however, necessary to allow for visitors, deliveries, traders and carers to park when necessary, in addition to residents. The simplest way of achieving this is restrict waiting to a short duration with an exemption to the time limit for resident permit holders. This will be the normal form of residents parking scheme within Herefordshire.

In some locations pressure on space is so great that this arrangement does not "reserve" sufficient space for the residents and in these circumstances consideration

will be given to making a more prescriptive order, reserving specific marked bays for use by resident permit holders only.

The general approach to granting residents permits will be to issue permits to car owners registered as residential council tax payers at an address within the relevant area. Where space allows, two permits will be available, one marked for the resident's vehicle and one for visitors. Where houses are in multiple occupation, only one permit per council taxpayer will be issued in order to reduce pressure on kerbside space. In no case will the issue of a permit guarantee the availability of a parking space. The charge for permits will cover the administrative costs of issuing the permit plus a contribution to the costs of enforcement.

9.7.15 Christmas And Special Events

The Council recognises the importance of supporting the local economy and the role that car parking can make to this. As a result, for certain periods of free parking are traditionally allowed at Christmas in Hereford and Ross-on-Wye to encourage use of local shops for Christmas shopping. This is primarily because, unlike other towns in the County, there are no free public car parks in Hereford or Ross-on-Wye.

The use of car parks for non-profit making events is permitted subject to sufficient parking continuing to be available elsewhere for the general public.

9.7.16 Provision For Disabled People

Concessions for the disabled people wishing to park on-street are set nationally, exempting those displaying a blue badge from the time limits otherwise applying and allowing a stop of up to three hours on double yellow lines providing it does not cause danger to other road users. The Council is keen to ensure that appropriate car parking is provided for disabled people. Therefore, in order to also encourage parking off street, all council car parks allow three hours free parking for blue badge holders. Where possible, off-street car parks also include designated wide spaces to assist wheelchair users.

9.7.17 Parking Concession For Pensioners

Concessions for pensioners were the subject of considerable debate and consultation in 1999 and 2000 and a countywide system was introduced in January 2001. This allows a pensioner to buy a permit allowing two hours free parking in the town closest to their home. The scheme has been designed to be consistent with policy in relation to transport and social exclusion and helps to support the

economies of the Market Towns, encourage local communities and encourage shorter car trips.

9.7.18 Parking And The Council's Travel Plan

The Council has adopted a comprehensive Travel Plan to promote the use of sustainable modes for journeys to, from and during work by staff and visitors. The management of car parking in relation to Council buildings and by staff when carrying out their duties will be considered through the development and implementation of the Travel Plan. This will seek to encourage greater use of alternative modes and support the promotion of car sharing.

Interviewees for the On-Street Parking Review

Officers

Mr A Ashcroft – Head of Planning and Transportation
Mr Richard Ball, - Head of Highways
Mr Andrew Blackman – Admissions and Transport Manager
Mr S Burgess – Interim Transportation Manager
Mrs Alison Cook – Income and Recovery Manager
Mr Jim Davies – Public Transport Manager
Mr M Edwards – Integrated Transport Assistant
Mr A Lee-Jones – Lead Engineer (Traffic)
Mr Mick Morris – Parking Manager
Mr Simon Moran – Civil Enforcement Officer
Mrs Cynthia Palmer (Hereford City Centre Manager).
Ms Linda Sinker – School Travel Advisor

Users of the Service:

Mr A Carter – President, Castle Green Bowling Club, Hereford
Mr Philip Collins, Collins Engineering Ltd
Mr I Higton – Chair, Castle Street Residents Association, Hereford
Mr Morris Jones - Phillip Morris, Widemarsh Street, Hereford;
Ms Paige Mitchell
Mr Edward Pritchard - Pritchard and Son, King Street, Hereford.
Rev P Towner – Chair, St James Residents Association, Hereford

Technology provider

Mr Tony Burt & Ms Hannah Stewart (NetSecrets Ltd)

Residents Parking Schemes

Policy and Criteria

Policy

Public highways are, and always have been, provided for the movement of people, vehicles and goods. The legal definition refers to “the passage and re-passage” of traffic. In particular, roads are not provided for the purpose of parking and this applies both to those who own properties fronting onto any particular road, as well as to those who might otherwise find it convenient to park there for their own reasons.

