

REPORT OF THE MEETINGS OF CABINET

HELD ON 16TH AND 30TH MARCH AND
20TH AND 27TH APRIL, 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 final report submitted to Council for the current year and covers proceedings of the meetings listed above together with any items previously considered which are reserved to Council under Part 4 of the Constitution.

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

- 1.1 **Review of the Herefordshire Plan (Community Strategy)** - The Herefordshire Plan was first developed in 1999 and has been updated in 2001 and 2003. A significant review of the Herefordshire Plan was undertaken in 2005, leading to a number of recommended changes to the document itself and to the way in which the Herefordshire Partnership will function to deliver the Plan. The final document is now ready for approval. Its name has been changed to the Herefordshire Community Strategy. It contains more information and background/explanatory text than the previous document. A short, non-jargon executive summary is also being produced.

Cabinet recommends to Council that the Community Strategy be approved.

- 1.2 **Children and Young People's Plan for Herefordshire** – Cabinet has endorsed the Children and Young Peoples' Plan for Herefordshire for 2006/08. The Plan is to be used as the basis for routine annual performance assessments both of the Council and wider partnership performance. It has been the subject of much partner discussion and input and has incorporated the views of children and young people. It also forms the basis for developing Children's Trust arrangements and integrated multi-professional working in Herefordshire. The performance management arrangements will be undertaken by the Children and Young People's Partnership Board and will include the children's aspects of the Local Area Agreement and wider Joint Area Review improvement planning.

Cabinet recommends to Council that the Children and Young People's Plan for Herefordshire be approved.

- 1.3 **Statement of Community Involvement** – The Statement of Community Involvement is required to be prepared as part of the Council's Local Development Framework, which will ultimately replace the Unitary Development Plan.

The purpose of the SCI is to:

- Identify who will be consulted on particular types of documents and applications and when they will be actively involved in plan making and in reaching decisions on planning applications;

- Set out transparent, accessible and meaningful approaches to community involvement in plan preparation and decision making on planning applications;
- Encourage early involvement in decision making between the community, interest groups and stakeholders. This can help to resolve any initial conflicts and can generate a sense of ownership early in the process and on agreed outcomes;
- Recognise and understand the different needs of all sections of the community and stakeholder interests and establish the most effective means of enabling all sections of the community to make their views known and help shape planning decisions in their areas;
- Explain how the results of the consultations will be fed into preparation of local development documents and how those involved will be kept informed;
- Set out standards for the Council to achieve and explain how the process will be resourced and managed and how the new planning process will be co-ordinated with other community involvement and consultation initiatives undertaken by the Council.
- To ensure that the Council complies with the adopted Statement of Community Involvement when preparing its Local Development Documents. This compliance must be kept under review and revised where necessary.

The SCI submission draft has undergone two consultation exercises. It is subject to further consultation and this is proposed to take place for a six week period between 12th June and 24th July, 2006. This final consultation is different from the previous exercises, which were about gathering information to improve the document. This time the consultation is about gaining support or otherwise to a document that is being submitted to the Secretary of State for consideration. If there are objections to the soundness of the document that cannot be met by the Council then these will be dealt with by an independent Inspector. The Inspector's report will be binding on the authority.

Cabinet recommends to Council that the Statement of Community Involvement be approved for the purposes of submission to the Secretary of State and publication for consultation purposes.

2. NOTICES OF MOTION

- 2.1 **Proposed use of Former Denco Car Park at Holmer Road, Hereford** - Councillor Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes submitted notice of the following motion to Council at its meeting on 10th February, 2006.

"I would like to propose that the recently vacated Denco car park site, adjacent to the Hereford Leisure Centre be the location for a skatepark facility to serve the many young people who have been working towards this objective for more than a decade.

The vacated Denco site is not in a residential area and planning permission for change of use to a Skatepark was granted in November 2005 . This is a unique opportunity for the local authority to actively support young people. No other suitable site has become available for years and the Leisure Centre will benefit from increased usage.

In collaboration with other partners, we believe this site would provide a much needed resource for young people, improving health, reducing anti-social behaviour and providing much needed pleasure. We would welcome the investment of the Herefordshire Council for our younger generation.”

