



HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

CORPORATE PLAN 2006 to 2009

Action for a better Herefordshire

"A place where people, business and an outstanding natural environment will together bring about sustainable prosperity and well-being for all."

- ...**Putting** people first
- ...**Promoting** our county
- ...**Providing** for our communities
- ...**Protecting** our future

Quality life in a quality county

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Foreword

Herefordshire is a wonderful county in which to live and work. The Council is determined that it should continue to be so. In a fast-changing world of increasing economic competition, social change, greater diversity and increased public expectations about the quality and flexibility of services, a successful future for Herefordshire will only be secured through an ambitious programme of continuous improvement.

The Council is leading that programme. Developed with the enthusiastic involvement of people and organisations across the county, the new *Herefordshire Plan* sets out the agreed vision for the next 15 years. Our *Local Area Agreement* with our partners and the Government will provide the core of the action plan for the next three years to turn the vision into reality.

Recent major independent inspections rate highly our work with our partners and our achievements: despite spending power 8% lower than the average for other unitary authorities, our performance is at or above the average for X% of the national indicators, with Y% in the top quartile. But the inspectors also confirmed that our performance is not consistently high and that our pace of improvement should be faster. We agree.

Our top priority is to ensure that our arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable children are robust and working well. We are also determined to tackle homelessness affecting young people and families, and will continue to improve our services for vulnerable adults to maximise their independence. More generally, we will carry through our ambitious programme to improve the accessibility and responsiveness of customer services, and make additional multi-million pound efficiency savings to make possible more investment in priority services and keep down Council Tax.

We are building on success. The new Greencroft and Hunderton children's centres, the opening of the new Leominster swimming pool, the construction of the new Whitecross School with private finance, and the huge success of the *Signposting Scheme*, under which 1,300 older people have been helped to access services so that they can keep their independence at home, are just examples of what we are achieving by working with partner organisations and communities across the county.

The future holds even bigger challenges and possibilities. The Council is impatient to seize them.

COUNCILLOR ROGER PHILLIPS

Leader of the Council

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council shares a vision for a better Herefordshire with a wide range of partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors, and with those representing communities. It is that

Herefordshire is a place where people, business and an outstanding natural environment will together bring about sustainable prosperity and well-being for all.

1.2 Looking forward to 2020, the new *Herefordshire Plan* sets out how we and our partners intend to turn this vision into reality. At its heart is our Local Area Agreement with the Government. This will establish demanding targets to ensure the continued improvement of services and better outcomes for people, businesses and communities throughout the county for the first three years – 2006-09.

1.3 This, the Council's own Corporate Plan, says what we will do over the same three years to play our part in fulfilling the vision. It also sets out how we intend to carry on improving our efficiency and effectiveness, so that we deliver a fair deal for Council Tax-payers and make sure that our front-line services are as good as they can be.

1.4 This Corporate Plan:

- identifies the main challenges facing the county and the Council
- reviews what has been achieved between April 2004 and the end of 2005
- makes clear the Council's priorities for the future
- sets out the improvements in services and in efficiency and effectiveness which are planned
- identifies the main risks to the achievement of the Plan and how they will be managed
- shows how the Council's resources – human, financial, organisational and physical (including ICT) – will be deployed to bring about the planned improvements and manage the risks
- is the Council's strategic Best Value Performance Plan¹ and Improvement Plan
- will incorporate the objectives and performance measures for the *Local Area Agreement* (LAA) once negotiations with the UK government are concluded
- is the basis for leading and managing the Council's performance
- is the basis for the Council's Annual Operating Plan and individual directorate and service plans, and for the performance objectives and targets of every team and every individual member of staff

1.5 Everything in the Plan is intended to help deliver the Council's commitment to:

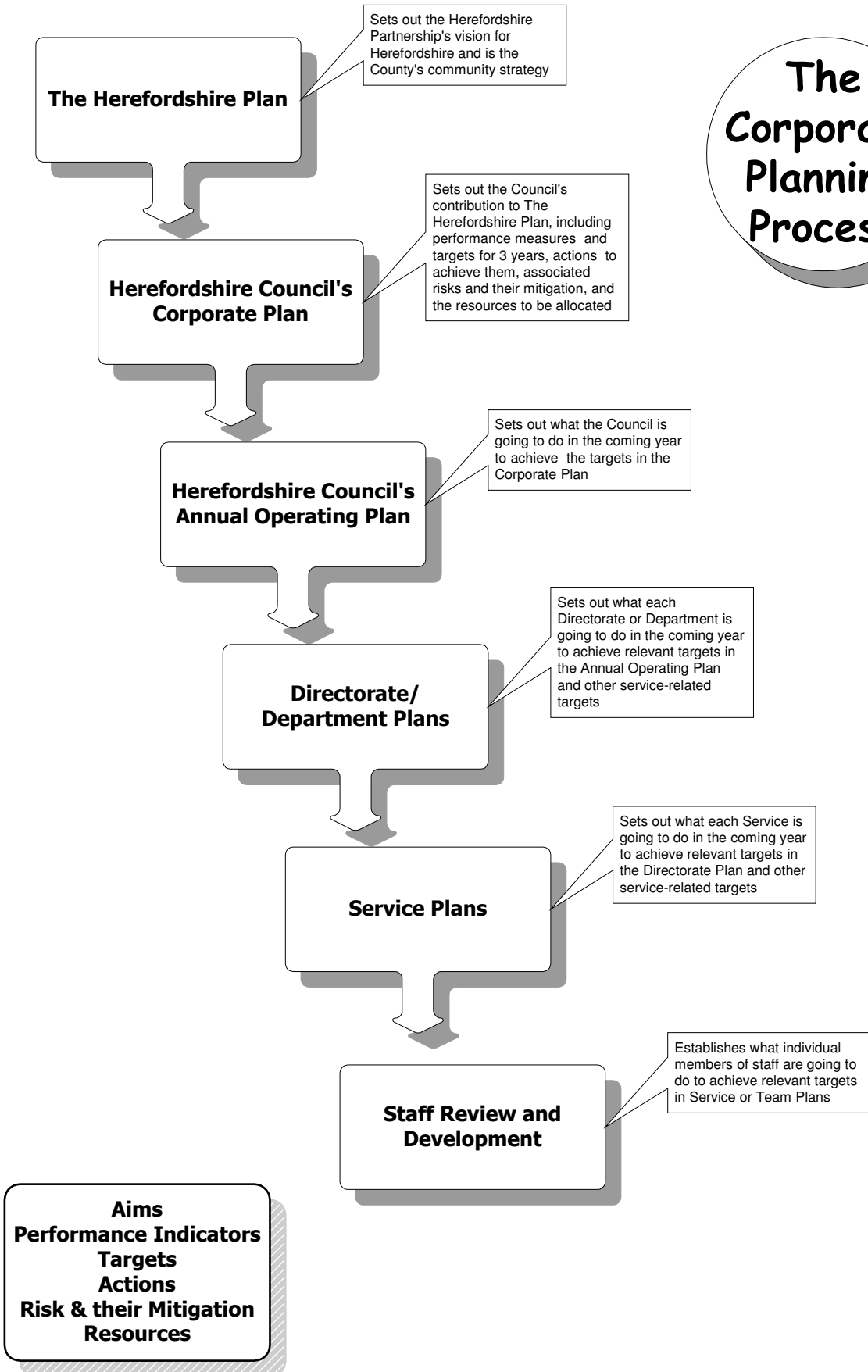
- understanding the needs and wishes of service users and Council Tax-payers, and doing all it can to respond to them - so it takes into account the views expressed during the wide-ranging public consultations carried out by the

¹ Outturns and future targets for Best Value Performance Indicators will be reported by 30th June, as an electronic link to the copy of this Plan on our website (www.herefordshire.gov.uk). Publication by this date is a statutory requirement.

Council over the past year and more, including those done with our partners in drawing up the new *Herefordshire Plan*

- understanding and responding to the distinctive needs of different communities, including rural areas
- community leadership and working in partnership with all sectors
- diversity and equal opportunities for all
- a sustainable environment

The Corporate Planning Process



2.0 Setting the Scene

- 2.1 Herefordshire's population is about 177,800. The county is sparsely populated, with the third lowest county population density in England. About one-third of the population lives in Hereford City, a little more than a fifth in the market towns and almost half in rural areas.
- 2.2 Between 1991 and 2004 the population increased by 10.8%, entirely due to net inward migration into the county, mainly from neighbouring English counties and the South East. This rate of growth was faster than that experienced by the rest of the West Midlands (2%) and England and Wales (4.5%).
- 2.3 Recent population movements have seen a considerable exodus from urban areas, mostly to recognisable villages within the immediate catchment of the main towns. Herefordshire has become a popular destination for the retired, for holiday homes and second homes and, in some areas, for out-of-county commuting.
- 2.4 The county's population has a considerably older age profile than that for England and Wales. 23.1% of the population is over retirement age, compared with 18.5% nationally, and there are fewer persons of working age (58.3% compared with 61.9%). People are, on average, healthier than nationally and live longer.
- 2.5 By 2011 the population is expected to grow by 2.7%, which is about the same as nationally. However, the number of under 18s is expected to fall by 10.9% (national fall 4%); the number of 18 to 64 year-olds to grow by only 2.2% (3.8% nationally); and the number who are 65 and over to grow by 18.4% (9.5% nationally).
- 2.6 Most dramatically, the number of people over 80 is expected to rise by a further 20.2%, to 11,800 residents, compared with a national increase of 11.3%.
- 2.7 Although the Government's 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks Herefordshire 192nd out of 354 local authorities, there are areas of poverty and deprivation within the county. Concentrations of the most deprived areas are within Hereford (South Wye and Central) and Leominster. Conversely, the least deprived areas are concentrated to the east of the county, in some of the fringes of Hereford and directly north and west of the city, and around Ross-on-Wye.
- 2.8 Average wages in the county are significantly below both the regional and national averages, although the gap has narrowed somewhat in recent years. Average house prices are high compared with elsewhere in the region.
- 2.9 Unemployment in the county is low. Manufacturing provides 19% of employment, with service industries accounting for 75%; both agriculture and tourism are a more important source of jobs in the county than elsewhere in the West Midlands. Self-employment is more common in Herefordshire (nearly 13.7%) than in the rest of England and Wales (8.3%).
- 2.10 Although Herefordshire performs well at GCSE level, there are relatively few people in the workforce with higher-level skills. There is limited higher education provision, and knowledge-based industries are under-represented in the county. There is net

out-migration of young adults from the county, probably for the most part in search of wider opportunities for employment and higher education.

