

MEETING:	COUNCIL
DATE:	25 MAY 2012
TITLE OF REPORT:	LEADER'S REPORT

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County wide

Purpose

To note the intention to revise 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 intention to revise the timetable for the production of the Local Development Framework, as set out at paragraph 12 below, be noted; and**
- b) **the overview of the Executive's activity be noted.**

Report

Herefordshire's People

1. This administration has always made crystal clear its commitment to supporting the most vulnerable in our communities and ensuring that our young people get the best possible start in life – and as the financial challenge facing local authorities across the country grows we must never lose sight of that priority. It is undoubtedly true that some difficult choices will have to be made, and we must ensure that our resources are directed to those in most need of support.
2. We have already agreed some changes to delivery of services supporting Herefordshire's 'Yes We Can' plan; primarily around the delivery of targeted and specialist family support services. These changes will ensure that contracts are more focussed on delivery of improved outcomes, as well as providing improved value for money. Members will also be aware of the recent consultations on the future of the youth service, and provision of children's centre services; Cabinet will be considering the outcome of those consultations shortly.
3. Herefordshire has some schools with truly exceptional performance that we can be rightly very proud of. However this positive picture is not as consistent as it could be

and we need to work closely with all those providing education for young people in the county to ensure that all our children, including those in our care, can achieve their full potential. Performance in early years and primary settings, which was well below average, is now improving and we need to continue on that journey of improvement. To provide a framework within which we can work together to secure quality education for everyone cabinet has agreed Guiding Principles for Herefordshire's Learning Community. These principles will be underpinned by individual delivery plans to ensure we have action as well as words.

4. It will come as no surprise that one of our greatest challenges lies in ensuring that we can meet the needs of the increasing numbers of older people in our community in a way that enables them to access the support they need as close to home as possible, and as cost effectively as possible. Like other authorities in the country we look forward to the expected government Social Care White Paper in response to the Dilnot Commission findings; however no-one expects this to offer easy solutions and we can't sit on our hands in the meantime. Our vision for transforming adult services is developing, and will be considered by Cabinet in the coming year.
5. There are some very good foundations on which to build, for example:
 - Children's Services in the county have been graded as performing well and our adoption service has been graded as 'good with outstanding features'
 - in partnership with Wye Valley NHS Trust improvements are being made to ante-natal support services across the county
 - the youth service is running 'Skillz Clubs' for children aged between 8 and 12 with more complex learning needs
 - within adult services a new carers strategy has been developed and launched
 - new supported living arrangements are in place and being expanded for people with disabilities
 - the establishment of Wye Valley NHS Trust as an integrated care organisation, and the development of locality working arrangements is helping to ensure that care is given in a more joined up and responsive way
 - a new joint approach between the police and our licensing and trading standards teams has led to a reduction in under-age alcohol sales and a reduction in the numbers of young people going to A&E with alcohol related issues.
6. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 will see important changes to how we manage health and social care in the county. We have been planning for the transfer of commissioning responsibilities to the Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group for many months and the transfer of legal responsibility from will take effect in April 2013 when the primary care trust disappears. This will mean a new chapter in the successful partnership between the council and the NHS in Herefordshire. Our partnership is underpinned by the Health and Wellbeing Board which has been operating since April 2011. The Board has produced the first draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which will guide the allocation of resources to agreed priorities.
7. During the course of the year we will also be preparing for the transfer of public health responsibilities, which will give the council statutory responsibility for promoting the health of the public. Finally, we are planning for the transition from LINK to HealthWatch, which will be the new consumer champion for both health and adult social care in the county. Seminars are being arranged to ensure that all Members are

briefed on all these important changes.

8. We will continue to work together with our partners across the public sector and in schools, colleges, the voluntary sector and the private sector, to ensure that people have access to the services they need.

