

# REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE

## Meeting Held on 15th October, 2004

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### Membership:

Councillors: T.M. James (Chairman), Mrs. P.A. Andrews (Vice-Chairman), B.F. Ashton, W.L.S. Bowen, A.C.R. Chappell, J.H.R. Goodwin, Mrs M.D. Lloyd-Hayes, J. Stone, J.P. Thomas, W.J.S. Thomas.

### REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

1. The Committee has considered a range of proposed changes to the Constitution, as detailed in the Cabinet report to Council. It has agreed to recommend the changes to Cabinet and Council for approval. In doing so it has noted that the procedure it is proposed to include in the Constitution describing the Head of Planning Services' power to refer planning applications which have been considered by the relevant Area Planning Sub-Committee to the main Planning Committee, as presented to the Committee, was a draft and subject to further modification.
2. The Committee has noted that it is acknowledged that more work needs to be done to keep all Members informed, by offering more briefing seminars and raising awareness of the role of the Scrutiny Committees in holding the Executive to account, contributing to policy development and determining what issues they should consider. A review of scrutiny activity for the year 2003/04 has recently been undertaken providing an opportunity to review progress to date and scope for improvement.

### CORPORATE PLANNING PROCESS

3. The Committee has noted the single, coherent corporate planning process approved by Cabinet. It has been advised that the process will facilitate performance monitoring at a strategic level and that individual Scrutiny Committees will be provided with detail on the new indicators and targets, which are to be developed.

### LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT

4. The Committee has noted the latest performance against the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) targets and received an update on the second round of LPSAs to be negotiated with the Government. It was advised that once feedback was received from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on the Authority's submission there would be an opportunity for Members to contribute to the process.

### RACE EQUALITY SCHEME ANNUAL REPORT 2003/2004

5. Progress in implementing the action plan designed to deliver the Council's Race Equality Scheme has been noted. The Committee was informed that progress against the relevant Best Value Performance Indicator target for 2003/2004 had been to comply with 50% of actions set out in the Indicator, with actual performance being 47%. The target for 2004/2005 was 60% and good progress was being made to meeting and hopefully exceeding that target.

## **BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PROVISION AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

6. The Committee has endorsed the recommendation of the Education Scrutiny Committee on the Stage 3 report of the Best Value Review of Special Educational Needs Provision and Support Services. The recommendation is to maintain the current provision but make a number of changes identified during the review process to deliver improvements. This has been referred to the Cabinet Member (Education) for consideration.

### **ANNUAL AUDIT ASSURANCE REPORT 2003/2004**

7. The Committee has received the Annual Audit Assurance Report highlighting the key internal control issues identified during the course of audit work and providing an update on key issues identified during 2003/04 that required attention.
8. It has been noted that verification errors persist in relation to the data collected for certain Best Value performance Indicators. This has resulted in unsatisfactory audit opinions in the past and is something which it has been suggested the relevant individual scrutiny committees need to consider.
9. The Committee's attention has also been drawn to the need to review compliance with the revised Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government. The Committee has been advised to revisit this matter following receipt of the Audit Commission's annual management letter in December.

### **REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING**

10. The Committee has noted the revenue and capital budget monitoring reports.

### **ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE INDIVIDUAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

11. The work of the Committees is analysed below as far as practicable under the following five roles for overview and scrutiny: holding the executive to account, best value reviews, policy development and review, external scrutiny, and improvement (performance management and review), the first four of which are identified as key roles in report on "The Development of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister". Issues considered by the Strategic Monitoring Committee as described above are listed for completeness.

## **Education**

12. The Education Scrutiny Committee met on 5th October, 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	Special Educational Needs
Policy Development and Review	Teachers Workload Agreement – Monitoring of Process School Travel Initiatives Review of Small Schools Review of school Organisation Plan
External Scrutiny	

Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Year 2004 Results for Herefordshire Schools Staff Sickness Absence Update on Ofsted Inspections since September 2003 Capital Schemes Revenue Budget Complaints, Compliments and Appeals
Other	Work Programme

13. The Environment Scrutiny Committee met on 17 September 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	Implementation of Improvement Plans
Policy Development and Review	Second Local Transport Plan Review of Parking Strategy
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Capital Budget Revenue Budget Public Rights of Way Performance Indicators
Other	-

14. The Health Scrutiny Committee did not hold a formal meeting in the reporting period but Members of the Committee met informally to review its activity and plan future work.

15. The Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee met on 4 October 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	-
Best Value Reviews	Update on Progress
Policy Development and Review	Scoping for Reviews of Home Care and Supported Housing for people with Mental Health Problems Respite Services for People with Learning Disabilities Building Healthy Relationships – A new Policy for young People in Herefordshire's Care
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Inspection of Herefordshire Fostering Service The Future Shape of Adoption and Fostering Services Performance/Budget Monitoring
Other	

16. The Social and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee met on 24 September 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	Reports By the Cabinet Members for Rural Regeneration and Smallholdings, Community and Social Development and Economic Development, Markets and Property.
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Hereford City – Economic Situation Creative Industries and Tourism Enterprise programmes Review of Courtyard Theatre Festivals Review – Progress report
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Sickness Absence Performance Indicators Revenue Budgets
Other	2004 Rural Strategy Position Statement on Countryside Rights of Way Act

17. The business conducted by the Strategic Monitoring Committee at its meeting on 15th October, 2004 is summarised below.

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	-
Best Value Reviews	Special Educational needs and Support Services – Stage 3 Transport Cross Service Review – Implementation
Policy Development and Review	Corporate Planning Process Review of the Constitution Property Scrutiny Review
External Scrutiny	Community Safety And Drugs partnership Progress Report
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Local Public Service Agreement Performance Monitoring Race Equality Scheme Annual Report 2003/2004 Annual Audit Assurance Report 2003/2004 Budget Monitoring 2004/05 Capital Programme Monitoring 2004/05
Other	

**T.M. JAMES  
CHAIRMAN  
STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE**

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Agenda Papers of the Meeting of the Strategic Monitoring Committee held on 15th October, 2004.