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Herefordshire Council

Direction of Travel Self Assessment 2006

1. Setting the scene – our local context

- 1.1 *The State of Herefordshire Report 2006*¹ gives a detailed account of the context in which the Council operates. In most respects this has not changed significantly since the summary given in the Council's self-assessment for the 2005 Corporate Assessment.² Material changes since are:
- the total population is now estimated to be 178,800, compared with 177,800 in 2004³
 - a lower forecast for overall population growth – of 1.7% by 2011, compared to the national growth forecast of 3.7%
 - falling numbers of people of working age – a forecast decrease of 1.1% by 2011, against a forecast increase of 3.4% nationally
 - falling numbers of children – a forecast decrease of 11.7% fewer by 2011, compared with a 3.1% fall in England and Wales
 - experimental statistics from the Office for National Statistics show Herefordshire's BME population to have increased from 2.7% of the total population in 2001 to 3.3% in 2003 (4,300 people in 2001 to 5,900 in 2003)
 - Home Office data shows that Herefordshire had an inflow of seasonal and migrant Eastern European worker of between 5,500 and 6,000 in 2005, the majority between 18 and 34.⁴
- 1.2 Following extensive public and stakeholder consultation, *The Herefordshire Community Strategy*⁵ for 2006-2020 has been published, setting out clear objectives for the Council and the other members of the Herefordshire Partnership. Reflecting national priorities and how they can be delivered to meet the distinctive needs and characteristics of the county, the core of the action plan to realise the objectives through to 2009 is the Local Area Agreement⁶ signed with Government in March 2006.
- 1.3 Several of the Council's main partners – the LSC, the Police and the PCT – have been subject to structural review and a period of major uncertainty. The Council is working closely with them to try to secure the best outcomes for the county and to manage the risks so as to maintain progress in delivering the community strategy. Government having confirmed that the Herefordshire PCT will continue in existence, detailed work is in hand with a view to the early establishment of a Public Service Trust/Children's Trust arrangements that will bring together the planning and commissioning of children's services and adult health and social care. **[Latest position will be available before sending]**
- 1.4 Updating the financial position for the 2006-07 figures shows the funding gap to have widened:
- Formula Grant per head of population is £259 – 21% below the unitary authority average of £329
 - Formula Grant plus Dedicated Schools Grant per head of population is £698 – 19% below the unitary authority average of £862; and
 - Dedicated Schools Grant per head of population is £439 – 18% below the unitary authority average of £533

¹ The State of Herefordshire Report 2006

² Corporate Assessment 2005: Herefordshire Council's Self-Assessment

³ ONS 2005 mid-year estimate

⁴ Home Office data, analysed in Herefordshire Council's 'Review of data on migrant & seasonal workers in Herefordshire, July 2006'

⁵ http://www.herefordshirepartnership.co.uk/docs/community_strategy.pdf

⁶ http://www.herefordshirepartnership.com/docs/LAA_Unified_document_for_website_June_2006%281%29.doc

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Despite this, the Council's financial situation is sound, with a healthy level of reserves and a strong balance sheet. However, the Council's ability to sustain major improvements in priority services in response to future challenges depends on large-scale transformational change, including high levels of efficiency savings. The implications are at the heart of the Council's new *Medium Term Financial Management Strategy* (MTFMS) 2006 – 2009, which will be finalised in October 2006 alongside the Corporate Plan 2007 – 2010.

2. The Council's track record in improving outcomes

2.1 The Council's priorities are set out in its Corporate Plan 2006-09 and Annual Operating Plan 2006-07.⁷ The subsequently agreed LAA PIs and targets are consistent with these priorities, and all are monitored and managed through the single process of integrated performance reports (IPRs).

2.2 The Council's highest priority is ensuring that the arrangements for safeguarding children are operating adequately, following the adverse findings in this respect in the 2005 Joint Area Review. The next highest priorities are securing major improvements in adult social care and raising to a consistently high standard performance management across the Council, so as to improve outcomes and efficiency generally.

