

REPORT OF THE MEETINGS OF CABINET

HELD ON 17TH NOVEMBER AND 15TH DECEMBER, 2005 AND
12TH AND 26TH JANUARY, 2006

Cabinet Members: R.J. Phillips (Leader of the Council),
D.W. Rule, MBE (Deputy Leader),
Mrs. L.O. Barnett, P.J. Edwards, Mrs. J.P. French, J.C. Mayson,
R.V. Stockton, D.B. Wilcox, R.M. Wilson.

This is the third report submitted to Council for the current year and covers proceedings of the meetings listed above.

1. DECISIONS RESERVED TO COUNCIL UNDER PART 4 OF THE CONSTITUTION

- 1.1 **Review of the Constitution** - The Constitutional Review Working Group, Strategic Monitoring Committee and Cabinet have considered a number of proposals for revisions to the Constitution to ensure that it meets all legal and operational requirements. The key issues discussed included: updates to reflect recent changes to the senior management structure; arrangements for filling unavoidable vacancies in Cabinet Member posts; Members' access to information and availability of reports; the Scrutiny rules concerning the process for calling in key decisions, the Members' Allowances Scheme and the appointment and discipline of staff. Cabinet has also recommended that the membership of the Constitutional Review Working Group more closely reflect the political proportionality of the Council.

Cabinet recommends to Council that:

- (a) **the duties previously assigned to the County Treasurer (including Section 151 Officer) be re-assigned to the Director of Resources;**
- (b) **the duties previously assigned to the County Secretary and Solicitor (including Monitoring Officer) be re-assigned to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services;**
- (c) **Cabinet Member portfolios be revised so that the Cabinet Member (Community Services) takes responsibility for Common Land (including Council-owned Commons and determination of any complaints about the management of the Council's Commons) and Public Rights of Way; the Cabinet Member (Children Services) takes responsibility for Youth Services (but see para (d)); and that the Cabinet Member (Resources) takes responsibility for Housing Benefit;**
- (d) **the Children's Services portfolio be renamed Children and Young People to reflect its enhanced role;**
- (e) **in the case of unexpected vacancies arising in Cabinet the Leader be authorised to re-assign responsibilities within the Cabinet, until such time as the Council has an opportunity to review the situation or to appoint a Cabinet Member to the vacant post;**

- (f) **SO 6.2.2.1 - Terms of Reference for Cabinet be amended to include responsibility for Risk Management;**
- (g) **the following words be added to S.O. 2.11 of the Constitution "There are additional rights of access to documents for Members of overview and scrutiny committees as set out in Regulation 18 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2000."**
- (h) **Councillors' rights to inspect documents and proposals set out at Appendix 4 be endorsed;**
- (i) **the rules relating to the co-ordinating role of the Strategic Monitoring Committee be revised as set out in Appendix 5;**
- (j) **the Independent Remuneration Panel at its next scheduled meeting in September 2006 considers whether the post of Chairman of the Audit Committee should be entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance;**
- (k) **Appendix 4 - Financial Regulations, paragraph 6.2 be amended to include "Where the signature is printed on the cheque by a Council system, the signature will be that of the Director of Resources.";**
- (l) **Appendix 23 - Allocation of Miscellaneous Functions be revised to correct typographical errors at items 14 and 31;**
- (m) **a revised Appendix 6 Appointment and Discipline of Employees (attached) be approved; and**
- (n) **the Political Group Leaders be asked to consider what changes they might wish to make to the membership of the Constitutional Review Working Group to ensure that political proportionality across the Council is more closely reflected, and subject thereto, the Chief Executive be authorised to implement the appointments notified by the four Political Group Leaders.**

2. NOTICES OF MOTION

- 2.1 No motions to Council were considered by Cabinet during the reporting period.

