

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE 17 SEPTEMBER 1998

NOTE: Full copies of the reports mentioned below have been sent to members of the Policy Committee and other members who have requested them. Further copies are, however, available from Janet Purcell, Room 222, County Secretary's Department, County Hall, Hertford. (Telephone: 01992 555562)

1. HERTS CONNECT

1.1 Background

A review of the whole organisation was undertaken in 1997 with a view to achieving efficiency savings whilst ensuring the organisation is in a healthy position for its future role.

The review was undertaken with the assistance of consultants and was overseen by a Member Steering Group and validated by an external group. The review:-

- tested the hypothesis that “there must be a better way”
- looked for ways of doing things differently which would be more effective, and also reduce duplication, integrate similar activities and would also embrace changing technology
- considered ways of improving staff costs and employment structures
- reviewed the use of property and other assets
- developed scenarios with differing levels of cost reductions, service improvements and risks

The review concluded that there should be universal access to the County Council (a “Gateway”) together with measures to improve cross-service working. The package of proposals named ‘Herts Connect’ is outlined below. The principle of Herts Connect has been adopted by the Policy Committee as a way of implementing efficiency and service improvements, (with costs and funding to be clarified).

1.2 Gateway Services and Information Technology

The universal 'Gateway' will enable the public to contact the County Council using:-

- the telephone via a single call centre **Herts Line**
- information technology on on-line facility **Herts OnLine**
- in person using well located premises **Herts Enters**

The Gateway will build on initiatives already started within departments and be part of the development of existing and new information technology systems.

Herts Line and Herts OnLine

The conclusions from feasibility studies are:-

- That both Herts Line and Herts Online will provide improved public access and service at a reduced cost.
- Herts Line could initially handle approximately 1.4 million calls per year and have 80 operating positions with scope for expansion to other County Council services or potential partners.
- Herts Online would be used by a relatively small proportion of the population initially but this number would increase with time.
- The set up costs would be in the region of £3.3 million, which could be funded from the receipts identified in the property disposal programme.
- The running costs of the Herts Line call centre would be in the region of £2.1 million per annum, a saving of £800,000 on the estimated costs of providing those services currently.
- The benefits of this proposal include a consistency of response with 95% of calls being answered within 30 seconds. It is expected that more than 70% of calls could be dealt with without referral.

The Policy Committee have agreed that the development of Herts Line and Herts Online proceed on the basis of:-

- using commercial partners to ensure they are delivered in the most cost effective manner;
- the Chief Executive authorising the funding of the implementation from the identified and approved capital receipts (after consultation with the Member Steering Group);
- a project plan being reported to the Policy Committee in January 1999 with the financial assessment for the funding of capital requirements.

Herts Enters

The Whole Organisation Review suggested that the Gateway services should include a walk-in facility for public access (Herts Enters). A feasibility study indicated that the

initial set up costs for a County-wide service would be significant and MORI research indicated that the public did not consider this facility would be widely used. However, in principle, Herts Enters could offer some benefits to services and where opportunities to pilot the principle are identified these could be pursued. Opportunities may be identified and provided during the review of Library Services and from discussions with other partners.

The potential of Herts Enters will be tested after consultation with the Member Steering Group, but no further expenditure will be undertaken on these until full details of the probable cost and consumer need for the services are provided.

Partnership

A number of discussions have been held with potential partners from both the private and public sectors. Several commercial organisations have assisted in the research into the provision of Gateway services. This involvement and the scale of the project has led to these and a number of other private sector providers expressing interest in being involved in the development and provision of these services. The Committee have agreed that appropriate partnerships be pursued with private, public and voluntary sector organisations.

1.3 Productivity and efficiency reviews

Productivity and efficiency reviews carried out to date across the County Council will yield full year savings totaling £5 million. A further £2 million per year from improved purchasing arrangements has been identified.

Feasibility studies have tested a methodology which could be adopted by the Council as a means of delivery improvements. The efficiency approach has been tested by the Transport Review and Integrated Casework Management by the Review of Services for Children with Disabilities (see paragraph 1.4 below).

The progress with the Transport Review was the subject of a report to the Policy Operations Sub-Committee on 10 September and a further report with details of the financial implications will be presented to the Sub-Committee on 8 January.

1.4 Integrated Casework Management

An analysis of the activities undertaken by the County Council suggested that there is scope for improving the delivery of services where more than one agency is involved by adopting an integrated “casework” approach. A Casework Management project has tested the hypothesis that an integrated ‘casework’ approach reduces costs and duplication and provides a more coherent service to clients (and other stakeholders).

