

GEM / ISO14001 Management Review October 2005 to September 2006

SUMMARY

GEM (Good Environmental Management) plays a key role in delivering

- Council commitment to deliver a sustainable environment through everything in the Corporate Plan (1.5)
 - The Council's Corporate Plan priority to 'protect the environment, including by producing much less waste, recycling much more of what remains and significantly reducing carbon emissions' (5.1)
 - its [environmental policy](#) commitment to "demonstrable and continuous improvement of its environmental performance" across all Directorates
 - The Council's contribution to the Community Strategy for Herefordshire's guiding principle to "Protect and improve Herefordshire's distinctive environment", which states:-

"Herefordshire has a rich and diverse environment with many unique features. This resource must be conserved and enhanced through raising awareness and education so that communities and future generations can continue to enjoy and benefit from the distinctive environment. This includes improving local public areas across the county, developing access to the countryside, protecting our biodiversity and tackling climate change through waste minimisation and energy efficiency measures. "

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Council successfully extended its **certification to ISO 14001**, the international environmental management standard, to cover provision of all Unitary Council functions in July 2006. It is the first shire county to achieve this.
- **EcoSchool** scheme registration now covers two thirds of the county's schools At the end of the summer term 2006 there were 18 schools with a bronze award, 10 with a silver award and 10 with the top Green flag award.
- Herefordshire achieved **County-wide Fairtrade status** in May 2006 with Council support - the first county in the Midlands to achieve this
- Herefordshire Partnership has agreed a **Climate Change Strategy** and Action Plan, based on the county Greenhouse Gas Inventory prepared by Council staff.
- Environment is included in the suite of corporate **cross cutting themes** to be addressed by Service Plans for 2007/08
- **Directorate summaries** of environmental impacts, controls & targets are now in place, covering the whole council



Corporate Management Board agreed on 21st November 06 that

1. Directorate Management Teams review and record their environmental performance at least half yearly, supported by their GEM Leads, using the Directorate summaries of environmental impact & controls (1.3)
2. Directorate Summaries (now Integrated Control and Enhancement Directorate GEM Summaries, known as ICED GEMS) are regularly updated by appropriate managers and are used to inform environmental target setting (2.2)
3. Service Plans include specific environmental improvement opportunities for 2006/2007 with formal management programmes indicating responsibility and timescales and link these to corporate objectives (3.5 & 4.1)
4. ISO 14001 requirements are integrated into key corporate processes, such as performance management, procurement and communication, now that all Council functions are included (4)
5. GEM auditors are allocated time by their managers to undertake at least 2 GEM audits annually (2.1)
6. The corporate plan indicator for reducing carbon emissions is changed to "Achieve a 12.5% reduction in Council carbon dioxide equivalent emissions by 2012" (3.4)
7. Reiterate the importance of all legal breaches being reported to GEM as soon as possible after they have occurred to ensure compliance with ISO 14001 (4.1.1)
8. Directors ensure that actual & potential risks identified by the Legal Compliance Review are entered on their Directorate Risk Registers (4.1.1)
9. Ensure that sufficient resources are made available to minimise the risk of potential or actual legal breaches identified in the Legal Compliance Review (4.1.1)
10. Paper for Council external printing jobs to contain a minimum 50% recycled fibre for coated papers and 70% for uncoated papers by 1st June 2007 (4.5).
11. All wood used by the Council is from certificated sources (5.3).

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1. Process

1.1. *Input from senior management – a requirement of ISO 14001*

The ISO 14001 standard requires that top management review the environmental management system regularly to ensure that it continues to be suitable, adequate and effective to deliver the Council's policy commitment to improving environmental performance and full compliance with all relevant legal and other requirements (see the Management Review Procedure in the GEM Manual).

Management Reviews address the possible need for changes to the policy, objectives and other Environmental Management System (EMS) elements in the light of audit results, performance against objectives and targets, concerns of relevant interested parties, changing circumstances and the commitment to environmental improvement.

