

## SCRUTINY ACTIVITY REPORT

**Report By: Director of Corporate and Customer Services**

### Wards Affected

County-wide

### Purpose

1. To consider the work being undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees.

### Financial Implications

2. None

### Background

3. This report summarises the matters considered by the Scrutiny Committees since the last report by this Committee to Council. It is intended to help keep Council aware of the work being undertaken.
4. 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).

### Summary

5. The Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee met on 17th March, 2006 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Review of Services to People with Learning Disability Homelessness Prevention White Paper – Our Health, Our Care, Our Say; a new Direction for Community Services
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Budget Monitoring Future Budget Position Performance Monitoring
Other	

6. The Committee is undertaking a review of services to people with a learning disability recognising the pressures on the service caused by changing demography, spending

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
Tim Brown, Committee Manager (Scrutiny) on 01432 260239

patterns and changes in expectations and the need to review the current use of resources and future needs. A series of visits have been undertaken to meet staff and service users. A number of issues have been raised and the intention is to complete the review and make recommendations to the Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults and Health) for consideration in the summer.

7. The Committee has also given careful consideration to the current and future budget position. It has requested that a seminar be arranged to discuss the budget and future service delivery in more detail.
8. The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee met on 13th March, 2006 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)	Joint Area Review of Children's Services in Herefordshire Health of Children and Young People in Herefordshire
Other	

9. The Committee has given consideration to recommendations for improvement following the recent Joint Area Review (JAR) of Children's Services. When the Committee met it was noted that the JAR Improvement Plan had been sent to the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and the Department of Education and Skills (DfES). The outcome of their assessment of the Service's capacity to improve as a result of the Improvement Plan was still awaited. The Improvement Plan resulting from the JAR inspection and any implications arising from it will be reported to the next meeting. A performance monitoring report on performance against the JAR Improvement Plan, will form an integral part of the Committee's future work programme. The Committee is also to undertake a series of fact-finding visits to the various services within the Directorate to inform its understanding of the Services.
10. The Committee has also been briefed on the work undertaken by Children's Services and its partners to improve and maintain the health of children and young people in Herefordshire, noting in particular the work undertaken by the Herefordshire Healthy Schools Partnership.
11. The Community Services Scrutiny Committee met on 24th March, 2006 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Community Youth Service partnership Arrangements with the Voluntary and Community Youth Sector Refurbishment of Kington Library Review of Independent Museums and Heritage Centres
External Scrutiny	Halo Leisure Services Ltd

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Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Performance Monitoring
Other	-

12. The Committee met in Kington to allow the public to hear at first hand an update on progress in refurbishing Kington Library. A question had been submitted by a representative of Kington Tourism Group about the implications of the Scheme for the location of the Tourist Office and she was also able to contribute to the discussion at the meeting. Further discussions are to be held to try to resolve that matter.
13. Last year one of the Committee's Co-opted Members, following a request from a Member of the public, proposed a review of the Council's support for independent museums and heritage centres in the County. The Committee decided to undertake the review and has now agreed a scoping statement for the review which it is planned to complete by April 2007.
14. In fulfilling its remit to scrutinise the provision of leisure services the Committee has scrutinised the operation of the external provider HALO Leisure Services Ltd
15. The Committee has also considered the working relationship with the voluntary and community youth work sector and Herefordshire Council's Community Youth Service. The Committee was concerned that the Service is unlikely to achieve its four DfES key performance indicators by the end of the year due to the low resource base of the Service. It has asked that the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee should be informed of these concerns and should closely monitor developments.
16. The Environment Scrutiny Committee met on 27th March, 2006 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	-
Best Value Reviews	Improvement Plans
Policy Development and Review	Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Capital Programme Revenue Budget Performance Indicators Environment Directorate's Contribution to the Herefordshire Plan
Other	

17. The Committee has been informed of the principal measures contained in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 and received an overview of the potential impact of the Act on the services provided by the Environment Directorate. The Committee has welcomed various aspects of the Act including the introduction of new Litter Clearance Notices which should enable the Council to enforce areas it had been unable to do previously. The Act also confirmed that cigarette butts and discarded chewing gum were classed as litter. In this respect the Committee particularly noted a comment that the Government were considering imposing a hefty tax on chewing gum with the proceeds being used to help Councils with the cost of cleaning chewing gum from footways. The Committee has recorded its support for

such a proposal to tax chewing gum, particularly the synthetic gum, and invited the Executive to make representations on the matter.

18. The Health Scrutiny Committee met on, 16th and 23rd March, 2006 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	Public Health Services Development of Stroke Services in Herefordshire White Paper – Our Health, Our Care, Our Say; a new Direction for Community Services
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	
Other	NHS Reconfiguration

19. The Director of Public Health's (DPH) Annual Report, considered by the Committee in January 2006, noted that people in Herefordshire are, in general, healthier than they are in the rest of the Country. However, overall MMR vaccine uptake rates are below the nationally recommended levels with a variation in uptake rates across the County. There is also now evidence of a rise in the infections the vaccine is supposed to prevent. The DPH report also highlighted that the percentage of 5 year olds free from tooth decay is below the average for England and Wales and is the lowest within the West Midlands (South) Strategic Health Authority area and that fluoridation of the water supply is agreed to be the most effective tool in reducing dental health inequalities. The Committee requested and received detailed information on these two areas of concern and will be seeking to support the Primary Care Trust in achieving improvement in these two areas as part of the Committee's focus on the public health agenda as a whole.
20. The Committee has also received a detailed presentation on proposals for the development of stroke services in the County, another area where the need for an improvement in provision has long been acknowledged, and has supported the approach being proposed by the Primary Care Trust in conjunction with the Council.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None