Householders are often resentful when others park outside their homes, even where the householder does not actually have the use of a car. Many residents even believe, incorrectly, that they actually have rights to park on the road outside their property. In general, where parking is not otherwise prohibited by order, kerbspace is available to any road user, subject to the laws of obstruction.

Class I and II roads in particular are provided and maintained to facilitate the movement of traffic. The needs of residents, businesses and others have to be subordinated to the need to keep traffic moving safely.

Where an area contains a mixture of land uses, such as residential, business, shopping, commerce and transport facilities, the residents will often feel swamped by the daily influx of other vehicles. Even where the residents have off-street parking facilities, they may on occasion be obstructed by others (a matter for the police) and may, in any case, feel that their environment is suffering. It might be assumed that people would consider such things before buying a given house but their subsequent complaints often suggest that the matter had been given no thought at all.

Where the same problems are experienced in a predominantly residential area, which is adjacent to other developments that attract large numbers of parked vehicles, the daily intrusion is particularly resented and there may be calls for “residents only” parking.

The main element of any such scheme is that all extraneous parking is displaced by enforceable restrictions. Several styles of Resident Parking are available, however in all cases some provision has to be allowed for visitors and deliveries i.e.:-

- (i) Some lengths of kerbspace are prescribed for limited waiting by visitors and other lengths are identified as being for residents only.
- (ii) Some lengths of kerbspace are prescribed for limited waiting for any purpose, residents being exempt from any limit on waiting.

In the main, the Council have adopted the second style, as it is considered that this will remove long term parking, but still allow for non residents to park for short periods to visit residents or local businesses. Residents who have a car can purchase a permit, to be displayed inside the windscreen when it is parked in a prescribed area, providing exemption of the limited waiting period. The purchase of a permit does not entitle the resident to park in any particular space, neither is any space guaranteed. In some areas, where sufficient road space will allow, a ‘Visitors’ permit can be purchased, as is stated and allowed within the associated Traffic Regulation Order.

The success of any resident parking scheme depends upon the degree of enforcement undertaken, and this is undertaken by the councils Civil Enforcement Officers.

Since a major feature of any such scheme is the displacement of large numbers of parked

cars, particular thought must be given to where those vehicles will go thereafter. To avoid them simply being displaced into other residential streets, outside the limits of the scheme under consideration, it is essential that off-street parking space, adequate and acceptable to the drivers involved, is available. If this is not available, the displaced vehicles would simply replicate the same problem again in another nearby area.

In any urban area there is always some extraneous parking, it follows that a major improvement to the environment can be achieved by such a scheme and the residents obtain considerable benefits in both convenience and improved surroundings.

The cost of a permit is not determined by the value placed upon these benefits but by the estimated costs of implementing and administering the scheme. All such schemes should be self financing; otherwise the wider community of ratepayers will be subsidising the benefits gained by some, whilst themselves being denied the opportunity to park in the restricted streets. Thus costs for the permits (£10.00 in Bromyard, £24.00/£25.00 in remaining zones June 2008), is intended to cover the costs of on street signing and lining, administration of permits and contribute toward enforcement duties.

Permits are will be made available for residents whose postal address is within the area of a residents parking scheme (as specified within the Traffic Regulation Order) and are registered with the Council as a Council Tax payer. Vehicles must also be registered at that address as detailed upon the registration document (or company vehicles).

In areas where two permits are issued the second one is designated as a visitors permit and can be used upon any private vehicle.

The categories for Council Tax payment are as follows:

Single occupancy dwelling

- a) Owner and resident of a property.
- b) Resident of a property.

Multi occupancy dwelling

- c) Residents of contained units with no shared facilities.

Where a property is divided into units with shared facilities such as kitchen and/or bathroom, the owner/landlord is liable for Council tax, however a maximum of two permits will be allowed for residents, in accord with standard conditions .

