

MINUTES of the meeting of Council held at The Shirehall, St Peter's Square, Hereford on Friday 5 February 2010 at 10.30 am

Present: Councillor J Stone (Chairman)
Councillor JB Williams (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: PA Andrews, WU Attfield, LO Barnett, CM Bartrum, DJ Benjamin, AJM Blackshaw, WLS Bowen, H Bramer, ACR Chappell, ME Cooper, PGH Cutter, H Davies, GFM Dawe, BA Durkin, PJ Edwards, MJ Fishley, JP French, JHR Goodwin, AE Gray, KG Grumbley, KS Guthrie, JW Hope MBE, B Hunt, RC Hunt, TW Hunt, JA Hyde, TM James, JG Jarvis, Brig P Jones CBE, MD Lloyd-Hayes, G Lucas, RI Matthews, PJ McCaull, R Mills, PM Morgan, AT Oliver, JE Pemberton, RJ Phillips, GA Powell, PD Price, SJ Robertson, A Seldon, RH Smith, RV Stockton, AM Toon, PJ Watts, DB Wilcox and JD Woodward

In attendance: Councillors

63. PRAYERS

Canon Andrew Piper, Precentor of Hereford Cathedral, led the Council in prayer.

64. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors SPA Daniels, DW Greenow, MAF Hubbard, JK Swinburne, AP Taylor, DC Taylor, NL Vaughan and WJ Walling.

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

66. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

For completeness, the formal records of the named votes taken at the 13 November 2009 meeting to be submitted for approval at the Council meeting on 5 March 2010.

67. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported on the following:

- Expressed his thanks to all those who had contributed to keeping Herefordshire going during the recent severe weather conditions, in particular Amey, the Emergency Services, Paramedics, postal workers and the many volunteers who helped out in those areas affected by the snow and ice. Many Council staff across directorates worked hard to keep the County moving and up-to-date. Further challenges were anticipated due to the possibility of more snow during February.

- The Customer Service Team was congratulated on successfully achieving the Customer Service Excellence Award. The Assessor was particularly impressed with the new Customer Insight Unit and the Business Improvement Technique NVQ projects that had been taking place throughout the year.
- The tragic death of Lance Corporal Daniel Cooper of the 3rd Battalion The Rifles was reported to Council. Lance Corporal Cooper attended Whitecross High School prior to joining the army and was deployed to Afghanistan in October last year. He died at the age of 21 as he tried to clear a path south of the Sangin district in northern Helmand Province. He was highly thought of by his comrades and commanders. On behalf of the Council, the Chairman expressed his sympathy to his family.
- All Members were invited to the Chairman's Civic Service which would be held on Sunday 14 March at 3.30pm at Hereford Cathedral, followed by afternoon tea at the Town Hall.

68. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Copies of all public questions received by the deadline, with the written answers, were distributed prior to the commencement of the meeting. Supplementary questions were asked by Mr N Jones and Mr P McKay. A copy of the public questions and written answers together with the supplementary questions and answers are attached to the minutes as Appendix 1.

69. FORMAL QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS TO THE CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN UNDER STANDING ORDERS

Question from Councillor WJS Bowen to the Cabinet Member Resources

- 1.1 *What figure does the Cabinet Member for Resources consider to be substantially below 3% and what is the definition of substantially below 3%? Have adequate and effective plans been put in place for alternative budgets for figures that might be more substantially less than 3% than the currently proposed 2.9%? What are the odds of being capped by the Government if we actually use 2.9% as our Council Tax increase?*

Answer from Councillor H Bramer Cabinet Member Resources

- 1.1 The government has not defined what it believes is "substantially below 3%" and is unlikely to provide any such definition; it is generally accepted that any increase above 3% will bring with it a risk of capping. The government has previously indicated it will look at the average level of increase across local government and, to some extent, whether any council stands out in comparison with others. It is for this reason we are seeking an in principle increase in the level of council tax.

A lower level increase would require us to review budgets, as stated in the report before Council today at agenda item 9.

No supplementary question was asked.