This information was collected through the directorate [GEM Lead Officers](#) and co-ordinated by the Sustainability Unit. It was discussed by the GEM group at their meeting on November 15th 2006, attended by the Director of Environment, Lead Director for ISO 14001. The report then went to CMB on 21st November 2006.

Key findings (this report) are being presented to the Cabinet Member (Environment) and Environment Scrutiny in December 06 as the second stage of the Council's top management review process.

1.2. *Roles of Directorate GEM Lead Officers & managers*

Directorate GEM Lead Officers are nominated by their Directors to act on their behalf. The corporate GEM Group has met 6 times since the last report. Due to reorganisation and staff changes there have been many changes to the GEM group, who received training on their role in February 06.

Service Managers have a responsibility to maintain good environmental management in their own services and contribute to the Council's requirement for overall improvement in environmental performance. Now that ISO 14001 covers the whole council, DMTs need to integrate service and corporate environmental targets into their Service Plans and performance management arrangements.

2. GEM Audits & surveillance

Audits are essential to find out what is working smoothly and where effort needs to be focussed. Audits check systems procedures annually and performance with regard to sites, contracts, operational controls and services on a 3 year programme.

Extensions in ISO 14001 scope and recent changes to the standard have led to a revision of the audit schedule, which now places more emphasis on service based

and systems audits. Audits are now in an electronic format that makes access and monitoring response to findings easier.

Regular and thorough auditing is a requirement of the standard.

2.1. GEM Internal Audits

A team of over 30 auditors, drawn from each Directorate, undertakes GEM audits. GEM Auditors are supported by training, update meetings, GEM Audit material posted on the Intranet and monthly bulletins. Further support is available from the Sustainability Unit on request.

GEM Audit activity 05/06 (full year)

Number of planned audits	32
Completed/Work in progress	32
Number of non conformances raised	34
Number of non cons overdue for close out	1
Number of observations	13

GEM Audit activity 06/07 to half year

Number of planned audits	43
Completed/Work in progress	17
Number of non conformances raised	20
Number of non cons overdue for close out	8
Number of observations	59

Training for 8 existing auditors to equip them to undertake service and system audits took place in February 2006, using Highways as a live example.

Audits are now concentrated in 2 periods a year, in November and May.

2.2. Findings and actions taken in response to GEM internal Audit

Audits identified the following areas of weakness and opportunities for improvement. Although particular non-conformances have been addressed individually, the pattern shows that 'Control of Documents & records' and 'Operational control' require additional attention at systems level.

ISO14001 CAUSE	DESCRIPTION	NC	OBS
Control of documents and records (4.4.5 & 4.5.4)	Documents out of date	3	4
	Documents incomplete	1	10
	Documentation not readily available	4	4
	Documents not in use	1	
	Documentation to demonstrate targets being achieved		1
	Better corporate control/management of GIS system	1	1
Operational Control (4.4.6)	Contractor management		1
	Recycled paper not in use	1	1
	PAT testing not evident	1	
	Fire drill out of date	1	1

	Mismanagement of waste		2
	Gas key not available		1
	Recycling bin availability		1
	Impact of move (to Plough Lane) on service delivery		1
	Collection of computers for recycling- Worcester lifestyles		1
	Use of electronic reporting		1
Objectives targets programmes (4.3.3)	Need environmental targets in operating/service plans	1	2
	Include commitment to ISO14001 in documentation		1
	Consideration of cross cutting issues		1
	Extend fair trade status		1
	Identify performance indicators		2
	Use of best quality indicators		2
Resources, roles, responsibility and authority (4.4.1)	No rep on GEM team	1	
	No fire warden reps		1
	Directing financial resources appropriately		1
Communication (4.4.3)	Better external communication		1
	Internal communications – problems with access to info		3
	Internal communications re: H&S		1
	External communications re: planning		1
	Internal / external communication re: expertise		1
	Better links between initiatives		1
	Passing info to ESU		1
	Publicising of initiatives		1
Competence, training and awareness (4.4.2)	Environmental training updated		2
	Training re: use of GIS		1
	Training re: sustainability appraisals		1
Monitoring and measurement (4.5.1)	Clarify progress on environmental commitment		1
	Better monitoring of impacts / effects of actions		2
	Policy monitoring in service plan		1

2.2 GEM External Surveillance

To maintain ISO 14001 certification our certifiers, SGS, undertake a 5 day surveillance visit every 6 months. Certifiers raise Corrective Actions (CA) and Opportunities for Improvement (OI). Progress on these is examined at the subsequent visit and CAs must be formally closed out.

