

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE

Meetings Held on 17th September and 25th October, 2007

Membership:

Councillors: PJ Edwards (Chairman), PA Andrews, WU Attfield, WLS Bowen, SPA Daniels, KG Grumbley, T.M. James, RI Matthews, SJ Robertson, RH Smith and K Swinburne.

INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT

1. The Committee has considered the Integrated Performance Report (IPR) on performance to the end of July 2007 including performance against revenue and capital budgets and corporate risks, and remedial action to address areas of under-performance.
2. The Committee recognised that the format of the Integrated Performance Report (IPR) is evolving and the efforts being made to improve its presentation to make it an effective performance management tool for Members. In addition to challenging progress against a number of individual targets it has made a number of specific points on the presentation of information in the IPR including: that where it is indicated that data is to be reported annually it should be made clear when that data will in fact be reported; that it should be made clear whether good performance is shown by performance being above or below the relevant performance indicator target, and that the presentation of the revenue budget should include the budgets for the year to enable the significance of budget variations to be more clearly understood and comparisons readily drawn.
3. It has also registered concern that a number of performance templates remain to be completed. From now onwards there is a need to ensure that this is given priority before the year to which the templates relate to permit proper performance management to take place.
4. The Committee has also expressed considerable concern about the projected overspend on the revenue budget and the need for Cabinet to ensure that the position is not simply being accepted and that budgets are being firmly and effectively managed with plans in place to ensure budget compliance.
5. The Committee was advised that the financial strategy had been developed to address the funding of the base budget. The updated financial strategy and service priorities would be presented to the Committee soon. The Corporate Management Board (CMB) was aware of the budget pressures and the need to provide services within the agreed cost. CMB had been told that clear plans needed to be in place stating how each service would be delivered within the resource base.
6. The Committee has noted that the costs incurred as a result of summer flooding of a number of schools, estimated at £930,000, had not been recoverable under the Government's Bellwin Scheme. This was because the risk was viewed as insurable. The Council had decided to self-insure some years ago setting aside £250,000 to meet the risk. The Committee has been advised that the process for insuring

schools against risk is being re-examined as part of the corporate risk management approach and will be the subject of further report.

EMPLOYEE OPINION SURVEY 2007

7. The Committee has considered the results of the Employee Opinion Survey 2007. It was advised that the improved response rate at 53% was well in excess of the 43% average response rate for local government surveys. The responses in general also showed marked improvements in the perception of employees over the areas covered by the survey questions. The Committee asked a number of questions about the detail of the findings. In particular it asked about the finding that 36% disagreed that action would be taken as a result of the survey. The Committee was informed of those actions that had been taken as a result of previous surveys. Communication was a key issue to remind employees of what action had been taken in response to previous surveys and demonstrate what had been achieved.

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ICT SERVICES – EXECUTIVE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

8. A scrutiny review of the Council's Information, Communication and Technology Services was completed in December 2006. The Committee has received an update on progress in implementing the Executive's action plan. The Committee discussed several aspects of the report receiving assurances about progress. It has requested a further update in 3 months time.

OMBUDSMAN LETTER AND COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS MONITORING

9. The Committee has noted the Ombudsman Annual Letter 2006/07 and the figures for complaints and compliments recorded for the year ended 31st March, 2007. The Committee was informed of several aspects where the Ombudsman had commented favourably on the Council's complaints handling arrangements, and that the Council was also well placed to move from the second quartile to the top quartile of authorities in terms of responding to enquiries from the Ombudsman's office within 28 days.
10. It was noted that the majority of complaints continued to relate to planning and building control issues. The Committee has requested an update on the reasons for the complaints, having looked into the matter last year when no obvious areas of consistency in the various complaints (either type of application or type of complaint) had been identifiable.

MEETING OF 25 OCTOBER

11. A supplementary report will be circulated on issues considered at this meeting.

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE INDIVIDUAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

12. The work of the Committees is analysed below in accordance with the following two roles for scrutiny based on a University of Birmingham categorisation.

