ANNEX 3

HEREFORDSHIRE THINKS RURAL

ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan deals only with those areas designated "quick wins" in the strategy adopted by Cabinet on the 1st September, 2005. An attempt has been made to match individual officers or groups of officers to those actions and to be honest about the extent to which those actions can be delivered in line with the strategy's recommendations. However, it is important to recognise the need to designate both a member and officer champion to drive the actions of the strategy. This is best achieved by confirming the Cabinet Member for Rural Regeneration as the "Rural Champion". This would be consistent with the portfolio of that Cabinet Member and allow for actions to be approached in an holistic way. It is further proposed that the Director of Adult and Community Services be designated as the officer champion. However, many of the activities obtained with the actions plan span the work of the Council and for that reason it is proposed that a network of officers be established to act as links to particular actions in the strategy. The action plan as detailed therefore only contains those actions which were described in the Herefordshire Thinks Rural Action Plan as "quick wins" to be achieved by March 2006. It is proposed that progress be reviewed and a longer term view taken at the beginning of the financial year 2006/07 as to which set of actions should form the activities in next year's action plan.

HEREFORDSHIRE THINKS RURAL ACTION PLAN

IMPROVING THE EVIDENCE AND INFORMATION BASE		
Key Activity Area	**Quick Wins** **Achieved by March 06**	**Action**
Gather and map quantitative geographical evidence to assess differential needs within County.	• Use new urban/rural definitions to analyse differences within County and produce clear maps to analyse differences • To be taken into account in the next *State of Herefordshire Report*, due for publication in February 2006 (N.B. This would mean early achievement, at least in part, of the first of the actions included in the right hand column as to be achieved by September 2007). • Will be considered routinely in future data collection, with a judgement to be made in each case about as to whether it would be appropriate, add value and be cost-effective.	Lead: Madeleine Spinks, Research Corporate Policy and Research
Gather and map qualitative geographical evidence to assess differential needs and aspirations within the County	• Build rural proofing into consultation quality check • *Exemplar: Check % rural response to consultation for review of Herefordshire Plan; pilot examination of young people's responses for difference across County.* • Use Parish Plans to gauge rural communities aspirations	Lead: Community Involvement Coordinator
Build a geographical dimension into data collection about delivery accessibility, impact and outcomes of services across the County.	• *Exemplar: Prepare needs analysis for Children and Young People's Plan taking into account current levels of delivery across County.* • *Exemplar: Use data on differential needs to inform and develop extended schools programme.* • N.B. Research must be consulted by service areas to ensure that the analysis is soundly based and feasible	Lead: Children's Services Change Manager
Opportunities for rolling out to wider partnership *Continue to build on Herefordshire Information and Research Network to share evidence base and to undertake joint consultations* *Use Accessibility Assessment to gather evidence of variation of access to services*		

EMBEDDING A RURAL DIMENSION INTO STRATEGIC PLANNING, SERVICE PLANNING, SCRUTINY AND REVIEW		
Key Activity Area	**Quick Wins** **Achieved by March 06**	
Embed a rural dimension into corporate, directorate and service planning and wider strategic planning.	• Develop and include simple rural proofing checklist in service planning guidance, (including risk register). • Guidance for directorate and service plans 2006-07 includes a checklist of all cross-cutting themes that have to be addressed, with links to documented guidance, including the *Thinks Rural* report . • The guidance includes a mandatory template for the identification of risks and control measures. • Rural proof review of the Herefordshire Plan. • Make explicit how LAA will benefit rural areas (interdependency model) • *Exemplar: Rural proof new strategy for Adult and Community learning. to ensure rural needs addressed*	Lead: Corporate Policy and Research Manager Lead: Partnership Team Manager, Herefordshire Partnership Support Team
Include rural challenge in cabinet and other decision-making processes.	• Include rural implications in cabinet papers and briefings. • Encourage lead cabinet member to question rural implications of decisions. • Guidance note will be issued shortly spelling out the responsibility of lead Cabinet members and members of the Corporate Management Board (CMB) to ensure that all cross-cutting issues, including the impact on rural areas, have been considered in any proposals to be considered by Council, Cabinet or CMB. • Ensure contracts for service delivery meet the needs of rural communities - *Exemplar* Rural proof new Home Care Contract	Lead: Members Services Manager , Individual Directors, Lead Cabinet Member and lead on Procurement, Cabinet Member Rural Regeneration N.B. it is not proposed to have a further designation on the Cabinet papers but to make sure that this is explicit in the text.
Build a rural dimension into the performance management framework.	• 'Flag' BVPIs that are insensitive or detrimental to rural needs. • Meaningless unless linked with the development of separate measurement for rural areas, which is the action proposed for achievement by March 2007 (next column)	This needs to be linked up with the medium term activity. Lead: Corporate Policy and Research Manager

		BVPIs are those which we have to be reported on. It is as much a question of developing Pis that will reflect the particular context of the rural area.
Embed a rural dimension into scrutiny and review.	• Use internal and external 'rural champions' as part of scrutiny process • Use IDeA checklist (IDeA 2004) in relation to Best Value and rural proofing.	Lead: Committee Manager (Scrutiny) & Scrutiny Chairman. Will be reflected in the Scrutiny Development Plan.
Plan response to future rural challenges and opportunities		

Opportunities for rolling out to wider partnership
Include results of Parish Plans in development of strategic and service plans - roll out inclusion in statutory planning guidance.
Include rural dimension in future Local Public Service Agreements
Develop partnership based Vision for the Countryside, linked to revised Herefordshire Plan and negotiate with Natural England to be exemplar for integration with LSP

BUILDING ON BEST PRACTICE IN RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF RURAL AREAS		
Key Activity Area	**Quick Wins** **Achieved by March 06**	
Two for the price of one - seize opportunities for collaboration and co-location	*Exemplars:* • *Use new Kington Info Shop to delivery services of other agencies* • *Challenge 2 new mobile libraries to delivery other services.* • *Encourage collaboration between schools to delivery extended schools programme, building on the experience of existing clusters of schools*	In terms of the exemplars listed there is an immediate need to challenge the models described as these projects are progressing. There will however be a need to pick up general points in the Service Plans for 2006/07.
Use all forms of delivery (including ICT) to improve access to services	• Address shortfalls in access to broadband in most remote rural areas. *Exemplar: Library Service/Community Access points. Use volunteers and Community Transport to move people and books, co-locate with shops and schools, use any access to IT for ordering and renewals.*	Lead: Head of Service, ICT Services The CAPs (Community Access Points) project has now gained approval. Need to identify the actual extent of Broadband coverage.
Identify and copy best practice	• Arrange networking meeting with other rural councils working on rural proofing (Lancashire, Suffolk, Cumbria, Northumberland, S. Glos, N. Somerset etc) • Take to benchmarking club and IDeA • Embed rural dimension into implementing govt. programmes *Exemplars:* *Design Children's Centres to meet rural needs* *14-19 Curriculum - rural access to non vocational learning*	Lead: Partnership Team Manager, Herefordshire Partnership Support Team Herefordshire Council is part of the IDEA rural mentoring programme and activity will centre around this in the first instance.
Opportunities for rolling out to wider partnership *Continue to collaborate on co-location and joint delivery of services. Encourage partner organisations to embed rural proofing in service plans*		

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF STAFF AND MEMBERS TO "THINK RURAL"		
Key Activity Area	**Quick Wins** **Achieved by March 06**	
• *Nominate rural ambassadors - both members and staff*	• Find Staff Ambassadors - preferably from all levels in the organisation . • Find Member Ambassadors - at least one to be part of scrutiny and review and one on cabinet *Need to make this attractive and fun! - space and time needed to be innovative and visionary.*	Lead: The Communications Team working with the Cabinet Member, lead Director (Champions)
• *Include specific rural elements in training and development programmes for staff and members*	• Include specific rural dimension in induction training for staff and members • Strengthen advice about 'geographic location' element in diversity impact assessment training. • Communicate evidence base to staff	Lead: Human Resources working with Members Development
• *Encourage innovation, creativity and collaboration in meeting the needs of rural communities*	• 'Flag' strategies and plans that have been rural proofed. • Collect best practice case studies, examine for critical success factors and disseminate. • Hold council meetings (management and member) in rural locations.	Lead: Communications Team and Committee Services
• *Organise a series of events to learn about, celebrate and disseminate Herefordshire Thinks Rural*	• Offer to be a pilot area for GOWM monitoring rural proofing at a local level • Organise and run Think Rural Think Tank Conference including MPs, MEPs etc.	GOWM already have a copy of the Herefordshire Thinks Rural documentation and this may well be applied across the Rural LAA To be considered post the activities concerned with the rural mentoring programme
Opportunities for rolling out to wider partnership *Include challenge to 'think rural' in Herefordshire Driver to embed rural proofing in Herefordshire Partnership activity.* *Disseminate partner organisations' best practice in relation to rural delivery.*		

INFLUENCING OTHERS TO "THINK RURAL"		
Key Activity Area	**Quick Wins** **Achieved by March 06**	
Challenge national (and regional) government when policies and/or targets are not 'rural friendly'	• Establish good links with GOWM and Commission for Rural Communities to log difficulties. • Focus on a few key issues for influencing campaign.	Lead: Herefordshire Partnership Support Team link to LAA Development
Develop an influencing strategy focussed on strengthening the rural voice at regional level	• "Get the region out of Birmingham" *Exemplar: Offer to host regional meetings in Herefordshire. Find opportunity for WM Regional Assembly to meet in/visit Herefordshire* • Make presentations to WM Rural Affairs Forum, AWM, WM Regional Assembly about Herefordshire Thinks Rural	Lead: Herefordshire Partnership Support Team
Roll out Herefordshire Thinks Rural to Herefordshire Partnership	*Actions included in each part of Action Plan*	This approach was agreed at the Board meeting of the Herefordshire Partnership on the 16th September.
Opportunities for rolling out to wider partnership *Build on current strategic alliances to 'speak with one voice' on rural issues at a regional level wherever possible - including Herefordshire Partnership, Rural Regeneration Zone Board, Rural Housing Network, Regional Rural Affairs Forum.*		

MANAGE AND REVIEW THE THINKING RURAL ACTION PLAN	
Recommendations	**Next Steps**
Agree lead and support staff	- Chief Executive Management Team/Cabinet appoint corporate and member leads. - Corporate lead to identify staff to support the work and provide the 'engine room' for implementing the Action Plan.
Build actions into service and individual work programmes	- Herefordshire Thinks Rural to appear as a standing agenda item for Heads of Service Group. - Cabinet agrees actions to ensure strong member involvement including scrutiny.
Agree evaluation and review process	- Cabinet requests progress reports on Action Plan implementation (frequency to be decided). - Agree evaluation and review process as part of more detailed Action Plan
Conduct review and amend action plan	*To be agreed*

RURAL PROOFING CHECKLIST AND FRAMEWORK FOR ITS USE

Taken from Spencer K., Rogers S., (2005) Rural Proofing for Unitary Local Authorities in England, Unversity of Birmingham

(Adapted from the Countryside Agency Rural Proofing Checklist for use by local authorities, from Caffyn, Dahlstrom, Rogers and Spencer, Rural proofing for local authorities, <u>Local Governance</u>, vol. 28, no. 4, 2002 pp. 273-286).

Note

Applying this checklist approach should not be done in isolation, it may be an added aid in relation to the more policy planning integrated approach put forward in the main body of this report.

Framework stages for checklist

Step 1 An evaluation of how significant the impacts of new or current policies may be on key rural issues.
Step 2 An analysis of options for action.
Step 3 An analysis of partners who need to participate, be involved or consulted.
Step 4 A statement of proposed actions.

<u>Step 1. The Checklist</u>

Each issue questions should be assessed against two criteria:
   a) does it have a significant or not significant impact on rural communities.
   b) does it have a positive or negative impact on rural communities.

Rural issues are identified below, others may be added by local authorities. Some of the example questions may be self-evident, and others may be added as appropriate.

   1) <u>Protecting/enhancing local facilities and shops</u>
      How does the policy affect rural facilities such as village shops, post offices, pubs, garages, other retail outlets, village halls, banks, churches and community enterprises? Can polices be amended to protect or enhance such facilities?
   2) <u>Maintaining/improving access to services</u>
      Does the policy impact on access to and maintenance of services for the rural population, particularly for less mobile groups such as the elderly?
   3) <u>Improving transport links and options</u>

Will the policy affect transport links and options for commuting, accessing services and recreation? Are different modes and uses of transport considered?

4) <u>Tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion</u>
Does the policy affect any disadvantaged groups e.g. elderly, people with disabilities, homeless people, unemployed, women or ethnic minorities? Does it have an impact on sources of information and advice, social services, health, community development and capacity building?

5) <u>Providing activities/facilities for young people</u>
Will the policy impact on young people and how?

6) <u>Improving employment opportunities</u>
Will the policy impact on employment opportunities and how?

7) <u>Strengthening/diversifying the rural economy</u>
Does the policy affect the rural economy? Will it affect market towns, business support, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, retail, credit sources, community enterprises, farmers markets, training, ICT or start-up premises?

8) <u>Provide affordable, quality rural housing</u>
Will the policy affect the affordability and quality of housing across all types of tenure? Does the policy relate to prices, registered social landlords, developers, planning policies, migration, second homes, the elderly or special needs? Does it enhance sustainable communities?

9) <u>Protecting/enhancing the local environment</u>
How does the policy affect the protection and/or enhancing of the local natural and built environment? How sustainable is this?

10) <u>Developing education and training opportunities/facilities</u>
Does the policy impact upon education and training? How does it affect schools, colleges, ICT, access via local facilities or through transport or distance learning?

11) <u>Promoting the use of and access to ICT</u>
Will the policy have an impact on the use of and access to ICT?

12) <u>Encouraging recreation and tourism</u>
Does the policy affect recreation and tourism? Will it have an impact on rights of way, access to the countryside, recreational activities, local heritage, culture, villages and market towns?

Step 2. Options analysis

The local authority should consider options for action arising from its checklist findings. Where an impact is negative and significant it may require remedial action. Where positive impacts are identified there may be scope for further capitalising on these. Affordability will be an issue, as will be possible working with other partners, seeking new funding or lobbying for action.

Step 3. Partner analysis

Where the options analysis indicates needs for consultation, liaison or joint working, the next step is to identify which partners/stakeholders to engage in the actions required or negotiated. Such groups could be other local authorities, government at

regional levels, business groups, the voluntary and community sectors, local communities and business. It would also be important here to identify whether the issue(s) is significant enough to be raised as part of the local strategic partnership process, or other partnership processes, in order to further encourage joined-up working.

Step 4. Proposed actions

Proposed actions could be a short summary of:
- actions to take
- who is responsible for each action
- a timetable for implementation of actions

Finally, it is important to take the rural proofing concept beyond policy formation, it should emphasise differential rural implications of a service plan on different communities, age groups and so on. Different approaches to service delivery may be appropriate and this may entail cost variations.