

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

CORPORATE PLAN 2007 to 2010

Action for a better Herefordshire

"A place where people, business and an outstanding natural environment will together bring about sustainable prosperity and well-being for all."

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

Quality life in a quality county

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Foreword

In a world of increasing economic competition, social change, greater diversity and increased public expectations, a successful future for Herefordshire will only be secured through an ambitious programme of continuous improvement.

The Council leads that programme. Developed with the enthusiastic involvement of people and organisations across the county, the *Herefordshire Community Strategy* sets out what we want to achieve through to 2020. Our *Local Area Agreement* with our partners and Government is the core of the action plan to turn this vision into reality.

We have demonstrated our ability to do exactly that. We have achieved our top priority, ensuring that our arrangements for safeguarding children are sound. Our schools have delivered record GCSE results. We opened the Whitecross School and Specialist Sports College, one of the most eco-advanced in Europe. We helped many more vulnerable people to live at home, with our Signposting Scheme now having enabled older people to claim more than £9.5 million in additional benefits. We reduced from 54 to 5 the number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation. We recycled more waste and sent less to landfill. We speeded up our planning decisions dramatically. These are just examples.

We are determined to drive an even faster pace of improvement. Resolved to keep Council Tax increases to the absolute minimum necessary, and with bleak prospects for increased Government grant, we have to create the capacity to meet both the exciting challenges and opportunities in the new local government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, plus the challenges we face locally. Not the least of these are the inexorable rise in the number of older people and how to ensure that they are able to lead fulfilled lives as active members of their local communities; securing the economic infrastructure that will make the difference between a prosperous future and steady but certain decline – through ambitious projects such as the Edgar Street Grid and Rotherwas Futures; and the need to meet the public's expectations for better, more flexible services.

What will make all this possible is our comprehensive *Transformation Programme*. Over the next three years, this will revolutionise our services to customers, paying for the improvements through *Herefordshire Connects*, the rationalisation of our accommodation, and by a systematic approach to identifying future needs and how they can be met most cost-effectively, learning the lessons from the highest performing authorities elsewhere. The opportunity for greater efficiency and better services will be increased by our ground-breaking proposal to create a Public Service Trust that unites the Council with the commissioning arm of the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust.

Together with the completion of the network of *Info Shops* across the county, integrated with other services such as libraries, our new *Info By Phone* service will provide fast and efficient one-stop services for all. We will modernise our approach to potentially vulnerable adults, with the emphasis firmly on prevention and on maximising independence. We will continue to improve the safety, opportunities and achievements of children and young people. In all that we do, we will work with the people of Herefordshire to ensure cleaner, safer and culturally richer communities, taking full advantage of the passion of those of us long-established in the county, as well as the energy of the diverse range of newcomers we welcome to join us in this common cause.

Councillor Roger Phillips - Leader of the Council

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council shares a vision for a better Herefordshire with a wide range of partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors, and with those representing communities. It is of

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

1.2 Looking forward to 2020, the new *Herefordshire Community Strategy* sets out how we and our partners intend to turn this vision into reality. At its heart is our *Local Area Agreement* with the Government. Recently reviewed and refreshed, it establishes demanding targets to ensure the continued improvement of services and better outcomes for people, businesses and communities throughout the county for the next three years – 2007-10.

1.3 This, the Council's own Corporate Plan, says what we will do over the same three years to play our part in fulfilling the vision. Appendix 1 shows how the Council's priorities relate to the Herefordshire Community Strategy. This plan also sets out how we intend to carry on improving our efficiency and effectiveness, so that we deliver a fair deal for Council Tax-payers and make sure that our front-line services are as good as they can be.

1.4 This Corporate Plan:

- identifies the main challenges facing the county and the Council
- reviews what has been achieved between April 2005 and the end of December 2006
- makes clear the Council's priorities for the future
- sets out the improvements in services and in efficiency and effectiveness which are planned
- identifies the main risks to the achievement of the Plan and how they will be managed
- shows how the Council's resources – human, financial, organisational and physical (including ICT) – will be deployed to bring about the planned improvements and manage the risks
- is the Council's strategic Best Value Performance Plan¹ and overall improvement plan
- incorporates the objectives and performance measures for the *Local Area Agreement* (LAA)
- is the basis for leading and managing the Council's performance
- is the basis for the Council's Annual Operating Plan and individual directorate and service plans, and so for the performance objectives and targets of every team and every individual member of staff

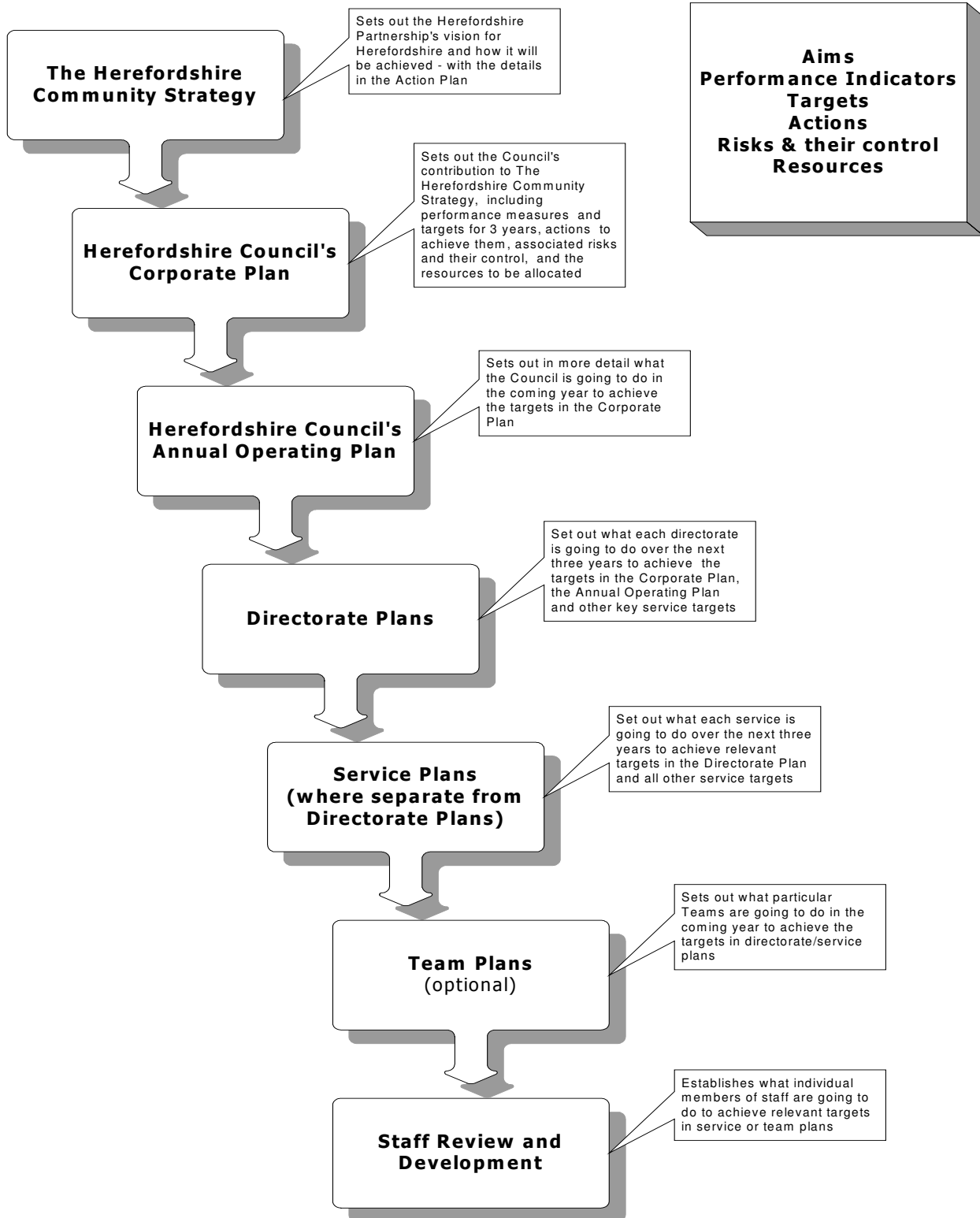
1.5 Everything in the Plan is intended to help deliver the Council's commitment to:

¹ Outturns and future targets for Best Value Performance Indicators will be reported by 30th June 2007, as an electronic link to the copy of this Plan on our website (www.herefordshire.gov.uk).

- understand the needs and wishes of service users and Council Tax-payers, and do all we can to respond to them; so it takes into account the views expressed by the public in the drawing up of the *Herefordshire Community Strategy*, the results of our first annual public satisfaction survey in autumn 2005 and those from the subsequent *Herefordshire Voice* citizen's panel survey
- community leadership and working in partnership with all sectors

and to the cross-cutting objectives that require contributions from across the Council:

- diversity and equal opportunities for all
- thriving communities
- understanding and responding to the distinctive needs of rural areas
- safeguarding the environment
- better outcomes for children
- enabling older people to live fulfilled lives in their local communities
- sustainability



2.0 Setting the Scene

- 2.1 Herefordshire's population is about 178,800. Just below a third of the population lives in Hereford City, about a fifth in the market towns and almost half in rural areas. A higher proportion of the county's population lives in very sparse areas than any other authority.
- 2.2 Between 1991 and 2005 the population increased by 11.5%, entirely due to net inward migration into the county, mainly from neighbouring English counties and the South East. This rate of growth was faster than that experienced by the rest of the West Midlands (2.6%) and England and Wales (5.2%).
- 2.3 Recent population movements have seen a considerable exodus from urban areas, mostly to villages within the immediate catchment of the main towns. Herefordshire has become a popular destination for the retired, for holiday homes and second homes and, in some areas, for out-of-county commuting.
- 2.4 The county's population has a considerably older age profile than that for England and Wales. 23.4% of the population is over retirement age, compared with 18.7% nationally, and there are fewer persons of working age (58.3% compared with 62.0%). People are, on average, healthier than nationally and live longer.
- 2.5 By 2011 the population is expected to grow by 1.1%, which is about the same as nationally. However, the number of under 16s is expected to fall by 10.6% (national fall 2.7%); the number of working age residents to fall by 1.6% (2.6% growth nationally); and the number who are of retirement age and above to grow by 17.3% (10.4% nationally).
- 2.6 Most dramatically, the number of people aged 85 and over is expected to rise by a further 35.9%, to 5,980 residents, compared with a national increase of 19.4%.
- 2.7 Although the Government's 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks Herefordshire 192nd out of 354 local authorities, there are areas of poverty and deprivation within the county. Concentrations of the most deprived areas are within Hereford (South Wye and Central) and Leominster. Conversely, the least deprived areas are concentrated to the east of the county, in some of the fringes of Hereford and directly north and west of the city, and around Ross-on-Wye.
- 2.8 Average wages in the county are significantly below both the regional and national averages, with the gap having increased slightly in recent years. Average house prices are high compared with elsewhere in the region.
- 2.9 Unemployment in the county is low. Manufacturing provides 17% of employment, with service industries accounting for 77%. Agriculture and tourism are a more important source of jobs in the county than elsewhere in the West Midlands. Self-employment is more common in Herefordshire (nearly 13.7%) than in the rest of England and Wales (8.3%).

- 2.10 Although Herefordshire performs well at GCSE level, there are relatively few people in the workforce with higher-level skills. There is limited higher education provision, and knowledge-based industries are under-represented in the county. There is net out-migration of young adults from the county, probably for the most part in search of wider opportunities for employment and higher education.
- 2.11 Experimental statistics (from ONS) suggest that, in 2003, 3.3% of the county's resident population was from ethnic minorities (5,900 people). This proportion is still very low by national (14.2%) and regional (15.0%) comparisons, but reflects growth of 22.9% in ethnic minority numbers since 2001, compared to just 1.1% in the total population. It is highly likely that numbers have increased further since the expansion of the European Union in May 2004; estimates suggest that in 2005 between 2,500 and 3,000 workers from new accession states were cleared to work in the county indefinitely.
- 2.12 The county also experiences a significant influx of seasonal agricultural workers each year (around 3,000) – mainly over the summer months, with the majority from the Ukraine and Russia.