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

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

| Scrutiny Committee | Holding the Executive to Account | Developing Policy |
|---|---|--|
| Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing | Presentation by Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults and Health) Revenue Budget 2007/08 Performance monitoring Learning Disability Action Plan Executive Response to Recommendations on Homelessness | Review of Transition from Leaving Care to Adult Life (Joint with Children's Services) Presentation by Registered Social Landlords Adult Social Care Fairer Charging Review of the Modernisation of Day Opportunities for older people. Review of Herefordshire Home Point Housing Allocations Policy |
| Children's Services 25 September 2007 5 October 2007 | Call-in of Cabinet Decision on WyeBridge Sports College: Academy Project Annual Performance Assessment Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2007/08 Revenue Budget monitoring Report 2007/08 Performance Digest Executive Response to Review of Behaviour and Discipline management in Herefordshire Schools | Review of Transition (see above) Principles on Future Provision of School Places |

| Scrutiny Committee | Holding the Executive to Account | Developing Policy |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Community Services 8 October 2007</p> | <p>Presentation By Cabinet Member – Economic Development and Community Services</p> <p>Action plans in response to the Cultural Services inspection, Hereford City Partnership and the 18-35 Review</p> <p>Revenue Budget 2007/08</p> <p>Performance Monitoring</p> | <p>Review of Agreement with HALO Leisure Trust</p> <p>Review of Tourism with specific reference to Tourist Information Centres</p> <p>Ledbury Tourist Information Centre</p> |
| <p>Environment 24 September 2007 (and 9 November 2007)</p> | <p>Call-In Of Cabinet Decision On Rotherwas Archaeology: Options For The Preservation Of The Ribbon And Completion Of The Rotherwas Access Road</p> <p>Presentations by Cabinet Members (H&T) - Environment Directorate Restructure</p> <p>Capital Budget Monitoring - Revenue Budget Monitoring -</p> | <p>Findings of Review of Household Waste Recycling in Herefordshire</p> <p>Review of Travellers Policy</p> |
| <p>Health 14 August 2007 20 September 2007</p> | | <p>Review of Multi-organisation patient pathways (focusing on elderly patients having unscheduled medical emergencies)</p> <p>Public Service Trust for Herefordshire</p> <p>West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust – Foundation Trust Status</p> <p>Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust – Foundation Trust Status</p> <p>Reconfiguration of mental health Services</p> |

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|---|---|--|
| | | Changes in the Management of mental Health Services Development of Local Involvement Network |
| Scrutiny Committee | Holding the Executive to Account | Developing Policy |
| Strategic Monitoring Committee 17 September 2007 25 October 2007 | Integrated Performance Report Employee Opinion Survey Ombudsman letter and Complaints and Compliments Scrutiny Review of ICT Services – Executive Action Plan – Progress Report Presentations by Cabinet Members Herefordshire Community Strategy Development Plan Annual Report Strategic Service Delivery Partnership Herefordshire Connects Progress Report | Local Area Agreement Priority Setting Financial Control of Capital Schemes in Property Services Principles to Guide the Provision of Education |

14. Issues of particular note include:

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

The Committee has received a presentation from the Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults and Health) and discussed issues with her.

The Committee has also received a presentation from one of the Registered Social Landlords in the County and intends to hear from two more at a future meeting. The invitation was originally prompted by a wish to examine maintenance policies but the Committee is analysing a range of issues to identify areas for improvement.

The Committee continues to monitor the pressure on the revenue budget and a seminar on the budget has been arranged.

- **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee called in Cabinet's decision on WyeBridge Sports College: Academy Project. Having considered the issues the Committee has accepted Cabinet's

decision. In the course of discussion concern was, however, expressed about the future provision of community, South Wye Learning and Young People's Support Services. The hope was expressed that if it was not possible to retain these services on site provision was made immediately adjacent to the site.

- **Community Services Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee has received a presentation from the Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services) and discussed issues with him.

- **Environment Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee called-in Cabinet's decision on "Rotherwas Archaeology: Options For the Preservation Of The Ribbon And Completion Of The Rotherwas Access Road".

The Committee endorsed the decision taken by Cabinet on 6th September 2007 with regard to proceeding with option F for the completion of the Rotherwas Access Road. Whilst endorsing this decision the Committee noted that there might have been instances when information flow within the Council fell short of that normally expected. Cabinet has been recommended to set in place work to address this for the future during periods of "purdah" and immediately following elections. The Committee also congratulated the County Archaeologist on the universally acknowledged standards and quality of his work on the ribbon thus far. The Committee sincerely hoped he would be able to lead further researches either side of the present find in due course. The Committee also urged Cabinet to continue to seek funding for further research into the ribbon including a tourism scoping report when appropriate.

- **Health Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee has considered the Public Service Trust proposals making a number of recommendations to Cabinet.

The Committee has also considered and responded to the West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust's proposed reconfiguration of emergency operations centres. The Committee has supported the reconfiguration in principle but has sought assurances that the service on the ground in Herefordshire will not be adversely affected and, amongst other things, has requested some reinvestment into the County of any resources realised through reorganisation. It has suggested that providing direct funding for equipment for Community First Responders would be a good place to start to seek to improve the provision of service to rural areas.

**PJ EDWARDS
CHAIRMAN
STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Agenda Papers of the Meeting of the Strategic Monitoring Committee held on 17 September and 25 October 2007