

Environment Scrutiny Review of Planning Services

Action Plan

Recommendation 4A	Using capacity from recession to work even more closely with growth issues in the County.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. This has naturally developed as discussions have taken place about this report and that produced by the Audit Commission.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
The redeployment of staff from development control will be monitored on an ongoing basis.	HOP&T	Quarterly	Appropriate use of staff resources		
Recommendation 4B	Give particular attention to elected members representing wards in Hereford City given the concentration of new growth.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. As the report suggests this should not be at the expense of consultation with other members, as there is also significant growth proposed in other parts of the County.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Preparation of detailed timetable for Member engagement in the LDF.	Forward Planning Manager	Sept 09	Member engagement in LDF process		
Preparation of detailed engagement for key stakeholder groups.	Forward Planning Manager	Sept 09	To secure stakeholder engagement in this important document		

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation 4C	Preparation of Planning Services Masterplan.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. The outcome of the Cabinet's consideration of the two reports will allow the HOP&T to prepare an overall service improvement Masterplan.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Incorporation of responses from this report and that of the Audit Commission into a single service improvement masterplan.	HOP&T	August 09	Clarity of tasks to be undertaken.		
Recommendation 4D	Examples of authorities with significant experience in modernising be studied and incorporated into Masterplan.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. This overlaps with the response to the Audit Commission report.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Benchmarking processes with similar Councils.	DC Manager	Ongoing	Exposure to national/developing best practice.		
Visits to other authorities with similar committee models to those adopted in the County.	DC Manager				

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation 4E	Arrangement of seminar to involve other Councils.				
Cabinet's Response	This is partially accepted. Learning and development from others will be essential to the change management process. This may best be achieved by visiting other authorities.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Benchmarking processes with similar Councils.	DC Manager	Ongoing	Exposure to national/developing best practice.		
Visits to other authorities with similar committee models to those adopted in the County.	DC Manager				
Recommendation 4F	Preparation of a comprehensive consultation plan be developed on future growth proposed in the LDF.				
Cabinet's Response	A detailed consultation strategy has already been agreed as part of the LDF process. The matter will be discussed with members and stakeholders.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
See action to R10 of the Audit Commission report.					
Recommendation 5A	Expansion of membership of LDF Task Group.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. The matter was raised at the Task Group meetings on 11 th May 2009 and discussions are underway to extend the membership of the Group.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Preparation of revised terms of reference for the Task Group and invitations to potential new members.	Cabinet Member (E&SH)/ HOP&T	August 09	Wider membership of Task Group.		

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation 5B	Expansion of opportunities for members to discuss emerging LDF issues.				
Cabinet's Response	Agreed. This overlaps with the response to the Audit Commission report.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Preparation of detailed timetable for Member engagement in the LDF.	Forward Planning Manager	Sept 09	Member engagement I n LDF process		
Preparation of detailed engagement for key stakeholder groups.	Forward Planning Manager	Sept 09	To secure stakeholder engagement in this important document.		
Recommendation 5C	Give greater attention to plainer English in planning documents.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. As the planning process becomes more complete the ability of the Council to engage with the public becomes ever more important.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Arrange Plain English Campaign training course for key staff	HOP&T	Sept 09	Appreciation of the need to produce clear, jargon-free literature		

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation 5D	Preparation of timetable for members involvement in LDF.			
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. This overlaps with the response to the Audit Commission report.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Preparation of detailed timetable for Member engagement in the LDF.	Forward Planning Manager	Sept 09	Member engagement I n LDF process	
Preparation of detailed engagement for key stakeholder groups.	Forward Planning Manager	Sept 09	To secure stakeholder engagement in this important document.	

