

## **REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE**

### **Meetings Held on 30th March, 2007**

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#### **Membership:**

Councillors: T.M. James (Chairman), Councillor Mrs. P.A. Andrews (Vice-Chairman), B.F. Ashton, W.L.S. Bowen, H. Bramer, A.C.R. Chappell, J.H.R. Goodwin, Mrs M.D. Lloyd-Hayes, J.P. Thomas, and W.J.S. Thomas.

#### **COUNCIL RESERVES**

1. In considering the Budget Strategy at its meeting on 12th February, 2007 the Committee requested a report on the Council's reserves. The Committee was informed that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process had the Use of Resources as a key element of the overall assessment. The overall assessment for 2006 was 3: "consistently above minimum requirements, performing well". Further development of the Council's policies for holding reserves and balances was needed to improve this score. It has noted that the policy on reserves and balances had been reviewed in developing the Medium Term Financial Management Strategy. Emphasis was now being placed on identifying the key financial risks and setting aside specific reserves to meet these risks. The level of general fund balance remained a key area for further scrutiny.

#### **INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT**

2. The Committee has considered the Integrated Performance Report setting out performance to the end of January 2007 against the Annual Operating Plan 2006-07, together with performance against revenue and capital budgets and corporate risks, and remedial action to address areas of under-performance. It has also noted progress being made against the Council's Overall Improvement Programme.
3. In relation to capital expenditure the Committee was informed by the Chairman of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee of his concerns about how a funding gap of £2.28m between the lowest tenders for the two capital projects at Riverside Primary School and Sutton County Primary School and the resources available had arisen.
4. The Committee noted the action taken by the Children's Services Committee to try to ascertain the reasons for the shortfall. It has been advised that work is underway by officers and the Executive to address the issues identified and avoid a similar situation occurring again. The Committee has also identified this as an example of the need for Scrutiny Committees for pre-decision scrutiny to be developed to allow the scrutiny committees to play an effective role in assisting decision making.

#### **FORWARD LOOKING ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT 2007/08**

5. The Committee has noted the Council's draft strategy for the 2007/08 Annual Efficiency process, progress to date on procurement issues and an update on future prospects for the Government's efficiency agenda.

#### **HEREFORDSHIRE SATISFACTION SURVEY**

6. The Committee has considered the results of the recently completed survey and how

it should be used to inform future work programmes. It has agreed to consider a further report in three months time to assist in developing its work programme. The other scrutiny committees are requested to consider the data relevant to their areas of responsibility and to take appropriate action.

## **GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME**

7. The Committee has considered the Gender Equality Scheme and noted that the action plan forming part of the Strategy is to be reviewed annually.

## **ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE INDIVIDUAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

8. The work of the Committees is analysed below as far as practicable under the following five roles for overview and scrutiny: holding the executive to account, best value reviews, policy development and review, external scrutiny, and improvement (performance management and review), the first four of which are identified as key roles in the report on "The Development of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister". Issues considered by the Strategic Monitoring Committee are listed for completeness.

## **Summary**

9. The Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee met on 23rd March 2007 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Homelessness Joint Scrutiny Review: Transition from Leaving Care Growing Older in Herefordshire
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Budget Report 2006/07 Performance Monitoring
Other	Work Programme Summary of Action in response to Scrutiny Committee recommendations

10. The Committee has given considerable consideration to the issue of homelessness as part of its work programme. The Committee held a second homelessness consultation event in December 2006 following on from the initial homelessness event held in October 2005. The event included representatives from relevant agencies across the County. It focussed on lessons learned in the last year in terms of tackling the main causes of homelessness in Herefordshire and explored opportunities for closer working arrangements in the future. A number of recommendations have been made to the Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults and Health).
11. The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee met on 19th March, 2007 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	14-19 Strategy

	Scrutiny Review of Behaviour and Discipline Management in Herefordshire Schools Joint Scrutiny Review: Transition from Leaving Care to Adult Life
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Progress on Improvement Current School issues
Other	Work Programme Summary of Action in response to Scrutiny Committee recommendations

12. The Committee has completed the scrutiny review of Behaviour and Discipline Management in Herefordshire Schools. The recommendations are appended. The Committee agreed the recommendations for referral to Cabinet and added a further recommendation to bring to Cabinet's attention the Council's 'duty of care' towards its employees.
13. The Committee also considered an urgent item concerning the significant gap in capital funding for projects at Riverside Primary School and Sutton County Primary School, which is referred to earlier in this report. The Committee requested an urgent informal meeting with officers to discuss how the situation had come about. This was held on 21st March and a number of observations were submitted to the relevant Cabinet Members.
14. The Community Services Scrutiny Committee met on 26th March, 2007 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Scrutiny Review of the Hereford City Partnership Scrutiny Review of How to Retain 18-35 year olds in Herefordshire and Attract them to it.
External Scrutiny	Progress Report Following the Scrutiny Review of the Courtyard Centre for the Arts
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Herefordshire Community and Safety Drugs Partnership Performance Monitoring
Other	Work Programme Summary of Action in response to Scrutiny Committee recommendations

