

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
RESOURCES, PROSPERITY, PARTNERSHIP  
AND CONSULTATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY 18 JUNE 2002 at 2.30pm**

Agenda Item No.

**1**

**SCRUTINY OF PROMISE FOR 2001-02 “*Work with business to increase prosperity, protect jobs and improve standards of living for local people*”**

Report of the Head of Economic and Community Development and Head of Trading Standards

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Executive Member:- Michael Janes

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To give members of the Scrutiny committee an opportunity to examine the Promise for 2001-02 to work with business to increase prosperity, protect jobs and improve standards of living for local people.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 The performance of measures reported in the Best Value Performance Plan for 2001-02 against this Promise suggests that targets will be met or exceeded.
- 2.2 A number of actions are being undertaken to further this Promise
- The Food Service Plan and Trading Standards Service Plan, which conforms to the newly introduced National Performance Framework have been approved by Cabinet and will be published on Herts Direct. Both plans include sections on working with business.
  - Trading Standards will continue to work closely with business, giving advice on new legislation and encouraging compliance with the law. All authorities in the East of England work together to promote uniformity and consistency of approach, which is something business demands.

**3. Background**

**Objectives, actions and examples - What we said in the 2001-02 Best Value Performance Plan**

- 3.1 Our Economic Development unit works in association with the TEC, Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce and Business Link, the key agencies for business support in Hertfordshire, via the Hertfordshire Prosperity Forum. (From 1 April [2001] the TEC is replaced by the Learning and Skills Council and the Small Business Service).

3.2 Through this partnership encompassing district councils, businesses, the Learning Skills Council, the University of Hertfordshire and others working with the county council, a five year Economic Development Strategy for Hertfordshire, launched in October 2000, has been developed with the following key objectives:

- Create a learning environment for all
- Develop a business-friendly environment
- Strike a balance between the built and natural environment
- Promote social inclusion through:
  - development of a county-wide social inclusion framework through Hertfordshire Anti-Poverty Partnership (HAPP)
  - integrated delivery between service providers
  - mainstreaming successful pilots and initiatives.

*(The full action plan is set out in the Economic Development strategy)*

3.3 This strategy has eight themes which recognise that maintaining the county as an attractive place to live and work is a key factor in attracting inward investment and ensuring a robust local economy. Our Trading Standards Business Advice team works closely with the county's businesses and carries out regular inspections to high and medium risk premises as well as food premises across the county.

3.4 To take this promise forward we are:

- Creating a web-based network to encourage innovation and enterprise - part funded by a successful bid to the Regional Development Agency
- Linking the Herts Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Business Link web sites into a "business channel" on [www.hertsdirect.org](http://www.hertsdirect.org) so that business people can access information through one point
- Producing with the industries concerned, cluster development plans
- With the East of England Investment Agency and Herts business support organisations, reorganising the county's inward investment and aftercare services to provide a better service and linking this to a computerised property database
- Getting our share of European Funds to use for training unemployed people, and developing the skills of those already employed
- Enhancing business competitiveness through the Hertfordshire Prosperity forum
- Working to establish further science/high tech business parks in Hertfordshire
- Encouraging the development of more new businesses in the knowledge-based economy
- Improving road access – a responsibility of our Environment department

3.5 The county council is backing plans to redevelop Hatfield aerodrome to create 8,000 jobs and 1,700 new homes on the largest of the county six key employment sites.

## 4. What we have done and plans for the future

### 4.1

- Within the year 2001/02. Trading Standards especially responded to the needs of the farming community, which had restrictions placed upon it by the foot and mouth crisis. Staff worked on Saturdays to minimise delays on licensing animal movements and acted as a conduit, to relay business concerns to the Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs. This was done at both regional and national level. Departments within the Eastern Region provided staff to assist colleagues elsewhere in the country and to act as liaison officers with local DEFRA offices.
- The year 2001/2 saw the launch of a pilot “Proof of Age” card scheme in St. Albans. It enables young people to prove their age to retailers, but also helps protect businesses from inadvertently selling age restricted products to youngsters. The scheme will be extended to another two districts this year (02/3).
- Trading Standards will develop more formal agreements with “Home Authority (HA)” businesses, particularly in the light of a relaunched HA principle. The principle, which is welcomed by business and central government, promotes a single point of contact for companies to seek advice and guidance on regulatory matters. Hertfordshire has a national reputation for working with Home Authority businesses, and we were involved in the re-drafting of the principle.
- Two of the Trading Standards Performance Indicators will be changing for 2002/03. Local 256 will reflect the percentage of enquiries completed within a standard target time (5 days). This will hopefully show a more qualitative approach.
- Local 259 will set targets for the percentage of high and medium risk food premises visited. This is to comply with Food Standards Agency requirements.

