

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE

Meeting Held on 26th January, 2006

Membership:

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

REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

1. The Committee has considered a number of changes to the Constitution designed to reflect changing legislative and Council requirements. These amendments had been proposed to reflect changes to the Senior Management Structure; to make arrangements for filling unavoidable vacancies in Cabinet Member posts, to improve Members' access to information and availability of reports, to revise to the Scrutiny rules concerning the process for calling in key decisions, and to reflect a review of the Members Allowances Scheme. These changes and the recommendations relating to them are set out in detail in the Cabinet report to Council.
2. As reflected in the Cabinet report the Committee agreed with the recommendations to be made to Cabinet subject to Cabinet clarifying the proposed wording in relation to arrangements for the circulation of reports containing a key decision and for giving notification that a key decision was not included in the Forward Plan to ensure that these provisions were consistent with one another.

COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND JOINT AREA REVIEW

3. The Committee has been informed of the receipt of the Corporate Assessment and Joint Area Review (JAR) undertaken in 2005 and the timetable for preparing an Improvement Plan.
4. It has noted that the issues raised in the JAR in particular cross the remits of a number of Scrutiny Committees. The relevant Chairmen will therefore need to discuss how the scrutiny function can contribute to the development of the Improvement Plan and its implementation.
5. The Committee has also noted the findings in the Corporate Assessment relating to Scrutiny including the statement that there is considerable room for improvement in the scrutiny function. A proportionate response will need to be made to these findings as part of the Improvement Plan.

INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT

6. The Integrated Performance Report was presented to the Committee which has noted that work is continuing to simplify the collection and presentation of performance information.
7. The Corporate Assessment, referred to above, identified amongst other things the need for the Scrutiny function to have an increased focus on performance management. The Committee will contribute to the Council's response to this finding in the Council's Improvement Plan.

COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITY POLICY

8. The Committee has noted progress in implementing the action plan designed to ensure that the Council meet the criteria to reach Level 2 of the Equality Standard by 2007.

PAY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

9. Progress in implementing the strategy has been noted.

CORPORATE PLAN 2006/09

10. The Committee has noted the work been undertaken on developing the Plan, in particular steps being taken to provide fewer, but more strategic performance indicators and present information in a more helpful way for Members and managers.

LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

11. The Committee has noted the development of the Local Area Agreement and the intention that this should improve collaboration with partners leading to improved service delivery and reduced bureaucracy.

WORK PROGRAMMES

12. The Committee has considered the development of scrutiny work programmes. It will address the need for the Committee's own work programme and those of the other scrutiny committees to reflect appropriate issues identified in the Council's Improvement Plan including the need for the scrutiny function to have an increased focus on performance management and corporate policy development in response to the finding in the recent Corporate Assessment of the Council.

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE INDIVIDUAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

13. The work of the Committees is analysed below as far as practicable under the following five roles for overview and scrutiny: holding the executive to account, best value reviews, policy development and review, external scrutiny, and improvement (performance management and review), the first four of which are identified as key roles in the report on "The Development of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister". Issues considered by the Strategic Monitoring Committee are listed for completeness.

Summary

14. The Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee met on 2nd December, 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Learning Disability Service. Homelessness Consultation Event – Outcome. Joint Team with Pension Service and Voluntary Sector.
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Performance/Budget Monitoring 2005/6.

Other	
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15. Attention is particularly drawn to the Homelessness Consultation Event held in October, 2005. This involved representatives from relevant agencies across the County and the Committee has made several recommendations as a result of this scrutiny event.
16. The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee met on 16th December, 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	Cabinet Member Briefing
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Integrating Services for Children and Young People in Herefordshire.
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	
Other	Review of Statutory and Co-opted Members on Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – Update. Committee Work Programme.

17. The Community Services Scrutiny Committee met on 14th December 2005, at 6.00 p.m. in the Town Hall, Hereford, and 11th January 2006, at 6.00 p.m. at the Green Dragon Hotel, Hereford (reconvened on Friday 13th January at 2.00 p.m. at Brockington), and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Overview of Heritage and Museum Services. Hereford City Centre Refurbishment. Tourism Development in Herefordshire. Adult & Community Services Directorate. St. Katherine's Site – Update. Review of the Experiment to Pedestrianise Widemarsh Street, Hereford.
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Performance Monitoring
Other	Work Programme

18. The meeting on 11th January considered the experiment to pedestrianise Widemarsh Street. The Committee heard evidence from a range of key groups. About 40 Members of the public also attended. The Committee reconvened on 13th January to debate the evidence heard and made recommendations to the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation).
19. The Scrutiny Review of The Courtyard Centre for the Arts is progressing. The scrutiny review of how to retain 18-35 year olds in the County is nearing completion.

20. The Environment Scrutiny Committee met on 5th December, 2005 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Revenue Budget Monitoring. GEM Performance 2005/6 Half-Year Report. Development Control Performance
Other	Work Programme

21. The Health Scrutiny Committee met on 8th December, 2005 and 30th January, 2006 considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	
External Scrutiny	Presentation by Hereford and Worcester NHS Ambulance Trust. Primary Care Trust Briefing. Review of Communications Review of GP Out of Hours Services. Director of Public Health's Annual Report
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	
Other	NHS Reconfiguration Scope for a Health Park in Herefordshire.

22. The meeting with the Ambulance Trust which was called to advise the Committee on options being considered to manage the Trust's financial situation is highlighted. The invitation had been prompted in part by reports in the press that the Trust was proposing to close/relocate the four existing ambulance stations at Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye. However, it also provided the Committee with the opportunity to receive its first formal report from the Ambulance Trust. It is considered that the meeting was of benefit both to the Committee and the Trust. A number of issues were identified which the Trust has been requested to address.

23. The business to be conducted by the **Strategic Monitoring Committee** at its meeting on 26th January, 2006 is summarised below.

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Corporate Plan 2006/09 Local Area Agreement Review of the Constitution

External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Comprehensive Performance Assessment Integrated Performance Report Comprehensive Equality Policy Pay and Workforce Development Strategy
Other	Work Programmes

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Agenda Papers of the Meeting of the Strategic Monitoring Committee held on 26th January, 2006.