

Committee: Executive
Date: Monday 1 March 2010
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA

Membership

| | |
|---|--|
| Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman) | Councillor G A Reynolds (Vice-Chairman) |
| Councillor Ken Atack | Councillor Norman Bolster |
| Councillor Michael Gibbard | Councillor James Macnamara |
| Councillor Kieron Mallon | Councillor Nigel Morris |
| Councillor D M Pickford | Councillor Nicholas Turner |

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest that they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

3. Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting

The Chairman to report on any requests to submit petitions or to address the meeting.

4. Urgent Business

The Chairman to advise whether they have agreed to any item of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.

5. **Minutes** (Pages 1 - 10)

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2010.

Strategy and Policy

6. **Private Sector Housing Strategy 2010 - 2014** (Pages 11 - 70) **6.35 pm**

Report of Head of Housing Services

Summary

To seek adoption of the council's Private Sector Housing Strategy and endorsement of the associated action plan.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- (1) Adopt the Private Sector Housing Strategy.
- (2) Endorse the Strategy's action plan.

Service Delivery and Innovation

7. **The Council's Response to Climate Change** (Pages 71 - 88) **6.45 pm**

Report of Head of Environmental Services

Summary

This report considers the progress of the Environmental Strategy for a Changing Climate and the overall progress of the Council in responding to climate change issues.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the current progress relating to the Environmental Strategy for a Changing Climate and the performance relating to the four climate change national indicators.
- (2) To approve the revised Environmental Strategy for a Changing Climate Change delivery plan and the continuing priority attached to it.
- (3) To support reducing carbon emissions by improving the energy efficiency of corporate buildings and also reducing other sources of Council emissions by gaining support from the Carbon Trust Local Authority Carbon Management programme.

8. Progress on Developing and Delivering the Equalities Work Programme **7.05 pm**
(Pages 89 - 120)

Report of Chief Executive and Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager

Summary

To provide an overview of achievements relating to our equalities work in 2009/2010 and outline the work programme for 2010/2011.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- (1) Agree the Corporate Equality Action Plan for 2009-2012 (Annex C)
- (2) Agree the proposals to seek equality accreditation from the Improvement and Department Agency (IDeA) in November 2010.
- (3) Agree the refreshed equalities scheme and the three year equality impact assessment programme (Annexes A and B)
- (4) Note the equality achievements made during 2009/2010.

Value for Money and Performance

9. 2010/11 Corporate Improvement Plan (Pages 121 - 134) **7.25 pm**

Report of Chief Executive and Head of Improvement

Summary

This report presents the proposed 2010/11 Corporate Improvement Plan.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- (1) Agree the 2010/11 Corporate Improvement Plan and associated 2010/11 Value for Money Review Programme

Urgent Business

10. Urgent Business

Any other items which the Chairman has decided is urgent.

(Meeting scheduled to close at 7.45 pm)

Information about this Agenda

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence should be notified to democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or (01295) 221587 prior to the start of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item. The definition of personal and prejudicial interests is set out in Part 5 Section A of the constitution. The Democratic Support Officer will have a copy available for inspection at all meetings.

Personal Interest: Members must declare the interest but may stay in the room, debate and vote on the issue.

Prejudicial Interest: Member must withdraw from the meeting room and should inform the Chairman accordingly.

With the exception of the some very specific circumstances, a Member with a personal interest also has a prejudicial interest if it is one which a Member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest.

Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates

Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare the fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

Queries Regarding this Agenda

Please contact James Doble, Legal and Democratic Services james.doble@cherwell-dc.gov.uk (01295) 221587

Mary Harpley
Chief Executive

Published on Friday 19 February 2010

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 1 February 2010 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman)
Councillor G A Reynolds (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Ken Atack
Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor Michael Gibbard
Councillor James Macnamara
Councillor Kieron Mallon
Councillor Nigel Morris
Councillor D M Pickford
Councillor Nicholas Turner

Also Present: Councillor John Donaldson
Councillor Lawrie Stratford

Officers: Mary Harpley, Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service
Ian Davies, Strategic Director - Environment and Community
John Hoad, Strategic Director - Planning, Housing and Economy
Mike Carroll, Head of Improvement
Liz Howlett, Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Phil O'Dell, Chief Finance Officer
Gillian Greaves, Head of Housing Services
Karen Curtin, Head of Finance
Philip Clarke, Head of Planning & Affordable Housing
Claire Taylor, Community Planning Manager
Jo Smith, Communications Manager
Fiona Brown, Strategic Housing Officer
David Peckford, Senior Planning Officer
Karen Muir, Corporate System Accountant
Chris Thom, Planning Officer (Policy)
Alexa Coates, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
Natasha Clark, Trainee Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

104 **Declarations of Interest**

Members declared interest with regard to the following agenda items:

6. Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

Councillor Barry Wood, Personal, as persons known to him have a land interest in the area of, but outside the ecotown.

Councillor G A Reynolds, Personal, as a County Councillor due to the County Council having a land interest at Gowell's Farm.

Councillor Kieron Mallon, Personal, as a County Councillor due to the County Council having a land interest at Gowell's Farm and as a land tenant of one of the landowners in the original draft Core Strategy but not mentioned in the current draft Core Strategy.

Councillor Michael Gibbard, Personal, as a County Councillor due to the County Council having a land interest at Gowell's Farm.

Councillor Nicholas Turner, Personal, as a County Councillor due to the County Council having a land interest at Gowell's Farm, as a tenant of part of the land that Trinity College suggested and put forward and as licensee of Drayton Golf Club which is adjacent to one of the sites mentioned in the draft Core Strategy.

Councillor Nigel Morris, Prejudicial, as having an interest in land very close to the land at Bankside (Policy BAN 3).

Councillor Norman Bolster, Personal, as a County Councillor due to the County Council having a land interest at Gowell's Farm.

105 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

106 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

107 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2010 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Turner left the meeting for the duration of the following agenda item.

108 **Local Development Framework Core Strategy**

The Head of Planning and Affordable Housing Policy submitted a report which sought approval of the Executive for a Draft Core Strategy and sought approval for the Council to undertake a period of public consultation on this document.

The Portfolio Holder Planning and Housing reported that he had received a number of responses to the Draft Core Strategy from Councillor Andrew

Fulljames; Councillor Mrs Catherine Fulljames; Councillor Devena Rae; Kidlington Parish Council; Hanwell Parish Council; a developer promoting a technological centre in Kidlington; and, Mr Radkey of Bodicote.

The Portfolio Holder Planning and Housing assured the meeting that these responses would be considered with all the responses received during the full public consultation.

Resolved

- (1) That the Draft Core Strategy be approved as the Council's draft proposed development strategy for the district for the period to 2026 and as the basis for public consultation and that the Head of Planning and Affordable Housing Policy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Planning and Housing be delegated to make any further changes before the public consultation commence.
- (2) To approve that the Council undertakes a public consultation on this Draft Core Strategy broadly in accordance with the proposals as set out below:

This public consultation is likely to include the following elements.

- Production of a summary leaflet on the contents of the Core Strategy
- Workshops with Parish and Town Councils
- Extensive publicity through the local media
- Public Exhibitions
- Use of the website
- Offers to attend public meetings hosted by parish and town councils

Reasons – The Draft Core Strategy provides a comprehensive series of strategic policies which will help shape the growth and development of the district over the next 16 years. It makes some difficult decisions on the locations for new development and provides a basis upon which the Council can consult with local people.

Options

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Option One | Approve the Draft Core Strategy as the basis for public consultation. |
| Option Two | Amend the Draft Core Strategy prior to approving it as a basis for public consultation. |
| Option Three | Do not approve the Draft Core Strategy at the present time, and reconsider the overall development strategy for the district. |

Councillor Reynolds took the Chair for the duration of the following agenda item.

109

Cherwell's Housing Strategy for Older People 2009-2014

The Head of Housing Services submitted a report which sought for Executive to formally adopt the housing strategy for older people following consultation and to agree the delivery plan.

Resolved

- (1) That the Housing Strategy for Older People 2009-2014 be formally adopted.
- (2) That the delivery plan for the Housing Strategy for Older People 2009-2014 be endorsed.

Reasons - This strategy is an essential part of the District's response to the needs of our older people and seeks to deliver improvements within existing resources. Housing and related services are at the heart of enabling older people to live independent and active lives and helps prevent older people falling into crisis and the need for high cost care.

Options

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Option One | To formally adopt the strategy and endorse the delivery plan. |
| Option Two | To adopt the strategy and endorse the delivery plan with amendments. |
| Option Three | Not to adopt the strategy or endorse the delivery plan in which case an alternative strategy will need to be considered. |

110

Member Development Monitoring Report

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which updated members on the progress in member development since the approval of the Member Development and Support Strategy in September 2009.

Resolved

- (1) That the improvements since the Member Development and Support Strategy was agreed in September 2009 be noted.
- (2) That officers be requested to explore options for external accreditation of Cherwell's Member Development and support arrangements.

Reasons – The Member Development Strategy has had a positive impact on member development and support informed through the member support interviews process and evidenced by the increased member attendance at development events. It is also believed that this has been assisted through

the increased focus the organisation has given to member development and support, evidenced by the appointment of a specific Portfolio Holder. It is important that if the Council is to build on these achievements, this increased profile in the organisation should be maintained.

Options

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Option One | To agree the recommendations |
| Option Two | Not to agree the recommendations |
| Option Three | To amend the recommendations |

111

Performance Management Framework 2009/2010 Third Quarter Performance Report

The Chief Executive and Community and Corporate Planning Manager submitted a report which covered the Council's performance for the period 1 October to 31 December 2009 as measured through the Performance Management Framework.

Resolved

- (1) That the many achievements as set out below be noted:

Cherwell: A District of Opportunity

- In November 2009 Councillor Gibbard and Chairman Diana Edwards joined staff and tenants of Charter Community Housing in planting a tree to mark the opening of twenty affordable flats at Merton Street in Banbury. The council supported the development of these flats by investing gap funding so that Sanctuary Housing Group could make use of homes which a developer was struggling to sell.
- The council continues to work with partners to hold weekly job clubs. An apprenticeships scheme is being finalised to support opportunities for younger people.

A Cleaner Greener Cherwell

- Successful roll out of the food waste collection to 17,000 properties before Christmas.
- We have launched a resource point for recycling of redundant equipment from local businesses to voluntary organisations.

A Safe and Healthy Cherwell

- Successful opening of the new Spiceball Leisure Centre, ahead of schedule.
- The first Drinks Banning Order in the country has been obtained in Banbury and the success recognised by the Home office.
- An ASBO has been granted for a persistent offender in Bicester.

- The 'Scores on the Doors' website (for information about local food hygiene ratings) achieved 3415 hits during December.

An Accessible Value for Money Council

- As at 31 December 2009 we have secured £924,000 of our £1 million savings target for 2009/10. We are also projecting £693,000 of efficiencies against a target of £600,000.
- The council has received its Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational rating and has scored strong threes across all assessment areas:
 - Managing performance 3 out of 4
 - Use of resources 3 out of 4
 - Managing finances 3 out of 4
 - Governing the business 3 out of 4
 - Managing resources 3 out of 4

The CAA is a tougher test of performance than the CPA (Comprehensive Area Assessment) and whilst we have not achieved our aim of scoring a four there are several areas of excellence and strong performance that have been identified through the assessment. These include our performance in helping local people and businesses respond to the recession, community leadership and the pace of improvement, the way we deal with waste, clean streets, falling crime, affordable housing, homelessness and temporary accommodation performance, access to services, electronic transactions, our website and improved value for money.

- (2) That officers be requested to report in the fourth quarter on the items set out below where performance was below target or there are emerging issues:

Cherwell: A District of Opportunity

- Processing of major planning applications (NI 157a processing of major planning applications within 13 weeks), performance is off target but improving. The service expects to be within target by the year end. This target has been affected by the reduced number of major applications received.
- The percentage of planning appeals upheld against a refusal. This target is reporting red (33% against a target of 30%), however, performance is improving and in December all appeals were won by the Council. It is anticipated that this target will be met by the year end.

A Cleaner Greener Cherwell

- NI195b (street and environmental cleanliness – detritus), this is the second quarter this target has been reported as red. The service expects to be on track in quarter four.

An Accessible Value for Money Council

- We have improved our performance in terms of benefits processing this quarter both in relation to new claims and changes to circumstances. However, this is still an area for

improvement and we will keep it under review and provide a further update in the quarter 4 report.

- (3) That the responses identified to issues raised in the last quarterly performance report be noted.
- (4) That Officers be requested to provide a briefing to the Leader on the performance of NI195b (street and environment cleanliness – detritus) over the past two quarters.

Reasons – This report sets out the Council's performance in the third quarter of 2009/10 as measured through the Performance Management Framework. Central to this is the Corporate Scorecard, which is made up of the Council's priority performance targets. The Corporate Scorecard covers seven areas of performance. These are performance against The Local Area Agreement; the Community Plan; the Corporate Plan promises; Priority Service Indicators; Financial Performance; Human Resources and Customer Feedback.

Options

Option One

1. To note the many achievements referred to in paragraph 1.3 of the report
2. To request that officers report in the fourth quarter on the items identified in paragraph 1.4 of the report where performance was below target or there are emerging issues.
3. To agree the responses identified to issues raised in the last quarterly performance report in paragraph 2.1 of the report or to request additional action or information.

Option Two

To identify any additional issues for further consideration or review.

112 **Apologies for Absence**

113 **2009/10 Projected Revenue & Capital Outturn at 31 December 2009**

The Head of Finance submitted a report which summarised the Council's Revenue and Capital performance for the first 9 months of the financial year 09/10 and projections for the full 09/10 period. These were measured by the budget monitoring function and reported via the Performance Management Framework (PMF) informing the 09/10 budget process currently underway. The report also considered progress against the 2009/10 Procurement Action plan which contributes to the Council's annual efficiency target.

Resolved

- (1) That the projected revenue & capital position at December 2009 be noted.
- (2) That the changes in the 2009/10 capital programme as detailed in resolution 3 below be approved.
- (3) That £2,734K of project funding into the 2010/11 capital programme be slipped and that this be considered as part of the 2010/11 budget process
- (4) That the contents and the progress against the procurement action plan be noted.

Reasons - Due to the downturn in the economy, impact of the credit crunch on Council services and the volatility of the financial markets, the Council is keeping a watching brief on any challenges that they may need to face which may result in a redirection of budgets.

Options

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Option One | To review current performance levels and consider any actions arising. |
| Option Two | To approve or reject the recommendations above or request that Officers provide additional information. |

114

Draft Budget 2010/2011

The Head of Finance submitted a report which provided Executive with the final of three opportunities to shape and refine the interaction between the corporate plan service plans and financial matters before the final budget is presented to Council on 22 February 2010.

The Chief Finance Officer circulated a 2010/11 Budget update relating to Local Authority special grant funding for concessionary travel to Members for consideration.

Resolved

- (1) That the changes to the draft budget since 11th January 2010 be approved and that the draft revenue budget in the context of the Council's service objectives and strategic priorities be considered.
- (2) That the approach to the overall capital programme and 2010/11 new scheme bids be agreed.
- (3) That the treasury management strategy for 2010/11 be approved.
- (4) That the election fees payable for 2010/11 be approved.
- (5) That it be recommended that the draft corporate plan be endorsed.

- (6) That it be noted that the latest MTFS financial forecast was currently being refreshed and would be part of the budget book.
- (7) That officers be requested to produce the formal 2010/11 budget book on the basis of Appendices 1-5 as set out in the minute book.
- (8) That the updated draft budget and treasury management strategy be recommended for adoption by the Council on 22 February 2010 (as a key decision).

Reasons – The budget will form the financial expression of the Council's strategic priorities and service delivery plans for 2010/11; the allocation of resources against agreed service priorities is necessary in order to achieve its strategic points.

Options

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Option One | To review draft revenue and capital budget to date and consider actions arising. |
| Option Two | To approve or reject the recommendations above or request that Officers provide additional information. |

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Executive

Private Sector Housing Strategy 2010 - 2014

1 March 2010

Report of Head of Housing Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek adoption of the council's Private Sector Housing Strategy and endorsement of the associated action plan.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To adopt the Private Sector Housing Strategy, and
- (2) Endorse the Strategy's action plan

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The Private Sector Housing Strategy is intended to deliver improvements in four priority areas. These are described in section 2.8 of this report.
- 1.2 Its production has been overseen by a Steering Group, following extensive consultation, and with the involvement of a Task and Finish Group established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 At the direction of the Steering Group the draft strategy and action plan have been subject to appropriate revision to take account of consultation responses.
- 1.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has considered and endorsed the draft strategy and the action plan (subject to clarification of certain targets) and has asked that delivery progress should be reported back to that Committee in a year's time.
- 1.5 The strategy does not require additional financial resources but will make use of external grant funding which has already been secured by the council for housing purposes. It will also be necessary to appoint a part-time officer on a temporary contract to deliver improvements in domestic energy-efficiency and address fuel-poverty issues but it is intended to achieve this within the 2010-11 budget.

Proposals

- 1.6 That the strategy should be formally adopted by Executive.
- 1.7 That the associated action plan for the strategy is endorsed.

Conclusion

- 1.8 This strategy is an essential part of the council's response to the need to provide suitable accommodation for the residents of Cherwell. The council has a key role to play in ensuring that the local stock is in satisfactory condition; that fuel poverty and carbon emissions are reduced; the housing needs of vulnerable residents are met and that those seeking homes have suitable options available to them, particularly in the private rented sector.
- 1.9 The Private Sector Housing Strategy will also assist with the delivery of a number of actions and targets previously identified in the Cherwell Homelessness Strategy 2007-11 and the Cherwell Housing Strategy 2005-11.

Background Information

- 2.1 The need to develop the Council's first Private Sector Housing Strategy was identified in early 2009. A new stock condition surveys was underway and a fuel poverty survey had recently been completed. The Government had also reported on a review of the private rented sector. A strategy was needed to address the issues being raised.
- 2.2 It was also judged important to highlight the importance of good quality private sector housing to residents in the district, and to specifically reflect the contribution the private sector housing team can make towards meeting the Council's corporate priorities.
- 2.3 The project was overseen by a Steering Group chaired by Councillor Michael Gibbard and including representatives from Adult Social Care, Age Concern, Oxfordshire PCT and the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.4 In April 2009 in response to a request from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a Task and Finish Group to contribute to the production of the Private Sector Housing Strategy.
- 2.5 Development of the strategy commenced with four consultation events. The draft was been subject to a six week formal consultation period which included a 'coffee morning' event, a press release, a direct postal mail shot to 114 stakeholders and interested parties, and the inclusion of a consultation questionnaire on the Council's website consultation portal.
- 2.6 All of the consultation responses were considered by the Steering Group and a number of revisions made to the draft as a result.
- 2.7 Given the strategic importance of this topic, the Task and Finish Group judged that it would be appropriate for the draft strategy to be considered by full Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to it's consideration at Executive. At its meeting on 25 January the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

endorsed and approved the draft Private Sector Housing Strategy and the action plan (subject to clarification of certain targets) and has asked that delivery progress should be reported back to the Committee in a year's time.

2.8 Four priorities have been identified for action over the next four years and these are at the core of the strategy. They are:

- a. Ensure existing privately rented homes are accessible and affordable;
- b. Ensure existing stock is in good condition;
- c. Support vulnerable people to remain living in their own homes and improve their health outcomes;
- d. Improve energy efficiency to reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty.

The action plan develops these four priorities into a number of objectives and targets.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 This strategy is an essential part of the District's response to the needs of our residents for suitable accommodation. It will play an important role in delivering the council's corporate objectives.
- 3.2 The strategy has been produced at a time of financial stringency and in full recognition of the need for efficiencies and for resources to be committed to priorities. It therefore seeks to deliver improvements within existing resources, through more efficient working and by refocusing activities. However, delivery of a number of important actions (identified in the action plan as the Private Sector Development Project) will require the use of grant funding which has already been secured by the council for housing purposes. The allocation of that grant funding to help deliver the action plan has been approved by CMT.
- 3.3 Housing and related services are at the heart of enabling older people to live independent and active lives and helps prevent older people falling into crisis and the need for high cost care.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward:

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Option One | To adopt the Private Sector Housing Strategy and endorse the action plan |
| Option Two | To adopt the strategy and endorse the action plan with amendments. |
| Option Three | Not to adopt the strategy or endorse the delivery plan, in which case an alternative strategy will need to be considered. |

Consultations

Public and stakeholders

The strategy was subject to extensive consultation both during its development and following production of the draft (see section 2.5). A summary of the consultation responses received in response to the draft strategy is included as Appendix 2.

Implications

Financial:

The Strategy has no additional financial implications and will be resourced within existing resources, and using new Recession Impact funding, Homelessness Grant and other funding streams as identified within the strategy.

Comments checked by Eric Meadows, Service Accountant PH&E, 01295 221552

Legal:

There are no legal implications resulting from the adoption of this strategy. The Private Sector Housing team works within a tight legal framework relating to enforcement of property condition and provision of grants. The strategy does not detract from that framework.

Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Solicitor, 01295 221687

Risk Management:

The Council's annual survey of residents' views indicates that housing issues are of increasing importance to the public. Having in place an effective Private Sector Strategy is a key means of demonstrating the Council's recognition of, and resolve to address, pressing housing issues. The content and delivery of the Strategy's action plan are likely to be subject to audit and a significant factor in any future assessments made of the Council's performance.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

- Theme 2 - improve health - including health prevention and access to services for older people. It makes the link between housing and health issues for older people.
- Theme 5 - Secure more affordable housing. This will include increased provision of new specialist extra care housing for older people.
- Theme 8 - Access to rural affordable housing and relevant services for all groups and specifically younger and older people.
- Theme 10 - Focus on Cherwell's people including increasing involvement, improving advice and support and promoting independent living with older people.

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Michael Gibbard
Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing

Document Information

| Appendix No | Title |
|---|--|
| Appendix 1 | Cherwell's Private Sector Housing Strategy 2010-2014 |
| Appendix 2 | Summary of consultation responses |
| Background Papers | |
| Ministerial foreword to the Rugg Report (23 October 2008) on a review of the private rented sector. | |
| Report Author | Tim Mills, Private Sector Housing Manager |
| Contact Information | 01295 221655 tim.mills@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk |

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Cherwell's Private Sector Housing Strategy 2010-2014

Making the most of our existing homes

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Executive Summary

1. Purpose of the Private Sector Housing Strategy

This strategy aims to ensure that homes in the district are of good quality, that no one has to live in unsatisfactory accommodation and that the changing housing needs and aspirations of residents can be met. A good home provides a foundation which gives individuals the opportunity to work and aspire towards secure and affluent prospects. This in turn helps to foster sustainable communities.

We have built on our links with partners and stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors and have established a vision that:

By 2014, private sector housing in the Cherwell district will provide our residents with more choice, a better quality home, more independence and more affordable warmth. Our partnerships will have been fully developed to achieve these goals.

Our vision can be summarised in four key words: choice, quality, independence and warmth.

2. The current position

In its report: 'Building better lives - Getting the best from strategic housing' released 9 September 2009, the Audit Commission states:

If councils thought of housing more broadly, they could do more to combat poverty, ill-health, educational under-achievement and help strengthen their local communities. The recession makes a strategic view of housing all the more important.

Cherwell District Council has already recognised these issues: its housing services were restructured in 2007 following the transfer of its remaining housing stock to Charter Community Housing. A dedicated private sector housing team was established as part of the integrated Housing Service.

The private sector housing team deals with around 1200 enquiries each year and provides a wide range of housing services to households living in private sector housing. Services include:

- Providing Disabled Facilities Grants and other forms of financial assistance
- Home Improvement Agency
- Working with partner agencies to provide equity release and other loan solutions to help homeowners improve their homes
- Delivering affordable warmth assistance and home energy efficiency advice
- Licensing private rented sector houses in multiple occupation.
- Enforcing housing standards and management in the private rented sector
- Reducing the number of empty properties in the district and targeting action where empty homes are causing a nuisance to the surrounding community

3. Setting the scene

In the preparation of this strategy we have researched the facts and figures but also listened to our partners' views on what they think the existing housing issues are. We considered the particular circumstances, demographics, tenures, needs and aspirations of the district. The key points are:

- Projected population growth of 24% in the next 20 years
- Mix of affluence and significant deprivation within the district
- Significant benefit dependence in some areas
- Growth and fluctuation of the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) population
- A quarter of households with a vulnerable household member

We carried out a new stock condition survey and have established that:

- More than one in every ten homes in the district has at least one serious hazard.
- Principle hazards are excess cold, falls associated with steps and stairs and damp and mould growth.
- The cost of remedying these hazards is over £8million or £1,400 for each property affected.
- Almost thirty percent of homes in Cherwell fail the decent homes standard, compared with under a quarter in 2004.

The strategy also recognises that:

- The number of new affordable homes will never meet the need for housing.
- The recession has had a major impact on the housing market and on housing need as fewer households can achieve home ownership
- The increasing priority which climate change is receiving

4. Delivering the vision

Consultation with stakeholders has identified what needs to be done to deliver our vision and four priorities have been identified:-

Choice

Private sector landlords will provide accommodation and services of the very best standard to their tenants and will receive excellent support and guidance from the Council in doing so. The private rented sector will be a meaningful housing choice for people seeking accommodation which is flexible, accessible, affordable and in good condition.

- Priority - Ensure existing privately rented homes are accessible and affordable

Quality

The physical condition of private sector housing will have improved - this will include increasing the number of vulnerable households living in decent homes, reducing serious hazards in the home, and making the home a safe and healthy place for our residents and their families to live.

