

MEETING:	COUNCIL
DATE:	8 MARCH 2013
TITLE OF REPORT:	LEADER'S REPORT
REPORT BY:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

1. Classification

Open

2. Key Decision

This is not an executive decision

3. Wards Affected

County-wide

4. Purpose

To provide an overview of the Executive's activity since the last report to Council in November.

5. Recommendation(s)

THAT:

The overview of the Executive's activity be noted.

6. Report

Planning for the Future

6.1 The November meeting of Council approved the corporate plan, where the priorities for the organisation were set out to ensure a focus on:

- Creating and maintaining a successful economy;
- Enabling residents to be independent and lead fulfilling lives with resources focussed on supporting the most vulnerable; and
- The council supporting delivery through efficient and effective operations that deliver value for money.

6.2 Cabinet has focussed much of its attention on developing its Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget proposals to ensure that resources are appropriately aligned to these priorities. That budget was approved by Council in February and, whilst there are

undeniable challenges ahead we have put in place robust monitoring and assurance processes to support delivery.

- 6.3 The feedback and comments provided both through the Your Community Your Say engagement process and the subsequent budget consultation exercise have been welcomed, and will be taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of any changes to service delivery through the year.
- 6.4 We must collectively continue to review what services we provide as well as we provide them. This is necessary to ensure that the council's resources are directed only at providing those services needed to meet our corporate plan priorities. It is also vital that we implement a whole council approach to prevention and early intervention to ensure that people are able to access the information and advice they need at an early enough stage so that they can remain active and independent and do not need higher cost support services. This requires a fundamental review of the future role of the council, and will form the focus of the *Herefordshire 2020* root & branch review, underpinned by changes to the way in which we make information and services available to customers through better use of technology and local networks. I hope that all members will wish to engage in this review.

Herefordshire's People

6.5 The Executive has taken the following decisions:

- Cabinet received a progress report on transition arrangements for public health and agreed the novation of contracts and transfer of staff to be effected on 1 April 2013 in line with national requirements
- Cabinet has considered a report on the current priorities and future focus of both the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board and the Herefordshire Safeguarding Adults Board
- The Cabinet Member Environment Housing & Planning agreed the Herefordshire Tenancy Strategy 2012/15
- The Cabinet Member Health & Wellbeing agreed the Executive's response to the Overview & Scrutiny Task & Finish Group's review of Children's Safeguarding in Herefordshire. The recommendations are incorporated in the overall improvement plan developed in response to the findings of the Ofsted inspection in the early autumn; progress in delivering that improvement plan is being closely monitored by the independently chaired Improvement Board
- The Cabinet Member Education & Infrastructure has agreed the recommendations of the Schools Forum for the local implementation of the national schools funding formula

6.6 With the recent cold weather it is very pleasing to note that, for the second year running, the council's private sector housing team has successfully led a local partnership bid for the Department of Health's 'Warm Homes, Healthy People' fund, securing £165,000 to help vulnerable people stay warm this winter.

Herefordshire's Economy & Communities

6.7 The Executive has taken the following decisions:

- Cabinet received a progress report on the development of future options for waste disposal and agreed actions to progress the options appraisal, requesting a further report be brought to Cabinet in the summer
- In line with the previously reported timetable, Cabinet has agreed the draft Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Charging Schedule for consultation. The consultation runs from 4 March to 22 April. Further details are available on the council's website. The Cabinet Member Environment, Housing & Planning agreed the Executive's response to the Overview & Scrutiny Task & Finish Group report on CIL which was taken into consideration in the development of the proposals for consultation; their continued engagement in this work is welcomed.

- Cabinet has also agreed its proposed Local Transport Plan for recommendation to Council; this appears elsewhere on this meeting's agenda.
- Cabinet considered a petition submitted in respect of the introduction of car parking charges at Etnam Street car park in Leominster and agreed that, subject to the budget process, the Cabinet Member, Education & Infrastructure, reviews the proposals put forward by Leominster Town Council and assists in the provision of a satisfactory solution.
- The Cabinet Member Corporate Services agreed the retention of a proportion of the capital receipt realised by Herefordshire Housing Limited through the sale of surplus property to enable investment in the provision of move-on accommodation for vulnerable adults and improvements to properties to enable older people to remain safely at home.
- The Cabinet Member Enterprise & Culture has approved proposed governance arrangements in respect of Hereford Enterprise Zone.
- The Cabinet Member Education & Infrastructure received a report on changes to the national funding of major transport infrastructure funding requiring the establishment of devolved decision-making on a Local Enterprise Partnership footprint, and agreed proposed governance arrangements to support implementation; a report will be brought to a future meeting of Council to bring these arrangements into effect.

6.8 The bad weather over recent weeks has clearly had a heavy impact on the condition of our roads network; with reduced funding from central government to support this work, the pressures are immense and we continue to lobby for increased support while looking to deliver greater efficiencies through our service delivery contracts; in the meantime we have enabled early use of 2013/14 capital grant funding to help address some of the most significant immediate concerns.

6.9 I am delighted to report that, in line with previous Cabinet decisions, the contract for delivery of the Broadband project was signed in December. This is excellent news for the county and will enable not only our local businesses to grow and flourish, but also the wider use of new technologies to support service delivery, such as new models of telecare enabling people to stay safely for longer in their own homes.

6.10 I am also pleased to note the progress being made on the retail quarter site, and to see that the confidence in the future of the city demonstrated by this development is leading to further interest elsewhere in the city. Similarly, land available for business development at both the Rotherwas Enterprise Zone and Model Farm, Ross on Wye sites has seen interest, amongst others, from Ukrainian and Georgian businesses looking to locate to Herefordshire.

Other Issues

6.11 In addition, the Executive has considered the following issues:

- a) *Performance and Budget Monitoring* – Cabinet has considered reports on performance for the past quarter, and monthly budget monitoring reports.

b) *Accommodation Strategy* – Within the overall framework of the strategy, the Cabinet Member Corporate Services approved revised schemes for the Plough Lane and Civic Hub sites, and funding for technology and associated support; good progress is being made.

6.12 Finally I would like to warmly welcome our new Chief Executive, Alistair Neill, to the authority and very much look forward to working with him in the future.