The motion was not considered to be urgent and was referred to the Cabinet Member (Resources) who was considering a number of options for the future use of the site.

The Council owns the freehold interest in the land and has received an expression of interest from Hereford City Council for the purpose of providing a skateboard park. A planning application for change of use of the area to allow a public skate park facility on the site had been approved in December 2005. Cabinet has agreed that the site be leased to Hereford City Council for the purpose of the development of a skateboard park. The lease will be for a period of between 10 and 25 years and is to be offered at a peppercorn rent. Cabinet has noted the opportunity cost to the Council of not realising the market value of the site, estimated at £10,000 a year at current levels.

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

3.1 There were no such decisions made during the reporting period.

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

4.1 Report on Decisions Taken

(i) **Consultations on new Strategic Health Authority, Primary Care Trust and Ambulance Service Arrangements** – The Cabinet has participated in National consultation exercises regarding new boundaries for Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs), Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and Ambulance Trusts. The consultations relate to changes to organisational boundaries and do not include any proposals for service change. In terms of SHAs in the West Midlands, the proposal being consulted on is to bring together Birmingham and the Black Country SHA, Shropshire and Staffordshire SHA and West Midlands South SHA, to establish one SHA for the West Midlands that is coterminous with the Government Office for the Region.

For PCTs in the South West Midlands, the proposal is to bring together the current PCTs of Wyre Forest, Redditch and Bromsgrove and South Worcestershire to form one Worcestershire PCT. Additionally North Warwickshire PCT, Rugby PCT and South Warwickshire PCT would be merged to create a Warwickshire PCT with Herefordshire PCT and Coventry PCT remaining as currently configured.

The proposal being consulted on for ambulance services in the West Midlands is to bring together the current four Ambulance Trusts (Staffordshire; Coventry and Warwickshire; West Midlands and Shropshire; Hereford and Worcester) to be replaced by one Ambulance Trust covering the whole of the West Midlands conterminous with the Government Office for the Region.

The results of the consultation will be reported by the SHA to the Department of Health who will make a final decision on the re-configurations.

Cabinet has approved responses to all three consultation papers, supporting a West Midlands Strategic Health Authority, the continuation of an independent Herefordshire Primary Care Trust and a single Ambulance Trust for the West Midlands.

- (ii) **Annual Efficiency Statement 2006/07** – The Council is required to provide a Forward Looking Annual Efficiency Statement for 2006/07 as part of the wider Gershon Agenda. It needs to identify as a minimum a cumulative total of £6.619m by the end of 2006/07. This includes the ongoing gains of £3.31m for the current year. At least half of these efficiency gains need to be 'cashable', i.e.: releasing additional cash resources, and £1.65m has been included in the revenue budget for 2006/07 accordingly. Cabinet has agreed a strategy for securing efficiency gains through the "Herefordshire Connects" initiative which aims to ensure improvements in: customer service, providing residents, visitors and businesses access to a broad range of council and partner services; smarter working for all Council staff; more efficient management of records and documents; and better procurements and transaction efficiency.
- (iii) **Local Area Agreements: Outline Proposals** – Cabinet has received a report of the successful negotiation of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) which will run for three years from 1st April, 2006, and has endorsed the actions required for the next stage of the process.
- (iv) **Corporate Performance Assessment - Improvement Plan** - Cabinet has approved an Improvement Plan, following the Corporate Assessment (CA) and Joint Area Review (JAR) which combined to form the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA). The Improvement Plan does not carry every detail of major pieces of work but will cross reference to underlying projects and processes. This approach has been endorsed by the Audit Commission. The Plan will be checked after three months and a detailed examination of progress will be carried out after six months.
- (v) **Herefordshire Connects Update** - 'Herefordshire Connects' is the Council's strategic transformation project - previously called the Corporate Strategy Review. The project will address the service improvements required and means substantial investment in staff and support systems in order to revolutionise the delivery of Council services. Cabinet has received a report on the completion of Phase 1 of the Herefordshire Connects programme. It has approved the Herefordshire Connects Programme including the outline financial appraisal. It will receive further updates on the programme in due course, including a more detailed financial appraisal so that changes in the approved revenue and capital spending plans can be made. It has approved the use of the £1.928 million Invest to Save budget for 2006/07 to fund additional capital financing costs and direct revenue costs resulting from the programme in 2006/07 and 2007/08. It has noted the potential need to revisit the Prudential Borrowing limits for 2006/07 and beyond as a result of the additional long-term borrowing required to pay for the Herefordshire Connects Programme and has confirmed that the governance arrangement be developed in accordance with the framework set out in the report.