- Priority - Ensure existing stock is in good condition

Independence

Vulnerable people will be aware of the services available to them and will be helped to identify and carry out the repairs and improvements needed to ensure their home is kept in good condition and remains suitable for their needs. As demand grows we will fully explore opportunities to secure new funding and deliver assistance, including options such as equity release schemes, and we will implement these wherever appropriate.

- Priority - Support vulnerable people so that they can remain living in their own homes, and improve their health outcomes

Warmth

People will live in affordable warmth and will be better placed to heat their homes adequately, especially through the winter months. Residents will know what they can do to reduce the amount of energy used in their homes and the energy-efficiency of the district's homes will have increased.

- Priority - Improve energy efficiency to reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty

5. Resourcing the strategy

Summarised below are the current streams of funding.

Revenue Funding

A mix of funding from these sources in addition to existing revenue budgets will be used to deliver the Strategy objectives.

- CLG Recession Impact Funding.
- CLG Homelessness Prevention Grant.
- LAA Performance Reward Grant.
- Supporting People Programme.
- Maximising fee income for grants and loans.
- Generating income from additional activity.
- Joint Commissioning.

Capital Funding

With demand for capital works increasing and a growing pressure on council resources, the strategy does not in this economic climate seek additional capital funding from the council. It seeks to secure opportunities for inward investment from partners and reduce demand for capital grants. The Strategy will seek to do this through:

- Negotiating increased investment from RSL partners.
- Maximising match funding from private sector landlords.
- Maximising take up of loan opportunities.
- Maximising grants and discounts provided by other agencies.
- Maximising grant opportunities from CLG.
- Continuous review of available grants and grant conditions.

Value for Money

Delivering value for money has been a major consideration when developing the Private Sector Housing Strategy. We are absolutely clear that where an increase in resources is proposed it is on the basis of the 'spend to invest principal'.

6. Consultation

The council has fully engaged with partner agencies, stakeholders and the public through a series of consultation events throughout the development of this strategy.

7. Monitoring

Actions will be monitored by Cherwell's Strategic Housing Team and key actions reported through the Council's Performance Plus System.

Part A – Understanding the current situation

1. Introduction

Purpose of the Private Sector Housing Strategy

This strategy aims to ensure that homes in the district are of good quality, that no one has to live in unsatisfactory accommodation and that the changing housing needs and aspirations of residents can be met. We believe a good home is important. It provides a foundation which gives individuals the opportunity to work and aspire towards secure and affluent prospects. This in turn helps to foster sustainable communities.

Cherwell's commitment to investing in private sector homes and improving housing standards goes a long way in delivering a wide range of positive benefits for residents. With so much pressure on Cherwell housing stock we must help ensure that the private rented sector plays a full role in meeting local housing needs. We must continue to help develop and adapt private sector homes to meet the needs of different sections of the community, such as the elderly, to promote independence and social inclusion. We will also be working to address the disparities between different parts of the district in terms of housing conditions and affordable warmth.

Although the focus of this strategy is on the private housing sector it is part of a wider strategic framework and has been developed in close association with Cherwell's strategies and plans. This strategy supports and links directly to a wide range of other strategies at a national, regional and local level that seek to improve opportunities, health and well being of local people.

We have built on these links and through our work with partners and stake holders from the public, private and voluntary sectors we have established a vision that:

By 2014, private sector housing in the Cherwell district will provide our residents with more choice, a better quality home, more independence and more affordable warmth. Our partnerships will have been fully developed to achieve these goals.

Our vision can be summarised in four key words: choice, quality, independence and warmth.

The current position

In its report: 'Building better lives - Getting the best from strategic housing' released 9 September 2009, the Audit Commission states:

If councils thought of housing more broadly, they could do more to combat poverty, ill-health, educational under-achievement and help strengthen their local communities. The recession makes a strategic view of housing all the more important.

Cherwell District Council has already recognised these issues: its housing services were restructured in 2007 following the transfer of its remaining housing stock to Charter Community Housing. Three new service areas, with increased resources, were established to deliver strategic housing functions (including delivery of new social housing), address housing needs (including homelessness, assessment & re-housing and advice) and improve

private sector housing (housing standards and grants). The restructure understood the integral links between all housing activities and, allied to the recruitment of suitably skilled and experienced staff, has increasingly supported efficient, effective and sustainable delivery.

The council has also provided significant capital resources to deliver improved housing standards and adaptations for disabled residents and has established an in-house Home Improvement Agency to help vulnerable people access the grant assistance they are entitled to. Statutory enforcement work is delivered alongside advice and a range of grants and other assistance has been developed to deliver help where it is most needed and achieve the council's targets.

The council has secured external funding wherever possible and work with partners and customers where it is beneficial to do so. Our services have been benchmarked against other authorities and we have participated in a value-for-money pathfinder project. Customer service standards have been established and customer satisfaction and equality and diversity impact assessments inform what we do.

Current Services

Cherwell District Council's private sector housing team deals with around 1200 enquiries each year and provides a wide range of housing services to households living in private sector housing.

| Service | Number |
|---|---------------|
| General enquiries/advice | 760 |
| Private sector jobs requiring visit or further action | 200 |
| Disabled Facilities Grant enquiries | 140 |
| Discretionary Grants | 50 |
| CHEEP Grants | 50 |
| Total | 1200 |

Services include:

- Providing Disabled Facilities Grants and other forms of financial assistance
- Home Improvement Agency
- Working with partner agencies to provide equity release and other loan solutions to help homeowners improve their homes
- Delivering affordable warmth assistance and home energy efficiency advice
- Licensing private rented sector houses in multiple occupation.
- Enforcing housing standards and management in the private rented sector
- Reducing the number of empty properties in the district and targeting action where empty homes are causing a nuisance to the surrounding community

Strategic Relevance

The links between the council's strategies and other important regional and national documents are clearly understood. Set out below are some of the strategic documents which inform and direct housing activity. (Further detail of the objectives contained within these strategies is included at Appendix2)

- Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods – A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society.
- Regional Housing Strategy 2008-11
- Oxfordshire Sustainable Communities Strategy and Local Area Agreement
- Oxfordshire Supporting People Strategy 2008-2011
- Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (December 2007)
- Cherwell Community Plan 2006-2011
- Cherwell Sustainable Communities Strategy: Our District; Our Future
- Cherwell Housing Strategy 2005-2011
- Cherwell Homelessness Strategy 2007-2011 – From Crisis to Prevention
- Cherwell Housing Strategy for Older People 2009-2014

The council's Housing Strategy 2005-2011 covers all aspects of the Council's housing role and contains seven priorities, but the two which are specifically concerned with the private sector have principally directed our activities since 2005. They are:

Priority 5: to improve housing standards, including overall condition and energy efficiency

Priority 6: to help people live independently in the community with suitable, adapted accommodation.

What we have achieved

In the preparation of this strategy we have researched the facts and figures but also listened to our partners' views on what they think the existing housing issues are. We have reviewed what has been achieved over the last four years as part of the housing strategy and evaluated initiatives we have undertaken.

Supported vulnerable people to remain in their own homes and improve their health outcomes

- Met the growing demand for disabled facilities grants (DFG) through increased capital allocation and reorganisation of the grants team.
- Secured additional DFG capital funding from government in 2008-09 to deliver 140 completed jobs and a record budget of £910k in that year.
- Obtained approval of a new and more flexible Grants and Assistance Policy 2008.
- Secured funding for an increased range of targeted discretionary grants.
- Delivered 176 Essential Repairs Grants to vulnerable households at a cost of £412k.
- Improved grant delivery by bringing the Home Improvement Agency in-house in April 2008 with financial support from partners.
- Developed and publicised our Small Repairs Service in partnership with Health and Social Care partners to deliver repairs for elderly people and to contribute to reducing hospital admissions for vulnerable households and facilitate hospital discharge.
- Developed a Housing Strategy for Older People 2009.

Ensured existing stock is in good condition

- Commissioned a Stock Condition Survey in 2009 (see the section Stock Condition - Key findings, below).
- Implemented the statutory licensing scheme for houses in multiple-occupation (HMOs) from 2006 and issued licences to all properties known to require one.

- Improved housing standards by resolution of serious hazards at 229 premises through both enforcement and assistance.
- Prosecuted landlords for serious breaches of standards.
- Worked with partners to bring 214 homes occupied by vulnerable households up to the Decent Homes standard.
- Responded to 621 service requests relating to property condition (155 each year on average).
- Introduced a Landlord Home Improvement Grant in 2007 (using a special allocation of capital from government) to raise standards in private rented housing in return for nominations rights to the accommodation for those in housing need. Improved 31 homes (2007-09) and secured nomination rights totalling 88 years at a cost of £352k.
- Developed, with partners, an equity release scheme which has secured government funding, was implemented in 2009, and will be used to help improve the homes of elderly owner-occupiers.

Improved energy efficiency to reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty

- Achieved total domestic energy efficiency improvements of 16.52% in the years 1996 to 2008 (compared with a 1996 baseline).
- Provided grant assistance to deliver improved energy efficiency in 131 privately rented homes.
- Worked with partners to encourage targeted households to take up energy efficiency grants for which they are eligible by means of specific mail-shots.
- Assessed the level of fuel poverty in the district and established a baseline for future action (2009 NI 187 survey).
- Provided a First-time Central Heating Grant in 2006-07 (using a special allocation of capital from government) to improve heating and insulation in private rented housing occupied by vulnerable households in return for future letting commitments. 17 homes improved at a cost of £62k.

Ensured existing private homes are accessible and affordable

- Developed the housing options service and produced a directory of housing advice and support services in the district.
- Reviewed the rent deposit schemes and introduced a new scheme Private Accommodation Lettings Scheme (PALS) from April 2009.
- Expanded and revised the range of information leaflets for tenants, private landlords and those investigating their housing options.
- Further developed the information available on and through the Council's website.
- Produced specific information on private rented accommodation for the emerging Polish community.
- Continued to hold and promote independently chaired Landlord Forum meetings every four months.
- Developed a homelessness strategy.
- Introduced the Landlords Home Improvement Grant (see also Housing Conditions achievements above) and secured nominations to 31 improved private rented homes.

General

- Established customer satisfaction measures for each service area and a monitoring system to ensure continuous improvement.

- Continued participation in a benchmarking partnership with similar authorities to collect and compare performance and drive improvement.
- Participated in a value-for-money pilot exercise with Housing Quality Network (HQN) to develop an effective process for comparing costs, with a view to establishing an Oxfordshire value-for-money group (2007-09).
- Carried out equality impact assessments of private sector housing services.

However, despite good performance there is still much to be done:

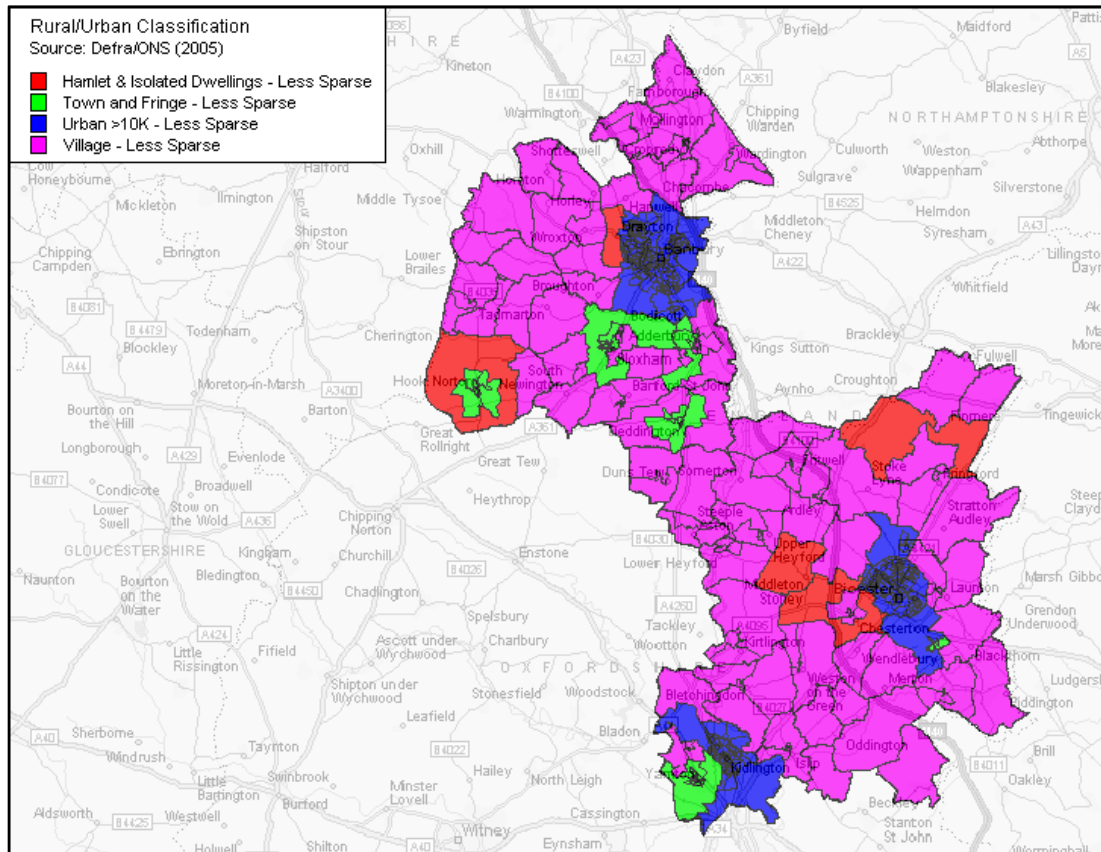
- The supply of new affordable housing cannot meet current or projected need so we must ensure that the private rented sector can provide suitable homes for those requiring affordable accommodation.
- Demand for disabled facilities grants continues to grow. The number of applicants is exceeding our ability to process and deliver adaptations and the capital budget is fully committed.
- More than ten percent of the district's homes are hazardous to the health of their occupants.
- Nearly a third of our homes do not meet the decent homes standard.
- Slow progress is being made with improvements to energy efficiency.
- More than half of all of the district's homes still have inadequate insulation.
- Ten percent of residents are in fuel poverty.
- Seven hundred homes have currently been empty for over six months.

2. Setting the Scene

Living in Cherwell

Cherwell's population is based in the three major centres of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington, and in 75 small rural parishes. 65% of Cherwell's residents live in the three large settlements so the population is – perhaps surprisingly - mostly urban, which gives rise to challenges that are more usually associated with urban areas, though we also face some of the common rural issues such as restricted access to services and isolation.

The map below shows the distribution spatially



The total population in 2007 was 138,000 and is expected to increase by nearly 24% by 2031, with the largest growth in Bicester and the rural parishes. The population group aged 75 and over is expected to grow by 110% over the same period.

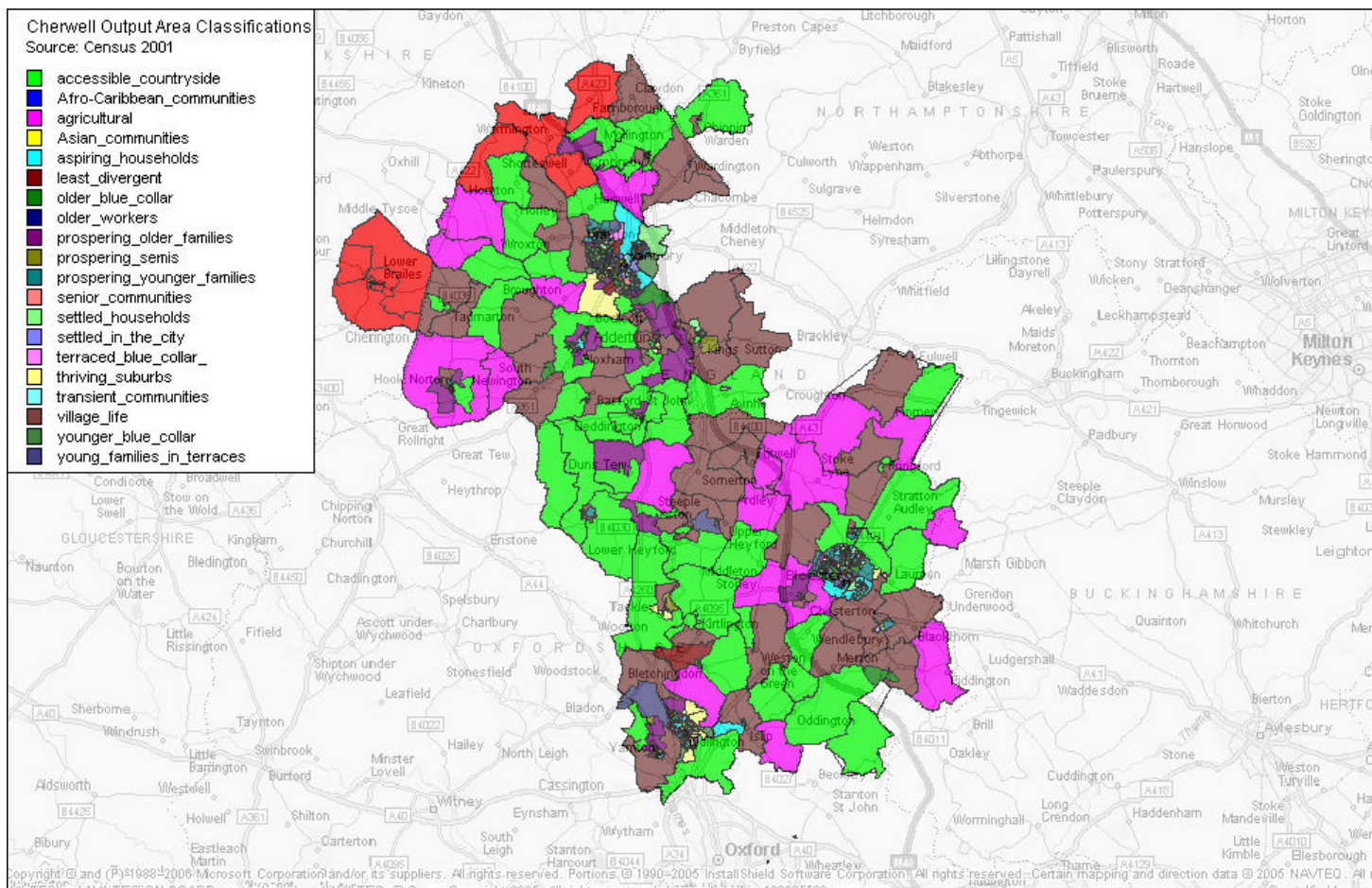
The latest estimates on ethnicity (2007) tell us that 11.2% of the population is from ethnic minority groups, an increase from 9.3% in 2001, with the “non-British white” category being the largest and the size of this group having grown by 61% since 2001 to 5,300.

Cherwell is a relatively affluent area but there are significant differences in wealth distribution. Banbury in particular has pockets of severe deprivation, second only to Oxford in the County. Seven areas in Cherwell are in the worst 10% in England in terms of skills, education and training (Index of Deprivation 2007). According to the Child Well-Being index, Cherwell is ranked 140 out of 354 Local Authorities – well below other rural districts in Oxfordshire. Within Cherwell district the most deprived areas for Child Well-Being are in urban Banbury. The index also highlights deprivation in rural areas with rural isolation a significant factor.

The following table shows the difference in tenure split between the two years the Council carried out Stock Condition Surveys

| Table – Tenure change in Cherwell 2004-2009 | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Tenure | 2004 | 2009 |
| Owner Occupier | 75.8% | 70.4% |
| Private Rented Sector | 11.9% | 17.4% |
| Social Housing | 12.3% | 12.2% |
| Total | 100% | 100% |

28% of households claim one of more significant benefits, of which Council Tax benefit and Pension Tax Credits predominate. Our House Condition Survey 2009 also tells us that 23.7% of the district's households are classified as being vulnerable (over 13,000 households) (see Appendix 1 for definition of vulnerable) and that 11.5% of all properties accommodate a household with a disabled member. The County Council (Pansi¹) estimates that Cherwell will have the highest number of residents (23%) with a serious or moderate physical disability in the County by 2015. There is also evidence of a 56% increase in the number of disabled children transferring from children's disability services to care management teams.



¹ Projecting Adults Needs and Service Information system

Key points

- Projected population growth of 24% in the next 20 years
- Mix of affluence and significant deprivation within the district
- Significant benefit dependence in some areas
- Growth and fluctuation of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population
- A quarter of households with a vulnerable household member

What do we know about the housing stock and housing issues in Cherwell?

Stock condition

As an 'Excellent Authority' (Audit Commission 2008), Cherwell District Council recognises that accurate data is essential to properly understand conditions in its district. We are committed to undertaking a stock condition survey every four years in order to ensure we have the detailed information we need. Data from other sources is also valuable and we make use of information from central government (CLG's English Housing Survey), our local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (United Sustainable Energy Agency or USEA) and national grant agencies such as Eaga (who deliver Warm Front grants). We use available data to plan services and adapt them to changing needs and circumstances.

Our latest private sector housing survey was undertaken in early 2009, building on information obtained from earlier surveys in 2004, 1999 and 1994. This survey (undertaken in accordance with current best-practice¹) provides us with statistically reliable information (in the form of a 'snap-shot') about the type, age and tenure of the stock as well as various measures of its condition. It also gives us information about residents, including ethnicity, financial circumstances and vulnerability issues. Comparing the new data with that from earlier surveys allows us to detect trends and determine whether particular issues need more or less attention.

Key stock condition issues

- More than one in every ten homes in the district has at least one serious hazard.
- Principle hazards are excess cold, falls associated with steps and stairs and damp and mould growth.
- The cost of remedying these hazards is over £8million or £1,400 for each property affected.
- Almost thirty percent of homes in Cherwell fail the decent homes standard, compared with under a quarter in 2004.
- Private rented sector properties are in the poorest condition overall with over a third failing the decent homes standard.
- An estimated 16% of the RSL stock still fails the decent homes standard.
- The main cause of failure is poor state of repair but there are also significant numbers of decent-homes failures associated with serious hazards and inadequate thermal comfort.
- There are an estimated 13,755 vulnerable households in the district (one in four of all households) of which more than two-fifths are in fuel poverty.
- A quarter of vulnerable households live in homes which fail the decent homes standard.

¹ Collecting, Managing and Using Housing Stock Information, DETR (now CLG) 2001

- The cost of bringing all homes in the district up to the decent homes standard is more than £65 million or £12 million for the homes of vulnerable households (an average of £3,500 for each one).
- The average energy rating (SAP rating) of the district's stock is 53.8 compared with 50 in 2004 and with a national average of 49 in 2006¹.
- But nearly one in ten of the stock has a SAP rating of less than 35 (taken to indicate a serious health hazard).
- The RSL stock has a better SAP rating overall (58) than the private rented sector (54) and owner-occupied (53).
- Well over ten percent of the stock has no more than 50mm of loft insulation and almost half has no more than 100mm. Only three in every ten homes have the 200mm which constitutes a good level of insulation. (The currently recommended level for new homes and for up-grades is 270mm.)
- Over 700 homes have currently been empty for six months or more, with some 66 empty for 5 or more years².

The principle messages to be drawn from the stock condition survey data is that despite clear improvements on many (but not all fronts) since 2004 and favourable comparisons with the national picture, there are still many unsuitable homes in the district and much to be done. Poor insulation and heating underlie many of the problems including serious hazards, failure to reach the decent-homes standard and fuel poverty. The size of the survey prevents us from drawing any accurate conclusions about relative conditions at ward or parish level.

Housing need and demand

In addition to information about stock condition the Council also considers information about residents' housing needs. We obtain data about future housing demand and residents' housing aspirations by several means, including:

- Specific and up-to-date local research: (Oxfordshire Housing Market Assessment 2007 (commissioned by the council with its Oxfordshire local authority partners), the council's own Cherwell Housing Needs report 2008 (a 2009 report is at draft stage) local housing needs surveys);
- Regular review of other data sources: (Hometrack (data source and analysis capability), Oxfordshire Data Observatory (information on housing need and lifestyle available at 'super output area' level), the council's own Housing Register data.); and
- Partnership working and review: (Regular 1-2-1 meetings with the council's Developing Partner RSLs, Management and Development Group meetings with all local stock holding RSLs).

The Housing Market Assessment established a need for five hundred additional social homes each year over five years. The 2008 Cherwell Housing Needs survey confirmed the figure at five hundred homes, but estimated they could be delivered over seven years.

Recent delivery of new affordable housing is shown in the following table:

| Year | 2005-06 | 2006-07 | 2007-08 | 2008-09 |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Number of affordable houses | 61 | 166 | 133 | 87 |
| As percentage of total new-build | 6% | 19% | 29% | 20% |

¹ English House Condition Survey 2007

² Council Tax data April 2009

New affordable housing is clearly unable to meet the currently estimated need. The recently approved eco-town in north-west Bicester is likely to deliver some 1500 new affordable homes over fifteen years but although this will assist with meeting demand in the south of the district is unlikely to affect matters in Banbury.

The council manages the allocation of the great majority of the district's social housing by means of its Allocation Policy, allied to a (sub regional) Choice Based Lettings Scheme. It also maintains the Housing Register. In excess of 3000 households are registered but the number of RSL-owned homes available for letting each year is typically about 350, - a very significant short-fall.

The table below shows the number of RSL lettings (not including transfer applicants) over the last 4 years

| Total RSL lettings (including LA nominations but not transfers within or between RSLs) | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/9 |
| 238 | 401 | 388 | 322 |

Source: HSSA

Although the council continues to work to improve the condition of the private rented stock it has historically had a poor image in terms not only of condition but also, critically, in terms of accessibility and security. As a consequence, many residents consider social rented accommodation a better and preferable option. The council has introduced schemes (such as its Private Accommodation Lettings scheme (PALs) and Landlords' Home Improvement Grant (LHIG) to improve access) and is encouraging people to recognise that the shortfall in available social rented accommodation will mean that many aspiring social tenants will face potentially long waiting times and possible disappointment. In those circumstances the message is that a privately rented home can and should be regarded as a realistic and appropriate alternative.