Question from Councillor GFM Dawe to the Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

- 2.1 *The Council have said they will help pay for an east or west bypass (ODR) around Hereford with contributions from developers from the new housing in the next plan period 2011-2026. What percentage of the cost of the road will come from the housing and what percentage from other sources? How much will each new house have to contribute?*

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

- 2.1 This Administration remains committed to the delivery of an outer distributor road; the study undertaken jointly for the Council and the Highways Agency made clear there could be no growth within the city without such additional transport infrastructure. Whilst the precise route, and therefore funding requirement, has yet to be determined it is clear that any developers will need to contribute to the costs of the infrastructure required.

Given the significant funding that will be required to build the road, all possible funding streams are being explored. This is likely to include seeking contributions from Central Government, the Council and developers.

Supplementary question:

If developers are required to contribute to the ODR how can the houses be classed as affordable housing?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

The amount is not yet defined. Funding for the ODR would be provided from a range of sources. Affordable housing is a separate issue which is determined in line with appropriate policies.

Question from Councillor GFM Dawe to the Cabinet Member Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources

- 2.2 *How much has the Council paid on the wrap-around AdMag and Herefordshire Journal advertisements?*

Answer from Councillor JP French Cabinet Member Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources

- 2.2 The Council is required to undertake wide consultation in the development of its Local Development Framework and Local Transportation Plan. To ensure that as many people as possible are aware of the issues and can engage in the public events, complete a questionnaire, and give their views during the Shaping Our Place consultation as wide a communication as possible of these opportunities has been undertaken. The total cost of publicity (taking into account discounts secured by the Council) in the Admag and Journal papers has been £8,700. The results so far indicate that this is already the most successful consultation undertaken so far by the Council in terms of participation.

Supplementary question

Why was a decision made to advertise over and above the normal rules?

Answer from Councillor JP French Cabinet Member Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources

There has been wide ranging publicity of this important consultation to ensure that residents and businesses know of the opportunity and are encouraged to submit their views in order to influence the future of the county. Views are sought on wide ranging issues, e.g infrastructure planning, roads etc. The wrap around is an effective way to bring the consultation to the public's attention and to help

achieve the target of 10,000 consultation responses. All Councillors are encouraged to arrange meetings with the planning teams and to encourage community involvement. The funding for the wrap around was met by a special provision in the LDF budget.

Question from Councillor GFM Dawe to the Cabinet Member Resources

2.3 *What is the Council's current level of debt? What was it in 2001 and 2005?*

Answer from Councillor H Bramer Cabinet Member Resources

2.3 The current level of borrowing is £115.2 million. It should be noted that approximately £90 million of this total is supported borrowing (that is where the government funds both the interest and the principle element of the loan) that we get funding for in our annual settlement from Government. We also need to note Herefordshire inherited ex-Hereford & Worcester County Council debt at re-organisation totalling £27.7 million. The level of borrowing in 2001 was £32.4 million and in 2005 £67.7 million.

The reason we borrow is to fund capital projects and our total borrowing has helped many community and school schemes for example:

- Gym equipment for all Halo leisure centres
- Leominster Swimming Pool
- Hereford Crematorium
- CCTV Equipment
- Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- Riverside Primary School

Supplementary question

Should the publication of Herefordshire Matters (described as propaganda) be stopped, thereby saving the authority £45,000?

Answer from Councillor JP French Cabinet Member Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources

On a point of information, the Councillor was reminded of the Code of Conduct in relation to his accusations of officer produced documents.

Question from Councillor GFM Dawe to the Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing

2.4 *Is Herefordshire Council going to match fund the £80,000 offered by English Heritage to the Council in order to look at the Rotherwas Ribbon?*

2.4.1 *What is the total spend so far by the Council on the archaeology on this site associated with the road so far?*

2.4.2 *What is the total spend on the archaeology associated with the road from all sources so far?*

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing

- 2.4 No match funding is required.
- 2.4.1 To date the Council has spent a total of £500,000 on the archaeology on the site, which includes some £250,000 to examine the find and design and install appropriate protection measures.
- 2.4.2 The total costs spent on archaeology from all sources so far is £502,500 which is the Council's spending plus £2,500 spent by English Heritage on radiocarbon costs.