- In Feb 2006 zero CA and ten OIs were raised. These were all closed out at the time of the July 2006 surveillance visit.
- In July 2006 four CAs and ten OIs were raised. The CAs related to:-

- Control of contractors unclear
- Service Environmental Impact Assessments not all fully complete & accurate
- Systems audits overdue
- Document issue & checking required further attention

These CAs and OIs are included in the Corrective Action system – see 4.1.1

Some of the other matters raised by SGS since the last Management Review are particularly relevant to top management.

- SGS Obs 2 Feb: **Ensure that minutes of management review meetings include evidence of discussion and outcomes in areas of concern**, eg repeated failures of sewage works at Hillcrest Callow and internal audits behind schedule.
- SGS Obs 4 Feb: Whilst some worthwhile environmental improvements were noted in Adult Social Care during 2005/2006 period, they have not been recognized **within the Service Plan. Ensure that specific environmental improvement opportunities are identified for 2006/2007, objectives established and formal management programmes indicating responsibility and timescales are prepared.**
- SGS Obs 6a Feb (Compliance Review): A **capital bid to upgrade the flare** at the Sutton Sugwas closed landfill site was **submitted for a second time** in Nov 2005 – review outcome at next visit. (Legal Register)
- SGS Obs 6 July: Management Review - Recommend review of Management Review procedure (GEMSYS 4gP1 V5) to align it more accurately with current arrangements (done)

3 Performance against GEM objectives & targets & changes in environmental performance

Objectives and targets are important to ensure that the Council's environmental performance is improving: monitoring is vital in checking whether these are being achieved.

3.1 Key achievements

- Herefordshire Partnership agreed Climate Change Strategy in June 2006. The Council has put in a submission to the LGC Sustainable Communities Award - Climate Change category
- Extensions of ISO 14001 certification scope to cover:
 - Feb 2006: Adult Social Care, County Secretary & Solicitors, Development & Building Control,
 - July 2006 Children's Services, Forward Planning, Conservation, Human Resources, Policy, Communication, Herefordshire Partnership, Economic & community regeneration
- ISO 14001 Certification now covers all mainstream Council services so environmental impacts of Council services are now evaluated, as well as those relating to Council premises. There is increased emphasis on documenting environmental impacts and controls by Directorate & service to enable managers to access this information easily.

3.2 Performance against GEM & Environmental Strategy objectives and targets 2005/6

Performance on the GEM programme for 2005/6 was reported to the Cabinet Member and Environment Scrutiny on 5th December 2005 (half year) and 5th June 2006 (end year). See the Gem Report 2005/06 for more details.

Performance against Environment Strategy targets (internal & external) in 05/06

Topic	Achieved	Not achieved	Unclear/ no data
Waste	8	3	
Transport	13.5	2.5	2
Energy & climate change	7	1	
Water & Flooding	5	1	
Natural & built Environment	2		6
Planning & Development	1.75	0.25	7
Environmental Risks & pollution			7
Community Involvement & Partnership working	1.75	0.5	5.75

The Sustainability Unit will be following up targets where data is not currently clear and the GEM group will track performance.