2.11 The 2.5% of the population from ethnic minorities at the time of the 2001 Census is very low by national and regional comparisons. With the exception of seasonal workers, no single group numbers more than about a thousand. The biggest group probably remains the traveller communities. But the total is almost certainly rising with the recent influx of people from Eastern Europe and Portugal, principally to work in manufacturing and agriculture.

3.0 What the Council can do

- 3.1 The Council has a wide range of powers and duties. These range from a general power to promote well-being to a host of specific legal obligations. These include such things as the provision of schools, the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, the safety of roads, waste collection and disposal, licensing and trading standards.
- 3.2 This means that the Council has limited or no discretion in some areas but more in others.
- 3.3 The Council has finite resources to deliver both its legal obligations and discretionary services. The financial context is therefore crucial.

The Challenges

- 3.4 In the last financial year, general Government grant accounted for a third of the net cost we needed to pay to provide services. However, the Government has changed fundamentally the way it will distribute general grant to support local government services from 2006-07 onwards, with funding for schools being ring-fenced for that purpose. This means that the Council will have to find from its remaining resources the sums required for other services that support schools, including special educational needs and pupil transport.
- 3.5 The new formula for allocating the non-schools general grant is designed to deliver a cash sum based on various statistical features of each local authority rather than, as previously, a notional assessment of need to spend. Whilst the approach is welcome in some ways – it allows settlements for a number of years that aid forward planning – it is more subjective and less transparent than the previous system.
- 3.6 Under these new arrangements we have been given a two-year settlement that provides the following increases in funding:

| Financial year | Overall increase (%) | Schools increase (%) | Non-schools increase (%) |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| 2006-07 | 6.4 | 4.3 | 2.4 |
| 2007-08 | 7.4 | 4.0 | 3.4 |

- 3.7 Whilst schools will enjoy above inflation increases for the next two years, non-schools budgets will get a standstill increase in 2006-07 and an increase a little higher than expected inflation in 2007-08. It is likely that budget pressures on

schools can be contained within the grant funding much more easily than they can for other services, some of which are experiencing severe pressure.

- 3.8 These pressures are particularly intense on adult social care, including services for older people, and tackling homelessness, evidenced by high levels of overspending in both 2004-05 and 2005-06. The Council has limited discretion in these areas.
- 3.9 Nor has the Council much room for manoeuvre in respect of non-schools aspects of children's services. Its responsibilities for the welfare of children have grown as a result of the new Children Act. The concerns expressed in the Joint Area Review of services for children and young people in respect of the Council's arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable children, and the need to improve services for children with learning difficulties, underline the extent of what has to be accomplished.
- 3.10 Pressures are increasing in other areas too. For instance:
- spending has to continue to rise to meet Government targets for reducing waste
 - the costs of petroleum-based products (particularly materials used in highway maintenance) have risen sharply with the cost of oil. This has a particularly severe effect on rural counties like Herefordshire
 - the statutory exemption from bus fares of people with a registered disability and all over 60
 - the *Civil Contingencies Act* requires the Council to take on substantial additional responsibilities in leading and co-ordinating emergency planning
 - the proposals in the Government's Green Paper *Youth Matters* will place local authorities centre-stage for all youth services in their areas
 - new legislation will extend significantly the requirements to promote equality and eliminate discrimination in respect of gender, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief.
- 3.9 In aggregate, these pressures will not be matched by increases in the Council's budget:
- looking beyond the next two years, the next local government settlement – in the winter of 2006-07 - will cover the three-year period 2008-09 to 2010-11, following HM Treasury's Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. Early indications are that this will include an even more incisive efficiency review and that resources will be focused on the Government's national priorities, such as education, health and security. This would mean that cash for local government services other than schools would be squeezed yet further
 - one-off funding of major projects by the European Union and other external sources are coming to an end
 - in view of the high number of people in the county on fixed and low incomes, and the Government's rules on capping, the Council cannot make up the deficit by increasing Council Tax to the levels that would be required

- whilst the Council will continue to borrow prudently, this will only be done where it would produce long-term affordable benefits.

3.10 The net result is that the Council faces significant budget pressures in 2006-07 and beyond: base budget pressures of £2.9 million; essential growth items of £1.1 million; and adult social care budget pressures of up to £2.8 million. We anticipate budget headroom in the region of £3 million to maintain current levels of service provision. On top of this, we must make £1.65 million of cashable efficiency savings and absorb some £4.8 million of other budget pressures.

3.11 The coming years are therefore a watershed in terms of ensuring that our annual operating costs do not exceed the level of available resources. The Council cannot spend more than the budget it has for non-schools services indefinitely because reserves and working balances would run out.

The Council's Response

3.12 Herefordshire is 38th out of 44 unitary authorities in terms of Government grant per head of population, with spending power 8% below the average. The Council will continue to campaign, with other rural local authorities, for a fairer deal. Whatever the outcome, the Council will take decisive action to live within its means and ensure the affordability of this Corporate Plan.

3.13 Its strategy to do so will involve:

- moderate increases in Council Tax
- a balanced budget for non-schools services in 2006-07 and 2007-08 that will, so far as possible within available resources, deliver the Council's priorities; this means ensuring that essential obligations in all service areas are covered and that as much resource as can be found are set aside for the expected growth in demand for social care services for vulnerable adults and to tackle homelessness.
- a tough service improvement programme aimed to deliver the level of cash and service efficiencies needed to ensure that the Council's budget position is sustainable beyond the next two financial years; this requires £1.65 million of cash-releasing savings in 2006-07 and more in future years
- spend-to-save investment, the prudent use of reserves and long-term affordable borrowing that delivers service improvements, greater efficiency and maintains the Council's assets for the future
- ensuring that best value is being achieved in priority areas that are benefiting from additional resources, such as adult social care, so that the Council's total investment delivers the best possible results for customers
- targeted growth in priority services and essential infrastructure, including ICT

4.0 Performance April 2004 – December 2005

4.1 The Council is building its plan for the next three years on both a record of achievement and a good understanding of areas where it needs to improve.

4.2 The independent Audit Commission gives the Council a **Comprehensive Performance Assessment score of 3** (out of a possible 4) and adjudges us to be **improving adequately** (fuller details are given below). The Council is determined to accelerate its rate of improvement and achieve a high standard of effectiveness and efficiency across all that it does.

To do this it must:

- ensure that social care services for children are at least adequate in all respects, with priority accorded to the safeguarding of vulnerable children
- improve the performance and prospects of social care services for adults, including older people
- achieve a consistently high standard of performance management across all aspects of the Council’s work
- strengthen the scrutiny function in respect of its role in both performance enhancement and policy development
- increase its capacity to deliver better services by delivering its ICT and accommodation strategies and making significant further efficiency savings, particularly by implementing the Service Improvement Programme

4.3 Overall performance against Best Value Performance Indicators

The Council performs well overall compared to local authorities in England as a whole. Although its spending power is 8% less than the average for all unitary authorities, in 2004-05 the Council was in the top quartile for **X%** of the national Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs), and in the top half for **Y%**. **Z%** were in the bottom quartile. Compared to the previous year, the Council improved or maintained its performance against 52% of the indicators.

4.4 Highlights of performance against the Council’s priorities

| | |
|---|---|
| Maximise the health, safety, economic wellbeing, achievements and contribution of | - The average length of stay in B&B accommodation of households that are unintentionally homeless and in priority need has risen from 5 weeks at the end of 2003-04 to over 9 weeks at the end of November 2005. A new Homelessness Project Manager has now been appointed and Action Plan approved with the aim of eliminating the use of B&B accommodation in the future. |
|---|---|

| | |
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| <p>every child</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 Children’s Centres opened during 2005: Greencroft and Hunderton Hollybush. The Centres provide early education and childcare, family support and outreach to parents, child and family health services, links with schools and children’s information services, and links with Job Centre Plus. |
| <p>Improve the achievement of pupils</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The proportion of pupils in LEA schools achieving Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 Mathematics fell from 75% to 74%, whilst English remained the same at 81%. 93% of pupils achieved 5 or more A*-G grades a GCSE. - The Whitecross High School PFI has been agreed, building has started and the school is due to open in June 2006. In addition to providing improved teaching accommodation, the facility will allow for greater use by the local community, particularly of the high quality sports facilities that will come with its designation as a Sports College. - The % of young people leaving care with at least 1 GCSE rose from 52% in 2003/04 to 65%. |
| <p>Enable vulnerable adults to live independently</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of older people helped to live at home per 1,000-population aged 65 or over fell from 83 to 60, although there are issues surrounding the accuracy of historical data. This puts Herefordshire in the bottom quartile of English authorities. - At the end of September 2005, 3.2 adults per 1,000-population aged 18-64 with physical disabilities are being helped to live at home compared with 2.4 in 2004/05. For the same period, 3.3 adults per 1,000-population aged 18-64 with mental health problems were being helped to live at home compared with 1.3 in 2004-05. - The You@Home Partnership was set up in 2004 to carry out essential or urgent works, identified by health or other key workers, for vulnerable people in their homes. To date, over 700 people have been assisted. - Working with a number of partner organisations, since February 2005 almost 1,300 referrals have been made through the Signposting Scheme, directing older people to necessary services to enable them to remain independent at home, including an additional £6,500,000 plus in benefits being claimed. |
| <p>Protect the environment, by recycling waste and reducing carbon emissions</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The percentage of household waste which has been recycled continues to improve, and was at 24.2% at the end of December 2005 against an outturn of 19.5% in 2003/04 and 21.7% in 2004/05. - The proportion of major and minor planning applications determined against the statutory guidelines was less than in 2003-04, below the targets set. As a result, the Council was designated as a statutory planning authority by the Government and an Action Plan has been introduced to improve performance. |