Herefordshire's Economy and Communities

9. While people remain our first priority, we mustn't lose sight of the building blocks that are essential to securing the future wellbeing of our residents: a robust and sustainable economy, more jobs available locally with better wages, housing to meet the needs of local people and those wishing to move into the county, active and engaged communities, and an environment we can all enjoy and be proud of.
10. The national and global economic position, now and into the future, will of course have consequences locally. I won't pretend that realising our ambitions for the county will be easy in this context, but it does mean that, where we can make capital investments that both deliver much needed infrastructure and reap future revenue rewards, we should take the opportunity to do so.
11. As a result of Cabinet's recent approval of a number of variations to the development agreement we have with Stanhope, I am delighted to say that the retail quarter redevelopment is now able to be progressed. Already hoardings have been erected around the old livestock market site (and made much more attractive by some fantastic artwork based on the Hereford Bull provided by students from our local schools). I acknowledge that some people have reservations about this new development but have no doubts whatsoever that it will prove to be a much valued addition to both the city and the county as a whole, attracting more people to the city centre and preventing the risk of out of town development that none of us would wish to see.
12. A revised timetable for the Local Development Framework (LDF) was approved by Council at its last meeting, in order to allow for responses to the consultation on a Revised Preferred Option to be properly analysed. That timetable indicated Cabinet would consider the LDF in June followed by Council consideration in July 2012. To enable Cabinet to consider the implications of recent case law and any further consultation required to ensure our LDF process is as robust as possible, Cabinet will not now be considering the LDF in June, and will receive a report in July to inform future actions. Council is therefore asked to note that the timetable for the LDF will need to be amended in light of that advice, and that further details will be reported to Council in due course.
13. National policy changes, such as the Localism Act and the national planning framework, will also impact on both the future role of local authorities and the way in which particular services are delivered. Again we have in place some excellent foundations on which we can build to take these changes forward and achieve our ambition for the county. These include:
 - the opening of the new livestock market which has provided a high quality facility to support our agricultural sector, and is now operating at capacity
 - the successful delivery of the Yazor Brook flood alleviation scheme (which has been put to the test in recent weeks and already proved its worth)

- securing £5m funding for 'Destination Hereford' to support transport improvements in the city
- the continued development of plans to link the A49 Ross Road to the A465 Abergavenny Road to deliver transport improvements south of the city
- 90 affordable homes brought into the market with a further 88 long term empty properties being brought back to use
- with the support of the Marches LEP Herefordshire has secured 'Enterprise Zone Status' for Rotherwas and funding from the regional Growth Fund to support the established redundant buildings grants programme
- in partnership with the Herefordshire Business Board and Visit Herefordshire a county brand has been developed and can already be seen appearing across the county
- phase 1 of the Masters House in Ledbury has been successfully delivered, resulting in a magnificent start to the re-development of this unique property
- we have achieved our waste recycling target of 41%
- locality working has been rolled out across each of the 9 local areas and there are already examples of successful local working involving local Members, including the transfer of community assets in Ross and Wye.
- funding has been secured for our 'Get Warm Stay Warm' scheme
- following our difficult decision to remodel delivered library services and our call to Parish Councils to consider establishing community library services, within 6 months we had six community libraries operational, a further three scheduled to open and more in the pipeline. This is an excellent example of how we can work creatively together and has been recognised by the Cabinet Office as an example of good practice in decentralisation.

14. Members will see a theme in many of my observations – working together. We can't do this alone – and neither should we try to. There are so many skills within our communities, so much energy, knowledge and creativity that we can work with. Individuals and groups can and do make a real difference. Whether its running a community shop, checking on an elderly neighbour, or being a member of a board or committee, people from all walks of life are giving their time, voluntarily, to help improve the lives of people in Herefordshire and I place on record my thanks to all of them.

Herefordshire Council - Rising to the Challenge

15. The current financial year includes a budget that delivers a second year of nil increase in council tax. The council accepted the government's one year grant; equivalent to a 2.5% increase (£2.2m), but did so in a way that limited the impact on future years' budgets. This prudent approach meant that the £2.2m was used as a one off source of funding for transformation and also as a budget contingency.
16. There is no funding certainty after this financial year and we await the future local government statement due to be announced in the autumn. However, we can expect further reductions in our funding and our financial strategies already make this assumption. This will require further reviews of services and methods of delivering in the future.
17. The principle of business rate localisation will be a powerful move towards localism as a driver of economic growth. However we await the details of the full government scheme expected to be announced in 2013.