Targets not achieved in 05/06

Section	Target	04/05	05/06
Waste	Increase both the % and tonnage of household waste arisings composted	6.69%	6.58%
Waste	Decrease the cost of waste collection per household	£42.59	£44.69
Waste	Decrease the cost of waste collection per tonne	£58.51	£78.99
Transport	Increase the number of passenger journeys per year on public transport (Bus & Rail)	Rail 3089000	Rail 3079000
Transport	Improve the condition of surface footways	32.5%	30.68%
Transport	Decrease the number of road accident casualties (all/ children)	Children 6	Children 8
Energy & Climate Change	Reduce the energy costs of operational council property per square metre Gross Internal Area	£7.22	£9.23
Water	Reduce the water costs of operational council property per square metre Gross Internal Area	£1.71	£1.83
Planning & Development	Reduce the time in which planning applications are determined: ie, major, minor, other applications & standard searches	Standard searches 95%	Standard searches 75.94%
Community Involvement & Partnership working	Increase the proportion of schools that are (a) registered on the EcoSchools programme and (b) have achieved an award level	Award level 17	Award level 17

3.3 Carbon Management Action Plan (CMAP) Update

The Council now has an explicit Corporate Plan commitment to:-

'Protect the environment, including by ... **significantly reducing carbon emissions**' (5.1).'

The current Corporate Plan target relating to this is:-

"Through the implementation of the Herefordshire Partnership's Carbon Management Action Plan, we aspire to see a reduction in carbon emissions per head of population from the baseline of 14.5 tonnes to 11.25 tonnes a year. "

The Council is working closely with the Herefordshire Environment Partnership and Herefordshire Partnership on carrying forward Herefordshire's Climate Change Strategy.

However the Council only has direct control over emissions resulting from its own activities.

A carbon reduction figure for 2005/06 is not yet available (due to staff shortages), but is due by the end of 2006. The CMAP group meets in November 2006 and will review the Action Plan. Ten actions were due for completion by September 2006. A number of problems have been encountered so the Action Plan is being revised. Care will be required to ensure that the 1.25% annual reduction remains on track.

3.4 Performance against objectives and targets 2006/7

The performance on the GEM programme for 2006/07 will be reported to the GEM Group in January 2007. This will include half year reports on targets currently in Business Plans, any targets carried over from 2005/06 and Environment Strategy targets for which half year data is available.

3.5 Plans for 2007/8

The Environment Strategy 2005 -11 continues to provide the framework for major corporate environmental commitments, both internal and external.

In addition there is a strong emphasis across the Council on taking account of cross cutting themes, including 'safeguarding the environment'. In 'Directorate and Service Plans 2007-10: the requirements' it states clearly that:-

"Directorate and service plans must....include what will be done to address the Council's cross-cutting issues."

4 Continuing suitability of GEM

The environmental management system has grown rapidly during the review period as the scope of ISO 14001 certification has expanded. It is now important to revisit both system and operational procedures to ensure they are remain fit for purpose in this larger system. Certain elements of the system that used to be co-ordinated by the Sustainability Unit may now need to be handed to other corporate systems and mechanisms, for instance performance management and commitments in the Environmental Strategy.

4.1 Incidents, near misses and corrective action (including legal compliance)

4.1.1 Legal Compliance Review

Compliance with environmental legislation was reviewed in October 2006 using a similar format as last year, with the addition of land related Management Agreements.

For the first time this review covers “other” requirements, an addition to the 2004 ISO 14001 standard. This covers compliance with relevant commitments that the Council has taken on voluntarily, for instance relating to Fairtrade.

KEY FINDINGS

i) Breaches

There have been a number of breaches during the reporting period including:

- Hillcrest Housing sewage treatment works discharges (2 breaches – 1 major)
- Asbestos contamination at Burley Gate School (1 major incident)
- Crematorium emissions (7 minor breaches)
- Merton Meadow lorry wash discharges (3 minor breaches)

No prosecutions have been taken over these particular breaches, but prosecution has been considered in relation to Hillcrest sewage works (formal caution to be given instead) and remains a possibility in relation to the Burley Gate School incident as the investigation is still ongoing.

ii) Potential breaches

There are a number of areas of Council responsibility where work is required during the next year to reduce the risk of breaches including:

- Gas flare at Stretton Sugwas closed landfill site (plan, timetable & funding agreed for flare)
- Stretton Sugwas - recent gas migration at this site may increase the risk of breaches. This could give higher weighting to the funding of measures to manage gas extraction in the 07/08 capital bidding round.
- Sewage treatment works for which the Council is responsible (survey and refurbishment programme)
- Ross Ashburton depot interceptor (condition survey/inspection and necessary works)
- Management of land with nature conservation designations (2C) (audit of Council responsibilities)
- Broad Street car park Leominster drainage (installation of interceptor or other contingency arrangements in case of spill)

iii) Poor reporting of breaches

There have also been problems during this year with breaches not being reported to GEM even when there are specific process procedures in place stating that this should be done.