Nearly five percent of households have a monthly income of less than £500 and over twenty percent have less than £1,250. Over a third of households claim one of more significant benefits, of which Council Tax benefit and Pension Tax Credits predominate. The 2009 Cherwell Housing Needs report indicates that an estimated 79% of all new (emerging) households could not afford to buy a lowest quartile (cheapest 25%) entry level property. Only 22% of emerging households could not afford a private rent.

Adding to the problem of affordability, our House Condition Survey 2009 tells us that nearly a quarter of the district's households are classified as being vulnerable and over a quarter of those vulnerable households live in property which fails the decent homes standard. Over two-fifths of vulnerable households are also in fuel poverty (10.4% of the district's population, a figure close to the 10% produced through the separate NI187 methodology).

The council is also experiencing a significant growth in demand for disabled facilities grants. These play an important role in helping people remain in their own homes. As the population ages this demand is expected to continue and will present an on-going challenge to both the council's capital and revenue resources, not least because the specific funding contribution made by government has not kept pace.

The Stock Condition Survey 2009 has highlighted a substantial increase in the proportion of privately rented homes in the district's stock since 2004 (from 12% in 2004 to over 17%) but, although we expected to see an increase because of the popularity in recent years of buy-to-let investment, the number of owners seeking to rent property which they cannot currently sell is not known.

Impact of recession

This strategy has been produced in a time of recession. The likely impact of the recession is difficult to judge because its duration and the consequent impact on employment are not known. If the recession proves lengthy it is reasonable to expect that homelessness will rise, but this has not yet occurred. At present there is (anecdotally) an over-supply of private rented accommodation, a reduction in rents and an increasing number of landlords seeking to find tenants through the council. In the event that unemployment increases it is possible that the number of repossessions and empty homes may grow.

The council is currently encountering many new landlords (some of whom are undoubtedly 'reluctant landlords' who we expect to cease letting their property when the market improves). In the meantime there is a need to provide the information and advice they need to trade effectively and understand their legal obligations.

It might be assumed that falling house prices would make it easier for emerging households to purchase properties and "get a foot on the property ladder". However there are major obstacles to home ownership:

- property prices still remain well above the usually acceptable multiplier of 2.9 times a single income or 3.5 times a joint income
- lending is restricted, with lenders demanding much higher deposits
- parents are no longer as willing or able to put extra resources into their adult children's property purchase as they may face financial difficulties themselves or have seen their equity in their property diminish

However the overall picture for housing needs and the key issues remain largely unchanged.

Legislative changes

Changes in the law can have a profound effect and although the council uses the available consultation processes to make its views known, and also feeds back information through its various contacts with government and other agencies, we must ultimately operate in accordance with statutory requirements.

Significant recent changes include the Housing Act 2004, which came into effect in 2006 and included the introduction of an entirely new way of assessing house condition problems, a new enforcement regime and licensing of houses in multiple occupation and Local Housing Allowance, which introduced changes to how housing benefit is assessed and paid.

Changes in the way in which housing benefit is administered since April 2008 have had a particularly significant effect in the private rented sector: Benefit payments are now expected to be paid to the claimant and cannot (except in special cases, or when rent arrears reach 8 weeks) be paid directly to landlords. Government's intention was to empower tenants but the new arrangements are making landlords reluctant to let to more vulnerable households.

There are also a number of further changes in prospect:

The government consulted in May 2009 on a proposals document entitled “The Private Rented Sector – professionalism and quality “ which deals with the twin themes of encouraging professionalism among private landlords and enforcement of better standards. Key proposals include a national register of rental property linked to an improved complaint and redress system and regulation of letting agents to improve property standards, management and consumer protection. Changes to the way in which planning controls might be used to better control the number and location of houses in multiple-occupation are also being considered.

Diversity

The Council is mindful of the diversity of the district’s population and many private sector housing services are by their nature directed specifically at vulnerable groups. Disabled facilities grants are provided for households containing an adult or child with a disability while the Small Repairs Scheme is aimed at older people.

We are aware from our research that non-white British people are more likely to rent in the private sector than people from other ethnic groups. Cherwell’s largest ethnic minority is Asian/British Asian.

Home ownership is highest amongst the Indian ethnic minority. Traditionally, BME groups have accessed homeownership by buying rundown properties in unpopular areas and their access to homeownership may become limited if this opportunity reduces. Young ethnic minority households may not have the same access to inherited wealth or parental support as their white British counterparts, making them potentially more likely to rent privately. Therefore actions within this strategy relating to the private rented sector are likely to impact positively on ethnic minority groups within the district.

This strategy has been subject to a full equality impact assessment during the consultation period.

3. Cherwell's vision for the existing housing stock

Key messages for service provision

Consultation, informed by results obtained from the most recent stock condition survey and needs data, as well as evidence of changes highlighted by comparing current data with that from earlier surveys, has helped identify the issues and actions included in this strategy. The principle issues can be summarised as follows, but are further developed into priorities in Part B of the strategy and actions in Part C..

Stock condition issues

- There are significant stock condition issues to be addressed despite progress made to-date.
- Unsatisfactory insulation & heating is the overriding issue to be addressed and is the principle cause of the serious hazards identified, failure to reach the decent homes standard and fuel poverty.
- Private rented accommodation is poorer overall than other tenures.
- There is a need for landlord training and development to fill a skills gap and improve standards.
- Resources must be effectively targeted to assist households in greatest need, areas of deprivation and to where there are high levels of health and social care needs. More data is required to inform decisions on area-based interventions.
- More data is needed to inform decisions about appropriate empty-homes activity.

Access to private rented accommodation issues

- Demand for social housing is unlikely to be met and the private rented sector needs to become an appropriate and acceptable alternative if housing needs are to be met.
- Many vulnerable households require assistance to secure and maintain private rented sector tenancies.
- The private sector has grown significantly since 2004 but its future size is unknown and any decline will impact on our work.
- Best use must be made of the available social stock particularly the issues of under-occupation and empty dwellings.

Vulnerability and disability issues

- Demand for disabled facilities grants (DFGs) is expected to grow and to exceed resources.
- Many vulnerable households do not have either the financial or practical resources to maintain their homes and are therefore reliant upon support services to enable them to do so.

Fuel poverty and energy efficiency issues

- A significant proportion of the stock is still inadequately insulated and therefore wasteful of the energy used to heat it.
- One in ten households are in fuel poverty

Access to service issues

- Awareness of the work the council does to address poor housing conditions and the assistance available is insufficient.
- Access to services needs to be improved.

Vision

Having gained an understanding of the issues affecting the lives of residents living in all tenures, and taking particular account of the needs of vulnerable households, Cherwell has set a vision for what services should look like over the next five years.

By 2014, private sector housing in the Cherwell district will provide our residents with more choice, a better quality home, more independence and more affordable warmth. Our partnerships will have been fully developed to achieve this.

Through our consultations and work with stakeholders we have identified what needs to be done to deliver this vision and have identified four priorities:-

Choice

Private sector landlords will provide accommodation and services of the very best standard to their tenants and will receive excellent support and guidance from the Council in doing so. The private rented sector will be a meaningful housing choice for people seeking accommodation which is flexible, accessible, affordable and in good condition.

- Priority - Ensure existing privately rented homes are accessible and affordable

Quality

The physical condition of private sector housing will have improved - this will include increasing the number of vulnerable households living in decent homes, reducing serious hazards in the home, and making the home a safe and healthy place for our residents and their families to live.

- Priority - Ensure existing stock is in good condition

Independence

Vulnerable people will be aware of the services available to them and will be helped to identify and carry out the repairs and improvements needed to ensure their home is kept in good condition and remains suitable for their needs. As demand grows we will fully explore opportunities to secure new funding and deliver assistance, including options such as equity release schemes, and we will implement these wherever appropriate.

- Priority - Support vulnerable people so that they can remain living in their own homes, and improve their health outcomes

Warmth

People will live in affordable warmth and will be better placed to heat their homes adequately, especially through the winter months. Residents will know what they can do to reduce the amount of energy used in their homes and the energy-efficiency of the district's homes will have increased.

- Priority - Improve energy efficiency to reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty

How the priorities will be delivered:

The strategy recognises that the council is operating in a difficult financial environment and, although continuing to drive improvements in value for money, has to both reduce budgets and increase efficiency savings. The actions identified in the strategy will be delivered using existing budgets and will also utilise external funding secured by the council and its partners.

We shall continue to develop our services, to work with partners to deliver efficiencies wherever possible and to secure external funding when it is available. Resources will be targeted and reallocated to achieve our priorities and this will increasingly mean those vulnerable and households in need for whom the council provides the essential safety net.

The council strives to do better in several areas: it is determined in particular, to bring about much greater energy efficiency improvements; determine how best to make use of empty homes; and increase its engagement with private sector landlords both to improve standards and to secure access to privately rented accommodation for households in need.

The way we will deliver our services will be guided by the following principals:

- Working in partnership with other agencies and stakeholders to expand capacity and improve services
- Offering greater customer choice
- Customer led service delivery, with service designed to respond to the diverse needs of residents of Cherwell
- Value for money in service delivery and providing services that are both effective and efficient
- Making best use of all available resources
- Working to maximise the impact of services
- Using our market intelligence to take a risk based approach to targeting our resources at those neighbourhoods with the worst housing conditions or a client group who are most vulnerable

Part B – Improving house condition and services

Part B of this strategy describes the priorities and the key objectives for each of them. There is an overarching need to publicise and promote the service. Rather than repeat common themes under each of the four priorities we have set them out together in the General section at the end.

1. **Priority: Ensure existing privately rented homes are accessible and affordable**

This priority encompasses the need to both regulate and support landlords and tenants and includes working to improve the image and desirability of the private rented sector; ensuring that it becomes a realistic tenure choice for those seeking accommodation in terms of both its quality and security; and assisting those who want a privately rented home to both locate and secure one that is suitable and affordable.

Key issues:

Working with tenants

- Ensuring residents understand the council's housing role and the services available, and that they are able to access them.
- Ensuring that language barriers do not prevent access to the Housing Service.
- Development of the information and advice available to landlords, tenants and prospective tenants.
- The need to develop schemes such as PALs so as to secure access to the private rented sector for households in need.

Key issues:

Working with landlords

- Partnership work to develop schemes to improve security of tenure.
- Review of discretionary grants available to private rented sector landlords and tenants so as to ensure that the grants programme effectively delivers access and affordability objectives.
- Continued support and development of the Cherwell Housing Providers' Forum (landlords' forum) as a means of engaging with landlords.
- Landlord training as a means of improving landlords' skills and driving up standards of practice and property condition.
- Landlord accreditation as a means of improving landlords' skills and driving up standards of practice and property condition.

| Key actions for ensuring accessibility and affordability |
|--|
| <p>1.1 Undertake further review of the Private Accommodation Lettings Scheme (PALS) to ensure its effectiveness in securing appropriate private rented accommodation for those in need. (See Homelessness Strategy priority 3.1)</p> <p>1.2 Review existing grant schemes and grant opportunities, including Landlord's Home improvement Grant, to ensure we are best able to deliver efficient access and affordability objectives. (See Cherwell Homelessness Strategy priority 3.2 and Cherwell Temporary Accommodation Strategy objective eight)</p> |

1.3 Work with landlords to improve their skills and awareness as a means of improving both property and management standards. (See also objective 2.3)

2. Priority: Ensure existing stock is in good condition

We need to resolve serious health hazards and to reduce the number of homes which fail the decent homes standard, particularly where they are occupied by vulnerable households. Improving stock condition remains vital. An effective enforcement policy is in place and includes a commitment to resolve issues informally where it is appropriate to do so. Poor energy efficiency not only adds to climate issues but is the major cause of failed condition standards. Improving the energy efficiency of homes through insulation and better means of heating will therefore play a major role in reducing hazards and achieving decent homes. We also need to understand how we can best bring empty homes back into use.

Key issues:

The unsatisfactory condition of homes

- The number of homes with serious health and safety hazards
- The number of homes failing the decent homes standard
- Ensuring that houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) - whether subject to a licence or not - are properly managed
- The need to work with housing providers to drive up standards in rented accommodation and, in particular, provide training and advice for landlords
- Ensuring that residents understand the council's role in housing, the services available and that they are able to access them
- Making sure that owners, landlords and tenants understand the need for timely maintenance work and are encouraged to undertake (or report) it.
- Elderly owner-occupiers often have equity in their homes but little cash available with which to repair them.

Key issues:

Statutory duties

- Resolution of serious health and safety hazards and statutory nuisances
- The duty to keep the condition of the stock under review in order to measure progress and inform future decision making and objectives
- Ensuring that all HMOs which require a licence are subject to the licensing process
- Ensuring that licensed HMOs comply with their licence conditions

Key issues:

Resources must be used effectively

- The need to target interventions at the households living in the poorest accommodation and in greatest need
- The need for data to inform decisions on the appropriateness and location of area-based interventions
- The need for research to inform decisions on the need for empty homes interventions
- Ensuring that the Grants and Assistance policy is kept under review and that the measures available continue to be the most appropriate for achieving priorities.

Key actions for ensuring good stock condition

- 2.1 Re-target enforcement and other interventions to address serious hazards, statutory nuisances and also non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households, and to increase the number of homes improved.
- 2.2 Audit HMOs to ensure that all qualifying premises are subject to a licence.
- 2.3 Raise awareness with owners and landlords of the need for timely and appropriate maintenance to both maintain and improve standards. (See also objective 1.3)
- 2.4 Formalise the annual review of the grants and assistance available to ensure that the discretionary grants programme effectively delivers stock-condition and stock-use objectives.
- 2.5 Expand the Flexible Home Improvement Loan scheme to deliver assistance to more elderly home-owners through loans without repayment until the property is sold.
- 2.6 Reduce the number of empty homes in the district.

3. Priority: Support vulnerable people to remain living in their own homes and improve their health outcomes

We recognise that people usually want to continue to live in their current homes for as long as possible and that it is often best for them to do so. In many cases they need help and this can be provided through financial and/or practical assistance with essential repairs and through the provision of assistive equipment (including assistive technology) and adaptations where the current location continues to be suitable. We shall continue to develop the advice and practical assistance which are available and will work to ensure that there are appropriate financial and other resources to meet the need.

Key issues:

Supporting vulnerable people

- The need to secure the resources necessary to deliver disabled facility grants (DFGs) in the district.
- The need for a DFG policy to address the prioritisation and allocation of resources and, in particular, issues associated with a demand which exceeds supply.
- Development of practices and procedures which will improve the efficiency and value for money of the DFG service in partnership with County and Health partners.
- Promotion of the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) service including the Small Repairs Service.
- Ensuring that the Grants and Assistance policy is kept under review and that the measures available continue to be the most appropriate for achieving priorities
- Encouraging uptake of Flexible Home Improvement Grants and the need to work with partners to both develop the scheme and secure additional funding.
- Development of data recording and reporting facilities.

Key Actions for supporting vulnerable people

- 3.1 Make best use of available Disabled Facilities Grant resources in a period of growing demand.

- 3.2 Formalise the annual review of the grants and assistance available to vulnerable households so as to ensure the discretionary grants programme is as effective as possible in delivering assistance. (See also objective 2.4)
- 3.3 Improve data recording and reporting so as to deliver effective performance management and data provision to partners.
- 3.4 Increase uptake of HIA services including Small Repairs Service.
- 3.5 Ensure the actions contained within the Older Peoples Housing Strategy relating to preventative services are included in work plans when delivering this strategy.

4. Priority: Improve energy efficiency to reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty

The latest stock condition survey has identified unsatisfactory insulation and heating as the single most important house-condition issue. We have also established that ten percent of households (identified in accordance with the NI187 requirements) are in fuel poverty. We will work with partners to improve the energy efficiency of the district's housing; ensure that home-owners can make informed choices about energy-efficiency improvements to their homes and are encouraged to carry them out. The strategy also aims to ensure that all rented homes reach an appropriate energy efficiency standard, and will introduce initiatives to tackle fuel poverty and to increase the uptake of grants and discounts funded by national and other agencies.

Key issues:

Energy efficiency of homes in the district

- The need to work with partners to ensure that home-owners can make informed choices about energy-efficiency improvements to their homes and are encouraged to carry them out.
- Working with partners to ensure that home-owners can make informed choices about renewable sources of energy and are encouraged to utilise and install them out.
- Ensuring that rented homes reach an appropriate energy efficiency standard
- The development and implementation of initiatives to increase the uptake of energy efficiency grants and discounts funded and delivered by national and other agencies.

Key Issues:

Reduce fuel poverty

- Develop and implement an Affordable Warmth policy to tackle fuel poverty.
- Use available sources of information to provide advice and assistance to households identified as being in fuel poverty.

Key actions for improving energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty

- 4.1 Increase the numbers of owner-occupiers and landlords installing insulation and implementing other energy-efficiency measures.
- 4.2 Reduce the number of households in fuel-poverty.

5. General and common themes

A cross-cutting theme that affects all our services is the need for the public and especially vulnerable households to be aware of them.

Key issues:

Access to services

- Those who require our services must know what is available and be able to access them
- Partners and other agencies must be able to refer or direct their clients to us effectively

| Key actions for ensuring access to services |
|---|
| 5.1 Increase public awareness of the council's housing role and the services available. |

6. Resourcing Cherwell's Private Sector Housing Strategy

The restructure of the council's Housing Services placed the Private Sector Housing Team in a much stronger position to deliver an efficient and effective service. This has provided the Team with capacity to deliver several of the service improvements outlined in the Private Sector Housing Strategy. However, some of the Strategy's essential developmental areas produce resource implications and opportunities and these are detailed against each objective in the Action Plan. Summarised below are the current streams of revenue funding, some or all of which can contribute to the resource implications and opportunities which the Strategy brings.

Revenue Funding

- **CLG Recession Impact Funding.** The council has already been awarded this funding and recognises the significance of developing the private sector at a time of National Recession
- **CLG Homelessness Prevention Grant.** The council is awarded an annual grant to deliver its Homelessness Strategy. Developing the Private Sector is a Key Priority within the Strategy.
- **LAA Performance Reward Grant.** This is grant held by Oxfordshire's Public Service Board. Some of this grant has been allocated to partnerships which the council could approach for this Strategy as there is a clear relevance (such as funding which has been awarded for deprivation and climate change). There will also be additional opportunities as there is additional funding yet to be awarded.
- **Supporting People Programme.** The council currently receives Supporting People Grant income for its in-house Home Improvement Agency. As this programme nationally faces great cuts, it is crucial to ensure the council maximises opportunities through clearly evidencing need and delivering a value for money service ~ especially in light of funding for the scheme only being secure until March 2011 when it is due for review.
- **Maximising fee income for grants and loans.** The council's in-house HIA currently charges 10% for works up to £10,000 and 7% for works over £10,000 for DFGs. There is an opportunity to extend the charging of fees to Flexible Home Improvement Loans. The funding can be equivalent to 5% of the total loans made by the local authority

during the year, subject to a maximum funding of £25,000. This would significantly increase capacity within the Private Sector Housing Team and allocation of loans under this scheme. Increased allocation under the Flexible Home Improvement Loans Scheme will reduce pressure on the capital grants schemes (see below).

- **Generating income from additional activity.** The HIA has the ability to undertake fee-based work for clients who are not eligible for grant assistance. This work will be increased where and when capacity permits. The fees generated from HMO licensing make a contribution towards the cost of that activity but, since licences are issued for 5 years and most qualifying HMOs were licensed in 2006, that income stream is periodic.
- **Joint Commissioning.** The strategy may provide opportunity for discussion and negotiation for joint commissioning between The Council and Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust and Oxfordshire County Council where there are areas of joint concern and responsibility.

A mix of funding from these sources will be used to deliver the Strategy objectives.

Capital Funding

With demand for capital works increasing **and** a growing pressure on council resources, there is an urgent need to make the council's capital go further. The Private Sector Housing Strategy does not in the current economic climate seek additional capital funding from the council. The Strategy seeks to secure opportunities for inward investment from partners and reduce demand for capital grants. The Strategy will seek to do this through:

- **Negotiating increased investment from RSL partners.** This includes payment towards disabled adaptation works across the RSL stock and also includes sourcing alternative housing for households where the level of adaptations needed are disproportionate to the size or value of the home. These developments are inextricably linked to the production of a comprehensive DFG Policy.
- **Maximising match funding from private sector landlords.** This includes Energy Grants and Home Improvement Grants.
- **Maximising take up of loan opportunities.** This includes the Flexible Home Improvement Loans Scheme mentioned above.
- **Maximising grants and discounts provided by other agencies.** Examples of these include Warm Front Grants and Cocoon discount insulation.
- **Maximising grant opportunities from CLG.** The Council receives an annual capital grant from CLG for the DFG programme. Whilst it is not anticipated that this will reduce (it has stayed at the same level for over three years) it is important to maintain an open dialogue with CLG to retain this grant and take up additional opportunities of capital grant from CLG as they arise.
- **Continuous review of available grants and grant conditions.** By ensuring that the mix of available grants (and their conditions and criteria) continues to be entirely appropriate, we can get best value from existing capital provision.

Value for Money

Delivering value for money has been a major consideration when developing the Private Sector Housing Strategy. We are absolutely clear that where an increase in resources is proposed it is on the basis of the 'spend to invest principal'. An example of this is the proposal for a Private Sector Development Officer, which will forge stronger partnerships

with private sector landlords thus increasing take up of home improvement grant schemes. This will increase leverage to secure match funding and nominations, which will in turn reduce demand on the Council's temporary accommodation costs.

Value-for-money considerations are also informed by the relevant Audit Commissions Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs):

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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is able to demonstrate significant costs savings and / or quality improvements through partnership (<i>eg Production and application of a county-wide leaflet explaining DFGs and the grant processes; countywide DFG works specification</i>) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council collects accurate information on costs and services and uses it to decide priorities and to strategically manage resources. Has effectively benchmarked services and uses the information to compare costs and evaluate systems, procedures and policies in other organisations against its own strategic priorities. (<i>eg participation in Benchmarking Group and HqN value for money pilot.</i>) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council follows good practice for procurement. (<i>eg the bulk purchase of key-safes with other Oxfordshire authorities</i>) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council understands the impact of the strategic approach and makes maximum use of other sources of finance to improve private sector property condition and uses full capacity partners to secure other sources of funding not available to the Council. (<i>eg participation in the creation of Flexible Home Improvement Loans Ltd., a successful bid for GOSE funding and the delivery of loans to elderly home owners without resource to the council's capital.</i>) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is successful in bidding for grants and making the most of match funded projects. (<i>eg Landlords Home Improvement Grant and Flexible Home Improvement Loan schemes.</i>) |

If we keep a focus on value-for-money we will deliver services that are sustainable, affordable and target the most vulnerable members of our community.

Part C - Taking the Strategy Forward

1. Consultation

The council has fully engaged with partner agencies, stakeholders and the public through a series of consultation events as a key part of the development of this strategy.

In addition, a six week consultation was carried out from 20th November to 31st December 2009. Responses were requested via a questionnaire through a variety of means including the council's website, a mail shot to those who engaged with the development in the early stages and other stakeholders and through a consultation event held at the Council's offices on 2nd December.

The results of the consultation are available on the Council's website.

2. Implementation

The implementation of the strategy will be taken forward by building the objectives into annual service plans and the individual annual targets and work plans of the relevant staff.

3. Action planning

Below is a detailed action plan which will be amended to take account of the consultation responses to this Strategy. The key actions will be absorbed into Cherwell's Housing Strategy when this is revised for 2011 to ensure robust monitoring of progress towards the priority objectives.

4. Monitoring

Actions will be monitored by Cherwell's Strategic Housing Team and key actions reported through the Council's Performance Plus System.