The public's views

- 2.13 The Council has a systematic programme for keeping up to date with the priorities of people in Herefordshire and what they think about the Council and the services it provides. This has included the wide-ranging consultation that enabled the Council and its partner organisations to develop the *Herefordshire Community Strategy*, the first of the Council's annual satisfaction surveys in Autumn 2005 and an initial follow-up survey of the members of the *Herefordshire Voice* citizen's panel in 2006 to find out the underlying reasons for key areas of dissatisfaction.
- 2.14 Taking these results together, the following issues emerged:
- perceived ease of access to most key local services had stayed at similar levels since 2003-04, but the public wanted better information and access
 - although 80% of respondents were satisfied with their local community as a place to live, most quality of life aspects were perceived to have deteriorated; this was particularly marked in respect of traffic congestion, wages and the local cost of living
 - by contrast, anti-social behaviour was seen as less of a problem than in 2003-04, although the public wanted further reductions in both anti-social behaviour and crime
 - satisfaction with public transport information and local bus services had decreased
 - satisfaction with local recycling facilities had increased since 2003-04 but satisfaction with the kerbside recycling collection had decreased
 - a safeguarded and pleasant environment was important to people, with particular importance attached to flood prevention
 - satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities, parks and open spaces had remained steady, while satisfaction with other cultural and recreational services had decreased

- considerable importance was attached to affordable housing and support to live independently
- this was also the case in respect of business diversification, enterprise, improved skills and training opportunities
- well over half of respondents felt they were kept well-informed by the Council, an increase compared with 2003-04; even so, people wanted more say in local issues and decision-making
- about half of respondents were satisfied with the way the Council runs things overall (a similar proportion to 2003-04), compared with under a quarter who are dissatisfied

2.15 The results of the Autumn 2006 General Survey are being analysed. Our report on them will be published in Spring 2007. They will be used further to refine and target our improvement programme.

3.0 What the Council can do

- 3.1 The Council has a wide and growing range of powers and duties. They already range from a general power to promote well-being to a host of specific legal obligations. These include such things as the provision of schools, the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, the safety of roads, waste collection and disposal, licensing and trading standards. The October 2006 White Paper; *Strong and Prosperous Communities* sets out the Government's proposals to increase these substantially. The Council has limited or no discretion in some areas but more in others.
- 3.2 The Council has finite resources to deliver both its legal obligations and discretionary services. The financial context is therefore crucial. It is set out in detail in the Council's Medium-Term Financial Management Strategy

[electronic link to be added]

The Challenges

- 3.3 In 2006-07 the gap in the level of Government grant provided to the Council widened:
- Formula Grant per head of population is £259 – 21% below the unitary authority average of £329
 - Formula Grant plus Dedicated Schools Grant per head of population is £698 - 19% below the unitary authority average of £862; and
 - Dedicated Schools Grant per head of population is £439 – 18% below the unitary authority average of £533
- 3.4 Despite this, the Council's financial situation is sound, with a healthy level of reserves and a strong balance sheet.
- 3.5 The Government has confirmed that Herefordshire will receive an increase of 2.4% in its formula grant for 2007-08. Under the current Government settlement, the Council is scheduled to receive in 2007-08 an increase of 4% in Dedicated Schools Grant. The amount for local authority schools will continue to be ring-fenced, so it cannot be used for other services.
- 3.6 It is therefore likely that budget pressures on schools can be contained within the grant funding much more easily than they can for other services, some of which are experiencing severe pressure.
- 3.7 Pressures are particularly intense on adult social care, including services for older people and adults with learning difficulties, evidenced by high levels of overspending in recent years. A comprehensive analysis of future needs and the cost-effective modern services needed to meet them shows that demand will continue to rise year-upon-year for the foreseeable future, as the population ages. The Council has limited discretion in these areas.
- 3.9 Nor has the Council much room for manoeuvre in respect of the non-schools aspects of children's services. Its responsibilities for the welfare of children have grown as

a result of the Children Act 2004. Although its arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable children are now judged to be good overall, the greatly increased number of referrals requires additional capacity to carry out assessments and deliver effective services. Other areas in need of continued improvement are services for children with learning difficulties and ensuring that all vulnerable young people make a successful transition to adult life.

3.10 Pressures are increasing in other areas too. For instance:

- spending has to continue to rise to meet Government targets for reducing waste
- there are rising costs nationally in a range of services, including street cleansing, tackling anti-social behaviour, housing, pensions and transport
- additional costs from new legislative and Government policy requirements, such as making local authorities solely responsible for the Coroners Service, that are not fully funded
- the proposals in the Government's Green Paper *Youth Matters* will place local authorities centre-stage for all youth services in their areas and the Government is proposing further extensions to concessionary fares in 2008; but in neither case is it clear whether the funding will be sufficient to meet the costs
- the proposals in the White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* are far-reaching, placing further duties on local authorities in respect of community involvement, the delegation of power and budgets to local members and the community ownership and management of local facilities. The Council welcomes these proposals as increasing its ability to work with community and partners even more effectively to improve the quality of life throughout the county; but there can be no doubt this will increase the financial and other pressures.

3.11 In aggregate, these pressures will not be matched by increases in the Council's budget:

- looking beyond 2007-08, the next local government settlement will cover the three-year period 2008-09 to 2010-11, following HM Treasury's Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. Early indications are that this will include an even more incisive efficiency review and that resources will be focused on the Government's national priorities, such as education, health and security. This would mean that cash for local government services, other than schools, would be squeezed yet further
- one-off funding of major projects by the European Union and other external sources is coming to an end
- in view of the high number of people in the county on fixed and low incomes, and the Government's rules on capping, the Council cannot make up the deficit by increasing Council Tax to the levels that would be required
- whilst the Council will continue to borrow prudently, this will only be done where it would produce long-term affordable benefits.

3.12 The net result is that the Council faces significant budget pressures in 2007-08 and beyond. These can only be met by means of a radical transformation programme that both liberates cash for improvements in priority areas and delivers across the board improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of customer services.

The Council's Response

3.13 The Council will continue to campaign, with other rural local authorities, for a fairer deal. Whatever the outcome, the Council will maintain its programme of decisive action to live within its means and ensure the affordability of this Corporate Plan.

3.14 The motor for this is the Council's long-term *Transformation Programme*. Chaired by the Chief Executive, the Programme's Transformation Board leads an ambitious change programme to improve customer services and deliver the financial capacity needed to invest in key priorities for the future. It consists of six main inter-linking projects, each managed by its own board. They are:

- The *Herefordshire Connects* Programme
- The Customer Services Strategy
- The Children and Young People's programme
- The review of our office accommodation strategy
- The Adult and Community Services Programme
- The Pay and Workforce Development programme

3.15 The single most important element, on which all the others depend to a greater or lesser extent, is ***Herefordshire Connects***. Led by a corporate Change Core Team Manager and change champions from each directorate, it is in the advanced stages of procurement. There are three key work-streams:

1. Integrated Customer Services – electronic records and document management system
2. Integrated Support Services – finance, procurement, HR and asset management
3. Corporate Performance Management – cross-council framework

3.16 This programme is aimed to release cash from business processes to reinvest in service and capital investment priorities, such as increasing demand for adult social care, improved children's service and essential economic infrastructure, such as *Rotherwas Futures*. The benefits realisation target is £11.75m by 2010.

3.17 Objectives and targets for the other *Transformation Programme* projects are included in the Action Plan in section 6 below.

3.18 On the basis of the benefits from the *Herefordshire Connects* programme and of modest assumptions about future Government grant and the level of Council Tax, the Council's capacity for cumulative increased spending over the period of the Corporate Plan is of the order of:

2007-08	+ £6.5 million
2008-09	+ £2.4million
2009-10	+ £4.7 million

- 3.19 These existing plans will be boosted by our proposal to create a Public Service Trust for Herefordshire over the coming year. It will bring together, in one executive organisation, the Council and the commissioning arm of the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust. This will create a unique opportunity simultaneously to drive down costs and provide better services.
- 3.20 To make the maximum impact in terms of sustainable service improvements, the Council will concentrate investment on meeting its top priorities in ways that will either reduce future expenditure or mitigate the costs of inescapable future demands.
- 3.21 The Council's aspirations for improvement are that it should achieve, by no later than 2009-10, a level of performance equating to the following Comprehensive Performance Assessment star ratings:
- Adult social care – at least 3*
 - Benefits – at least 3*
 - Children and Young People – at least 3*
 - Corporate – at least 3*
 - Culture (Libraries and Leisure) – at least 3*
 - Environment – at least 3*
 - Housing – 4*
 - Use of Resources – 4*
- 3.22 To enable us to meet these aspirations, we want to be judged by the Audit Commission in 2007 to be improving well and, in 2009 to be improving strongly.

4.0 Performance April 2005 – September 2006

4.1 The Council is building its plan for the next three years on both a record of achievement and a good understanding of areas where it needs to improve.

4.2 For 2006, the independent Audit Commission gives the Council a **Comprehensive Performance Assessment score of 3** (out of a possible 4) and adjudged us to be **improving adequately** (fuller details are given below)

4.3 The Council's *Transformation Programme* is designed to accelerate the Council's rate of improvement, so as to ensure that it achieves a high standard of efficiency and effectiveness in all that it does.

4.4 Major achievements already include:

- ensuring that our arrangements for safeguarding children social care are adequate, with excellent progress in the number of referrals of children in need (from 175 per 1,000 in March 2006 to 264 in December, against a target of 220)
- implementing all the key elements of the Joint Area Review Action Plan; for example, the 12-week target for occupational therapy assessment is now being met.
- completing other actions in the Children and Comprehensive Forward Delivery Plan to achieve the improved outcomes required by the Children and Young People's Partnership Plan
- completing a comprehensive assessment of future social care needs for older people and adults with learning difficulties, and of the better, more cost-effective services needed to meet them
- the implementation, across the whole Council, of a comprehensive *Performance Improvement Cycle* that links the allocation of resources with the delivery of the Council's priorities
- changing the Constitution to provide the necessary flexibility to ensure that the Council's political structures are aligned with the forward agenda
- strengthening the scrutiny function in respect of both performance enhancement and policy development by means of a Scrutiny Improvement Plan, including a programme of visits to look at best practice in other local authorities, with a particular emphasis on improving Children's Services scrutiny
- increasing the Council's capacity to deliver better services, particularly through the development of the *Herefordshire Connects* programme,

and the completion of the county-wide *Info. Shop* network and the new *Info. by Phone* Service, which are on track for Spring 2007

4.5 Overall performance against Best Value Performance Indicators

Compared to the previous year, in 2005-06 the Council improved or maintained its performance against 59% of the indicators. This compares favourably with the 52% improved or maintained in 2004-05. However, only 21% of indicators are in the top quartile when compared to all other unitary authorities, compared to 29% in 2004-05.