4.2 Report on Items of Interest

- (i) **Local Public Service Agreement** - Cabinet has received a report on the final performance against the first Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA1). It has noted that the performance reward grant earned by the Council for achievement of the LPSA targets is £1.65 million. The grant will be paid in two equal instalments over the next two years and will be used for investment in LPSA2. This will be supplemented by the pump priming grant from the Government of £930,000.
- (ii) **Community Forums** - Cabinet has received a report on the January 2006 round of Community Forum meetings. Attendance at the forums ranged from three to 50, with a total attendance of 137 across all six meetings. Analysis of attendees suggests that there is a core of 70 - 90 people who attend the forums regularly. Items discussed at this round of meetings included: Council Tax and the Budget; the Primary Care Trust Consultations; the National Grid Gas Connection projects; climate change; the learning disabilities service; as well as other local issues. 79% of those who completed the feedback questionnaire felt the meetings were worthwhile or very worthwhile.
- (iii) **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) **Joint Area Review – Improvement Plan** – Cabinet has received a report on progress so far and the response to the draft improvement plan sent to the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The Action Plan sets out what the Council intends to do to ensure a successful response to the recommendations of the Joint Area Review (JAR) Report 2005, and has been drawn up with the key partner organisations, the Primary Care Trust, the Police and the Voluntary Sector. It seeks to ensure that: appropriate criteria are set for the involvement of the Council's professionally qualified social care staff in child protection cases; these criteria are clearly understood by all concerned and consistently applied in practice; there is an effective workforce strategy to address the recruitment and retention problems within the Council's social care service and a written record is made of all contacts with the Social Care Duty Team. The Council has been successful in obtaining consultancy support from the Children's Workforce Development Council which will assist with the development of a workforce strategy.
- (ii) **Review of the Provision of School Places** - Cabinet has approved a County-wide review of school provision in primary, secondary and post-16 phases of education. The review is necessary because falling rolls in schools are significant, are projected to continue until 2016 and are already causing difficulties for schools to maintain the quality of teaching and learning and to

consider the additional initiatives expected of them. The existing review policies within the School Organisation Plan do not provide an adequate basis to consider the full impact of the problem. The review is expected to be completed by the end of 2007.

- (iii) **Children and Young People's Plan for Herefordshire** - A report on this item is to be found at item 1.2 of this report.

5.2 **Report on Items of Interest**

- (i) **Education White Paper October 2005 - Higher Standards, Better Schools for All: Implications for Herefordshire** - Cabinet has received a report on the local implications for Herefordshire of the Government's new Education Bill. Cabinet has noted that the proposals will have a limited impact locally and will do little to resolve the paradox of increasing parental choice and competition between schools, whilst ensuring the Every Child Matters agenda is met, particularly in relation to the most vulnerable pupils and families. The key education issue facing Herefordshire is how to maintain and further improve education standards in the County at a time of falling rolls and the proposals for Trust Schools, or the less radical federated school may be a possible solution to that problem.

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

6.1 **Report on Decisions Taken**

- (i) **HALO Leisure Trust** – Cabinet has considered a request for a two-year funding agreement and Capital investment programme with HALO Leisure Trust. It has: approved the development of a two-year rolling management agreement with the HALO Leisure Trust, with possible extension to three years subject to agreement by the Cabinet Member (Community Services); authorised the Leader to underwrite the proposed short term Capital Investment Programme outlined within the report, subject to the submission of a satisfactory business case; and requested that further work be undertaken to develop a long-term strategy for capital investment in HALO facilities. Cabinet is opposed to HALO establishing its own independent ICT system.

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 6 Return** – The IEG return is an essential part of the national monitoring process for assessing electronic local service delivery capability against central government's 2005 target and supports the delivery of priority outcomes for local e-government. It is an important feedback mechanism for assessing progress towards realising the benefits from the investment in e-government and the use of IEG funding in

individual local authorities. Cabinet has approved the Implementing Electronic Government return (IEG6).