Within the controlled zone, where extraneous long-term parking is prohibited, visitors may park in prescribed places for up to 1 hour. This limitation is a serious disadvantage of such schemes because genuine visitors cannot be distinguished from others and are controlled by the same regulations, Commuters etc. will be removed by the limited waiting restrictions however a 'Visitors' permit may be available, where road space is sufficient, for the parking of visitors for periods longer than the prescribed limit. A resident may purchase either or both types of permit, however two 'visitors' permits will not be issued, one in lieu of the dedicated permit.

Most of the waiting restrictions in the controlled zone apply only between 8am and 6pm to control daytime long stay parking. However, due to high vehicle ownership in some areas the demand for parking spaces by residents far outweighs the amount available at night when they return from work etc.

Criteria

The Council has adopted the criteria set out below in the consideration of any proposed schemes. However, it should be noted that when residents are apprised of both the advantages and the disadvantages of such schemes, only a minority may be interested in

proceeding further. More commonly, residents seek to be exempted from existing waiting restrictions which cannot be done.

- (i) Eighty percent of the kerb space in the area under consideration shall be regularly occupied by extraneous vehicles.
- (ii) Full consultations with residents will be undertaken. Full consideration of a scheme will only be undertaken if a majority of residents support of the introduction of a residents parking scheme.
- (iii) Less than fifty percent of the residents have a facility to park off the road. This may be relaxed slightly in a conservation area.
- (iv) The majority of property which fronts the roads concerned shall be residential.
- (v) A charge shall be made for permits, sufficient to cover the implementation and administration of the requested scheme.

Terms and condition of issue.

- 1) The occupier of each self-contained dwelling can apply for a maximum of two parking permits, subject to there being no current permits being held by another or previous occupier. You can only purchase one visitors and one vehicle permit. **You cannot purchase two visitors permits.**
- 2) The permits, which remain the property of Herefordshire Council, will be issued upon receipt of an appropriate completed form identifying the name and address for which the application is made. In addition to completing the application you will need to provide the following:

Visitors permit – proof of residency

Vehicle permit – proof of residency **AND** proof of vehicle ownership

See reverse of application form for acceptable documentation.

- 3) A permit does not give any right to the provision of a parking space, but simply allows a vehicle displaying a valid permit to park in excess of the permitted period laid down or in designated resident parking areas.
- 4) A permit will be issued in respect to a motorcar, motorcycle (with or without side-car), invalid carriage, or motor vehicle constructed or adapted for the purpose of carrying goods but not exceeding 3½ tonnes maximum gross weight.
- 5) The permits are invalid once the holder vacates the property, or disposes of a vehicle identified on a vehicle permit. Any invalid permits must be surrendered to Herefordshire Council.
- 6) New permits cannot be issued in respect of any dwelling until previous permits have expired or have been surrendered.
- 7) The permits are **only** valid in the streets which are included in the particular zone applied for and must not be used in any other location. A list of streets for this zone are listed at the end of these terms and conditions.
- 8) **Vehicles must NOT be parked in anticipation of a permit being received or whilst awaiting a replacement or renewal. Any vehicle not displaying a valid permit is liable to receive a Penalty Charge Notice.**

- 9) Fraudulent use of the permits **will** lead to the removal of the permits and may lead to prosecution.
- 10) Lost permits – a replacement visitors permit will not be replaced if the original is lost. A new permit will only be issued once the lost permit has expired and on receipt of a new application.

A duplicate vehicle permit can be issued, but you will be required to make a new application, completing the relevant application form and providing the necessary evidence. You will need to pay the full charge and the new permit will be valid for full year from the date of issue.

Street Cleaning

Report By: The Director of Environment and Culture

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To consider performance and priorities in relation to street cleaning issues.