| | |
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| <p>Improve transport and the safety of roads</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council, together with Herefordshire MIND, has received national recognition after a transport scheme aimed at helping people in isolated communities received top honours in June 2005 - The Council has been named as one of just 17 new centres of excellence for local transport delivery, including public transport and road safety. - The condition of local roads in the County continued to improve, achieving the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) target of no more than 10% of non-principal roads exceeding the prescribed deterioration threshold. - The LPSA target for reducing the number of killed and seriously injured casualties in road accidents was exceeded. Performance was 141 against the LPSA stretch target of 197. |
| <p>Sustain vibrant and prosperous communities, providing more efficient, effective and customer-focused services and clean streets</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of people accepted as homeless and towards whom the council has a full statutory duty fell 4% to 510 in 2004-05; there were 224 acceptances to the end of September 2005, a reduction of 21% on the first half of 2004/05. - The first phase of a major enhancement project to revitalise Hereford City Centre started in May. The refurbishment will include new paving, street lighting, seating and the replanting of trees. - The number of visits to public libraries increased to 5.17 per person [from ?]. |
| <p>Promote diversity and community harmony and strive for equal opportunities</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outcomes from Phase 1 impact assessments have been evaluated and will be incorporated in Service Plans for 2006-07; Phase 2 assessments are taking place. - A new race equality monitoring system was launched to encourage the reporting of incidents and allow for more accurate recording. - The proportion of Council buildings open to the public meeting Disability Discrimination Act requirements increased by 4% to 32%. |
| <p>Develop its community leadership role</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A new Communications Strategy approved. - Youth Council Action Group formed. - A survey of young people aged 13-19 showed that 19.8% thought that the Council does enough to give young people the opportunity to influence important decisions, compared to 13.8% in 2003. |
| <p>Secure significant efficiency savings</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A new Procurement Strategy was approved on 14th July, with milestones in the National Procurement Strategy being followed. - A new Customer Services Strategy approved. Development of the Service Improvement Programme will lead to greater efficiency savings. - Overall, the Council expects to make efficiency savings of £X |

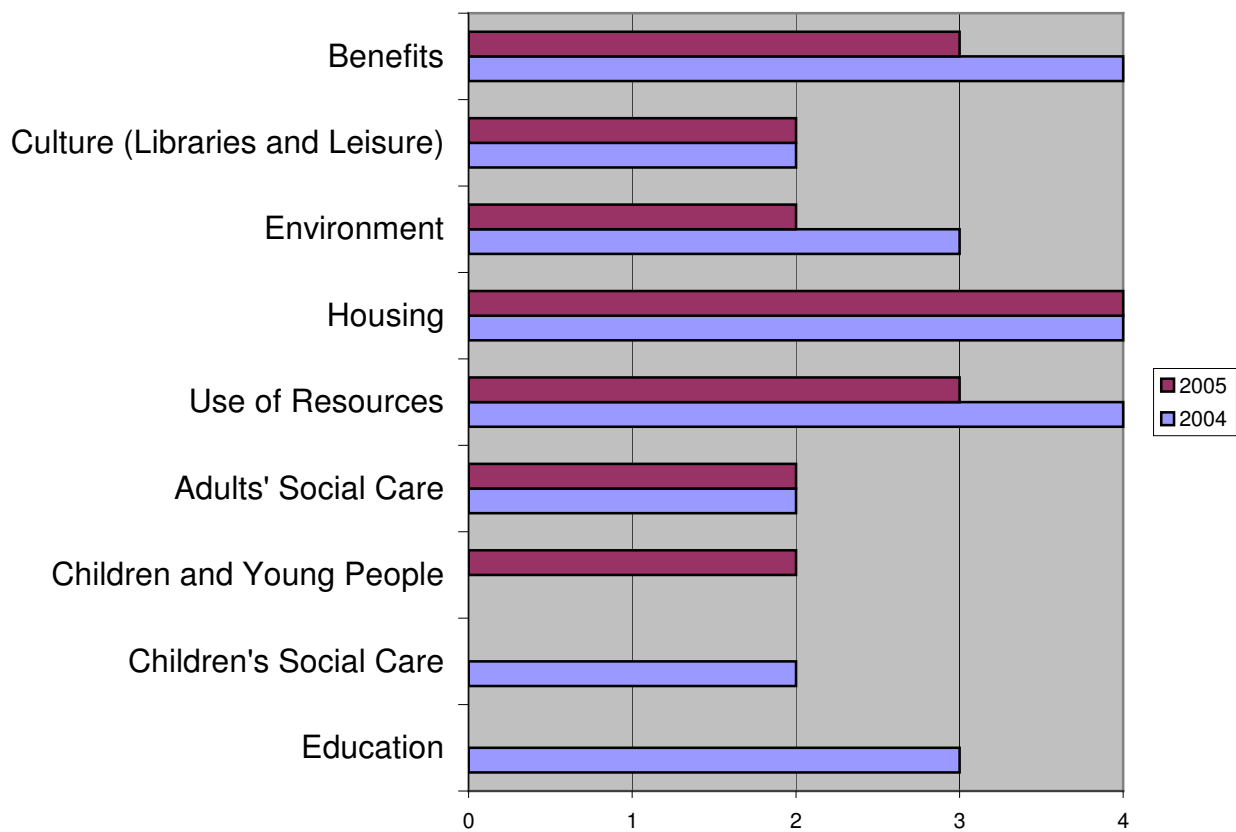
| | |
|---|--|
| | million in 2004-05, of which £Y million will be cash-releasing |
| Ensure that its essential assets are in the right condition for the long-term cost-effective delivery of services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Property Strategy developed [further details to be added, including re. Asset Management Strategy] |
| Understand the needs and preferences of service users and Council Tax-payers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All of the 536 Freedom of Information requests up to August were responded to within the statutory timetable. - New Community Involvement Strategy and Action Plan approved. - Annual satisfaction surveys introduced in autumn 2005 with follow-up <i>Herefordshire Voice</i> surveys. |
| Recruit, retain and motivate high quality staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sickness levels were at 11.07 days per FTE at the end of November 2005 against a target of 7 days, a drop in performance from the end of year figure reported for 2004/05. - Projects are underway in relation to centralising recruitment, career grading / generic skills, and approach agreed regarding flexible working as part of the Pay and Workforce Strategy - Job evaluation completed |
| Embed corporate planning, performance management and project management systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revised Performance Management Framework and Service Planning Guidance have been produced. There is a requirement for consistent implementation across the Council for performance management to be successful. - Integrated Performance reports to Corporate Management Board, Cabinet and Strategic Monitoring Committee are being produced according to the Performance Management Framework, but the quality and timeliness of the information needs to be improved to a consistent standard. |

4.5 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

4.6 The Audit Commission introduced revised and significantly more demanding CPA arrangements in 2005: *CPA – The Harder Test*. Under these arrangements, the Council was judged overall to have maintained its services at the same level as in the previous year, notwithstanding the lower scores under this tougher regime awarded to Benefits, Environment and Use of Resources.

4.7 The previously separate scores for Education and Children’s Social Care have been replaced with an overall score of 2 for Children and Young People, with education services seen as good but social care judged to be inadequate, substantially owing to concerns about the Council’s arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable children.

4.8 Housing, Culture and Adult Social Care have maintained their service scores.



4.9 **Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)** - CSCI assessed the Council as providing a 0 star service, serving some adults well, with uncertain capacity for improvement; and no children well with poor capacity for improvement.

4.10 **Audit and Inspection Letter** - the Council's overall financial position was judged by its external auditors to be sound, although it faces the challenge of delivering substantial future efficiency savings. Systems of internal control were found to be adequate, with room for improvement by further developing risk management, the assurance framework and the role of the Audit Committee. They judged the Council's achievements and management arrangements for improving value for money to be good.

