

MEETING:	COUNCIL
DATE:	18 NOVEMBER 2011
TITLE OF REPORT:	LEADER'S REPORT

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards affected

County wide

Purpose

To agree revisions to the timetable for production of a policy framework item; and to provide an overview of the Executive's activity since the last meeting of Council.

Recommendations

THAT:

- a) **The revised timetable for the production of the Local Development Framework, as set out at paragraph 2 below, be agreed;**
- b) **The appointment of an additional Cabinet Member, and consequent changes to cabinet member portfolios be noted; and**
- c) **The overview of the Executive's activity be noted.**

Report

Local Development Framework

1. Members will of course be aware that we have begun the public consultation on the Local Development Framework (LDF) Revised Preferred Options; the consultation remains open until 28th November. We believe the changes we are proposing will put us in the best position to meet the needs of our communities in the future – whether through housing, jobs, shopping or leisure – whilst protecting our natural environment. I would like to use this opportunity to encourage everyone to get involved – this affects the future of the whole county, and we really want your views.
2. To allow for this further consultation, which is a result of our responding to issues raised in previous consultations as well as changes in national government policy, Council is asked to approve revisions to the timeframe agreed on 3 March 2011 as set out below.

ACTIVITY	DATE	REVISED DATE
Consultation	July - October 2011	September – November 2011

Overview & Scrutiny Committee <i>NB OSC are separately considering the consultation process, as opposed to outcome, in December</i>	December 2011	TBC – before May 2012
Cabinet	January 2012	May 2012
Council approve submission of draft Core Strategy	February 2012	July 2012
Pre-submission publicity	March/April 2012	August – September 2012
Submission to Secretary of State	May 2012	October 2012
Public Examination of Core Strategy	-	Winter 2012
Adoption of Core Strategy	-	Spring 2013

Budget

3. The budget planning process is now well underway. I am sure that none of us are under any illusions about the financial challenges that we, as other councils, our public sector partners in Herefordshire, and indeed national governments, are facing. However we have over the past months and years, been putting in place a number of actions to ensure that we are as lean and efficient as possible and that bureaucracy is kept to a minimum. I do not claim that we have reached our end goal, but the focus remains unchanged and we are starting to see the benefits of those actions. A series of events are being held in our nine locality areas to help us shape our budget proposals; at the events, residents, local interest groups and charities will be invited to discuss what their priorities are ranging across health, social care and other local services I see this as the beginning of a big conversation which will help us define our priorities for where budgets should be spent and I encourage as many people as possible to take part.
4. Local Councils, representing our parishes, towns and city, have a key role to play to encourage and support whole community responses to issues of importance locally. As well as engaging with local councils in our budget setting process, we have signed up to a Parish Charter, developed jointly with local councils within the county, which will help to guide our future relationships and which reflects good practice from other areas. As ward members we all have a role to play in supporting the development of these all-important working relationships.
5. Cabinet received a report on implementation of our agreed Accommodation Strategy. We are now in a position whereby the strategy can be delivered without the need for a new build headquarters – this is an extremely positive step, reflecting our continued emphasis on driving efficiencies, and one that I am sure many members will welcome.
6. The Executive has also taken, as an item of special urgency, a decision to invest in energy efficient street lighting and traffic signals. This investment not only results in revenue savings in future years, but contributes significantly to our carbon reduction targets.

County Achievements

7. Following work led jointly by the Herefordshire Business Board and Visit Herefordshire, a new brand for the county has been launched. The flexible brand, incorporating the iconic Hereford Bull, will help to establish a consistent identity for the county whether for tourists, businesses or local communities. A copy of the launch presentation is available to view at the following web link: <http://www.slideshare.net/rejoneshc/herefordshire-brand-launch-presentation-visit-herefordshire-6102011>

8. I am delighted that we has been successful in securing further funding of £1.5m from the Regional Growth Fund to support the established redundant buildings grants programme administered by Herefordshire Council on behalf of the local authorities within the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). This funding is expected to support over 50 businesses in the coming two years resulting in both the creation of new employment opportunities and safeguarding of existing jobs. The previous scheme, which covered Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Worcestershire, saw £2.9m awarded to 100 projects which have created and safeguarded 743 jobs.
9. Following the granting of planning consent for the old market site, the developers, Stanhope were able to confirm that Debenhams had joined Waitrose and Odeon in signing for the scheme. This is fantastic news for Hereford and will provide a real boost to the city's overall retail and leisure offer. The Executive has also approved compulsory purchase orders necessary to support progression of the retail area development.
10. The county has again demonstrated its creative talent during September's H.Art week and the Contemporary Craft Fair held at the Courtyard Theatre between 11th & 13th November. We are also pleased to support the Herefordshire Photography Festival currently running until 26th November. We should be rightly proud of the wide range of talent within our county.
11. Herefordshire's excellent tradition of growing and producing wonderful quality food was celebrated at the Food Festival held recently at the racecourse, and at the Flavours of Herefordshire awards ceremony. As members of the Herefordshire Food Partnership, we have also seen the publication of "From Field to Table", a sustainable food strategy and action plan for the county. The strategy aims to bring about an integrated, county-wide approach to activity in the food and drink sector through co-operation between local government, health service, business and community partners.
12. With our partners HALO Leisure, we have completed the first phase of a £3.5m investment programme at Hereford Leisure Pool with the opening of a new changing village. Work is now underway on the 'dry' facilities at the site to provide a new gym, dance studios, café and reception area, which should be completed in the late spring of 2012.
13. The annual children's services assessment letter from Ofsted has been received, and I am delighted to note that Ofsted has judged Herefordshire's children's services to be good or better. Inspectors reported that a particular strength is the highly effective arrangements that are in place to support families and cases not requiring intervention. The council has worked with health professionals and other agencies to provide support and help to families before intervention is needed, and I commend the work of all those involved in helping deliver this improvement.
14. Members will also be pleased to note that in its Annual Audit Letter for 2010/11 the Audit Commission have given an unqualified opinion on both the Council's financial statements and its arrangements to secure value for money. The Audit Commission also noted that the Council has generally good financial management arrangements and managed the implementation of International Financial Reporting Standards very well.