Supplementary question:

Is the contract for this work out to competitive tendering; if not, why not?

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing

The work has been contracted out by the archaeological group and team for two excavations. Additional funding would be required for any further work.

Question from Councillor PJ Edwards to the Cabinet Member ICT, Education and Achievement

- 3.1 *Referring to page 26 of the Council Agenda please could the Cabinet Member confirm the approximate additional number of pupils throughout Herefordshire who will be eligible for free school meals under the National Extended Scheme and additional total approximate cost per annum?*

Answer from Councillor PD Price Cabinet Member ICT, Education and Achievement

- 3.1 The government's proposals, which include a 1% inflationary uplift to the household income eligibility level, are subject to Parliamentary approval of the Budget and re-election of the government in May 2010.

Free school meals are funded by Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The draft school budgets for 2010/11 are based on an estimated 2,186 pupils entitled to free school meals, with an estimated cost of £789,000. This is an increase of 287 (15%) pupils and an increased cost of £137,000 from 2009/10. The 2010/11 pupil numbers/costs are estimates as school budgets cannot be finalised until pupil numbers have been confirmed in mid to late February. No additional funding has been added to DSG to cover this.

We are not aware of any plans to extend the pilot of universal free school meals for primary school children to Herefordshire, or of any extension of the eligibility to Free School Meals other than the inflation increase to income thresholds contained in the government's proposals.

No supplementary question was asked.

Question from Councillor PJ Edwards to the Cabinet Member Resources

- 3.2 *Given that 'the Shared Services initiative has subsumed the Connects project into the wider Transformation Project' please inform what % capital and revenue contribution and actual monetary value is being supplied by NHS Herefordshire into the joint budget (Council agenda item 9 page 29 and paragraphs 24 and 25):*

- *Past*

- *Present*
- *Future*

Answer from Councillor H Bramer Cabinet Member Resources

3.2 Funding for the development of a shared service strategy of £175K was provided by the Improvement and Efficiency Partnership West Midlands, together with financial contributions from Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire of £12,500 each. All three partners have contributed officer resources for the shared services to the work to date. Work is currently underway to determine the most appropriate governance arrangement and commercial models, including any invest to save requirements, for the next stages of the programme.

Supplementary question

How will the Cabinet Member track the savings, which would be of benefit to the public, across the various initiatives and budget headings (shared services, integrated commissioning, change management etc)?

Answer from Councillor H Bramer Cabinet Member Resources

The costs would be tracked in accordance with CIPFA regulations.

Question from Councillor RI Matthews to the Cabinet Member Resources

4.1 *The Council's Connect project in which many millions of pounds of taxpayers' money has been invested is still only realising a modest one million of efficiency savings for 2010-11, which is well short of what we were led to believe would be the case a few years ago. With the Authority's formula grant due to be considerably reduced in 2011-12, can the Cabinet Member assure us that the forecast savings will be delivered and where it is anticipated that the savings will be made?*

Answer from Councillor H Bramer Cabinet Member Resources

4.1 Yes; savings are forecast to be made in the following key areas:

- Procurement.
- Business process improvement.
- Decommissioning of legacy systems.
- Reduction in full time equivalent (FTE).

Supplementary question

In excess of £5million has been invested in the Connects project. When is it expected that this money will be recovered and how long will it take to reclaim the monies invested in the project? As the Connects programme is now under the general umbrella of corporate efficiencies, is all now working as expected?

Answer from Councillor H Bramer Cabinet Member Resources

The comments were noted and a written response would be provided

Question from Councillor AT Oliver to the Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing

5.1 *What is the total amount of section 106 funding lost to the Council since the decision by the Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing to suspend*

section 106 agreements, as from 1 April 2009? What effect does this loss have on the Council's budget for 2010/11 and beyond, and on its ability to deal with the costs to the community arising from permitted development?