5.0 Priorities

5.1 The Council's **top priorities** for the period of this Plan are:

- to **maximise the health, safety, economic well-being, achievements and contribution of every child**, including those with special needs and those in care
- to build on the already strong performance of the county's schools and continue to **improve the achievement of pupils**
- to **enable vulnerable adults to live independently** and, in particular, to **enable many more older people to continue to live in their own homes**
- to **protect the environment**, including by **producing much less waste, recycling much more of what remains** and significantly **reducing carbon emissions**
- to **improve transport and the safety of roads**, including further reductions in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured
- to **sustain vibrant and prosperous communities, including by securing more efficient, effective and customer-focused services, clean streets, tackling homelessness and effective emergency planning**
- to **promote diversity and community harmony** and **strive for equal opportunities** for all the people of Herefordshire, regardless of race, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, geographical location, income or age
- to **develop its community leadership role**, working with partners to deliver the *Herefordshire Plan*, including the *Local Area Agreement*

5.2 To make these things possible, **the Council's organisational priorities** are:

- to streamline its processes, assets and management structures, and **secure significant efficiency savings**, so as to keep down Council Tax increases and invest in priority service improvements
- to **ensure that its essential assets**, including schools, other buildings, roads and ICT, **are in the right condition for the long-term cost-effective delivery of services, and ensure business continuity** in the face of emergencies
- better to **understand the needs and preferences of service users and Council Tax-payers**, and to tailor services accordingly
- to **recruit, retain and motivate high quality staff**, ensuring that they are trained and developed so as to maximise their ability and performance
- to **embed corporate planning, performance management and project management systems** so as to continue to drive up service standards and efficiency

6.0 Identifying and Managing Risk

- 6.1 The Council is determined to make the most of opportunities and has a comprehensive approach to identifying and managing the risks it faces. The main risks to particular services and major projects, and how the Council intends to manage them, are identified in the Action Plan that follows in Section 7 below.
- 6.2 All risks are recorded and monitored by means of a corporate register. Details for 2006-07 will be included in the Annual Operating Plan and in directorate and service plans.

Overarching risks

- 6.3 A number of risks have the potential to affect the Council as a whole and to have direct or indirect impacts on all its services. These are **financial, reputational** and in respect of its **organisation, staff and systems**. These categories of risk often overlap and interact one upon the other.

Financial

- 6.4 The Council faces major risks in respect of the **level of resources** available to it to provide services, the maintenance of a **balanced budget** and the **effective and efficient use of resources**.
- 6.5 The UK Government is placing tight constraints on local authority spending generally, at the same time as requiring councils to take on additional responsibilities and setting more demanding service targets. These bear disproportionately on rural authorities because of the extra costs of providing services to sparse populations.
- 6.6 The impact falls especially hard on Herefordshire Council, as an authority that receives a much lower than average Government grant per head of population.
- 6.7 The Council will manage these risks by:
- continuing to make the case to Government for a fairer deal
 - ensuring that, whatever the level of resources realistically likely to be available, its forward plans are affordable
 - rigorous and robust systems of internal control, including in-year financial and performance monitoring and management, and a carefully targeted audit programme
 - delivering a major programme of efficiency savings, at least meeting the requirements of "*Delivering Efficiency in Local Services*", including:
 - the Service Improvement Programme (SIP)
 - targeted measures across all departments, without reducing customer services
 - spend-to-save investment, including the prudent use of reserves
 - getting better value from the goods and services the Council procures
 - rationalising the Council's accommodation and other property holdings, and lowering the costs of using them

- reducing lower priority services
- further developing our Medium-Term Financial Strategy in a new publication, initially in 2006-07, that will set out
- key service priorities
- the national context
- an overview of the capital plan
- a budget risk assessment
- the treasury management strategy
- details of pressures, improvements and savings
- the Prudential Indicators

Reputational

- 6.8 The Council must ensure that it has a good reputation with the people of Herefordshire, with partner organisations and with the UK Government. This is at risk in view of the financial and service challenges described above, as well as the ever-higher standards demanded by the Audit Commission and the other Government-led inspectorates.
- 6.9 The Council will manage these risks by:
- implementing its Improvement Programme, which has been rolled forward in the light of the 2005 Comprehensive Performance Assessment, including the Corporate Performance Assessment and the first Joint Area Review of Services for Children and the Young People (the key strategic elements are included in the Action Plan below). It will give the highest priority to ensuring that its arrangements for safeguarding children are at least adequate, and over the medium-term much more than that
 - an accelerated review of our corporate strategy to provide a sound basis for the comprehensive programme of service improvement and improved efficiency over the next three years
 - continuing the targeted improvement of individual services to achieve and maintain the highest possible Comprehensive Performance Assessment scores
 - under its comprehensive *Communications Strategy*, explaining to the public and partner organisations, candidly and in plain English, the issues the Council faces
 - under its equally comprehensive *Community Involvement Strategy*, consulting the public and partners fully about the major choices it has to make, taking their views into account before making them, and explaining the reasons for its decisions
 - intensifying its focus on serving its customers through its new *Customer Services Strategy*. This will include testing, through annual surveys and the monitoring of complaints and

compliments, levels of customer satisfaction with the Council as a whole and with individual services

- ensuring effective emergency planning and business continuity to maintain essential services and protect the vulnerable
- continuing to implement the Freedom of Information Act, at the same time as continuing to comply with data protection legislation
- ensuring full compliance with all equalities legislation, in particular by completing its comprehensive programme of diversity impact assessments, ensuring that the results are acted upon, and being well-prepared to meet the requirements of new legislation that will extend protection against unequal treatment on the grounds of gender, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief
- working with other organisations to achieve common goals for the people of Herefordshire, particularly by means of giving effect to the new *Herefordshire Plan* and the associated *Local Area Agreement* with Government
- maintaining the highest standards of corporate governance, propriety, integrity and impartiality

Organisation, staff and systems

- 6.10 In support of these developments, the Council is implementing a major programme of organisational change and development, which involves working in new ways across traditional service boundaries within the Council and with our partners. This requires a more driven, corporate approach to securing change so as to deliver better services, meet new statutory and regulatory requirements, and improve efficiency.
- 6.11 Foundations have been laid to meet the challenges of *The Children Act* and *Every Child Matters*. Full, successful implementation will continue to require substantial cultural and organisational change within the Council and with partners. There is a particular need to ensure fully robust social care to safeguard the most vulnerable children and to improve services for those with learning difficulties and their families.
- 6.12 This is paralleled in its importance and magnitude by the need to secure new patterns of preventative, more flexible, value for money services to maximise the choice and independence of vulnerable adults
- 6.13 These and other challenges must be met at the same time as continuing to deliver to a high standard all essential services; and do so in some cases with fewer staff, working in new structures, new management relationships and streamlined business processes. Above all, it must have a high quality, motivated workforce.
- 6.14 Underpinning the service and organisational improvements, there must be highly efficient and effective ICT. The Council's systems are undergoing major up-grading; this will continue to require significant investment over the coming years.
- 6.15 Organisational change and development of this scale and range is a huge challenge, with high inherent risks of failure.
- 6.16 The Council will manage these risks by means of:

- setting clear strategies, objectives, targets and timetables for all elements of change and improvement, taking into account their interactions one upon the other
- having a designated lead Cabinet member and member of the Corporate Management Board for each area of change, objective and performance, including in respect of children's services and an Older People's Champion
- PRINCE 2 project management, with each project led by the relevant member of the Corporate Management Board or Senior Management Team and overseen by the responsible Cabinet member
- the establishment of the Corporate Management Board, chaired by the Chief Executive. Its focus is on strategic issues, including the change agenda. Each member devotes at least 20 per cent of his or her time to explicitly corporate activities. These changes are buttressed by the creation of the new Directorate for Corporate and Customer Services, which leads and manages the corporate planning process and performance management throughout the Council.
- driving strategic change into operational reality through the new Senior Management Team of Heads of Services
- devoting dedicated staff resources to drive the programme and to safeguard affected areas during the transition to fully operational new structures
- a Pay and Workforce Strategy, including support for staff and comprehensive training and development opportunities linked to the Council's objectives, underpinned by the Council's commitment to seek accreditation as an *Investor in People*
- a systematic programme for effective two-way communication with all staff, as part of the Council's overall *Communications Strategy*
- regular monitoring by the Corporate Management Board and Cabinet of the overall programme and the individual elements, leading to vigorous action wherever necessary
- regular reports to the Strategic Monitoring Committee and the relevant subject scrutiny committees

7.0 The challenges and the Council's response: the Action Plan for 2006-09

- 7.1 The pages that follow set out, for each of the Council's priorities, what the Council aims to achieve over the coming three years and the key actions it intends to take to do so.
- 7.2 Many of the actions contribute to more than one of the priorities. Where they are of particular significance to more than one priority they are repeated, but mostly they are described in relation to the priority to which they contribute most.
- 7.3 **Part One – Making a reality of The Herefordshire Plan** – shows what the Council intends to do to fulfil the new *Herefordshire Plan*, including the *Local Area Agreement*.
- 7.4 **Part Two - Organisational improvement** – shows what the Council intends to do to the way it operates so as to deliver better, more cost-effective services to users and Council Tax-payers.
- 7.5 Except where otherwise indicated, the stated targets are to be achieved by the end of March 2009.
- 7.6 The Plan will be up-dated and rolled forward annually so that it always looks forward three years.
- 7.7 The details of what the Council will do in the first year of this Corporate Plan will be set out in its **Annual Operating Plan 2006-07**. This will include the budgets, targets and actions for individual services and organisational programmes.
- 7.8 To achieve the targets will require effective working across organisational boundaries: internally, between Cabinet members and between managers at all levels; and externally, between Council members and officers and their counterparts in partner organisations.
- 7.9 Information on the Council's budgets and income is given in Appendices 1 – 5.

The Action Plan Part One: making a reality of *The Herefordshire Plan*

Maximising the health, safety, economic well-being, achievements and contribution of every child, including those with special needs and those in care

The challenges

The overall challenge is to deliver, with our partners and across the whole of the Council's activities, fully integrated and coherent services for children and young people, as required by *Every Child Matters* and the *Children Act*.