3. KEY DECISIONS BY INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS WHICH WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THE FORWARD PLAN

- 3.1 **Bargates Air Quality Management Area** -The Council has a statutory duty under section 83(1) of Part 4 of the Environment Act 1995 to declare an air quality management area if it is satisfied that an air quality objective is likely to be exceeded. Local studies have shown that the traffic related pollutant, nitrogen dioxide, is very likely to exceed this objective at Bargates, Leominster. The Cabinet Member (Environment) has therefore agreed that an order be made under the Act to formally declare the "Bargates Air Quality Management Area" because of elevated levels of the traffic related pollutant nitrogen dioxide.

4. CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE (Chairman of Cabinet – Councillor R.J. Phillips)

4.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Corporate Plan 2006/09** - The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's intentions for its contribution to The Herefordshire Plan and its own organisational improvement. It includes performance measures and targets for three years, actions to achieve them, associated risks and their mitigation and the resources to be allocated. It is the top level plan in the corporate planning process that provides the framework for the Annual Operating Plan and directorate and service plans. Cabinet has noted that it is important for the Council's Performance Indicators and those contained in the Herefordshire Plan to be rationalised. The Corporate Plan 2006/09 has been reformatted to reduce it in size without losing any important data. Cabinet has endorsed a draft, subject to any changes being made to reflect the new Herefordshire Plan, (depending on its timing) the Local Area Agreement with Government and budget decisions. The Corporate Plan 2006/09 will be submitted to Council in March for approval.
- (ii) **Local Area Agreements: Outline Proposals** - On 19th May, 2005 Cabinet gave consent for interest to be registered with the Government Office West Midlands (GOWM) in obtaining a Local Area Agreement (LAA). Since then the Council has been successful in securing an LAA and is one of only 13 areas to have a Single Pot LAA. Cabinet subsequently approved outline LAA proposals and a first draft Local Area Agreement (LAA) has been to the Government Office for the West Midlands. Cabinet has now approved a second draft LAA for submission by 3rd February, 2006. The final LAA will be signed off by 24th March, 2006.
- (iii) **Hereford City Council Service Level Agreement with Herefordshire Council** - Cabinet has received a report on potential changes in the Service Level Agreement with Hereford City Council. It was confirmed that the City Council would reduce, by £85,000 the sum it contributed via a Service Level Agreement to a figure of £133,000. Cabinet has asked that a full assessment be made on the impact any changes to the SLA will have on the services provided in the City. The Budget Panel will be requested to address this as part of its deliberations on the 2006/07 revenue budget. Cabinet has also noted that Hereford City Council has confirmed its long term interest in acquiring the Town Hall.
- (iv) **Police Restructuring in England and Wales** - Cabinet has considered the Council's response to the West Mercia Police Authority following the publication of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) report "Closing the Gap" and the subsequent letter issued to Police Authorities by the Home Secretary. Despite reservations about the effect any restructure would have on policing in Herefordshire, it has supported the establishment of a West Mercia Strategic Police Service. It has also expressed concern about the speed of the consultation exercise which it felt was not in the best public interest.
- (v) **Local Public Service Agreement Update** – Cabinet has received an update on the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA). It has noted that the majority of the stretched targets have an end date of March 2008, with the exception

of the Road Safety target which is measured to December 2008. It has also noted that there is a Performance Reward Grant (PRG) of £4.4 million attached to the achievement of the targets (£366,000 per target).

Cabinet has noted that the Council will be relying on partner organisations and significant investment to achieve many of the ambitions. It has agreed to allocate £1.7 million of Performance Reward Grant from LPSA1 and £0.9 million Pump Priming Grant to fund the second generation Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA2).

4.2 Report on Items of Interest

- (i) **Comprehensive Performance Assessment: Corporate Assessment and Joint Area Review** - Cabinet has received formal notice of the receipt of the Corporate Assessment and Joint Area Review. It has noted that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process was revised this year and Herefordshire Council was one of the first eight authorities to experience the new process of assessment. This involved a Corporate Assessment and a Joint Area Review which were carried out at the same time. The new Assessment also contained an assessment on Direction of Travel which is expressed in terms of the capacity of the organisation to improve. The Council's overall score was that of a three star authority and, under the Direction of Travel statement, the authority was seen as "Improving Adequately". In overall terms there was a positive assessment of the review of Services for Children and Young People, however, there was a major qualification to that overall assessment in relation to the area of "Staying Safe" where the inspection had concluded that the arrangements for that area were "inadequate".

