

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

### **Meetings Held on 19 November 2007 and 21 January 2008**

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#### **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 AND FINANCE REPORT**

1. The Committee has considered the Integrated Performance and Finance Reports (IPR) for the first half of 2007/08 and for the first eight months of 2007/08.
2. The Committee has previously commented on the development of the IPR and the efforts being made to improve its presentation to make it an effective performance management tool for Members. The Committee has welcomed the continued improvement in the clarity of the presentation of performance and financial information in response to the Committee's observations. The Committee considers that this assists all Councillors in the more efficient conduct of business.
3. Noting that some targets have yet to be agreed the Committee has had to request that the importance of ensuring that baselines are established and targets set in a timely manner is re-emphasised to all Directorates and in particular the Council's partners.
4. Attention has been drawn to the negotiations with Shaw Homes over new accommodation at Leadon Bank in Ledbury. The Committee was informed that officers are in dialogue with Shaw with a view to reducing the whole life costs of the scheme and to mitigate some of the risk around the overall financial model. The Committee has requested that any proposed changes to the current strategy for the provision of places at Leadon Bank, Ledbury should be reported to Cabinet for consideration and Members of the Committee and Local Members advised of any such intention.
5. As part of the IPR the Committee was informed, in summary, of the findings of the Annual Satisfaction Survey conducted in September and October 2007. Given the importance of perception in the new format of satisfaction survey and the bearing this will have on external assessments of the Council's performance, the Committee has highlighted the importance of monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's communication strategy. It has been advised that an action plan is in place.
6. The Committee has also asked that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee be provided with regular briefings by the Chairman of the Partnership Performance Management Group.

#### **PRESENTATION BY CABINET MEMBER (CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES)**

7. The Committee has received a presentation from the Cabinet Member (Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources) and discussed a number of issues

with her.

8. One of these issues was the importance of the Committee having material presented to it in a timely and orderly manner if it was to be able to conduct its business efficiently and effectively, an issue relevant to meetings across the Council. The Committee welcomed the support of the Cabinet Member (Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources) for procedures governing the production of agenda papers to be implemented and adhered to in order to facilitate the efficient conduct of business and has urged her to pursue this matter.

#### **HEREFORDSHIRE STRATEGIC SERVICE DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP**

9. Further to the report to Council in November 2007 the Committee has received a further report on the Herefordshire Strategic Service Delivery Partnership between the Council, Amey Wye Valley Limited (AWV) and Owen Williams Limited.
10. The Committee received presentations from representatives of Owen Williams Limited, and from Amey Wye Valley Limited (AWV) explaining how they intended to approach their new responsibilities. The Committee questioned them, raising a number of issues, and has requested a further report on the Strategic Service Delivery partnership in six months time.

#### **HEREFORDSHIRE CONNECTS**

11. In November the Committee requested that a further report be prepared for the Committee's consideration setting out the development of the Herefordshire Connects project in a clear sequential order with a clear explanation of the financial position, and clarifying any interlinkages with the Council's other major IT projects.
12. In December Cabinet made a decision on the acquisition of the preferred technology to replace the current client systems used within both Adult Social Care and the Children and Young People's Directorate. This decision has been called in by the Committee and will be considered on 31st January, 2008. As part of this consideration the Committee will also consider the consolidated report on the Herefordshire Connects programme requested in November.
13. An update on the Committee's decision will be provided to Council.

#### **POLICY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SMALLHOLDINGS ESTATE**

14. Having received a report on the Council's policy for the management of the smallholdings estate the Committee has requested that a full review of the management of the Council's smallholdings estate be carried out and properly documented in one report, with particular reference to value for money for the whole of Herefordshire. This report is expected shortly.

#### **ELECTIONS MAY 2007**

15. The Committee has considered a detailed report from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services on problems arising from the May 2007 elections and an action plan designed to improve the service and process based on lessons learned.
16. The Committee's view, in summary, is that whilst a large proportion of the difficulties experienced, openly acknowledged in the report, can be attributed to the late introduction of significant legislation governing the elections it is essential that substantial improvements are made to avoid the problems that were experienced reoccurring.

17. The Committee has welcomed the elections action plan designed to address the issues which arose. It has also requested that the issue of whether contributions to the costs of elections should be shared with Parish Councils holding elections or instead met in full by Herefordshire Council should be revisited; that action should be taken to ensure that the public address system used on election nights functions effectively; and that further consideration be given to whether the count should be held on the day following the elections.
18. The Committee has recorded its recognition of the considerable efforts made by staff to deliver the elections.
19. The Committee has requested a further report from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services on conclusion of legal issues with the supplier contracted to deliver aspects of the election. It has agreed that a representative from the Electoral Commission should be invited to attend the meeting.
20. The Committee had earlier welcomed a proposal for a seminar on issues raised on elections and requested that this be progressed as soon as practicable.