Actual and potential reported breaches in this document are accurate and up to date as a result of contact being made with all relevant officers as part of the review.

4.1.2 Corrective Action Forms

Corrective Actions Forms (CAFs), including any points raised by Regulators, are raised internally when non-compliance is identified,. The GEM Group reviews

corrective action and the CAFs are signed off once these have been completed. CAFs are recorded and reviewed regularly at GEM meetings.

Eleven CAFs have been raised internally since the last Management Review. Two have not been closed out. SGS said three of the CAFs raised were not non-conformances as such (relating to roadside trees, polytunnels and the Transco pipeline) so they have been removed from the CAF register.

The CAFs can be summarised as follows: -

Nov 06 review		Nov 05 review	
Breach of consent/requirements at Sewage Treatment Plants (All at Hillcrest)	3	Failures at Sewage Treatment Plants	4
Breach of consent/requirements by other Council operations	1	Breach of consent/requirements by Council operations	2
Air pollution from landfill gas flare	1	Air pollution from landfill gas flare	1
Local environmental quality	1	Local environmental quality	2
Concerns raised by interested parties	1	Potential water pollution	2
Document control	1	Fire	2
Procedure weakness	2	Salt storage	1
Resourcing /follow through of objectives	1	Noise from Council operations	2

Two CAFs are overdue for close out. SGS have raised observations on both of these areas and will be reviewing progress at their Feb 2007 visit.:-

- Sewage Treatment Works at Hillcrest Callow: three formal samples have been taken by the Environment Agency since August 05 and two have failed. Two routine samples have failed this year. A formal caution is due from the Agency and another formal sample will be taken shortly. It is hoped that this will demonstrate that preventative measures now in place have been successful. (CAF 04/05 8, also SGS Obs 6 Feb 06)
- Replacement of the Stretton Sugwas landfill flare (raised in March 05). A capital bid will be resubmitted in the current round. (CAF 05/06 2, also SGS Obs 3 Feb 06)

4.1.3 Links to other systems to notify environmental incidents

Health & Safety Accident, Incident and GEM report form

The system is computerised and prompts specifically for any environmental impacts. These incidents are automatically routed to the Sustainability Unit.

No environmental issues have been notified through this route during the review period.

Customer Relationship Management

A new process was implemented in October 2005 via Customer Relationship Management (CRM). When any complaints are logged that have environmental impact, CRM automatically sends an email alert to the GEM team. The complaint will continue to be investigated by the Directorate concerned. A new CRM system is due to be rolled out in January 2007 which will also incorporate GEM into the Compliments / Complaints process.

No environmental issues have been notified through this route during the review period.

4.2 Changes in premises, staff or services affecting GEM

Reorganisation resulted in changes to the GEM group and responsibility for some environmental aspects such as purchasing. Directors reviewed their GEM Lead Officers early in 2006 in the light of this and developments in the brief of the GEM group.

The development of the Local Area Agreement (LAA), running from April 2006- 2009, led to some changes in the vision for the Community Strategy for Herefordshire (launched July 06) and the Corporate Plan. This new vision places the environment centrally and protecting the environment remains a guiding principle. However ambitions have been changed to reflect the LAA blocks so there is no longer an environment ambition and the Herefordshire Partnership Environment Ambition Group has now become the Herefordshire Environment Partnership. This group remains one of the interested parties defined in the Council's environmental management system because of the number of key public, private and voluntary environmental groups represented on it. Additionally the group provides valued support to the Cabinet member.