Cabinet Member Appointment

15. Members will be aware from a report elsewhere on Council's agenda of changes to Overview and Scrutiny Committee appointments. I would like to thank Cllr Harry Bramer for his Chairmanship of Overview & Scrutiny Committee and for guiding the introduction of the new arrangements. I have invited him to use his considerable skills to overview, as a Cabinet Member, major contracts such as waste disposal and the contract with Amey. By bringing this focus into the executive team, this responds to comments made by the Audit Commission. The revised Cabinet Portfolio list is appended, for the information of Council.

Rural Members Forum

16. This informal forum open to all ward members representing rural wards has recently held its first meeting to establish its work programme. As this forum is intended to be an informal network where rural ward members may share issues (and good practice) in common to rural areas, and ensure those issues are fed through to the executive, I don't currently propose to establish this as a formal committee within the constitution; we will however, review how effectively the forum is operating after a year to ensure it is adding value.

Other Issues

17. In addition, the Executive has considered the following issues:

- a) *Budget and Performance Monitoring Reports* – In July and October Cabinet considered reports on 2011/12 performance and revenue and capital outturn. Actions being taken to address areas of underperformance were noted and amendments to the measures, targets and projects within Theme 2 of the Joint Corporate Plan (Improve Health & Social Care) were agreed.
- b) *Policy Framework Items* – Cabinet has recommended the Economic Development Strategy and Youth Justice Plan to Council and these items appear elsewhere on the agenda today.
- c) *Subsidised Bus Network* – Following extensive consultation Cabinet has agreed actions to meet the requirement for budget savings in relation to subsidised public transport whilst seeking to minimise the impact of those savings on bus service users.
- d) *Director of Public Health Annual Report/Establishing the Evidence Base for Commissioning* – Cabinet have received presentations on the annual report of the Director of Public Health, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the State of Herefordshire Report; these documents collectively will inform future commissioning arrangements within the council and for our partners, and I would encourage all members to look at the key findings.
- e) *Coroners' Service* – The Cabinet Member Corporate Services & Education has confirmed arrangements for the delivery of a Coroner's service in Herefordshire.
- f) *Delivery of Affordable Housing* – The Cabinet Members for Corporate Services & Education and Environment, Housing & Planning have agreed proposals for the use of council owned land to support the delivery affordable housing, and a preferred delivery partner.
- g) *West Midlands Councils* – I have accepted the constitution governing the operation of West Midlands Councils.
- h) *Hereford Buttermarket* – The Cabinet Member Highways, Transportation & Waste has approved the appointment of Wrenbridge-Trebor LLP as the preferred developer for the redevelopment of the Buttermarket scheme and agreed the negotiation of a memorandum of understanding between the council and Hereford Futures in respect of the scheme.
- i) *Shared Services* – Cabinet received a report on progress made by the Shared Services Company (now known as Hoople) established earlier in the year by the council, NHS Herefordshire and Wye Valley NHS Trust.
- j) *HPS Governance* – Cabinet have agreed revisions to the arrangements for future governance of the Herefordshire Public services partnership reflecting national changes to health commissioning and health & wellbeing arrangements.
- k) *Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)* – I recently attended at the Houses of Parliament the inaugural meeting of a cross party committee to support the LEP network.

- l) *Parliamentary Boundary commission* – Cabinet noted the proposals being made by the Boundary commission in respect of parliamentary constituencies covering the county. Concern was expressed that these proposals were not supportive of maintaining the Herefordshire identity and it was agreed that a cross-party group review the proposals and consider what response, if any, should be proposed from Herefordshire. A report on the outcome of that group’s considerations appears elsewhere on council’s agenda.
18. Finally, despite an unexpectedly warm autumn, we and our partners have been preparing for the coming winter. Amey have ensured that gritting supplies are in place to keep our key road networks running, and the annual programme of flu vaccination to those most vulnerable is well underway. Whilst public services can provide a range of support to people during severe weather, we also acknowledge there is much that individuals and the community can do to help themselves and each other. Some basic advice on some of these actions is available on our website at the following web link:
http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/advice_and_benefits/winteradvice.asp

Financial Implications

19. The role of Cabinet Member attracts a special responsibility allowance which is set by Council, informed by the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel. Whilst there is capacity within the allocated budget to increase the number of Cabinet Members, it should be noted that Cllr Bramer has advised the Chief Executive that he will not draw the allowance and therefore there are no financial implications arising from the appointment.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Cabinet Portfolio List