Background

2. The Committee, through the regular general performance reports, has carefully monitored performance of street cleaning. As a result of concerns expressed and also highlighted by the Strategic Monitoring Committee, a report was requested to highlight the approach currently taken to delivering the service and how performance is monitored.
3. The following report has been prepared in consultation with the Council's Strategic Delivery Partner, Amey, which is responsible for the delivery of street cleaning services on the ground.

Target Setting and Performance Management

4. The targets for improving street and environmental cleanliness are related to separate measures of the levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting. These are part of the National Indicators. Improved street and environmental cleanliness is covered by NI 195, which has replaced BVPI 199. A number of changes have been introduced in this revision, including the methodology for calculating and reporting the figures, which makes direct comparisons with previous years difficult.
5. Annual targets are set as part of the service planning process, based on improving previous performance with consideration also given to how Herefordshire compares with the other authorities across England.

The actual results from previous years, the targets for 2008/09 and the latest results for 2008/09 are shown below.

Local street and environmental cleanliness -	Actual 2005/06	Actual 2006/07	Actual 2007/08	Target 2008/09	2008/9 to date*
- litter	18%	17%	15%	10%	3%
- detritus				12%	14%
- graffiti	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%
- flyposting	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Stewart Barton, Streetscene Manager
01432 383214 sbarton@herefordshire.gov.uk

Notes:

- * Average of first two of the three surveys carried out during the year. Third survey carried during December to March results currently being collated at time of writing. In previous years, litter and detritus were combined as a single figure for the reports.
3. The annual results are an average of fifteen scores collected through the year. They are taken in three tranches during the year, that is, once every four months, and each tranche is a group of five scores. This approach can result in a variation during the year but the annual average provides a representative sample for comparison between years. Each score is taken in one of the forty wards of the county, and the choice of location of each measurement is in a three year schedule from a matrix based on areas of social deprivation set by central government. Every ward is included at least once every three years. The overall indicators represent a score marked as a percentage failure rate, with 0% meaning everything passes, and 100%, everything fails. Hence a lower percentage score represents better performance.
 4. It is possible to compare performance with other authorities by reference to the annual report on Local Environmental Quality published by the Department for Marine, Landscape and Rural Affairs. ENCAMS, an environmental charity, is commissioned by central government to survey the environmental cleanliness of all English local authorities and they also audit the assessments made by the Council's own team of assessors for NI 195. The latest Local Environmental Quality report covering April 2007 to March 2008 shows that the Overall Quality Standard for Herefordshire for Good and Satisfactory was 48% against a National average of 47%. There were variations across the categories, and detritus for All Areas was graded unsatisfactory. In particular, areas of Low Density Social Housing, Rural Roads, Other Highways and Public Open Space were in the lowest grade.
 5. It is apparent from the complaints and requests for service received by the Council that litter is a concern but that detritus is rarely reported. Litter however is graded as Good, and is only slightly worse than the Current National Benchmark in three out of the twelve categories. Performance for litter is ahead of target.
 6. Monitoring indicates that there is a very low level of graffiti and fly posting. The Council continues to work closely with the police on their anti-graffiti operations, and has provided witness statements and helped with successful prosecutions. The Council is working with the probation service so that offenders' work on community service orders fits their crimes and they are cleaning up graffiti and litter picking.

Current Street Cleaning Practice

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Stewart Barton, Streetscene Manager
01432 383214 sbarton@herefordshire.gov.uk

7. Amey undertake street cleaning activities on behalf of the Council. Resources are applied flexibly to target the areas of most need and provide a responsive service. As a result actual sweeping regimes vary greatly between areas. It is planned that villages are swept every 6 months, although this schedule has not been maintained across the county. The schedules for sweeping of all roads and footways in Hereford city have recently been revised. The main shopping areas are swept daily with the bins being emptied twice a day. The main roads are scheduled for sweeping twice a week and the residential roads once a fortnight. All footways are swept once a fortnight, whether they are adjacent to roads or are link footpaths.
8. All litterbins in Hereford City are emptied daily with the city centre bins being emptied at least twice a day. Records are kept to monitor the usage of litter bins and to identify hot-spots such as bins that are frequently full and to correlate usage with activities such as public events and school terms.

