

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL IMPROVEMENT PLAN - MONITORING REPORT

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE

CABINET

25TH SEPTEMBER, 2003

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To consider and agree the first monitoring report on the Herefordshire Council Improvement Plan and to identify any action to be taken as a result.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Recommendations

- THAT (a) the monitoring report on the Council's Improvement Plan be agreed;**
- and**
- (b) any action Cabinet wishes to take as a result of the monitoring report be identified**

Reasons

The Council is required to have an Improvement Plan in place following the outcome of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and to implement appropriate monitoring arrangements.

Considerations

1. In September 2002, the Council was subject to CPA along with all other upper tier authorities in the country. The assessment resulted in a report outlining the Council's strengths and weaknesses under a number of headings and culminating in a series of recommendations. The Council initially challenged the report in respect of a number of issues, including individual section scores, lack of appropriate audit trail for some of the conclusions drawn, nuance and grammatical errors. The final report was sent to the Council in November 2002.
2. One of the requirements of CPA was that the Council should draw up an Improvement Plan. Herefordshire Council's Improvement Plan is drawn from the recommendations outlined in the CPA report and those outstanding from the previous improvement plan arising from the Improvement and Development Agency's peer review in 2001. The Improvement Plan was agreed with the Audit Commission

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Hilary Preedy, Policy Officer on (01432) 260378

in February 2003 and forms the basis of the Council's audit and inspection programme for the next three years. The Plan was developed as a strategic plan for improvement over three years with actions focused around five key areas: leadership and vision, performance management, key resources, organisational development and learning and communications.

3. The CPA process also required the Council to identify six improvement priorities to be delivered over the 12 months to December 2003. The Council was keen, however, to focus on long term improvement and incorporated the so-called "CPA priorities" into the overall Improvement Plan. By way of clarity, a summary of these priorities is set out on page 4 of the Improvement Plan.
4. Monitoring of the Improvement Plan was agreed on the basis of using "faces":
 - ☺ Smiling face indicates action completed or full on track for completion
 - ☹ Straight face means that issues have arisen but which are not expected to impact on the achievement of the overall Plan
 - ☹ Sad face means that there are significant issues that could affect the timing or performance of the Plan
5. The Improvement Plan envisaged monitoring to be undertaken at the agreed performance monitoring intervals, namely 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 months. Given the strategic nature of the Improvement Plan, it is unlikely that significant progress overall will be made in each two-monthly interval although specific actions may warrant closer monitoring. Cabinet is asked to consider, therefore, the frequency of monitoring reports that it wishes to receive.
6. The detailed progress report is appended at Appendix 1 and indicates that the majority of actions have a smiling face, being either completed or fully on track for completion by the target date. In relation to the "CPA priorities", these are fully on track and will be completed by the end of December 2003. Highlighted below are those issues arising in each of the five areas which have either a straight or sad face:

Leadership and vision

- **Race Equality Scheme – straight face:** the first year's action plan was not completed and a revised action plan has now been developed. There have been some delays in moving forward with the Steering Group.
- **Disability Scheme – straight face:** the original target date of June 2003 was not met and a revised target date of December 2003 has now been agreed. Implementation is due to start in January 2004 to meet the Council's statutory obligations by October 2004.

Performance management

- **Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) – straight face:** there are a number of issues highlighted in relation to the achievement of the LPSA targets. A separate LPSA monitoring report will be submitted to Cabinet at the end of September.

Key resources

- **Project management: review and revise cross Council strategies and programmes in light of agreed methodology – straight face:** the list of cross Council strategies which should be revised in the light of the agreed methodology for project management (PRINCE2) was compiled in March 2003. The managers responsible for their delivery have been offered the full PRINCE2 training with a view to then revising their project plans.
- **Scrutiny review of property – sad face:** the scrutiny review of property is included in the work programme of the Strategic Monitoring Committee with a target date for completion of December 2003. The review was delayed because of the election/change of administration and although some data gathering has started, no revised timetable is yet in place.

Organisational development and learning

- **Management of change/organisational development – straight face:** this element has been removed from the Modernisation Programme and is being taken forward by a small group of officers. Some activities have been identified although there is no formal work plan in place.

Communications

- **Team briefings: random spot checks – straight face:** the first survey is due to take place in August 2003.
- **Staff roadshows – sad face:** the Improvement Plan commits the Management Team to two staff roadshows each year. To date, in 2003, no roadshows have taken place and none are yet planned.
- **Work shadowing – straight face:** work-shadowing commitments are in place for Directors/Heads of Department. However, the picture is more inconsistent at Head of Service level where only a few Heads of Service, such as Head of Engineering and Transportation, regularly undertake programmed work shadowing
- **Connecting with Communities – straight face:** the deferring of a decision in respect of the future of Herefordshire Matters is likely to impact on the overall achievement of the Connecting with Communities action plan.
- **Local Area Forums – straight face:** this action was due for completion by December 2003. Given that future work is on hold pending a decision by Cabinet, it is unlikely that the Council will meet this timescale. There remains some uncertainty about the future of Local Area Forums, which are seen as a key part of the Communications area of the Improvement Plan.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options

Risk Management

Failure to fulfil the actions identified in the Council's Improvement Plan may result in an increased programme of audit and inspection

Consultees

None identified

Background Papers

None identified