7.2 Report on Items of Interest

- (i) **Disability Equality Scheme** - The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 requires organisations across the public sector to be proactive in ensuring that disabled people are treated fairly. Local Authorities have to produce a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) by December 2006 that shows they have considered the impact of their policies, practices and procedures on disabled people. Herefordshire Council has had a DES since 2002, but this needs updating to take account of the new duty to:

- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the DDA
- Eliminate harassment that is unlawful under the DDA
- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- Take steps to take account of disabled person's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other people.

Cabinet has noted the progress to date in developing the Disability Equality Scheme for 2006/09.

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

8.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Statement of Community Involvement** - A report on this item is to be found at item 1.3 of this report.

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

9.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) There were no decisions by Cabinet relating to this portfolio during the reporting period.

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

10.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Proposed use of Former Denco Car Park at Holmer Road, Hereford** – A report on this item is to be found at item 2.1 of this report.

- (ii) **Wesleyan Chapel, Kington** - The Wesleyan Chapel at Kington, originally acquired by Leominster District Council, is a Listed Grade II building which has been in a poor state of repair for many years. Over the last two years officers, Cabinet Members and local interested parties have tried to find a sustainable use for the building. Potential uses of the building included a youth hostel, Info Centre, Library and Sure Start Centre and more recently mixed private sector and community use. In all cases the high cost of conversion and ongoing revenue costs rendered each scheme non-viable. Conversion costs are estimated to be from £950,000 to in excess of £1.6 million. A variety of funding options have been explored but none would be adequate for the extent of the work required. Cabinet has noted that any attempt to de-list the building would be unlikely to succeed. Cabinet has given approval for the disposal of the Wesleyan Chapel on the open market.

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

11.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **EU Funding Programmes 2007-2013** - Cabinet has received a report on the European Commission's key proposals on the EU Structural Funds, particularly the Competitiveness and Employment Fund and England Rural Development Programme 2 (ERDP2). Euro 6.2 bn will be available for the new Competitive and Employment Programme and a further 0.6 bn will be available for the new Interreg Programme across the Country. In addition, the ERDP2 funding levels will be about the same as the current levels which is £3.5 million per year for the West Midlands. Cabinet has authorised officers to continue engagement in shaping the programme and lobbying for support.

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

12.1 Report on Decisions Taken

- (i) **Integrated Community Equipment Service** - The Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES) is a joint service provided by Herefordshire Council under a pooled budget arrangement with Herefordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT). In 2005/6, the pooled budget was £486,940. This budget covers all running costs, including accommodation and staffing costs, as well as the purchase of equipment items. The Integrated Community Equipment Service was established under guidelines issued by the Department of Health requiring health and social care to work together. This has now become an essential part of mainstream services and is a key component in the prevention agenda. Cabinet has received an update on performance and development plans related to the community equipment service and, while accepting, in principle, the proposed plans for current and future development of the service to meet the growing demand for specialist equipment across the County, has asked that a further detailed plan be submitted for consideration by Cabinet in September 2006.

12.2 Report on Items of Interest

- (i) **Homelessness Update** - The number of homelessness applications and acceptances in Herefordshire has risen steadily since 2002, accompanied by a significant rise in spending on temporary accommodation. There were 510 homelessness acceptances in 2004/05. In July 2005, Cabinet agreed a number of initiatives, based upon a homelessness prevention agenda. Since then, changes have been implemented which have led to an improving position around homelessness prevention in Herefordshire. Herefordshire Council is now once again providing homelessness and housing advice services following the transfer of services from Herefordshire Housing Ltd. Cabinet has noted that the number of homelessness acceptances in 2005/06 was reduced to just over 400. 30 successful homelessness prevention payments, totalling £9,000, have been made between January and March 2006. This represents a projected saving of approximately £300,000 by preventing temporary accommodation bookings to bed and breakfast establishments. The number of new families booked into bed and breakfast accommodation has fallen steadily from 24 in November 2005 to 9 in March 2006. Cabinet will continue to receive progress reports on a quarterly basis.

**COUNCILLOR R.J. PHILLIPS
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**