15. Representatives of Herefordshire and Community Drugs Partnership addressed and answered questions from Members on the important work it carries out in the County. The Committee has completed scrutiny reviews of the Hereford City Partnership and the retention of 18-35 year olds in Herefordshire and how to attract them to the County. The recommendations from these reviews to Cabinet are appended.
16. The Environment Scrutiny Committee met on 12th March 2007 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	-
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Review of the Voluntary Code of Practice for the Use of Polytunnels in Herefordshire. Review of Household Waste Recycling in Herefordshire.
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Monitoring of 2006/07 Service Plan Performance Indicators – April to December 2006 Environment Directorate Service Planning Waste Management Service Capital Budget Revenue Budget
Other	Work Programme Summary of Action in response to Scrutiny Committee recommendations

17. The Committee received the findings of two scrutiny reviews. The findings of the Polyunnel Review Working Group, which attracted approximately 40 members of the public, are appended to this report. The Committee considered the findings of the Group which had been reached on the basis of the legal and planning advice following the outcome of the Waverley Borough Council planning high court case. The Committee agreed that the recommendations be referred to the Cabinet Member (Environment) for consideration.
18. In relation to the Review of Household Waste Recycling in Herefordshire the Committee were advised that the result of the Government's review of the National Waste Strategy was still awaited and agreed that the report on the review be circulated to Parish Councils for comment. At its next meeting the Committee will consider the outcome of the Scrutiny Review in light of any implications from the Government's review of the National Waste Strategy and any comments from Parish Councils.
19. The Health Scrutiny Committee met on 2nd and 15th March and is due to meet again on 30th March 2007 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Update on Emergency Planning Arrangements Primary Care Trust Local Delivery Plan Response to Scrutiny Review of GP out of hours service. Response to Scrutiny Review of Communication in the Local Health Service Access to Health Delivery of Ear Nose and Throat Services Access to Health Public Service Trust

External Scrutiny	Performance of the West Midlands Ambulance service Trust Annual Healthcheck declaration Staffing Issues at Hereford Hospital
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	
Other	Work Programme Summary of Action in response to Scrutiny Committee recommendations

20. The Committee has received progress reports in response to work it has carried out on Communication in the local Health Service, the GP Out of hours Service, the Ear, Nose and Throat Service and on emergency planning arrangements in the health sphere.
21. The Committee has also received detailed briefings from the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust, the Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust and the West Midlands Ambulance Service Trust to enable it to respond to the requirements of the Healthcare Commission for health scrutiny committees to produce commentaries on health bodies for the Commission's Annual Health Check.
22. The business conducted by the **Strategic Monitoring Committee** at its meeting on 30th March, 2007 is summarised below.

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	Review of ICT Services – Cabinet's response
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Forward Looking Annual Efficiency Statement 2007/08 Gender Equality Scheme Reserves
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Integrated Performance Report Herefordshire Satisfaction Survey
Other	Scrutiny Improvement Plan Work Programme Summary of Action in response to Scrutiny Committee recommendations

### Summary of Recommendations

23. Each of the Scrutiny Committees has received a report summarising recommendations made since June 2003 and action taken in response to those recommendations.

**T.M. JAMES**  
**CHAIRMAN**  
**STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE**

#### BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Agenda Papers of the Meeting of the Strategic Monitoring Committee held on 30th March, 2007

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS**

- (a) The results from the staff questionnaire be used to form the baseline for similar studies to be undertaken in the future; (see para. 3.1)**
- (b) That an audit be undertaken of the positive parenting courses currently available across Children's Services (multi agency), and if necessary, the provision and information about such courses be increased. (see para. 3.6)**
- (c) A Directory of information be compiled of services available to both parents and professionals to support and improve pupil behaviour in schools; (see para. 3.8)**
- (d) Leaflets informing parents and professionals of key services be reviewed and updated where necessary; (see para. 3.8)**
- (e) The Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) consider the merit in discussing with appropriate schools the further provision of Learning Support Units (LSUs) in the county; (see para. 3.10)**
- (f) The Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) satisfies himself that procedure for the early identification of moderate learning difficulties is rigorously implemented; (see para. 3.11)**
- (g) When the expected legislation is brought into force the correspondence to parents of excluded pupils be revised to reflect the new legal responsibilities and the penalties of not supervising their children when excluded. Such correspondence to be where possible in plain English; (see para. 3.12)**
- (h) a review be undertaken into the level of support for healthy eating initiatives from both the Council and the Primary Care Trust (PCT), in particular to applaud those schools that have achieved the National Healthy Schools Status and to encourage the rest to do so; (see para. 3.13)**
- (i) The Executive's response to the Review including an action plan be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive has approved its response; (see para. 6.1)**
- (j) A further report on progress in response to the Review then be made after six months with consideration then being given to the need for any further reports to be made. (see para. 6.1)**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE HEREFORD CITY PARTNERSHIP**

