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| MEETING: | COUNCIL |
| DATE: | 28 MAY 2010 |
| TITLE OF REPORT: | ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE |
| MEMBERSHIP | COUNCILLORS: PA ANDREWS, WLS BOWEN, ME COOPER, PJ EDWARDS, AE GRAY, KG GRUMBLY, TM JAMES, RI MATTHEWS, PM MORGAN, AT OLIVER, PJ WATTS. |

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Purpose

To inform Council of the work undertaken by the Scrutiny function in 2009/10.

Introduction and Background

1. This report summarises the work undertaken by the six Scrutiny Committees in 2009/10. This summary will form the basis of a fuller Herefordshire Council Scrutiny Committees Annual Report 2009/10 which will be published and made available on the website.

SUMMARY OF WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE SCRUTINY FUNCTION IN 2009-10

2. **The following scrutiny reviews have been completed this year:**
 - A review of the support to carers in Herefordshire, the principal recommendations of which were accepted by the Executive in its response.
 - A review of the Herefordshire Economic Development strategy 2005-25, the recommendations of which were accepted by the Executive.
 - A review of General Practitioners Services, the response to which is awaited.
3. **The following scrutiny reviews were previously completed but have received a response, or update from the Executive this year:**
 - Review of community engagement with the Herefordshire Community and Safety Drugs Partnership - the Executive's response to the review was accepted, noting that the Executive had accepted the review's recommendations.
 - Review of on-street parking - the majority of recommendations were accepted by the Executive and scrutiny accepted the Executive's response.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Tim Brown Committee Manager (Scrutiny) on (01432) 262039

- Review of Planning Services, undertaken by scrutiny committee, and the Planning Service Review undertaken by the Audit Commission - the Executive accepted the recommendations of the scrutiny review and agreed that a single action plan for service improvement be compiled.
- Review of tourism and tourist information centres – the Executive’s initial response was not accepted. Since the scrutiny review a separate, independent review of the County’s Destination Management Partnership (DMP), a public-private sector partnership established to develop the visitor economy of Herefordshire has taken place. Scrutiny will consider the outcome of this review.
- Review of transition from leaving care to adult life - the Executive has been requested to reassess its response to this review and set out specific actions and clear lines of responsibility for delivery within a defined timescale.

4. **Scrutiny Reviews in Progress**

The following scrutiny reviews are in progress: the effectiveness of communication by the Council and NHS Herefordshire with the public about services and access to those services, home care, the impact of the severe winter weather and the response to it, and volunteering. Scrutiny will also participate in a further review of the Herefordshire Travellers Policy.

5. **Scrutiny Development**

- Members of the Committees and the Executive participated in a facilitated scrutiny event to develop an enhanced external focus to the scrutiny committee work programmes reflecting the concerns of residents and communities of Herefordshire. They identified the following top five priorities for scrutiny: housing related issues, Youth, Communication, Safeguarding and Transport. In response the Committees have
 - Considered a number of housing related issues:
 - The delivery programme for affordable housing for 2009/11 and schemes to alleviate homelessness.
 - the outcome of a review of the Housing Allocations Policy.
 - Considered the remit of the youth service and the range of provision across the County.
 - Assessed Safeguarding arrangements for children in the County.
 - Commenced a review of the effectiveness of communication by the Council and NHS Herefordshire with the public about services and access to those services.

6. The scrutiny committees have considered a range of other matters.

7. The **Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee** has:

- Invited the Homes and Communities Agency, the national housing and regeneration agency for England to explain its role and priorities to the Committee.
- Received an update on the review of the Fairer Charging policy for non-residential care services.

- Assessed the operation of the partnership agreement with Midland Heart to provide accommodation and support for adults with a Learning Disability in Herefordshire.
- Highlighted the shortfall in the Disabled Facilities Grant budget in the face of a significant increase in demand for the delivery of major adaptations to homes.
- Examined the Supporting People Grant budget which provided housing support allowing people to live independently in their homes.
- Monitored progress in improvements to adult safeguarding arrangements.
- Considered the implementation of the National Strategy “Living well with Dementia”.

8. The **Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee** has

- Considered the scheme for free early education for 3 and 4 year olds.
- Received a progress report on the work of the Herefordshire Schools Task Group, established to recommend to the Council a set of criteria to underpin the future of education and learning provision in the County.
- Considered arrangements for the transfer of the Learning and Skills Council staff and the Connexions Service to the Council.
- Conducted a spotlight review of Special Educational Needs (SEN)/Banded Funding, and referred a number of observations to the Herefordshire Schools Forum for consideration.
- Considered the percentage of children in Kinship Care Placements and the position regarding children cared for by unofficial carers.
- Considered progress made in addressing the needs of children affected by domestic abuse.
- Considered the provision for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum conditions and action plans for the development of further provision.
- Challenged pupil achievement for swimming at key stage 2.