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing

- 5.1 It is important to note the suspension, made at a time of severe economic downturn and with the aim of providing a stimulus to the development market, has resulted in 122 planning applications to commence development within 12 months delivering 195 new homes (excluding affordable housing) and 15 new employment sites in the County, and generating an income fee of £66,555.

There will be no effect to the Council's budget as section 106 contributions are 'windfall' payments to support delivery of specified schemes or projects which would not otherwise be realised.

It is estimated that the total amount of potential S106 agreement contribution in respect of applications processed since 1 April 2009 could have amounted to some £309,000.

Supplementary question

What is the definition of 'commence development within 12 months'?

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing

That there are signs of the development being started and that footings have been put in place

Question from Councillor AT Oliver to the Cabinet Member Resources

- 5.2 *Is the suggestion that there will be a 5% per annum cut in the formula grant from central government after 2010/11, the result of a direct line to the Tory election manifesto, or an educated guess? If the grant is cut by this amount what services is it proposed are dropped or cut from 2010/11 onwards, and how many redundancies or job losses might be involved?*
- 5.3 *The financial resource model indicates that there may be inflation uplifts to key contracts. Which contracts and what is the cost of the potential uplift in each case? Do the contracts entered into by the Council specify such inflationary uplifts?*
- 5.4 *It is stated that there is a backlog of £17,750,000 of maintenance required across all service areas, with £595,000 stated to be urgent. No provision has been made within the Council's budget for this work. I assume that this £595,000 will have to be spent before 31 March 2011. If so can it be accommodated within additional prudential borrowing, or will it have to be offset against revenue budgets?
Can the rest of the backlog be postponed indefinitely or is this potential substantial cost going to impact on our budgets for the next two years?*
- 5.5 *The net borrowing requirement is projected to rise from £115,000,000 at 31 March 2010 to £142,000,000 at 31 March 2011, an increase of nearly 25%. What new infrastructure will Herefordshire have as at 31 March 2011 to justify this increase?*

Answer from Councillor H Bramer Cabinet Member Resources

- 5.2 The Council's financial strategy covers three years and reflects the general consensus that the public sector will have much tighter funding settlements in the future. We have certainty about government funding for 2010/11 but no information on future levels of grant. As a result we have included a 5% per annum reduction in the level of future funding for 2011/12 and 2012/13, taking into account the general view amongst the local government community and statements made by organisations such as the Audit Commission.

The planning for such a scenario is ongoing and will include efficiencies such as shared services. The Council has been clear that the shared services agenda will lead to a reduction in the number of jobs across the three partner organisations of some 140 posts.

- 5.3 It is not possible in the time available to produce a list of the relevant contracts and cost of potential uplift in each case. I can confirm that a number of existing contracts do contain a specification for uplift and have asked officers to contact you to provide you with a more comprehensive briefing.
- 5.4 The significant issue of maintenance backlog is one of the key reasons why we have agreed to a new joint accommodation strategy. The council's intention is to rationalise its estate and for example, in Hereford alone this will reduce the number of office locations from 11 to one at Plough Lane.

The £595k could be funded from unallocated Prudential borrowing in 2010/11 that is being held back pending completion of the review of the existing capital programme; alternatively the work could be funded from existing property maintenance revenue budget (£1.197 million) depending on whether the works required meet the definition of capital expenditure.

- 5.5 Capital funding will be directed to support priority capital projects identified in the Capital Programme (currently under review) and to deliver Highways, Footways and Bridges works as supported by specific government funding allocations

Supplementary question

Does the urgent backlog of maintenance (£595k) include the refurbishment of the tennis courts at Bishops Meadow?

Answer from Councillor H Bramer Cabinet Member Resources

A written response will be provided.

Question from Councillor AT Oliver to the Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

- 5.6 *Have all liabilities from the construction of the Rotherwas relief road now been settled? If not what provision has been made in the 2010/11 budget for any liability which may become due?*

One of the conditions attached to the planning permission for the relief road, was that the Holme Lacy Road be upgraded. Has the scoping document for any proposed improvements to the road yet been produced, and is there any provision in the 2010/11 budget for the cost of any road works necessary?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

- 5.6 All contractor costs associated with the construction of Rotherwas Access Road have been paid from this year and previous years' budgets. There are a range of other payments to affected landowners and to potentially affected households which are still under negotiation. The Rotherwas Futures budget contains an allowance for these costs in 2010/2011 financial year.

