

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE 17 DECEMBER 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. "TACKLING DRUGS TO BUILD A BETTER BRITAIN" WHITE PAPER AND "HERTFORDSHIRE'S DRUG AND ALCOHOL STRATEGY"

1.1 Background

The Government has responded to the national concern about the availability of illegal drugs (including the implications for young people and crime) by publishing a White Paper entitled "Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain". This follows the previous government's strategy which set up Drug Action Teams, and sets a framework for a new 10 year drug strategy for the country.

1.2 The Objectives of the White Paper

The White Paper aims to promote action against drugs that makes substantial progress over the long term and which concentrates on areas of greatest need and risk. Clear, consistent and rigorous targets have been set to ensure the government and individual agencies are readily measurable against these targets.

The four key elements of the strategy are:

- (a) to help young people resist drugs misuse in order to achieve their full potential
- (b) to protect our communities from drug-related anti-social and criminal behaviour
- (c) treatment to enable people with drug problems to overcome them and to live healthy and crime free lives
- (d) to stifle the availability of illegal drugs on the streets

To address these four elements, key objectives have been set for all agencies which are:

- (a) to reduce the proportion of people under 25 reporting use of illegal drugs in the last months of the previous year
- (b) to reduce the levels of repeat offending among drug misusing offenders
- (c) to increase participation of problem drug misusers including prisoners in drug treatment programmes which have a positive impact on health and crime
- (d) to reduce access to drugs among 15 – 16 year olds.

1.3 The Drug Action Team

The Drug Action Team is chaired by the Director of Social Services and has representatives from Education, the Police, Probation, the Health services, District Councils, and voluntary organisations. The Drug Action Team also has an Alcohol Reference Group which is working at the development of an alcohol strategy which is considered to be as much a priority as the drug strategy for this county.

The Hertfordshire Drug Action Team is currently in the process of completing a Drug Action Plan for 1999/2000 onwards in accordance with the government's key actions:-

- (i) that all agencies should re-align their priorities, resources and operational focus in line with the White Paper, and produce a forward plan
- (ii) that all agencies should develop corporate and individual performance targets and measures
- (iii) that national, local and private and voluntary sector funding should be re-aligned in support of the plan.

1.4 Coordination and Commissioning

Agreement in principle has been reached between the two Health Authorities, the Social Services and Education Services that, a joint commissioning system should be set up using the Drug Action Team as the commissioning board. Funds to establish this are being sought from Joint Finance monies between Social Services and Health to establish the post of Joint Commissioning Manager to work directly to the Chairman of the Drug Action Team and, when established, will take over the disparate commissioning and purchasing functions currently spread between the Health Authorities, Local Authorities and others. It is hoped from 1999/2000 onwards that a coherent approach to prioritising and standard setting for Drug Action will be established.

1.5 Issues for the County Council

Departments have a major role to play in this strategy.

- (i) The **Education Service** already has a comprehensive programme of work in developing awareness of drugs issues among young people. This will need to continue and be given some priority if the County Council is to meet the objectives set out in the White Paper.

The White Paper will require local education authorities and schools to reduce the number of drug related exclusions. This will require the County Council to adopt a consistent approach across the whole county.

The **Youth and Community Service**, Schools and associated groups such as those funded via voluntary organisations, will need to contribute to the strategy.

- (ii) **Social Services** will have a large role to play, in relation to the children for whom the Council has corporate responsibility, and also indirectly with the many families with whom the department works. The Social Services Department will need to ensure that every unit and every team is fully appraised of the drug strategy if it is to meet the overall objectives set out in the White Paper.
- (iii) The County Council as a large employer, can significantly influence the awareness of the general population. Staff training and awareness schemes cascaded throughout the whole organisation would allow access and awareness to a large proportion of the population to be achieved, and proposals will be drawn up to establish a systematic approach to this issue.
- (iv) One of the objectives is to reduce the levels of repeat offending among drug misusing offenders. This will be a key objective for the new **Youth Offending Teams** which are being established and be a critical part of the **Community Safety Partnerships** that are also being established. A drugs arrest referral scheme is currently being piloted in Dacorum, and evidence from the pilot suggests that extending the scheme to other areas of the county will have an impact in reducing repeat offending. Some bids for this are currently being considered as part of the County Council/Health Service Joint Finance scheme for 1999/2000.
- (v) The White Paper requires our strategy to increase the participation of problem drugs misusers in drug treatment programmes. Whilst the primary responsibility for this will lie with the **Health Authorities, Probation and Social Services Committee** have responsibility for funding residential and non-residential rehabilitation of drug and alcohol misusers. It will be important to bring all the various small purchasing strategies together as part of a Joint Commissioning Strategy.