The Council has also received reports through the Annual Audit Letter and Inspection Letter which outlines areas where action is needed to contribute to the Improvement Plan. It has received a score of 3 for its Use of Resources.

Finally, the Council has been assessed under the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) star rating in relation to Adults and is seen as Serving Some People Well with Uncertain Prospects for Improvement, whilst in relation to children the impact of the "Staying Safe" judgement within the Joint Area Review has led to an assessment that the Council is Serving No Children Well with Poor Prospects for Improvement.

The Improvement Planning process has already commenced and will build on the improvement actions outlined in the Corporate Assessment, the Annual Audit and Inspection letter and the Joint Area Review report. Meetings have been arranged with the CSCI Regional Director and the Chief Inspection of CSCI. Early meetings with the Audit Commission and the External Auditors are also anticipated.

Further reports will be submitted to Cabinet and the Strategic Monitoring Committee as the comprehensive Improvement Plan is developed.

- (ii) **Draft Revenue Budget Strategy** - In formulating its initial recommendations relating to the Revenue Budget for 2006/07 Cabinet has considered the recommendations of the Budget Panel. (Strategic Monitoring Committee are

seeing this report on 13th February, 2006.) Initial budget options were considered within the following framework:

- Council Tax increases for 2006/07 and 2007/08 of 4.7%;
- Transfer of unspent Invest to Save budget in 2005/06 into 2006/07;
- Writing off the significant overspends from 2004/05;
- Writing off 2005/06 overspends to reserves;
- Correcting the ongoing base budget issues;
- Preparation of detailed efficiency plans; and
- Preparation of detailed Invest to Save plans.

The proposed budget strategy aims to smooth pressure on Council Tax increases over the next two years; correct structural issues within the base budget; target remaining resources at key spending pressures; and develop, implement and realise the cash benefits from Invest to Save and service improvement initiatives (particularly accommodation and ICT). Cabinet has referred its recommendations to the Strategic Monitoring Committee. Cabinet will meet again on 23rd February to consider any views from the Strategic Monitoring Committee and make further recommendations to Council on 10th March, 2006.

- (iii) **Proposals for 2006/07 Capital Programme** - The Council's Capital Strategy needs to be integrated with the Medium Term Financial Plan and Corporate Plan and decisions made in regard to the capital programme over the medium term need to be aligned with the priority objectives set out in the Corporate Plan. Cabinet has received a report outlining the key issues for consideration regarding the capital funding strategy and the allocation of supported and unsupported borrowing for capital expenditure for 2006/07. Prudential Borrowing allocations made in 2004/05 and 2005/06 for future year commitments become the first call on 2006/07 and 2007/08 allocations. The Capital Scheme Selection and Prioritisation (SSP) process has been used again to collate new capital bids for 2006/07 and future years. Cabinet has noted that prudential borrowing bids have not been submitted for a number of significant capital projects, e.g. the relocation of the livestock market and the corporate accommodation project.

Appendix 1 details the 2006/07 Supported Capital Expenditure (Revenue) allocations. Prudential Borrowing Allocations were made in 2004/05 and 2005/06 and these included future year commitments which are detailed in Appendix 2. The five recommended bids and those requiring further consideration are included at Appendix 3.

The current proposal is that:

- (a) the Supported Capital Expenditure(Revenue) awarded for Children's Services, Transport and Housing provisionally be ringfenced to those areas;

- (b) a minimum level of Prudential Borrowing of £5,843,000 for 2006/07 be approved as set out below:

PRUDENTIAL BORROWING REQUIREMENTS				
	Total	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
2006/07 Bids Recommended by CSG	6,063	3,105	2,258	700
Allocations agreed in 2004/05 to be funded	1,863	813	1,050	
Allocations agreed in 2005/06 to be funded	3,850	2,050	1,800	
Non-earmarked SCE(R) able to fund SSP bids	(250)	(125)	(125)	
Net Prudential Borrowing Required	11,526	5,843	4,983	700
Indicated level of Prudential Borrowing Available	(15,000)	(5,000)	(5,000)	(5,000)
Additional Requirement / (Capacity)	(3,374)	843	(17)	(4,300)