2.3 Overall, the Council modestly improved its performance against the national BVPIs in 2005-06 compared with 2004-05 (33 improved, 31 deteriorated, 16 unchanged). More important is that the Council has made significant progress in respect of many PIs in its priority areas and continues to do so.

2.4 In respect of **children and young people**:

- appropriate criteria have been set for the involvement of the local authority's professionally qualified social care staff in child protection cases; these are understood by all concerned and consistently applied in practice. This has led to excellent progress in the number of referrals of children in need (from 175 per 10,000 in March 06 to 223 in July 06, against a target of 220)
- as a result, we are carrying out many more assessments but are having to manage intensively the flow of referrals, with all under constant review to ensure that Section 47 safeguarding assessments are carried out urgently
- recruitment and retention problems within Safeguarding and Assessment are being addressed immediately through the use of selected agency staff and, longer-term, through a dynamic workforce strategy
- as a result of these and other improvements, Government has accepted that the Council's arrangements for safeguarding are now adequate
- good progress is being made more generally with the implementation of the JAR Action Plan, in respect of which the Council has allocated an additional £100K, as well as contingency funding. For example, the number of families in B&B has been cut from 54 at the end of 2005 to 10; the 12-week target for occupational therapy is now being met; and involvement and consultation with children and young people is increasing: the Shadow Children and Young People's Board was set up at the end of 2005 and Youth Council elections were held in March 2006
- **[Whitecross school PFI; environmental aspects and pupil involvement in design]**
- **[most recent exam results]**

Fuller details are in the Annual Performance Assessment self-assessment of May 2006.⁸

2.5 In **adult social care** significantly improved outcomes were achieved in 2005-06 in respect of:

- older people helped to live at home up to 82.9 per 1,000, against a target of 80

⁷ http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/council_gov_democracy/council/1855.asp

⁸ http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/docs/JointAreaReview/APA_2006.pdf

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- adults with physical difficulties helped to live at home up to 4.8 per 1,000, against a target of 4.2
- adults with mental health problems helped to live at home up to 3.7 per 1,000 against a target of 3.0 (performance was below target in respect of adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home)
- adults and older people receiving direct payments up from 60 per 100,000 to nearly 80
- the continued success of the Signposting scheme, under which more than 20 organisations, including the Council, the PCT, the Fire Service, the Police, the Pensions Service and voluntary bodies, work in partnership to enable older people to live independently in their own homes: over 2,100 referrals in 2005-06, bringing the total since 2002 to over 8,000, with the welfare rights element helping people claim more than £9.5m of additional benefits.
- the number of people accepted as homeless to whom the Council has a full statutory duty was reduced from 510 to 416 (even more dramatically, as a result of intensive action and the establishment of a dedicated team, there were only 29 acceptances in the first quarter of 2006-07, compared to 115 in Q1 2004-05)
- Between 2003-04 and 2006-07 a total budget addition of over £4m was made in respect of Adult Services. A Social Care contingency of £1.3m has been created for 2006-07 and the Medium- Term Financial Management Strategy recommends that this should increase to £3m.

Fuller details are in the Annual Review Meeting self-assessment of August 2006

2.6 In respect of **economic and community development and regeneration**:

- development of a new economic development strategy with partners, including AWM
- significant progress with the county's premier regeneration and economic development project, the Edgar Street Grid, with the appointment of the Chief Executive and the purchase by AWM of the trading site for the relocation of existing businesses
- completion of the first phase of the refurbishment of Hereford city centre
- commissioned the development of a business centre on the Leominster Enterprise Park, with lots sold to developers and development underway
- 45 business start-up grants already awarded in 2006-07, compared with the original target of 30 for the whole year
- an increase from 33 in 2004-05 to 54 in 2005-06 in the number of empty private dwellings returned to occupation as a result of action by the Council
- development of a Museum and Learning Resource Centre where users are reporting an over 90% satisfaction rate; regional awards for the Parks Service; and development of the Cultural Pathfinder initiative
- the Council's new annual public satisfaction survey in November 2005 showed that well over 60% of users of cultural and recreational services were satisfied with them, with most people believing that access to nature and sports and leisure facilities had improved
- but there were higher than previous levels of dissatisfaction with cultural services amongst non-users, which coincided with lower numbers of users, in line with the national trend. It also showed a deterioration in perceptions of some aspects of quality of life, especially traffic congestion, wage levels and the local cost of living. Follow-up work is in hand to find out the underlying reasons and provide the basis for targeted action, with citizen's panel surveys in the summer and autumn.
- **[Widemarsh street pedestrianisation – Richard Ball]**
- **[Rotherwas – heads of agreement to be signed on 28 Sept]**