- (vi) Staff in schools, Social Services Teams, residential units and staff in the Youth Service all provide varying approaches to counselling problem drug misusers. It will need to be an objective for the coming financial year that a more consistent approach to defining what quality of services are to be provided is established between all the constituent parties.
- (vii) Staff in schools, the Youth Service and Social Services Teams all need to be trained to recognise the symptoms of drug misuse and to know where young people and adults can be referred for specialist treatment. This training programme will need to form part of the drug strategy and be considered by each relevant local authority department.
- (viii) A further key objective is to reduce access to drugs among 15 – 16 year olds. Whilst the Police, Prison Service and Customs will be primarily responsible for this, County Council representatives on Community Safety Partnerships, staff in Youth Offending Teams and all services, will need to review their approach to their responsibilities in this area.

1.6 Financial Implications

Implementing this strategy over the next ten years will have significant implications for all Committees of the County Council. Some will be direct “business” implications, such as contracts for services which will be the responsibility of individual Committees, some will involve staff training/publicity, which will also be a call on departmental training priorities. Other financial implications rest on a “corporate” basis for activity for joint strategies, such as Arrest Referral schemes, which are currently being financed from Joint Finance Schemes. It would be expected that Committees, considering the drug strategy as recommended, identify the financial implications and how they might be addressed, as part of the spring committee review.

1.7 Conclusion

Each service has been asked consider the detailed implications of the White Paper for their areas of responsibility and put in place departmental and corporate strategies to enable the objectives of the White Paper to be taken forward in a systematic way. A report back to the Policy Committee on 1 July 1999 will include how the County Council will work with other statutory and voluntary agencies to develop a comprehensive approach to the problem in Hertfordshire.

2. CITIZENS' PANEL

2.1 Background

The Citizens' Panel was set up in 1997 to allow the County Council, the Police Authority and Health Authorities to consult a group which is representative of the wider community.

The panel comprises 2,300 Hertfordshire residents and is representative of the population in terms of age, gender, socio-economic profile and ethnicity.

A variety of consultation techniques, on a wide range of topics has been used. Quantitative research exercises have been conducted jointly with partners and the County Council has experimented with a range of methodologies to undertake qualitative research, as described below.

2.2 Quantitative Research

(a) September 1997

The initial recruitment survey was conducted through face to face interviews. MORI approached 3,000 residents with a range of questions on health, police and county council services, as well as an invitation to join the panel. More than 2,300 responded positively to this invitation and shared their views on:

- the satisfaction with their area as a place to live
- satisfaction with some County Council services
- impressions of how well the County Council keeps them informed.

(b) November 1997

The County Council used this postal questionnaire survey of the whole panel, to consult on the budget. The public were asked to rank the County Council's services in terms of how important they are and whether they should be protected from cuts. Members of the panel were also asked to indicate whether or not they would be prepared to pay more on council tax in order to protect services.

(c) February 1998

The partner organisations agreed to conduct this shared consultation opportunity through a telephone survey. In doing so, the number of those approached was reduced to a representative sample of 500 who were asked a range of questions on their perceptions and experience of quality service in:

- primary and secondary schools
- home care for elderly people
- roads maintenance.

Whilst it was possible to obtain meaningful feedback on both schools and roads, the sample of Home Care users (at 7%) was not statistically viable.

The findings of the research were fed back to the respective service chief officers for local consideration and action.

(d) September 1998

As part of the Crime and Disorder Act, local authorities and the police are required to conduct local crime audits which require an element of public consultation.

This research brought together the ten district councils, the County Council and the police authority who agreed a common series of questions on crime and anti-social behaviour. The results have been disaggregated and despatched to the relevant District Council Chief Executives and have also been reported to the relevant officers within the County Council.

(e) Partner issues

Over the past year, partners have developed their elements of the joint surveys independently of each other. That is, each authority has surveyed the panel on their discrete health, police or county council issues.

2.3 Qualitative Research

(a) Focus Groups

These exercises, usually lasting no more than two hours, bring together a group of panel members for discussion of an issue. Focus Groups have been used, for example, to gain feedback on the County Council's proposals to create a unified gateway to services under Herts Connect.

(b) Working Groups

This technique brings together a representative group of panel members to work with the authority over a period of time, either for regular consultation on specific projects or active involvement in developing a piece of work.

The Green County Commission have engaged a group of sixteen citizens, who are currently working with Councillors to produce a citizens' environment pledge. The group will remain involved with the project over a six month period.

(c) Citizens Workshops

These workshops involve between sixteen to thirty panel members who are invited to spend a whole day working with facilitators in looking at a specific issue in depth. They may not result in consensus, but they do produce better informed conclusions.

During the autumn, two workshops have been held on budget priorities and as part of a Best Value review of the Highways Maintenance service.

2.4 Selection Criteria

The member reference group have developed selection criteria for future use of the panel to ensure its efficient use in terms of:

- practical and viable issues (enough time, money, panel members)
- not duplicating research conducted elsewhere
- being clear of purpose and outcomes
- sharing experience and learning

(The criteria are available on request.)

2.5 Future use of the Panel

In October, the Citizens' Panel member reference group hosted a joint seminar for representatives of both health authorities and members of the police authority.

This event resulted in a shared commitment to improve collaboration in areas of common interest such as drug education, social care issues, transport, traffic and road safety. Specifically, officers have been asked to produce a common programme for use of the panel next year and to seek to involve other partners such as District Councils.