The project looked at disabled children with special educational needs with a focus on the referral and assessment and case planning elements.

The overall conclusion of the project was that inter-agency collaboration can reduce costs and duplication and provide a more coherent service to the child and his or her

family. This conclusion reiterates the findings of other in-county and national studies, although no one else has attempted to introduce a multi-agency solution.

A proposed 'redesign model' adopting a more holistic and integrated approach with the child as the focus of a joint team approach to assessment, case planning and service delivery has been proposed. This requires changes to the current approach and a series of pilot studies have been agreed as part of the next phase of this project, to test the use of multi-agency assessment and the use of a single joint commissioning budget.

The Committee have noted the findings of the Casework Management Project and endorsed the use of pilot studies and associated review processes as the means of delivering a 'Best Value' review programme. The pilot studies will be for a minimum six month trial period to determine whether the methodology offers a more effective and efficient means of cross departmental customer delivery.

1.5 Property Review/Workwise

A Property Review has been undertaken to confirm the potential to realise capital receipts from the disposal of property and the adoption of flexible working practices (Workwise).

Disposal of surplus housing stock and parts of the rural estate will produce gross capital receipts to the value of £13.5 million, exceeding the requirements for the implementation of Herts Connect.

It is anticipated that the move to flexible working and changes in service delivery will also release more property for disposal. The capital receipts from such disposals could be used to reinvest in services or used to support other initiatives.

All service departments are developing and adopting the Workwise initiative. Early indications are that Social Services are identifying 40% space gains and that the overall savings of between 15% and 25% could be achieved across all departments. Discussions with consultants in the property field have indicated that the level of space savings are usually in the region of 25%. At this stage the level of these savings have not been identified but Social Services have achieved savings in the region of £350,000 in their 1998/99 budget based on the introduction of Workwise to central Social Services staff only. This initiative has also realised £1 million in capital receipts from Social Services. Education have also started to plan the implementation of Workwise with full year effect of savings of £150,000 identified to date.

It is anticipated that the requirement for office space will reduce further as a result of the implementation of efficiency and integration of casework management reviews across all services with a resultant reduction in office space, bringing further savings, subject to the appropriate investment being provided.

As part of the Authority's ongoing review of its property stock it is appropriate to consider alternative means of provision including the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) approach or short term leasing from a third party.

Work is underway with Three Rivers District Council to identify the property holdings of the two authorities in that area. This exercise will identify any scope for utilising them differently and could provide a model for adoption with other District Councils and other public sector organisations such as Health Authorities, who are already starting to show an interest.

Service Committees are now required to consider opportunities for other changes in service delivery and to identify potential property disposals and the level to which Workwise and other flexible working practices can be introduced and report back to the Policy Committee.

1.6 Consultation

There has been an extensive programme of consultation with both internal and external groups. These included elected members, groups of staff, representative bodies, potential partners, suppliers and the public. The programme was designed to ensure that the views of all of these groups informed the work of the project teams and to assist in the development of the recommendations to Policy Committee.

Discussions with staff and consultation with trade unions will continue as the project develops and, project by project, the full staffing implications will be reported back to the Member Steering Group and Policy Committee before with any changes.

1.7 Financial Implications

The work to date, including that of Gateway Design has identified savings with a full year effect of approximately £12 million.

The cost of establishing Herts Line and Herts OnLine are estimated to be £3.3 million with annual running costs of £2.1 million a saving of £800,000 per annum on the current provision of this service. Therefore, the payback period for the investment in these elements is approximately four years.

The Property Review has identified usable receipts of £13.5 million from the disposal of property for which approval has already been given. The funding to support the provision of Herts Line and Herts OnLine could be provided from the receipts from the disposal of property already approved. The use of any further receipts and some decisions on the disposal of property will need to be the subject of further consideration by Policy and service committees.

It is expected that the implementation of further productivity and integrated casework reviews will deliver additional savings as will the adoption of flexible working practices across other services and central departments. However, in order to achieve these savings and those relating to the Gateway services, it will be necessary for funding to be provided on an 'invest to save' basis.

Therefore, an implementation and 'invest to save' budget of £1.5 million will be established using identified receipts from the disposal of property to fund the implementation of Herts Connect and the Chief Executive will authorise use of this

funding after consultation with the Member Steering Group, provided the business case is made in each case.