18. Changes to the local government finance framework set out legislative functions to devolve greater financial powers and freedoms to local councils. In particular the reformer funding means that local councils will once again receive the revenue from local business rates which have been a national tax since 1990. In addition, the current council tax benefit regime of national support for council tax will be replaced with locally decided schemes for helping people pay their council tax.
19. As I have mentioned before – we can't wait for all these uncertainties to be resolved before we take action.
20. It is for those reasons that we are pursuing a review of all of our services under the root and branch programme. Over the next 18 months we will look at everything that we do and ask fundamental questions about why we do things. The reviews will:
 - Redefine the role of the Council and public services
 - Set out the priorities for the next decade
 - Rebuild budgets, with clear links between spend and results
21. Central to the programme will be a genuine process of engagement with residents, employees, Councillors and our partners across business, the third sector and the public sector. All Members will have a key role to play through the “Your community, your say” initiative, building on the Hearts of Herefordshire approach.
22. In addition we have made progress in become a more efficient less bureaucratic organisation. For example:
 - Cabinet has recently agreed the framework within which we decide the degree of subsidy, fees or charges that will be applied to services.
 - the integrated care organisation, Wye Valley Trust, is a further example of innovation for Herefordshire. Although we still have some way to go, we have already seen successful work through the neighbourhood teams and a significant reduction in delayed discharges at the Hospital.
 - improvements continue to be made to our ICT systems with a new financial system now in place, better management of on line procurement and an increasing level of self service on financial and human resources transactions
 - the introduction of a new customer relationship management system means that more customer enquiries are being resolved at the first point of contact; we have also seen a sharp decline in the number of customer calls that we receive which are avoidable, due to improved self service through the website. The Council's website also received a top rating four stars in the annual “Better Connected” survey, putting Herefordshire in the top 20 in the country
 - Cabinet has also received a report on the progress made in developing shared services. It is important to note that the Council received £1.3m of savings in the year through our shared services initiative with the PCT and Wye Valley Trust. Hoople Ltd is now one year old and is already establishing a national reputation for innovation, being recently commended in the Municipal Journal Awards.

Cabinet Portfolios

23. I have been discussing with my Cabinet colleagues possible changes to the portfolios to ensure that, like the rest of the organisation, we are in the best position to help the

organisation move forward. I will provide an update to Council at the meeting.

Overview & Scrutiny

24. In line with the commitment given to Council in May 2011 to review the operational effectiveness of the new model after 12 months of operation, this review is now underway; a report will be brought to Council in July on the outcome of that review.

Other Issues

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

- a) *Budget and Performance* – In April Cabinet considered reports on 2011/12 performance, and revenue and capital outturn; actions being taken to address areas of underperformance were noted. Cabinet also approved the corporate delivery plan for 2012/13 and agreed revisions to the corporate planning cycle.
- b) *Police & Crime Panel* – Cabinet has considered actions needed arising from the requirement to establish a Police & Crime Panel for the West Mercia policing area, and a report appears elsewhere on Council's agenda today.
- c) *Enforcement*– Cabinet has agreed the adoption of a single enforcement and prosecution policy as part of its drive to reduce bureaucracy and increase transparency.
- d) *Housing* – Cabinet has approved a joint Herefordshire and Shropshire Housing Strategy; it has also commenced Compulsory Purchase Order proceedings to bring back into use a property at Overross Farm, Ross on Wye.
- e) *Community Safety* – Cabinet has considered a draft strategy for the county; a report appears elsewhere on Council's agenda today.
- f) *Armed Forces Community Covenant* – Cabinet has approved the adoption of a covenant, providing a statement of mutual support between the local civilian and armed forces communities, and an action plan to support its delivery.
- g) *Schools* – the Cabinet Member Corporate Services & Education has approved the dedicated schools budget proposals for 2012/13 as recommended by the Herefordshire Schools Forum and agreed amendments to the schools admissions arrangements for 2013/14 to reflect changes in the national code.