The Committee have agreed that the Panel continue to be used for both collective research with partners and County Council specific surveys in line with the agreed criteria.

Information, experience and best practice will continue to be shared within the County Council and with partners. The County Council will also continue to work with the Local Government Association and other authorities to improve national co-ordination and sharing of knowledge in the use of citizens' panels.

The Member Reference Group on the Modernising Local Government White Paper will consider learning from the Citizens' Panel and ensure that the increasing legislative demands for consultation across all of the County Council's services and activities are met both effectively and efficiently.

3. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE WORK OF COMMISSIONS

Commissions were established in late 1997 following a review of member processes and structures. Their purpose is:-

- to enable the County Council to consider broad areas of policy irrespective of the departmental or organisational boundaries which exist, and
- to develop an integrated approach within HCC and with partners to tackle the issues within their remit.

Policy Committee have an overview role in respect of the work of Commissions and, to that end, have required an annual report on the work of each Commission. This years annual reports from the Commissions are attached as an appendix.

The experience of each Commission has been different. Each have developed their role in their own way, and a number of different ways of working have been tried. The report of each Commission addresses their own achievements and processes.

The Modern Local Government White Paper contains wide-ranging proposals for the review and reform of member processes and structures. It would be futile to engage in a major debate on the future role of Commissions in isolation.

The Committee have therefore agreed that consideration of the future of Commissions be deferred pending the report from the Member Reference Group presently considering Member structures.

Ian Laidlaw-Dickson
Chairman
17 December 1998

COMMUNITIES COMMISSION**1.0 Purpose and objectives of the Commission**

The Communities Commission were established with the purpose of empowering *'citizens and communities to act together to identify and address their own priorities and needs in improving the quality of their lives'*.

The original scope of the Commission was seen to encompass:

- the encouragement of community development and empowerment, working with local people, businesses and representatives to increase the growth of self-sustaining communities across the county and consolidate local community leadership
- equality of access to opportunities for participation, and maximising the representation and participation of marginalised communities
- the development of partnerships, forums and other effective relationships to support and further the work of the Commission, including Community Panels, and other innovative ways of gathering the views of local people
- the safety of individuals and communities from crime and accidents, alongside countering the fear of crime, and interventions reducing the likelihood of crime or accidents
- the health of individuals and communities, not only countering specific illnesses but initiatives and programmes to improve overall levels of health and fitness

2. Priorities for the Commission

2.1 At the meeting of 18 December 1997 Members agreed priorities for the work of the Commission for the year as:

- Devolution
How the Council can further more devolution to local communities.
- Participation
How communities can be directly involved in decisions that affect them.
- Modelling strong communities
Developing mechanisms for understanding what makes communities stronger and measuring success in doing so. The intention was to produce a model which included individual and community perception of value, quality of life measures, active citizenship and participation.
- Integrating Council services
So that they are closer to the communities they serve.

2.2 A number of specific areas were referred to as part of the Commission's Workplan:-

- Reviewing joint working
- Mapping participation arrangements and considering best practice
- Monitoring the framework for working with the voluntary sector

2.3 At the meeting, and subsequently, a number of issues were raised which impacted on the original priorities:-

- Integrating Council services
This issue was raised before the outcomes on the whole Organisation review and HertsConnect were concluded and subsequent progress on this issue has taken place under the HertsConnect banner.
- Community Safety
The Commission have focused their attention in this area on the implications of the Crime and Disorder legislation. This is now being taken forward by the Crime and Disorder Task Group.
- Health
The establishment of a Member Task Group on Health has provided a separate forum for these issues.

3. Progress of Commission's agenda

3.1 Devolution

Members have set core principles as a guide to implementing devolution and extending delegation:-

- (i) The approach most appropriate for each case will be determined
- (ii) HCC will establish clear, specific and agreed objectives;
- (iii) Initiatives will use ideas and experience from elsewhere;
- (iv) A "pragmatic, 'do-able' programme" will be defined;
- (v) A top-down approach will be avoided;
- (vi) Decisions should be taken by the people affected and decisions should be taken as locally as possible;
- (vii) A strong, active, citizenship is to be fostered through participation and devolution;
- (viii) Where it is appropriate, monitoring of outcomes will take place.

Members have implemented a two faceted approach to devolution. A letter is being sent to all parishes giving those interested the opportunity to explore further devolution. Within St Albans District, where there has been greater debate on the issue a group of parishes is exploring issues in conjunction with HCC and the District Council.

3.2 Voluntary Sector Funding

Grants are made to those Countywide voluntary sector organisations which have a community development focus. Members have implemented a rigorous approach to the Voluntary Sector Funding applications. This two stepped approach involved ensuring adequate funding for groups for the current year and developing longer term strategies to encourage greater independence and less reliance by the Voluntary Sector groups and the widening of the process to other bodies. Presentations by voluntary organisations to the September Commission meeting formed part of the approach.

A report will be put to the Communities Commission on 11 December setting out the timescale and process for inviting bids for next year.

3.3 Whole Settlement Strategies (WSS)

Members have scrutinised the Whole Settlement Strategy process, including a thorough assessment of the progress of the two pilot projects at Hitchin and Potters Bar and the lessons learned from them to date. A session with Hitchin Vision representatives was included. Members selected the next two locations for WSSs, namely Hatfield and South Oxhey and are receiving regular reports on officer and member discussions with the district councils concerned. The Commission presented a report on WSS progress to the October Environment Committee, encouraging that Committee to maintain their investment in the programme. One of the outcomes of the Committee's debate was a resolution asking that the Communities Commission seek support from all committees for the WSS programme.

3.4 Garden City 21

The Commission also examined the Garden City 21 project and welcomed the approach. Members recommended the approach that those who have recently moved into new housing elsewhere in Hertfordshire could provide valuable input and this has now been built into the project.

3.5 Joint Working

3.5.1 *District Councils*

Members have initiated a programme of reviewing progress with joint working and District Councils on a rolling basis. Presentations on work with Three Rivers and Stevenage have indicated examples of good practice, suggested approaches for taking joint working forward. There will be further work in this area (see section 5) after which conclusions on best practice and possible ways forward can be recommended to Policy Committee.

3.5.2 *Town Councils*

The Commission has reviewed progress for joint working with Town Councils. Members agreed that any future working should consider a list of learning points and that the list should form the basis of a future report to Policy Committee. Key elements were that the relationship tends to be more fruitful where the joint work is specific to the locality and is by its nature operational as opposed to strategic.

3.5.3 *Parish Friends*

The Commission discussed the strengths and drawbacks of the parish friend scheme. Members felt that there should be positive responses to requests for a “friend”, but not to put any further resources into the scheme.

3.6 Modelling Strong Communities

Work has been limited to date and is a priority area for the next year (see section 5). Members would like to further explore ways of measuring the success of community initiatives including: the possibility of developing performance indicators; the investigation of partners who might want to take part; and having the work done for HCC.

3.7 Other areas

Economic Development & Community Regeneration

Links have been made between this Commission and EDAP. Members have received information on a number of initiatives designed to promote partnership working and community and economic regeneration in Hertfordshire.

Information Needs Of Hertfordshire's Rural Communities

Members have received a report on the information needs of rural communities and HCC's approaches to tackling these needs. This issue is now being addressed as part of the HertsConnect work.

4. Areas for further consideration by the commission

Members agreed at the meeting of 30 September to tackle the workload through the use of subgroups. This will ensure the concentration of member attention on priority areas, enabling some different ways of working, and spread the workload of the commission. Three priority areas were chosen:-

4.1 Joint working with other authorities

Officers have started work on a report picking up these issues, which will be considered by lead officers and SMB as well as members. More work will be done on protocols (as requested by Policy Committee), direction to local members or lead officers and prioritisation of this work. The relation between joint working through lead officers and cross-authority work such as crime & disorder also needs to be clarified.

4.2 CRE standard on community development

The Council's self assessment against the CRE standards showed poor performance in this area. Policy Committee referred the issue to this Commission for action. Work is needed in this area, to develop better priorities, work programmes and procedures to improve the Council's record. It is particularly urgent, as the use of "S.11" funding by the government to support specifically targeted projects is to be significantly altered. The council therefore must ensure that it does not lose resources, and that money spent on specific services is not reduced without proper examination. This should be done in close consultation with the black and ethnic minority communities, and in ways which ensure members are fully involved.

4.3 Modelling successful communities

Work has been proceeding in this area, not least through officer input to the developing LGA/LGMB model on evaluating good practice in this area. Again this area of work will benefit from active member input.

There are two further areas of work that have been deferred or are emerging:

4.4 Community safety, particularly fire safety

Members wish to explore the work of the Fire & Rescue Service on promoting fire safety, and its links with other community safety initiatives.

4.5 Community regeneration

The Commission wishes to explore issues raised by The Social Exclusion Unit document 'Bringing Britain Together: a national strategy for neighbourhood renewal' It gives an overarching picture from the Government about its vision for community regeneration.

EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMISSION

1.0 Purpose and objectives of the Commission

1.1 Scope

- Considering and refining policy and guidance for early childhood services
- Developing a strategic approach to meeting the needs of children under 8, and the arrangements to meet these
- Ensuring greater integration and co-ordination of service provision and networks
- Developing and supporting partnerships, forums and other effective relationships to support and further the work of the Commission and to meet legislative requirements
- Development of integrated and consistent standards to support high quality services to young children and their carers in all sectors

1.2 Objectives

- To improve the opportunities for the participation of parents and carers, including consultation with children themselves about their aspirations and needs
- To enhance the participation of local groups and the wider public, other agencies and service providers in consultation, about the needs for services, and the appropriateness of current provision and organisation arrangements
- To identify quality standards and the support infrastructure needed
- To improve the information available to the council and its partners about initiatives which will successfully promote these objectives
- To ensure that the Commission's strategies support key objectives of the council, notably equal opportunities, liberty and choice, sustainability, and democratic participation and partnership

2. Context

The Early Childhood Commission have co-opted a representative from each of the two Health Authorities in recognition of the significance of the Health sector in developing the Early Years agenda.