1.8 Timescale

The projected timescale for the implementation of Herts Connect is three years. Work is ongoing to develop a project plan which will be reported to Policy Committee in January.

This will bring together the specific design and development plan for the Gateway Services currently being developed with potential suppliers and partners. It is anticipated that specifications will be prepared early in 1999.

In the next three months a provisional programme of reviews will be developed to address the requirements of Best Value and Herts Connect. This programme will use a flexible but robust review methodology based on the experience of the existing service review process and the feasibility studies.

1.9 Conclusion

The work undertaken since the publication of the findings of the Whole Organisation Review have confirmed that the County Council services and organisation could deliver its internal and external services more effectively and at less cost.

Herts Connect will ensure that there is improved and unified public access and more integrated, person focused services. To achieve this the council will need to adopt a more flexible approach to the way it works and to work in partnership with the public and private sector.

It will also need to have a robust review process of its assets and processes to release resources for savings and reinvestment. Although the elements of Herts Connect can be looked at and adopted individually, there is an inter-relationship between the elements which provides a greater return can be achieved separately.

It is considered that the proposals for greater public access and involvement together with the review processes will satisfy the requirements placed on the County Council by the Best Value and Modern Local Government initiatives.

The following are the formal resolutions of the Policy Committee:-

- (1) That the principle of Herts Connect as a way of implementing efficiency and service improvements be adopted as the way forward for the County Council and that costs and funding be further clarified.
- (2) That service committees be required to consider opportunities for other changes in service delivery, identify potential property disposals and report back to an early meeting of the Policy Committee and annually thereafter.

- (3) That service committees identify the level to which Workwise and other flexible working practices can be introduced and report back to the Policy Committee.
- (4) That, the proposals to proceed with the development of Herts Line and Herts Online be approved on the basis of:-
 - using commercial partners to ensure they are delivered in the most cost effective manner;
 - the Chief Executive authorising the funding of the implementation from the identified and approved capital receipts after consultation with the Member Steering Group;
 - a project plan being reported to the Policy Committee in January 1999 with the financial assessment for the funding of capital requirements.
- (5) That the potential of Herts Enters be tested as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report after consultation with MSG but no further expenditure on Herts Enters be agreed until full details on the probable cost and consumer need for the services are provided.
- (6) That the findings of the Casework Analysis Project be noted and the pilot studies and associated review processes be endorsed as the means of delivering a 'Best Value' review programme with the pilot studies being for a minimum 6-month trial period to determine whether the methodology offers a more effective and efficient means of cross departmental customer delivery.
- (7) That the review process be programmed and prioritised.
- (8) That an implementation and 'invest to save' budget of £1.5 million be established using identified receipts from the disposal of property to fund the implementation of Herts Connect and that the Chief Executive be authorised to utilise this funding after consultation with the Member Steering Group provided the business case is made in each case.
- (9) That, project by project, the full staffing implications be reported back to the Member Steering Group and Policy Committee before proceeding.
- (10) That appropriate partnerships be pursued with private, public and voluntary sector organisations.
- (11) That discussions with staff and consultation with trade unions continue as the project develops.

Members expressed their appreciation to staff for their constructive support to date.

2. IMPLICATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER : MODERN LOCAL GOVERNMENT - IN TOUCH WITH THE PEOPLE

2.1 Main proposals of the White Paper

The White Paper represents a major change in the way that local government does business. It addresses:

- The local government finance system;
- The relationship between the council and the wider community;
- The internal political arrangements of the council;
- The local electoral system;
- The ethical framework for councillors and officers;
- The replacement of Compulsory Competitive Tendering with a new 'Best Value' regime;

2.2 Finance

The principal proposals for the reform of the local government finance system are:

- The abolition of universal capping, but a retained reserve power to limit excessive budget increases;
- The end, from this financial year, of pre-signalling the capping limit;
- Freezing the method of calculating the Standard Spending Assessment for three years;
- Local councils to bear the increased cost of Council Tax benefit arising from increases in the Council Tax beyond a guideline level;
- Discretion for local authorities to set a local non-domestic rate 1% above the national rate, rising to up to 5% over time;
- The business community to agree the ways in which additional business rates will be spent locally;
- The creation of a single capital finance pot (rather than service or programme specific allocations) from 2001-02 at the earliest.

Two particular issues will need considerable attention: the impact of the Council Tax benefit proposals and the implications of the Business Rates proposals.