- (a) That Herefordshire Council reinstates the Cabinet Member Portfolio with responsibility for Economic Development This Cabinet Member should take the lead on a strategic vision for Hereford City with support from partner organisations such as HCP and ESG, and ensure links with the wider County. (10.30)**
- (b) That Herefordshire Council representation on the HCP Board is revisited and a member representative with potentially more time to support the work of HCP is appointed. If the recommendation for the reinstatement of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development is accepted then that Portfolio Holder should assume this appointment. (10.2)**
- (c) 17. 3 That reporting mechanisms are put in place to enable the Hereford City Partnership manager to report to the Cabinet Member (Economic Development) on a regular basis. (10.1)**
- (d) 17.4 Herefordshire Council relocates the Hereford City Manager to one of its City Centre Office spaces, rather than being based at Plough Lane. (9.5)**
- (e) 17.5 That the Hereford City Manager's job particulars have a person specification prepared to go with the job description. (9.4).**
- (f) 17.6 The Hereford City Manager be provided with administrative support. (9.1)**
- (g) 17.7 The Membership of Hereford City Partnership be reviewed to ensure that all areas of the City are represented including the addition of major retailers as Members. (11.3)**
- (h) 17.8 That additional funding is put into HCP to support the Hereford City Manager and administrative support be provided in the short term prior to the emergence of a whole city vision and the development of ESG. (10.6)**
- (i) 17.9 That the annual funding of £16,000 which is put into HCP by Hereford City Council is matched by Herefordshire Council over the next three years, plus HCP maintains its existing funding and infrastructure support commitments to continue and develop its activities and events. (10.6).**
- (j) 17.10 That Hereford City Council investigate the possibility of increased support for HCP through the level of precept levied in the city. (8.13).**
- (k) 17.11 That Hereford City Partnership commence regular budgeting procedures and produce income and expenditure accounts. (8.15).**
- (l) 17.12 That Hereford City Partnership concentrate their main activities on the City Centre's economic and environmental wellbeing. (5.11).**
- (m) 17.13 That Hereford City Partnership liaise with other key partners with an interest in the City, including Hereford City Council, Herefordshire Council, Edgar Street Grid, South Wye Development Trust, and Rotherwas Futures. (10.4).**
- (n) 17.14 That mechanisms are put in place by Herefordshire Council enable the Hereford City Manager to report to Officers at Head of Service level. (10.7).**

- (o) 17.15 That the Street Trading Panel procedures are reviewed to enable direct reporting to the Cabinet Member (Economic Development). (8.11).
  - (p) 17.16 That Hereford City Partnership fully instigates the proposed retail membership scheme with varying levels of membership to generate income. (8.14).
  - (q) subject to the Review being approved, the Executive's response to the Review including an action plan be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive has approved its response;
- and;
- (r) a further report on progress with respect to the Review be made after six months with consideration then being given to the need for any further reports to be made.

#### **SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HOW TO RETAIN 18-35 YEAR OLDS IN HEREFORDSHIRE AND ATTRACT THEM TO IT**

- (a) That young people are involved in the shaping of major regeneration schemes and developments, specifically looking at how these can incorporate their recreational, cultural, and employment needs. This should include detailed and targeted inward investment promotion and working with property agents and developers to influence private investors and brand name companies.
  - (b) Due to the over provision of University places generally within the Country, avenues exploring other methods of retaining and attracting college graduates and young people to Herefordshire are pursued.
  - (c) Given that the figures demonstrate that there is an outflow of young people aged between 18 and 24, yet a net influx of people aged 25 to 35, available resources are concentrated on improving the County's Social and Economic offer to this age group.
  - (d) That the Business Start-Up programme is promoted to young people to support entrepreneurship within the age group.
  - (e) That the Council continues a programme of affordable housing linked to major developments.
  - (f) subject to the Review being approved, the Executive's response to the Review including an action plan be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive has approved its response;
- and;
- (g) a further report on progress with respect to the Review be made after six months with consideration then being given to the need for any further reports to be made.



## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE POLYTUNNEL REVIEW WORKING GROUP**

- (a) all *new* polytunnel developments within the county (be they for soil grown crops or table top growing or otherwise howsoever) be treated as development requiring planning consent. The usual application form will need to be completed in those circumstances;**
- (b) that enforcement proceedings be continued and/or initiated in accordance with the priorities below:**
  - 1. Enforcement proceedings to be continued in respect of those sites where notices have already been served and/or are in preparation**
  - 2. Enforcement proceedings to be initiated during the growing season of 2007 in all cases where polytunnels are already known, or are suspected, to be outside the Code of Practice, there is a threat to acknowledged planning interests, and are approaching four years in situ**
  - 3. Enforcement proceedings to be initiated after the end of growing season 2007 in all other cases where planning applications have not, by then, been submitted and there is a threat to acknowledged planning interests; and**
- (c) that the Executive's response be reported to the Committee in due course.**