It is pleasing to note that, following construction of the relief road, Holme Lacy Road has seen a 90% reduction in HGV usage. Following preliminary consultations with Lower Bullingham Parish Council, a draft Holme Lacy Road improvement scheme has been developed. It is intended to undertake wider consultation on these proposals this spring. Funding will be made available through the Council's Local Transport Plan, with the implementation of the scheme being phased over a number of years.

Supplementary question

What is the actual provision for the outstanding liability of the Rotherwas Futures project?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

The detail of the final amount would not be disclosed, however the total cost of the project has been around £14million.

70. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDERS

There were none.

71. DRAFT FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2010/13

The Leader introduced the item and drew Members' attention to the amended recommendation to the Draft Financial Strategy 2010/2013 which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

The Cabinet Member Resources advised Council that:

- The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was based on an 'in principle' council tax increase of 2.9%, which equated to a rise of £0.66p per week for Band D properties and which would be the lowest level of council tax set by the Council. An on going review of the MTFS would take place in advance of the 5 March 2010 Council meeting.
- All public services were experiencing increasingly challenging times balancing lower funding levels with the need to maintain front line service delivery.
- Whilst the Local Government Settlement provided an increase of £2.2million for 2010/11 additional budgetary pressures of £5.5million had been identified.
- Careful review of the budget identified additional costs for Integrated Commissioning, Children's' Services, Adult Social Care (in anticipation of the costs relating to the implementation of the Personal Care at Home Bill), and winter maintenance, as well as the need to reimburse reserves.
- Planning the strategic and operational intentions of the Council over three years during a period of such uncertainty was challenging and Members were advised that flexibility was needed in the process to allow for informed assumptions to be reflected and amended in the MTFS.

The recommendations were moved and seconded.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlined the following key points raised by his Committee in considering the report:

- the expectation that funding in subsequent years would be substantially cut year on year at a rate of -5% or more.
- noted government's expectation that council tax increase should be 'substantially' below 3% and queried the definition of 'substantially' in light of the proposed (in principle) council tax level of 2.9%.
- that vital information was lacking to enable support for or against the Executive's recommendations (e.g report on capital projects, information relating to the superannuation fund).

Members acknowledged the challenges in relation to the development of the MTFS during such uncertain times; however a number of Members expressed concern regarding the lack of detail with which to make an informed decision on the recommendations. The following specific points were raised:

- Clarifications were sought on; (i) the additional cost incurred in relation to shared services and improved procurement processes; (ii) the rationale of recruiting an additional 100 staff in the previous 12 months; (iii) uplift in relation to contracts; (iv) the Connects project anticipated £6million savings; (v) when compatible IT systems would be in place.
- Comments were made regarding budget allocations; specifically in respect of dementia sufferers and archaeology.
- It was important to ensure the organisation and the services it delivered were effective as well as efficient.
- Clarification was sought as to why there remained a debt of £27.7million which originated from the previous Hereford and Worcester County Council.
- The deficit buildings should not be considered for sale until the economic climate was more favourable.
- The Council's budget sheets should be made available on the web.

Responding to comments raised Executive Members stated that:

- Members were reminded that the February Council meeting provided an opportunity to set the context, discuss issues and ask questions of Cabinet in advance of March Council meeting which would set the budget; the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic) would write to Members outlining the legal and constitutional requirements of Council in the budget setting process.
- Members were advised that officers from the Resources Directorate were attending public meetings in order to outline the position of the Council and the challenges it faced in delivering services and efficiencies in an effective way.
- The impact of the Government's position on the financing of local government and public sector in general was challenging and whilst additional funding had been received through the settlement grant, a substantial reduction in funding was expected on a rolling annual basis. Work on reviewing the financial strategy would continue over the coming weeks and additional information would be made available to Members.
- The role of the scrutiny function in helping to review the delivery of the right services, and the right time to the public was important to assist the effectiveness of the organisation.