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation 5E	Agree with Town and Parish Councils the role of parish planning within the LDF				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. This overlaps with the response to the Audit Commission report.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Preparation of detailed timetable for Member engagement in the LDF.	Forward Planning Manager	Sept 09	Member engagement in LDF process		
Preparation of detailed engagement for key stakeholder groups.	Forward Planning Manager	Sept 09	To secure stakeholder engagement in this important document.		
Arrange meeting with HALC/Cabinet Member, and send briefing note to all Town/Parish Councils	HOP&T/ Planning Policy Manager	Sept 09	Clarity in role of parish plans in the development plan process.		
Recommendation 5F	Appropriate funding of growth point initiative.				
Cabinet's Response	Partially accepted. The growth point initiative is already funded through central resources, the Growth Point fund from CLG and via the Planning and Housing Delivery Grant. The importance of funding this important initiative should not, however, be underestimated.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Monitor the financial position of the Growth Point initiative	HOP&T / Forward Planning Manager	Quarterly	Appropriate resources being available.		

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation 5G	A programme of communication be commenced with developers/agents.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. This overlaps with the responses to the Audit Commission Report.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
See responses to R1 and R10 of the Audit Commission Report.					
Recommendation 6A	Establishment of an all-authority infrastructure group.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted in principle. It is suggested that this is debated initially at the LDF Task Group, and that the remit of existing groups (such as the Major Projects Group) be reviewed to assess whether they can be incorporated into such an overarching group.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Consider establishment of all-authority infrastructure group at LDF Task Group 14 th September, 2009.	HOP&T	Sept 09	Relationship of LDF Working Group to infrastructure issues.		
Recommendation 7A	Achievement of top quartile DC Performance.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted in principle. The ability or otherwise of achieving this target can be assessed once the Civica system has been implemented and any new committee structures established.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Monitor performance and reassess procedures once the Civica system is in place.	HOP&T	Oct 09	Continuously improving performance.		

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation 7B	Redeployment of Planning Services employees to priority areas within the Service.				
Cabinet's Response	Redeployment of staff from development control to planning policy took place earlier in the year. The situation is being monitored.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
The redeployment of staff from development control will be monitored on an ongoing basis.	HOP&T	Quarterly	Appropriate use of staff resources		
Recommendation 7C	Establish how other authorities deliver services				
Cabinet's Response	Agreed in principle. This overlaps with responses to the Audit Commission report.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Benchmarking processes with similar Councils.	DC Manager	Ongoing	Exposure to national/developing best practice.		
Visits to other authorities with similar committee models to those adopted in the County.	DC Manager				
Recommendation 7D	Establishment of a contingency budget.				
Cabinet's Response	Not accepted. Measures are already in place to cover abnormal expense.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
N/A.					

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation 7E	Ensure an appropriate balance between expenditure on planning policy and development control.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. See response to 7A				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
N/A.					
Recommendation 8A	Preparation of a costed and timed programme for the major planning issues in the LDF process.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. The Council has already allocated additional resources to the LDF process through its own Medium Term Financial Plan, and the Council will continue to be able to bid for external funding from the Growth Points Challenge Fund.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Monitor the financial position of the Growth Point initiative.	HOP&T / Forward Planning Manager	Quarterly	Appropriate resources being available		
Recommendation 8B	Roll-out of programme of training on development management principles.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. This overlaps with response to the Audit Commission report.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
See Action Plan to Audit Commission report (R2).					

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation 8C	Staff training in development management.			
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. This overlaps with response to the Audit Commission report.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
See Action Plan to Audit Commission report (R2).				
Recommendation 9A	Take account of committee cycles and town and parish councils when consulting on applications			
Cabinet's Response	Not accepted. The Council has a duty to determine applications within a statutory period. Town and parish councils are notified on applications and are given 21 days in which to respond. Nonetheless training offered to town and parish councils will offer guidance on how best to respond to planning applications in a timely manner.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Incorporate advice on commenting on planning applications on wider training to town and parish councils.	HOP&T	Sept 09	Speedier response to planning applications	
Recommendation 9B	Reconsideration of Parish Compact			
Cabinet's Response	Agreed. The Compact needs to be reconsidered in the light of the wider committee changes, and in advance of the determination of major LDF – derived applications.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Re-negotiate Parish Compact	HOP&T	Oct 2009	Relationship to new committee structure and wider arrangements.	

