

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE

Meetings Held on 9th June, 2005 and 1st July, 2005

Membership:

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

SCRUTINY COMMITTEES ANNUAL REPORT 2004/2005

1. The second annual report of the work of the Council's Scrutiny Committees has been prepared. A copy is enclosed separately for Members of the Council.

IMPROVING SCRUTINY SEMINAR

2. The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Scrutiny Committees have held a seminar with Directors. This reviewed 2004/05 activity; looked at how to improve scrutiny in Herefordshire using the Centre for Public Scrutiny self-evaluation framework, and examined proposals for scrutiny activity for 2005/06. An improvement programme is being prepared for discussion with all Scrutiny Committee Members. One of the proposals which will be of particular interest to Council is the intention to strengthen the relationship between Council and the Scrutiny Committees. This will be developed over the next few months.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

3. A proposal to increase public participation at all of Herefordshire Council's Scrutiny Committee meetings along the lines piloted by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee has been considered. The view has been taken that it is important that the Scrutiny Committees are able to operate flexibly and responsively. Rather than adopting a prescriptive approach it has been agreed that each Committee should determine how best to encourage public participation in its work, drawing on the experience of the other Scrutiny Committees.
4. It was also noted that the inter-relationship of the Community Forums and the Scrutiny Committees required further consideration.

OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

5. The Committee called-in Cabinet's decision on 19th May on the proposed office accommodation strategy. The Committee referred the matter back to Cabinet making a number of requests. Cabinet reconsidered the matter on 23rd June, 2005 and has accepted the requests made by the Committee, agreeing to proceed with the strategy on that basis.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND INTEGRATED ANNUAL OUTTURN REPORT 2004/2005

6. The Committee has noted the revised Performance Management Framework and received the first integrated annual performance report. The Committee has concluded that performance in relation to homelessness, the social care budget and performance in determining planning applications are areas which should be subject to more detailed scrutiny.

ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

7. The Committee has expressed its intention to monitor progress towards achieving the savings set out in the Council's Annual Efficiency Statement.

LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT

8. The Committee has noted progress towards developing the second Local Public Services Agreement (LPSA2) with the Government and received an update on performance against the targets in the first round LPSA (LPSA1).

BEST VALUE REVIEWS

9. The Stage 3 reports of the Best Value Reviews of Private Sector Housing services and Commercial Enforcement have been approved.
10. Given the resources involved in Best Value Reviews and the changes which have taken place since the introduction of the Best Value regime the Committee has called for a report on the future approach to the Best Value review process.

PAY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

11. The Committee has noted the Pay and Workforce Development Strategy and the associated operating plan for 2005/06.
12. The Committee had sought a report on the Council's recruitment process, which is part of the Strategy, and its cost and has now received assurances that the Council is seeking efficiencies at every stage of the recruitment process.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

13. Action undertaken to improve the health, safety and well-being of the workforce including the management of sickness absence has been noted. The Committee has expressed its concern about the level of sickness absence, whilst acknowledging the management action which has been taken. It has received an assurance that further work is being carried out to separate out long-term sickness from the statistics and identify the percentage of days lost which this represents allowing a more accurate picture of sickness absence to be established.

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE INDIVIDUAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

14. 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 the 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 corporate matters, rather than being of Council-wide significance, are listed for completeness.
15. The Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee met on 10th June 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	Private Sector Housing – Stage 3 Best Value Reviews Update
Policy Development and Review	Green Paper-Independence, wellbeing and Choice
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Budget Monitoring Performance Monitoring
Other	

16. The newly formed Childrens' Services Scrutiny Committee held an informal meeting in June in view of its new, wider remit to discuss its future role. It subsequently held one formal meeting to consider a call-in of the Cabinet's decision on 23rd June, 2005 on denominational transport, as referred to in the Cabinet report to Council.

17. The Community Services Scrutiny Committee met on 13th June, 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Castle Green Regeneration project Review of how to retain 18-35 year olds within Herefordshire or attract them to it.
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Youth Service Performance Monitoring
Other	-

18. The Committee also piloted arrangements for enhancing public participation as referred to elsewhere in this report.

19. The Environment Scrutiny Committee met on 6th June 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	-
Best Value Reviews	Commercial Enforcement – Stage 3 Report Improvement Plans
Policy Development and Review	Provisional Local Transport Plan 2006/7 – 2010/11 Corporate Environment Strategy and Revised Policy Biodiversity Strategic Framework
External Scrutiny	Trunk Roads in Herefordshire
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Capital Programme Revenue Budget GEM report Performance Indicators
Other	

20. The Health Scrutiny Committee met on 16th June, 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Patient and Public Involvement Forums - Protocol
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Provision of Ear, Nose and Throat Services New General Medical Services Contract 2004-2005
Other	Work Programme

21. The business conducted by the Strategic Monitoring Committee at its meetings on 9th June and 1st July, 2005 is summarised below.

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	Call-in – Office Accommodation
Best Value Reviews	Private Sector Housing Services (Stage 3) Commercial Enforcement – Stage 3
Policy Development and Review	Performance Management Framework Local Public Service Agreement Pay and Workforce Development Strategy (Work Programme – Strategic Scrutiny Reviews 2005/06) Public Participation at Scrutiny Committees
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Integrated Annual Outturn report 2004/05 Annual Efficiency Statement – 2004/05 Health and Safety Annual Report
Other	

22. Future activity planned to date includes a review by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee of how to retain 18-35 year olds within Herefordshire or attract them to it, consideration by the Environment Scrutiny Committee of performance in processing planning applications, reviews by the Health Scrutiny Committee of the GP out of hours service and communication and morale, and reviews by the Strategic Monitoring Committee of recruitment, ICT services and the operation of the Council's contract with Herefordshire Jarvis Services.

T.M. JAMES
CHAIRMAN
STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Agenda Papers of the meetings of the Strategic Monitoring Committee held on 9 June and 1 July, 2005.