4.6 Other highlights of performance against the Council’s priorities in 2005-06 and 2006-07

<p>Maximise the health, safety, economic wellbeing, achievements and contribution of every child</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although the average length of stay of all households who were unintentionally homeless and in priority need rose from 4 weeks at the end of 2004-05 to 10.65 weeks at the end of 2005-06, the number of families with children in B&B accommodation was reduced from 54 at the end of 2005 to 7 at the end of November 2006, with only 5 having been in B&B for six weeks or longer. - Prevention work is having a positive impact: homelessness applications and acceptances are down to record lows. - The Leominster Coningsby and Springfield children’s centres were officially opened in May 2006, providing enhanced support to children and their families by bringing together under one roof different organisations that provide key services.
<p>Improve the achievement of pupils</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 48.3% of pupils achieved five or more A*-C GCSE passes, a 2.9% increase on the 2005 results. - 92.9% of pupils gained at least five A*-G GCSE passes, a 1.5% improvement on 2005. - The % of young people leaving care with at least 1 A*-G GCSE pass or an NVQ rose from 65% in 2004 to 91.7% in 2005.chasing the figure for 2006 - Whitecross School and Specialist Sports College opened in June 2006. Many of its pupils helped design the school, which is one of the most eco-advanced in Europe.
<p>Enable vulnerable adults to live independently</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of older people helped to live at home per 1,000-population aged 65 or more rose from 60 to 82.9. - The success of the Signposting Scheme continued: with over 2,100 referrals in 2005-06, the total since 2002 is over 8,000 and the welfare rights element has helped people claim more than £9.5 million in additional benefits. - Per 1,000 population aged 18-64, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4.8 with physical disabilities were helped to live at home in 2005-06 compared with 2.4 in 2004-05; - 3.7 with mental health problems, compared with 1.3; and - 2.5 with learning difficulties compared to 2.2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of carers receiving a specific carers' service as a percentage of clients receiving community-based services rose in 2005-06 to 10%, against a target of 2%. - Supporting People funded services enabled the independence and social inclusion of over 2,600 vulnerable or disabled people through the provision of low-level housing-related support.
Protect the environment, by recycling waste and reducing carbon emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The percentage of household waste that has been recycled continued to improve, rising to 29.03% as at November, against 24.07% in 2005-06. - There was a reduction, from 528 to 521.7 in 2005-06, in the kilograms of waste collected per head, although the cost per household collection rose, as did disposal costs per tonne - The action plan developed to tackle the previous year's fall in the speed with which planning applications were determined had an immediate impact: major applications determined within 13 weeks improved from 46% in 2005-06 to 72% as at December 2006; minor applications determined within 8 weeks from 51% to 82%; and other applications within 8 weeks from 64% to 92%.
Improve transport and the safety of roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents rose from 141 in 2004 to 147 in 2005, this compares very favourably with earlier years; and there was a significant fall, from 783 to 732, in the number of people slightly injured.
Sustain vibrant and prosperous communities, providing more efficient, effective and customer-focused services and clean streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of people accepted as homeless and towards whom the council has a full statutory duty fell from 510 in 2004-05 to 416. The number of acceptances in the first half of 2006-07 had fallen to 68, with the number of applications falling by 58% against the same period in the previous year. - The cleanliness of streets continued to improve, with a fall from 27% in 2004-05 to 17% at September 2006 in the proportion of relevant land falling below an acceptable level. - Following development of the Museum and Learning Resource Centre, satisfaction levels were at over 90%. - The first phase of the major enhancement project to revitalise Hereford City Centre is well-advanced - Significant progress has been made on the Edgar Street Grid, with the appointment of a Chief Executive and the purchase by Advantage West Midlands of the trading site for the relocation of existing businesses - 80% of adults resident in Herefordshire were satisfied with their local community as a place to live.
Promote diversity and community harmony and strive for equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council remains on course to meet its target of achieving Level 2 of the Local Authority Equality Standard in 2006-07: the three-year comprehensive programme of equality impact assessments has been completed, providing the basis for SMART action plans to be in place across the Council by March 2007 - Developed in partnership with West Mercia Police and

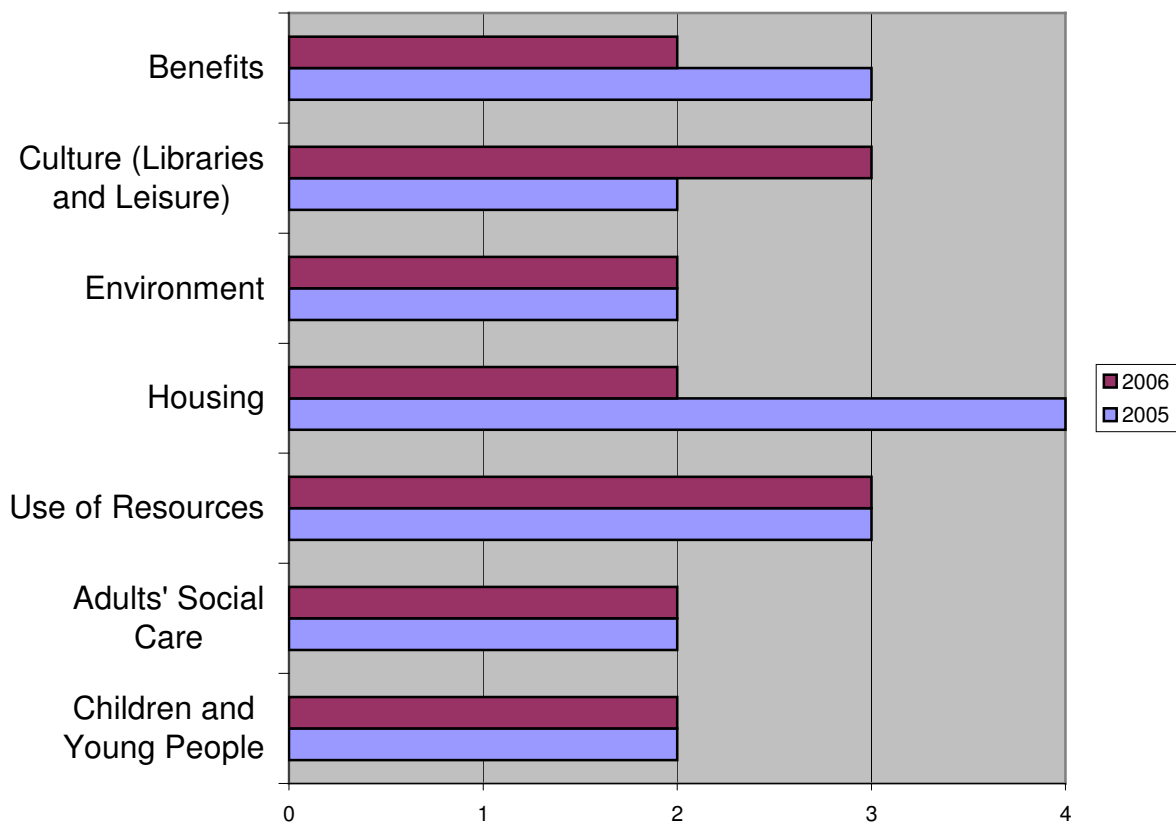
	<p>Herefordshire Primary Care Trust, a migrant workers' web-site has been launched, the first of its kind in the UK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - buildings open to the public meeting Disability Discrimination Act requirements increased by 14% to 45.9%.
Develop its community leadership role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust, the Council has proposed the establishment of a Public Service Trust for Herefordshire to deliver more efficient and effective services. - Following its election, the <i>Herefordshire Youth Council</i> is now fully established and met for the first time in March 2006
Secure significant efficiency savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council made total efficiency savings of £3.2 million in 2005-06, of which over £2.5 million were cash-releasing.
Ensure that its essential assets are in the right condition for the long-term cost-effective delivery of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A score of 3 out of 4 was achieved for the Use of Resources in the 2006 Comprehensive Performance Assessment, meaning that the Council was performing well and consistently above the minimum requirements set by the Audit Commission. - Options for future accommodation are under review following the decision of the owners of the Plough Lane site to suspend discussions on its purchase by the Council.
Understand the needs and preferences of service users and Council Tax-payers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual satisfaction surveys were introduced in autumn 2005. Overall satisfaction levels with the Council were broadly similar to those achieved in 2003. - Follow-up surveys with the <i>Herefordshire Voice</i> citizen's panel have been undertaken during 2006-07 to find out the reasons for dissatisfaction with some services, so as to provide the basis for targeted action
Recruit, retain and motivate high quality staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sickness levels fell slightly to 8.72 days per full-time equivalent employee as at November, compared to 10.5 days in 2005-06. - Turnover in 2005-06 remained low at 7.73%, compared with the 16.55% average in comparator authorities. - The new Central Recruitment Team reduced the average time taken to recruit to 39 days, compared with the previous 72.
Embed corporate planning, performance management and project management systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - implementing a new <i>Performance Improvement Cycle</i> has enabled the Council to commit to higher targets within baseline budgets for many services, and to concentrate additional investment on securing further improvements in services for children and vulnerable adults through initiatives that will save money or reduce otherwise unavoidable expenditure. - putting in place a linked network of performance improvement managers across the Council, with parallel action to strengthen substantially the performance management arrangements of <i>The Herefordshire Partnership</i>, including for the Local Area Agreement

4.7 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

The Audit Commission introduced revised and significantly more demanding CPA arrangements in 2005: *CPA – The Harder Test*. Under these arrangements, the Council is judged overall to have maintained its services in 2006 at the same level as in the previous 2 years, demonstrating a 3* overall performance and improving adequately, notwithstanding the lower scores under this tougher regime awarded to Benefits and Housing.

The Culture Service has improved its rating to 3* from 2* in 2005.

Adult Social Care, Children and Young People, Environment, and Use of Resources have maintained the same judgement as in 2005.



4.8 The **Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)** assessed the Council as serving some adults well, with uncertain capacity for improvement.

4.9 The **Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)** judged as adequate the Council’s maintenance and improvement of outcomes for children and young people, its associated social care services and its capacity to improve.

5.0 The Council's Priorities

5.1 The Council's **top priorities** for the period of this Plan are:

- to **maximise the health, safety, economic well-being, achievements and contribution of every child**, with special emphasis on sound arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable children and sustained improvements in educational attainment
- to **reshape adult social care, enabling vulnerable adults to live independently** and, in particular, **many more older people to continue to live in their own homes**
- to **secure the essential infrastructure for a successful economy**
- to streamline its processes, assets and structures, and **secure significant efficiency savings, particularly by delivering the *Herefordshire Connects* programme.**

5.2 The Council's **other priorities** are:

- to **sustain thriving communities, including by securing more efficient, effective and customer-focused services, clean streets, tackling homelessness and effective emergency planning**
- to **protect the environment**, including by **producing much less waste, recycling much more of what remains** and significantly **reducing carbon emissions**
- to **improve transport and the safety of roads**, including further reductions in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured
- to **promote diversity and community harmony** and **strive for equal opportunities** for all the people of Herefordshire, regardless of race, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, geographical location, income or age
- to **give effective community leadership**, working with partners to deliver the *Herefordshire Community Strategy*, including the *Local Area Agreement*

5.3 To make these things possible, the Council's **organisational priorities**, in addition to securing significant efficiency savings, are:

- to **ensure that its essential assets**, including schools, other buildings, roads and ICT, **are in the right condition for the long-term cost-effective delivery of services, and ensure business continuity** in the face of emergencies
- better to **understand the needs and preferences of service users and Council Tax-payers**, and to tailor services accordingly

- to **recruit, retain and motivate high quality staff**, ensuring that they are trained and developed so as to maximise their ability and performance
- to **embed corporate planning, performance management and project management systems** so as to continue to drive up service standards and efficiency

6.0 Identifying and Managing Risk

- 6.1 The Council is determined to make the most of opportunities and has a comprehensive approach to identifying and managing the risks it faces.
- 6.2 All risks are recorded and monitored by means of a corporate register. Details are included in directorate and service plans.

Overarching risks

- 6.3 A number of risks have the potential to affect the Council as a whole and to have direct or indirect impacts on all its services. These are **financial, reputational** and in respect of its **organisation, staff and systems**. These categories of risk often overlap and interact one upon the other.