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation 9C	Placing Agents Forum on a formal basis.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Discuss future composition/arrangements at next Agents Forum	HOP&T/DCM	Agents Forum 16 th July, 2009	Clarity of future arrangement/meeting schedules/governance		
Recommendation 9D	Member guidance and training on relationships with officers				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. This overlaps with proposed training stemming from the Action Plan to the Audit Commission report.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Incorporating of this aspect of training into wider training packages	HOP&T	Sept/Oct 09			
Recommendation 9E	Any formal Agents Forum presents an annual report to the Environment Scrutiny Committee				
Cabinet's Response	This is ultimately a decision that the agents concerned would need to determine. The issue will be raised at the meeting on 16 th July, 2009				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Discuss this matter at the Agents Forum	HOP&T	16 July 09			

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation 10A-10E	Various recommendations on Section 106 Procedures			
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. In general several of the recommendations are now incorporated (or being incorporated) into the day-to-day operation of the Service following the appointment of the Planning Obligations Manager. It is recognised that these ongoing arrangements need to be incorporated into widely-accessible guidance. To this extent these elements of guidance will be incorporated into the report to Council in due course.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Incorporation of revised Section 106 Agreement procedures into Council report on committee structures on 24 th July, 2009.	HOP&T	July 2009	Information	
Recommendation No. 10F	Increase size of member training budget			
Cabinet's Response	Agreed in principle. The matter will need to be considered in the round setting the 2010/11 budget.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Direction of this information to the Director of Resources	HOP&T	July 09		
Recommendation No. 10G	Notice is taken of survey results included in the Environmental Scrutiny report.			
Cabinet's Response	Agreed. The Environment Scrutiny report has been important in shaping service improvements.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation No. 10H	Development and roll out of training programme to town and parish councils.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. This overlaps with responses to the Audit Commission Report.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
See other responses on training and development.					
Recommendation No. 10 I	Establish standards for acknowledging letters and responding to phone calls.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. Customer standards already exist. Nonetheless there will be clear benefits to all concerned that these standards are incorporated in revised guidance notes on the operations of the system.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Include standards for acknowledging letters and responding to phone calls in updated guidance notes on the operation of the Development Control system.	HOP&T	Sept 09	Readily-understood system		
Recommendation No. 10J	Introduction of a systematic approach to collecting and analysing and using customer feedback.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. The existing information is collected and presented in a patchy way.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Introduction of systematic approach to collecting, analysing and using customer feedback.	HOP&T	Oct 09	Availability of readily useable information		

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation No. 10K	Enforcement service to be more viable and proactive.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. The enforcement service needs to take a balanced approach to breaches of planning permission based on the individual circumstances.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Preparation and circulation of an Enforcement Guide and set of protocols.	Development Control Manager	Nov 09	Clarity on operation of planning system		
Recommendation No. 11A – 11H	Detailed recommendations on the introduction of the Civica system (through Herefordshire Connects).				
Cabinet's Response	The system will be operational in September 2009. Detailed arrangements will be made to business processes as a result of its introduction. These will be refined on the basis of any changes to Committee structures and arrangements. Document scanning will be introduced in Phase 2 of the project and once a corporate decision has been made on document management systems.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Monitoring of successful roll-out of the Civica Project.	IERS Project Board	Sept 09	Effective roll-out of the new system.		
Recommendation No. 11 I & J	Accommodation of Planning Services in a single building.				
Cabinet's Response	These matters will be addressed in the wider accommodation review of the Council.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Ensure that the operational requirements of the Planning Service are appropriately managed as part of the wider accommodation review.	Accommodation Review Group	Ongoing			

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation No. 11K & L	Various recommendations relating to the Committee system.			
Cabinet's Response	These areas overlap with the responses on the Audit Commission report (R5).			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
These matters will be dependent on the Council's decision on any revisions to the Committee structures				