4.3 Changes in legislation, government or self set requirements

Fairtrade	The County was awarded Fairtrade status in May 2006. In support of this the Council is committed to: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve Fairtrade coffee and tea at its meetings and in offices and canteens; • Seek to attract popular support for the campaign across Herefordshire, particularly supporting the local Fairtrade Steering Group
Building Regulations, April 06	Requirements relating to Part L, Conservation of Fuel and Power & Part F Means of Ventilation). The changes in legislation will have implications on work carried out to Council Property
Nottingham Declaration on climate change	Prepare a plan with our local community to address the causes and effects of climate change and to secure the maximum benefits for our communities. Publicly declare within the plan the commitment to achieve a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from our own authority's operations specifically energy sourcing, and use, travel and transport, waste production and disposal and the purchasing of goods and services. Provide opportunities for the development of renewable energy generation within our area. Monitor the progress of our plan against the action needed and publish the results.
Biodiversity duty	From 1st October 2006 a new duty comes in under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, requiring public bodies to consider biodiversity in the work they do. The aim is to raise the profile of biodiversity in England and Wales and it will affect over 900 public bodies including local authorities, fire, police, health bodies, museums, and transport authorities. The guidance is expected to be published in early 2007.
European Energy Directives Part L Building Regs	This directive relates to the energy performance of all buildings over 1000m2 and will require any Council buildings with floor area over 1000m2 to display its energy performance. EU member states have 3 years from January 2006 to implement this directive.
New Fire Risk Assessments	From 1 st October 2006 new requirements have come in under the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 (as amended) which affect the fire certification of buildings. This will have implications for the Council, both acting as landlord and

	tenant.
Commons Act	This was passed in 2006 and is likely to have some implications in the way that the Council deals with common land – in the first instance in relation to documentation and mapping. Currently awaiting detailed guidance, which is due out in 2007.
ISO 14001	Certification now covers the whole Council.
Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 2001	The requirements to carry out SEA on certain plans and programmes is now fully in force.

4.4 Resourcing environmental improvement

i) Capital programme & environmental improvements

The Council has an annual capital programme for Prudential Borrowing. Bids are submitted in November and will this year be evaluated against a high level cost -v- strategic objective. Those that pass this stage are then scored against the Herefordshire Partnership Guiding Principles Appraisal and environmental impact. Legal compliance issues are also taken into account.

Environmental Bids submitted in 05/06 for 06/07	Cost	Cost
Restore Leominster landfill site	£0.5m	Agreed
Crematorium rebuild	£0.8M	Agreed
Second phase of drainage work (Broad Street, Leominster)	£ 75K	Failed
Gas Flare, Stretton Sugwas Landfill Site	£55K	Failed

A capital bidding round is currently in process for 07/08 - bids were due by mid November. Invest to Save bids will be considered, including all bids that can justify significant revenue savings when compared to the capital financing costs over the life of the asset created.

Bids relating to environmental improvements submitted in 06/07 for 07/08 & beyond

Gas Flare, Stretton Sugwas landfill site	£60K
Gas extraction system, Stretton Sugwas landfill site	£105K
Leominster Closed landfill site restoration	£1.6m
Strangford Closed landfill site - leachate wells & gas monitoring points	£18k

The Council succeeded in gaining funding from Salix in summer 2006 for energy efficiency works on its buildings, which must meet strict payback criteria. This scheme is being led by Property Services.

4.5 Performance of contractors and partners

Owen Williams, HJS, Severn Waste & FOCSA all have ISO 14001 certification.

West Mercia Supplies has an environmental statement, an environmental champion and a sizeable programme of environmental initiatives.

The Environment Agency sent Severn Waste Services a formal written warning for breaches of some conditions of the Waste Management Licence relating to the management of the closed landfill site at Leominster on 11th July 2006. They require a written reply submitting proposals for the long term management of the site that will ensure compliance with the licence, by 31st October. The Council does not manage this site but is contractually liable for the cost of managing the Leominster closed landfill site within the terms of the WML as

part of the Waste Disposal Contract with Mercia Waste (Environmental deed of the WMC, 1998). Environmental Health works closely with Severn Waste on this area (see also capital bid at 4.4).