(i) Council Tax Benefit

District and Borough Councils administer the collection of Council Tax and the payment of Council Tax benefit on behalf of the County Council and other precepting authorities. Currently, the full cost of Council Tax benefit payment is reimbursed from central government funds. In the White Paper, the Government proposes to issue a guideline for Council Tax increases beyond which local authorities will be responsible for the costs of Council Tax benefit.

The result of this proposal will be that if the Council intended to increase its Council Tax rate above the guideline, then the rate would need to take into account the need to meet the additional cost of Council Tax benefit. In other words, above the guidance, to raise a given level of revenue for the council, the tax would need to be higher than if the cost of benefit continued to be fully funded.

While those who are receiving benefit would be unaffected financially, the proposal would have a disproportionate impact on those people whose incomes are slightly above the benefit threshold. At this stage, the Government has not indicated what its guideline level would be.

(ii) *Abolition of universal capping*

The end of pre-signalled capping from 1999-2000 means that the Council now has a real local choice between Council Tax increases and spending limits. It is possible that councils will not know whether the Government considers their Council Tax increase excessive until after they have made their budget decision.

The Government intends to retain reserve powers to limit excessive tax rises. In applying these reserve powers Government will consider councils' cumulative budget increases, best value performance and the support of the local electorate.

(iii) *Freezing the method of calculating SSA*

To provide greater certainty in local government finance, the method by which resources are allocated will be fixed for three years. Currently, the system is reviewed annually. The methodology will be fixed after this year's review which includes changes to the Area Cost Adjustment. This could result in an ongoing loss of resources to the County Council.

(iv) *Business Rates*

The proposals for the local variation of Business Rates have been the subject of considerable comment. In particular the Local Government Association's view is that the proposals fall some way short of a return to local financial autonomy. However, 1% of the business rate raised locally amounts to £2.8 million. The County Council 'share' of this might be as much as 80%, or about £2.2 million.

The Government proposes that the business community would need to agree the use of any local variation, but they would not be able to veto the increase itself. If the Council and the business community were unable to agree what use the funds should be put to, then the Government proposes that the additional amount raised would be absorbed into the national pool.

It is clear that existing mechanisms for consulting business taxpayers are not adequate to the task of agreeing the use of additional funds, and it will be necessary for a more robust process to be designed and agreed. The

Government intends to consult on the detail of the scheme in the coming months.

(v) Single capital pot

The Government proposes to create a single pot of capital resources, and move away from the current emphasis on service-specific allocations. The single pot would be allocated to local authorities on the basis of new cross-service need indicators and the quality of their capital investment strategy. Although this single pot will not be created until 2001/02 the Council will need to review its capital strategy to consider how it fits with government expectations.

2.3 Member Structures

Much of the press reaction to the publication centred on the proposals for elected mayors. However, the proposals in detail present a choice of models for future member structures and recognition that there will be considerable local variation within these models.

The models available to local government will include:

- A directly elected mayor, appointing a cabinet of councillors;
- A cabinet with a leader elected by the council;
- A directly elected mayor with a council manager.

The White Paper leaves open the possibility that other models will be available. Councils will have a duty to consider their member structures and publish a timetable for doing so. If the Council fails to publish a timetable, or fails to act on a published timetable, the Government will have the power to compel authorities to hold a local referendum so that the local electorate can make a choice of a new member structure.

If the Council wishes to adopt a model, which includes a directly elected mayor, it will be required to hold a referendum on the proposal. The result of the referendum would be binding on the Council. There is no provision in the White Paper for any threshold to be achieved either in terms of numbers voting or size of majority required for the proposals to be approved.

The Government's clear view is that there is a need to have a distinct executive within the council structure, and authorities are asked to begin developing proposals to establish such arrangements immediately.

2.4 Elections

The original consultation papers proposed that there should be annual elections for all local authorities, including county councils. This was the subject of representations by the County Council and many other authorities.

The proposal in the White Paper is that non-metropolitan counties will have elections every two years, with half the Councillors retiring at each election. It envisages that the general principle in two tier areas should be that each electoral division has two members; but it recognises that this would mean large divisions in rural areas and accepts that single member divisions will continue in many authorities.

The Government proposes to take a power to instruct the Local Government Commission to take the need to establish two-member divisions into account as part of its periodic electoral review. This review is about to commence in Hertfordshire and the Commission is awaiting guidance on the implication of the White Paper on this review.