Improving Service Delivery

9. Working with Amey, the Council has sought to adopt the best practices set out in central government's Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse. This has resulted in changes to working practices such as considering not just how often areas are cleaned but how to manage consistently and appropriately to keep an area clean. This means for example that a relatively clean street is not swept just because it is that street's turn, but allowing the flexibility to move on to another that requires cleaning.
10. In the coming months, Amey plan to further improve the reporting systems and the supervision of the operations to improve delivery of street cleaning activities. Sweeper vehicles can be diverted to deal with incidents such as Road Traffic Collisions, flooding relief works, clearing mud on roads. Having been diverted to clear debris from Road Traffic Collisions, the machines have to be thoroughly cleaned of contaminated waste before returning to their scheduled works. Amey are currently investigating ways to overcome this operational issue and ensure that resources are always available for day-to-day street cleaning activities.
11. The Service Delivery Review of the Council's Strategic Service Delivery Partnership is intended to include a new performance management regime to drive improved outcomes in relation to services provided by Amey. This will include specific performance targets in relation to street cleaning. It is recommended that a further report be presented in relation to this matter once the new arrangements for service delivery have been implemented.

Recommendation

THAT the contents of the report be noted and that a further report be submitted once the changes to the Service Delivery Partnership with Amey have been implemented.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Stewart Barton, Streetscene Manager
01432 383214 sbarton@herefordshire.gov.uk

**ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK
PROGRAMME****Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Democratic****Wards Affected**

County-wide

Purpose

- 1 To consider the Committee work programme.

Financial Implications

- 2 None

Background

- 3 In accordance with the Scrutiny Improvement Plan a report on the Committee's current Work Programme will be made to each of the scheduled quarterly meetings of this Scrutiny Committee. A copy of the suggested Work Programme is attached at appendix 1.
- 4 The programme may be modified by the Chairman following consultation with the Vice-Chairman and the relevant Director in response to changing circumstances.
- 5 A number of other possible issues for consideration have been logged and depending on the Committee's future instruction may be added to the programme as it is further developed. The issues are listed at the foot of the programme.
- 6 Should any urgent, prominent or high profile issue arise, the Chairman may consider calling an additional meeting to consider that issue.
- 7 Should Members become aware of any issues they consider may be added to the scrutiny programme they should contact either the Director of Environment and Culture, the Director of Regeneration or the Democratic Services Officer to log the issue so that it may be taken into consideration when planning future agendas or when revising the work programme.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT subject to any comment or issues raised by the Committee the Committee work programme be approved and reported to Strategic Monitoring Committee.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified.

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
for consideration at 20 April 2009

Monday 8th June 2009 at 9.30am	
Agenda items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing Energy Consumption – Street Lighting – Update • Greater Energy efficiency through higher building standards. • Councils vehicle Fleet & Fleet Management – update. • Social Care transportation – cost/carbon efficiencies identified through the Day Care Opportunities Review. • Capital Budget Monitoring • Revenue Budget Monitoring. • Report on Performance Indicators. • Committee Work Programme.
Reviews underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Monday 14 September 2009 at 9.30am	
Agenda items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Environmental Management (GEM) – End of year report. • Capital Budget Monitoring • Revenue Budget Monitoring. • Report on Performance Indicators. • Committee Work Programme.
Reviews underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Monday 23 November 2009 at 9.30am	
Agenda items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting Local Speed Limits – (in relation to Circ 1/2006, delivering road safety and education, whole estate urban speed limit, financial and resource implications.) • Progress in meeting NI186 target (per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the Local Authority area) • Capital Budget Monitoring • Revenue Budget Monitoring. • Report on Performance Indicators. • Committee Work Programme.
Reviews underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Items for consideration as the programme is further developed:

- The effect on Herefordshire of changes to the Single Farm Payments system (e.g. hedge cutting, drainage ditch clearance)
- 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.
- Consider inviting the Environment Agency to discuss the environmental impact, if any, of the Open Windrow Greenwaste composting facility at Morton-on-Lugg.