9. The **Community Services Scrutiny Committee** has:

- Scrutinised a number of aspects of the development of the Edgar Street Grid Scheme (ESG). This included calling-in Cabinet’s decision to grant approval to enter into the ESG Retail Quarter Development Agreement and seeking assurance that Members would be given the opportunity to question and be satisfied as to the financial and operational viability of the project before irrevocable decisions were taken, The Committee also investigated the support the Council had made available to businesses that that would have to relocate from the Edgar Street Grid as result of the construction of the ESG link road.
- Considered the backlog of definitive map modification orders.
- Assessed the measures being taken by the Council to alleviate the impact of the economic downturn in the County.
- Gained an understanding of the role of the Community Safety and Drugs Partnership and

agreed arrangements for discharging the duty on the Council to scrutinise crime and disorder matters.

10. The **Environment Scrutiny Committee** has:

- Considered actions taken by social care transport, following a review of Day Opportunities for Older People to ensure compliance with the Council's Environmental Policy.
- Considered the Executive's response to the Scrutiny Review of the Herefordshire Travellers Policy and agreed to participate in the further review of the policy now proposed.
- Considered a range of environmental issues:
 - Reviewed the Council's performance against the corporate Environmental Strategy targets and received an update on the Council's targets in relation to climate change and carbon management with particular reference to the Council's own carbon emissions and made recommendations to the Executive.
 - Considered the environmental performance of the Council's vehicle fleet.
 - Expressed reservations about the Council's carbon management performance and concern that the planned carbon reduction actions will not achieve the targets.
 - Considered the environmental effect of staff and Member travel to work arrangements.
 - Considered progress made by the Highway Service in reducing the energy consumed and carbon dioxide generated through street lighting.
 - Considered options to increase energy efficiency standards in new buildings and made recommendations to the relevant Cabinet Member.
- Examined the work of the Community Protection Team.
- Considered the work of the West Mercia Safer Roads Partnership and the review of highway speed limits.
- Reviewed the current highway maintenance standards and the plans to improve the long term condition of the network, recommending the local community be kept informed of scheduled work by both the Council and the Highways Agency.
- Considered the impact of the severe winter weather on the highway network and the strategy being adopted to return the roads to an acceptable standard.
- Considered current street cleansing standards and the plans to improve the cleanliness of the county urging Council departments and partner organisations to work even closer together to tackle environmental crime and requesting that parish councils be informed of the financial cost to the Herefordshire tax payer of environmental crime and a regular article be placed in Herefordshire Matters highlighting the cost and implications of environmental crime in the County.
- Pressed for a central database of Council vehicles to be established as soon as possible to ensure that information about this valuable resource is properly recorded and managed and considered an outline programme of work to improve the fleet's management.

- Considered procedures in place to ensure that the Council incorporates sustainability within building contracts.
- Considered the Connect 2 cycle scheme linking Hereford City, via Rotherwas to Holme Lacy, examining the time taken to progress the scheme and the increase in costs.

11. The **Health Scrutiny Committee** has

- Considered the National Health Service Quality Assurance Framework and the processes and systems in place to ensure quality services are being commissioned and directly provided.
- Discussed work undertaken on the integration of provider services.
- Considered the provision of mental health services.
- Assessed the outcome of an efficiency review of the West Midlands Ambulance Service and progress in response to the findings of both that review and the Health Scrutiny Committee's own scrutiny review of the Service.
- Noted NHS Herefordshire's World Class Commissioning Strategy and requested regular updates describing progress and providing evidence of the degree of change and its effectiveness.
- Considered a progress report on health and social care ICT linkages.
- Received assurance on the approach being taken nationally and locally to tackle swine flu.
- Commented on the preferred option to site the GP-led health centre on the Hereford Hospital Trust Site, responding to public concerns about an alternative location.

12. The **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** has:

- Considered progress reports on Information Communication and Technology Service issues following a scrutiny review of the service.
- Commented on a number of key corporate strategies and plans:
 - the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2010-13.
 - the joint NHS Herefordshire Corporate Plan.
 - the refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
 - the combined Council and NHS Herefordshire Joint Corporate Property Strategy.
- Evaluated the value for money of the extra care facility known as the Rose Gardens, Ledbury Road, Hereford.

13 All the scrutiny committees have:

- Scrutinised performance across the Council and asked Cabinet Members and officers to account for their performance and explain their future plans.

- Considered capital and revenue budgets, highlighting to the executive areas of concern including:
 - the level of the adult social care budget, given the demographic profile of the County, reinforced by the key findings of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and high expectations of quality services; and proposals to raise eligibility criteria for services. Related to this scrutiny has recommended action to improve budgetary management for the Adult Social Care Service and the Health Service by ensuring linkages on the interface between the Frameworki Social Care software system with the Council's finance system.
 - the highway maintenance backlog situation urging the executive to make every effort to address this in the 2011/12 budget.
- The overspend on the Children's Services budget has also been carefully monitored.

Future Work

14. The Work Programme for 2010/11 includes:

- Concluding reviews currently in progress
- Conducting reviews of access to services and festivals
- Affordable Housing Policy
- Every Child Matters Themes
- Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership Scrutiny
- Edgar Street Grid
- Environmental Management Issues
- Management of the Council's vehicle fleet
- Rights of Way Service Performance and Outcomes
- Population health and the delivery of effective preventive interventions.

Background Papers

Agenda papers and Minutes of the meetings of the scrutiny committees.