- Question relating to staffing would need to be referred to the Chief Executive.
- Members were advised that typographical corrections would be captured in future documentation.

Members indicating support for the recommendations highlighted that the need for those opposed to the proposed budget needed to consider alternative proposals.

Responding to comments raised, the Leader stated that:

- Para 27 of the report reflected inflationary increases in contract costs.
- £500,000 had been spent on archaeological costs relating to the Rotherwas Ribbon, which required appropriate investigation, and which had been undertaken at an additional cost to the access road. Current archaeological costs were being met through an alternative source.
- It was acknowledged that a three year MTFs had to estimate years two and three. This year these estimations were more difficult due to the current economic climate, the tightening of public sector finance and the certainty of an election no later than 3 June 2010.
- The impact of paying back the severe national debt needed to be considered within Government and by national politicians who needed to be mindful of their approach to funding local government and ensure that no changes to settlements were done mid year in order not to impact services detrimentally.
- It was imperative that the MTFs took account of potential reductions in Government funding, and whilst no formal figure had been received, cuts of at least -5% were expected over the next two years.
- It was expected that the reduction in public sector funding would also affect the Area Based Grant (up to £15million) which supported vital services. However as the ABG stood outside the formal local government budget, it was vulnerable to mid year changes.
- It was deemed appropriate to reimburse monies borrowed from the reserves in respect of winter maintenance and adult social care.
- Capital spending has been considered and revised to ensure timescale and phasing of delivery together with the impact on the revenue budget.
- The financial environment ahead has been described by a leading academic as an 'end of era' with officers and members needing to tackle severe challenges not previously experienced in their professional careers.
- In response to comments made regarding borrowing levels, the differences between prudential and supported borrowing were outlined. Assurance was provided to Members that the current combined debt level (both prudential and supported) of £115million was well below £185million which would be upper limit.
- In considering the budgetary process, the proposed increases reflected needs identified, mostly in support of vulnerable children and adults. Such increases needed to be fully explained to the public and set out within the appropriate context (including the pressures of rurality, demography and infrastructure). Some potential funding impacts were yet to be fully costed, such as the Personal Care at Home Bill, which whilst a laudable principle, has been estimated by the Prime Minister to cost £650million and by the Association of Directors of Social Services as £1billion, of which 37% of the cost would be borne by local government.

- The impact of the recent severe winter weather was ongoing and it was expected that there would be a need to reprofile spend within the highways budget to deal with patching and resurfacing requirements and assess the additional requirements for the 2010/11 budget.
- It was acknowledged that at 2.9% the proposed (in principle) council tax was too high and would have to come down.

A vote was taken and the resolution was carried 26 for (2 against, 19 abstentions)

RESOLVED:

THAT Council approve *in principle*:

- (a) **the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) shown in Appendix A, which includes the 2010/11 budget and the 2010/11 to 2012/13 revenue overview summarised in the Finance Resource Model (FRM); (noting that the Treasury Management Strategy including the MRP statement remains in draft form until the next meeting of Council on 5 March 2010) and;**
 - **an additional £1.0m capital allocation for roads maintenance;**
 - **an additional £500k for the social care contingency; and**
 - **an additional £500k for the winter maintenance reserve;**
- (b) **a proposed council tax increase of *no higher than 2.9%***

72. HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL AND NHS HEREFORDSHIRE JOINT CORPORATE PLAN

The Leader presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The amended version of the corporate plan which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, the amendments being highlighted in red.
- The joint corporate plan outlined the overall objectives of the deep partnership between the Council and NHS Herefordshire which were increasingly important within the context of tighter budgets. It was considered a positive and effective aid to move forward constructively.
- The plan additionally outlined the close linkages with other partners in the public, private and third sectors.
- That increasingly in the future, Herefordshire would be considered within the Total Place context (quantifying all public monies in the area and identifying how it can be put to best use for the public).
- Appendix 2, which identified actions and performance targets, complemented the Corporate Plan. It would be used by Members and Officers to monitor progress and spend. Such an approach would assist the organisations in developing further a businesslike approach by targeting knowledge and identifying areas where funding would have the greatest impact.