- (c) £5,000,000 Prudential Borrowing be approved for each year 2007/08 and 2008/09 to enable commitments from previous years Prudential Borrowing allocations to be funded and to enable future bids to be considered; and
- (d) the capital strategy permits the ability to reprofile schemes should slippage occur in projects funded by Prudential Borrowing. This flexibility is retained to ensure projects can be brought forward should any Prudential Borrowing become available through slippage. -

Cabinet has referred its recommendations to the Strategic Monitoring Committee and will meet again on 23rd February to consider any views from the Strategic Monitoring Committee and make further recommendations to Council on 10th March, 2006.

- (iv) **Strategic Monitoring Committee** - Cabinet has received and noted the report of the Strategic Monitoring Committee which is the subject of separate report to Council.

5. CHILDREN'S SERVICES (Cabinet Member: Councillor D.W. Rule, MBE)

5.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Youth Matters - Green Paper** - Cabinet has noted the Council's response to the Youth Matters Green Paper. It has recommended that the Council's Constitution be amended to facilitate the transfer of the Youth Service to the Children and Young People's Directorate with accountability resting with the Cabinet Member in line with Every Child Matters and Youth Matters. It has also noted that the three highest issues identified by young people as needing the most improvement are: young people's involvement in decision-making and democracy, leisure facilities and access to transport.

**6. COMMUNITY SERVICES
(Cabinet Member - Councillor R.V. Stockton)**

6.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Youth Matters - Green Paper** - A report on this item is to be found at item 5.1(i) of this report.
- (ii) **Voluntary and Community Sector Support Strategy** - Cabinet has received a progress report on the development of a Voluntary and Community Sector Support Strategy for the Council and its relationship to the Local Area Agreement. It has approved a draft Strategic Framework for consultation and approved the principle of maintaining existing funding arrangements to Age Concern, Community First, Community Voluntary Action Ledbury & District and Herefordshire Voluntary Action, pending final adoption of the Strategic Framework and agreement of the Infrastructure Consortium Business Plan.

**7. CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES
(Cabinet Member - Councillor Mrs. J.P. French)**

7.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Implementing Electronic Government 5 Return** – The IEG is an essential part of the national monitoring process for assessing electronic local service delivery capability against central government's 2005 target. It is an important mechanism for assessing progress towards realising benefits from the investment of e-government and the use of IEG funding in individual local authorities. Cabinet has noted that the Council is expected to achieve 99% compliance with the Government's Best Value Performance Indicator 157 (electronic delivery of services) by April 2006. It has also noted that the Council's website is rated the best, technically, of all local authority websites in the country.

Cabinet has approved the Implementing Electronic Government Return (IEG5) for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

7.2 Report on Items of Interest

- (i) **Integrated Performance Report** - The Council's Corporate Plan sets out the Council's objectives, priorities and targets for the three year period 2005-2008. The Annual Operating Plan is the detailed action plan for the first of these years 2005-2006. Cabinet has received a progress reports on the first eight months of the current year and has noted the arrangements in place to integrate the performance and other management activity necessary to implement successfully the Council's Corporate Plan. It has noted that 361 compliments have been recorded along with 79 comments. Of the 159 complaints received 70 were upheld and subsequent action taken. Cabinet will receive another progress report at the end of March.
- (ii) **Comprehensive Equality Policy** - The Comprehensive Equality Policy (CEP) is the overriding document that sets out the Council's commitment to achieving excellence and meeting its responsibilities to promote and implement equality when it is providing services, purchasing services,

employing staff and working in partnership with other organisations. It provides the focus to ensure that the Council meets the criteria needed to reach Level 2 of the Equality Standard by 2007. Cabinet has received a progress report on the implementation of the Policy and has requested further updates every six months.

