

REPORT OF THE MEETINGS OF CABINET**HELD ON 17TH JULY, 2003**

Cabinet Members: R.J. Phillips (Leader of the Council), G.V. Hyde (Deputy Leader), Mrs. L.O. Barnett, P.J. Edwards, Mrs. J.P. French, J.C. Mayson, D.W. Rule, MBE, R.V. Stockton, D.B. Wilcox, R.M. Wilson.

This is a supplementary report of the proceedings of the meeting held on 17th July, 2003.

1. CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE
(Chairman of Cabinet – Councillor R.J. Phillips)

1.1 Report on Decisions Taken

(i) **Herefordshire Matters Surveys Following Two Pilot Editions** - Herefordshire Council has been involved in the "Connecting with Communities" initiative since January 2002. One of the key recommendations was that the Council needed to establish a regular newspaper or magazine for its residents. Last year Cabinet agreed that two pilot editions of Herefordshire Matters be produced and, following evaluation, a decision would be taken in relation to the future of the magazine. Early feedback was good with the vast majority of comments favourable about the style and layout of the magazine, its content and the cost of production and distribution. Cabinet has asked for more work to be done to reduce costs and with the Council's public sector partners with a view to a joint publication and/or distribution and to review the format. The need to consider this in the wider context of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and the Improvement Plan was noted.

(ii) **Procurement of Contract Services** - The Council needs to procure a wide range of contract services to the value of approximately £13 million per annum over the next 10 years. Most of this work has traditionally been carried out by Herefordshire Commercial Services. However, the Council has invited expressions of interest from the private sector for a partnership that would provide a long term relationship and a flexibility to meet changing needs.

During earlier discussions on the approach to be adopted Cabinet had expressed a preference for such a partnership to be through a joint venture company. It has now agreed a course of action to conclude negotiations with the preferred bidder. It has

- endorsed the Heads of Terms agreed, subject to contract, between Jarvis, as preferred bidder for the future delivery of contract Services, and the Council;
- determined the shareholder arrangements for the proposed joint venture company;

- agreed to seek admitted body status with the Local Government Pension Scheme for the proposed joint venture company;
 - agreed the application of new guidance to protect new employees of the joint venture company; and
 - authorised officers to conclude negotiations within the parameters outlined in the report and to report back.
- (iii) **Procurement of Technical Consultancy Services** - The Council needs to procure a wide range of technical consultancy services to the value of £1 million approximately per annum over the next 10 years. A contract for the provision of many of these services is currently held by Halcrow, which ends on 31st August, 2003; a number of other consultants are also employed by the Council to provide some of the services within the scope of this contract. The Council has invited expressions of interest from other contractors and Cabinet had previously agreed Owen Williams Limited as the preferred bidder. Cabinet has now endorsed the Heads of Terms, subject to contract, and authorised the Director of Environment, in consultation with the County Secretary and Solicitor, and County Treasurer to conclude negotiations with Owen Williams Limited and enter into the proposed principal contract documents in relation to the contract.

2. COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (Cabinet Member - Councillor R.V. Stockton)

2.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Replacement Swimming Pool for North Herefordshire** - The Sydonia Swimming Pool in Leominster was closed in March 2002 on health and safety grounds. Following its closure Council submitted an application to the National Lottery Sport Fund for a replacement pool. The application was rejected in September 2002. The National Lottery Sports Fund was suspended in December 2002 and this suspension will continue until at least December 2003. The Council has been advised that new applications are unlikely to be invited until April 2004 at the earliest. Sport England had advised the Council to undertake a Joint Facilities Planning Model Study to decide on the most appropriate swimming provision for North Herefordshire. The study found that there was a case for some indoor swimming provision in Leominster which could be met by the provision of a small community pool of 20m x 8m. Cabinet has considered the number of potential users of the pool and the relative costs involved in providing different sizes of pool ranging from 20m x 8m to 25m x 12.5m.

It has agreed that a replacement swimming pool be provided for North Herefordshire and professional advisers be appointed to compile tender documents for a 25m x 12.5m pool with a 50 square metre learning bay at the site adjoining the Leisure Centre in Leominster. The scheme to be as approved by the Council's Northern Area Planning Sub-Committee on 30th May, 2001.

It has also agreed that the local community be requested to seek to raise a minimum of £250,000 which is the additional cost of providing this size of pool. The County Treasurer has been asked to identify funding of the remaining costs. A progress report will be made to Cabinet in November, 2003.

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MARKETS AND PROPERTY (Cabinet Member and Deputy Leader - Councillor G.V. Hyde)

ENVIRONMENT (Cabinet Member - Councillor P.J. Edwards)

3.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Edgar Street Grid Masterplan** - During 2002, Herefordshire Council and Advantage West Midlands agreed to jointly commission a masterplanning exercise to inform the redevelopment of the Edgar Street Grid site which is located immediately to the north of Hereford's historic city centre. In March 2003 DTZ Pieda were commissioned to lead a multi disciplinary consultancy team to prepare a strategic vision, masterplan and implementation strategy for the site.

The brief for the masterplanning exercise set out the following key objectives:

- to create a main focus for regeneration within the context of an historic city centre;
- to create a development that is accessible to sustainable transport modes, that contributes to development in the wider city centre, with an emphasis on the development and improvement of sustainable access links to the city centre and other adjacent areas;
- to utilise key locations and physical attributes associated with the project area including opportunities offered by the Livestock Market site, the existing railway station and the former canal basins;
- to set an aspirational, but achievable and robust masterplan for the project area within the context of sustainable developments reflecting the heritage of the city and the use of the new and emerging economy of the 21st century;
- to focus on delivery and the mechanism for implementation.

The Council's Regeneration Board has overseen the Consultants' work to date which has established a series of criteria that any masterplan option must satisfy and four masterplan options 1(a), 1(b), 2 and 3 have been identified. All four options have been subject to a wide ranging consultation exercise.

Option 3 is emerging as the preferred Option, the key features of Option 3 are:

- the new A49/Commercial Road link joins the A49 in the vicinity of the

Courtyard Arts Centre, raising the profile of this venue and allowing in the longer term for a reorientation of the football ground. Details of the junction with A49 will be subject to agreement with the Highways Agency. There are concerns about the capacity of existing junctions to deal with these new proposals. These concerns will need to be addressed in the next phase of the work.

- a new civic focus away from the Market site (as proposed in the UDP) to the Blueschool Street area.
- the introduction of retail uses onto the Livestock Market site. This serves to help the overall economic viability of the scheme and ensures the Council is making best use of its assets. However retail uses need careful handling from a planning point of view. One of the main objectives of the study is to integrate with the existing city centre and it is important that what is effectively a separate focus for investment is not created which would compete rather than complement the main shopping areas to the south. In particular city centre shopping uses are not to be preferred on the Market site. This could weaken the retail emphasis in the existing centre which contributes to the vitality and viability of the historic core. It is essential that this is maintained. In terms of other retail uses, the capacity in the City to accommodate additional food retail is limited and a case would need to be made to or by the Council, acting as planning authority, that additional provision of this nature could be justified by other considerations. Bulky goods retailing could be another possibility, for which there is a need to identify additional land.
- Other uses such as a Hereford Learning Village, multiplex cinema and public transport provision/interchange are not explicitly provided for in the option as it stands. These need to be further considered as part of the development of the implementation plan.

Cabinet has agreed that Option 3 be used as the basis for further consultation, with particular reference to transportation issues, and that an implementation plan be developed on that basis.

**COUNCILLOR R.J. PHILLIPS
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**