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

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

<b>Holding the Executive to Account</b>	<b>Developing Policy</b>
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	

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

	Holding the Executive to Account	Developing Policy
<b>Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing</b>  10 December 2007	Revenue Budget 2007/08 Performance monitoring Learning Disability Services Improvement Plan Widemarsh Workshop Update	Presentation by Registered Social Landlords  Learning Disability Services – Tender for Accommodation and Support Partner

	Holding the Executive to Account	Developing Policy
<b>Children's Services</b> 22 January 2008	<p>Presentation by Cabinet Member (Children's Services)</p> <p>Annual Performance Assessment</p> <p>Arrangements for school meals provision</p> <p>Budget Monitoring</p> <p>Performance Monitoring</p>	<p>Review of Provision of School Places</p> <p>Youth Service Update</p> <p>Targeted Youth Support and Positive Activities</p>
<b>Community Services</b> 17 December 2007	<p>Performance Monitoring</p> <p>Revenue Budget</p> <p>Action Plans for Cultural Services Inspection: Review of Hereford City partnership; The 18-35 Review and the Review of Museums and Cultural Centres</p> <p>Courtyard Centre for the Arts - Action Plan</p>	Rotherwas Futures
<b>Environment</b> 3 December 2007 2 January 2008	<p>Performance Monitoring</p> <p>Call-in of Cabinet Decision on Colwall Railway Bridge</p>	<p>Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation</p> <p>Polytunnel Developments</p>

	Holding the Executive to Account	Developing Policy
<b>Health</b> 6 December 2007		Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Health Protection Agency Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2007 Primary Care Trust Update Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust Update Development of Local Involvement Network Review of Elderly Falls Mental Health Services
<b>Strategic Monitoring Committee</b> 19 November 2007 21 January 2008 31 January 2008	Presentation by Cabinet member (Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources) Strategic Service Delivery Partnership Herefordshire Connects Integrated Performance and Finance Report (2) Elections May 2007	Policy for the Management of the Smallholdings Estate

23. Issues of particular note include:

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

The Committee has received presentations from the Marches Housing Association Limited and Herefordshire Housing Limited, a presentation from Festival Housing Ltd having been made to the Committee in October 2007. These are the three Registered Social Landlords with most properties in Herefordshire. The Committee has invited Herefordshire Housing Ltd to provide a further update in six months time.

- **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee met the day after proposals for the future provision of school places had been withdrawn for reconsideration. The Committee had been expecting to debate the draft proposals, which were the subject of one of its agenda items, and agree its response. The Committee noted the current position and requested that an update including a revised timetable for the review be brought to its next meeting. The Committee also expressed its wish to scrutinise the revised draft proposals prior to the Executive issuing them for public consultation. The Committee also highlighted the need for all elected members to be kept informed throughout the review process.

In considering a separate item on the agenda on the arrangements for school meal provision, which envisaged capital expenditure on some school kitchens, the Committee identified the need for caution to be exercised, given the possible implications of the review of the provision of school places.

- **Community Services Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee has considered an update on the Rotherwas Futures Project. It has recommended that the Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Community Services) give further consideration to: the development of a marketing strategy for attracting further businesses to Rotherwas; improving the provision of broadband facilities at the estate; ensuring that proper flood alleviation measures are put in place to protect and enhance the value of properties on the estate; the range of buildings on the estate particularly the possibility of 'flexible buildings', ensuring that companies can grow; the Council's future requirement for office space and the potential for an energy from waste site. It has asked that a report on broadband provision to the estate be made to the next meeting and a report on broadband provision to the County be included in the Committee's work programme for a future meeting.

- **Environment Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee considered the call-in of the Cabinet decision to approve expenditure to provide a temporary Bailey bridge over the sub-standard bridge in Colwall carrying the B4218 if the results of an assessment report showed, on deliberation, that such a solution was the most appropriate means of opening the bridge to normal highway traffic.

The Committee agree the need for a temporary crossing. However, they strongly recommended that Cabinet: seek urgent clarification as to the legal responsibilities on both Council and owners of non Council owned bridges over which a highway runs; considers representation to the Health and Safety Executive on Network Rail's failures to adequately maintain Colwall Railway bridge; agree that the final decision on the temporary crossing is treated as a key decision; and treat the matter as urgent in view of the detrimental effect on the local community.

- **Health Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee received a presentation on the Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2007 and issues arising from it. The Committee has requested further reports providing greater depth on Stroke Services and Sexual Health.

**PJ EDWARDS  
CHAIRMAN  
STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Agenda Papers of the Meeting of the Strategic Monitoring Committee held on 19 November 2007 and 21 January 2008.