The recommendations were moved and seconded.

Councillor H Davies left the meeting.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlined the following key points raised by his Committee in considering the report:

- Welcomed the new format of the Joint Corporate Plan and its close links with Performance Plus.
- That consideration be given to the following specific points:
 - (i) That the STEAM report be used as a basis for measuring the delivery of long term objective 1.3 '*visitors to the county*';
 - (ii) The targets for the processing of planning applications against long term objective 1.4 should measure the quality of decisions.
 - (iii) The targets for recycling waste should be made more ambitious
 - (iv) That long term objective 6.2 relating to CO2 and climate change targets should be more robust.
 - (v) Affordable housing objectives had a long way to go
 - (vi) Some of the information contained in the corporate plan did not align with the Draft Financial Strategy e.g. capital programmes.

In discussion the following points were raised by Members:

- An agreed approach was required regarding use of appropriate terminology.
- The work undertaken to achieve the plan and its SMART targets was recognised and the Policy and Performance team commended.
- In recognising that the Appendix 2 was work in progress, the finance would need to be monitored
- Concerns were raised regarding the differing cultures and ethos of Herefordshire Council and the NHSH. It was commented that much work was required to embed a single organisational approach and vision.
- The Joint Corporate Plan was a positive and logical approach which emphasised the benefits of a deep partnership, however it was stated that there was a long way to go in ensuring appropriate integration e.g. IT systems, and that the opportunity for further joint working needed to be considered e.g. approach to obesity.
- Concern was expressed that the joint corporate plan was a wish list of desirable outcomes which were unachievable within budget. It was commented that the corporate plan should be realistic, have fewer tick box targets, that projects should be viable and deliverable, and that some targets and objectives should be lowered.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committees should review the joint corporate plan on a regular basis.
- A specific example was given of current levels of underreporting in relation to crime and antisocial behaviour, the levels for which, if the public were encouraged to report crimes, would rise. However increased reporting would enable better assessment of trends. West Mercia Police Authority Members took on board a comment made in relation to the closing of a police station front desk.
- In working towards the targets relating to CO2 emission targets and climate change, it was stated that staffing was not in place to provide appropriate

support. Concern was expressed that this situation should be addressed prior to the setting of any mandatory Government targets.

- As community leaders, Councillors should use the joint corporate plan as an opportunity to further engage with their communities and seek appropriate funding for initiatives.

In responding to the comments made the Leader:

- Thanked Members for their positive comments and commended the work of officers.
- Stated that the objective and vision outlined in the joint corporate plan needed to be embedded within the organisation and supported by Members.
- Stated that the deep partnership was delivering tangible benefits in relation to value for money and performance in areas such as Adult Social Care.
- Herefordshire was the only place in Britain with joint ICT provision across both Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire, and that data sharing protocols were in place.
- In comparison with other councils, Herefordshire had travelled far in developing its partnership with health, and was being closely monitored by others in the local government sector. It was acknowledged however that there were differences in culture and employment issues between both organisations.
- In tackling CO2 emissions, the disposal of surplus properties was integral to achieving the target.
- The use of appropriate language was important and comments expressed would be taken on board.
- Members were reminded that whilst the vision and long term objectives outlined in the joint corporate plan (Appendix 1) were concrete, the targets set in Appendix 2 would remain flexible.
- Other organisations would need to link in and contribute to the long term objective and work would be done to ensure this would happen.
- The joint corporate plan was considered to be a positive incremental step forward and formed the basis of a collective approach for the economic well being and social welfare of the public.

A vote was taken and the recommendation carried (with 2 abstentions).

Recommendation

THAT: Council approve the Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire Joint Corporate Plan vision, objectives and long-term outcomes as set out in the revised Appendix 1 to the report and as circulated at the Council meeting.

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm

CHAIRMAN