

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL IMPROVEMENT PLAN - MONITORING REPORT

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE

CABINET

3RD JUNE, 2004

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To consider and agree a monitoring report on the Herefordshire Council Improvement Plan and to identify any action to be taken as a result.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Recommendations

- THAT (a) the monitoring report on the Council's Improvement Plan be agreed subject to any action Cabinet wishes to take, and**
- (b) the Improvement Plan be realigned with the Council's revised Corporate Plan, the foundations for which are due to be established during August 2004.**

Reasons

The Council was required to have an Improvement Plan in place following the outcome of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and to implement appropriate monitoring arrangements.

Considerations

1. During 2002, the Council was subject to CPA along with all other upper tier authorities in the country. The assessment resulted in a report outlining the Council's strengths and weaknesses under a number of headings and culminating in a series of recommendations. The final report was sent to the Council in November 2002.
2. One of the requirements of CPA was that the Council should draw up an Improvement Plan. Herefordshire Council's Improvement Plan is drawn from the recommendations outlined in the CPA report and those outstanding from the previous improvement plan arising from the Improvement and Development Agency's peer review in 2001. The Improvement Plan was agreed with the Audit Commission in February 2003 and forms the basis of the Council's current audit and inspection programme. The Plan was developed as a strategic plan for improvement with

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
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actions focused around five key areas: leadership and vision, performance management, key resources, organisational development and learning and communications.

3. The CPA process also required the Council to identify specific improvement priorities to be delivered over the 12 months to December 2003. The Council was keen, however, to focus on long term improvement and incorporated the so-called "CPA priorities" into the overall Improvement Plan. By way of clarity, a summary of the priorities up to December 2003 is appended at Appendix 1 and this indicates that the majority of actions have been completed although further work is required to meet the Council's targets in relation to communication.
4. Monitoring of the Improvement Plan was agreed on the basis of using "faces":
 - ☺ Smiling face indicates action completed or on track for completion
 - ☹ Straight face means that issues have arisen but which are not expected to impact on the achievement of the overall Plan
 - ☹ Sad face means that there are significant issues that could affect the timing or performance of the Plan
5. Cabinet considered the first Improvement Plan monitoring report on 25th September 2003 and it was decided that future reports should include appropriate milestones. As a result, a new column has been added to the reporting format to indicate milestones in relation to those tasks with longer time horizons.
6. The detailed progress report is appended at Appendix 2 and indicates that the majority of actions have a smiling face, being either completed or on track for completion by the target date. Highlighted below are those issues arising in each of the five areas which have a straight face:

Leadership and vision

- **Race Equality Scheme – straight face:** the first year's action plan was not completed and a revised action plan was developed for year two. An audit against the National Performance Indicator for the Council's duty to promote Race Equality suggests that the Council has now achieved a 47% score and further improvement targets will be set over the next three years for inclusion in the Best Value Performance Plan.

Performance management

- **Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) – straight face:** a number of issues have been highlighted in relation to the achievement of the LPSA targets in separate monitoring reports previously submitted to Cabinet.

Key resources

- **Scrutiny review of property – straight face:** the review of property was included in the work programme of the Strategic Monitoring Committee with a target date for completion of December 2003. The review was delayed because of the election and change of administration. A revised timetable is now in place and the review is on target for completion by June 2004.

- **Herefordshire in Touch Programme – straight face:** The original Broadband Plan has been revised in the light of a new Regional ICT Strategy and delays in securing external funding have now been resolved. A milestone target of achieving 80% broadband coverage within the county by December 2004 has also been established. Announcements by British Telecom, in relation to trigger levels for the provision of broadband, may influence the overall implementation of the programme across the county.

Organisational development and learning

- **Management of change/organisational development – straight face:** this element is being taken forward by a small group of officers. Some activities have been identified, although there is no formal work plan in place and no milestones have been identified.

Communications

- **100% penetration of Team Briefings - straight face:** survey evidence indicates 78% penetration. This target was identified as a key improvement to achieve by December 2003, following the Council's CPA assessment.
 - **Staff roadshows – straight face:** the Improvement Plan sets a target of undertaking two staff roadshows each year. During 2003/04 one major roadshow exercise was undertaken in relation to Council's Job Evaluation Programme.
 - **Review success of staff open meetings - straight face:** a review of staff open meetings was originally scheduled for completion by March 2004. The Public Relations Team will now undertake the reviews during 2004/2005.
 - **Opportunities for all staff to feed back ideas- straight face:** although some mechanisms exist within Directorates and Departments it is not clear how feedback is shared across the Council.
 - **Work shadowing – straight face:** work-shadowing commitments are in place for Directors/Heads of Department. However, the picture is less consistent at Head of Service level.
 - **Consistent use of corporate stationery – straight face:** revised corporate style guidelines were due to be issued during March 2003. New templates are now scheduled to be issued to all staff via the intranet/CD-Rom during the summer of 2004.
7. Cabinet originally approved the Council's Corporate Plan during January 2003. It is now proposed to revise the Corporate Plan, linked to a prioritisation exercise to be undertaken with Members during August 2004, and to realign the Improvement Plan accordingly.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options

Risk Management

Failure to fulfil the actions identified in the Council's Improvement Plan may result in an increased programme of audit and inspection

Consultees

None identified

Background Papers

None identified