The White Paper also contains proposals for modernising the way in which elections are held and refers to the existence of a Home Office Working Party on Electoral Practices. This Working Party announced its recommendations during August. Many of these recommendations will be matters for electoral registration authorities, but will have an impact on the County Council nevertheless.

2.5 Best Value

The proposals for a new Best Value regime will replace the current Compulsory Competitive Tendering approach. However, the Government is anxious to stress that the Best Value regime will be a rigorous one, and will not allow councils to become complacent about the quality of their services.

The basic approach is that councils will be required to carry out a fundamental performance review of all their services (including those that have never been subject to CCT) over a five-year period. The key stages in these reviews have been dubbed the 'four Cs':

- Challenge the purpose of the service
- Compare performance
- Consult community
- Compete with others

The Government will publish guidance on the conduct of each of these elements of the review process. It should be noted that the 'competition' element would not necessarily be a full tendering process. Alternatives presented include: independent benchmarking, competition for an external partner, or the running of a core in-house team with top-up support from the private sector allowing cost comparisons.

2.6 Performance Indicators

The results of these fundamental performance reviews will include performance targets, which will feed into the Community Planning process. The Government intends to establish key indicators of performance for each service, and for the overall health of the organisation. It intends that these should be measures of outcome rather than input or output, and that they will allow broad comparability of performance between authorities.

2.7 Beacon Councils

The White Paper contains a proposal for the establishment of 'Beacon Councils'. This proposal would establish a process, which would allow additional freedoms and powers to become available to councils, which were deemed to be among the 'very best' performing councils.

The Government's stated intention is that the criteria for achieving Beacon status should be as objective and transparent as possible. The award of Beacon status would be for a fixed term of three or five years, and would be made by ministers on the advice of an advisory panel.

Beacon status would be achieved on a service by service basis. If a council has achieved beacon status for a number of its key services, it would be able to make an application for overall beacon status. It is not clear from the White Paper whether the award of beacon status for a particular service would be made by ministers in the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions or by those in the most directly relevant government department.

The benefits of beacon status include:

- The ability to raise an additional 1% supplementary business rate per annum;
- Greater discretion in the management and delivery of beacon services;
- Greater freedom in planning capital investment;
- Relaxation of controls in secondary legislation;
- The possession of beacon status will be a factor taken into account by the Secretary of State in considering whether there is a need to use reserve capping powers in respect of a council's budget.

The Local Government Association and others have expressed significant reservations about the Beacon Council proposals. The principal objections to the establishment of Beacon Council status include:

- Concern that the proposals will lead to a two-speed system of local government, and the danger that those councils that might be most in need of additional resources or flexibility could be deprived of them;
- The potential of the proposals to increase local tensions between councils; stigmatise those councils which do not achieve beacon status; or to increase tensions between services within a single council;
- The lack of clarity in the White Paper about the process by which bids for Beacon status will be assessed and the criteria against which they will be judged.
- The potential for the award or otherwise of beacon status to become tainted by suspicions of political favouritism.

The White Paper states that further details of the Beacon Council scheme will be worked out in consultation with the LGA and others.

2.8 Community Planning

The White Paper places a heavy emphasis on the need for councils to have clear plans in place in order to:

- Increase local effective accountability
- Measure actual performance against that expected by the Authority and by the public
- Deploy resources effectively

The Paper talks of a Community Planning process, but not of a 'Community Plan' as such. The picture it lays out is of a connected series of plans that would operate on a number of levels from the individual service delivery plan to a strategy for local well being.

All of the plans referred to would relate to the "Council's vision for the local community". This vision would "establish local priorities and set them out clearly" – although there is no requirement to publish such a vision. The priorities themselves would flow from a "wider engagement with the local community".

The series of plans are:-

(i) *Local well-being strategy*

This arises from the proposal to place a new duty to promote local environmental, social and economic well being on authorities. This will be accompanied by discretionary powers to act in furtherance of local well being.

The local well being strategy is expected to be developed with local people, businesses, public and voluntary bodies; and to include council objectives on issues such as sustainability and equal opportunities. It will clearly need to be closely tied to the Local Agenda 21 and regeneration strategies.

(ii) *Service and Issue Plans*

These are the 'plans' with which the County Council is most familiar. Examples include statutorily required plans for services (Education Development Plan), on issues (local transport plan) or plans developed for the management of individual services.

The White Paper includes an explicit requirement for these plans to take into account the wider priorities of the well-being strategy etc. as expressed in the local well being strategy and other statements of corporate priorities.