Financial

- 6.4 The Council faces major risks in respect of the **level of resources** available to it to provide services, the maintenance of a **balanced budget** and the **effective and efficient use of resources**.
- 6.5 The UK Government is placing tight constraints on local authority spending generally, at the same time as requiring councils to take on additional responsibilities and setting more demanding service targets. These bear disproportionately on rural authorities because of the extra costs of providing services to sparse populations.
- 6.6 The impact falls especially hard on Herefordshire Council, as an authority that receives a much lower than average Government grant per head of population.
- 6.7 The Council will manage these risks by:
- continuing, in partnership with other rural authorities, to make the case to Government for a fairer deal
 - ensuring that, whatever the level of resources likely to be available, its forward plans are affordable
 - rigorous and robust systems of internal control, including integrated in-year financial and performance monitoring and management, and a carefully targeted audit programme
 - delivering, primarily by means of the *Herefordshire Connects* programme, a major programme of efficiency savings that will exceed Government requirements
 - seeking further efficiencies through its proposals to establish a Public Service Trust
 - meeting its priorities in ways that will either reduce future expenditure or mitigate the costs of inescapable future demands, including the prudent use of reserves
 - getting better value from the goods and services the Council procures

- rationalising the Council's accommodation and other property holdings, and lowering the costs of using them
- where necessary, reducing lower priority services
- and, generally, through the measures and controls set out in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy

Reputational

6.8 The Council must ensure that it has a good reputation with the people of Herefordshire, with partner organisations and with the UK Government. This is at risk in view of the financial and service challenges described above, as well as the ever-higher standards demanded by the Audit Commission and the other Government-led inspectorates.

6.9 The Council will manage these risks by:

- implementation of the comprehensive Action Plan further to improve our performance management arrangements, with the aim of integrating them as fully as possible with our key partner organisations by April 2008.
- continuing to give the highest priority to ensuring that its arrangements for safeguarding children continue to achieve good results-
- working with other organisations to achieve common goals for the people of Herefordshire, particularly by means of giving effect to the new *Herefordshire Community Strategy* and the associated *Local Area Agreement* with Government
- delivering full benefits from the *Transformation Programme*, in particular the savings and service improvement from *Herefordshire Connects*.
- establishing a Public Service Trust
- continuing the targeted improvement of individual services to achieve and maintain the highest possible Comprehensive Performance Assessment scores
- under its *Communications Strategy*, explaining to the public and partner organisations, candidly and in plain English, the issues the Council faces
- under its *Community Involvement Strategy*, consulting the public and partners fully about the major choices it has to make, taking their views into account before making them, and explaining the reasons for its decisions
- intensifying its focus on serving its customers through its *Customer Services Strategy*. This includes testing, through annual surveys and the monitoring of complaints and compliments, levels of customer satisfaction with the Council as a whole and with individual services

- ensuring effective emergency planning and business continuity to maintain essential services and protect the vulnerable
- continuing to comply with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and data protection legislation
- ensuring full compliance with all equalities legislation, in particular by ensuring that the results of its comprehensive programme of impact assessments are acted upon, and being well-prepared to meet the requirements of new legislation that is extending protection against unequal treatment on the grounds of gender, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief
- maintaining the highest standards of corporate governance, propriety, integrity and impartiality
- systematically inducting members of the Council following the election in May 2007

Organisation, staff and systems

- 6.10 In support of these developments, the Council is implementing a major programme of organisational change and development, which involves working in new ways across traditional service boundaries within the Council and with our partners. This requires a more driven, corporate approach to securing change so as to deliver better services, meet new statutory and regulatory requirements, and improve efficiency.
- 6.11 Foundations have been laid to meet the challenges of *The Children Act* and *Every Child Matters*. Full, successful implementation will continue to require substantial cultural and organisational change within the Council and with partners. More rigorous and effective performance management is central to this, which is why the Council has engaged the Institute of Public Care to work with managers and staff in the development and operation of strengthened arrangements.
- 6.12 This is paralleled in its importance and magnitude by the need to secure new patterns of preventative, more flexible, value for money services to maximise the well-being, choice and independence of vulnerable adults
- 6.13 These and other challenges must be met at the same time as continuing to deliver to a high standard all essential services; and do so in some cases with fewer staff, working in new structures, new management relationships and streamlined business processes, with a consistently robust and effective approach to performance management. Above all, the Council must have a high quality, motivated workforce.
- 6.14 Underpinning the service and organisational improvements, there must be highly efficient and effective ICT. A draft ICT strategy is in place and the Council's systems are undergoing major up-grading; this will continue to require significant investment over the coming years.
- 6.15 Organisational change and development of this scale and range is a huge challenge, with high inherent risks of failure.

6.16 The Council will manage these risks by means of:

- setting clear strategies, objectives, targets and timetables for all elements of change and improvement, taking into account their interactions one upon the other; this is provided for in the *Transformation Programme*
- having a designated lead Cabinet member and member of the Corporate Management Board for each area of change, objective and performance, overseen by Cabinet and considering recommendations made by the relevant scrutiny committees
- PRINCE 2 project management, with each project led by the relevant member of the Corporate Management Board or Senior Management Team and overseen by the responsible Cabinet member
- the operation of the *Performance Improvement Cycle*, which integrates corporate, service and financial planning and performance management
- the operation of the Corporate Management Board, chaired by the Chief Executive. Its focus is on strategic issues, including the change agenda. Each member devotes at least 20 per cent of his or her time to explicitly corporate activities.
- driving strategic change into operational reality through the Senior Management Team, which comprises the Heads of Service
- devoting dedicated staff resources to drive the programme and to safeguard affected areas during the transition to fully operational new structures
- the *Pay and Workforce Strategy*, including support for staff and comprehensive training and development opportunities linked to the Council's objectives, underpinned by the Council's commitment to seek accreditation as an *Investor in People*
- a systematic programme for effective two-way communication with all staff, as part of the Council's *Communications Strategy*
- regular monitoring by the Corporate Management Board and Cabinet of the overall programme and the individual elements, leading to vigorous action wherever necessary
- regular reports to the Strategic Monitoring Committee and the relevant subject scrutiny committees

7.0 The challenges and the Council's response: the Action Plan for 2007-10

- 7.1 The pages that follow set out, for each of the Council's priorities, what the Council aims to achieve over the coming three years and the key actions it intends to take to do so.
- 7.2 **Part One – Making a reality of The Herefordshire Community Strategy** – shows what the Council intends to do to fulfil the *Herefordshire Community Strategy*, including the *Local Area Agreement*.
- 7.3 **Part Two - Organisational improvement** – shows what the Council intends to do to the way it operates so as to deliver better, more cost-effective services to users and Council Tax-payers.
- 7.4 Many of the targets and actions contribute to more than one of the priorities. Where they are of particular significance to more than one they are repeated, but mostly they are described in relation to the priority to which they contribute most.
- 7.5 Where particular objectives and related targets and actions are led by partner organisations, rather than the Council, they are shown under the Council priority **to give effective community leadership**, which begins on page 44
- 7.6 Except where otherwise indicated, the stated targets are to be achieved by the end of March 2010.
- 7.7 The Plan will be up-dated and rolled forward annually so that it always looks forward at least three years.
- 7.8 The details of what the Council will do in the first year of this Corporate Plan are set out in its **Annual Operating Plan 2007-08**.
- 7.9 To achieve the targets will require effective working across organisational boundaries: internally, between Cabinet members and between managers at all levels; and externally, between Council members and officers and their counterparts in partner organisations.
- 7.10 Information on the Council's budgets and income is given in Appendices 2 - 4.

The Action Plan Part One: making a reality of *The Herefordshire Community Strategy*

Maximise the health, safety, economic well-being, achievements and contribution of every child, with special emphasis on sound arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable children and sustained improvements in educational attainment

The challenges

The overall challenge is to deliver, with our partners and across the whole of the Council's activities, fully integrated and coherent services for children and young people, as required by *Every Child Matters* and the *Children Act 2004*.

Within that framework, we must give the highest priority to ensuring that:

- services are provided on the basis of a sound understanding of the needs and wishes of children, young people and their families
- all children and young people are safeguarded, and enjoy and achieve to their maximum potential
- there is enhanced provision of appropriate family support and early intervention through children's centres, extended services around schools and support for parents
- there are effective services and support that meet the needs of children and young people with disabilities, learning difficulties or who are looked after
- the Council continues to work successfully with schools to raise the already impressive overall achievement of pupils across the county to even higher levels; and ensures that this extends to all Council maintained schools and all groups of pupils, with a particular emphasis on improving the achievements and life-chances of those with additional needs
- services promote healthy living for children and young people and families, and reduce health inequalities
- there is adequate housing for vulnerable young people (including those leaving care) and families
- that sound arrangements for children and young people are established, linked with the proposed Public Service Trust

The Council's response

The full strategic response of the Council, with its partners, is set out in the statutory *Children and Young People's Plan 2006-09*. A selection of those targets, milestones and actions **where the Council is in the lead are in this section. Those led by other partners are included in the section below *Giving effective community leadership*.**

BE HEALTHY

We aim to have **all schools accredited as Healthy Schools by 2010** (24 HCS)

Working with our partners, particularly in the NHS and the community sector, to ensure that parents get the advice and support they need, we aim to:

- **Increase from 33% in 2004-05 to 40% in 2007-08** the proportion of babies born in the South Wye area who are breastfeeding at six weeks (21b HCS)
- **Increase from 21% in 2004-05 to 30% in 2007-08** the proportion of babies born to teenage mothers in the county who are breastfeeding at six weeks (21a HCS)
- **Increase** the percentage of all babies in the county breastfeeding at six weeks (20 HCS) Target to be set by end March 2007
- **Increase the percentage of children walking or cycling to school.** This is a new indicator – target to be agreed by end March 2007 (88 HC)
- **Improve the health of young people by;**
 - taking actions to **reduce the percentages who smoke, and who are obese, as well as reducing the rates of alcohol consumption and drug use.**
 - taking actions **to increase the percentage participating in sport or other physical activities**
 - increasing the **percentage of young people eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.**

Targets for these indicators will be set before the end of March 2007. (22a to 22f HCS)

- continuing to **reduce the number of sexually transmitted infections in young people by at least 1% a year against the 2004 baseline figure of 278 cases** (23 HCS)

STAY SAFE

We will improve performance with the intention that we are **in the top quartile of authorities for staying safe outcomes** and will aspire to level 3 in Annual Performance Assessment**

**Note – we will measure performance using the following indicators;

- The number of referrals for children in need; (89a HC)
- The completion rate of initial assessments of children in need within 7 working days of referral (89b HC)
- The completion of core assessments for children in need within 35 working days; (89c HC)

By working closely with schools, requiring the recording of incidents and action to deal with bullying, we aim to **reduce the percentage of 11-15 year-olds who say they have been bullied in the last twelve months** (28 HCS) Target to be set by the end of March 2007.