- (iii) **Pay and Workforce Development Strategy 2005/08** - The Council's Pay and Workforce Development Strategy 2005/08 adopted the Employers Organisation's five themes as key areas that Council needed to address: pay; reward and recognition; resourcing; developing leadership capacity; developing the skills of the workforce; and organisational development. There was an added emphasis in the Council's Strategy on ensuring workable pay, reward and recognition structures to help recruit, motivate, and retain the employees the Council needs to deliver its services. Cabinet has received a progress report on the implementation of the Strategy which shows significant progress in a number of areas.

8. ENVIRONMENT (Cabinet Member: Councillor P.J. Edwards)

8.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Update on the Operation of the Herefordshire Code of Practice for the Temporary Agricultural use of Poly tunnels** – Cabinet approved a Code of Practice for the Temporary Agricultural use of Poly tunnels in October 2004. That decision provided for the Code to be reviewed after two years ie in 2006. The Environment Scrutiny Committee has received a progress report from the Head of Planning Services, after the Code has been in operation for one year, and has made a number of recommendations to Cabinet.

Cabinet has noted the report and recommendations and has agreed that a further report be made in the event of any significant change in case law which would change the basis of the current Code of Practice. It has endorsed the principle of incorporating the pre-consultation requirements of the Code of Practice into the draft Statement of Community Involvement currently in preparation, and also endorsed the continued operation of the Code of Practice subject to a full review in October 2006. It has agreed an amendment to the Terms of the Code of Practice by inserting the requirement for a local impact statement specifying, as a minimum, the proposed vehicular routing, volume and type of traffic, and the need for mitigation measure which may include one-way routes, hardening of passing places or surface improvements.

- (ii) **Local Development Scheme** – The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new system of development planning, known as the Local Development Framework. One of its requirements is for local planning authorities to publish a statement of how their forward planning work will be organised over a three year period. This is known as the Local Development Scheme. The first Scheme for Herefordshire came into effect on 1st January, 2005.

Cabinet has approved a revised Local Development Scheme to have effect from 31st January, 2006. The main amendments include: changes to the

timetable for the Core Strategy which has been revised to avoid conflicts with the likely Unitary Development Plan (UDP) timetable; timetables for new Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) including those for the Edgar Street Grid and for planning obligations; and for Parish Plans to be adopted as further planning guidance to the UDP rather than as Supplementary Planning Guidance or SPDs. There are no changes to the programme for the Statement of Community Involvement. In addition Cabinet has noted that the issue of affordable housing may be addressed more easily under the Local Development Scheme than had been the case with the UDP.

- (iii) **Annual Monitoring Report 2004-2005** - The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced new provisions and requirements for development planning. The regular review and monitoring of development plans through mandatory Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs) is a fundamental feature of the new planning system. AMRs are to be based on the period 1st April - 31st March and submitted to the Secretary of State no later than the following 31st December. The AMR largely follows the thematic division of the chapters in the UDP, such as housing and employment. Objectives for each topic area are identified and appropriate policies linked to these are set out. In many topic areas the extent to which UDP policies are being implemented has been difficult to gauge, principally because the UDP has not yet been adopted. Subsequent AMRs will enable more accurate assessments to be made which will be used to develop future planning policies.

Cabinet has approved the first Annual Monitoring Report 2004-2005.

- (iv) **Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP): Inspector's Report** - The UDP Inquiry was held between February and June 2005. The Inspector's Report is expected to be submitted to the Council before the end of the financial year. Cabinet has agreed that the UDP Working Group comprising the Cabinet Member (Environment)(Chairman), Cabinet Members (Highways and Transportation), Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Environment Scrutiny Committee and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee be reconvened to facilitate consideration of the Inspector's recommendations, advising Cabinet accordingly.

9. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION
Cabinet Member - Councillor D.B. Wilcox)

9.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Concessionary Fares Scheme** - Cabinet has approved a revision of the Concessionary Travel Scheme for elderly and disabled person following an anticipated change in the regulations governing the operation of such schemes. It has agreed that the Concessionary Fares Scheme be revised to increase the level of discount to pass holders from 50% to 100% of the adult fare and that no other changes be made to the scheme. This means that those over the age of 60 and the disabled, will be entitled to free bus travel from 1st April, 2006. Any additional costs associated with the changes to the scheme will need to be addressed when preparing future budgets.
- (ii) **Widemarsh Street, Hereford - Review of Experimental Pedestrianisation Scheme** - The experimental pedestrianisation of Widemarsh Street and High Street, Hereford, came into effect on 8th June, 2005 and was monitored until 31st December, 2005. Extensive consultation and monitoring was carried out during the experiment, involving face to face interviews with the public in the city centre, questionnaires to city centre retail/business premises, public questionnaires, consultation with stakeholder groups and statutory bodies, a retail assessment by specialist consultants, traffic surveys, monitoring of car park income, monitoring of footfall in a central shopping location, shopmobility usage, visitor numbers to the Museum and the Old House, air quality monitoring and a review of accident data.

Consultation and monitoring during the period indicated that the experiment had received widespread support from the community and has not had a significant adverse impact on strategic traffic routes in Hereford. On the evidence available, the advantages of the scheme appear to be significant in terms of improving the pedestrian and shopping environment. Improvements to pedestrian access to the city centre are a priority in the Local Transport Plan and the scheme itself is consistent with the recommendations of the Hereford Transport Review.

Cabinet has agreed that:

- the Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders prohibiting traffic in Widemarsh Street and High Street, Hereford, between 10.30am and 4.30pm each day and imposing a 20mph speed limit on these roads be made permanent;
- further consideration be given to improvements, including minor highway adjustments, to support access and parking by coaches, taxis and disabled vehicles in the city centre;
- subject to detailed design, revised traffic signal control at the Newmarket Street/Blueschool Street/Widemarsh Street/Maylord Orchard junction be implemented to improve conditions for pedestrians and to provide greater automation of the traffic control measures in Widemarsh Street;
- a programme of targeted action be developed to promote visits to Hereford by more sustainable means of travel, including additional

promotional activity and a study of coach accessibility identifying improvements to signing, coach stopping and coach waiting facilities including re-engineering of the West Street/Broad Street junction, as necessary;

- subject to necessary consultation, an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order be made prohibiting the driving of vehicles in Bewell Street between the hours of 10.30am and 4.30pm each day from its junction with Widemarsh Street to a point 3 metres west of that point; and
- the funding of associated streetscape improvements be addressed within the preparation of the Council's capital programmes for 2006/07.

10. RESOURCES (Cabinet Member - Councillor R.M. Wilson)

- 10.1 There were no decisions taken by Cabinet relating to this programme area during the reporting period.

11. RURAL REGENERATION AND STRATEGY (Cabinet Member - Councillor J.C. Mayson)

- 11.1 There were no decisions taken by Cabinet relating to this programme area during the reporting period.

12. SOCIAL CARE ADULTS AND HEALTH (Cabinet Member Councillor Mrs. L.O. Barnett)

12.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy** - Cabinet has received a report on the West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2005 and Strategy for Allocating the Regional Housing Pot for 2006-08 which form the basis of regional housing policy and investment priorities across the West Midlands Region. It has endorsed the development of increased partnership working between the Council and the Shropshire local housing authorities identified within the West Housing Market Area, as proposed by the Regional Housing Strategy. It has noted that there may be additional revenue and staffing costs associated with supporting the development of co-operative working across the West Housing Market Area and expects to receive a further report once these costs have been identified.
- (ii) **Adult Social Care Budget 2005/06** - Cabinet has received a confidential report on the current budget position in relation to the Adult Social Care budget in 2005/06. It has noted the management actions being taken and the implications this may have on service delivery. It has authorised officers to explore "invest to save" options (showing quantified investments and quantified savings); and approved the use of £714,000 from reserves to meet the carry forward overspend from 2004/05.