5. Private Sector Housing Strategy Action Plan

Action plan is for 3 years and will be refreshed after 2 years to develop services for the next 3 years

Priority: Accessible & affordable privately rented homes

| No. | Objective | Year 1 target | Year 2 & 3 target | People Involved | Resources | Success | Year 1 Measures |
|-----|--|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| 1.1 | Review Private Accommodation Lettings Scheme (PALS) to ensure continued effectiveness in securing appropriate private rented sector accommodation for those in need. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a Private Sector Development Project. 2. Implement pre-PALS premises inspection. 3. PALS steering group to meet to agree review timetable | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Procedural review. 2. Review Private Sector Development Project. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CDC Housing Needs Team 2. CDC Private Sector Housing Team 3. CDC Housing Benefits contractor and monitoring staff. 4. Floating support partners. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officer time. 2. Recession Impact funding. 3. Housing & Planning Delivery Grant. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supply of sufficient suitable accommodation. 2. Clearly established and smooth-running processes. 3. Landlords willingness to re-use PALS. 4. Improved quality of available accommodation (see 1.3 below). | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project established and project plan agreed. 2. Pre-PALS inspection procedure and monitoring in place. 3. Steering Group meeting held |
| 1.2 | Establish an annual review of both existing grant schemes and grant opportunities, including Landlord's Home improvement Grant | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review LHIG & other current schemes and implement revisions arising. 2. Review opportunities to make use of new schemes. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review LHIG & other current schemes and implement revisions arising. 2. Implement any previously identified new schemes. | | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officer time. 2. Recession Impact funding. 3. Housing & Planning Delivery Grant. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continued uptake of schemes. 2. Supply of sufficient suitable accommodation. 3. Clearly established and smooth-running processes. 4. Improved value for money 5. Secure improvements and nomination rights to 12 homes a year through LHIG. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of LHIG completed 2. Review of opportunities undertaken |
| 1.3 | Work with landlords to improve their skills and awareness as a means of improving both property and management standards.(see also objective 2.3) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a Private Sector Development Project. 2. Review Cherwell Housing Providers Forum. 3. Review potential for local Landlord's Association. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement outcomes of review of Forum. 2. Take forward outcomes of review of Landlord's Association. 3. Review potential for Landlord Accreditation Scheme. 4. Take forward outcomes of review of Landlord Accreditation Scheme 5. Review Private Sector Development Project. | | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officer time. 2. Recession Impact funding. 3. Housing & Planning Delivery Grant. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving property condition of 60 homes per year as measured through pre-PALS inspections. 2. Reduced number of condition & tenancy issues requiring intervention by PALS officers. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project established and project plan agreed. 2. Review of Provider Forum completed 3. Review of Landlords association completed. |

Priority: Ensuring existing stock is in good condition

| No. | Objective | Year 1 target | Year 2 & 3 target | People Involved | Resources | Success | Year 1 Measures |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1 | Re-target enforcement and other interventions to address serious hazards, statutory nuisances and also non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households, and to increase the number of homes improved. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake research to identify the potential for both geographically and personal-need based targeted action. Review website content to highlight the assistance available. Undertake a promotional event to raise service awareness. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Implement appropriate targeted action. Undertake a promotional event to raise service awareness. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> CDC Private Sector Housing Team CDC Housing Benefits contractor and monitoring staff. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Officer time. Discretionary grant budget. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Serious hazards resolved in 60 premises each year, on average, over the lifetime of the strategy. Other hazards resolved in 20 premises each year on average, over the lifetime of the strategy. 25 premises occupied by vulnerable households brought up to the Decent Homes standard each year, on average, over the lifetime of the strategy. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Research completed. Website content reviewed and pages updated Event taken place. |
| 2.2 | Audit houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) to ensure that all qualifying premises are subject to a licence | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review available data to identify premises potentially subject to need for a licence. Undertake follow up mailing to identify those premises requiring further inspection. Carry-out advertising campaign to raise awareness of licensing requirements. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review and re-licence those premises originally licensed in 2006. Implement pro-active inspection of premises identified as potentially requiring a licence. Carry-out advertising campaign to raise awareness of licensing requirements. Conclude pro-active inspection of premises identified as potentially requiring a licence | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> CDC Private Sector Housing Team CDC Housing Benefits contractor and monitoring staff. CDC Communications Team | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Officer time. Resources to fund advertising costs. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Number of qualifying but currently unlicensed premises identified. Number of new licence applications received. Premises with existing licences appropriately re-licensed. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review completed Mailing completed and list of properties identified Campaign taken place |

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|-----|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| 2.3 | Raise awareness with owners, landlords and tenants of the need for timely maintenance to both maintain and improve standards (see also objectives 1.3 & 3.4) | 1. Review, revise and re-publish existing maintenance booklet. 2. Review options for an advertising campaign through CDC and other publications. | 1. Launch and effect distribution to appropriate locations. 2. Take forward advertising campaign | 1. CDC Private Sector Housing Team. 2. CDC Communications Team | 1. Officer time. 2. Resources to fund production of leaflet. | Awareness raised amongst new landlords | 1. New booklet published 2. Options for promotion agreed and planned |
| 2.4 | Formalise the annual review of the grants and assistance available to ensure that the discretionary grants programme effectively delivers stock-condition and stock-use objectives. | 1. Undertake review and implement revisions arising | 1. Undertake review and implement revisions arising | 1. CDC Private Sector Housing Team. | 1. Officer time. 2. Discretionary grant budget. | Delivery of an effective range of grants. | 1. Review process established and review completed. |
| 2.5 | Expand the Flexible Home Improvement Loan to deliver assistance to more elderly home-owners through loans without repayment until the property is sold. | 1. Appoint officer on suitable contract terms. 2. Undertake media promotion of the scheme. 3. Undertake direct promotion of the scheme through partners and established forums. | 1. Review year 1 activity. | 1. CDC Private Sector Housing Team. 2. CDC Communications Team. | 1. Appointment of short-contract consultant, funded by fee income available from FHIL. 2. FHIL budget funded by GOSE 3. Officer time. | 1. Increased number of loans arranged. 2. Deliver loans to the value of £100k per annum on average over the lifetime of the strategy. 3. Successful bids (with partners) for additional funding. | 1. Officer in post 2. Media promotion completed 3. Attend an agreed list of meetings to promote. |
| 2.6 | Reduce the number of empty homes in the district. | 1. Review available data to inform decisions about empty homes initiatives. 2. Undertake programme of surveys to inform decision making. 3. Produce a new Empty Homes Policy. | 1. Implement Empty Homes Policy 2 Review policy outcomes. | 1. CDC Private Sector Housing Team. 2. CDC Council Tax contractor and monitoring staff. 3. CDC Communications Team. | 1. Officer time. 2. Recession Impact funding. 3. Housing & Planning Delivery Grant. | 1. Reduction in the number of properties empty for more than 2 years. 2. 5 premises per year on average over years 2-4 of the policy, brought back into use as a direct result of council intervention. | 1. Review of data completed 2. Surveys completed 3. Policy adopted. |

Priority: Supporting vulnerable people

| No. | Objective | Year 1 target | Year 2 & 3 target | People Involved | Resources | Success | Year 1 Measures |
|-----|---|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| 3.1 | Make best use of available Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) resources in a period of growing demand. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare and implement a DFG policy to include RSL allocations, grant priorities and waiting list criteria. 2. Undertake promotion of the Policy to service users and Members. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review DFG Policy | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CDC Private Sector Team. 2. RSLs 3. OCC 4. CDC Communications Team. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officer time. 2. DFG budget allocation from GOSE.. 3. DFG budget allocation from the council. 4. Discretionary grant budget. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Availability of clearly established practices and protocols. 2. Effective management of expectations. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DFG Policy agreed and adopted 2. Promotion taken place |
| 3.2 | Formalise the annual review of the grants and assistance available to vulnerable households so as to ensure the discretionary grants programme is as effective as possible in delivering assistance. (See also objective 2.4) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertake review and implement revisions arising. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertake review and implement revisions arising. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CDC Private Sector Housing Team. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officer time. 2. Discretionary grant budget. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delivery of an effective range of grants. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review completed |
| 3.3 | Improve data recording and reporting so as to deliver effective performance management and data provision to partners. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement Foundations software to record and monitor HIA activity. 2. Transfer recording of Small Repairs Service activity to the Foundations system. 3. Establish and implement performance management reporting using the Foundations database. 4. Review the use made of the Uniform software and the potential for extending usage. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review spreadsheets used for financial monitoring and recording of grant activity. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CDC Private Sector Housing Team. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officer time. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comprehensive data recording and reporting. 2. Effective and efficient reporting to partners of SLA data requirements. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foundations software in place 2. Small Repairs Scheme recording in place 3. Monitoring system in place. 4. Review completed |

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|-----|---|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| 3.4 | Increase uptake of HIA services including Small Repairs Service. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake direct promotion of the service through partners and established forums. Deliver a Small Repairs Service launch event in Bicester. Review options for an HIA advertising campaign through CDC and other publications. Participate with funding partners in review of service. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review HIA service to take specific account of future funding and procurement decisions by partners. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> CDC Private Sector Housing Team. OCC Supporting People partnership. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Officer time. Revenue funding provided by partners. Discretionary grant budget. DFG budget allocation from GOSE.. DFG budget allocation from the council. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the number of service users recorded by: 5% per annum for the HIA grant service and 5% per annum for Small Repairs Service. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion taken place Launch event taken place. Review completed Joint review carried out. |
| 3.5 | Ensure the actions contained within the Older Peoples Housing Strategy relating to preventative services are included in work plans to deliver this strategy. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review Older Peoples Housing Strategy to identify actions to be included. Include actions in the private sector teams' annual service plan. | | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> CDC Private Sector Housing Team | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Officer time. Discretionary grant budget. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Actions from the Older People's Housing Strategy are completed. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Actions identified and included in service plan. Actions are completed. |

Priority: Improving energy efficiency to reduce carbon emissions & fuel poverty

| No. | Objective | Year 1 target | Year 2 & 3 target | People Involved | Resources | Success | Year 1 Measure s |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4.1 | Increase the number of owner-occupiers and landlords installing installation and implementing other energy-efficiency measures. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appointment of Private Sector Energy-efficiency Officer, on short-term contract 2. Undertake targeted promotion of Warm Front grant in the form of letters and application forms to potentially eligible households. 3. Review the range of discretionary CDC energy efficiency grants and opportunities for targeted action. 4. Undertake promotion of the CHEEP grant through the Cherwell Housing Providers' Forum and other forums. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertake targeted promotion of Warm Front grant in the form of letters and application forms to potentially eligible households. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CDC Private Sector Housing Team. 2. CDC Council Tax & Housing Benefit contractor and monitoring staff. 3. CDC Communications Team. 4. USEA (local energy-efficiency advice centre). 5. Eaga (agency delivering Warm Front) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officer time. 2. Partner funded Warm Front grant. 3. Partner funded Cocoon insulation. 4. Discretionary grant budget. 5. Funding for Energy Efficiency Officer | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased number of vulnerable households receiving Warm Front grants. 2. Increased uptake of insulation through Cocoon scheme (see also 4.2 below). 3. Increase uptake by landlords of CHEEP grants by 5% per annum. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff member appointed 2. Promotion completed 3. Review completed 4. Promotion completed |
| 4.2 | Reduce the number of households in fuel poverty. (See also objective 4.1) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appointment of Private Sector Energy-efficiency Officer, on short-term contract 2. Produce and implement an Affordable Warmth Policy. 3. Provide specific and tailored energy-efficiency advice in response to NI187 questionnaire returns. 3. Undertake targeted promotion of Warm Front grant in the form of letters and application forms to potentially eligible households. 4. Review the range of discretionary CDC energy efficiency grants and opportunities for both geographically and personal-need based targeted action. 5. Undertake promotion of the CHEEP grant through the | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide specific and tailored energy-efficiency advice in response to NI187 questionnaire returns. 2. Undertake targeted promotion of Warm Front grant in the form of letters and application forms to potentially eligible households. 3. Review range of discretionary CDC energy efficiency grants and opportunities for both geographically and personal-need based targeted action. 4. Undertake promotion of the CHEEP grant through the Cherwell Housing Providers' Forum and other forums. 5. Review Private Sector Energy-efficiency Officer role | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CDC Private Sector Housing Team. 2. CDC Council Tax & Housing Benefit contractor and monitoring staff. 3. CDC Communications Team. 4. USEA (local energy-efficiency advice centre). 5. Eaga (agency delivering Warm Front). 6. RSLs with local stock. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officer time 2. Partner funded Warm Front grant. 3. Partner funded Cocoon insulation. 4. Discretionary grant budget. 5. Funding for Energy Efficiency Officer | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reducing number of households in fuel-poverty as measured by annual NI187 survey returns. 2. Increased uptake of free insulation through Cocoon scheme. 3. Number of households taking up specially targeted discounted insulation through Cocoon scheme. 4. Increased number of vulnerable households receiving Warm Front grants. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff member appointed 2. Affordable Warmth Policy adopted 3. Advice provided 4. Targeted promotion taken place 5. Review completed 6. Promotion taken place. |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | Cherwell Housing Providers' Forum and other forums. | and opportunities for further contract. 6. Review affordable Warmth Policy. | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|

Common priorities:

| No. | Objective | Year 1 target | Year 2 & 3 target | People Involved | Resources | Success | Year 1 Measures |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| 5.1 | Increase public awareness of the council's housing role and the services available. (see also objectives 2.1 & 2.3) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a Private Sector Development Project. 2. Review options for an advertising campaign through CDC and other publications. 3. Undertake a promotional event to raise service awareness. 4. Review website content to highlight the assistance available. 5. Review range and distribution of leaflets. 6. Produce and implement leaflet distribution plan. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertake questionnaire survey to review customer s awareness of services. 2. Analyse survey results and review promotional activity. 3. Implement revised promotional activity. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CDC Housing Needs Team 2. CDC Private Sector Housing Team 3. CDC Communications Team | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officer time. 2. Recession impact funding. 3. Housing & Planning Delivery Grant. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved customer awareness of services offered | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project established and project plan agreed. 2. Review completed and options agreed 3. Event taken place 4. Review of leaflets completed 5. Leaflet distribution plan implemented. |

Glossary of Terms

Appendix One

| | |
|---|---|
| Affordable housing | Social housing (where rents are capped to benefit levels) and shared ownership property where owners can purchase a part share and pay rent to an RSL for the remainder |
| Assistive technology | Use of new technology in equipment to support vulnerable people e.g. doors that send an alarm call if someone goes outside in the middle of the night |
| BME | British Minority Ethnic |
| CHEEP grant | A discretionary grant from Cherwell District Council to improve energy efficiency in private rented sector property. |
| CIEH | Chartered Institute of Environmental Health |
| CIH | Chartered Institute of Housing |
| Communities and Local Government (CLG) | The government department now responsible for overseeing housing issues. |
| Cocoon | An insulation scheme available to all Oxfordshire residents which delivers discounted insulation (free to recipients of certain means-tested benefits). It is run by USEA (the name of our local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre) and is funded by significant contributions which the energy companies are required to commit to energy efficiency. The Council works actively with USEA to promote this scheme. |
| Decent homes standard | Originally designed as a standard to drive up planned maintenance in social housing, it was extended into the private sector as a measure of quality. Local authorities have a specific requirement to reduce the % of non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households. The standard includes measures of serious hazards, disrepair, age of amenities and thermal comfort. |
| Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) | Mandatory grant for clients whose physical needs and requirements have been assessed by the Welfare Authority and for whom a referral has been made to the council. Subject to a test-of-financial-resources the council must approve a DFG for qualifying applicants up to a grant maximum of £30,000. Parents of a qualifying child are not means-tested. Government makes a capped capital contribution to DFGs. |
| Discretionary grant | Those grants which a council sees fit to make available out of its own resources to achieve its objectives, but which must be covered by a written grant policy. |
| Eaga | The organisation which has secured the contract to deliver the government's Warm Front grants. |
| Essential Repairs Grant (ERG) | A discretionary grant (usually provided through the HIA) to help vulnerable households carry out a range of urgent repairs to keep their homes safe and suitable. |
| Flexible Home Improvement Loan | This is a new Council initiative available to elderly owner occupiers who can get an equity release loan at lower than commercial interest rates. |
| Fuel Poverty | Generally taken to mean a need to spend more than 10% of income on fuel bills. However this is not an easy definition to work with because of the difficulty in obtaining financial information. Other surrogate measures are therefore used. In particular, NI187 uses receipt of a means-tested benefit and occupation of a home with a SAP rating <35 as indicating fuel poverty. |
| GOSE | Government Office for the South East |
| Hazards | Problems identified using the HHSRS and which are graded according to the degree of risk. Hazards giving rise to the greatest risk are called Category-1 hazards and the council must take action. |

| | |
|--|---|
| | |
| Home Energy Conservation Act 1996 (HECA) | This Act required local authorities to make domestic energy savings in the existing stock and set a target of a 30% reduction against 1996 levels by 2006. |
| Home Improvement Agency (HIA) | A discretionary service which, for a fee (often included in the grant), gives clients practical assistance with grants. HIAs can assist with the application process, tendering and selection of contractors and supervision of works. A Small Repairs Service is also available. Cherwell's HIA is an in-house service. Many authorities use an external provider. The service is jointly funded by the council, the Welfare Authority and Primary Care Trust. |
| Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) | Dwellings occupied by more than 2 unrelated occupants (with a few specific exemptions). HMOs with 3 or more storeys occupied by 5 or more tenants require a licence to operate. |
| Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) | The prescribed method for assessing housing defects (hazards) in all tenures and the basis for statutory interventions |
| LACORS | Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Standards – acts as an advisory body for local authorities providing, principally, legislative interpretation and good-practice advice. |
| Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) | The transfer of ownership and management of social housing from local authority to Registered Social Landlord following a ballot to determine tenants' wishes. Cherwell transferred its remaining stock in 2004 (following an earlier transfer of a part). |
| Mandatory grant | Grant which the council is required by law to give to eligible applicants. Disabled Facilities Grants are now the only mandatory grant. |
| National Indicators | A series of performance measures set by government which local authorities are required to report against and which are therefore important focuses of action. |
| Private Accommodation Letting Scheme | This is the Council's rent deposit scheme which enables households who are at risk of homelessness to access privately rented accommodation through the provision of a deposit bond and support for tenants. |
| Private sector | Includes all residential premises other than those owned by the council. Since Cherwell District Council transferred its stock in 2004, all residential premises in the district fall within the private sector. |
| Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) | Organisations (other than local authorities) which are recognised by government as providers of social housing and supervised accordingly. |
| SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) | A widely used means of assessing and comparing energy efficiency of homes. A SAP of 35 or less is extremely poor and greater than 65 reasonable. The national average is 49.8 |
| Small Repairs Service | One of the services provided to vulnerable households as part of the HIA. The SRS carries out a range of minor works including carpentry and plumbing but not electrical or gas work. Fitting key-safes to facilitate hospital discharge is a major activity. |
| Social housing | Accommodation provided by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) (previously known as housing associations). |
| Test of resources (Means-test) | A specified procedure for determining the contribution which a DFG applicant must make towards the cost of grant work. No means test applies in the case of adaptations for a child. Applicants in receipt of specified benefits are deemed not to have a contribution to make. |
| USEA | United Sustainable Energy Agency (formerly Thames Valley Energy Agency) is our local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, a not-for profit organisation part funded by the Energy Saving Trust. |

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Vulnerable household | There is no single definition of vulnerable but it is typically taken to mean a household with a member in receipt of a means-tested benefit. That is the definition used for this strategy and the stock condition survey which underlies it. For grant purposes receipt of a benefit is further qualified by the requirement to be aged 60 or more or to have a resident child aged 16 or under. That is the definition used in the council's Grants & Assistance Policy. |
| Warm Front | A nationally available grant from the government which delivers improved insulation and heating for various groups of vulnerable owner-occupiers and privately renting tenants. The Council works actively to promote Warm Front to eligible households. |
| Welfare Authority | Oxfordshire County Council is the statutorily designated Welfare Authority for the Cherwell District. The County Council's Social & Health Care service undertakes assessments and makes DFG referrals to the council in fulfilment of its duties as Welfare Authority. |

Strategic relevance

Appendix Two

National strategies:**Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods - A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society**

Department of Communities and Local Government, Department of Health, Department of Work and Pensions February 2008

Main recommendations:

- Joint working including joint assessment, service provision and commissioning.
- The need for preventative services.
- Improved information and advice about the range of options available.
- Expansion of HIAs and handyperson services own homes.
- Equity release to help fund the cost of adaptations.

Regional and County (sub-regional) strategies:**Regional Housing Strategy 2008-11**

The Regional Housing Strategy builds on the region's existing strategic priorities. It sets a framework for targeting the resources at the priorities for investment. It is also the framework for local authorities and housing providers to focus their efforts towards the common objective of delivering more affordable homes.

Main recommendations (relevant to this strategy):

- Number of vulnerable households who live in non-decent properties
- Equity release
- Energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty including reducing winter deaths
- Neighbourhood regeneration
- Improving non-decent housing through local authority partnerships

Oxfordshire Sustainable Communities Strategy and Local Area Agreement

This is the overarching strategy for all public services across Oxfordshire and drives the selection of priority targets (National Indicators) within the LAA. Local Area Agreement 2 (LAA2) includes the following targets:

Main recommendation:

- The need for extra care housing, increased social care and increased participation in cultural and physical activities.

LAA2 targets:

- NI 154 Number of net additional homes provided.
- NI 155 Number of affordable homes delivered.
- NI 141 Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living.
- N1131 Reducing delayed hospital discharge.

Oxfordshire Supporting People Strategy 2008-2011

This is the County plan for the distribution of Supporting People funding up to 2011. This funding pot was established in 2003 to ensure that all vulnerable households receive the support they require to enable them to maintain their accommodation and live independently.

- Availability of support services to older people based on need not on accommodation

type.

- Increasing quality of accommodation for physically and mentally infirm people to enhance independent living.
 - Simplified referral links to minimise the need for multiple assessments.
- Services to meet the specific needs of ethnic minority groups.

Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment December 2007

This is the key document now required by National planning policy to define and analyse the housing market and various sub market areas in Oxfordshire.

Main conclusions/recommendations:

- Tackling affordability is the primary issue alongside meeting increased need
- The growth of smaller households including single person households and the growth of households headed by people over 65 are the most significant demographic drivers
- There is a lack of sufficient private rented sector properties in rural areas.

This research has been supported by the Cherwell Housing Needs Estimates Report (2008):

- estimated the level of need to be 529 affordable homes per year assuming that 102 new affordable homes are built each year (i.e. the average since 2001)
- this means that 102 affordable homes per year (or 15.2% of Cherwell's annual South East Plan requirements of 670) are needed each year to prevent need getting worse
- this work is being updated to take account of the final South East Plan figures & work on the Affordable Housing Viability Study

Oxfordshire County Council Extra Care Strategy 2008

The strategy was commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council in order to drive forward the implementation of extra care in the County

Main recommendations:

- The need for extra care provision as a vital part of housing and care for our older people.
- The need to develop around 7000 units of private and socially commissioned extra care units.
- Acceptance of a variety of models and methods for securing extra care housing.
- The need for joint working between Housing and Planning Authorities to deliver extra need housing.

Local strategies:

Cherwell Community Plan 2006-2011

The community plan is the strategy of the Cherwell Community Planning Partnership which comprises a diverse range of organisations who have agreed common aims and actions to improve economic, social and environmental well being within the Cherwell District area. The Community Plan has 10 themes, 4 of which are particularly relevant to this strategy:

Main objectives:

- Theme 2 - improve health - including health prevention and access to services for older people. It makes the link between housing and health issues for older people.
- Theme 5 - Secure more affordable housing. This will include increased provision of new specialist extra care housing for older people.
- Theme 8 - Access to rural affordable housing and relevant services for all groups and specifically younger and older people.
- Theme 10 - Focus on Cherwell's people including increasing involvement, improving

advice and support and promoting independent living with older people.

Cherwell Sustainable Communities Strategy: Cherwell: Our District; Our Future

This new partnership document will replace the Cherwell Community Plan as the primary strategic document for the district. All of the council's other policies will reflect and support its objectives, which are therefore the overarching principles for the council's activities. Objectives are set out in the form of four pledges, each of which has an important housing component:

The Sustainable Communities Strategy helps to meet the vision for Cherwell in 2030 and as produced four ambitions which are:

- Opportunities for all – our communities in 2030
- Diverse and resilient – our economy in 2030
- Connected and protected – our infrastructure and environment in 2030
- Resourceful and receptive – community leadership in 2030

Each of the above ambition is supported by objectives and priorities for action. The Private Sector Housing Strategy is integral to all four of the above ambitions but in particular has a key role in delivering the community and the connected and protected ambitions, and a lesser but still significant role in supporting the economy and community leadership ambitions.

Cherwell Housing Strategy 2005-2011

This is the strategic document for the delivery of the Council's Housing Service. It is due to be revised during 2010 and will include key actions from this sub-strategy

Main objectives:

- Priority 5 commits us to improving housing standards, including overall condition and energy efficiency.
- Priority 6 of the strategy focuses on helping people live independently and includes targets for provision of lifetime homes and delivery of DFGs.

Cherwell Homelessness Strategy 2007-11 – From Crisis to Prevention

This strategy was introduced to address a particularly serious local problem with homelessness. Cherwell was one of the first local authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy and this is now a requirement for all authorities. The Strategy is supported by the Cherwell Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2008-11 – A Season for Change.

Main objectives:

- Offer a wide range of preventative measures.
- Increase access to settled homes.
- Halve the number living in temporary accommodation by 2010.

Cherwell Housing Strategy for Older People 2009-14

This strategy aims to ensure there is an adequate supply of good quality services to meet the needs of our ageing population.

Main objectives:

- Provide and support preventative services (including financial assistance) that allow people to remain living independently in their own homes.
- Increase provision of specialist older people's housing.
- Improve provision of information and advice about housing options for older people.
- Involve older people in the way we provide services
- Ensure new housing development meets the needs of older people.

Appendix Three

List of Consultees

Private landlords
Letting Agencies
Estate Agents
Other local authorities
Thames Valley Police – Crime Reduction Team
Age Concern
Housing Associations
Town Councils
Parish Councils
Oxfordshire NHS Primary Care Trust
Occupational Therapy Service
Advice Agencies
Connexions
Supporting People Team
Adult Social Care
Early Years & Family Support Service
Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service
Women’s Aid
Local churches and church groups
Banbury Foyer
Banbury Mosque
Banbury Civic Society
Probation Service
Prison Service
Jobcentre Plus
Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust
Oxfordshire County Council
Drug & Alcohol Service
Fire & Rescue Service – Fire Safety
Banbury & District Housing Coalition
Shelter Housing Aid
WRVS Cornhill Centre
National Energy Service
The Rent Officer Service
Council for Voluntary services
The public

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Private Sector Housing Strategy

Consultation response Summary

Consultation on the Draft Private Sector Housing Strategy was carried out between 20th November and 31st December 2009

How many people responded and from which organisations?

| Organisation | Number |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Letting Agency | 1 |
| Landlord | 3 |
| Owner Occupier | 4 |
| Private tenant | 1 |
| Church worker | 1 |
| RSL | 4 |
| Advice agency | 3 |
| Health/PCT worker | 1 |
| Local government | 2 |
| Total | 20 |

| Ethnic Origin | Number |
|---------------|-----------|
| White | 17 |
| Other | 0 |
| No answer | 3 |
| Total | 20 |

General

Question 1 - Are our priorities the right ones?