#### 4.1.1 In the year 2001/02 the Economic and Community Development Unit has:

- Assisted the Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry to launch its web-based innovation network (the HertsNetwork).
- With Business Link, Screen East and the South West Herts Business Partnership negotiated a new Film Commission arrangement for the Region.
- With our regional and local business support services re-organised and implemented the new County inward investment and aftercare service, and developed with in this the property database, all funded through £100k from EEDA.
- With our partners obtained £5m of European Social Fund for getting people into work and improving employment prospects.
- Accessed other external funding, again with our partner;
  - The Phoenix fund aimed at ethnic minorities (£450,000)
  - Single Regeneration budget for disadvantaged communities (£3.5m)

- Worked with the Trestle Theatre Company to obtain £1.5m lottery funding for the physical regeneration of the Cell Barnes Chapel, which has now opened.
- Continued to work on the Key Employment sites, in particular
  - Leavesden Park, where a planning application for the 1.2million sq. ft new media Business Park has been submitted which includes a new digital film studio.
  - Essex Road, consultants have been engaged to draw up a planning application for a new road bridge to open up the site for development
  - Hatfield Park, to investigate the viability for a heritage facility provided for as part of the local agreement.
- With the Chamber of Commerce and Industry responded to the impact of the foot and mouth crisis to establish a tourism group which obtained £15,000 from EEDA and successfully organised:
  - A familiarisation trip for journalists to group tour operators which has resulted in editorial on Herts
  - Appearing in Easy Jet and Garuda Airlines in-flight magazines
  - Two editions of the Herts Holiday Times
  - A tourism seminar with key note speaker Dr. Kim Howells
  - A successful Enjoy! Hertfordshire marquee at the Herts County Show.
- Concluded stage 1 of the Hertfordshire Town Renaissance Campaign - 'a wider dimension on countywide housing capacity issues' - reporting back on 18 months worth of event based activities that took the key issues associated with making the best use of previously developed land to the widest of audiences.
- Assisted the University of Hertfordshire to develop the Herts Observatory (a web-based “one stop shop” for information and intelligence)

#### 4.1.2 for the future we will:

- Implement the recommendations of the Best Value Review of Economic Development carved out in 2001/02 in partnership with the district councils and HpF Partner,
- Continue to implement the recommendations of the Best Value Review of Voluntary Sector funding, which we have supported during 2001/02
- Continue the release of HpF Newsletter, aimed particularly at businesses
- Launch the Cultural Strategy, which we have been working on during 2001/02. This will be informed by the consultation with the public and partners undertaken this year, including 15,000 leaflets distributed through public venues, roadshows and the web.
- Deliver the targets agreed with EEDA in the HpF Business Plan, which secures for the partnership £500,000 for economic development activities.

- Implement areas of the Compact with voluntary Organisations which was successfully launched in 2001/02
- Determine ways to access alternative external funds as European Social Fund diminishes.
- Continue to develop the key employment sites, in particular 3, Cherry Trees Lane, to work in partnership with land owners and key stakeholders to research the viability of and development strategy for Hertfordshire first science park.
- Take forward the conclusions from stage 1 of the Hertfordshire Town Renaissance Campaign completed in (2001/02) by working in partnership with the districts and other key stakeholders by providing the practical means for supporting the delivery of the renaissance agenda in Hertfordshire.
- Continued to progress the Hertfordshire Observatory.

#### 4.2 We also intend to:

- Establish a baseline picture of those communities with disadvantaged people who could benefit from training and monitoring to increase their employment prospects.
- Place the relevant agencies in contact with those people identified above.
- Develop a film and media plan for Hertfordshire intended to ensure the success the county has enjoyed continues into the future.
- Assist those voluntary organisations which want to develop into social enterprises.

## 5 How we are doing – TRADING STANDARDS

- 5.1 There are 5 measures of this Promise, which are shown below. These are all locally determined indicators.
- 5.2 Performance against these measures suggests that targets will be met or exceeded.

PI ref	Performance indicator	2001-02 Target	2001-02 End of Year Estimate	Variance	Comments on performance
a07	<i>Work with business to increase prosperity, protect jobs and improve standards of living for local people</i>				
Local 256.00	The number of consumer complaints and enquiries dealt with	31,000	31,000	0%	
Local 259.00	The number of visits to food premises (MAFF target is to visit 40% of all premises)	35% (revised to 40%)	40%	0%	Following the establishment of 2 new posts, the target has been increased from 35% to 40%
Local 260.00	The number of food samples per 1,000 population	1.3	1.3	0%	
Local 261.00	Net spending per head of population on environmental health and consumer protection	£2.07 – Figure calculated in accordance with the Best Value Accounting Code of Practice	£2.03	-2%	
Local L055	The average number of consumer protection visits per high and medium risk premises.	0.22	0.22	0%	This is a measure of how often we visit the most important premises (based on national criteria taking account of e.g. turnover and history) and assess them. For example 0.25 would indicate assessment every 4 years.

## 6. How we are doing – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

6.1 There are three performance indicators, two of which are locally determined.

6.2 These will be met or exceeded.

PI ref	Performance indicator	2001-02 Target	2001-02 End of Year Estimate	Variance	Comments on performance
BVPI 114	The adoption by the authority of a local cultural strategy	To achieve Cultural Strategy by December 2002	N/A	Will be achieved early	Will be launched in September 2002
LO74	Amount of money received from external funding sources	£6m	£11m	+£5m	No further SRB rounds and ESF likely to diminish 2002/3 onwards. Target of £6m for 2002/3 still recommended.
LO77	Increase in the number of disadvantaged people who are employed or who are training for employment.	Establishment of benchmark and plans to address target in place during 2002/3	On target	0	The reorganisation of key partner agencies is now complete enabling progress towards the target.

## 7. Conclusions

7.1 The performance of measures reported in the Best Value Performance Plan for 2001-02 against the Promises suggests that targets will be met or exceeded

7.2 A number of actions are being undertaken to further these Promises.