- (iii) **Herefordshire Housing Post Transfer Improvement Programme** – The Council's Housing Stock was transferred to Herefordshire Housing Limited (HHL) on 26th November, 2002. Prior to that, in the consultation document for tenants, HHL promised to undertake a programme of repairs, improvements and planned maintenance to the housing stock if the transfer went ahead. At the point of transfer, HHL entered into a legally binding contract with the Council committing the company to honour the promises made within the consultation document.

Cabinet has now received a second progress report on improvements to housing stock transferred to HHL. It has noted that, in the final year of the initial five year programme, HHL's programme of works will concentrate on rewiring and the replacement of external doors. There was some concern about the quality of the work and about disruption, not just to tenants but also to their neighbours, while extensive programmes of work were being carried out. It has asked for a further update following the end of the 2005/06 financial year and asked for the Improvement Programme to be included in the workplan of the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee.

- (iv) **Community Equipment/Independent Living** – The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 places a duty on Herefordshire Council for the provision of equipment for those who are disabled or have a chronic illness. The Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES) is managed by Herefordshire Council in partnership with Herefordshire Primary Care Trust and has a pooled budget. Services include assessment of need; the ordering, supply delivery and subsequent collection, cleaning and recycling of equipment to meet those needs; and where necessary, on-going monitoring of changing needs. The Service provides equipment, on loan, to assist with the maintenance of independence (aids to daily living) and for home nursing and also funds minor adaptations in the home.

Cabinet has endorsed the plans for the Integrated Community Equipment Service to meet the growing demands arising from local, regional and national strategies by developing and expanding the in-house service. However, it has asked that a business plan, with properly identified targets and timescales be submitted to Cabinet for approval before the end of the current financial year.

- (v) **Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers** - The Housing Act 2004 places a statutory requirement on the local housing authority to carry out an assessment of accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers residing or resorting to their district, as part of the review of housing needs in their districts. In addition national planning guidance indicates that local planning policies should aim to meet the housing needs of all sections of the community, including those with special accommodation needs. Cabinet has endorsed the work being carried out in Herefordshire to identify the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers including: identifying existing sites, including permanent, transit, legal and illegal both tolerated and others; identifying those in settled accommodation; identifying those seeking settled accommodation; personal interviews with Gypsies and Travellers; review of the housing related support service to Gypsies and Travellers; those known to be seeking settled accommodation and registered with Home Point; and identifying any cross boundary working. A further report confirming the

findings of the survey and recommendations for consideration will be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

12.2 Report on Items of Interest

- (i) **Herefordshire Housing Needs Assessment 2005** - The Housing Act 1985 places a duty on the local Housing Authority to consider the housing conditions of its district and its needs with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation. A Herefordshire Housing Needs Survey was published in 1999 and updated in 2001. A further assessment carried out during 2005 consolidates all surveys completed since local government reorganisation. The assessment is based on issues affecting housing demand and supply, such as current and future population, earnings, house prices in the County and homelessness. Cabinet has received a summary of the key findings. Estimates of affordable need in Herefordshire, using four different methods of calculation, range from 2,980 to 6,500. The assessment will be used to influence relevant changes in planning policies to support future planning and financial grant applications for the provision of affordable housing across the County.

- (ii) **Herefordshire Older People's Strategy** - In September 2005 Cabinet approved the production of a Strategy for Older People for Herefordshire. Councillor Mrs. Barnett has been identified as the Older People's Champion for Herefordshire. Her principal role is to act as the Elected Council Member who leads for older people across the Council and to take responsibility, on the Council side, for supporting the implementation of the National Standards Framework and wider Older People's Strategy for Herefordshire. It is intended that Herefordshire's Older People's Strategy will become the strategic document that drives the Healthier Communities and Older People's themes, and that the Herefordshire Partnership Board will assign lead organisations to deliver the targets and actions of the Strategy and to monitor and review its progress on an on-going basis. Cabinet has noted the timetable for the production of the Strategy which is due to be launched in October 2006 and has requested a further progress report in June 2006.

COUNCILLOR R.J. PHILLIPS
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL