

APPENDIX A

Overarching Strategy for 2006/07 Annual Efficiency Statement

Herefordshire Council continues to make significant strides for maximising the efficiency of service delivery. The formal VfM assessment as part of the 2005 CPA marked the Council as a 3 (out of 4) and this highlights improvements made in this respect since its inception in 1998.

The Council's budget for 2006/07 has identified the realisation of £1.65m of cash efficiency gains across all services and these have been set out in the detailed statement. In addition to this, non-cashable gains have been clearly linked to the delivery of its key objectives within the Corporate Plan.

There are a number of efficiency strands identified in the 2005/06 Forward Looking Annual Efficiency Statement, which underpin the realisation of these efficiency gains. The underpinning initiative is 'Herefordshire Connects' which is the outcome of a comprehensive corporate strategy review undertaken early in 2006. This has resulted in three work streams that are currently being worked up into more detailed business cases. These are:

- Integrated Customer Services;
- Integrated Support Services; and
- Corporate Performance Management.

The scope for these three work streams, now branded 'Herefordshire Connects', cover significant areas of the Council's service delivery, support and management and will add value by driving out efficiencies by releasing resources to customer facing services. The full benefit of this major programme will not be realised until well into the medium term however it will encapsulate many of the initiatives that have been highlighted in the detailed efficiency statement. Broadly Herefordshire Connects will ensure improvements in:

- Customer service providing residents, visitors and businesses access to a broad range of council and partner services via a range of access channels;
- Smarter working for all Council staff using the wide range of remote working and operational devices available to them;
- More efficient management of records and documents; and
- Better procurement and transaction efficiency.

The Council is therefore embarking on a significant change programme. This is exemplified by the rationalisation of accommodation for frontline and back office staff through an active asset management programme and the movement of staff into the central Plough Lane offices. Other major initiatives to be progressed in 2006/07 include the creation of a central recruitment team and a comprehensive absence management programme, the continued delivery of a consistent and robust performance management framework, and the delivery of the Corporate Customer Services, Corporate Communications and ICT Strategies including a new voice and data network serving council employees, schools, community access points and various partner organisations.

From a specific service perspective Social Care is under particular pressure to realise efficiencies in the face of significant demand pressures and new and innovative ways of procurement and commissioning are being developed in conjunction with the Council's partners. Environment, highways and transport continue to provide improving services in the face of cash reductions in real terms and this has been through effective working with the Council's strategic partners. Children's Services have also been able to maintain ongoing efficiency savings by continually reviewing non-schools services, in particular school transport.