Within that framework, we must give the highest priority to ensuring that:

- the most vulnerable children and young people are safeguarded, and enjoy and achieve to their maximum potential
- there are high quality services and support that meet the needs of children and young people with learning difficulties
- there is adequate housing provision for single young people (including those leaving care) and families
- services are provided on the basis of a sound understanding of the needs and wishes of children, young people and their families
- the foundations are laid for all children to lead healthy and fulfilled lives

The Council's response

- ✓ Building on the work of the *Children's Partnership Board*, we will **establish**, with our partners, **a Children's Trust** to provide the basis for sustainable high quality services for children and young people
- ✓ We will complete, with our partners, the development and **successful implementation of the *Herefordshire Child Concern Model*** under the direction of the *Safeguarding Children Board*
- ✓ We will establish a disability taskforce and Development Plan to **deliver service improvements for children with learning difficulties and disabilities**
- ✓ By implementing our *Homelessness Strategy* and by securing, with partners, an increase in the supply of both temporary and settled housing, we aim to **eliminate the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for households with children**
- ✓ Through the implementation of our *Community Involvement Action Plan for Young People*, including the establishment of the *Herefordshire Youth Council* and the operation of the *Community Fora*, we will maintain an up-to-date understanding of the

needs and wishes of children and young people. A key measure of our success will be to **increase from 19% to 30% the percentage of young people who feel that the Council does enough to give young people the opportunity to influence important decisions**

- ✓ Working with our partners, particularly in the NHS and the community sector, to ensure that parents get the advice and support they need, we aim by 2007-08 to:
 - **increase from 25.4% to 40% by 2008 the proportion of babies born in the South Wye area who are breastfeeding at six weeks of age**
 - **increase from 15.1 % to 30% by 2008 the proportion of babies born to teenage mothers in the county who are breastfeeding at six weeks of age**
- ✓ By delivering Local Transport Plan safety schemes and through road safety instruction in schools, we aim to **limit to no more than 12 the number of under 16s killed or seriously injured annually in road accidents in the county**
- ✓ We aim to ensure that **at least 85% of 3 year olds have access to** a good quality free early years education place in the voluntary, private or maintained sectors
- ✓ We aim to **increase from 12 to 46 by 2008 the number of young people engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19 who had been looked after by the Council in their 17th year**

Building on the already strong performance of the county's schools and continuing to improve the achievement of pupils

The challenges

The coming three years will require the Council to continue to work successfully with schools within a developing national framework that is likely further to increase school autonomy, but with the Council still have major responsibilities for support services, such as school transport, and special educational needs.

This partnership will need to:

- raise the already impressive overall achievement of pupils across the county to even higher levels
- ensure that this extends to all Council maintained schools and all groups of pupils, with a particular emphasis on improving the achievements and life-chances of those suffering disadvantage

The Council's response

- ✓ By working with schools in partnership with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and further education colleges, to broaden the range and flexibility of the curriculum and available qualifications, including increased vocational options, we aim to **increase from 90.1 % to 96.5% by 2007-08 [2008-09 target to be determined] the proportion of pupils in schools maintained by the Council achieving 5 or more 5A* - G grades at GCSE, or the equivalent**
- ✓ We will work with schools to raise to even higher levels performance in the top GCSE grades, in particular **increasing from X % to Y % the proportion of pupils in schools maintained by the Council achieving 5 A* - C GCSEs, including English and Maths, or the equivalent**
- ✓ By working in partnership with schools to tackle disaffection by means of the Behaviour Support Plan and the Behaviour Support Policy produced by each school, we aim to **reduce school absences** as follows:
 - **in secondary schools maintained by the Council, from 7.8 % to 6% of half-day sessions by 2007-08**
 - **in primary schools maintained by the Council, from 5.2 % to 4% of half-day sessions by 2007-08**
 - **the number of children looked after by the Council continuously for at least 12 months, who missed at least 25 days of schooling during the previous school year, to fall from 14 to no more than 7 by 2007-08**

- **reduce by an average of 4.25% over three years (ending academic year 2007/8) the number of half-day sessions (currently 839) missed due to authorised and unauthorised absence in primary schools by children looked after by Herefordshire**
- **reduce by an average of 7% over three years (ending academic year 2007/8) the number of half-day sessions (currently 1,656) missed due to authorised and unauthorised absence in secondary schools by children looked after by Herefordshire**

Enabling vulnerable adults to live independently and, in particular, enabling many more older people to continue to live in their own homes

The challenges

Throughout the coming three years the big challenges are to:

- continue to expand provision and improve the quality of life to meet the needs of the rapidly increasing numbers of older people, especially those over 80, and their carers
- provide more effective and flexible support for other vulnerable adults (particularly those with physical disabilities, mental health problems or learning difficulties) and their carers
- in respect of all, maximise independence, well-being and choice
- tackle homelessness
- work with communities and partners to develop to the full the opportunities for all older people to have fulfilled lives and contribute to society
- provide services more efficiently so that the money released can be reinvested in better services

The Council's response

- ✓ By working with partners to reduce waiting times for assessment and care packages; mapping, co-ordinating and developing a range of rehabilitation, prevention and independent living services; establishing community wardens across the county; expanding the *Signposting Scheme*; piloting a local care sitter service; targeting further sites with Fire Service outreach workers; continuing the Trading Standards *Doorstep Crime Campaign*; and by increasing significantly the number of older people receiving direct payments to purchase social care, we aim to **increase from 60 to Y the number of people of 65 or over helped to live at home per 1,000 population** *[N.B. Targets for this and other adult social care indicators below to be set once reliable baseline data has been established]*
- ✓ By the same means, we aim to:
 - **reduce from 34,691 to 31,222 by 2007-08 the number of emergency unscheduled acute hospital bed-days in NHS hospitals occupied by a person aged 75 or more commissioned by Herefordshire Primary Care Trust**
 - **increase the satisfaction of people over 65 using home care services provided through Herefordshire Social Care or directly purchasing services using direct payments** (measured as a reduction

of at least 10% in the gap between the proportion satisfied in 2006 and 100%, and the gap in 2009)

- ✓ By working with our partners and following extensive consultation with older people and other interests, **we will have in place by October 2006 a comprehensive Older People's Strategy, with clear targets and actions to achieve them**
- ✓ Through the development of a Joint Team with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and implementation of an agreed plan and methods to identify potential claimants, **increasing the number of people in receipt of Pension Credit from 7596 to 8138 by 2007-08**
- ✓ Through the development of a Joint Team with the DWP and implementation of an agreed plan and methods to identify potential claimants, **increasing the number of people aged 60 or over in receipt of Council Tax benefit from 6862 to 8061 by 2007-08**
- ✓ Through the development of a Joint Team with the DWP and implementation of an agreed plan and methods to identify potential claimants, **increasing the number of people in receipt Attendance Allowance from 5874 to 6702 by 2007-08**
- ✓ Working with partners to implement the *Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment Best Value Review Action Plan* and through the development of a new deaf-blind service, we aim to **increase from X to Y the number of people with physical disabilities per 1,000 population aged 18-64 helped to live at home**
- ✓ With partners, using improved assessment tools and providing improved advice and support, we aim to **increase from X to Y the number of people with learning disabilities per 1,000 population aged 18-64 helped to live at home**
- ✓ Working with our partners in a co-located joint service, with expanded early intervention, deliberate self-harm and carers' support services, we aim to **increase from X to Y the number of people with mental health problems per 1,000 population aged 18-64 helped to live at home**
- ✓ By implementing with our partners our *Homelessness Strategy Action Plan* and developing more affordable housing, we aim to **decrease from 417 to X the number of people accepted as homeless during a year in respect of whom the Council has a full statutory duty**
[Target yet to be set]

Protecting the environment, including by producing much less waste, recycling much more of what remains and significantly reducing carbon emissions

The challenge

Building on the strong foundations we have laid in recent years, over the next three years we must further improve our performance in respect of:

- safeguarding Herefordshire's beautiful countryside as a place where people can live, work and enjoy, and which continues to be a magnet for responsible tourism
- reducing waste and pollution across the county
- our direct contribution from the way we conduct our operations

and do so within tightly constrained resources.

The Council's response

- ✓ Primarily by means of targeted bus subsidies, the provision of bus lanes and other public transport infrastructure, and by introducing park and ride facilities, we aim to:
 - **control the increase of annual average traffic volumes to no more than 5% compared with 2003-04**
 - **increase from 3,447,528 to 4,017,000 (16.5%) the number of passenger bus journeys a year**
- ✓ By providing improved cycleways, traffic and road safety schemes, the safer routes to schools programme, and highway and footway maintenance, we aim to increase the number of cyclists using public cycle parking facilities by 5% every two years and **increase by 12% the number of cycling trips in a year compared with 2003-04 [absolute numbers to be added]**
- ✓ Through our maintenance of highway verges, school grounds, cemeteries, smallholdings, parks, open spaces and other landholdings, we aim to **increase from 2.49% to 3.3% the proportion of Council-owned or managed land, without a nature conservation designation, that is managed for biodiversity**
- ✓ By increasing participation in the kerbside collection of recyclables, supporting new facilities for waste diversion and recycling and improving the performance of household waste sites, we aim to:
 - **limit the increase in the amount of household waste collected per head in a year to 530.87 kilograms (compared to the baseline of 528.03 kilograms)**

- **reduce from 78.28 % to 71.8% the proportion of household waste that is landfilled**
- ✓ Through the implementation of *The Herefordshire Partnership's Carbon Management Action Plan*, we aspire to see a **reduction in carbon emissions per head of the population from the baseline of X to 11.25 tonnes a year**

Improving transport and the safety of roads, including further reductions in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured

The challenge

Over the coming three years we must:

- improve the condition of the roads for which the Council is responsible at a time when recurrent Government financial support for highways is set to fall
- build on our achievements by cutting road casualties even more
- continue to do all we can to promote sustainable transport that serves all the people of the county, including those who don't have a car