The Early Childhood Commission have been supported by the Early Childhood Unit, and an officer group, from Education, Health, Social Services, Libraries and Environment. The context within which it has been operating is a rapidly changing and developing national strategy, aimed at delivering an integrated and co-ordinated range of early years services to meet the needs of all young children and their families. This has involved the preparation and delivery of an Early Years Development Plan, and the setting up of an Early Years Partnership, comprising interested parties from the private, voluntary and maintained sector. The key priorities of this national strategy are reflected in the ethos and workplan of the Commission, putting Hertfordshire in the forefront of developments.

3. Priorities Set By The Commission

The County Council tasked each Commission with selecting five priorities for the first year. The Early Childhood Commission agreed the following at their meeting in November 1997:

- parenting skills education and support
- provision for three years olds
- holiday and after-school care
- daycare/childminding
- information and entitlements

In setting these priorities members asserted that the approach had to be to ‘add value’ rather than duplicate work undertaken elsewhere: to identify and address gaps in provision; to identify and remove overlaps, and to set objectives which enabled the Council itself to control or influence change. In that regard the Commission have worked alongside the Early Year partnership in setting an agenda, and in assisting the delivery of the Early years Development Plan.

4. Progress On The Priorities

4.1 Parenting skills education and support

The Commission’s approach to developing a strategy, which was endorsed at their meeting in May 1998, had a number of strands, including:-

- considering the current situation in Hertfordshire
- listening to presentations from acknowledged experts
- looking at examples of information packs in use on parenting skills
- utilising the work of the parenting Steering Group. (the PSG includes representatives of health, social services, family centres, education, voluntary and private providers)

The outcome is a strategy which has the aim of enhancing the confidence and skills of all Hertfordshire parents, to enable them to perform the parenting task successfully, and thereby to meet their children’s needs effectively.

Entitlements, priorities and targets are clearly set out within the strategy, with indicative costs for each detailed proposal. The Commission have allocated £120,000 from the Early Years Project Development Fund to be spent on supporting the strategy over the next two years. Expenditure will be managed through the Early Childhood Unit, who will also oversee implementation of the strategy in accordance with specifications agreed and monitored through the Parenting Steering Group.

In addition to improving parenting information to parents throughout the County the strategy targets development in particular geographical areas and with particular groups.

4.2 Provision For Three-Years-Olds

This was the most recent of the priorities to come before the Commission in July 1998. Members heard presentations from two Headteachers and from a Senior Development Worker with the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

The Commission has considered mapped information on provision of pre-school places and are developing a strategy which includes:

- equal opportunities for all three years olds to access high quality pre-school education
- implementing a pilot study scheme in Stevenage, Borehamwood and Hitchin
- continued development of links between pre-schools and 'other fours' schemes
- continued development and maintenance of a database, integrated with the Early Years Information Project
- clarifying the scale and nature of accommodation problems for pre-schools
- developing with other agencies and partners a set of recommendations about the most appropriate conditions for three year old provision (taking account of the Herts Quality Standard, the studies being prepared for the Education Committee, national research and government policy as it emerges).

4.3 Out Of School Care

Hertfordshire County Council has been successful, in partnership with Training and Enterprise Council, in developing a range of clubs. The Commission has agreed a short term strategy to develop a further 20 clubs, with additional resources targeted on areas of special need, with a total project cost of £122,000 in 1998/99, of which £97,000 is funded by the TEC.

The Government has announced a significant expansion in this area, through the New Opportunities Fund, to be available from 1999. The Commission is seeking to place Hertfordshire in a strong position to take full advantage of this climate. It has a long-term vision:

'To make Hertfordshire a County where the community provides children's out of school care services, accessible to all, in a safe, caring and stimulating environment which supports children to attain the highest possible level of health, education and social development'.

The specific objectives to achieve this are:

- higher standards of provision measured by safety, care, accessibility and social development of children
- more and better trained staff - measured by staff numbers, investment in training and development, and nationally recognised qualifications

- more and better informed stakeholders, measured by numbers, investment in training and development, business plans, quality standards, development of best practice and innovation
- more accessible provision, measured by the number of clubs, numbers of disadvantaged children accessing provision, and by the geographical spread of provision

4.4 Day Care

The Commission has examined the baseline information on childcare provision, assessed needs and potential for a range of providers, all in the context of the Early years Development Plan 1998 - 2000.

Hertfordshire has been successful in attracting a special grant from Government to extend integrated care facilities around existing provision. The programme, which is supported by a full time development worker, is concentrating on a number of projects:-

- childminder networks in urban areas
- childminder networks in rural areas
- nursery schools - extension of breakfast/lunchtime clubs and the creation of afternoon care facilities in others
- nursery classes - lunchtime and afternoon care sessions in schools with morning only nurseries
- extended care in pre schools
- evaluation of schemes

The Early Years and Child Care Partnership is required to conduct an audit of childcare provision on which to base its plans. Specific great funding of £12m has been set aside by the DfEE in 1998/9 for the conduct of audit and drawing up plans. Hertfordshire's allocation for this work is £177,000.