100% (20) = yes

Other comments:

| Responder | Comment | CDC response |
|-----------|--|---|
| Landlord | Support landlords who deliver accessible, affordable homes that are well equipped and in good condition. | No action. This is reflected in the strategy with the recognition of good landlords being part of a landlord accreditation scheme (Action plan 1.3) |

| Responder | Comment | CDC response |
|-----------|---|---|
| Landlord | Helping elderly with repairs (organising not necessarily paying for them) | Agree – Strengthen comment in the strategy at 3. Priority (page 22) to refer to ‘financial and/or practical assistance’ |

Priority – Ensure existing privately rented homes are accessible and affordable

Question 2 - Have we got the key actions right in this area?

95% (19) = yes

Other comments:

| Responder | Comment | CDC response |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Key action 1 – rent deposit scheme | | |
| Landlord | I never use rent deposit scheme. I try not to have people on HB as the system always causes problems and they end up in arrears (for various reasons) | No action. This is a statement. Noted. |
| Owner occupier | Do many people know about the rent deposit scheme? Some estate agents won't take on clients who are applying for HB – even though presumably some of the landlords are happy to take those clients. Should this be better regulated? | No action. The strategy is promoting access to the private rented sector including take up of PALS. (Action plan 1.1) However the scheme is designed as an alternative to homelessness and not all people in housing need will be eligible for assistance. |
| Local Gov | We have found working closely with housing benefit colleagues has meant more landlords used our RDS. | No action. The strategy provides for the PALS scheme to be reviewed and housing benefit staff are already members of the PALS steering group (Action plan 1.1) |

| Responder | Comment | CDC response |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Key action 3 working with landlords | | |
| RSL | When working with landlords in the private sector, try to encourage them to accept tenants in receipt of HB and those who have pets. | No action. Have included closer working with landlords in the strategy (Action plan 1.3) |
| Local gov | But less emphasis on assistance and more on carrying out enforcement | An informal approach is advocated although an effective policy on enforcement is in place where this is ineffective. Add a comment on this - page 21. |
| Other | | |
| Owner occupier | Empty homes? | No action. The need to work towards bringing empty homes back into use is addressed in the strategy. (Action plan 2.6) |

Priority – Ensure existing stock is in good condition

Question 3 - Have we got the key actions right in this area?

95% (19) = yes

| Responder | Comment | CDC response |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Key action 1 – poorest stock | | |
| Landlord | Institute a scheme of tenant awareness to encourage tenants to look after their property and thus prevent good property deteriorating due to tenant neglect or ignorance. | Tenant leaflets on maintenance and disrepair (i.e. condensation) are available. Add to action 2.4 'raise awareness with owners, landlords and tenants the need for timely maintenance to both maintain and improve standards' |

| Responder | Comment | CDC response |
|---|--|--|
| Health/PCT worker | These are often the 'hardest to find and reach' people - need various channels and mechanisms for finding them !! | No action. Agree but consider this is covered in the strategy under formalising the annual review of grant and assistance available (Action plan 2.4) reduce the number of people in fuel poverty (Action plan 4.2) and increased public awareness of the services (Action plan 5.1) |
| Key action 2 – encourage proper maintenance | | |
| Local Gov | But less emphasis on assistance and more on carrying out enforcement | An informal approach is advocated although an effective policy on enforcement is in place where this proves ineffective. Add a comment on this - page 21 (as previous comment). |
| Key action 3 - loans | | |
| Owner occupier | How will the elderly afford these loans? | Add in to page 21 unsatisfactory condition a bullet 'elderly owner occupiers often have equity in their homes but no cash and therefore need to release equity to carry out maintenance and essential repairs'. Make clear in Action plan 2.5 that loans are not subject to repayments until the property is sold. |
| RSL | With action 3 (loans), also try to encourage downsizing if appropriate - no use doing lots of improvements if house is too large!! | No action. The loan scheme considers the appropriateness of works to the home prior to approval of the loan. |
| Advice Agency | Loans may not be appropriate for all, especially if on low incomes. | Need to strengthen info in strategy to stress no repayments until sold. (as above) |

| Responder | Comment | CDC response |
|-----------|--|-------------------|
| Other | | |
| Landlord | Do not prioritise 'Young Single Mums'. I see many who just say they are single to get priority and it encourages young women to have children before they have the means to support them. Many come to me for a room! and tell me they are waiting for a council flat. | No action. Noted. |

Priority – Support vulnerable people to remain living in their own homes and improve their health outcomes

Question 4 - Have we got the key actions right in this area?

100% (20) = Yes

| Responder | Comment | CDC response |
|---|--|---|
| Key action 1&2 – prioritising and effectiveness of DFGs | | |
| Health/PCT worker | Grants and access to them can be very confusing. It's really important that information as to who can claim, and how is really clear - many people who could qualify, don't apply, because it is a minefield!! | No action. This is covered in the action to increase uptake of HIA services (Action plan 3.4) |
| Local Gov | a) Also lobby government for adequate funding of DFGs. b) Emphasis on better integration of District and County-based elements of the service. ????? from a client-led process. | a) No action – funding of DFGs is covered in the strategy at page 25, Capital funding. b) Quarterly meetings and joint working is in place but not reflected in strategy. Add to page 22 3 rd bullet 'in partnership with County and Health partners' |

| Responder | Comment | CDC response |
|---|--|---|
| Key action 3 – awareness of Small Repairs Service | | |
| Landlord: | I do not know about small repair service - very good idea but needs to be publicised | No action. This is covered in the action to increase uptake of HIA services including Small Repairs Service (Action plan 3.4) |
| Advice Agency | Ensure those in need of help receive excellent advice on options available. | No action. This is already in place and also covered in the action to increase public awareness of the council's housing role and the services available. (Action plan 5.1) |

Priority – Improve energy efficiency to reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty

Question 5 - Have we got the key actions right in this area?

100% (20) = Yes

| Responder | Comment | CDC response |
|---------------|--|---|
| RSL | Make sure the various grants or incentives for implementing energy efficient measures are available or as effective as possible/ | No action. This is included in the strategy with an annual review of grants and identification of opportunities for targeted action (Action plan 2.4 & 4.1) |
| Local gov | Identifying any vulnerable occupiers who fall between Warmfront and LA provision of assistance. | No action. The review and targeting of grants aims to identify vulnerable occupiers falling between services. (Action plan 4.1 & 4.2) |
| Advice Agency | CAB would be happy to discuss joint work around reducing fuel poverty | No action. Noted. |

Promoting services:

The responses for the suggested ways of promoting the service are:

| Method suggested | Number of responders | CDC response |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Articles in Cherwell Link Magazine | 16 | Noted – this will inform future promotional events. |
| Articles in local press | 16 | |
| Better use of the website | 14 | |
| Market stalls in town centres | 13 | |
| Talks to Community groups | 13 | |
| Stands outside supermarkets | 10 | |
| Opens days at the Council | 8 | |
| Speakers at other events | 6 | |

Other comments separate from main questionnaire

| Responder | Comment | CDC response |
|------------|--|---|
| OT Service | Introduction? comment on appropriate environment to enable independence whether location or home itself | Noted. Add comment to page 22 about location still being appropriate. |
| | Page 7 repairs for older or disabled people living their own homes not just to prevent hospital admission or allow discharge, I did find this elsewhere and agree priority for this situations but we need to encourage overall take up and this is across Oxfordshire so might light to reference take up levels. | Noted. Amend bullet points on page 7 to be clear that small repairs service is not just for this purpose. General improvement in awareness is covered in the strategy (Action plan 5.1) |
| | Page 9 provision of DFGs, could we add active with OTs in SS to ensure the adapted property best meets the person's longer term needs and consider all options first before progressing to DFG. | No action. This will be covered in the DFG policy (Action plan 3.1) |

| Responder | Comment | CDC response |
|-----------|---|---|
| | Bottom of page 10 - Child health, incidents of families with 2 disabled children again like Oxford city higher than elsewhere in the county but do we have figures to evidence? | No action. We do not have evidence to support this information and without it we do not consider it appropriate to include the reference to it. |
| | Page 17 - besides vulnerable should anything be added re individuals with mental ill health e.g. dementia who can afford to repair properties etc but need support to be able to do so | Noted. Amend second vulnerability bullet point to reflect that it may be financial or practical assistance that is needed not just financial. |
| | Page 22 - please use assistive equipment and not aids and adaptations. Can we include a comment on assistive technology - Telecare? Small repairs service does all provide for advice and information for people to consider, sign posts to other services and supports Should there also be comment on timeliness of DFG so work is completed within reasonable timescale. | Noted. Replace 'aids' with 'assistive equipment'. Do not agree that adaptations are assistive equipment. Add a reference to assistive technology. Noted. Noted. This will be part of DFG policy (Action plan 3.1) |
| | Page 26 - county wide specification for DFG so we can benchmark against BS and good practice, this work is nearing completion and will be available online as part 2 of OT toolkit from January 2010 | Noted. Add to first bullet point a comment regarding the countywide DFG works specification. |

Ministerial foreword

This Government values the private rented sector. The sector plays an important role in providing choice and flexibility at all levels across the housing market – most people will have rented at some point in their lives.

Housing needs continue to be a key concern for many people. A professional, high-quality private rented sector which is aware of its responsibilities to tenants, but given freedoms and flexibilities to grow will be a welcome part of the housing offer. The Government wants to help achieve this vision. Through the Housing Act 2004, this Government acted to tackle areas of greatest risk within the sector. However, since then, a range of bodies – the Law Commission, Shelter and the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) – have made a range of proposals for further change.

It was against that background that we decided to commission an independent review of the private rented sector from Julie Rugg and David Rhodes¹ (“the Rugg Review”). We approached the commissioning of the review with a deliberately open mind. We did not know what its findings would be and were keen to allow as much flexibility as possible to the review team in developing their views.

Julie and David reported their findings on 23 October 2008. On one level, the picture they paint is very encouraging. They talk of a sector that performs an important role in the housing market; a sector that is responding flexibly to changing circumstances, both for individuals and structurally; and a sector that continues to offer quality and choice for those choosing to rent, as well as a safety net for those unable to access other types of housing.

A key message from the review is encapsulated towards its end:

“Both landlords and tenants should be encouraged to view letting and renting as a less risky activity. The vast majority of tenancies begin and end in good faith and with no issues arising for either party.”²

But, the Rugg Review also highlights weaknesses. Whilst it finds that most landlords are well-intentioned and deliver a good service, it also finds that some simply do not view themselves as landlords and, therefore, fail to obtain sufficient knowledge to be good landlords. Others – a minority – are ill-intentioned and seek to operate outside and against the current regulatory framework, often exploiting the most vulnerable and allowing anti-social behaviour to take place in neighbourhoods, causing misery for many households. At the same time, local authorities are not always able to focus their resources in order to use the extensive enforcement powers provided in the Housing Act 2004 against the worst landlords.

In the review, Julie and David set out some high-level proposals for how these issues could be tackled. This response endorses the overall approach. It also builds on the high-level proposals in the Rugg Review by setting out the basic principles within which we think they should work in practice.

¹ *The Private Rented Sector: its contribution and potential* – Julie Rugg and David Rhodes, Centre for Housing Policy, the University of York (<http://www.york.ac.uk/chp>) (“the Rugg Review”)

² Rugg p113

We see the Rugg Review as very much building on the Law Commission's work in this area. Their two³ major reports – *Renting Homes*⁴ and *Housing: Encouraging Responsible Letting*⁵ – were an important input both to our own thinking and to the thinking that underpins the Rugg Review. We are very grateful to the Law Commission and especially to Professor Martin Partington for the hard work they have put into these reports. This response should be seen as the Government's response to the Law Commission reports as well as to the Rugg Review.

We have been very grateful to stakeholders across the private rented sector for the way in which they have been willing to engage both with Julie and David during their work and with us as we have started to consider the Rugg Review's findings. It has been very encouraging to see how key players in the sector have already started to think about the practicalities of implementation. We are very conscious of another key finding of the Rugg Review pointing to the sheer complexity of the private rented sector and we are mindful of the need to bring together as much evidence and expertise as possible to support any changes planned for the future. The proposals and questions in this response are designed to form a starting point for this, more detailed, conversation.

We will welcome views from all who have a stake in the sector. We will all need to be clear that we want to end up with a sector that:

- continues to react flexibly to housing market conditions
- continues to offer a high quality alternative to those choosing not to buy
- continues to provide a robust safety net to those who cannot access alternative forms of tenure and
- continues to strike the right balance between rights and responsibilities for both tenants and landlords.

At the same time, we need to move towards a sector that:

- is growing in confidence
- encourages professionalism for landlords and
- no longer provides a climate in which it is possible for bad landlords to operate.

I would like to thank Julie Rugg and David Rhodes for their important and thoughtful work and for setting us on the road to reform. I look forward to continuing the conversation with our stakeholders and to working with you all to achieve these aims.

Iain Wright MP

³ A third report – *Housing: Proportionate Dispute Resolution* – is the subject of a separate response by the Ministry of Justice

⁴ *Renting Homes: The Final Report* (vols 1 and 2) May 2006 Law Com No 297 (<http://www.lawcom.gov.uk>)

⁵ *Housing: Encouraging Responsible Letting* August 2008 Law Com No 312

Executive

The Council's Response to Climate Change

1 March 2010

Report of Head of Environmental Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report considers the progress of the Environmental Strategy for a Changing Climate and the overall progress of the Council in responding to climate change issues.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the current progress relating to the Environmental Strategy for a Changing Climate and the performance relating to the four climate change national indicators.
- (2) To approve the revised Environmental Strategy for a Changing Climate Change delivery plan and the continuing priority attached to it.
- (3) To support reducing carbon emissions by improving the energy efficiency of corporate buildings and also reducing other sources of Council emissions by gaining support from the Carbon Trust Local Authority Carbon Management programme.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 National government believes local government has a significant role to play on the climate change agenda. Local authorities are expected to show leadership and encourage local communities to take action to mitigate and to adapt to a changing climate.
- 1.2 Nationally the target is to reduce emissions by 20% by 2020 and 80% by 2050. To reflect the importance of local authorities leading change locally on the climate change agenda, a number of National indicators relating to climate change were introduced in 2008/09.

Proposals

- 1.3 The Council's current Environmental Strategy has a 121 point action plan. This action plan was developed before the introduction of the current National Indicators through which the performance of the Council is judged by National Government. Consequently many of the actions in the Environmental Strategy do not relate to the current national performance regime.
- 1.4 Because of this a new revised delivery plan has been produced which is focused on delivering improved performance against the National Indicators as well as delivering the Environmental Strategy for a Changing Climate.
- 1.5 Improving energy efficiency at Council properties and vehicle fuel consumption are high priority areas for reducing emissions. It also has the obvious advantage of reducing operational costs. Reduced energy usage, whether gas, electricity or fuel, can be achieved by a number of ways. These can range from changing staff behaviour to investing in higher efficiency equipment.
- 1.6 Raising staff awareness of how they can impact on energy usage is particularly important as it is both low cost and can deliver significant improvements.
- 1.7 We propose to seek support from the Carbon Trust Local Authority Carbon Management programme. The programme is free but requires the commitment of local authorities to commit sufficient resources to ensure the ten month programme is successfully implemented. The programme has worked so far with 135 local authorities and produced £70 million in financial savings and saved 865,000 tonnes of carbon emissions.

Conclusion

- 1.8 To deliver improved performance against the National Indicators a new 40 point action plan is proposed. This will provide a much clearer focus on priority areas for improvement.
- 1.9 The delivery plan covers delivery of the Environmental Strategy and improving the performance of the national indicators. It identifies resource requirements, the lead officer and target dates.
- 1.10 The Carbon Trust Local Authority Carbon Management Plan is an opportunity to gain expert support to assess the current opportunities to achieve further reductions in emissions. The aim is to join this programme early in 2010/11.

Background Information

- 2.1 There are four National Indicators measuring performance on climate change which were introduced in 2008/09. They are:
- NI 185 Reduction in CO2 emissions from local authority operations
 - NI 186 Reduction in CO2 emissions from the district
 - NI 188 Adaptation to climate change
 - NI 194 Reduction in Nitrous oxides (NOx) and Particulate emissions (PM10) from local authority operations.
- 2.2 There are two Local Area Agreement targets (LAA2) which relate to the national indicators. These are:
- NI 185 – to reduce emissions by 6% by 2011/12
 - NI 188 – to reach level 3 in adapting council services to a changing climate by 2011/12.
- 2.3 In addition the Environmental Strategy for a Changing Climate has an aim to reduce emissions (excluding sports centres) by 22% by 2011/12 which is also in the Council's Corporate Plan. This target was established from a baseline in 2006/07 and is now largely superseded by the new national indicators which were introduced in 2008/09.
- 2.4 The Audit Commission through Comprehensive Area Assessment examines the Council under Use of Natural Resources. The assessment which is currently underway is wider than purely climate change national indicators since it covers a broad range of natural resources (water, paper etc.).
- 2.5 Finally in the 2009 Customer satisfaction survey some 82% of residents believe Cherwell District Council have an important role to play in climate change issues. The results of the customer satisfaction survey regarding climate change in set out in Appendix 2.
- 2.6 Capital funding through a Climate change efficiency fund has been available to support energy efficiency projects. Some funds still exist for efficiency projects in 2010/11. It is important for the future that energy efficiency is given a high priority in refurbishment projects and that capital funds are sufficient to carry out such work.

Leading by Example/Emissions from Council Operations

- 2.6 In the first NI 185 baseline year of 2008/09, emissions from Cherwell District Council operations were 5,002 tonnes. The main sources were:
- Sports Centre 48%
 - Corporate buildings 23%
 - Transport 26%
 - Staff travel 3%.
- 2.7 Emissions in the baseline year were low due to the Sports Centre Modernisation Project. During this year, at any one time, the Bicester and

Kidlington pools were out of use for use for 5 and 6 months respectively along with a phased refurbishment closure programme for all other facilities. In addition, Woodgreen Open Air Pool was not open. Consequently, emissions from sports centres which were artificially low in 2008/09 will rise in 2009/10 with all the sports centres and Woodgreen operating. It is possible that emissions will rise further in 2010/11 with the larger (23% increase in building size including 76% increase in pool volume) of the new Spiceball Leisure Centre but it is expected that any increase energy consumption will be wholly or partly offset by the more energy efficient building.

- 2.8 Energy efficiency improvements have been made to corporate buildings particularly Bodicote House and Banbury Museum. Bodicote House was refurbished during 2008/09 and Banbury Museum had its lighting systems renewed in 2008/09. In addition, accommodation changes have meant the Old House and the Town Centre offices are no longer used for Cherwell District Council operations. Overall these improvements have for the first three quarters of 2009/10 reduced emissions by 14% compared to 2008/09. In addition these energy efficiencies also produce cost reductions
- 2.9 Thorpe Lane depot is due to be refurbished with contractors likely to commence work in March/April 2010. The refurbishment will substantially reduce emissions by incorporating improved energy efficiency measures such as increased insulation as well as features which reduce water usage particularly on the vehicle washdown. In addition the heating system for the office block may include a woodchip boiler and solar panels may be incorporated into the workshop roof. Improvements will be achieved in 2010/11 but the full year benefit will be realised in 2011/12
- 2.10 Transport Operations have shown a reduction in 2009/10. In the first three quarters emissions have dropped by around 3.5%. Mileages travelled have been reduced from a variety of changes such as the closure of Alkerton and the full implementation of the four day week. These reduced mileages with more fuel efficient vehicles have helped bring improvements. Further improvements are expected in 2010/11
- 2.11 Although improvements in corporate buildings and transport have been achieved for the first three quarters of 2009/10, these have been cancelled out by rises in sports centre emissions and, to a much lesser extent, staff travel
- 2.12 However it should be noted that there are a number of successes which have been achieved but are not counted against NI 185. These include:
 - A new electricity contract with 100% renewable electricity compared to the Environmental Strategy target of 50%. This was achieved at no additional cost and reduces our real emissions.
 - Running all the Council vehicle fleet on a 5% bio-diesel mix.
 - Reducing water usage at Bodicote house.
 - Reduced paper usage from the installation of new multi function devices.
- 2.13 Every large public building must display an energy efficiency rating known as a Display Energy Certificate (DEC). The ratings run from A-G with A being the best rating. A-D ratings are considered good energy efficiency performance.

Last autumn the two main corporate buildings which have to display certificates were rated as F but are improving due to the developments outlined above. DEC's for the sports centres will take some time as they require a reasonable period of operation before assessment.

- 2.14 Bodicote House has a reasonable performance on the energy efficiency certificate for heating but the building has high electricity consumption. ICT changes due over the next financial year involve changing servers and changing many workstations from PCs to thin clients. These will produce significant electricity savings which will improve the energy efficiency rating which will be re-evaluated in the Autumn 2010.
- 2.15 Successes have also been achieved which are measured by NI 194. This Indicator measures NOx and PM10. NI 194 is largely influenced by transport emissions and emissions from boilers. The on going vehicle replacement plan means that vehicles with Euro III engines are replaced by vehicles with Euro V engines. Each Euro V engine vehicle replacement reduces nitrous oxide (NOx) levels by 60% and also reduces soot or particulates (PM10) by 80% compared to the Euro III vehicle it replaced. Consequently NI 194 is expected to show good progress during 2009/10 and subsequent years.
- 2.16 When considering the ongoing need for improved performance, a number of options exist for future improvements which have been captured in a new delivery plan (Annex 1). These include:
- Improving the energy efficiency of the main corporate buildings so that the Display Energy Certificate (DEC) ratings rise to D or better.
 - Developing the Green Travel plan.
 - Increasing the bio-diesel mix once Highfield and Thorpe Lane fuel tanks are renewed during 2010.
 - Reducing fuel consumption as a result of changes to bin lifting equipment.
 - Evaluating the impact on climate change, CO2 emissions and use of natural resources of proposed capital projects.
 - Continuing to make capital funding available to drive energy efficiency improvements.
 - Ensuring climate change issues are addressed through the Service & Financial Planning process in 2010/11.
 - Considering future offsetting if emissions targets are not achievable.
- 2.17 The 2006/07 Corporate Plan target of 22% reduction in emissions excluding Sports Centres is currently on track with an anticipated end of 2009/10 position of 11% against the 2006/07 baseline. However, the emphasis has now shifted to the formal NI 185 which it is recommended be used for target setting in the future.
- 2.18 If approval is given to the new delivery plan, further detail regarding specific CO2 reduction targets will be prepared for annual service and financial planning and performance monitoring purposes.

Community CO2 Emissions

2.19 The overall emissions of the district are far in excess of the emissions of Cherwell District Council. While the Council's emissions are around 5000 tonnes the overall emissions of the district are in excess of 1.2 million tonnes. Data for the national indicator NI 186 which measures overall district emissions is two years in arrears. District wide emissions from recent data are set out below;

| | Industry & Commercial (1000 tonnes) | Domestic (1000 tonnes) | Road Transport (1000 tonnes) | Emissions per capita (tonnes) |
|------|--|---------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2005 | 532 | 339 | 376 | 9.1 |
| 2006 | 536 | 347 | 363 | 9.1 |
| 2007 | 510 | 338 | 365 | 8.8 |

2.20 The emissions in Cherwell per capita are the second highest in Oxfordshire (Vale of White Horse emissions are greater) and one of the highest in the South East (only exceeded or matched by Chichester & Swale)

2.21 Emissions in the district are high largely from the combination of high emissions from commercial and industrial facilities and transport. Although motorways are excluded from transport emissions calculations emissions from the major highways which run through the district such as the A34, A40, A41, A43 and A44 are included.

2.22 The high emissions per capita have helped secure free consultancy from the Energy Savings Trust so that a 2 year action plan can be developed to engage residents and businesses to act to reduce emissions. The initial draft report has only very recently been received. An action plan will be developed from this report by the summer of 2010.

2.23 To engage residents and businesses will require additional resources. To achieve this resources have been moved within the Environmental Services budget for this and the growing climate change agenda. In particular we are moving one post from Recycling and Waste Collection to Environmental Strategy and increase the number of days the part time Environmental Strategy Officer works from three to four days a week. These changes were achieved as well as Environmental Services delivering over £140k of savings for 2010/11.

2.24 The Cherwell Community Planning Partnership Climate brings together a selection of organisations from across the district to share information and best practice about climate change issues. All members have made pledges to carry out actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change and the progress of these pledges are monitored at each meeting.

2.25 One of the largest opportunities to engage a wider audience is the proposed Eco Town in Bicester. This development will showcase and help promote a lower carbon lifestyle. A show home will be an excellent resource to engage residents about changes that can be made to existing homes to save energy and reduce emissions

Adaptation

- 2.26 Adaptation is about adapting services to new weather patterns which will occur as a result of climate change. Even if emissions are quickly reduced, there will still be changes in the climate as a result of increasing carbon dioxide levels.
- 2.27 Extreme weather events include high intensity rainfall leading to flooding events and heat waves causing health issues for vulnerable people. Such events can damage the ability of an organisation to deliver services.
- 2.28 NI 188 covers adaptation. It covers the processes the authority has to deal with adapting services. Up to the end of March 2009 the Council had achieved level one. This involved actions such as:
- Signing the Nottingham declaration
 - Producing a Climate Impact Profile Report (LCLIP).
- 2.29 The next two levels 2 & 3 require comprehensive risk based assessments and prioritised actions in the different areas of the organisation. To achieve this, specialist external support has been engaged to produce risk based assessments of all the services. Level 2 should be achieved during the first quarter of 2010/11 with level 3 (all key services) being achieved by the end of 2010/11.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 The key issue is one of considering the revised delivery plan which takes into account local priorities as measured by national indicators. Account should be taken of the good work and improved performance already achieved but despite this, there will be continued pressure to maintain a positive direction of travel specifically with ongoing CO2 emission reductions.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Option One | To approve the proposed revised delivery plan. |
| Option Two | To reject the proposed delivery plan |
| Option Three | To ask officers to modify the proposed delivery plan |

Consultations

- | | |
|---|---|
| Officers Energy Efficiency Group | Continued investment in energy efficiency projects and promote energy awareness will help to reduce emissions and energy costs. |
|---|---|

Implications

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Financial: | There are no short term financial implications with this |
|-------------------|--|

report which are not within the 2010/11 budget. Some proposals could result in reinvesting savings to achieve further savings but this will only occur where there is financial benefit to the Council.