The Council's response

- ✓ By means of Local Transport Plan safety schemes, improving the condition of roads more generally and through road safety training in schools, we aim to **reduce from 141 to 116 the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions in a year**
- ✓ Primarily by means of targeted bus subsidies, the provision of bus lanes and other public transport infrastructure, and by introducing park and ride facilities, we aim to:
 - **control the increase of annual average traffic volumes to no more than 5% compared with 2003-04**
 - **increase from 3,447,528 to 4,017,000 (16.5) the number of passenger bus journeys a year**
- ✓ By providing improved cycleways, traffic and road safety schemes, the safer routes to schools programme, and highway and footway maintenance, we aim to increase the number of cyclists using public cycle parking facilities by 5% every two years and **increase by 12% the number of cycling trips in a year compared with 2003-04**

Sustaining vibrant and prosperous communities, including by securing more efficient, effective and customer-focused services, clean streets, tackling homelessness and effective emergency planning

The challenges

The next three years require continued action across a wide range of complementary areas vital to the future of communities across the county:

- strengthening the competitiveness of the economy to secure better paid, higher value-added jobs
- tackling the growing problems of affordable housing and homelessness
- building on success in reducing the overall level of crime, with a particular drive to reduce the number of violent offences, crime related to the misuse of drugs and alcohol, and anti-social behaviour
- working in even more effective and focused partnerships across all sectors to maintain and improve community services, including the full modernisation of those provided directly by the Council to make them more cost-effective and user-friendly
- the fuller engagement of people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities in the life and development of their communities
- maintaining our successful partnerships to ensure that all people are safeguarded at times of emergency

The Council's response

- ✓ By implementing with partners the *Herefordshire Economic Development Strategy 2005 to 2025*, including the creation of *The Learning Village* and the £100 million plus regeneration programme for Hereford City, continued special emphasis on raising skills, employment opportunities and wages in the South Wye area, and the completion of *The Market Towns Initiative*, we aim to **continue to close the gap in average wage levels between Herefordshire and the rest of the West Midlands and nationally**
- ✓ By establishing a new grant scheme to encourage employers and by running a support programme of seminars and events, we aim to **increase the number of people employed in technology and knowledge intensive industries from 9,339 to 10,286 by 2007-08**
- ✓ Through the implementation of the *Herefordshire and Worcestershire Learning and Skills Council Local Strategic Plan*, we aim **by 2007-08 to increase the number of Herefordshire residents aged 19 and over achieving:**

- a Level 2 qualification, excluding manufacturing and engineering, from 1,738 to 1,872
 - a Level 2 qualification in manufacturing and engineering from 35 to 57
 - a Level 3 qualification, excluding manufacturing and engineering, from 825 to 878
 - a Level 3 qualification in manufacturing and engineering from 26 to 44
- ✓ By implementing with our partners our *Homelessness Strategy Action Plan* and developing more affordable housing, we aim to **decrease from 417 to X the number of people accepted as homeless during a year in respect of whom the Council has a full statutory duty**
- ✓ Through the implementation of the *Herefordshire Community Safety and Drugs Partnership Strategy*, the *Hereford Against Night-Time Disorder Scheme*, and the work of the *Community Alcohol Service*, including the *Alcohol Referral Scheme*, we aim **by 2007-08 to:**
- **decrease from 2,844 to 2,553 the number of violent crimes**
 - **decrease from 2,524 to 2,101 the number of criminal damage incidents**
 - **decrease by 5% the proportion of people who think that the following things are a problem:**
 - **speeding traffic**
 - **vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles**
 - **people using drugs**
 - **people dealing drugs**
 - **people being drunk or rowdy in public places**
- ✓ By means of promotional campaigns, working in partnership with other agencies and voluntary and community groups (including the provision of cleansing equipment for them to use), a targeted programme of deep cleansing and enforcement action, we aim to **reduce from 34% to 15% the proportion of streets and other public areas falling below an acceptable level (Grade B) for cleanliness**
- ✓ Through a wide-ranging programme of actions, *[key elements to be defined]*, we aim **at least to maintain access to key local services, measured by the proportion of survey respondents who find it easy to access:**
- **a local shop: 86%**
 - **a supermarket: 79%**

- a shop selling fresh fruit and vegetables: 80%
- a post office: 82%
- a doctor: 77%
- a local hospital: 56%
- a green space: 81%
- public transport: 75%
- a chemist or pharmacy: 77%
- a bank or cash point: 73%
- a library: 69%
- a sports or leisure centre: 66%
- a cultural or recreational facility: 53%
- a Council office: 60%

[targets to be reviewed in the light of analysis of results from the late 2005 Annual Satisfaction Survey]

- ✓ We aim **by 2007-08 to increase from X % to Y% [by 7%] the satisfaction of adult residents with their local community as a place to live [the baseline and target will be finalised in the Spring when the results of the late 2005 Annual Satisfaction Survey have been analysed]**
- ✓ We will also measure the adult public's perceptions of improvement in the quality of life over the three years of this Plan in terms of each of the following:
 - access to nature
 - activities for teenagers
 - affordable decent housing
 - clean streets
 - community activities
 - cultural facilities
 - education provision
 - facilities for young children
 - health services
 - job prospects
 - parks and open spaces
 - public transport
 - race relations
 - road and pavement repairs
 - shopping facilities
 - sports and leisure facilities
 - the level of crime
 - the level of pollution
 - the level of traffic congestion
 - wage levels and the local cost of living

[targets and actions to be taken to be determined in the light of analysis of the late 2005 Annual Satisfaction Survey]

- ✓ By implementing our *Community Involvement and Communications Action Plan*, enabling more communities to draw up their community/parish plans, making the best possible use of the county's *Community Fora*, capacity- building and training for community volunteers and agencies, and support for activities that enable communities to come together more we aim **by 2007-08 to:**
 - **increase from X% to Y % [i.e. by 5%] the proportion of adult residents who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local community [the baseline and target will be finalised in the Spring in the light of analysis of the late 2005 Annual Satisfaction Survey]**
 - **increase from X% to Y% [i.e. by 5%] he proportion of adult residents reporting that they have engaged in formal volunteering for an average of two or more hours a week [the baseline and target will be finalised in the Spring in the light of analysis of the late 2005 Annual Satisfaction Survey]**
- ✓ Working with our partners to deliver our annual programme of risk assessment, emergency planning and exercising, business continuity management within the Council, advice to businesses and other organisations, and effective communications with the community, we will **comply fully with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004**
- ✓ By all these means, we aim to **increase by 2007-08 from X% to Y% [i.e. by 8%] the proportion of adults satisfied with their community as a place to live [the baseline and target will be finalised in the Spring in the light of analysis of the late 2005 Annual Satisfaction Survey]**

Promoting diversity and community harmony and striving for equal opportunities for all the people of Herefordshire, regardless of race, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, geographical location, income or age

The challenges

Over the next three years we must:

- accelerate our progress against the *Local Authority Equality Standard*
- meet existing and new statutory requirements to promote equality and eliminate discrimination in respect of race, disability and gender
- prepare effectively to meet expected new statutory requirements in respect of age, religion or belief, and sexual orientation
- continue the sound equal opportunities policies and practices the Council has established for the selection and development of its staff, and further increase the diversity of our workforce

The Council's response

- ✓ We will work with *The Herefordshire Equality Partnership*, implement fully our *Comprehensive Equality Policy Action Plan*, rolling it forward to meet new challenges and targets, and continue our comprehensive programme of elected member, staff and community awareness and development, so as to **attain Level 4 of the *Local Authority Equality Standard***
- ✓ Integral to this, we will **complete our initial three-year programme of equality impact assessments during 2006-07 and roll it forward to ensure that the results are up-to-date and cover fully new statutory requirements**, with effective action planning and performance management to ensure that the results are acted upon
- ✓ In particular, we will keep up-to-date our statutory *Race Equality Scheme* and *Disability Scheme*, with the following key targets:
[to be added]
- ✓ In doing all this, **we will take account of the equalities implications of the results of our surveys that ask the public about ease of access to key services and factors affecting the quality of life** (for fuller details see the Action Plan for *Sustain vibrant and prosperous communities* on page 33 above), **setting targets and actions accordingly**
- ✓ ***[target and related key actions to increase the diversity of the Council's workforce]***

Developing the Council's leadership role, working with partners to deliver *The Herefordshire Plan*, including the *Local Area Agreement (LAA)* with Government

The challenges

The development of a new *Herefordshire Plan* to 2020 with partners, and following extensive public involvement and consultation across all sectors, provides the foundations for an even more successful *Herefordshire Partnership*. This is now buttressed by the LAA, which provides the core of the *Partnership Action Plan* for 2006-09, with clear targets and performance management arrangements to ensure delivery.

The challenge is to take full advantage of this unprecedented opportunity to improve significantly the quality of life of the county's whole population.

At the same time, the Council must continue to maintain confidence in local democracy.

