

Cabinet Member Report - Environment

In response to the invitation from the Environment Scrutiny Committee I am pleased to present the following report.

Overview

The Environment Directorate is now acknowledged as a high performing part of the Council. The Service CPA score improved from a 1 to 3 out of a possible 4. This was more than the target and reflects the determination of the Directorate to provide high quality cost effective services.

December 2004 and January 2005 saw several Environment Services relocated to new offices. Kemble House closed in December leading to Waste Management and Environment Support Service moving to the ground floor in Plough Lane.

As part of the process of maintaining more effective use of the Planning Services existing office accommodation, Building Control vacated its area offices in Corn Square, Leominster and Swan House, Ross. In mid November they relocated to the main office at Blueschool House, Hereford. Surgeries are held in the Info centres so that a local service is maintained.

The majority of Highways officers co-located from Bath Street to Rotherwas to become the 'hub' of our Streetscene approach to services, and the Construction Team took their place by moving back to Bath Street.

Service Delivery 2004/5

Streetscene

A new staff structure was consulted on, developed and implemented in July / August 2004. One of the outcomes has been a sharper focus on the management of the whole street environment ("Streetscene") working in Partnership with Herefordshire Jarvis Services (HJS).

Streetscene began with the introduction of the Graffiti Hotline in November 2003 operated by Highways & Transportation Service. Since the implementation of the hotline, it has now become the Streetscene Hotline for reporting all environmental concerns, dog fouling, potholes and discarded 'Sharps' (needles / syringes) etc. In 2004 Streetscene grew in other ways too, including the refurbishment of public conveniences and more focussed street cleaning and litter patrols.

Environmental Health & Trading Standards(EHTS)

The High Court ruling on the Estech Europe Ltd judicial review, delivered on February 18, 2005, found no problems with the proposed Madley site but did find that clearer environmental information was required before planning permission could be granted. The Council has decided not to appeal the decision and Estech Europe Ltd has decided to continue with its planning application, which remains to be determined.

EHTS successfully implemented the Directorate restructure and there has been positive feedback on the restructure through the Quality Audit of February 2005.

Herefordshire Council's EHTS joined 170 other Councils in signing up to the ENCAMS (formerly Tidy Britain) initiative "Unwanted Vehicle Amnesty". During this period the Pollution Team removed 87 vehicles.

The implementation of the Licensing Act 2003 transferred the administration of liquor licensing from Magistrates to Local Authorities and introduced new licensing conditions for other licences. This also impacted on other services within the Directorate e.g. street cleansing and public conveniences.

The newly formed Licensing Section has developed a licensing policy for Herefordshire. The Licensing Section has also been giving presentations to all parties who are going to be affected by the new Act. The Chair of Regulatory Committee and senior staff held public meetings in April which were welcomed by those attending. The section is leading on the response to the 24 hour economy and also took on the responsibility for Taxi Licensing in August 2004.

EHTS was accredited in February 2004 with ISO 9001 the international standard for environmental management covering our Good Environmental Management system (GEM), Waste Management were included at the end of July 2004 and Bereavement Services in February 2005.

Waste Management were praised by the external certifiers for their robust systems for tracking and following up complaints, and for their programmes to increase recycling levels.

The Kerbside / backdoor collection of recyclables was expanded with 60.28% of Herefordshire population covered by the scheme.

The ReBox Scheme for the Ross-on-Wye area has been introduced and is being rolled out to rural areas around Ross-on-Wye.

Planning

There have been many Information Communication Technology (ICT) improvements. Some improvements are the MVM software reconfiguration, server upgrades, software upgrades; network improvements and historic data capture have now been completed. Improvements to the functionality of the MVM planning and building control information management system have progressed to the point where the system is now fully integrated with the MapInfo Geographical Information System (GIS). The improvements undertaken over the last 12 months formed the basis for the development of a fully Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) compliant planning service.

Improvements in Development Control performance – Following the imposition of performance targets by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in early 2002, significant improvements to development control performance have continued to be achieved. These continued improvements have been recognised through the award of a grant from the Planning Delivery Grant Programme (PDG) to fund further planning service improvements. The last 12 months have seen a decrease in performance improvement due to increased staff turnover and a continuing high level of vacant positions. This situation has now been rectified and performances against statutory performance indicators has improved to exceed targets from April 2005. The PDG allocations for 2005/06 is £101,354 but this excludes any further allocation for plan making activity that will be announced later in the year.

The revised draft Unitary Development Plan completed the deposit stage on 24th June 2004 with 1,400 representations being made in respect of the proposed changes. The Unitary Development Plan's Public Local Inquiry commenced on 8th February 2005.

Following the distribution of the first Parish Plan packs in 2002 a total of nine completed parish plans have now been adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance covering Re-use and Adoption of Traditional Rural Buildings, Design and Development Requirements, Biodiversity and Landscape Character Assessments have now been revised in the light of UDP Objections and proposed changes were adopted by the Council in July 2004.

The programme of commercial partnerships between the Building Control Service and external companies now stands at four, comprising Leominster Construction, Border Oak, Kingspan and Collins Engineering. The Cabinet Member for the Environment has endorsed the principle that the Partnership scheme be further developed when staff resources permit.

Other achievements:

- Major projects are now underway to deliver e-government compliant planning service, for example, the ability to submit planning applications on-line.
- Planning Delivery Grant – the total receipts have helped towards developing an e-enabled planning service.
- The Edgar Street Area Regeneration Project was progressed by providing a land use framework in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

Service Delivery 2005/6 (April 05 – May 05)

Streetscene

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act was published at the end of April 2005 and is a key part of the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' five-year environmental strategy to clean up people's immediate environment, boost sustainable development, increase energy efficiency and care for rural communities.

The Act increases the powers of local authorities to tackle anti-social behaviour and environmental crime e.g., graffiti, fly posting, dog fouling, litter, abandoned cars and noise nuisance including the discretion to set charges for, and issue, Fixed Charge Penalty Notices.

One of the ways in which Herefordshire Council is tackling the problems of litter, graffiti, fly tipping etc is to use their enforcement powers.

The introduction of the 'Lay-by Safari' anti-litter signs in 20 of the worst lay-bys across Herefordshire has proved so successful that the animals (plus some new ones) are being used again to help promote "Streetscene".

In 2005/6 Streetscene is moving into its next phase, which combines environmental actions with awareness raising, educational campaigns and lots of promotional publicity – hence the animals. The 'Safari' Gang' of animals will be seen prominently displayed on all Herefordshire Jarvis Services vans and lorries e.g the litter collection lorries have large signs on the sides of the vehicles with both the main brand and a specific animal e.g. the litter lion or the fly-tip frog. Individual members of the gang will be introduced, month by month focusing on different issues, for example, Claude 'the Chewing Gum' Cheetah and Jemma 'the Graffiti Giraffe'.

Part of this publicity was the successful launch of one of the animals at the Public Rights of Way "Walking Festival" on the 18 June in High Town, Hereford.

Environmental Health and Trading Standards

Until a Waste Manager can be appointed, the Waste Management Section is employing an Interim Waste Manager. The Waste Manager's position has been vacant for some time and to date it has not been possible to appoint someone to the post. The position of Recycling Officer, which has also been vacant for some time, has now been filled and the successful applicant officially started at the beginning of May.

The charges for the collection and disposal of trade waste throughout the county have been increased by approximately 7%. This is largely a result of the increase in landfill Tax from £15 to £18 per tonne.

Planning

The UDP Public inquiry opened in early February and finished on schedule a year after the deposit on 24 June 2005. The Forward Planning team and other witnesses attended the Inquiry on a daily basis to speak for the Council against a wide range of opposition, from national developers to local environment groups. Most of the hearings were concerned with housing sites, which have been proposed by landowners and developers for inclusion in the Plan. The Inquiry programme was regularly updated on the Council's website. The Government Planning Inspectors are due to report at the end of the year.

The Way Forward

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out the Council's contribution to the Herefordshire Plan, with the Annual Operating Plan setting out what the Council is going to do in the coming year to achieve the targets in the Corporate Plan.

The Operating Plan is going to be reviewed on a regular basis and progress will be reported to Chief Executives Management Team and Cabinet Member.

Included in the Operating Plan are actions which will aim to;

- Reduce the percentage of 11-15 olds smoking
- Increase the percentage of council owned land managed for biodiversity
- Increase the percentage of new homes built on brownfield sites
- Reduce the CO2 emissions across the county

- Roll out ISO14001 across the council
- Increase the number of eco-schools
- Increase the percentage of waste recycled
- Decrease the tonnage of waste collected

See appendix 1 for further details.

The CPA inspection in September 2005 will have resource and service implications as well as a major revision of the CPA service block scoring criteria.

Measures and outcomes for the holistic approach to street cleansing through 'Streetscene' etc are being developed.

Progress will be made on the replacement of the existing crematorium in Hereford.

Waste Management is working on diverting biodegradable waste from landfill and detailed targets have been drawn up as part of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy with Worcestershire County Council.

Other changes that will affect Environmental Health & Trading Standards are:

- Establishment of a Call Centre for the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Service.
- Completion of Best Value Review of Commercial Enforcement
- Draw up, agree and implement policies and procedures within the Quality Assurance system.
- Issue licences under the new Licensing Act 2003.

Lifescapes Project - The Lifescapes project that will end in September 2005 has played a key role in identifying environmental enhancement opportunities in the 5 main river valleys of Herefordshire. This work will be further developed through the Mapping Opportunities for Habitats and Landscape (MOHL) resource as the basis for steering programmes of community led habitat improvement and restoration.

The Council is engaged in two issues which may have implications outside of its boundaries i.e. polytunnels and accommodation for seasonal workers.

Councillor P.J. Edwards

Cabinet Member – Environment

28th July, 2005

Appendix 1 Corporate Plan - Operating Plan

Council Priority	Indicator	Target 2004/05	Actual 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Milestone	Action	By When
Reducing deaths from heart disease, stroke and cancer by reducing the number of people smoking	% of 11-15 year olds smoking 1+ cigarettes per week	Survey carried out in 2000. Information for 2004/5 not available.		Reduce to 12%		Establish future basis for measuring aim. PCT are appointing a Smoking Cessation Officer	
					Number of presentations, number of test purchases	Investigate traders, carry out test purchases %	Programme for April to March
						Set up liaison group	May 2005
To identify, protect and enhance the County's environmental assets	% of Council-owned or managed land without a nature conservation designation, managed for biodiversity	Baseline established as 2.49%		2.6%	Baseline Assessment	Measurement system Define management regimes for commons / open spaces to be established and IT resource secured	31st March 2006
To achieve sustainable development by integrating environmental issues into Herefordshire's	% of all new homes built on previously developed (brownfield) land	60%	68%	60%		Control development of the built environment through UDP	
	CO2 emissions in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per head of	Figures not available		13.7	1) Set Partnership Targets 2)	1) Annual Emissions Comparison (Oct each year) 2) Energy Services (ESCO) through West Mercia Supplies	