2.7 Significant **improvements in environmental outcomes and services** have been achieved. Leading examples of improved performance in 2005-06 over 2004-05 are:

- 23.89% of waste recycled or composted, compared with 21.79%, with kerbside collection of two recyclables being extended in September

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- waste landfilled down from 78.2% to 76.1% and waste collected per household down from 528.03 to 521.7 kilograms
- streets not reaching the BVPI cleanliness standard down from 27% to 18%
- traffic controls down from 3.18 to 0 days
- determination of planning applications within national target timescales up from 46% to 61% for major applications; 51% to 73% for minor; and 64% to 85% for others; and the quality of service checklist score up from 89% to 94%

2.8 **Community safety** shows generally positive progress:

- low overall crime levels have been maintained
- the annual satisfaction survey in November 2005 showed that, compared with three years ago, anti-social behaviour is now seen as less of a problem
- although the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads rose slightly between 2003 (141) and 2004 (147), this compares very favourably with earlier years; and there was a significant fall in the number of people slightly injured per vehicle kilometre between 2003 (783) and 2004 (732)

2.9 Health

[Main content dependent on sight of the Director of Public Health's annual report, which should be published before the end of September]

- increased facilities for physical activity and higher participation: 403 new participants in the South Herefordshire Activity Promotion and Education Scheme (SHAPES) since its start in 2005; the Sports Referral project exceeded its target by 1.5 times; Lady Hawkins Community Leisure Centre on target to exceed 6% increase in usage figures, with over 30,911 attendances; Wigmore Leisure Centre on target to exceed 8% increase in usage figures, with over 13,000 attendances; and the opening of the new swimming pool for North Herefordshire, where attendances have been 150% higher than they were for the old pool.

2.10 Performance in respect of **welfare benefits** has improved substantially. 2006-07 first quarter figures show the Council achieving the DWP standard of 36 days for processing new claims, compared with 70 in the same period in 2005-06; and processing changes in 21 days rather than 67.

2.11 The Council has continued to make progress in **mainstreaming diversity and equality of opportunity**:

- a Migrant Workers website⁹ has been successfully launched; developed in partnership with West Mercia Police and the PCT, it's the first of its kind in the UK
- our Info. centres are advertising in various languages our translation service and free Internet access
- we have provided significantly more support to schools, including the appointment of an additional 1.5 FTE permanent advisory teachers, to enable them to meet the unprecedented increase in the number of pupils learning English as an additional language: up from just 4 new referrals in 1999-2000 to 47 in 04-05 and 69 in 05-06 (provisional figure)¹⁰
- working with users and stakeholders, we have reviewed our Disability Equality Scheme; it's now out for public consultation, with the final version due to go live in October 2006
- our Corporate Diversity Team has continued to resolve successfully complaints of discrimination, of which 50 were received in 2005-06 and another 17 by the end of July 2006
- The Council has not made all the progress it would wish in respect of increasing the top 5% of staff who are women, the percentage of employees with a disability, and the percentage of

⁹ <http://www.welcometoherefordshire.com/>

¹⁰ Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)

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employees from ethnic minority communities. Our Central Recruitment Team, established in April, is focussing efforts on improving performance against these equalities targets

The Council's reputation and profile

2.12 The Herefordshire Annual Satisfaction survey in November 2005 found that almost half of respondents were satisfied with the way the Council runs things, about twice the proportion who were dissatisfied (broadly similar to 2003); and 54% felt that the Council kept them well-informed (an increase from 49% in 2003).