Work is underway to prepare a statistical analysis of current services, needs and gaps, on a District by District basis, and has so far included:

- identification and collation of relevant statistics in relation to population characteristics and service provision at ward level whenever possible
- questionnaires to random sample of parents, children and employers
- setting up focus groups in different parts of the county

4.5 Information and Entitlement

In conjunction with the Early Years Partnership the Commission has developed a strategy which addresses the following key themes: -

- the need to strike a balance universal and targeted information
- the need to balance direct provision of information and enabling parents to develop their own networks
- how to develop and disseminate information in a variety of ways

These themes flowed partly from workshop sessions, where parents joined Commission members and officers to share views and to comment on a wide range of leaflets and information packs currently provided by a variety of agencies.

Specific objectives arising from the strategy are: -

- (i) extension of the Information Pack for new parents, piloted in North Herts by a multi agency group from Social Services, Health, Education, Libraries and the District Council
- (ii) developing and implementing a database for 'under 8's' services
- (iii) distributing a booklet 'choosing what's best for your child' to all relevant parents
- advice about pre-school education

Government guidance on Early Years Development Partnerships and Plans recommends that authorities should set up a 'Children's Information Service' with responsibility for co-ordinating and offering advice/guidance about services. The Commission have taken strategic responsibility for the work of the Early Years Partnership in this respect.

Tasks undertaken include:

- providing details of all local child care and education provision
- giving guidance on choosing child care
- giving details about other local services
- collecting data which can inform local planning

5. Summary/future work

This report summarises the first year's work of the Commission in developing the early years strategy. Priorities identified in November 1997 are now key themes for the national strategy and targets set by government, and the work of the Commission has ensured Hertfordshire is in the forefront of developments. The work of the Commission on all priorities is very much ongoing, and the challenge over the coming twelve months, is to ensure that all priorities are being moved forward in a co-ordinated manner.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ANTI POVERTY COMMISSION

1. Progress

The Commission were established to promote Hertfordshire's economy and prosperity in partnership with the private and public sectors. They have undertaken their work through a series of working groups.

Three Working Groups of EDAP have been established for 1998/99 (five members sit on each group):-

- Education and Training
- Business, Europe and the Regions
- Anti-Poverty

Members are agreed that the first year had constituted a learning curve for most Members of the Commission. Future work will include:

- (i) concentrating on the activities of the Commission on a smaller number of initial priorities;
- (ii) reconstitution of the Working Groups to take forward this reduced number of priorities;
- (iii) extend the role of the Member Working Groups by giving them the authority to discuss, negotiate and take forward initiatives with others on behalf of the Commission;
- (iv) charge the Working Groups with the responsibility of reporting back to a Joint Forum of the Commission and all other organisations who will contribute to the delivery of services in the particular area of concern to the Working Group;
- (v) charge the Working Groups with establishing appropriate indicators and targets for monitoring purposes;
- (vi) establish processes to enable the Commission to monitor the outcomes and the effectiveness of its actions;
- (vii) establish processes to ensure that the activities of the Working Groups are effectively communicated to other Members of the Commission and that the activities of the Commission are communicated effectively to other Members of the Council.

2. Recent Activity of the Commission

2.1 Education

The Education and Training Working Group have reported and the Commission have endorsed a vision for education and training in Hertfordshire which includes the following features:

- an emphasis on literacy, numeracy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capability;

- a focus on local partners working together to support enterprises in improving learning and employability;
- a focus on developing the key skills;
- better opportunities for vocational education and for learning for people at work;
- the active involvement of business partnership.

The Commission agree that:-

- (i) This vision should be promoted to all the key stakeholders in education and training in Hertfordshire.
- (ii) Further work be undertaken to establish the means by which providers of education and training can work effectively with employers in order to establish the needs of business and industry and secondly consider the contributions businesses can make to wider learning.
- (iii) A project be established to investigate ways of integrating the various databases to build a full picture of the skills development and needs within the County.
- (iv) Priority be given to ensuring that schools are equipped adequately to teach the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills required for adult and working life in the next century and that, through partnership approaches, opportunities for community use of ICT facilities are maximised.

2.2 Anti-Poverty

The Commission in October received a presentation from West Hertfordshire Health Authority on health indicators and on current initiatives including partnership approaches to Health Improvement Programmes, Healthy Living and Primary Care Groups.

The meeting also received progress reports on:

- the newly appointed Anti-Poverty Manager's Work Programme
- the Hertfordshire Anti-Poverty Partnership (HAPP): Proposed Review
- the County-wide Benefits Take-Up Campaign
- Single Regeneration Budget: Fifth Bidding Round Up.