ENJOY and ACHIEVE

- We will continue to **ensure that at least 85% of three year-olds have access to good quality early years education** (66 HC)
- We will work with schools to raise to even higher levels performance in the top GCSE grades, in particular **increasing the proportion of pupils in schools maintained by the Council achieving 5 A* - C GCSEs, or the equivalent, including English and Maths** (31 HCS) Target to be agreed by April 2007
- By working in partnership with schools to tackle disaffection by means of the Behaviour Support Plan and the Behaviour Support Policy produced by each school, we aim to **reduce school absences** in 2007/08:
 - **in secondary schools maintained by the Council, from 7.4% to 6% of half-day sessions** (34 HCS)
 - **in primary schools maintained by the Council, from 4.9% to 4% of half-day sessions** (33 HCS)
 - **the number of children looked after by the Council continuously for at least 12 months, who missed at least 25 days of schooling during the previous school year, to fall from 14 in 2004 to no more than 7 in 2008** (35a HCS)
 - **the number of half day sessions missed by looked after children as a percentage of the total number of sessions in primary schools to fall from 4.65% in 2005/06 to 4.25% in 2007/08** (35b HCS)

- **the number of half day sessions missed by looked after children as a percentage of the total number of sessions in secondary schools to fall from 7.6% in 2005/06 to 7% in 2007/08** (35b HCS)
- We aim to **reduce by 2008-09 the conception rate of under 18s by 40% from a baseline of 37.2 per 1000** (85 HCS)
- We aim to **increase adults' perceptions of improvement** in:
 - activities for teenagers (60a HCS)
 - facilities for young children (90 HC)

[Note; Baselines and targets to be established by the end of March 2007]

POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION

- Working with them, we aim to **ensure that 100% of schools have a functioning school council** (91 HC)
- By encouraging Duke of Edinburgh Awards and other initiatives we aim to **increase the number of 11-15 year-olds volunteering** (37 HCS) Target will be set at the end of March 2007.
- Through the implementation of our *Community Involvement Action Plan for Young People* and by progressively embedding the Hear by Rights Standards by 2010, we will develop and maintain a good understanding of the needs and wishes of children and young people. The key measures of our success will be to **increase the percentage of young people who feel that they can influence decisions affecting important local services** (38 HCS) Target to be set by the end of August 2007 following publication of the 2007 Youth Survey.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

- Working with schools and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), **we aim to reduce to less than 4.8% the proportion of 16-18 year-olds those not in education, employment or training** (40 HCS)
- We aim to **increase from 12 to 46 the number of young people engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19 who had been looked after by the Council in their 17th year who are engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19** (41 HCS).
- By working with schools, the LSC and further education colleges to broaden the range and flexibility of the curriculum and available qualifications, including increased vocational options, **we aim to increase from 92.9% to 96.5% in 2008/09 the proportion of pupils in schools maintained by the Council achieving 5 or more A* - G grades at GCSE, or the equivalent** (30 HCS)

- By implementing our *Homelessness Strategy* and by securing, with partners, an increase in the supply of both temporary and settled housing, we aim to **eliminate the need for the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for households with children** (13 HCS)

SERVICE MANAGEMENT

- Building on the work of the *Children and Young People's Partnership Board*, we will **establish by April 2008 Children's trust arrangements** with all the relevant local partners. These arrangements will link to the proposed Public Service Trust between the Primary Care Trust and Herefordshire Council
- We will complete, with partners, the development and **implementation of the Herefordshire Common Assessment Framework (CAF) , with targets set by June 2007** to identify children with additional needs and ensure that early intervention services are put in place
- We aim to **increase by at least 15% (from about 250 to over 300) the number of families receiving support** (29 HCS)
- Fully involving parents, carers and children, we will develop and implement a joint commissioning strategy with Health, the voluntary sector and other partners to **deliver service improvements for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Implementation of the strategy will commence in April 2007, when targets will be set.**
- We aim to **ensure that all schools have an approved school travel plan by March 2010** (84 HCS)

Reshape adult social care to enable vulnerable adults to live independently and, in particular, to enable many more older people to continue to live in their own homes

The challenges

Over the coming three years the big challenges are to:

- implement radical improvements in the pattern and quality of services so as to meet future needs as efficiently and effectively as possible. Key elements in this will be;
 - (i) working with communities and partners to develop to the full the opportunities for the rapidly growing numbers of older people to have fulfilled lives and contribute to society
 - (ii) putting in place more cost-effective social care services to improve the quality of life of older people, especially those over 80, and their carers
 - (iii) putting in place more cost-effective and flexible support, including social care and preventative, housing-related support services for other vulnerable adults (particularly those with physical disabilities, mental health problems or learning difficulties) and their carers
 - (iv) in respect of all, maximising independence, well-being and choice
- continue to tackle homelessness successfully

The Council's response

Working with its partners, the Council aims to make the following improvements to the services provided to vulnerable adults:

- reduce waiting times for assessment and care packages;
- increase the number of individuals receiving non-care managed packages
- map, co-ordinate and develop a range of rehabilitation, prevention and independent living services;
- establish community wardens across the county;
- expand the *Signposting Scheme*; piloting a local care sitter service;
- expanding the provision of Supporting People Services;
- target further sites with Fire Service outreach workers;
- continue the Trading Standards *Doorstep Crime Campaign*;
- increase significantly the number of older people receiving direct payments to purchase social care.

By making these improvements we will:

- **increase the number of people of 65 or over helped to live at home per 1,000 population from 82.9 to 100 in 2009-10** (16 HCS) [Note; target under consideration in the light of the additional resources allocated to reshape older peoples social care and support services. Target to be set by end of March 2007]
- **reduce to 31,222 by 2007-08 the number of emergency unscheduled acute hospital bed-days in NHS hospitals occupied by a person aged 75 or more** (15 HCS)
- **increase the satisfaction of people over 65 using home care services provided through Herefordshire Social Care or directly purchasing services using direct payments from 58% in 2006 to 66% in 2009.** (17 HCS)

By working with our partners, and following extensive consultation with older people and other interests, we aim to have in place by **October 2007 a comprehensive Older People's Strategy, with clear targets and actions for improvement.**

Through the Joint Team with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and implementation of the agreed plan to identify potential claimants, we aim to:

- **increase the number of people in receipt of Pension Credit from 7,722 in 2006-07 to 8,554** (18a HCS)
 - **increase the number of people aged 60 or over in receipt of Council Tax benefit from 7,751 in 2006-07 to 8,300 in 2009-10** (18c HCS)
 - **Increase the number of people in receipt Attendance Allowance from 6,470 in 2006-07 to 6,934 in 2009-10** (18b HCS)
- Working with partners to implement the *Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment Best Value Review Action Plan* and through the development of a new deaf-blind service, we aim to **increase the number of people with physical disabilities per 1,000 population aged 18-64 helped to live at home from 4.8 to 5.2** (74c HC)
 - Working with partners on the continuing implementation of our four-year service transformation programme, using improved assessment tools, providing improved advice and support, and supporting more people to move into their own homes from registered care, we aim to **increase the number of people with learning disabilities per 1,000 population aged 18-64 helped to live at home from 2.5 to 3.5** (74a HC) [Note; target under consideration in the light of the additional resources allocated to reshape support services for people with learning difficulties. Target to be set by end of March 2007]

- Working with our partners in a co-located joint service, with expanded early intervention, deliberate self-harm and carers' support services, we aim to **increase the number of people with mental health problems per 1,000 population aged 18-64 helped to live at home from 3.7 to 5.1** (74b HC)

- Working with partners, we will before the end of 2007 establish the future needs of 18-64 year-olds **with mental health problems or physical disabilities; have a clear understanding of the services and support programmes needed to meet them cost effectively.**

- By implementing with our partners our *Homelessness Strategy Action Plan* **to prevent homelessness and by** securing more affordable housing, we aim to **decrease from 416 to 140 the number of people accepted as homeless during a year in respect of whom the Council has a full statutory duty** (14 HCS)

Securing the essential infrastructure for a successful economy

The challenges

It's crucial over the coming years to ensure that Herefordshire has the right infrastructure to strengthen the competitiveness of its economy and so to secure better paid, higher value-added jobs. This requires:

- a flexible, skilled workforce
- a good transport infrastructure
- a good supply of industrial and commercial sites
- incentives to help new businesses prosper and grow
- a focus on attracting and retaining knowledge and high-technology industries that offer better paid, high-value added employment

The Council's response

Working with partners, we will implement the *Herefordshire Economic Development Strategy 2005 to 2025*, key elements of which are;

- We intend to **tender for the development partner for the retail element of the Edgar Street Grid and to have a preferred development partner in place by early 2008.**
- **We also intend, by December 2007, to undertake a feasibility study for the inclusion and development of a library as part of the scheme.**
- We aim for **the Rotherwas access road to be opened in June 2008.**
- We intend to **start phase two of *Rotherwas Futures*, tendering for construction by January 2008.**
- We will continue to work with partners on the programme of construction of the *Learning Village* in Hereford City with **final handover of the completed Learning & Resource Centre and Work Skill Centre by December 2007.**
- We aim to **increase the number of VAT-registered businesses each year by at least 1.3%** (HCS 2)
- By establishing a new grant scheme to encourage employers and by running a support programme of seminars and events, we aim to **increase the number of people employed in technology and**

knowledge intensive industries from 9,500 in 2006-07 to 10,286 in 2007-08 (HCS 3) (LPSA target)

Through these measures, we aim to **reduce the gap in average wage levels, measured as a ratio, between Herefordshire and nationally from 0.87:1 in 2005 to 0.89:1 in 2009-10 (1 HCS)**

Sustaining thriving communities, including by securing more efficient, effective and customer-focused services, clean streets, tackling homelessness and effective emergency planning

The challenges

The next three years require continued action across a wide range of complementary areas vital to the future of communities across the county:

- tackling the continuing problems of affordable housing and continuing successfully to combat homelessness
- building on success in reducing the overall level of crime, with a particular drive to reduce the number of violent offences, crime related to the misuse of drugs and alcohol, and anti-social behaviour
- working in even more effective and focused partnerships across all sectors to maintain and improve community services, including the full modernisation of those provided directly by the Council to make them more cost-effective and user-friendly
- the fuller engagement of people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities in the life and development of their communities
- maintaining our successful partnerships to ensure that all people are safeguarded at times of emergency

The Council's response

By implementing with our partners our *Homelessness Strategy Action Plan* to **prevent homelessness** and by securing more affordable housing, we aim to **decrease from 490 to 140 the number of people accepted as homeless during a year in respect of whom the Council has a full statutory duty** (14 HCS)

By implementing our Community Involvement and Communication Action Plan, enabling more communities to draw up their community/parish plans, making the best possible use of the county's Community Fora, capacity-building and training for community volunteers and agencies, and support for activities that enable communities to come together more, we aim to:

- **increase the proportion of adult residents who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local community from 35% in 2005-06 to 40% by 2008 and to 43% by 2009-10** (61a HCS)
- **increase the percentage of adult residents who feel the Council does enough to give them the opportunity to**

influence important decisions about local services from 23% in 2005-06 to 28% in 2009-10 (70 HC)

- **increase the proportion of adult residents who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area (61b HCS) (target to be decided by the end of March 2007)**
 - **increase the proportion of adult residents reporting that they have engaged in formal volunteering of an average of two or more hours a week from 17% in 2005-06 to 22% in 2007 to 25% in 2009-10. (62 HCS)**
- By working in partnership with other agencies and voluntary and community groups (including the provision of cleansing equipment for them to use), and by a targeted programme of deep cleansing and enforcement action, we aim to:
- **reduce from 18% in 2005-06 to 13% the proportion of relevant land and highways that fall below an acceptable level (54 HCS)**
 - **reduce from 3% in 2005-06 to 1% the proportion of relevant land and highways from which unacceptable levels of graffiti are visible (92 HC)**
 - **reduce from 2% to 1% the proportion of land and highways from which unacceptable levels of fly-posting are visible (93 HC)**
 - **maintain our current grade of 1 (very effective) for the year-on-year reduction in the total number of incidents and increase in total number of enforcement actions taken to deal with 'fly-tipping' (94 HC)**
 - **increase by at least 4% over three years the percentage of people satisfied with the cleanliness standard in their area* (95 HC) (*for this indicator there will be a three-year target against which we will monitor progress annually through the Annual Satisfaction Survey)**
 - **increase from 90% in 2005-06 to 100% the percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours from the point where the Council is legally entitled to remove the vehicle (96 HC)**

Through the implementation of the *Herefordshire Community Safety and Drugs Partnership Strategy*, the *Hereford Against Night-Time Disorder Scheme*, and the work of the *Community Alcohol Service*, including the *Alcohol Referral Scheme*, **we aim by March 2008** to:

- **reduce the number of violent crimes from 2,844 in 2003/04 to 2,553 by 2008** (45 HCS)
- **reduce the number of criminal damage incidents from 2,524 in 2003/04 to 2,101 by 2008** (42b HCS)
- For there to have been a **fall of at least 5% against the 2005 baseline figures the proportion of people who think that the following things are a problem:** (43 HCS)
 - **speeding traffic** - 81% (2005 baseline) to 76% by 2008
 - **vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles** - 60% (2005 baseline) to 55% by 2008
 - **people using drugs** - 60% (2005 baseline) to 55% by 2008
 - **people dealing drugs** - 53% (2005 baseline) to 48% by 2008
 - **people being drunk or rowdy in public places** - 53% (2005 baseline) to 48% by 2008

We aim to maintain **the proportions of survey respondents who find it easy to access the following key local services using their normal form of transport**;**

- a Doctor (59a HCS)
- a local hospital (59b HCS)
- a library (59c HCS)
- a sports or leisure centre (59d HCS)
- a cultural or recreational facility (59e HCS)

**Note; Access to services indicators - These indicators are measured annually through a satisfaction survey.

We aim to **increase the percentage of adults who use:**

- **sports and leisure facilities at least once a month; from 25% in 2005 to 31% in 2010** (65a HCS)
- **parks, open spaces, play areas and other recreational facilities at least once a month; from 41% in 2005 to 48% in 2010** (65e HCS)
- **libraries at least once a month; from 32% in 2005 to 36% in 2010** (65b HCS)
- **museums or galleries at least once every six months; from 19% in 2005 to 22% in 2010** (65c HCS)

- **theatres or concert halls at least once every six months; from 32% in 2005 to 37% in 2010 (65d HCS)**
- We will also aim to **increase, by at least 4% by 2010, the adult public's perceptions of improvement in the following quality of life indicators***;
 - **access to nature (96 HC)**
 - **activities for teenagers (60a HCS)**
 - **affordable decent housing (60b HCS)**
 - **clean streets (97 HC)**
 - **community activities (98 HC)**
 - **cultural facilities (99 HC)**
 - **education provision (100 HC)**
 - **facilities for young children (90 HC)**
 - **health services (101 HC)**
 - **job prospects (60c HCS)**
 - **parks and open spaces (102 HC)**
 - **public transport (103 HC)**
 - **race relations (104 HC)**
 - **road and pavement repairs (105 HC)**
 - **shopping facilities (106 HC)**
 - **sports and leisure facilities (107 HC)**
 - **the level of crime (60d HCS)**
 - **the level of pollution (108 HC)**
 - **the level of traffic congestion (60e HCS)**
 - **wage levels and the local cost of living (60f HCS)**
 - **public rights of way (109 HC)**

* Note; Quality of Life indicators

The target has been set at 4% because perceptions are measured through the use of an annual survey which has a confidence level is $\pm 3\%$. This means that in order to be reasonably sure that there has been an improvement in performance the measurable improvement must be at least 4%.

We aim to increase;

- **the satisfaction of adult residents with their local community as a place to live from 80% in 2005 to 87% in 2008 (64 HCS)**
- **the percentage of people who feel that Herefordshire is a place where people from different backgrounds can get on together (63 HCS)***
- **the percentage of people who feel that people in their area treat them with respect and consideration*. (87 HCS)**
- **the percentage of people who feel informed about what is being done to tackle anti-social behaviour in the local area*. (110 HC)**

- **the percentage of people who feel that parents in their local area are made to take responsibility for the behaviour of their children***. (86 HCS)

** Targets for these indicators to be set by end of March 2007*

Working with our partners to deliver our annual programme of risk assessment emergency planning and exercising, business continuity management within the Council, advice to business and other organisations, and effective communications with the community, **we will comply fully with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.** (79 HC)

Protecting the environment, including by producing much less waste, recycling much more of what remains and significantly reducing carbon emissions

The challenge

Building on the strong foundations we have laid in recent years, over the next three years we must further improve our performance in respect of:

- safeguarding Herefordshire's beautiful countryside as a place where people can live, work and enjoy, and which continues to be a magnet for responsible tourism
- reducing waste and pollution across the county
- our direct contribution from the way we conduct our operations
- and do so within tightly constrained resources.

The Council's response

We intend to **adopt the Unitary Development Plan**, providing consistent county-wide policies for environmental protection and sustainable development

Through our maintenance of highway verges, school grounds, cemeteries, smallholdings, parks, open spaces and other landholdings, we aim **by 2009-10 to increase from 2.59% to 3.4% the proportion of Council-owned or managed land, without a nature conservation designation that is managed for biodiversity** (67 HC)

We aim to **increase from the proportion of land designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest within the local authority area that is in favourable condition**. (55 HCS) Target to be set by the end of March 2007

We aim to **increase the numbers of key species** (57 HCS) Target to be set by the end of March 2007

By increasing participation in the kerbside collection of recyclables, supporting new facilities for waste diversion and recycling and improving the performance of household waste sites, we aim to:

- **reduce the amount of household waste collected per head in a year to 510 kilograms (compared to the 2005-06 baseline of 521.7 kilograms)** (56a HCS)
- **reduce from 78.2% to 65% the proportion of household waste that is landfilled** (56b HCS)
- **maintaining the % of municipal waste arisings (excluding household waste) which have been sent by the Local Authority for recycling** (56c HCS)

- **Maintaining the % of municipal waste (excluding household waste) landfilled** (56d HCS)
- **increase the proportion of household waste recycled from 17.46% in 2005-06 to 28%** (56e HCS)

Through the implementation of *The Herefordshire Partnership's Carbon Management Action Plan*, we aspire to see a **reduction in carbon emissions per head of the population** (58 HCS) [Target to be set by the end of March 2007]

We will continue to seek improvements in the energy efficiency of domestic dwellings required under the Home Energy Conservation Act through the provision of grants and advice and by implementing an Affordable Warmth Strategy with the aim of **reducing energy consumption by at least 4.4% against the 2006 baseline.**

Improving transport and the safety of roads, including further reductions in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured

The challenge

Over the coming three years we must:

- improve the condition of the roads for which the Council is responsible at a time when recurrent Government financial support for highways is set to fall
- build on our achievements by cutting road casualties even more
- continue to do all we can to promote sustainable transport that serves all the people of the county, including those who don't have a car

The Council's response

By means of Local Transport Plan safety schemes, improving the condition of roads more generally and through road safety training in schools, we aim to;

- **reduce from 141 in 2004 to 116 the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions in a year** (52 HCS)
- **reduce the number of people slightly injured in road traffic collisions** (111 HC) [Target to be set by the end of March 2007]
- **reduce the percentage of adult residents in Herefordshire who usually travel to work for their main job by driving a car or van on their own.** (6 HCS) [Target to be set by the end of March 2007]
- **improve the condition of principal roads so that only 5% fall below an acceptable threshold compared to 21% in 2005-06** (83a HC)
- **improve the condition of non-principal roads so that only 14% fall below an acceptable threshold** (83b HC)

Primarily by means of targeted bus subsidies, the provision of bus lanes and other public transport infrastructure, and by introducing park and ride facilities, we aim to:

- **control the increase of annual average traffic volumes to no more than 8% compared with 2003-04** (7a HCS & 7b HCS)
- **increase from 3,248,935 to 4,032,000 (24%) the number of passenger bus journeys a year** (76 HC)

We will measure people's perceptions of traffic congestion (60e HCS) (Three-year target to be set by the end of March 2007. Progress will be reported on annually through the Annual Satisfaction Survey)

By providing improved cycleways, traffic and road safety schemes, the safer routes to schools programme, and highway and footway maintenance, we aim to;

- **increase the number of cyclists using public cycle parking facilities by 5% every two years** (114 HC)
- **increase by 18% the number of cycling trips in a year compared with 2003-04** (72 HCS)

Promoting diversity and community harmony and striving for equal opportunities for all the people of Herefordshire, regardless of race, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, geographical location, income or age

The challenges

Over the next three years we must:

- accelerate our progress against the *Local Authority Equality Standard*
- meet existing and new statutory requirements to promote equality and eliminate discrimination in respect of race, disability, gender, age, religion or belief, and sexual orientation
- continue the sound equal opportunities policies and practices the Council has established for the selection and development of its staff, and further increase the diversity of our workforce
- develop our plans in response to the community cohesion requirements in the Local Government White Paper, *Strong and prosperous communities*

The Council's response

Working with *The Herefordshire Equality Partnership Board* we will implement our *Comprehensive Equality Policy Action Plan*. and continue a comprehensive programme of awareness training, information sharing and networking with elected member, staff and community organisations so as to **attain Level 5 of the *Local Authority Equality Standard* by March 2010.** (80 HC)

We will **ensure that all Directorates and Human Resources have Equality Impact Action plans that are realistic and achievable and which are monitored and reported against every six months.**

We will **review and roll forward our statutory *Race Equality Scheme, by April 2008, and our *Disability Equality Scheme by December 2009****

In doing all this, **we will take account of the equalities implications of the results of our surveys that ask the public about ease of access to key services and factors affecting the quality of life** (for fuller details see the Action Plan for *Sustain thriving communities* beginning on page 34 above), **setting targets and actions accordingly**

By reviewing the effectiveness of our recruitment activities and changing them where necessary, we aim to:

- **increase from 0.89% in 2005-06 to 2.8% in 2009-10 the percentage of employees from black and ethnic minorities (112a HC)**
- **increase from 1.89% in 2005-06 to 3.5% in 2009-10 the percentage pf employees from black and ethnic minorities who are amongst the top 5% of wage earners (112b HC)**
- **Increase from 0.39% in 2005-06 to 3.75% in 2009-10 the percentage of employees declaring a disability (112c HC)**

We intend **by September 2007 to have developed our response to the community cohesion requirements in the Local Government White Paper, *Strong and prosperous communities***

Giving effective community leadership by working with partners to deliver *The Herefordshire Community Strategy*, including the *Local Area Agreement*

The challenges

The new *Herefordshire Community Strategy* to 2020 provides the foundations for an even more successful *Herefordshire Partnership*. This is buttressed by the LAA, which provides the core of the *Partnership Action Plan*, with clear targets and performance management arrangements to ensure delivery.

The Local Government White Paper, *Strong and prosperous communities* puts an even greater emphasis on local authorities leading effective partnerships in their areas to improve their communities and the quality of life.

At the same time, the Council and the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust have proposed a trail-blazing Public Service Trust.

The challenge is to take full advantage of this unprecedented opportunity to improve significantly the quality of life of the county's whole population.

At the same time, the Council must continue to maintain confidence in local democracy.

The Council's and partners' response

Fuller details are set out in *The Herefordshire Community Strategy 2006 to 2020*, and many of the key targets and actions are described in the earlier parts of this Action Plan. This section includes those where organisations other than the Council have the lead responsibility, albeit that in many cases the Council makes an important contribution.

Reducing crime, use of illegal drugs and violence

Through the implementation of the *Herefordshire Crime, Disorder and Drugs Reduction Strategy 2005- 8 and LPSA targets*, The Council, working with West Mercia Constabulary, aims by 2007-08 to achieve the following crime related targets (2004-5 data as baseline, unless otherwise specified):

- **Reduce violent crimes in Herefordshire by 11% against the 2003-04 baseline** (45 HCS)
- **Reduce the incidence of criminal damage in Herefordshire by 6% against the 2003-04 baseline** (42b HCS)
- **Reduce all recorded crime by 15%** (42c HCS)
- **Reduce the number of young people aged under 25 who are victims of crime in Herefordshire by 6%** (25 HCS)

- **Reduce re-offending by young people in Herefordshire by a further 2.5% by 2008 (measured in calendar years against the 2006 baseline) (36 HCS)**
- **Reduce by 15% the proportion of prolific and other priority offenders (PPOs) who re-offend. (48 HCS)**
- **Reduce British Crime Survey comparator crimes by 15%, against the 2003-04 baseline. (42a HCS)**
- **No more than 600 recorded domestic burglaries per year (49a HCS)**
- **No more than 1,086 recorded vehicle crimes per year (49b HCS)**

Through the implementation of the *Herefordshire Crime, Disorder and Drugs Reduction Strategy 2005- 8 and LPSA targets*, The Council, working with West Mercia Constabulary, aims by 2007-08 to achieve the following drug-related targets (2004-5 data as baseline):

- **Increase the number of Class A drug supply offences brought to justice by 25% (50 HCS)**
- **Increase the numbers of drug users in treatment to 720 (46 HCS)**
- **Reduce the offending behaviour of individuals engaged in the Drugs Intervention Programme (47 HCS).** Target to be agreed by the end of March 2007 once baseline data has been established.