2.13 Following the appointment of a Head of Communications earlier this year and a targeted programme of action, the Council has significantly increased its media profile: press enquiries have risen from 40 in April to nearly 140 in July; and press reports from about 100 in April to nearly 200 in each of June and July.

3. Progress in developing and delivering robust plans for improvement

3.1 The Council responded with speed to the judgement in the Corporate Performance Assessment 2005 that its rate of improvement was, for the first time, only adequate. It is implementing vigorously a comprehensive Overall Performance Improvement Plan (OPIP). This is intimately linked with the Council's long-term Business Transformation Programme (BTP). Chaired by the Chief Executive, the BTP's Overall Project Board leads an ambitious change programme to improve customer services and deliver the financial capacity needed to invest in key priorities for the future. It consists of six main inter-linking areas, each managed by its own board. They are:

- The *Herefordshire Connects* Programme
- The Customer Services Strategy
- The Children and Young People's programme
- *The Big Move*: our office accommodation strategy
- Adult Services Project
- Pay and Workforce Development

Both the BTP and the OPIP are being project-managed using Prince 2. Progress in respect of the individual elements follows.

3.2 ***Herefordshire Connects*** is the Council's strategic transformation programme. Approved in April 2006 and now in the early stages of procurement, it consists of 3 key work-streams:

1. Integrated Customer Services – electronic records and document management system
2. Integrated Support Services – finance, procurement, HR and asset management
3. Corporate Performance Management – cross-Council framework

This programme is aimed to release cash from business processes to reinvest in service and capital investment priorities, such as increasing demand for adult social care, improved children's service and essential economic infrastructure, such as the Rotherwas Relief Road. The benefit realisation target for 2007-08 is £5.8m. Integral is a corporate **ICT strategy**, which has been developed and will now be put to the Corporate Management Board and Cabinet for approval, and completion of the e-government programme.

3.3 **The Customer Services Strategy** is being rolled out, with priority being given to the creation by early in 2007 of the *Info. by phone* service and a greatly improved Information Shop for Hereford.

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- 3.4 As regards the **Children and Young People's programme**, the Children's Partnership three-year plan is being driven forward, with clear targets and milestones, through the Forward Delivery Plan. Initially for 2006-07 and integrating the JAR Action Plan, this is a live document that will be reviewed and updated regularly as the basis for continuous and sustained improvement in outcomes for children. Key issues of focus will be the embedding and progressive further improvement of the safeguarding arrangements, and the associated strengthening of the permanent complement of trained social workers. It is also intended as an important means of ensuring that pace is maintained and risks managed effectively as the present organisational arrangements are superseded by the proposed Children's Trust arrangements/Public Service Trust.
- 3.5 Significant progress has been made with the **Accommodation Strategy**, with a clear programme having been defined and detailed implementation plans drawn up.
- 3.6 The Department of Health has responded positively to the Council's initiative in seeking assistance to effect sustainable improvements in **adult social care**. It is procuring further assistance that will enable the Council to deliver on all aspects of its three pillars of improvement. We have not hung fire waiting for this to happen but have put in place an interim improvement plan, against which progress is being maintained. In particular, we have completed the assessment of future social care needs and services for older people and adults with learning disabilities.
- 3.7 In the field of **equalities and diversity**, the Council is pressing ahead towards its target of achieving Level 2 of the Local Authority Equality Standard in 2006-07. Its three-year programme of equality impact assessments is drawing to a close and will result in SMART action plans for improvement being in place across the Council, as an integral part of service plans, no later than March 2007. This will provide the platform for the Council to achieve its target of achieving both Levels 3 and Level 4 of the Standard in 2008 and Level 5 in 2010.
- 3.8 Major improvements in **performance management** are fundamental for the Council to achieve all aspects of the BTP and the OPIP. These are well in hand. Across the whole Council a comprehensive Performance Improvement Cycle (PIC)¹¹ has been developed. Its purposes are to link directly, at all stages of planning and performance management, the allocation of resources with the delivery of the Council's priorities in terms of measurable outputs and outcomes; enable the Council to make informed choices about the trade-offs between investment in different services; address successfully cross-cutting priorities, such as diversity, equalities and sustainability; achieve the best possible value for money, overall and in respect of individual services; make cash-releasing and non-cash releasing savings to meet Government requirements and deliver service improvements in priority areas; and drive continuous performance improvement for better customer services across the Council.
- 3.9 It is being rolled out with the development of three-year proposals for service improvement within the context of the MTFMS and as an integral part of the development of the Corporate Plan 2007/10. Cabinet plans to take these strategic decisions in October, so providing a sound basis for the development (in most cases for the first time) of three-year rather than annual service plans and the setting of annual budgets for 2007-08.
- 3.10 The Chief Executive's regular performance review meetings with individual directors and the Head of HR have been strengthened; monthly performance reports, with a prescribed minimum content, are made to each lead Cabinet member in respect of their portfolios; the discipline of the bi-monthly integrated performance reports to Cabinet, introduced in 2005, has exposed weaknesses in performance management and focused energy on remedial action, with the result that there has been a sharp decrease from 45 in May to 19 in July in the number of performance indicators red flagged and non-negotiable deliverables are incorporated into the objectives and targets of all heads of service (an example of the immediate impact this has had

