

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE

Meetings Held on 12 and 14 January, 2005

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.

HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY PROGRESS

1. The Committee has noted a report on progress against the Council's Human Resources (HR) Strategy including the main findings from the 2004 Staff Opinion Survey and 2003-04 Exit Surveys.
2. Although at the top end of response rates for surveys of this type the Committee was concerned that, at 38%, the response rate was too low. It was noted that the survey had been issued shortly after the Job Evaluation and Single Status results had been announced to staff and it was thought this had influenced both the response rate and the survey responses generally. It was also acknowledged that work was underway to seek to encourage a higher response rate.

DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN

3. The Committee has noted the position in relation to the development of the Corporate Plan.

COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

4. The Committee has been informed of the provisional timetable for joint area review of services for children and a corporate assessment and the challenge this presents for the Council as a whole.

LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT

5. Progress towards developing the second Local Public Service Agreement with the Government has been noted.

RACE EQUALITY SCHEME

6. The Committee has noted progress against the action plan which accompanies the Council's Race Equality Scheme, key initiatives to promote Race Equality and progress in delivering diversity training.

DEVELOPING THE CHILDREN'S AGENDA IN HEREFORDSHIRE – CHANGE FOR CHILDREN

7. The Committee has noted the arrangements made by Cabinet to respond to the Change for Children and Local Performance Improvement Agenda.
8. Assurances were given to the Committee that all parties affected by the changes would be kept fully informed of developments. It was also noted that there was an opportunity for Councillors in their role as School Governors to provide reassurance to schools about the changes.

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH A PHYSICAL DISABILITY – STAGE 3 REPORT

9. The Committee has approved the Stage 3 report of the Best Value Review of social care services for people with a physical disability.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING – CORPORATE HEALTH

10. In noting the report on corporate performance in relation to Best Value Indicators the Committee has remarked upon the continued importance of performance, currently below target, against the targets for processing new benefit claims and claims where there has been a notification of a change in circumstance. It has been reminded of the recent independent inspection report on the Benefits Service by the Benefit Fraud Agency, which had highlighted that the Service was demonstrating good practice in many areas. The County Treasurer informed the Committee that the imminent implementation of a new processing system might have an adverse impact in the short-term but performance should then improve.

REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING

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

INTERIM AUDIT ASSURANCE REPORT 2004/2005

12. The Committee has noted the key internal control issues identified during audit work and advised of the action taken to address them.

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE INDIVIDUAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

13. 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 not all of which are dealt with above because they arise from its role in fulfilling its remit to scrutinise the Policy and Finance Programme area, rather than being of Council-wide significance, are listed for completeness.

Education

14. The Education Scrutiny Committee met on 14th December, 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	Update on Reviews Conducted Special Educational Needs Provision and Support Services Improvement Plan
Policy Development and Review	Education Welfare Service – Policy and procedures on Schools Attendance Supporting pupils Learning English as a foreign language Security in Schools Primary School Provision in Hereford City
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Progress of Major Capital Schemes and Targeted Capital Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring Local Public Service Agreement
Other	

15. The Environment Scrutiny Committee met on 8th December, 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	Implementation of Improvement Plans
Policy Development and Review	Supporting Local Bus Services Parking Strategy - update
External Scrutiny	A49 Trunk Road – Road Safety Issues
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Capital Budget Monitoring Revenue Budget Monitoring Good Environmental Management Performance Herefordshire Plan Ambitions Human Resources Performance Indicators
Other	-

16. The Health Scrutiny Committee met on 9th December, 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Emergency Care Access Communication and Morale Future Support for Patient and Public Involvement in Health
External Scrutiny	Primary Care Trust Briefing
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	
Other	-

18. The Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee met on 13th December 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	-
Best Value Reviews	Services for People with a Physical Disability
Policy Development and Review	Home Care Supported Housing for People with Mental Health Problems
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Supporting People Programme Performance Indicators Revenue Budget Monitoring
Other	Annual Social Services Conference

18. The Social and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee met on 3rd December 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	Tourism Services
Policy Development and Review	Future use of Libraries Courtyard Review - update
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Performance Indicators Youth Service Indicators Revenue Budget Monitoring Staffing Numbers Herefordshire Plan Ambition Groups
Other	

19. The Committee was also informed of a review meeting on 26 January, 2005, commissioned by the Social and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee to consider pedestrianisation of part of Hereford City Centre and an additional meeting of the Committee on 31st January to discuss the findings of the review of the Courtyard Centre for the Arts.

20. The business conducted by the Strategic Monitoring Committee at its meetings on 12 and 14 January 2005 is summarised below.

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	-
Best Value Reviews	Services for People with a Physical Disability – Stage 3
Policy Development and Review	Review of Support to the Voluntary Sector Corporate Plan Developing the Children's Agenda In Herefordshire – Change for Children
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Human Resources Strategy Performance Monitoring Comprehensive Performance Assessment Race Equality Scheme Local Public Service Agreement Budget Monitoring 2004/2005 Capital Programme Monitoring 2004/2005 Interim Audit Assurance Report
Other	

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Agenda Papers of the Meeting of the Strategic Monitoring Committee held on 12 and 14 January 2005.