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets relating to sustainability within the HJS/Owen Williams/HC contract remain under negotiation as part of a review of all KPIs.

The HJS Print Unit produces committee agendas on recycled paper and uses 100% recycled paper as standard on 4 out of 6 machines. No suitable recycled grade is yet available for the remaining 2 machines. The Council have requested that HJS roll out a spec for use of recycled paper (50% recycled fibre for coated papers and 70% for uncoated papers) to their sub contractors. This is the specification recommended by WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) as one that should be achievable with no increase in cost.

A recent Procurement Healthcheck by Qualitar Consulting highlighted weakness in incorporating environmental obligations into contractual arrangements. A new post of Strategic Procurement Efficiency Review Manager in the Resources Directorate, responsible for procurement at a strategic level, has been created by reorganisation and is in the process of appointment. It is proposed that this issue be addressed when the Strategic Procurement Manager comes into post.

The national focus on sustainable procurement continues to strengthen with the report of Sir Neville Simm's taskforce and the Government commitment to being the leader in Europe on sustainable procurement by 2009.

The National Procurement Strategy for Local Government requires that we "Build sustainability into the Council's procurement strategy, processes and contracts".

Our Procurement Strategy, updated in July 2005, states at para 6 that :-

"In the context of a procurement process, obtaining the best value for money means choosing the bid that offers the best combination of whole life costs and benefits to meet the Council's requirements. This is not necessarily the lowest initial price option and requires an assessment of the ongoing revenue and resource costs, as well as the capital investment. The Council's requirements will include social, environmental, sustainability and other strategic objectives defined at the earliest stages of the procurement cycle. "

4.6 Concerns of relevant interested parties (including members) and/or new environmental issues

Herefordshire Partnership Environment Ambition group commented during the review of the Herefordshire Plan about coverage of environmental issues and loss of the Ambition groups.

The revised Community Strategy for Herefordshire has a strong commitment to sustainability, a commitment to the county's "outstanding natural environment" and includes environment & sustainability as guiding principles. The (now renamed) Herefordshire Environment Partnership chair will have a seat on the HP Board.

4.7 Communication

Internal communications channels have been restructured to minimise the environmental impact of communicating with 6,000 employees across a large number of council buildings. A face-to-face team briefing system was launched in April 2006, which depended on verbal briefings rather than printed material. In

addition, the council quarterly newspaper of eight pages was replaced with much smaller monthly news leaflets, reducing the amount of paper used by 50 per cent. Distribution was also improved to keep wastage to a minimum.

GEM was not included in the 2006 Staff Opinion Survey. However the monthly newsletter continues to be distributed to interested members of staff and the Resource Efficiency Code has been updated.

5 Other Developments

5.1 Review of Council environmental aspects

These have been extended and consolidated to reflect the new services joining the ISO 14001 scope, particularly in Planning Services. Additions include Landscape Character and Heritage & Archaeology. There are currently 17 aspects.

5.2 Sustainability Strategy

This is being developed by a corporate director level group, led by the Director of Environment and supported by Forum for the Future. A draft is currently out to internal consultation.

5.3 Timber

Property Services have required the use of legally felled timber, backed by certification schemes recognised by the Government, for some time.

It is recommended that this becomes standard for all wood used directly by the Council and by contractors working on its behalf.

Some Council services, eg Public Rights of Way, buy some local timber that is not currently certificated. Where the providing company can provide documentation to prove that the wood supplied is locally grown and legally felled it is recommended that this can continue to be used for an interim period. As Woodland Grant Schemes adopt FSC as standard it is expected that all wood used will be certificated to schemes recognised by the Government within 4 years.

SGS Observation – July 06

The GEM Team are already using the DEFRA Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET) site for guidance on legal and sustainable timber procurement, though evidence (eg at Whitecross school) of use of certificated timber is limited. It is expected that the guidance on this site will be implemented within the Council to support its Environmental policy commitment to legal compliance (possibly as an EMS objective). Review at next visit.

5.4 EcoSchools

This scheme continues successful in the county and is a target within the Environment Directorate Plan.

Sustainability Unit, November 2006