(iii) *Local Performance Plans*

Local Performance Plans will be produced annually. There will be a single Local Performance Plan for the County Council, but each district or borough council will also produce a Local Performance Plan. Any town council with a budgeted income of more than £500,000 per annum will also be subject to the Best Value regime, and therefore required to produce a Local Performance Plan.

The Local Performance Plan will be expected, amongst other things, to report on current performance and include annual and longer term forward targets. They will also need to link with other public and community plans.

There are at least three issues that arise from the Community Planning process as described in the White Paper.

- How to liaise effectively with other local authorities and public bodies each of which will be developing their own Local Performance Plans.
- Establishment of effective series of performance indicators, which meet the requirements of the Government/Audit Commission for comparability purposes, and the local need for effective measurement of performance. This will need to link to the County Council's own performance programmes, especially Herts Connect.
- The development of an effective and systematic process for the involvement of the wider community, the business and voluntary sectors etc in developing the Local Performance Plan and the local well being strategy.

2.9 Proposals for immediate action

The White Paper suggests that councils should start preparatory work on a number of these proposals immediately, and specifically that such preparatory work should not await the passage of the necessary legislation. The principal such proposals are set out in the table below. The table also sets out the state of play within the County Council on these proposals.

Table 1: Progress on requirements for immediate action

To develop the Council's role as community leaders; review and strengthen partnerships with public, private and voluntary organisations in the area	HCC has a history of working in partnerships with a wide range of such organisations. This will need to be further developed. A report on 'Partnerships' is due to be considered by the Communities Commission at their next meeting.
To develop a strategy for promoting local well-being	This will need to bring together existing strategies and processes, in consultation with the public, businesses etc. No single document exists which covers this ground, but much of the policy associated with it is already in place.
To consider how best to increase local electoral turnout	Many of the proposals in this respect are the concern of electoral registration authorities. HCC will need to consider whether it wishes to experiment with electoral arrangements in 2001 or at any by-elections that might arise.
To plan a programme of fundamental performance reviews as part of the Best Value regime	The programme of productivity reviews which arise from the Herts Connect proposals go most of the way to meeting this requirement. A full five-year programme will need to be agreed.
To begin to establish political management arrangements which establish a distinct executive	Exploratory discussions on this issue have begun, but are some way from fruition.
To establish a programme to make optimum use of assets and resources and to identify the Council's need for capital investment.	Herts Connect addresses this question directly: notably in the context of property review.

2.10 Timescale

For the most part, the White Paper does not specify implementation dates of its proposals. It is now expected that a Local Government Bill will feature in this Autumn's Queen's Speech.

The most likely date for implementation of many of the provisions of the legislation would then be April 1, 2000.

There are some exceptions to this timescale: firstly, issues relating to the electoral cycle will presumably be tied to the current cycle in some form. The first elections to the County Council under a new system would not then take place until 2001.

2.11 Conclusions and next steps

The Committee have acknowledged the need for the radical thinking about local government structures and procedures contained therein, but regrets the use of reserve powers and other forms of ministerial discretion to deny democratically elected local authorities proper accountability to their communities.

A Member Reference Group of 7 members will steer the County Council's response to the proposals in 'Modern Local Government: In touch with the people'

Revisions to member structures will be the subject of a Member Seminar and a report from the Member Reference Group to a meeting of the County Council for decision.

The Member Reference Group's remit will be to:-

- (i) Ensure that the County Council develops an effective response to those proposals on which the White Paper expects immediate action;
- (ii) Identify the implications for HCC following the passage of the expected legislation;
- (iii) Ensure that where work is already underway within HCC it is pursued in a way that is consistent with the expected legislation.
- (iv) Identify those aspects of the proposals on which the County Council may wish to make representations and agree the most effective way in which those representations can be made.
- (v) To respond, and where necessary, make representations on any further guidelines or regulations which are published by the Government, or related bodies such as the Audit Commission.
- (vi) Analyse the draft legislation when it appears and ensure that any necessary representations are made at that time.
- (vii) examine revisions to member structures, and the handling of cross-service issues, such as those currently within the remit of Commissions, as an early priority.
- (viii) consider how best to ensure members and officers of the County Council are effectively briefed on the implications of the White Paper proposals. [This is likely to include the need to report periodically to the Policy Committee on their work, or to publish briefing material for wide circulation to members and officers.]

Ian Laidlaw-Dickson
Chairman
17 September 1998