Comments checked by Joanne Kaye, Management Accountant 01295 221545

Legal:

There are no legal implications with this report

Comments checked by Liz , Head of Legal & Democratic 01295 221686

Risk Management:

Risk management is central to adaption to climate change

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Insurance & Risk Management officer 01295 221566

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

Environmental Strategy

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Reynolds
Portfolio Holder for Environment & Community

Document Information

| Appendix No | Title |
|----------------------------|---|
| Appendix 1 | Revised Environmental Strategy for a Changing Climate Delivery Plan |
| Appendix 2 | Customer satisfaction survey 2009 comments regarding climate change |
| Background Papers | |
| None | |
| Report Author | Ed Potter, Head of Environmental Services |
| Contact Information | 01295 221902 ed.potter@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk |

ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE – 2010/11 Delivery Plan

| 1. The Council's Carbon Footprint | | | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|---|--|---------------|
| Objective | Action | Indicator | Resources | Accountable Officer | Target Date |
| To reduce the CO2 emissions from the Council's vehicle fleet. | We will follow our Vehicle Replacement Plan continuing to purchase vehicles to high environmental standards and exceed European legislation where practical to do so. | Vehicle Replacement Plan | Environmental Services | Depot & Transport Manager | Annual Review |
| | We will review the bio-diesel mix ratio on an annual basis and move above the current 5% mix when practical to do so. In appropriate vehicles we will move to a 30% bio-diesel mix | Corporate Promise | Environmental Services | Depot & Transport Manager | Annual Review |
| | We will review our vehicle routing methods in order to reduce the fuel used. We will monitor any changes for CO2 reductions. | NI185 | Environmental Services | Waste Collection Manager | 2010/11 |
| To reduce CO2 emissions from travel both on journeys to and from work and on Council business | We will produce and implement a Green Travel plan and monitoring procedures. As part of this we will review and promote our Home Working Policy and monitor CO2 savings. We will also review the current pool bike system and examine cycle to work schemes. | NI185 | Environmental Services & HR | Environmental Services Project Officer | 2010/11 |
| To reduce CO2 emissions from our own estate operations and outsourced services. | We will produce and implement an Energy Policy with targets to reduce energy and water consumption, and increase recycling rates which will apply to any new or refurbished buildings. We will identify and implement energy conservation measures within Council buildings and monitor effectiveness. We will work towards ISO14001 accreditation for all Council premises. | NI185 | Facilities Management/ Environmental Services | Environmental Strategy Officer | 2010/11 |
| | We will explore the practicality of introducing a Green Champions network to advocate energy efficiency measures across the Council. | NI185 | Facilities Management/ Environmental Services | Environmental Services Project Officer | 2010/11 |
| | We will explore creating the role of an Energy Manager to address energy efficiency in Council Buildings. | NI185 | Facilities Management/ Environmental Services | Service Development Manager | 2011/12 |

ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE – 2010/11 Delivery Plan

| | | | | | |
|--|---|------------------|---|--|--------------------|
| | We will continue to raise awareness amongst all staff on CO2 emissions through, induction, training and communications. | NI185 | Environmental Services | Environmental Strategy Officer | Annual Review |
| | We will work with our partners that manage leisure facilities to develop energy management action plans. | NI185 | Environmental Services & Leisure | Senior Recreation Facilities Officer | 2010/11 |
| | We will purchase a minimum of 50% of electricity supply from renewable energy sources. | | Procurement | Procurement Manager | Ongoing |
| | We will establish and implement a sustainable procurement policy for all purchasing across the Council. | | Procurement | Procurement Manager | 2010/11 |
| 2. The District's Carbon Footprint | | | | | |
| Objective | Action | Indicator | Resources | Accountable Officer | Target Date |
| To reduce CO2 emissions from households in Cherwell District | We will work with local partners to raise awareness and encourage CO2 saving actions by residents. | NI186 | Housing Comms | Environmental Strategy Officer | Ongoing |
| | We will provide discretionary grants to improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock, with emphasis on the private rented sector and those in need. | NI186 | Housing Services, discretionary capital budget allocation | Private Sector Housing Manager | Ongoing |
| | We will promote and encourage uptake of home energy-efficiency grants available to residents from partner agencies (eg Eaga & our local Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre). | NI186 | Housing Services | Private Sector Housing Manger | Ongoing |
| | We will explore establish a local offsetting scheme to provide grants to local projects which fulfil the dual role of energy efficiency whilst tackling fuel poverty | NI186 | Environmental Services Housing Services | Service Development Manager | 2010/11 |
| | We will work with the community in conjunction with Oxfordshire Waste Partnership to further increase recycling and promote and facilitate waste minimisation and reuse. We will monitor these for CO2 savings. | NI186 | Environmental Services | Environmental Services Project Officer | Ongoing |
| | We will establish and roll out food waste recycling trial and expand to district wide service when county facilities become available. We will monitor for CO2 savings. | NI186 | Environmental Services | Environmental Services Project Officer | 2009/10 |

ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE – 2010/11 Delivery Plan

| | | | | | |
|--|---|-------|------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| | We will work with members of the Cherwell Community Planning Partnership to reduce carbon emissions district wide | NI186 | Environmental Services | Service Development Manager | Annual Review |
| To work with other public sector and private sector partners to reduce CO2 emissions in the District | We will encourage businesses to develop and share environmental good practice by continuing to facilitate the Resource Efficiency Club for businesses and increase membership | NI186 | Economic Development | Economic Development Officer | 2009/10 |
| | We will encourage the take up of Green Travel Plans with Cherwell businesses and organisations | NI186 | Economic Development | Economic Development Officer | Ongoing |
| | We will encourage engagement with sustainability issues among youth enterprise groups | NI186 | Economic Development | Economic Development Officer | Ongoing |
| | We will Include the principles of reducing CO2 emissions in all LDF documents and ensure that in identifying areas for development, the known physical and environmental constraints on the land are considered, including risks that could increase as a result of changes to the climate. | NI186 | Planning | Assistant Planning Officer | Ongoing |
| To use the Planning System to reduce CO2 emissions and promote sustainable development. | We will develop our Infrastructure Plan to incorporate best practice on climate change. | NI186 | Planning | Assistant Planning Officer | 2009/10 |
| | We will promote and encourage renewable and low carbon energy within new developments. | NI186 | Planning | Assistant Planning Officer | Ongoing |
| | We will help to achieve the national timetable and ambitions of 'zero carbon' development of domestic and non domestic buildings, setting local requirements for sustainable construction above the national requirements where there are clear local opportunities. | NI186 | Planning | Assistant Planning Officer | Ongoing |
| | We will implement and monitor Integrated Transport and Land Use strategies for Banbury and Bicester to deliver patterns of growth that promote alternatives to car use such as public transport, walking and cycling. | NI186 | Planning | Planning Implementation Officer | Ongoing |
| | We will implement and monitor Integrated Transport and Land Use strategies for Banbury and Bicester to deliver patterns of growth that promote alternatives to car use such as public transport, walking and cycling. | NI186 | Planning | Planning Implementation Officer | Ongoing |

ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE – 2010/11 Delivery Plan

| 3. The Air Quality in the District | | | | | |
|---|---|------------------|---|---|--------------------|
| Objective | Action | Indicator | Resources | Accountable Officer | Target Date |
| To monitor and improve air quality in the District. | We will continue to monitor local air quality and remain alert to the potential need for further action. | 194 | Environmental Services | Environmental Protection Manager | Ongoing |
| | We will set up a study to predict future Air Quality in Cherwell district and develop plans to mitigate future problems now. | 194 | Environmental Services | Environmental Protection Manager | Ongoing |
| | We will participate in the Oxfordshire Air Quality steering group to share best practice and develop a countywide approach. | 194 | Environmental Services | Environmental Protection Manager | Ongoing |
| 4. Adapting to Climate Change | | | | | |
| Objective | Action | Indicator | Resources | Accountable Officer | Target Date |
| To embed the management of climate risks across the Council | We will develop an adaptation strategy and action plan which will include the risk assessment, what the priority areas are, the action being taken to address priorities, how risks will be continually assessed and monitored in the future. | NI188 | Environmental Services | Environmental Strategy Officer | 2010/11 |
| | We will work together with local partners to gain better understanding of what a changing climate means for the Cherwell community and to improve resilience to the anticipated local impacts. | NI188 | Environmental Services | Environmental Services Project Officer | Ongoing |
| | We will work with all partners to implement the Banbury flood alleviation scheme. | NI188 | Building Control & Engineering Services | Head of Building Control & Engineering Services | Ongoing |
| | We will work to the Local Flood Risk Management Protocol between Cherwell District Council and the Environment Agency. | NI188 | Building Control & Engineering Services | Head of Building Control & Engineering Services | Ongoing |
| | We will maintain and update a database, in common with the Environment Agency and other statutory bodies, of | NI188 | Building Control & Engineering | Head of Building Control | Ongoing |

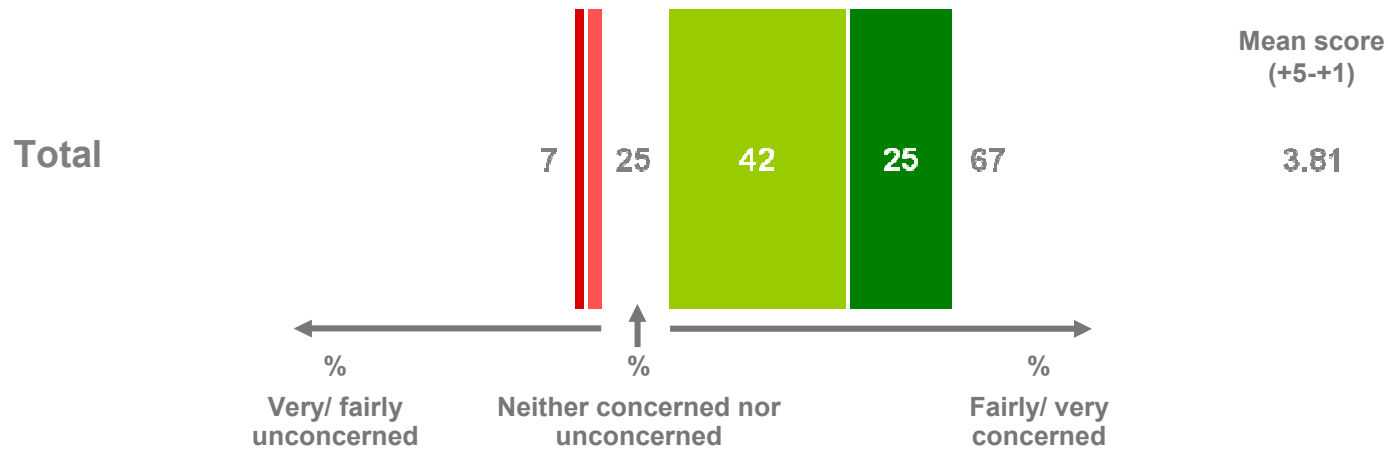
ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE – 2010/11 Delivery Plan

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| | properties at risk of flooding within Cherwell district. | | Services | & Engineering Services | |
| | We will ensure the planning system takes into account the impacts of climate change, shaping new communities to be resilient to and adapted for the expected impacts of climate change. We will produce and promote good practice on adaptation in guidance on planning | NI188 | Planning and Affordable Housing | Assistant Planning Officer | Ongoing |
| | We will develop and implement interim working policy on environmental issues especially related to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and adaptation to climate change | NI188 | Planning and Affordable Housing | Assistant Planning Officer | 2009/10 |
| 5. Protecting our Biodiversity | | | | | |
| Objective | Action | Indicator | Resources | Accountable Officer | Target Date |
| To take action to conserve existing biodiversity and improve ecological networks through habitat protection, restoration and creation in order to increase the capacity of the natural environment to adapt to climate change. | We will protect and enhance important habitats and species on the local authority estate | Indicator - Rural and Countryside Service Plan | Urban & Rural Services | Biodiversity & Countryside Officer | Ongoing |
| | We will protect and enhance important habitats and species across Cherwell District, including local wildlife sites, key grassland and wetland sites, small woodlands and farmland, through funding and working in partnership with local NGO's and Parish Councils | -NI197; Service Level Agreements | Urban & Rural Services | Biodiversity & Countryside Officer | Ongoing |
| | We will support the establishment and development of ecological networks | Delivery of Conservation Target Area project | Urban & Rural Services | Biodiversity & Countryside Officer | Ongoing |

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Around seven in ten residents are concerned about the impact of climate change on their local area – a quarter are very concerned

WHETHER CONCERNED ABOUT THE CURRENT IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON LOCAL AREA



Base: (Those answering: 1221)

Q1k. Overall how concerned, if at all, are you about the current impact of climate change on your local area?



Turning off appliances is the change most are prepared to make to limit their impact on climate change, followed by recycling more and avoiding the use carrier bags

CHANGES PREPARED TO MAKE TO LIMIT CLIMATE CHANGE



Base: (Those answering: 1236)

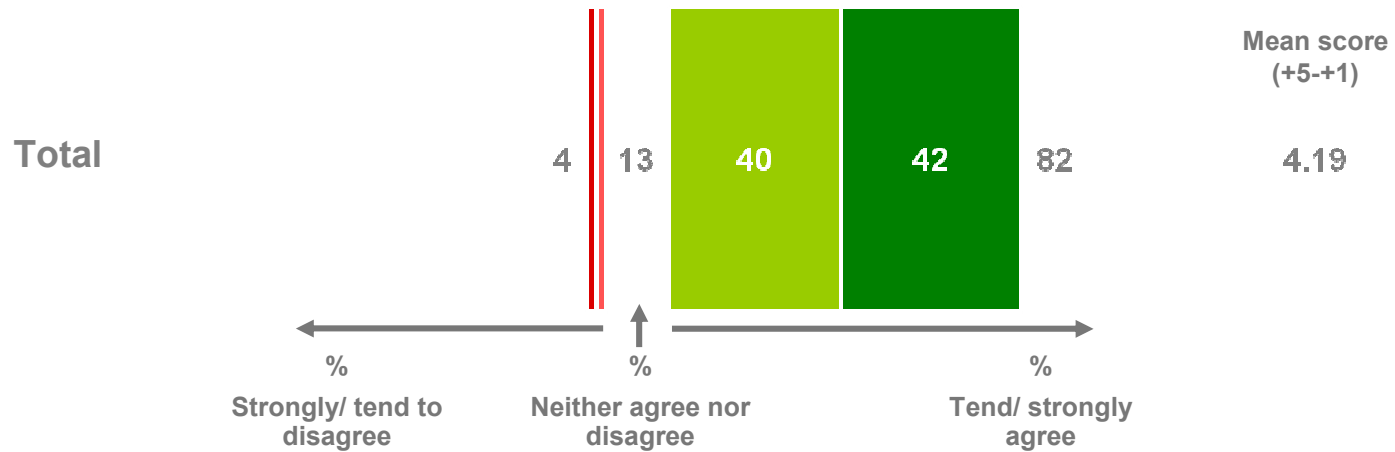
Q11. What, if any, changes would you be prepared to make in order to limit climate change?



The vast majority agree that Cherwell District Council has a role to play in limiting climate change – over two in five strongly agree

AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT:

“Cherwell District Council has a role to play in limiting climate change”



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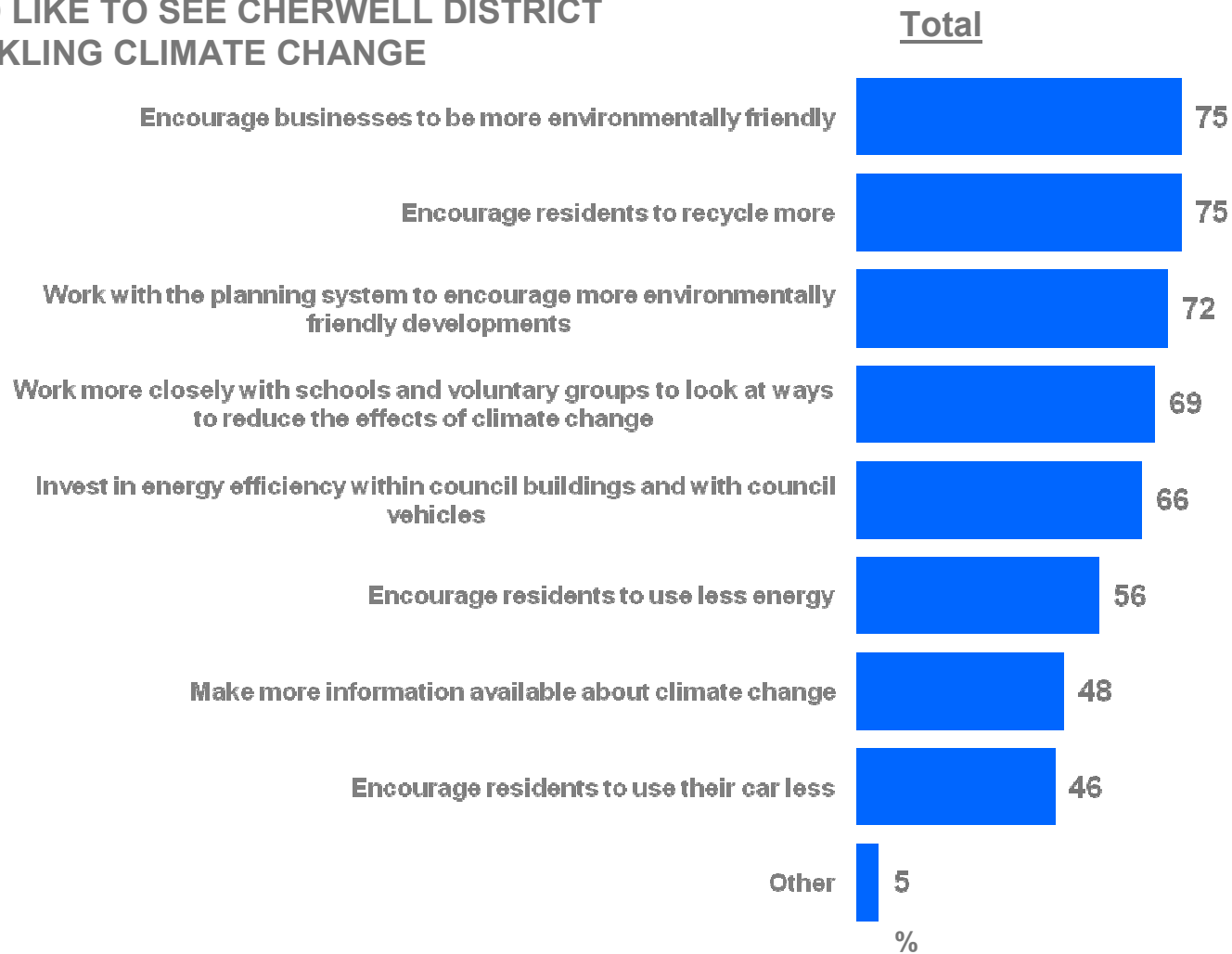
Base: (Those answering: 1168)

Q1m. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
“Cherwell District Council has a role to play in limiting climate change”



Three-quarters of residents would like Cherwell District Council to tackle climate change by encouraging businesses to be more environmentally friendly and by encouraging residents to recycle more

WAYS WOULD LIKE TO SEE CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE



Base: (Those answering: 901)

Q1n. Which, if any, of the following would you like to see Cherwell District Council to do help tackle climate change?



Executive

Progress on Developing and Delivering the Equalities Work Programme

1 March 2010

Report of Chief Executive and Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an overview of achievements relating to our equalities work in 2009/2010 and outline the work programme for 2010/2011.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- (1) Agree the refreshed equalities scheme and the three year equality impact assessment programme (Annexes A and B).
- (2) Agree the Corporate Equality Action Plan for 2009-2012 (Annex C).
- (3) Agree the proposals to seek equality accreditation from the Improvement and Department Agency (IDeA) in November 2010.
- (4) Note the equality achievements made during 2009/2010.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 This is the annual update report regarding the progress on developing and delivering the equalities work programme for Cherwell. The report outlines both the challenges and achievements made throughout the year and also provides information regarding Cherwell's IDeA Inspection under the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) which will take place during 2010/2011.
- 1.2 Over the last two years improving our approach to access and equalities has been a priority for Cherwell District Council. Throughout 2009 we have built upon our achievements and sustained progress. Examples include:

Usability testing of the website 35 people with a wide range of disabilities

have tested our website. Their findings are being developed into an action plan for improvement.

Improving Customer Access the complete re-development of our three former cash offices into one stop shops has allowed us to put in place:

- All service access on ground floor, no steps
- Wheelchair access
- Hearing loop at all service points
- Language Line is available and used for face to face visitors and telephone callers
- Leaflets are available in large print, Braille, audio tape and alternative languages
- Assistance for those with literacy problems with the completion of application forms or accessing services
- Office space in the One Stop Shops for the CAB and Housing Associations to hold surgeries to enable residents to access information and advice that we ourselves cannot provide in detail.

Environmental Health. We have run food protection road shows aimed at the over 60's to address food safety. The aim was to give advice on food storage and handling and the main topic is listeria as the number of cases in this age group has doubled since 2001.

Asian youth integration project. This involved working with the Asian youth forum to integrate a group of young people who wanted to play sport but found it hard to join new groups in the area. We already run an open access project at North Oxfordshire Academy for all young people aged 11yrs+ and the integration project worked with the Asian youth forum to merge the two groups and now we have a wider and more diverse group of young people accessing a safe and positive initiative.

Engaging young people. Every year we celebrate local democracy in the district by taking local councillors into schools to meet young people and hear about the issues that young people are facing in their area. We now have two youth councils that represent Banbury and Bicester and we are currently setting up a Kidlington Youth Forum. The Youth Councils comment on major issues affecting our towns and next year we hope to set up a rural youth council. Two students from Cherwell represent North Oxfordshire as UK Youth Parliament leads.

Working with economic migrants. We are one of a group of partners who took part in successful bid for the Migration Impact Fund grant. The aim of the project is support migrants; to promote access to training and appropriate services. It supports provision of English ESOL classes and raises migrant's awareness of local services.

- 1.3 Our equalities work programme for 2010/11 includes improved consultation with members of the local community, focusing on issues around deprivation in key areas in the district, continuing to streamline our equalities scheme and processes, introducing a new corporate modular equality training course for all staff and preparing for an assessment of our equalities performance in November 2010. Annex C outlines our Corporate Equalities Action plan for

the next three years.

Proposals

- 1.4 This report outlines key proposals for the Executive to consider. These proposals will help us demonstrate that our equalities work is focused and improves outcomes for local people. They are:
- To agree the Corporate Equality Action Plan; this action plan brings together our long term equalities objectives for the district across all equalities strands. The plan encompasses issues around deprivation and building strong and cohesive communities, both key priorities included within the Corporate Improvement Plan for 2010/10 (Annex C).
 - To agree that Cherwell District Council undergoes an inspection for the 'Achieving' status under the new Local Government Framework. This assessment will provide a health check on our equalities work.
 - To agree a Single Equality Scheme comprising of the Corporate Equality Action Plan, Equality Policies and the Equality Impact Assessment Programme, driven by equalities legislation. This scheme includes issues around deprivation, reflecting the new equalities duties (Annexes A and B).
 - To improve our equalities performance monitoring by using a Corporate Equality Scorecard, this will help us continue to demonstrate achievement in this area.

Conclusion

- 1.5 Cherwell District Council has continued to improve its approach to equalities. During 2009/10 we have improved our understanding of the Cherwell community enabling us to focus our equalities and access work on the needs of all sections of the community. Our work programme for 2010/11 builds on this community knowledge and aims to further improve access to services across the district for all communities.

Background Information

- 2.1 During 2009 a new and more challenging Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) was introduced. Under the old regime there were five levels of performance. The new scheme has three levels 'Developing', 'Achieving' or 'Excellent'. At present Cherwell District Council have self assessed at level 3 under the old framework. At their meeting in April 2009 Executive requested that officers prepare for an assessment under the new scheme.
- 2.2 Research into the new framework and some comparisons with other authorities for each of the 3 performance levels has been completed against the assessment guidance. This suggests that authorities meeting the old level 3 standard (Cherwell's current self assessment) should be able to demonstrate 'Achieving' status under the new standard. Significant evidence already exists to demonstrate our performance against the five new assessment criteria:
- Knowing your community: equality mapping
 - Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
 - Community engagement and satisfaction
 - Responsive services and customer care
 - Modern, diverse and reflective workforce

It is proposed that we should seek formal inspection under the new standard during November 2010 whereby we will be aspiring to gain accreditation of the 'Achieving' award. All services will be required to take part in the inspection and an Equality Steering Group made up of officers within the Council has been set up to assist with the delivery. A 'Path to Excellence' Project Plan has been developed to prepare for the inspection. This highlights month by month tasks which need to be undertaken. The cost of the inspection will be met within the Corporate Strategy, Performance and Partnerships team's existing budget.

- 2.3 A full review of our approach to equalities has taken place, led by the Equalities Officer with all Heads of Service contributing. This has provided extensive information as to how equalities impact each service. The review has resulted in a major streamlining of all Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) documentation and the creation of a new 3 year rolling EIA Programme (Annex A). In April 2010 a Corporate Equality Training Programme will also be launched which aims to ensure equalities and improving customer access are embedded into our daily work.
- 2.4 The new duties within the Equality Bill which take effect from April 2010 require Cherwell District Council to create a Single Equalities Scheme (Annex B), which includes a Corporate Equality Action Plan. (Annex C).