Council Priority	Indicator	Target 2004/05	Actual 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Milestone	Action	By When
Herefordshire's strategies	equivalent per head of population/year				Public Consultation 3) Final Strategy & Action Plan Adopted 4) Adoption of Council Part of Carbon Management Plan	Raise awareness of Herefordshire County Performance	
To foster an understanding of the impact of individual and collective actions upon the environment and encourage positive measures	EMAS / ISO14001 Certification			Roll out ISO14001 across other activities	6 services over next 9 months	Implement GEM Action Plan	
	No. of eco-schools	35%	60%	65%		Extend takeup of scheme through promotional events	Sep-05
	% of all household waste that is recycled and composted	21%	21.7%	21.8%		Expansion of Kerbside collection	Jul-05
						Improve performance of household waste sites	Ongoing
						Variation of current waste PFI contract to enable new facilities for waste diversion and recycling	Apr-05
					Increase to 75% participation	Increase participation in kerbside collection through ongoing promotion. Eg WRAP, Mission Impossible	
						Assess other methods of promotion	Sep-05
	Household waste collected per person, per year (kg)	515kg	528kg	530kg		Address waste challenge by adopting "Waste Hierarchy", home composting etc.	
					Increase joint working with Worc CC		

Council Priority	Indicator	Target 2004/05	Actual 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Milestone	Action	By When
Making it happen through greater customer focus and organisational improvement	The % of citizens satisfied with the overall service provided by their authority					Carry out Streetscene survey in order to establish public perception of quality of services.	

Appendix 2

Environment Best Value Performance Indicators

Ref	Target/Indicator	Target 2004/05	Actual 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Target 2006/7	Target 2007/8	Comments
	Strategic objective						
BV82a(i) Corp PI	Percentage of the total tonnage of household waste arisings which has been recycled	14.4%	15.03%	14.95%	15.50%	17.14%	
BV82a(ii)	Tonnage of household waste arisings which has been recycled			14,109 tonnes	14,688 tonnes	16,306 tonnes	New Indicator
BV82b(i) Corp PI	Percentage of the total tonnage of household waste arisings which has been composted	6.6%	6.69%	6.85%	7.10%	7.86%	
BV82b(ii)	Tonnage of household waste arisings which has been composted			6,465 tonnes	6,728 tonnes	7,478 tonnes	New Indicator
BV82c(i)	Percentage of the total tonnage of household waste arisings which has been used to recover heat, power and other energy sources	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
BV82c(ii)	Tonnage of household waste arisings which has been used to recover heat, power and other energy sources			0 tonnes	0 tonnes	0 tonnes	New Indicator
BV82d(i) Corp PI	Percentage of the total tonnage of household waste arisings which has been landfilled	79.0%	78.28%	78.2%	77.40%	75.00%	
BV82d(ii)	Tonnage of household waste arisings which has been landfilled			73,801 tonnes	73,348 tonnes	71,352 tonnes	New Indicator
BV84a	Kg of household waste per head per annum	515kg	528.03kg	530kg	530kg	530.8kg	
BV84b	Percentage change from the previous year of Kg of household waste per head per annum			+2.9%	0%	0%	New Indicator
	Cost/efficiency						
BV86	Cost of waste collection per household	£40.93	£42.59	£42.99	£45.19	£47.55	Targets updated to take into account 2003/4 actuals
BV87	Cost of waste disposal per tonne for municipal waste	£62.19	£58.51	£65.30	£68.57	£72.00	

Ref	Target/Indicator	Target 2004/05	Actual 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Target 2006/7	Target 2007/8	Comments
	Fair access						
BV91a	Percentage of population resident in the authority's area which area served by a kerbside collection of recyclables	59%	60.28%				Targets not required
BV91b	Percentage of population resident in the authority's area which area served by a kerbside collection of 2 recyclables						New Indicator – Targets not required
BV199a	The proportion of relevant land and highways (expressed as a percentage) that is assessed as having combined deposits of litter and detritus that fall below an acceptable level	33%	27%	31%	29%	27%	Targets being negotiated in LPSA2G
BV199b	The proportion of relevant land and highways (expressed as a percentage) from which unacceptable levels of graffiti are visible.						New Indicator – Targets not required
BV199c	The proportion of relevant land and highways (expressed as a percentage) from which unacceptable levels of fly-posting are visible.						New Indicator – Targets not required
BV199d	The year-on-year reduction in total number of incidents and increase in total number of enforcement actions taken to deal with fly-tipping'.						New Indicator – Targets not required