Through the implementation of the *Herefordshire Crime, Disorder and Drugs Reduction Strategy 2005- 8 and LPSA targets*, The Council, working with West Mercia Constabulary, aims by 2007-08 to achieve the following domestic violence related targets (2004-5 data as baseline):

- **Increase the number of calls to the Herefordshire Women's Aid helpline by 10% (51a HCS)**
- **Increase the number of domestic violence incidents reported to the police by 10% (51b HCS)**
- **Increase the number of arrests for domestic violence by 10% (51c HCS)**
- **Increase the number of sanction detections for domestic violence incidents by 5% (51d HCS)**

Through the implementation of the *Herefordshire Crime, Disorder and Drugs Reduction Strategy 2005- 8 and LPSA targets*, the Council, working with West Mercia Constabulary, aims by 2007-08 to achieve the following targets relating to the public's perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour (2004-5 data as baseline, unless otherwise specified):

decrease by 5% the proportion of people who think that the following are a problem:

- **speeding traffic** - 81% (2005 baseline) to 76% by 2008
 - **vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles** - 60% (2005 baseline) to 55% by 2008
 - **people using drugs** - 60% (2005 baseline) to 55% by 2008
 - **people dealing drugs** - 53% (2005 baseline) to 48% by 2008
 - **people being drunk or rowdy in public places** - 53% (2005 baseline) to 48% by 2008
- **increase in the percentage of people who feel informed about what is being done to tackle anti-social behaviour in the local area*** (112 HC)
 - **increase in the percentage of people who feel that parents in their local area are made to take responsibility for the behaviour of their children*** (86 HCS)

*these are new indicators. Baselines and targets will be set by end of March 2007

- **reduce by 4% against the 2006 baseline, the proportion of adults worried about crime or anti-social behaviour** (44 HCS)

Improving health

Through the implementation of the new public health agenda "Choosing Health", **the Council, working with the Primary Care Trust (PCT), aims to:**

- **reduce the mortality rate from cancer for people under 75 from 96 in 2006 to 93 in 2007 – (8 HCS)***
- **reduce the mortality rate from circulatory diseases for people under 75 from 79 in 2006 to 77 in 2007 – (9 HCS)***
- **reduce the number of deaths per annum from chronic diseases from 595** (based on an three year running average from 2004 to 2006) **to 590** (based on an three year running average from 2005 to 2007) (10 HCS)*
- **reduce the mortality rate from accidents.** Baseline data to be set and target to be agreed by the end of March 2007 (53 HCS)*

*Note; mortality rates are shown per 100,000

- **reduce the number of all causes standardised mortality rate (SMR) for deprived areas of Herefordshire from 24%** (based on an three year running average from 2004 to 2006) **to 20%** (based on an three year running average from 2005 to 2007) (11 HCS)

By the same means **the Council, working with the PCT, aims to improve the healthy lifestyles of residents by:**

- **increasing the number of adults who quit smoking from 1,100 a year in 2006 to 1,200 a year in 2007.** (12a HCS)
- **reducing the percentage of adults who consume more than the recommended intake of alcohol per week from the 2006-07 baseline figure of 17%** (12b HCS)
- **reducing the percentage of adults eating fewer than five portions of fruit and vegetables on a typical day from the 2006-07 baseline figure of 34%** (12c HCS)
- **increasing the percentage of adults undertaking thirty minutes or more of moderate physical activity at least three days per week from 22% in 2006 to 23%** (12d HCS)

Improving qualification rates

Through the implementation of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Local Strategic Plan, the Council, working with the LSC, aims by 2007-08 to increase the number of Herefordshire residents aged 19 and over achieving:

- **a Level 2 qualification, excluding manufacturing and engineering, from 1,738 to 1,872** (4c HCS)
- **a Level 2 qualification in engineering and manufacturing to 57** (4b HCS)
- **a Level 3 qualification, excluding manufacturing and engineering, from 825 to 878** (4e HSC)
- **a Level 3 qualification in manufacturing and engineering from 26 to 44** (4d HSC)

By the same means the Council working with the LSC aims to achieve the following targets:

- **31 skills for life qualifications gained through Train to Gain in 2007-08** (5 HCS)
- **an increase in the percentage of the working age population qualified to at least Level 3** (4ai HCS) [Note; Target to be set by end of March 2007]
- **an increase in the percentage of the working age population qualified to at least level 4** (4aii HCS) [Note; Target to be set by end of March 2007]

To maintain high-levels of public confidence in open government and local democracy, **the Council will:**

- overseen by its independently chaired *Standards Committee* and the *Monitoring Officer*, **uphold in its affairs the highest standards of corporate governance, propriety, integrity and impartiality**
- through the work of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee and the Finance Officer, **discharge its financial and audit duties to ensure good financial management and governance**

- **ensure it is accessible and responsive, seeking to avoid findings of maladministration against the Council being issued by the Local Government Ombudsman**

- **ensure that all members have the opportunity to receive full induction training on the responsibilities of being a Councillor, Cabinet Member, Committee Member and Scrutiny member**

- ensure that **all agendas for meetings are made available on our website at least five working days** before meetings **and that Council and Committee minutes, as well as Cabinet decision notices, are published on the Council website within two working days of being approved.**

- Work with the *Herefordshire Association of Local Councils*, **to provide training and support that enable the county's town and parish councils to demonstrate best practice and be at the forefront of national developments**

The Action Plan Part Two - organisational improvement

Streamline our processes, assets and structures, **and secure significant efficiency savings, particularly by delivering the *Herefordshire Connects* programme.**

The challenges

Over the next three years we must:

- make recurrent and cumulative cash-releasing savings of at least £11.75 million
- achieve these savings without detriment to our customers
- continue to modernise and improve the quality, accessibility and positive impact of our services on people's quality of life

The Council's response

We will **implement the *Herefordshire Connects* programme** (for further details see paragraphs 3.15 and 3.16 on page 12). The key milestones and staged targets to achieve the £11.75 million of cash-releasing savings will be determined in the coming months, following the appointment of the Council's strategic partner.

As part of this, we will **rationalise our front and back office functions**. Again, the key milestones and targets will be determined in the coming months, following the appointment of the Council's strategic partner

Through e-procurement, benchmarking against other organisations, streamlining procedures and other initiatives, we will continue to improve the value for money we get from procuring goods and services. **In the first year of this plan we will achieve an additional saving of £250,000 through improved procurement procedures.**

We will **review our *Accommodation Strategy by June 2007***, including the disposal of properties, the cessation of leases and the relocation of staff in the light of future needs for office accommodation.

Ensuring that essential assets, including schools, other buildings, roads and ICT, are in the right condition for the long-term cost-effective delivery of services, and ensure business continuity in the face of emergencies

The challenges

The Council must ensure that:

- despite the need for overall reductions in expenditure, it maintains a prudent programme for the renewal and maintenance of its key assets
- it has in place tried and tested plans and systems to maintain services in the event of disaster or other crises
- it raises its performance as regards the use of resources, including the achievement of best value for money, to an even higher level

The Council's response

In the light of the outcomes of the review of our Accommodation Strategy, we will **complete our new ICT network during 2007-08** to make our operations more efficient and effective, with the **network available for at least 98.5% of the time**

By disposing of some dilapidated property and bringing up to standard the buildings we retain following the review of our *Accommodation Strategy*, we will **raise the proportion of the gross internal floor space in ODPM categories A and B to at least 95% by 2009-10**

By embedding our business continuity plans for all parts of the Council's activities and services through an annual programme of risk assessment and business continuity management, we will ensure that we **comply with the *Civil Contingencies Act 2004*, in particular so as to safeguard the most vulnerable people in the county** (79 HC)

We will embed risk management across all aspects of the Council's work and take all other measures necessary to **raise our *Use of Resources* score from 3 to 4** (the highest possible). (113 HC)

Understanding the needs and preferences of service users and Council Tax-payers, tailoring services accordingly

The challenge

As the Council strives to achieve more with less, makes big efficiency savings and concentrates resources on priority areas, it must be more than ever careful to root all that it does in a solid understanding of what the public and our customers need and want.

The Council's response

Through our network of local *Info Shops*, a state-of-the-art *Info by phone* service and the fullest possible use of electronic services, we will provide **better, faster and more responsive services to individual customers**. The key milestones and targets for the period of this Plan will be determined as part of the *Herefordshire Connects* programme.

By embedding our new customer relations management and complaints handling systems, a programme to continue encouraging customer feedback, and a rolling programme of training for complaints officers and other staff, we aim to **increase from a baseline of 29% the proportion of those making complaints who are satisfied with how their complaint has been handled** (68 HC) (Target to be set by end of March 2007)

By implementing our *Community Involvement* and *Communications Strategy* action plans, giving effect to agreed parish plan aspirations, the implementation of changes following a review of the *Community Fora* and conducting annual customer satisfaction surveys, we aim to **increase the proportion of adult residents who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local community from 35% in 2005 to 43% in 2010** (61 HCS)

Through the service improvements described in this Plan, and also by enabling more communities to draw up town and parish plans, building community and voluntary sector capacity and enabling more opportunities for people in communities to come together, we aim to **increase from 80% to 87% the proportion of adults satisfied with their community as a place to live**. (64 HCS)

Through the implementation of our *Community Involvement Action Plan for Young People*, including the establishment of the *Herefordshire Youth Council* and the operation of the *Community Fora*, we will maintain an up-to-date understanding of the needs and wishes of children and young people. A key measure of our success will be to **increase from 19% to 28% the percentage of young people who feel that the Council does enough to give them the opportunity to influence important decisions about local services**. (69 HC)

Working with partners, and in consultation with service users and their representatives, we will **before the end of 2007 establish the future needs of 18-64 year olds with mental health or physical disabilities and have a clear understanding of the services and support programmes that will be needed to meet them cost effectively**.

We will continue to operate robust procedures so as to comply with the *Freedom of Information Act* and data protection legislation, **responding to FOI requests within 20 days and data protection requests within 40 days**. (79 HC)

Recruiting, retaining and motivating high quality staff, ensuring that they are trained and developed so as to maximise their ability and performance

The challenges

The Council has loyal and dedicated staff, committed to excellence in serving the people of Herefordshire. But the ever-rising expectations of the public and Government, the fresh challenges of a fast-moving world and the need to work in new ways with our partners to achieve more with less, can only be met if we continue to have the right managers and front-line staff with the right understanding, skills and motivation. These must, therefore, be continually updated and renewed.

Specific challenges are:

- re-skilling for the new business process and behaviours required to deliver the *Herefordshire Connects* programme successfully
- dealing successfully with the proposed executive merger with the PCT to form the Public Service Trust.
- as part of this, developing key skills in respect of effective planning and performance management to drive continuous improvement in standards of services across the Council and its partners
- continuing to roll-out the workforce strategy for social care to secure adequate recruitment and retention
- developing and implementing the workforce changes needed to deliver modernised, high-performing adult social care services
- to maximise productivity and contribute to the drive for big efficiency savings, we must reduce sickness absence and strike the right balance in staff turnover
- to make even more effective two-way communications between managers and staff at all levels.

The Council's response

Our Pay and Workforce Strategy will continue to be the comprehensive response to these challenges; it will reflect changing and future envisaged needs through regular review by the Pay and Workforce Strategy Board. Performance targets will be set by April 2007 as part of developing a revised workforce strategy for 2007-10.