3. **Future Direction**

The Commission's priorities for next year are:

- review and roll forward of the County Economic Development (to include social cohesion) strategy and programme
- Europe and the Regional Agenda
- Education, Business and Skills
- Review of the Hertfordshire Prosperity Forum
- Local Regeneration Strategies and Community Strengthening
- Income/resource generation

GREEN COUNTY COMMISSION

1.0 Purpose and objectives of the Commission

The Green County Commission held their first meeting on the 21 October 1997 with a stated purpose:

“To enhance the environmental sustainability and social well being of Hertfordshire in partnership with communities, organisations and individuals.”

Since that first meeting the Commission have met together on four different occasions at roughly three month intervals. To complement these main meetings, the Commission have used a number of small working groups of members and officers to investigate a range of issues and to develop and implement projects.

At the outset the Commission was presented with the existing Green County Hertfordshire Strategy and Action Plan which provided the baseline from which the Commission could develop its own ideas and work programme.

For the financial year 1998/99 the Green County Commission was allocated a budget of £120,000 from the Cross Service Issues fund. This was added to a £72,000 carry over for various projects, from the 1997/98 budget,

2.0 Completed Activity/projects

2.1 At their inaugural meeting the Commission identified five areas for investigation, these being: development pressures; transport; waste; the green economy and pollution. Task groups were established comprising three commission members and an officer support team. Each of the five identified areas was scrutinised to examine what the County Council was already doing to address the issues and then to identify what could be done differently and what else needed to be addressed. All task groups reported back to the Commission with recommendations for future County Council activity and these were prioritised.

2.2 Of the 47 separate actions identified across the five areas, the following were identified for priority action:

Project	Priority
<u><i>Development Pressure</i></u>	
Find out how to create a more innovative approach to development and a more proactive approach than is currently expected of the County Council.	1
Create a more proactive approach for the County Council in bringing forward appropriate development.	2

Project	Priority
<u><i>Green Economy</i></u>	
Establishing links with Economic Development and Anti Poverty Commission.	2
Support companies to assist them in meeting any green requirements passed through the supply chain.	1
<u><i>Pollution</i></u>	
Sort out the County Councils internal practice.	1
<u><i>Transport</i></u>	
Develop a green transport plan for County Hall.	1
Become "active" members of the Business TravelWise initiative.	2
<u><i>Waste</i></u>	
Create a site-wide campaign to minimise waste and recycle tins, glass, paper, toner and (if practical) kitchen waste at County Hall.	1
Provide 'Easy to Read – Easy Do' guides to environmentally sustainable behaviour for schools and throughout the County Council.	2

2.3 Following the Commission meeting on the 8 June 1998 officers were requested to look at those actions identified as a priority and determine appropriate funding from the Commission project fund of £25,000. As a result of this process £22,500 was allocated to three projects at the Commission meeting on 23 October 1998, these being:

- the development of a green commuter plan for County Hall;
- the development and implementation of a recycling plan for County Hall; and
- the development of a green business initiative (“Greening the HCC Supply Chain”).

The last of these, the Green Business Initiative, is also supported by the Economic Development and Anti-Poverty Commission who have allocated £20,000 to the project.

Additional work was undertaken to look at the remaining 44 actions identified by the task groups to determine what action they require and a timescale for them to come forward; this has been agreed by the Commission.

Current activity / projects

3.1 Hertfordshire Environmental Pledge

The Commission identified the next task in “enhancing the environmental sustainability and social well being of Hertfordshire” as being a campaigning initiative to encourage substantially wider participation in the “greening” of the County. To do this, it is currently developing an Environmental Pledge for Hertfordshire. This is being developed by invited participants in five sector based groups, these being: business; education; the public sector; voluntary groups and individuals (the latter coming from the Citizen’s Panel). The County Council is represented by three commission members on each of these sector groups. The initial draft pledges are expected to be ready for consultation in January 1999, with the whole process completed by May 1999. The Commission then expects to publicise and promote the pledges. A public register of organisations and individuals who have signed up will be kept at County Hall.

3.2 Environmental Management Systems

In September, Policy Committee decided to extend the development of environmental management systems (EMSs) to the whole of the County Council. This decision was reached following two years of pilot initiatives in the Environment and Corporate Departments. The decision taken by Policy Committee also asked the Green County Commission to monitor the implementation of EMSs across the authority and review performance on an annual basis. Currently an officer is employed to facilitate this implementation and the Commission holds the budget for this. The route opted for by Policy Committee asks departments to aim for external accreditation to the ISO 14001 standard. Currently the Environment Department is expected to gain accreditation in the Autumn of 1999 and Asset Management, County Supplies and Fire and Rescue are preparing plans to implement their own EMS’s.

3.3 Green County Hertfordshire

Implementation of the Green County Hertfordshire Strategy has continued throughout the last year. At its meeting on 23 October the Commission received the monitoring report for activity listed in the Green County Action Plan in 1997/98 as well as a draft Action Plan for 1998/99. It is anticipated that the 1998/99 Action Plan will be approved at the Commission meeting in January.

Some notable projects have taken place throughout the year including sixty three community projects financed from the LA21 Community Grants Scheme. These projects received a maximum grant of £250 and were to support community organisations working on projects related to Local Agenda 21.

Other projects have also taken place, including the Captain Superlight project, to distribute energy saving light bulbs and the Education for Sustainability project which delivered teacher training.

The Captain Superlight project received £10,000 from the old Local Agenda 21 Policy Panel to part fund a £285,000 programme to distribute up to 40,000 low energy light bulbs through Hertfordshire schools. The Education for Sustainability project was

jointly run by the Education and Environment Departments and benefited from European Commission funding. With a Total Budget of £340,000 the project aimed to develop teacher training on Educating for Sustainability in Hertfordshire with the assistance of partners in Sweden, Denmark and Spain.

4.0 Planned activity/projects

4.1 Hertfordshire Sustainability Roadshow

Initial investigation and research has been undertaken on the development of a sustainability roadshow which can be used across Hertfordshire to promote the Hertfordshire Environmental Pledge and the concept of living sustainably to the public. A panel of three members drawn from the Commission is currently looking at ideas on how this can be taken forward. It is expected that the project will be implemented during 1999. A bid is also being made to the Millennium Festival Fund to support this work.

4.2 Green County Hertfordshire Strategy Review

A review of the Green County Hertfordshire Strategy is planned for 1999/2000 following on from the work undertaken on the Hertfordshire Environmental Pledge. It is anticipated that this review will be complete by March 2000.

YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSION

1.0 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the Young People Commission is to work with young people and partner organisations to enhance the social and economic well-being of young people in all parts of Hertfordshire.

2.0 Work of the Commission to date

2.1 Between December 1997 and June 1998, the Commission focused their attention on young offenders. They investigated the ways in which different agencies can best respond collaboratively to the needs of young offenders and it held an inter-agency conference which gave impetus to the County Council and other agencies in Hertfordshire working together to respond to this group of young people.

2.2 On 2 July 1998, the Policy Committee decided that, in the light of the Crime and Disorder Bill and the need for the County Council to set up Youth Offending Teams in collaboration with the Police and other agencies, the Commission's work in the area of young offending should be taken forward by a new Task Group reporting to the Chief Officer Group on Criminal Justice.

2.3 At the same time, the Policy Committee decided that the tasks allocated to the Youth and Community Task Group be undertaken by the Young People Commission or by a sub-group appointed by the Commission.

2.4 Following these decisions by the Policy Committee, the Commission agreed:

- To develop and then pilot in a district council area an overarching policy for young people aged fourteen-plus. This work would be undertaken by all members of the Commission and reported to Policy Committee. This would complement the work of the Early Childhood Commission which was considering early years' services as well as the Government's childcare agenda for children up to the age of fourteen years.
- To establish a Youth Service sub-group comprising five members of the Commission which should include Youth Service spokespersons of the Community Services Committee. This group would take on the responsibilities of the previous 'Youth and Community Task Group' for:
 - the annual service plan
 - targets and measures for the service
 - grants to groups and organisations

The sub-group would report to the Community Services Committee but the Commission would be kept informed of the outcome of their work.

2.5 As a result of their role as outlined above, the Commission has prepared a draft policy for Young People aged 14 Plus.

2.6 The Commission used the document on “Entitlements and Responsibilities which was written by young people and the terms of reference for the Young People Commission to produce the draft policy. The result is a draft policy which:

- reflects the views of young people and the County Council;
- follows on from the work of the Early Years Commission which looks at childcare up to the age of fourteen years;
- is necessarily short and simple because the subject to which the policy applies is large, complex and diverse;
- identifies objectives which are tangible and can be translated into action; and
- which requires collaboration for its implementation between County Council services and partner organisations.

2.7 The draft policy is being piloted in partnership with Dacorum Borough Council in order to:

- test whether it works in practice and, if necessary, amend it in the light of experience; and
- gain practical experience of how its aims and objectives can best be achieved in order to allow it to be used more effectively in other areas of the county.

A group of members from the Commission met with members of Dacorum Borough Council on 11 November 1998 and agreed the work programme set out below which extends into next year.

3.0 Piloting the Draft Policy

The pilot will be limited to three of the five objectives in the Policy as follows:

3.1 To increase participation and decision making by young people in the social, cultural and local democracy of the communities with which they identify.

There are currently junior town councils in Tring and Berkhamsted. The pilot will establish appropriate arrangements in Hemel Hempstead for young people to be involved in the democratic life of the town.

3.2 To make sure that young people have access to accurate information and advice which is relevant to their lives.

The pilot will:

- enhance the Youth Enquiry and Information Service (Urban Access) by developing computer-based information access points in Hemel Hempstead
- develop a Good Practice guide for Dacorum Borough Council and County Council services on the production of information for young people

3.3 To reduce inequity of social and economic well-being between young people and the communities within which they live.

The pilot will focus on integrating the wide range of information about young people in the area and looking at how that information can be used to promote positive and quick action by local services to the needs of young people.

To allow members to take a view on how best the policy can be implemented, a number of members will attach themselves to one of the pilot activities and will be closely involved with its progress. Members will report their findings to the Commission in March when conclusions will be drawn, the policy amended and the results disseminated.