Local Indicators

Ref	Target/Indicator	Target 2004/05	Actual 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Target 2006/7	Target 2007/8	Comments
Corp PI	CO2 emissions in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per head of population/year			13.7 tonnes	12.9 tonnes	11.4 tonnes	Actual figures only available 12 months in arrears
Corp PI	Percentage of eco-schools	35%	60%	65%	75%	80%	

Planning Best Value Performance Indicators

Ref	Target/Indicator	Target 2004/05	Actual 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Target 2006/7	Target 2007/8	Comments
	Strategic objective						
BV106 Corp PI	Percentage of new homes built on previously developed land	60%	68.3%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	
	Service delivery outcome						
BV109a	Determine major commercial and industrial applications within 13 weeks	60%	46%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	Action plan to address issues has been formulated and in progress.
BV109b	Determine minor commercial and industrial applications within 8 weeks	65%	51%	65.00%	65.00%	65.00%	
BV109c	Determine other applications within 8 weeks	80%	64%	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	
	Quality						
BV200a	Plan Making – Have a development plan	Indicator may change – targets not required yet	No				Targets not required
BV200b	Plan Making – Milestones	Indicator may change – targets not required yet	Yes				Targets not required
BV200c	Plan making – monitoring report						New Indicator – Targets not required
BV204	Percentage of appeals allowed against authorities decision to refuse planning application		21%	<25%	<25%	<25%	
BV205	Quality of service checklist		89%	90%	92%	94%	
BV219a	Total number of conservation areas in local authority area						New Indicator – Targets not required
BV219b	Percentage of conservation areas with an up-to-date character appraisal						New Indicator – Targets not required

Ref	Target/Indicator	Target 2004/05	Actual 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Target 2006/7	Target 2007/8	Comments
BV219c	Percentage of conservation areas with published management proposals						New Indicator – Targets not required

Local Indicators

Ref	Target/Indicator	Target 2004/05	Actual 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Target 2006/7	Target 2007/8	Comments
Corp PI	Percentage of Council land without a nature conservation designation but managed for Biodiversity purposes	Scoping complete	Baseline of 2.49%	2.6%	2.8%	3.1%	
	Percentage of applications invalid on receipt (919 out of 3686)	<25%	30%	<25%	<25%	<25%	Based on sampling undertaken in September
	Percentage of appeals where the Council's decision was overturned	<40%	21%				Deleted as a local indicator – replaced by BV204

Environmental Health And Trading Standards Best Value Performance Indicators

Ref	Target/Indicator	Target 2004/05	Actual 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Target 2006/7	Target 2007/8	Comments
BV166a	Score against a checklist of enforcement best practice for environmental health	56%	90%	90%	90%	100%	
BV166b	Score against a checklist of enforcement best practice for trading standards	72%	86.6%	90%	90%	100%	
BV216a	Number of 'sites of potential concern' [within the local authority area], with respect to land contamination.						New Indicator – Targets not required
BV216b	Number of sites for which sufficient detailed information is available to decide whether remediation of the land is necessary, as a percentage of all 'sites of potential concern'.						New Indicator – Targets not required
BV217	Percentage of pollution control improvements to existing installations completed on time						New Indicator – Targets not required

Ref	Target/Indicator	Target 2004/05	Actual 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Target 2006/7	Target 2007/8	Comments
	installations completed on time.						required
BV218a	Percentage of new reports of abandoned vehicles investigated within 24hrs of notification.			85%	85%	85%	New Indicator – Targets not required
BV218b	Percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours from the point at which the Authority is legally entitled to remove the vehicle.						New Indicator – Targets not required

Local Indicators

Ref	Target/Indicator	Target 2004/05	Actual 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Target 2006/7	Target 2007/8	Comments
Corp PI	% of 11-15 year olds smoking 1+ cigarettes per week			12%	11%	Reduce to 10%	New Indicator
	Customer Satisfaction levels – overall satisfaction with service	80%	81%	82%	84%	86%	PI collected annually