

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE

Meetings Held on 10 September and 20 October 2008

Membership:

Councillors: PJ Edwards (Chairman), PA Andrews, WU Attfield, WLS Bowen, KG Grumbley, T.M. James, RI Matthews, AT Oliver, PM Morgan, SJ Robertson, and K Swinburne.

REVIEW OF THE SERVICE DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP WITH AMEY WYE VALLEY LIMITED

1. Council was informed in July that the Committee had commented on the draft recommendations from the Service Delivery Review of the Council's Service Delivery Partnership with Amey Ltd.
2. The Committee considered a further report in September containing officer recommendations to Cabinet. These sought authority to commence formal negotiations with Amey based on a Herefordshire Model of service delivery as the preferred model. This was a "managing agent" model under which, subject to successful negotiations, Amey would take on the relevant Council staff responsible for the relevant service areas under TUPE arrangements. It was proposed that a further report would be submitted to Cabinet on conclusion of the negotiations, stating that negotiation of the preferred model would not restrict the recommendation of a different model if it was clear that this would be in the Council's best interests.
3. It was also proposed that Asset Management and Property Services should be excluded from the negotiation whilst a wider review of the property estate and its management was carried out, to be completed by the end of March 2009.
4. The Committee broadly supported the recommendations being made to Cabinet on the Service Delivery Review. There was some concern as to whether due weight was being given in the discussions to the importance of quality of service. It was noted that detailed negotiations would give rise to a further opportunity to scrutinise the methods being proposed to measure both quality and value for money of both individual projects as well as the contract as a whole.
5. The Committee requested that further reassurance should be sought on the employment matters and financial implications once firm proposals had been agreed by both parties. It also requested that it be reconsulted once the asset management and property review was completed. The Committee also made a number of other observations to which it recommended Cabinet had regard. Cabinet accepted the Committee's recommendations.

INTEGRATED CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

6. The Committee has received a report on the Council's performance for the first four months of 2008-09 against the Corporate Plan 2008-11 and national performance indicators used externally to measure the Council's performance, taking account of the separate but complementary financial performance report, the updated Council risk register and progress against the action plans produced following the Crookall review.

7. The Committee has previously acknowledged the efforts that have been made to improve the presentation of performance reporting information, not least in response to the Committee's own requests. The Committee considers that clarity of reporting assists all Councillors in the more efficient conduct of business. The Integrated Corporate Performance Report represents a further development in the style of reporting. The Committee welcomes many of the features of the revised report, including the Directors' commentaries on performance. However, it has identified a number of aspects where it considers further improvement can be made, for example to avoid any impression that performance is improving or deteriorating where that is unknown, and providing more explanation in places. At the same time, the Committee is mindful of the need for the Integrated Corporate Performance Report to be proportionate, bearing in mind the role of individual scrutiny committees in drilling down in greater detail where this is considered necessary. It is important that the corporate reports are kept concise and readable, the underlying purpose of the reports being to track progress in achieving the Council's Corporate Plan and priorities.
8. The Committee has also requested the Environment Scrutiny Committee to consider a report on the Waste Disposal Contract, noting the position statement given in the Council Risk Register.
9. In relation to the Crookall Review Action Plan the Committee noted progress but singled out the action allocated to the Member Development Policy Group. A number of concerns were expressed about the Group's current operation compared with the voice that backbench Members, in particular, felt was available to them through the former Member Development Working Group. The Committee has accepted the Chief Executive's offer to discuss the position with the Group Leaders in the first instance to consider these concerns.
10. The Committee has also highlighted the importance it places on the Executive demonstrating that it has considered the points made by the Committee on performance and has responded to them.

COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT

11. The Committee has noted the detailed proposals for the new system of Comprehensive Area Assessment and how Cabinet has agreed Herefordshire's preparations are to be taken forward. The Committee has been advised that the CAA is likely to be a more demanding system of assessment because it expects the Council and its partners to be on top of understanding needs and to be delivering improved outcomes for people, rather than compliance with particular check-lists or processes. It is not a one-off inspection but should rather be considered as the core of planning and performance management and, therefore, of reporting for the Council, public service arrangements with the PCT and with the Herefordshire Partnership. It has noted that further reporting on the CAA will accordingly be included as part of the Integrated Corporate Performance Report.

BUDGET MONITORING

12. The Committee has noted the position on the revenue and capital budgets and the estimated outturn for the 2008/09 financial year. The Committee has noted that the current projected overspend at £1.671 million is a lower forecast of overspend at this point in the year than in previous years. The monitoring report attributed this to a more vigorous approach to financial management at Directorate level. It also

reported that the Chief Executive has set an expectation that Directorates produce management proposals to bring expenditure back to balance at the end of the financial year.