At the heart of the *Strategy* is our commitment to **Investor in People accreditation**, which we aim to achieve for the whole Council **by October 2007** (73 HC)

We will **continue our comprehensive programme of staff training and development**, basing it on a sound understanding of current skills and future skills needs, identifying the need for NVQs and other formally accredited training, and linking core skills

to pay and grading. Success will be measured by setting targets for attainment and for monitoring progress against these targets.

We will deepen and extend our programmes to **ensure that all managers are well-equipped to plan their services and manage performance effectively to deliver the Council's priorities.** Success will be measured by evaluating the impact of the revised management development provision. Performance targets will be set as part of developing a revised strategy for 2007-10

We will integrate this approach with individual performance management including regular Staff Review and Development (SRD) discussions with individual members of staff. In 2007-08 **we will raise the completion rate for SRDs from 94% to 100% of those members of staff agreed as being eligible for an SRD.** We will ensure that they are completed to a satisfactory and consistent standard. (115 HC)

By improved management of attendance, provision of timely management information, and the active engagement of Human Resources, we aim to **reduce sickness absence from an average of 10.5 days per FTE in 2005-06 to 8.9 days per FTE in 2007-08,** which is top quartile performance based on the 2005-06 outturn data. (71 HC) Target to 2010 to be set by end of March 2007.

Through better workforce planning, including the analysis of skills shortages and national trends, by promoting Council careers in schools, colleges, universities, and at national events, and by improving our recruitment and retention procedures, we aim to **maintain annual staff turnover at no more than 9%.** (77 HC)

We will pay **special attention to the recruitment and retention of staff in social care and other particularly sensitive areas of service delivery, through the development and delivery of workforce plans. We will measure success against the delivery of those plans and their impact on service delivery.** These measures will be developed by April 2007.

We will continue to improve understanding and motivation throughout the organisation by **implementing our *Communications Strategy Action Plan*;**

- We will maintain a robust team briefing system for managers and their teams. **To help keep our staff fully informed we will produce 150 team briefs by September 2007.**
- Establish a **news package** for all employees that achieves high scores for readability, relevance and credibility in the eyes of our staff. We will aim for a **50 per cent score in the first benchmarking, rising to 70 per cent by November 2007 and 90 per cent by November 2008.**
- We will continue to develop relevant and useful content for the intranet that is structured around the needs of users and supports improved performance across the council - starting with **an online induction for new employees by June 2007**
- We will create a communications tool kit **by April 2007 to help managers make the most effective and appropriate use of internal and external communications channels.**

Embedding corporate planning, performance management and project management systems so as to continue to drive up service standards and efficiency

The challenges

The Audit Commission has assessed the Council to be improving only adequately. Effective planning and performance and project management are crucial to accelerating the rate of improvement.

The Commission reviewed the operation of the Council's performance management arrangements again in autumn 2006. Its overall conclusion was that, "*The Council is making steady progress in strengthening its....arrangements and in embedding a performance culture.*"

It went on, however, to say that the improvements were not yet sufficient to meet the standard to which the Council aspires and not yet embedded across all parts of the organisation. It made a number of recommendations about how the Council could complete the job.

The systematic use of project management is more important than ever, particularly to ensure the delivery of the *Transformation Programme* and the full realisation of its benefits, in terms of both efficiency savings and improved customer services.

The Council's response

The Council aims to be **judged by the Audit Commission to be improving well by 2007 and to be improving strongly by 2008**. We will:

- **by April 2007, construct and communicate an interim high-level model that clearly identifies how the Council intends to assess and measure its level of performance and rate of improvement**
- **from April 2007, develop and begin to implement a more consistent, strategic approach to embedding a performance management culture across the Council**
- **ensure the fullest possible integration between the Council's planning and performance management arrangements and those of the Herefordshire Partnership; with a detailed implementation plan to be in place by December 2007 and the new arrangements operating from April 2008**
- **ensure that members are integrated into the Council's performance management arrangements, measured by a review of the operation of the performance management framework in October each year**
- **produce regular, high-level strategic assessments of performance trends for senior management, Cabinet and scrutiny, identifying barriers and levers to raising performance and delivering the**

Council's priorities. A format for this will be agreed by CMB and Cabinet in April, and will operate from June 2007

- improve the quality of the staff review and development (SRD) process **to ensure that all individuals' targets are linked to corporate and service targets**

Starting in 2007-08;

- **we will begin the performance improvement cycle in April** to provide a sound basis for systematically achieving value for money across all services
- We will **embed the performance management improvements being developed for Children's Services and for adult social care**. We will also consider their potential value for the Council more generally
- We will develop, as part of the *Herefordshire Connects* programme, **a corporate ICT-based system to make much easier and faster the collection and analysis of all performance information for the Council and its strategic partners**
- **Directors and Heads of Service will continue to be required to ensure that the Council's cross-cutting objectives** (see paragraph 1.5 above) **are delivered successfully in their areas**
- By means of our action plan to ensure robust auditable data, we aim to **retain the unqualified status of our Best Value Performance Plan (78 HC) and ensure that none of our individual performance indicators is qualified (81 HC)**
- The operation of **the whole Performance Management Framework will be audited as part of Internal Audit's annual review of the Council's key processes**, providing a sound basis for continuous improvement (82 HC)
- **PRINCE 2 project management will continue to be used** in respect of all aspects of the *Transformation Programme* and for other major projects.

How the Council’s priorities relate to the Herefordshire Community Strategy

Appendix 1

HCS Themes	The Council’s Priorities	Supported by Organisational Priorities
Children & Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to maximise the health, safety, economic well-being, achievements and contribution of every child, with special emphasis on sound arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable children and sustained improvements in educational attainment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to streamline its processes, assets and structures, and secure significant efficiency savings, particularly by delivering the <i>Herefordshire Connects</i> programme.
Healthier Communities and Older People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to reshape adult social care, enabling vulnerable adults to live independently and, in particular, many more older people to continue to live in their own homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to ensure that its essential assets, including schools, other buildings, roads and ICT, are in the right condition for the long-term cost-effective delivery of services, and ensure business continuity in the face of emergencies
Economic Development and Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to secure the essential infrastructure for a successful economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - better to understand the needs and preferences of service users and Council Tax-payers, and to tailor services accordingly
Safer and Stronger Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to sustain thriving communities, including by securing more efficient, effective and customer-focused services, clean streets, tackling homelessness and effective emergency planning - to protect the environment, including by producing much less waste, recycling much more of what remains and significantly reducing carbon emissions - to improve transport and the safety of roads, including further reductions in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured - to promote diversity and community harmony and strive for equal opportunities for all the people of Herefordshire, regardless of race, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, geographical location, income or age - to give effective community leadership, working with partners to deliver the <i>Herefordshire Community Strategy</i>, including the <i>Local Area Agreement</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to recruit, retain and motivate high quality staff, ensuring that they are trained and developed so as to maximise their ability and performance - to embed corporate planning, performance management and project management systems so as to continue to drive up service standards and efficiency

Revenue budgets 2007-10 by source**Appendix 2**

(To be finalised following Council approval of Council Tax and Budget)

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Formula Grant	47,648	47,649	47,649
Council Tax	74,467	78,746	83,271
Council Tax Surplus	256	300	300

NET REVENUE BUDGET FUNDING	<u>122,371</u>	<u>126,695</u>	<u>131,220</u>
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Note

The above figures are based on settlement figures for 2007-08 already announced by Government and the assumption of a zero percent increase in Government Funding for future years.

* The above table does not include additional government grants, fees, charges and other income not funded through the Council Tax and Formula Grant mechanism.

Strategic revenue budgets 2007-10 by service/corporate area**Appendix 3**

(To be finalised following Council approval of Council Tax and Budget)

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adult and Community Services	44,710	46,658	46,713
Children's Services (excluding DSG)	22,694	22,913	23,123
Corporate and Customer Services	7,688	7,782	7,872
Environment	25,021	25,584	26,192
Resources	6,122	6,230	6,333
Central Services & Human Resources	4,592	4,636	4,678
Capital Financing Costs (net of Investment Income)	9,768	11,542	12,127
Total Corporate Area budgets	120,595	125,345	127,038
Social Care Contingency	1,302	1,302	1,302
Herefordshire Connect - Revenue Costs		1,866	1,300
Herefordshire Connect - Revenue Savings	(5,800)	(10,600)	(11,400)
LPSA2 Reward Grant		(823)	(823)
Capacity to achieve potential CT increase	6,274	9,605	13,803
NET REVENUE BUDGET	122,371	126,695	131,220

Note

The above figures are based on information available from the Government's 2004 Spending Review, the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and projections from the 2007-09 Formula Grant mechanism.

Proposed capital programme 2007 – 10**Appendix 4**

(To be finalised following Council approval of Council Tax and Budget)

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Children and Young Peoples Services	14,324	14,077	5,949
Environment Services	19,206	15,038	11,133
Corporate and Customer Services	20,406	1,500	-
Resources	774	2,800	-
Adult and Community Services	12,128	5,165	2,485
	66,838	38,580	19,567
Funded by:			
Capital Receipts Reserve	5,569	8,529	2,585
Grants and Contributions	22,879	25,221	15,442
Supported Capital Expenditure (Revenue)	9,964	1,500	1,500
Revenue Contribution	170	-	-
Prudential Borrowing – Existing allocations	26,498	3,240	-
Prudential Borrowing – New bids	1,758	90	40
	66,838	38,580	19,567

Detailed above is the medium term initial capital programme which includes new bids to be funded from Prudential Borrowing. The Capital Programme is continuously updated as part of the capital monitoring process.

Major schemes include:

- Weobley High sports hall, New Minster School, Sutton Primary replacement school and Riverside Junior and Infants school amalgamation (£8m scheme)
- Herefordshire Connects ICT capital scheme costs of £19.4m for 2007-08, plus additional ICT corporate voice and data network work.
- Friar Street museum resource and learning centre Phase 3 works and High Town and High Street Hereford capital works
- Extra Care Housing development and affordable housing grants capital schemes

Glossary**Appendix 5**

<i>The Herefordshire Community Strategy</i>	The Community Strategy for Herefordshire. It sets out the vision, agreed by the Council and its partners following consultation with the public, for what the county should aspire to be by 2020, together with the objectives and targets to achieve it.
<i>Local Area Agreement (LAA)</i>	A three-year agreement with the Government to deliver, with the Council's partners, higher levels of performance than would otherwise have been achieved. This is facilitated by greater freedom and flexibility in the operation of Government rules, including the use of Government grants. It is the core of the action plan for the first three years of <i>The Herefordshire Community Strategy</i> .
<i>Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA)</i>	A three-year agreement with the Government to deliver higher levels of performance than would otherwise have achieved, in return for pump-priming additional finance to help achieve the enhanced targets and some relaxation in regulation. Achievement of the targets attracts substantial reward payments. As from 2006-07, it has been subsumed within the LAA (see above).
<i>Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)</i>	The assessment of a Council's current performance and its capacity to improve. It comprises four main components: self-assessment, corporate assessment by an external team, use of resources assessment by external auditors, and service assessment based on an analysis of recent service inspections, reviews and performance indicator results. It is overseen and managed by the independent Audit Commission.
<i>Corporate Management Board (CMB)</i>	The strategic management board of the Council, comprising the Chief Executive, Directors and the Head of Human Resources.
<i>The Senior Management Team (SMT)</i>	The operational management board of the Council, comprising Heads of Services.
<i>Local Transport Plan (LTP)</i>	A long-term strategy to develop an integrated and sustainable transport system for Herefordshire
<i>Joined-Up Programme (JUP)</i>	The complete programme of work undertaken by the Herefordshire Service Delivery Partnership (Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Jarvis Services and Owen Williams) covering highways, property and related work
<i>Academic years and Financial years</i>	References to academic years as shown thus; '/' – for example 2007/08 References to financial years are shown thus; '-' for example 2007-08