The proposed Corporate Equality Action Plan comprises 5 objectives with aims and actions underpinning them. Cherwell District Council's commitment is to 'Working to ensure equality, access and fairness in all we do' and the 5 objectives in the Corporate Equality Action Plan are; Fair Access and Customer Service, Tackling Inequality and Deprivation, Building Strong and Cohesive Communities, Positive Engagement and Understanding and

Demonstrating Our Commitment to Equality.

- 2.5 Cherwell District Council currently has a statutory duty to promote equalities. Under the new Equality Bill, there is a duty to consider socio-economic deprivation. Breaking the cycle of deprivation has already been identified as a key issue for Cherwell and is reflected in the new Sustainable Community Strategy. As such tackling deprivation will be at the centre of our approach to equalities, reflecting the key issues that face the district. Cherwell District Council has already taken the lead in this area by creating and leading a multi-agency deprivation project focusing on the areas of highest need in Banbury. This project will provide a wider approach to breaking the cycle of deprivation across the district.
- 2.6 To ensure our equalities work is focused on the needs of the Cherwell community and delivers clear outcomes from April 2010 an Equality Performance Scorecard will be created against all the objectives outlined in the Equality Action Plan and will be reported on and published quarterly. The Equalities Steering Group will be responsible for monitoring performance. In addition the corporate performance scorecard will include our performance in terms of our work to tackle deprivation.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 This report provides an overview of our equalities performance and our work programme for the future. It considers the impact of the new Equality Framework for Local Government and, as requested by Executive in April 2009, it proposes a timeframe for the inspection.
- 3.2 This report also provides an overview of new equalities duties that are coming into effect and how Cherwell District Council is responding to these duties and reflecting them in our long term objectives.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Option One | Agree recommendations as outlined above |
| Option Two | Executive to identify additional actions or changes to proposed timeframe and accreditation. |

Consultations

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Head of Service | Full equality department reviews completed. |
| Equalities Steering Group | The group has been consulted on all new and amended documentation |
| Good Practice Review | Equality & Diversity Officer completed research and good practice review prior to creating any new documentation. |

Implications

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Financial: | There are no financial implications from this report. Comments checked by Karen Curtain, Head of Finance 01295 221551 |
| Legal: | Actions identified meet the Equalities Framework. Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal & Democratic 01295 221686 |
| Risk Management: | Failure to gain the 'Achieving accreditation may have an impact on organisational performance and reputation. Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk & Insurance Manager 01295 221566 |

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

All

Executive Portfolio

**Councillor Wood, Leader of the Council,
Portfolio Holder for Corporate Policy.**

Document Information

| Appendix No | Title |
|---|---|
| Annex A | 3 Year Rolling Equality Impact Assessment Programme |
| Annex B | Single Equality Scheme |
| Annex C | 3 Year Equality Action Plan |
| Background Papers | |
| 'Equality Framework for Local Government' www.idea.gov.uk | |
| Report Author | Caroline French, Equality & Diversity Officer |
| Contact Information | 01295 221586 caroline.french@cherwell-dc.gov.uk |

EQIA Rolling 3 Year Action Plan

| Year 2009/2010 (September Onwards) | | Year 2010/2011 | | Year 2011/2012 | | Year 2012/2013 | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|---|-----------------|--|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| EQIA | Completion Date | EQIA | Completion Date | EQIA | Completion Date | EQIA | Completion Date |
| Job Evaluation | November 09 | Housing Strategy | 2010/2011 | Street Furniture, Urban & Rural | 2011/2012 | Corporate Consultation & Engagement Strategy | 2012/2013 |
| SCS – Sustainable Community Strategy | November 09 | Older people (85+) Strategy | April 2010 | Corporate Building Review | 2011/2012 | Civil Parking Enforcement – Urban & Rural. | 2012/2013 |
| Work Force Planning Process | October 09 | Corporate Plan, new strategic Priorities | 2010/2011 | Corporate Health & Safety | 2011/2012 | Safer Community Partnership Strategy | 2012/2013 |
| Health & Improvement Strategy | March 10 | Community Cohesion. | April 2011 | Communications – Cherwell Link | 2011/2012 | Licensing Services | 2012/2013 |
| Waste & Recycling Kitchen Caddy | November 09 | HR Recruitment Policy | 2010/2011 | Environment Strategy/Changing Climate. | 2011/2012 | Overview & Scrutiny | 2012/2013 |
| Procurement Strategy | | Core Strategy. | December 2010 | Tourism Plan & Recreation Strategy | 2011/2012 | Waste & Recycling Collection | 2012/2013 |
| Data Quality Strategy | | Equality in Employment | 2010/2011 | Occupational Health & Welfare Policy | 2011/2012 | Rural Dev & Countryside Services | 2012/2013 |
| Job Clubs | October 09 | Electoral Svcs | 2010/2011 | Building Control | 2011/2012 | Vehicle Parks | 2012/2013 |
| Deprivation Agenda | February 10 | Equality & Employment Monitoring Strategy | 2010/2011 | Street Scene/Landscape Services | 2011/2012 | Museum Services | 2012/2013 |
| Economic Strategy | | Policy & Dev | March 2011 | | | | |
| ICT Operations | December 09 | | | | | | |

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**Equality and Diversity Framework
2010/11**

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Introduction and Background

The purpose of equality and diversity work is summed up in the following definition:

“An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish.

An equal society recognises people’s different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be.”

The Equalities Review’s Final Report, Fairness and Freedom:
Communities and Local Government publications, February 2007

This definition recognises:

- That we need to help disadvantaged individuals reach their goals, although this is only part of the story,
- That we all share some of the responsibility for setting the conditions in which we can improve our own life chances, and for making sure that we are all treated with equal dignity and worth.
- Different needs and identities, and provides for equal participation in society.
- Our diversity: equality does not mean sameness, nor should an equal society try to force everyone into the same mould. The pursuit of equality is about empowering people to fulfill their potential, to be themselves and to be different, if they wish.

The definition captures three important aspects of the approach, which are reflected in our equality and diversity framework:

- opportunity: supporting access to opportunities;
- agency: what degree of choice and control an individual has in achieving the valued activity; and
- process: whether discrimination (or some other barrier or process) causes or contributes to a particular inequality

Part 1: Equalities Policy

1. Policy and Commitment

Cherwell District Council's commitment to the equalities agenda is a key ingredient in building excellent people-centered services, promoting the general well-being of Cherwell's communities and its citizens and a diverse, competent workforce.

The approach lies at the very heart of everything we do in providing services to people and in shaping the place they live and work and employing people

This is encapsulated in the Council's Equality Vision:

'Cherwell District Council, working to ensure equality, access and fairness in all we do'

To deliver on this vision requires positive action and commitment; taking account of different needs and building participation of our staff, service users and communities. This will help us to:

- Improve the services the Council provides so they are more representative, relevant and efficient, whilst also improving satisfaction and trust
- Ensure that our policies and strategies deliver for everyone and improve our accountability to local people
- Meet our statutory equality duties and avoiding litigation as a consequence of discrimination.

Our equality framework reflects our Strategic Priorities, Corporate Plan and the Corporate Improvement Plan.

Our Equality Commitment

Cherwell District Council serves a diverse community, where people from a range of backgrounds and experiences enhance the life and development of the district. The Council has a responsibility to lead its communities, by creating an organisation that can embrace diversity and recognise equality.

The Council is therefore committed to:

Delivering equitable services which:

- Have competencies and confidence in all equality strands: race, age, disability, gender, religion/belief and sexual orientation.
- Prevent inequality, focusing on equitable and fair outcomes even if this means treating people differently
- Understand and meet the needs of customers
- Are accessible by local people and communities

Shaping the development of our district by:

- Addressing persistent inequality and deprivation
- Understanding local needs and preferences and making sure that the right services are provided to local people
- Including different contributions, perspectives and experiences of people in our community in shaping the district
- Building a strong and cohesive community where everyone is treated with respect

Building a diverse, competent workforce and Membership where:

- People from differing backgrounds are encouraged to introduce fresh ideas and perceptions
- Staff have rights as employees to work in a supportive, safe and harassment free environment and that staff have individual and collective responsibility to value and respect each other's contributions
- Standards of conduct are of the highest level and to ensure that no one is harassed, bullied or victimised
- The workforce is proportionately reflective of the community and compares well with other councils

Responsibility and Accountability

1. The Portfolio Holder for equality and diversity is the Leader of the Council.
2. The Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board has responsibility for scrutiny of equalities policy and performance.

3. It is the responsibility of the Corporate Management Team to make sure that actions are in place to deliver on this framework.
4. Heads of Services have an essential role in delivering this policy. They are to be pro-active in developing a service led approach to equalities development and to ensure that staff are adequately trained to meet the requirements of this policy.
5. The Equality and Diversity Steering Group supports the development of service specific action plans.
6. Every manager and employee has a role to play in implementing the plans.
7. The overall implementation of the Framework will be monitored by the Corporate Strategy, Performance and Partnerships team and supported by the Corporate Equalities Steering Group and Head of Services.

Policy Review

This Policy will be kept under annual review and be subject to amendments and changes in line with changes in society and legislation.

2. Appendix to the Policy - Legislation

There are a number of Acts of Parliament which are designed to protect and promote rights and responsibilities. Depending on the area of work, there are likely to be requirements under at least one of these Acts. Below are a selection of the main Acts that place duties upon the Council and give rights to staff, residents and service users.

Race Relations Act 1976 & Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

The Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003

Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) 1975

Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) 1975 (Amendment) Regulations 2003

The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999

Gender Recognition Act 2004

Equal Pay Act (EPA) 1970 (as amended)

Equal Pay Act (EPA) 1970 (Amendment) Regulations 2003

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

Civil Partnership Act 2004

Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

Equality Act 2006

Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998

Children Act 2004

There are also Statutory Codes of Practice for the Specific Equality Duties, in the areas of Housing and Work with Children and Young People

Part 2: The Equality Scheme

3. The Equalities Scheme

Our approach to delivering on our vision and commitment is outlined in this scheme. In summary it is:

1) A Comprehensive Scheme

The mandatory Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes are widened out to include other strands.

In considering Age equality there is an opportunity to use the process of the Equality scheme to monitor and evaluate the impact of services on Children and Young People and how they enable children and young people in the district to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

2) A Scheme Based on a Clear and Robust Business Process

The outline below describes how the processes combine to produce a systematic scheme which is effective and robust.

- Evidence Based
- Uses local knowledge and an understanding of the Cherwell community
- Corporate and Cross Cutting

The scheme operates at both service and corporate levels so that our approach is based on evidence, knowledge and understanding of the local community. Focusing on our equalities at a corporate level ensures performance against our objectives and is fed by processes in each service.

1) A Comprehensive Scheme

There are various components to the Equality Scheme.

1. Equality Strands

Equality strands can be defined as groups of people who experience particular forms of discrimination, whether or not the discrimination is intentional.

This can be in terms of:

- Age
- Race

- Marital Status
- Sex
- Disability
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion and belief
- Deprivation

Each area has different legislative foundations and set of core requirements. The Council is striving to take the highest standards from each strand and apply these to all the areas of equality.

2. Partnerships

Working with partners in the statutory, voluntary and business sector is a feature of our business. It is also an essential part of promoting the general well-being of Cherwell's communities and its citizens.

In the Council's first Equality Scheme, we highlighted how we intended to work with our partners to develop our approach to equality. The Council has a number of key partnerships and as a part of these the Council will:

- Act as an equality champion
- Ensure that partnerships have considered equality matters as a matter of course
- Ensure that the partnership performance management framework assesses whether outcomes to address inequalities are included
- Ensure Partnerships are able to engage fully with local people taking due account of differing viewpoints

3. Procurement

A number of Acts contain various prohibitions on discrimination on the grounds of race, sex and disability in the provision of goods, facilities and services, and as such the Council expects its business partners to comply with all the relevant legislation, incorporating these as a requirement within all its contracts.

The Council will take into account within its tender evaluation and contracting processes, a potential contractor's approach to equalities in terms of its employment practices and service delivery, which will also be monitored and managed during the life of each contract.

The Council will check a contractor's compliance with equality and diversity issues in two ways:

- Prior to Contract Award - by asking equalities questions either prior to or during the tender process. If following evaluation the response does not satisfy the Council's criteria, the firm may not be shortlist or awarded a contract.
- After Contract Award - by including contract conditions on equality in Council contracts and by monitoring a contractor's performance and compliance with those conditions.

4. Training

Diversity training is designed to increase the cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills of our staff, with the specific intention to increase the capability of the council to be able to recognise and meet the needs of different identity groups, and to promote better teamwork through understanding and valuing difference.

The Council seeks to provide development and training to employees when the opportunity arises but specifically on the following occasions:

- New staff induction
- Special programs regarding disability awareness and other areas
- Corporate Training to all members of staff
- To managers as part of their competency training
- To members through their specific training programme

5. Consultation, Engagement and Community Knowledge

Key to all these process is the strategic and management information used to inform decision making. A knowledgeable service can deliver a tailored service to its customers

The Council is committed to consultation and engagement that improve the accessibility and quality of our services.

To achieve this effective engagement with local people is vital. Engagement is part of the process of actively involving people in the delivery of the developments and services. To support this engagement each service should:

- Ensure it listens and responds to its community needs
- Follow principles and objectives for effective consultation and engagement

The strategic objectives outlined In the Consultation and Engagement Strategy are to:

1. Demonstrate a clear commitment to consultation and community engagement
2. Have a coordinated but flexible approach to consultation that meets the needs of all our services and ensures a consistent approach across the council
3. Work in partnership with others to ensure joined up consultation
4. Undertake consultation in line with clear standards and good practice
5. Ensure our consultation is open, accessible and inclusive
6. Demonstrate how the results of our consultation influences outcomes

6. Equality Impact Assessments

The Council will assess the Impact of Its work as follows:

- Assess the likely impact of policies and strategies
- Assess the impact of its services

2) A Scheme Based on a Clear and Robust Business Process

The comprehensive approach to the equalities scheme is used to build a clear and robust business process:

1. The Council maintains its commitment by:

The Council's motivation comes from its equalities policy and commitment. In addition there is an annual business process which includes an update of the corporate equalities action plan, an annual performance review, a review of the policy and scheme and an approach to service and financial planning that includes equalities actions. This business process:

- Ensures the Council understands and acts upon the needs of the communities it serves, promotes equality and tackles inequalities and develops priorities that are genuinely shaped through a real understanding of the needs of its communities
- Ensures that the Council integrates its equality priorities within mainstream decision making and performance management processes
- Provides a systematic framework for mainstreaming equality leading to the continuous improvement of outcomes
- Helps the Council meet its obligations under the law

2. What are our Equalities Goals and Objectives?

The Corporate Equalities Action Plan has 5 objectives, each underpinned by targets and actions:

1. Ensuring Fair Access and Customer Satisfaction
2. Tackling Inequality and Deprivation
3. Building Strong and Cohesive Communities
4. Promoting Positive Engagement and Understanding
5. Demonstrating Our Commitment to Equality

3. Assessing the impact of Council services

a) How does the Council assess and consult on the likely impact of Proposed Policies and Strategies?

A self-auditing process is used to ensure that the Council is consulting and assessing the likely impact. This process is monitored by the Equality and Diversity Officer and the Corporate Equality Steering Group so as to ensure that basic equality questions and actions are built into policy, project, programme and strategic development.

This will increase the Council's understanding of people's needs and concerns within policy and strategy process. Needs that might have otherwise been overlooked or ignored will be recognised.

b) How does the Council monitor the impact of existing Policies and Strategies?

The strategic plan for impact assessments identified the council functions: as relevant to the promotion of equality. The 3 year timetable reveals when services will be assessed. Each service area will then carry out the following four stage assessment. The assessments will be carried out by a team which includes an Equality Officer and a member of the service.

Stage 1—Scope of the assessment

The Scope of the assessment comes from a definition the service and its policies and in discussion with an Equality Officer the scope of the assessment is agreed. It is possible to carry out an impact assessment on any aspect of the local Council's work. There is a choice in the approach taken. The focus may be Policy; Strategy; Service; Major project or a group of services/policies

Stage 2—Identify potential equality issues and factors

In most cases the assessment will rely on existing data sources. Additional data may be collected as part of the assessment and additional consultation

may be carried out. The decision will depend on the judgement of the team. There are likely to be data gaps at this stage but the collection of new data could be one of the 'equality objectives' emerging from the assessment. This would then be included in an action plan. Actions include:

- Decide what data and management information is needed. Use both quantitative or qualitative data
- Ensure there is information that allows all perspectives to be taken into account
- Identify and document any gaps in data. Explain how these gaps will be addressed. The team may have to generate primary data.
- Identify all current and relevant data sources

Stage 3—Analysis and Action plan

The purpose of carrying out an Impact Assessment is to provide the basis for creating Equality Objectives and Performance Indicators that will drive improvement and change in delivering equalities. There may provide a number of possible outcomes.

- Demonstrated an adverse impact or impacts in one or more areas
- Systemic issues are likely to cause an adverse impact across one or more areas
- No differential impact in employment practices or service delivery
- There is insufficient evidence to judge whether there is differential impact
- There is unmet need across one or more groups

If an assessment demonstrates adverse impact then the service should be taking immediate action to remedy the situation and objectives would be set accordingly.

However, where outcome of the assessment falls into one of the other categories set out above there will be also be a need to set objectives. The purpose of these objectives will be to:

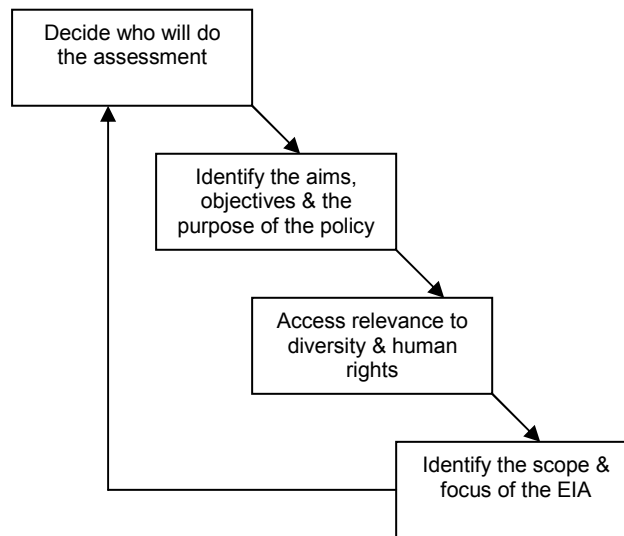
- Improve the quality of data/research so that a there is a clearer understanding of impact
- Develop good equality practice.
- Deliver against the Corporate Equality Goals

Stage 4—Monitoring

Monitoring of these assessments will form a part of the Equality Monitoring and Evaluation Scheme in Section 4

Equality Impact Assessments Flow Diagram

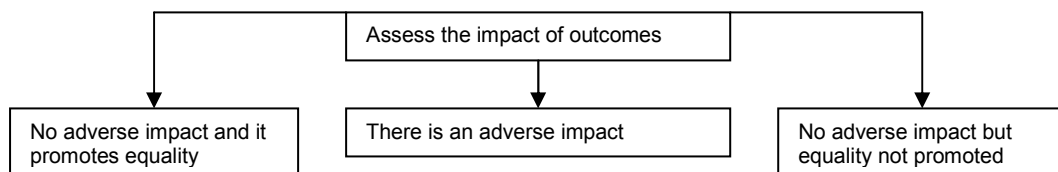
Stage 1 Scope



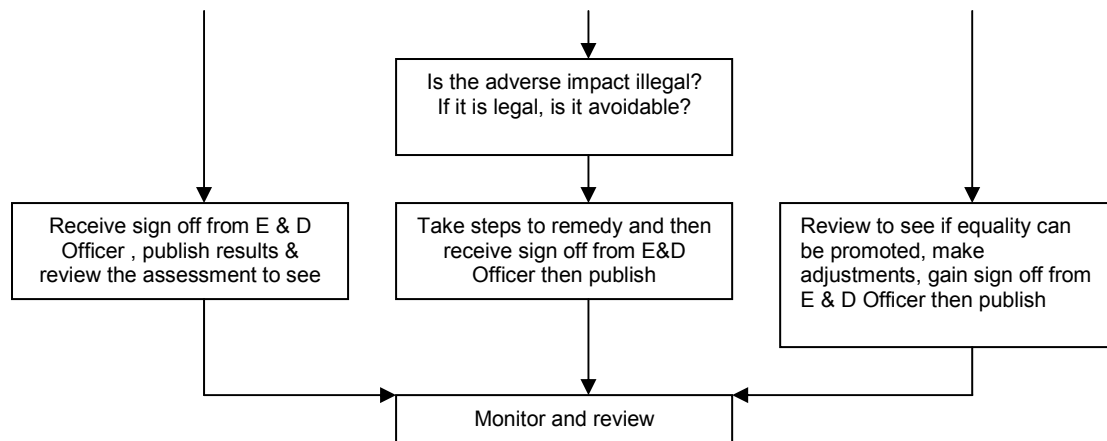
Section 2 Intelligence Gathering



Section 3 Judgment



Section 4 Sign Off, Publication and Review



For a full overview of the equality impact assessment process see the supporting guidance and three year programme of planned equality impact assessments.

4. The Corporate Equality Action Plan

The Corporate Equality Plan sets out how the Council will meet its Equality responsibilities and objectives.

1. Ensuring Fair Access and Customer Satisfaction
2. Tackling Inequality and Deprivation
3. Building Strong and Cohesive Communities
4. Promoting Positive Engagement and Understanding
5. Demonstrating Our Commitment to Equality

The Plan is updated annually and contains an overview of the work undertaken in the previous twelve months and the work programme going forward.

The plan reflects a number of equalities principles:

Equality as Quality excellent services recognise the importance of equality of access to employment opportunities and services. Councils have a duty to provide services that are appropriate to the user in both content and in the ways in which they are delivered. Rather than assuming that customers should fit with existing service provision structures, services should be built around a robust analysis and understanding of diverse needs, against the context of diverse localities.

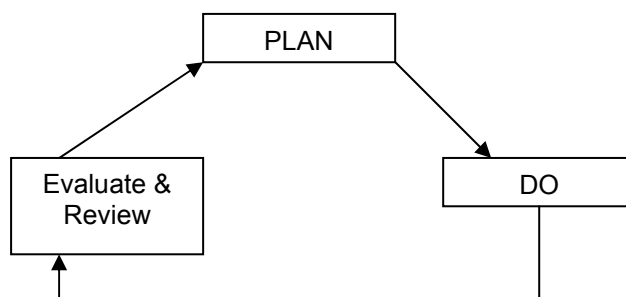
Developing positive outcomes while the Equality Framework is designed to embed *systems* for equality improvement, the ultimate objective is to deliver positive *outcomes*: real, measurable improvements in the delivery of services and employment that must be determined by services, according to need and context.

The new positive duties require this scheme to develop and identify the improvements that councils will make towards eliminating discriminatory barriers. The processes put in place by the Framework will enable the council to evidence its progress and mainstream equality through robust performance management.

Working corporately in the management of equalities a corporate approach to the implementation of equal opportunity issues is essential to ensure that the Equalities Policy for the Council and the processes involved in the Equality Framework are systematically applied. This approach will promote a shared understanding of equality within the Council, promote the sharing of 'best' practice and provide a set of comparable systems for performance management and self-assessment.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

We will performance manage our equalities work by following the 'Plan, Do and Review' model. This includes an annual review process, quarterly performance monitoring through the corporate performance management framework and an annual update of the action plan.



Evaluation

Evaluation is about using monitoring and other information collected to make a judgement about services equality standard. It is also about using the information to make changes and improvements.

Evaluation aims to answer agreed questions and to make a judgement against specific criteria. Like other research, for a good evaluation, data must be collected and analysed systematically, and its interpretation considered carefully. The results of an evaluation are intended to be used.

The general questions asked are:

- What are the key issues that have been/need to be addressed?
- What have we achieved/achieving?
- Why are we doing it?

Specific questions will help you to think about what you want to focus on.

- Are there any persistent inequalities that still need addressing?
- How do different users experience the service?
- What changes or benefits have met the needs of particular service users?

Each service considers these questions as part of the service planning process.

Equality Steering Group

The steering equality group will meet to:

- Review equality Impact assessments completed by managers

- Identify the service processes/actions that need to be in place to deliver the equality goals
- Agree how the services can contribute to the Corporate Equality Goals
- Review and update the Equalities Action Plan

Performance Review

Based on the Impact Assessments, Action Plan, Service Plans and Health checks a performance review will be produced which will be published annually.

A summary of all achievements, issues and plans will form a part of the Annual Equalities Report published as an information sheet in June and open to scrutiny. Key equality statistics will also be published as these become available.