13. The Committee was told that the level of interest on investments achieved in previous years cannot be guaranteed in the present financial climate. This has an implication for the level of the general reserves which based on current projections could see the level at the year end being close to the recommended level of minimum general reserves of £4.5 million.
14. Regarding the Capital Programme the Committee has sought and received an assurance that the Council's level of borrowing is prudent.

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE INDIVIDUAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

15. The work of the Committees is analysed below in accordance with the following two roles for scrutiny based on a University of Birmingham categorisation. Each Committee has also considered and rolled forward its work programme.

Holding the Executive to Account	Developing Policy
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	

	Holding the Executive to Account	Developing Policy
Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing 3 October 2008	Presentation by Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults) Revenue budget monitoring Performance Monitoring Implementation of the Revised Fairer Charging Policy Integrated Social Care Record System	

	Holding the Executive to Account	Developing Policy
Children's Services 29 September 2008	Call-in of Cabinet Decision on Swimming Provision for Primary Schools in Hereford City	
Community Services 17 October 2008	Revenue Budget Performance Monitoring	Review of the Edgar Street Grid Project
Environment 15 September 2008	Environment Strategy and Carbon Management Performance Performance Monitoring	Review of planning services - Update
Health 23 September 2008	Update from the Chief Executive of the Primary Care Trusts Update from the Chief Executive of Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust National Institute For Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) presentation Local Involvement Network	West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust – Response Times
Strategic Monitoring Committee 10 September 2008 20 October 2008	Integrated Corporate Performance Report Comprehensive Area Assessment Budget Monitoring	Review of the Service Delivery Partnership with Amey

16. Issues of particular note include:

- **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee called-in Cabinet's decision on 31 July 2008 to approve the closure of St Martin's Swimming Pool with immediate effect and the subsequent capital investment in the Hereford Leisure Pool prior to the new academic year. The Committee has recommended the Council invests £72,500 to enable the pool to

reopen as soon as possible; there should be no additional costs to schools; the existing charge to schools be maintained; and a thorough feasibility/business case for the next 2 years (to include LEA pool, HALO and users/voluntary sector) be formulated on the future of the pool in the context of the whole of Herefordshire swimming provision.

Cabinet is due to consider these recommendations in November.

- **Community Services Scrutiny Committee**

The Edgar Street Grid project is the major development project for the County and is at an important stage in its implementation. The Committee has undertaken a review with the following aims:

- To make recommendations to maximise the value and impact of the ESG scheme for the benefit of Hereford City and the wider County;
- To understand the views, aspirations and concerns of partners and stakeholders;
- To recommend key considerations in the implementation of the ESG scheme, especially in relation to creating a whole city approach.

The Committee adopted an innovative approach to the review by seeking to complete its evidence gathering on one day at an informal meeting to which all relevant interviewees were invited, facilitating an exploration of the key issues concerning the scheme,

The Committee has agreed that the recommendations set out at section 7 of the review (appended), should be submitted to Cabinet and the Executive's response reported back to the Committee.

Health Scrutiny Committee

- Following consideration of response times the Committee is to undertake a formal review of the ambulance response service in the County – with particular focus on the market towns of Ledbury and Ross –on –Wye.

**PJ EDWARDS
CHAIRMAN
STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE
BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Agenda Papers of the Meetings of the Strategic Monitoring Committee held on 10 September and 20 October 2008

Community Services Scrutiny Committee 17 October 2008 – Review of the Edgar Street Grid Project

Recommendations

That: a) Cabinet be requested to consider the following recommendations

- 7.1 The Expanded City Centre – That the scheme is referred to as the expanded City Centre to reflect the “one city” approach in creating benefit for and linkages between the whole of the city centre area.**
 - 7.2 Consultation – The importance of full consultation is recognised both to ensure the best results for the people of Herefordshire, but also to ensure compliance with planning regulations. ESG Ltd should continue with its current consultation (both giving and receiving) and to investigate and use other innovative methods of consultation as appropriate.**
 - 7.3 Town Centre Impact Study – That the Town Centre Impact Study commissioned by Stanhope as part of the planning process, is independently verified or conducted.**
 - 7.4 Business as Usual – that a partnership approach lead by the City Partnership is taken to address any down turn in use of the City Centre during construction work.**
 - 7.5 Linkage to the Courtyard – consideration is given to creating better linkage to the Courtyard Centre for the Arts for the venue to be part of the wider leisure offer presented as part of the expanded city development.**
- b) 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;**
- c) That further reports be made to the Committee on the following issues:**
- 7.6 Hereford City Centre Regeneration Strategy - The Hereford City Centre Regeneration Strategy is a ten-year ambition is endorsed. The strategy should be presented to Committee specifically outlining the implementation of schemes through a partnership approach.**
 - 7.7 Support for Businesses - For the committee to fully understand via written report the current and intended support to businesses to relocate from the ESG site.**
 - 7.8 Inclusion of the Football Ground – For officers of the council to submit a report to committee on the current position and options available to enable the development of the Football Ground.**