¹¹ Intranet: Info Library/Corporate Essentials

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is the increase in the proportion of staff review and development appraisals completed on schedule; up from 76% in 2005 to 94% in 2006).

- 3.11 Also across the Council, a linked network of performance improvement managers and supporting staff is being put in place. The managers will be line-managed by the Council's Head of Policy and Performance but be out-posted in their service areas. Some permanent appointments have been made and all others have been advertised. Where necessary, as in Children's Services, interim appointments have been made.
- 3.12 In view of the particular need to strengthen substantially performance management in Children's Services, the Council has additionally contracted with the Institute of Public Care, which is developing with management and staff tailored arrangements to meet their special needs and circumstances.
- 3.13** These arrangements are reflected in the Council's revised Performance Management Framework. **[to be presented for CMB and Cabinet approval in September]**
- 3.14 Parallel action has been taken with partners to strengthen substantially the performance management arrangements of *The Herefordshire Partnership* so as to ensure the delivery of the *Herefordshire Community Strategy*, including the LAA - targets will be set and action planning completed for all indicators by the end of September. The Partnership Performance Management Group is developing a risk management process by the end of October, and processes for scrutinising targets and planning by December.
- 3.15 Plans are also well in hand to **ensure that the Council's employees have the understanding and skills** to deliver the improvements. The Council has committed to achieving *Investor in People* accreditation by October 2007; internal communications have been overhauled, with the introduction of the *News and Views* two-way briefing system, *First Press* delivered with pay-slips and on-line, and the revamped *Leadership Forum*; and the roll-out of the comprehensive Pay and Workforce Strategy.
- 3.16 Council has recently approved a change to the Constitution that will provide the necessary flexibility to **ensure that the Council's political structures are aligned with the forward agenda**. This has been achieved by setting the number of Cabinet members at between 3 and 9, with it being a matter for the Leader to determine the actual number and the portfolios.
- 3.17 In order to **strengthen the scrutiny function**, the Scrutiny Improvement Plan has been further developed to reflect issues arising from the 2005 Corporate Performance Assessment and the Joint Area Review. It is now being rolled out. A valuable scrutiny report has been produced on the Council's service delivery partnership with Herefordshire Jarvis and Owen Williams, leading to a response and action plan from the Executive. A further scrutiny report on the Courtyard Theatre is being considered by the Executive. In addition to receiving the integrated corporate and other regular performance reports, special attention is being given to strengthen Children's Services scrutiny, including a presentation on best practice by the IDeA. More generally, visits are being organised to look at best practice in other local authorities.