6. Additional Sources of Information

Documents that support this scheme include:

- The Corporate Equalities Action Plan
- The Equalities Impact Assessment Guidance
- The Equalities Impact Assessment Three Year Rolling Plan
- Specific Equalities Policies
- The Corporate Equalities Training Programme

All are available on the equalities pages of the Cherwell District Council website. www.cherwell.gov.uk

7. Contact

For more information contact:

Caroline French, Equality and Diversity Officer

Caroline.french@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

01295 221586

Cherwell District Council
Corporate Equality Action Plan 2009 – 2012

Fair Access and Customer Satisfaction

| Corporate Plan Aim | 3 Year Corporate Targets | 2009/10 Corporate Targets | 2010/11 Corporate Targets | 2011/12 Corporate Targets | People/Resources |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| To ensure Cherwell District Council and our Partners treat the public fairly regardless of their background or way of life. | To improve our N1140 (Fair Treatment) National Indicator score | To be measured via the Cherwell District Council Place Survey. | To be measured via the Cherwell District Council Place Survey. | To be measured via the Cherwell District Council Place Survey. | Community Planning |
| To improve our services to the older generation within the Cherwell district. | Implement Older People's Strategy comprising of three age groups (50-65) (65-80) (80+) | Older People's Strategy to be written by 31 st March 2010. | Implement Strategy | Implement Strategy | Vickie Zielinski |
| To ensure all our services both internal and external are provided to an excellent standard. | Implement a yearly mystery shopper plan on our services. | <p>Phone and Face – Face mystery shopping in Customer Services.</p> <p>Continue to ensure 90% of customers who access Customer Services are happy with the service they receive.</p> <p>Create a centrally managed complaints procedure across all CDC departments</p> | <p>Phone and Face – Face mystery shopping in Customer Services.</p> <p>Continue to ensure 90% of customers who access Customer Services are happy with the service they receive.</p> <p>Continue and monitor corporate complaints procedure.</p> <p>Establish Disability Forum</p> <p>Create CDC service experience days using volunteers from the Disability Forum and review.</p> | <p>Phone and Face – Face mystery shopping in Customer Services.</p> <p>Continue to ensure 90% of customers who access Customer Services are happy with the service they receive.</p> <p>Continue and monitor corporate complaints procedure.</p> <p>Continue Disability Forums</p> <p>Create CDC service experience days using volunteers from the Disability Forum and review</p> | <p>Pat Simpson/Jacqui Hurd</p> <p>Pat Simpson/Jacqui Hurd</p> <p>Pat Simpson/Jacqui Hurd</p> <p>Michal Gogut</p> <p>Pat Simpson/Jacqui Hurd Caroline French/Michal Gogut</p> |

Tackling Inequality and Deprivation

| Corporate Plan Aim | 3 Year Corporate Targets | 2009/10 Corporate Targets | 2010/11 Corporate Targets | 2011/12 Corporate Targets | People/Resources |
|---|---|----------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------|
| To break the cycle of deprivation within the district. | Deliver 'Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation' projects. | | <p>Set up and commence the delivery of a multi-agency programme to address inequalities in targeted areas in Banbury.</p> <p>Undertake a community engagement activity in Banbury to ensure local people's views are included in the development of the pilot programme.</p> | <p>Continue the delivery of a programme of support measures for key areas in Banbury.</p> <p>(Actions lifted from the Corporate Plan)</p> | |
| | | | Additional targets to be agreed by steering group in first quarter if 2010/11 | | |

Building Strong and Cohesive Communities

| Corporate Plan Aim | 3 Year Corporate Targets | 2009/10 Corporate Targets | 2010/11 Corporate Targets | 2011/12 Corporate Targets | People/Resources |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Promote integration between communities and groups through the use of sport, leisure, cultural activities and opportunities for community involvement.</p> | <p>To develop and implement a stronger communities strategy.</p> <p>To improve upon the NI1 (%of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well in their local area) National Indicator score</p> <p>To improve upon the N123 (Perceptions that people in the area treat one and another with respect and Consideration) National indicator score.</p> <p>Improve opportunities for different groups within communities to work together and build strong community relations</p> <p>Establish intergenerational projects to improve relations between the young and old and tackle issues such as fear of crime</p> <p>Joint working with Thames Valley Police to highlight and reduce any community tension and build trust in local services.</p> | <p>CDC to hold a Community Event to promote (Inclusion Infusion)</p> <p>To be measured via the Cherwell District Council Place Survey.</p> <p>CDC to Join TVP Independent Advisory Panel to improve consultation and community relations.</p> | <p>Launch stronger communities strategy</p> <p>To be measured via the Cherwell District Council Place Survey.</p> <p>Work with Banbury Cohesion Working Group to hold a community event to build cohesion, understanding and strong relationships.</p> <p>CDC To establish programme of community events</p> <p>Work with the LSP to establish new opportunities for community groups to engage with local service providers</p> <p>Banbury Museum Asian Intergenerational Project to be ready for display in 2010.</p> | <p>Implement Strategy.</p> <p>To be measured via the Cherwell District Council Place Survey.</p> <p>CDC programme of community events</p> | <p>Community Planning</p> <p>Community Planning</p> <p>Community Planning</p> <p>Community Planning</p> <p>Community Planning</p> <p>Stephen Barker</p> |

Positive Engagement and Understanding

| Corporate Plan Aim | 3 Year Corporate Targets | 2009/10 Corporate Targets | 2010/11 Corporate Targets | 2011/12 Corporate Targets | People/Resources |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|
| To gain better engagement and work with young people within the district. | To work with local schools, colleges and sixth forms to engage with the districts younger generation. | Implement Kidlington Youth Council. Local Democracy Week. Continue OCC lead Oxfordshire Youth Parliament. | Implement Rural Youth Council. Local Democracy Week. Receive OCC Children & Young People Plan. Continue OCC lead Oxfordshire Youth Parliament. | Implement OCC Children and Young People's Action Plan. Local Democracy Week. Continue OCC lead Oxfordshire Youth Parliament. | Jon Wild Jon Wild Jon Wild |
| Continue to increase Cherwell's knowledge and understanding of the wider community to ensure we fulfil all residents' needs within our services. | Explore and establish links with minority representation and community groups to help us improve our services. | Launch role of Customer Service Officer - Specialist Support and be an active member of the 'Mantra' and 'Halt' steering groups to decrease hate crimes within the district | Attending external community events, forums, group meetings with the aim of reaching different equality groups who would not or could not access our services and promote them. | Once 2010/11 objective is completed the aim is to create an opening for these minority groups to attend open days at Cherwell District Council where they can access all services. | Jacqui Hurd Caroline French |
| Raise internal awareness of diversity within our community | Implement the 'Knowing Your Community' internal events. Continue with the internal 'Fair and Aware' Equality Communications. | Polish Community Event Communities in Crisis Event. | To complete two 'Knowing your Community' events a year. | To complete two 'Knowing your Community' events a year. | Michal Gogut |

Demonstrating Our Commitment to Equality

| Corporate Plan Aim | 3 Year Corporate Targets | 2009/10 Corporate Targets | 2010/11 Corporate Targets | 2011/12 Corporate Targets | People/Resources |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| To review and publicise all documentation in line with government framework | To ensure Cherwell District Council meets government requirements | Introduce Equality Monitoring Scorecard Publish Workforce Profile and identify underrepresentation Review EIA format. Create 3 year EIA Rolling Plan Create Single Equality Scheme Create 3 year Equality Action Plan | Continue to publish all EIA's Monitor, report and publish results on Equality Scorecard and EIA Action Plans Review EIA Rolling Plan and Equality Action Plan | Continue to publish all EIA's Monitor, report and publish results on Equality Scorecard and EIA Action Plans Review EIA Rolling Plan and Equality Action Plan | Caroline French Caroline French |
| To gain accreditation under the Equality Framework for Local Government. | To gain and maintain the 'Achieving' standard under the Equality Framework for Local Government. | Research Council's current position and implement the 'Path to Excellence' project plan | ELFG Peer Challenge for 'Achieving' Standard. | Review Achieving Standard to research and develop an improvement programme. | Caroline French |
| Ensuring our staff and services promote and embed equality into their work. | Implement a mandatory corporate modular training programme which can be tailored to each specific service. | Corporate training to be created and signed off by Chief Executive. Roll out Corporate Equality Training Programme to all staff. | Complete Corporate Equality Training Programme and consult on the success of the programme. | Equality Training Programme to continue on a quarterly basis for all new employees or refresher courses for existing staff. | Chris Harvey |
| To continue to maximise output from the Corporate Equality and Diversity Steering Group | Group members to continue to consult on all activities within the Council and promote Equality and Diversity within their own services. | Create new structure and terms of reference for the group. Group to meet on a Quarterly basis. | Group to meet on a Quarterly basis. Review success of the group. | Group to meet on a Quarterly basis. Review success of the group | Caroline French |

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Executive

2010/11 Corporate Improvement Plan

1 March 2010

Report of Chief Executive and Head of Improvement

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report presents the proposed 2010/11 Corporate Improvement Plan.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To agree the 2010/11 Corporate Improvement Plan and associated 2010/11 Value for Money Review Programme.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the proposed Corporate Improvement Plan for 2010/11. This shows the Council is committed to delivering further improvements in its performance and is responding to the issues of most concern to residents and to new developments in the community. In 2010/11 we will be doing this in the context of reduced corporate resources within the Council and pressures on public sector finances because of the wider economic context. While this does pose challenges it also provides the opportunity to enhance the organisation's capacity by continuing to develop new ways of working.

Proposals

- 1.2 The Council has transformed its performance in recent years and this has been underpinned by the changes delivered through the Corporate Improvement Plan. The most obvious evidence of this is the award of the Excellent rating under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment inspection regime in 2009. This has subsequently been replaced by the Comprehensive Area Assessment. Under this regime Cherwell has been judged as performing well (scoring 3 out of 4). The Audit Commission describes us as having many of the characteristics of a top performing council. We just missed out on the top score of 4 ('performing excellently')

because of a temporary dip in performance of one performance indicator. Only fourteen local authorities nationally were judged as performing excellently and it is our ambition and expectation to be judged at that level of performance in the next round of Comprehensive Area Assessment.

- 1.3 In 2007/08 the Council agreed the three-year Improvement Strategy, from which the first three annual Corporate Improvement Plans are derived. The Corporate Improvement Plans have contained very challenging targets against which we have performed very well. In 2007/08 we met 79% of these targets which improved to 89% in 2008/09. On the basis of current performance we can expect a similarly high level of performance at the end of 2009/10. This will be reported to the Executive in the annual performance report for 2009/10.
- 1.4 How the Corporate Improvement Plans have evolved each year is set out in the next section. The key change in the 2010/11 Corporate Improvement Plan is the shift in focus to more outward looking projects that respond to issues of concern to residents and to social and demographic developments.

Conclusion

- 1.5 The Council has transformed its performance in recent years and this has been underpinned by the focus brought to improvement by the Corporate Improvement Plan. The actions contained in the 2010/11 Corporate Improvement Plan build on the achievements of previous years and continue to lay the foundations for sustained improvement into the future. The key development is that it is more outward looking and contains a number of major projects that address complex social issues.

Background Information

- 2.1 2009/10 is the last year of the current Improvement Strategy. We will maintain our commitment to deliver continuous improvement but with a different focus. This is because the current Improvement Strategy has delivered its main objective of introducing an organisational infrastructure that will support the sustained improvement of performance. What does remain is the need to respond to a number of organisational issues and in particular a number of important issues affecting the local community. Over the next six to nine months we will be developing the new Corporate Plan which will incorporate an associated Improvement Strategy with this one year Corporate Improvement Plan bridging the gap between old and new.
- 2.2 How the Corporate Improvement Plans developed over the past three years is shown in the summaries below.
- 2.3 The 2007/08 Corporate Improvement Plan focussed on improvements to the way we plan services and monitor performance, on having better comparative information on performance, delivering better value for money, developing better partnership working, improving our work on equalities, and developing the learning organisation.
- 2.4 In 2008/09 we continued this agenda, embedding key changes into everyday working practices. As new priorities we improved our understanding of the diverse needs of the communities in the District, made significant improvements to the range and quality of social and demographic information

and data quality more generally, developed our approach to equalities, commenced the introduction of service standards across all our services, and improved how we engage all our staff in the process of continuous improvement.

2.5 Our performance on delivering the 2009/10 Corporate Improvement Plan will be included in the end of year performance report to the Executive. In advance of that we can report a number of significant achievements. A major development this year was the project to support the establishment of the jobs clubs and develop the skills agenda. As well as that we have continued to deliver improved performance against national and local performance indicators; improved management information and data quality; improved communication with staff; and improved how we procure goods and services and work in partnership with others. We have delivered an ambitious programme of value for money reviews. We have also introduced an ambitious programme of member training and development and delivered the Job Evaluation project.

2.6 **2010/11 Corporate Improvement Plan** The proposed Corporate Improvement Plan for 2010/11 is attached. There are some key changes to note:

Change of Focus and Scale. The most significant change from the previous Corporate Improvement Plans is the number (and potential scale) of outward looking, service delivery based projects. These are: Fear of Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour; Deprivation, Including Health Inequalities; Strong and Cohesive Communities; Changing Needs of an Ageing Population; and Young People. Some were raised as issues to consider in our recent Comprehensive Area Assessment and all are included in the Council's Corporate Plan. Their inclusion in the Corporate Improvement Plan is a clear signal of their importance to the Council and that we want to make quick progress in developing our response.

Ways of Working. We enter 2010/11 operating with a three-strong Corporate Management Team (down from the five-strong team we have had). But we have retained the capacity of the two Improvement Team Project Managers and we have a well-established and strong team of Heads of Service and others in our Extended Management Team. We have a successful track record of using teams made up of staff from across the council to deliver major projects (such as the accommodation review); and we have a successful track record of working effectively with external partners to address issues of shared concern (such as community safety). We will build on this experience to deliver the 2010/11 Corporate Improvement Plan. At the same time we will also use this as an opportunity to engage a wider group of staff in delivering corporate projects, each led by an Executive Councillor and a member of the Extended Management Team. Creating this extra capacity at service level will involve more flexible working arrangements across directorates and individual services and a greater devolution of responsibility from the centre and within individual services. But this is exactly what we have been working towards for the last couple of years as we have built capacity and capability in the organisation.

2.7 **Role of Members.** The leadership role of members will be key to the effective delivery of the Corporate Improvement Plan. Because of this there

is a lead Executive member for each project within the Corporate improvement Plan. In some instances Executive members are paired with member champions. Lead members and officers will work together to deliver the projects.

- 2.8 **Value for Money Review Programme.** Given the current economic climate and the need to be as efficient as possible a key part of the Corporate Improvement Plan is the programme of value for money reviews. Having identified savings and increased income of £3.7m over the past three years it is expected these reviews will have a key role in delivering future financial savings and improved efficiency. Because of the importance of delivering these improvements the proposed Value for Money review programme for 2010/11 is attached for the Executive to consider.

The starting point in developing this programme is an analysis of the Council's expenditure using the annual returns we make to Central Government of our budget and outturn expenditure. Using this information we can establish trends in our performance and compare our self with our 'family' of fifteen similar councils. The headline performance is very positive and reflects the hard work and difficult choices we have made:

- Cherwell's comparative position is improving. In 2008/09 our outturn made us the 2nd most expensive council in our family group (though one-off items such as the PRP buyout were significant contributors to this position). This was reduced to 6th most expensive for budget in 2009/10 and below average cost overall. This will improve further with the budget reductions scheduled for 2010/11.
- A comparison of efficiency savings achieved in 2008/09 (as recorded by National Indicator 179) shows that Cherwell has the 2nd highest level of savings per head of population of the family group.
- The number of services in the most expensive quartile has reduced from 15 in 2008/09 to 6 in 2009/10

Despite this very good performance some areas remain relatively high cost. It should be noted that this is not necessarily evidence of poor value for money as higher relative spend may just reflect our local priorities and circumstances.

- 2.9 The proposed review programme, which is attached, is very ambitious. It would not be possible to subject all these services to a full value for money assessment over the next year. We are therefore proposing to adopt different approaches that are proportionate to the issues involved. These approaches are:

- a) A full value for money review using the established Council methodology.

This covers high cost services that have not yet been reviewed. These are: the Corporate and Democratic Core; Economic Development; and Tourism.

- b) An update of a previously completed value for money review. This is services which have already been reviewed and delivered savings but which remain high cost. This will involve an update of the previously gathered

information to establish if value for money can be further improved. These services are: Housing; Development Control and Major Developments; and Planning Policy.

c) A value for money 'health check' on services not previously reviewed.

There are a number of service areas which have not been reviewed but, though not identified as high cost, do command significant resources. So that all areas of significant expenditure in the Council have been subject to a value for money assessment we are including these services in the review programme. It is not proposed that these services are necessarily subject to the rigour of a full Value for Money review. In the first instance we will seek to arrive at a high level judgement about the efficiency of their operations and if performance could be improved. After this any issues arising can be considered in more detail. The services are: Recreation and Sport; Culture and Heritage; and Urban and Rural Services.

d) An overall assessment of support services costs to assess the extent they continue to contribute to higher costs of front line service delivery.

Finally we are proposing to continue considering expenditure on internal support services. Value for Money reviews of support services have already delivered savings of over £1m. Firstly it is proposed we review the Customer Services Centre which has received significant investment and we are now in a good position to assess what this has delivered and if performance could be improved. Secondly we are proposing to take an overview of all internal support service costs (it should be noted that in the budget analysis referred to above support costs are not shown separately but are included in the service costs). Recent reviews of Legal Services and Finance both suggest that internal support costs are still relatively high and may make a significant contribution to apparent high costs in some services.

- 2.10 The Corporate Improvement Plan as a whole and the Value for Money review programme as part of that represents a significant undertaking. The scheduling of this programme will have to be given further consideration once the scope of each project and Value for Money review is considered with the lead officers.

The delivery of the Corporate Improvement Plan will be monitored through the Performance Management Framework and reported to the Executive each quarter through the performance report. Any issues arising will be reported then.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

3.1 The purpose of the report is to agree the 2010/11 Corporate Improvement Plan and the associated Value for Money Programme.

Option One To agree the organisational priorities for improvement and the content of the 2010/11 Corporate Improvement Plan as set out in this report.

Consultations Not Applicable

Implications

Financial: Financial Effects. The resources required to deliver the Corporate Improvement Plan are contained within existing budgets.
Efficiency Savings. The Corporate Improvement Plan will contribute to improved financial management, particularly around improved value for money.
Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Senior Accountant, 01295 221551

Legal: There are no direct legal implications arising from this report but where savings are sought the Council must take account of what it is required to deliver by law
Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, 01295 221686

Risk Management: The proposed Corporate Improvement Plan supports the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives. Any possible impediments to delivering this will be registered and monitored through the corporate risk register.
Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management & Insurance Officer, 01295 221566

Data Quality: The proposed Corporate Improvement Plan has a specific aim to ensure decision making is based on high quality management information and demographic information.
Comments checked by Claire Taylor, Corporate and Community Planning Manager, 01295 221563

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

The Corporate Improvement Plan covers all of the Corporate Plan Themes

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Cllr Ken Atack
Portfolio Holder for Performance Management and Improvement

Document Information

| Appendix No | Title |
|---------------------|--|
| None | |
| Background Papers | |
| None | |
| Report Author | Mike Carroll, Head of Improvement |
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CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2010 - 2011

| PROJECT | LEAD MEMBER/S & LEAD OFFICER/S |
|--|---|
| <p>Deprivation, including Health Inequalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategy for the Council that will address the aspiration, health, education, skills, and housing issues that contribute to the cycle of deprivation. • Develop an approach in partnership with other leading agencies that enables us to work together on county-wide issues whilst targeting localised issues in Cherwell. • Apply the lessons of best practice in addressing these issues. | <p>Lead Members: Cllr Barry Wood and Cllr George Reynolds</p> <p>Lead Officer: Ian Davies</p> |
| <p>Strong and Cohesive Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategy to increase the percentage of residents who believe they live in strong and supportive communities and understand and relate well to their neighbours. • Widen opportunities for community engagement • Support local schools in their statutory duty to promote community cohesion • Work with the Police to counter the potential impact of extremists. | <p>Lead Members: Cllr Kieron Mallon and Cllr Alyas Ahmed</p> <p>Lead Officer: Claire Taylor</p> |
| <p>Equality and Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver improvement plan to reach 'achieving status' in November 2010. • Agree improvement plan to reach 'excellent status' in November 2011. | <p>Lead Member: Cllr Barry Wood</p> <p>Lead Officer: Claire Taylor</p> |

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| <p>Changing Needs of an Ageing Population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an overarching strategy in the light of the latest demographic information, evaluation of current practices, and the views of residents. • Work with the county-wide Health and Well Being Partnership to deliver our objectives. • In the first year of the strategy target the under-claiming of benefits. • Apply the lessons of best practice in addressing these issues. | <p>Lead Members: Cllr George Reynolds and Cllr Paul O'Sullivan</p> <p>Lead Officer: Gillian Greaves</p> |
| <p>Services for Young People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review if the services and support the Council provides to young people meets their priority needs and does so effectively and efficiently. • To identify opportunities for improving joint working locally and county-wide to meet our objectives. | <p>Lead Members: Cllr George Reynolds and Cllr Dan Sames</p> <p>Lead Officer: Paul Marston-Weston</p> |
| <p>Fear of Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the effectiveness of current arrangements to achieve the council's objectives for crime and anti-social behaviour, namely; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The role of partnerships - Team structure and roles/responsibilities - Areas of expenditure and their outcomes • Identify areas and means by which the council's performance in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour can be improved • Assess if the service provides value for money for Cherwell residents, and identify means to improve this (where necessary). | <p>Lead Member: Cllr Nigel Morris</p> <p>Lead Officer: Chris Rothwell</p> |
| <p>Use of Natural Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the outcome of the 2009/10 Use of Resources inspection to identify the measures required to achieve and sustain a top rated performance. | <p>Lead Member: Cllr George Reynolds</p> <p>Lead Officer: Ed Potter</p> |

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve performance against National Indicators. • Use the Council's performance to set an example to the wider community, individuals, organisations and businesses, as to how they can improve their environmental performance. | |
| <p>Respond Flexibly to the Recession and Government Decisions about the Local Authority Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and adapt the Medium Term Financial Strategy in the light of changes to the national funding regime and other changes to the Council's income. • Identify and deliver the efficiency and savings targets required to meet our financial objectives. | <p>Lead Member: Cllr James Macnamara</p> <p>Lead Officer: Karen Curtin</p> |
| <p>Value for Money Review Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use national benchmarking information to assess the value for money performance of the council and identify areas for further consideration and/or inclusion in the value for money review programme. • Contribute towards the Medium Term Financial Strategy of identifying £1.6m of savings in 2010/11 and 2011/12. | <p>Lead Members: Cllr Ken Atack and Cllr James Macnamara</p> <p>Lead Officer: Neil Lawrence</p> |
| <p>Strategic Asset Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for a Use of Resources inspection in 2010/11 and develop a strategy for achieving a top rated performance for all assets (covering buildings, vehicles, Information and Communications Technology etc.). | <p>Lead Member: Cllr Norman Bolster</p> <p>Lead Officer: David Marriott</p> |
| <p>Data Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the process of improving data quality by producing updated guidance, training, and an enhanced testing regime. • Extend the data quality regime to partnership working. | <p>Lead Member: Cllr Ken Atack</p> <p>Lead Officer: Claire Taylor</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For the improvements in data quality to be reflected in the overall quality of management information and recognised in audit and inspection reports. | |
| <p>Using Customer Intelligence to Drive Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The overall aim is to ensure we use customer and community information to identify emerging issues for individual services, within localities and for particular groups and (with partners as appropriate) respond promptly to these issues.• The initial focus will be to assess the extent to which we exploit the full potential of the Customer Service Centre to provide intelligence on customer needs and service performance and use this to deliver improvements in service delivery. We will use this exercise to develop processes and procedures for wider application across other sources of such information. | <p>Lead Members: Cllr Nicholas Turner and Cllr Ken Atack</p> <p>Lead Officer: Alison Davies</p> |

VALUE FOR MONEY REVIEW PROGRAMME 2010/11
 (*all the budget figures are for 2009/10)

| Service | Commentary |
|---|--|
| Full VFM Review | |
| Corporate and Democratic Core | At a cost of £4m+ this is an area of significant expenditure which is above the average for our family of authorities. It comprises numerous central services that not yet been subject to a VFM review. |
| Economic Development | This is an area of above average expenditure, which has also received additional support during 2009/10. It is timely to assess the effectiveness of this expenditure in response to the economic recession. |
| Tourism | This is an area of above average expenditure not yet subject to a VFM review. A key issue will be to explore the benefits of spending at the current level to local economy. |
| Update Previously Completed VFM Review | |
| Housing | The service is delivering the £500k savings following the VFM review in 2007/08 but remains above average cost. The update will be an opportunity to review the latest benchmarking information and to identify any further savings potential and/or explain why expenditure remains high in some areas. |
| Development Control and Major Developments | The service has reduced costs since the VFM review in 2007/08 review but remains above average cost. The update will be an opportunity to review resources in the light of new priorities and workloads. |
| Planning Policy | The service has reduced costs since the VFM review in 2007/08 review but remains above average cost. The update will be an opportunity to review current and future resource requirements in the light of developments since that review was completed. |

| Service | Commentary |
|--|--|
| VFM Health Check' - Services not Previously Reviewed. | |
| Recreation & Sport | At a cost of £1.2m this is an area of significant expenditure that has not been subject to a VFM review. The review will be an opportunity to assess if all the objectives of Sports Centre Modernisation have been realised and if the service could be delivered more cost effectively. |
| Culture and Heritage (inc. Banbury Museum) | At a cost of £742k this is an area of significant expenditure that has not been subject to a VFM review. The review will be the opportunity to identify if the service could be delivered more cost effectively and income increased. |
| Urban and Rural | At a gross cost of £4.1m (with income of £4m) this is an area of significant expenditure that has not been subject to a VFM review. The latest analysis shows below average expenditure on licensing and parking. The review will be an opportunity to assess if the service could be delivered more cost effectively and income increased. It will also be timely to review the landscape management contract ahead of any re-tendering process in 2011/12. |
| Assessment of Support Services Costs | |
| Customer Services | This has received significant investment in recent years and we will now be in a good position to assess what this has delivered and if performance could be improved. |
| Support Service Recharges | This will involve an overview of all internal support service costs to identify where costs remain high and may make a significant contribution to apparent high costs in some services and how these costs could be reduced. |

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