The Council's response

The full details are set out in *The Herefordshire Plan 2006 to 2020*, and many of the key targets and actions are described in the earlier parts of this Action Plan. Crucial specific areas include the **implementation of:**

- ✓ **the county's *Crime, Disorder and Drugs Strategy***
- ✓ **the *Learning and Skills Council's Herefordshire and Worcestershire Local Strategic Plan***
- ✓ **the new public health agenda *Choosing Health***
- ✓ ***Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act***
- ✓ **in terms of adult social care, *Independence, well-being and choice***
- ✓ ***The Older People's Strategy***
- ✓ ***The Civil Contingencies Act 2004***

To maintain high-levels of public confidence in local democracy, the Council will:

- ✓ do all in its power to **meet its full statutory duties, including under the *Freedom of Information Act* and data protection legislation**
- ✓ overseen by its independently chaired *Standards Committee* and through the work of the *Monitoring Officer*, **uphold in its own affairs the highest standards of corporate governance, propriety, integrity and impartiality**

- ✓ working with the *Herefordshire Association of Local Councils*, **provide training and support to enable the county's town and parish councils to demonstrate best practice and be at the forefront of national developments**

The Action Plan Part Two - organisational improvement

Streamlining processes, assets and management structures, and securing significant efficiency savings, so as to keep down Council Tax increases and invest in priority service improvements

The challenges

Over the next three years we must:

- make recurrent and cumulative cash-releasing savings of at least £1.65 million annually
- achieve these savings without detriment to our customers
- continue to modernise and improve the quality, accessibility and positive impact of our services on people's quality of life

The Council's response

- ✓ We will define the full details of the programme to achieve the cash-releasing savings during 2006-7. The principal elements are described below:
- ✓ We will **rationalise our front and back office functions, create a state-of-the-art *Info by phone* service and deliver other aspects of our Service Improvement Programme**
- ✓ Through e-procurement, benchmarking against other organisations, streamlining procedures and other initiatives, we will **continue to improve the value for money we get from procuring goods and services**
- ✓ We will **implement our *Accommodation Strategy***, including the disposal of properties, the cessation of leases and the relocation of staff
- ✓ Wherever necessary, we will **invest to save in order to achieve recurrent savings**; in particular, we will **continue our comprehensive programme of investment in ICT and meet fully Government targets for e-government**
- ✓ **Develop during 2006-7 performance indicators for resources and efficiency** as part of an updated and more detailed Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

Ensuring that essential assets, including schools, other buildings, roads and ICT, are in the right condition for the long-term cost-effective delivery of services, and ensure business continuity in the face of emergencies

The challenges

The Council must ensure that:

- despite the need for overall reductions in expenditure, it maintains a prudent programme for the renewal and maintenance of its key assets
- it has in place tried and tested plans and systems to maintain services in the event of disaster or other crises
- it raises its performance as regards the use of resources, including the achievement of best value for money, to an even higher level

The Council's response

- ✓ We will complete our new **ICT network** to make our operations more efficient and effective, with the network **available for at least 98.5% of the time**
- ✓ With our partners, we will complete **the *Herefordshire in Touch* programme in the first year of this plan**
- ✓ By disposing of some dilapidated property and bringing up to standard the buildings we retain following the completion of our *Accommodation Strategy*, we will **raise the proportion of the gross internal floor space in ODPM categories A and B to at least 90% by 2007-08 [*higher target for 2008-09?*]**
- ✓ By embedding our business continuity plans for all parts of the Council's activities and services through an annual programme of risk assessment and business continuity management, we will ensure that we **comply with the *Civil Contingencies Act 2004*, in particular so as to safeguard the most vulnerable people in the county**
- ✓ We will embed risk management across all aspects of the Council's work and take all other measures necessary to **raise our *Use of Resources* score from 3 to 4** (the highest possible)

Understanding the needs and preferences of service users and Council Tax-payers, and tailoring services accordingly

The challenges

As the Council strives to achieve more with less, makes big efficiency savings and concentrates resources on priority areas, it must be more than ever careful to root all that it does in a solid understanding of what the public and our customers need and want.

The Council's response

- ✓ Through the completion of our network of local *Info Shops*, the creation of a state-of-the-art *Info by phone* service and the full implementation of e-government, we will provide **better, faster and more responsive services to individual customers. Phased implementation will go live in Planning and Environmental Health & Trading standards by summer 2006; full corporate implementation by late 2007.**
- ✓ By means of an action plan to define customer standards for individual services where they don't already exist, the embedding of our new customer relations management and complaints handling systems, a programme to continue encouraging customer feedback, and a rolling programme of training for complaints officers and other staff, we aim to **increase from 29 % to 50% the proportion of those making complaints who are satisfied with how their complaint has been handled**
- ✓ By implementing our *Community Involvement* and *Communications Strategy* action plans, giving effect to agreed parish plan aspirations, the implementation of changes following a review of the *Community Fora* and conducting annual customer satisfaction surveys, we aim to **increase from 11% to 30% the proportion of Herefordshire Voice respondents who feel that the Council does enough to give local people the opportunity to influence important decisions**
- ✓ Through these means and the service improvements described elsewhere in this Plan, and also by enabling more communities to draw up town and parish plans, building community and voluntary sector capacity and enabling more opportunities for people in communities to come together, we aim **by 2007-08 to increase from X% to Y% [i.e. by 8%] the proportion of adults satisfied with their community as a place to live**
- ✓ Through the implementation of our *Community Involvement Action Plan for Young People*, including the establishment of the *Herefordshire Youth Council* and the operation of the *Community Fora*, we will maintain an up-to-date understanding of the needs and wishes of children and young people. A key measure of our success will be to **increase from 19% to 30% the percentage of young people who feel that the Council does enough to give young people the opportunity to influence important decisions**

- ✓ Building on the good practice of our rolling programme of housing needs assessments across the county, we will extend this approach to other areas of the Council's work, **giving priority to understanding better the needs of the most vulnerable or disadvantaged people, including older people and those with disabilities or mental health problems**
- ✓ Continuing to operate our robust procedures for **complying with the *Freedom of Information Act* and data protection legislation.**

Recruiting, retaining and motivating high quality staff, ensuring that they are trained and developed so as to maximise their ability and performance

The challenges

The Council has loyal and dedicated staff, committed to excellence in serving the people of Herefordshire. But the ever-rising expectations of the public and Government, the fresh challenges of a fast-moving world and the need to work in new ways with our partners to achieve more with less, can only be met if we continue to have the right managers and front-line staff with the right understanding, skills and motivation. These must, therefore, be continually updated and renewed.

Specific challenges are:

- the recent Corporate Performance Assessment and Joint Area Review (JAR) of services for children and young people confirmed that we have many strengths but also the importance of developing key skills in respect of effective planning and performance management to drive continuous improvement in standards of services across the Council
- the JAR highlighted the need for a more effective workforce strategy for social care to address problems of recruitment and retention
- to maximise productivity and contribute to the drive for big efficiency savings, we must reduce sickness absence, strike the right balance in staff turnover, and improve our recruitment processes
- to make even more effective two-way communications between managers and staff at all levels.

The Council's response

- ✓ **Our *Pay and Workforce Strategy*** will continue to be the comprehensive response to these challenges; it **will be kept up-to-date to reflect changing needs**
- ✓ At the heart of the *Strategy* is our commitment to ***Investor in People* accreditation**, which we aim to achieve for the whole Council. The timescale for this will be considered as part of the Pay and Workforce Development Strategy operational plan and set in 2006-07.
- ✓ We will **continue our comprehensive programme of staff training and development**, basing it on a sound understanding of current skills and future skills needs, identifying the need for NVQs and other formally accredited training, and linking core skills to pay and grading
- ✓ In particular, we will deepen and extend our programmes to **ensure that all managers are well-equipped to plan their services and manage performance effectively to deliver the Council's priorities**
- ✓ We will integrate this approach with the annual cycle of individual Staff Review and Development, with the intention of **raising from 76 % to 100% the putting into place and implementation of personal development plans**

- ✓ By improved management of attendance, provision of timely management information, and the active engagement of Human Resources in recommending interventions and improvement, we aim to **reduce sickness absence from an average of 10.4 days per FTE in 2004 to 7.**
- ✓ Through better workforce planning, including the analysis of skills shortages and national trends, by promoting careers at the Council in schools, colleges, universities, and at national events, and by improving our recruitment and retention procedures, we aim to **maintain annual staff turnover at 9%**
- ✓ We will pay **special attention to the recruitment and retention of staff in social care and other particularly sensitive areas of service delivery**
- ✓ We will centralise the recruitment administration of permanent and temporary employees, and agency staff, to secure efficiency gains across the Council, by **creating a new Recruitment Centre**
- ✓ We will continue to improve understanding and motivation throughout the organisation by **implementing our *Communications Strategy Action Plan***

Embedding corporate planning, performance management and project management systems so as to continue to drive up service standards and efficiency

The challenges

The recent Corporate Performance Assessment and the Joint Area Review of services for children and young people confirmed that the Council has sound frameworks for planning and performance management, but also that they have not been operated to a consistent high standard across all departments. In particular, we need:

- a more systematic and rigorous approach to drive continuous improvement in standards of services
- an effective mechanism to maintain an overall view of performance against high-level ambitions and cross-cutting issues

The inspectors also confirmed the need for more effective use of Scrutiny in managing performance and corporate policy development, and recommended the review and, if necessary, reconfiguration of political structures in line with corporate priorities.

Rapid progress in these areas is crucial to the delivery of the Council's ambitious agenda for organisational change, modernisation, greater efficiency and, above all, service improvement.

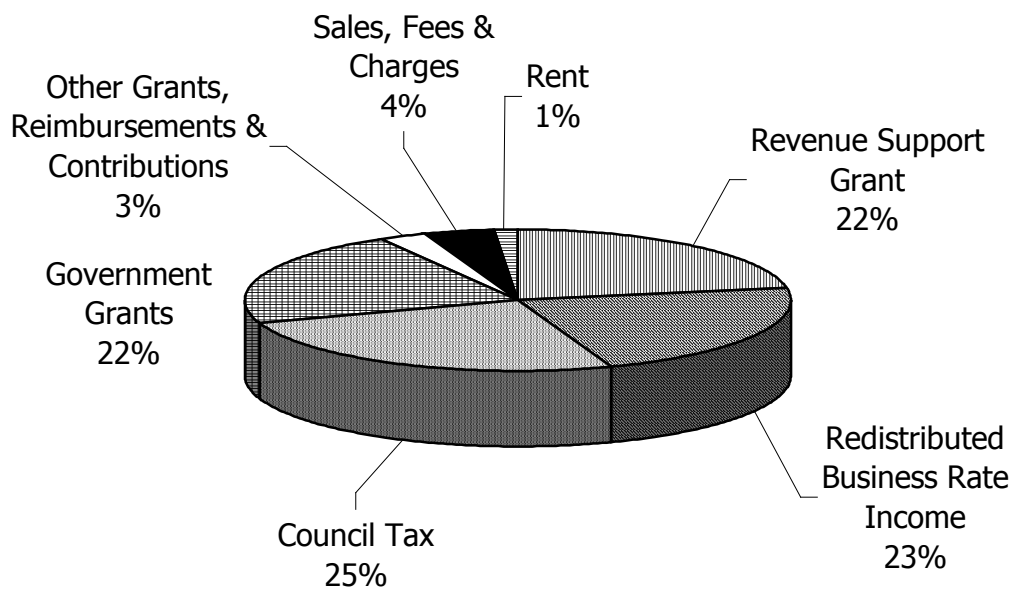
The Council's response

- ✓ We will further develop the corporate planning process to **align fully corporate, service and financial planning**, and so provide a sound basis for systematically achieving value for money across all services
- ✓ We will implement performance management systems and tools **to facilitate much more effective challenge** and so bring greater rigour to the setting of targets and the identification of the necessary milestones, actions, risks and resources, so as to drive up performance
- ✓ Starting with this Corporate Plan, there will be **fewer, more strategic performance indicators** but with clear links to all the more detailed indicators that must feature in directorate and service plans
- ✓ We will **review and make much more accessible performance reports to the Corporate Management Board, Cabinet, Strategic Monitoring Committee and subject scrutiny committees**, so as to promote more effective challenge and performance improvement
- ✓ We will put in place **a corporate ICT-based system to make much easier and faster the collection and analysis of all performance information for the Council and its strategic partners**. The timescale will be determined following the Corporate Strategy Review; that timescale will not be allowed to stand in the way of the improvements in the quality of plans and performance reporting that are needed urgently

- ✓ **Directorate and service plans will be quality-assured** to ensure that they are of the right standard and will enable the Council to deliver its priorities, including in respect of cross-cutting issues
- ✓ **Directors and Heads of Service will be required to ensure that all Council-wide policies, strategies, programmes and procedures are delivered in their areas**
- ✓ By means of our action plan to ensure robust auditable data, we aim to **retain the unqualified status of our Best Value Performance Plan** (now incorporated into this Corporate Plan [*electronic link*]) **and ensure that none of our individual performance indicators is qualified**
- ✓ During 2006-07, we will **review and implement any necessary changes to our political structures to provide the best basis for continuous improvement in the Council's performance**
- ✓ Also in the first year of this Plan, we will **strengthen the scrutiny function to maximise its contribution to policy development and performance enhancement**
- ✓ The operation of **the whole Performance Management Framework will be audited as part of Internal Audit's annual review of the Council's key processes**, providing a sound basis for continuous improvement

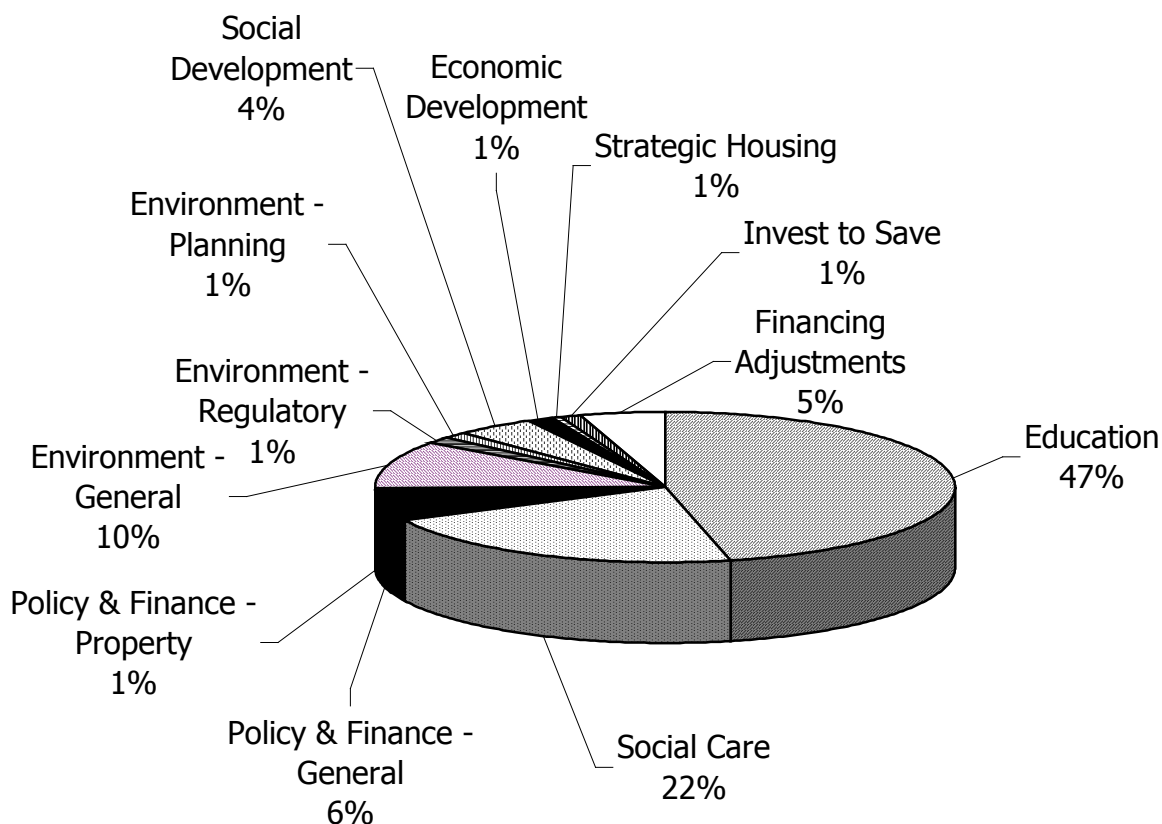
Revenue Expenditure in 2005-06 is funded by

| | £'000 |
|--|-----------------------|
| Revenue Support Grant | 58,688 |
| Redistributed Business Rate Income | 58,954 |
| Council Tax | 67,247 |
| Government Grants | 57,839 |
| Other Grants, Reimbursements & Contributions | 7,877 |
| Sales, Fees & Charges | 10,917 |
| Rent | 3,664 |
| Interest | 696 |
| Total Income (excluding Internal Recharges) | <u>265,882</u> |



Net revenue budget in 2005-06 by Programme Area

| | £'000 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Education | 85,605 |
| Social Care | 39,912 |
| Policy & Finance - General | 11,721 |
| Policy & Finance - Property | 1,074 |
| Environment - General | 18,949 |
| Environment - Regulatory | 2,674 |
| Environment - Planning | 2,269 |
| Social Development | 8,320 |
| Economic Development | 2,336 |
| Strategic Housing | 1,432 |
| Invest to Save | 2,048 |
| Financing Adjustments | 8,549 |
| Total | <u>184,889</u> |



Revenue Expenditure in 2006-07 is funded by

[To be added]

Proposed net revenue expenditure 2006-09 by service/corporate area

[To be added]

Proposed capital programme 2006 – 09

[To be added]

Glossary**Appendix 6*****The
Herefordshire Plan***

The Community Plan for Herefordshire. It sets out the vision, agreed by the Council and its partners following consultation with the public, for what the county should aspire to be by 2020, together with the objectives and targets to achieve it.

***Local Area Agreement
(LAA)***

A three-year agreement with the Government (initially for 2006-09) to deliver, with the Council's partners, higher levels of performance than would otherwise have been achieved. This is facilitated by greater freedom and flexibility in the operation of Government rules, including the use of Government grants.

***Local Public Service
Agreement (LPSA)***

A three-year agreement with the Government (currently for 2005-06 to 2007-08) to deliver higher levels of performance than would otherwise have achieved, in return for pump-priming additional finance to help achieve the enhanced targets and some relaxation in regulation. Achievement of the targets attracts substantial reward payments.

As from 2006-07, will be subsumed within the LAA (see above).

***Service Improvement
Programme (SIP)***

A programme to improve Council processes so as to achieve better services for the same or lower cost.

***Comprehensive
Performance
Assessment (CPA)***

The assessment of a Council's current performance and its capacity to improve. It comprises four main components: self-assessment, corporate assessment by an external team, use of resources assessment by external auditors, and service assessment based on an analysis of recent service inspections, reviews and performance indicator results. It is overseen and managed by the independent Audit Commission.

***Corporate Management
Board (CMB)***

The strategic management board of the Council, comprising the Chief Executive, Directors and the Head of Human Resources.

***The Senior Management
Team (SMT)***

The operational management board of the Council, comprising Heads of Services.

***Local Transport Plan
(LTP)***

A long-term strategy to develop an integrated and sustainable transport system for Herefordshire

***Office of the Deputy
Prime Minister (ODPM)***

The UK Government department with responsibility for, amongst other things, policy for local government and

Prime Minister (ODPM) relations with local authorities

Joined-Up Programme (JUP) The complete programme of work undertaken by the Herefordshire Service Delivery Partnership (Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Jarvis Services and Owen Williams) covering highways, property and related work