

# Public Document Pack

## Cherwell District Council

### Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 7 March 2011 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 Nigel Morris  
Councillor D M Pickford  
Councillor Nicholas Turner

Also Present: Councillor Nick Cotter

Apologies for absence: Councillor Colin Clarke

Officers: Ian Davies, Interim Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service  
John Hoad, Strategic Director - Planning, Housing and Economy  
Philip Clarke, Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development  
Karen Curtin, Head of Finance  
Liz Howlett, Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer  
David Marriott, Head of Regeneration & Estates  
Ed Potter, Head of Environmental Services  
Claire Taylor, Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager  
Bob Duxbury, Development Control Team Leader  
Jacqui Hurd, Customer Service Manager  
Natasha Clark, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

## 118 **Declarations of Interest**

Members declared interests in the following agenda items:

### **7. Cherwell District Council's Response to Heavy Snow.**

Councillor Nicholas Turner, Personal, as a member of an Oxfordshire County Council scrutiny committee which had considered the issue and as Chairman of Banbury, Bicester and Woodstock Farmers Union who had worked with Oxfordshire County Council on addressing the issue of heavy snow.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

120 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

121 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

122 **Population and Household Projections for Cherwell and Key Implications for the Local Development Framework**

The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development submitted a report which outlined for members the updated population & household projections for Cherwell and to consider the implications in terms of proposed changes to the Local Development Framework procedures and the consideration of a locally determined level of growth for the district. The item had been deferred from the 7 February Executive meeting to enable Members to receive further information on the subject.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the information contained in this report and in the attached technical paper be noted.
- (2) That the emerging broad population and household figures for Cherwell District for the period up to 2026 set out in the annex to these minutes (as set out in the minute book) be agreed as a basis for further work on the Core Strategy.

**Reasons**

The preparation of the Local Development Framework is a statutory requirement. However, the Government has proposed that changes to the statutory procedures for the preparation of Local Development Frameworks will be introduced in April 2012. These changes are expected to include greater responsibility for local planning authorities in assessing their local housing needs. The population and household projections set out in this report, together with the options for taking forward this work, will provide a basis for the Council to undertake further work to refine the Draft Core Strategy.

**Options**

**Option One** To agree the recommendations as set out in the report.

**Option Two** To amend the recommendations

**Option Three** Not to agree the recommendations.

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### **Cherwell District Council's Response to Heavy Snow**

The Head of Environmental Services which sought consideration of the Council's response to the heavy snow in December 2010 and improvements to that response in similar circumstances in the future.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the problems and issues which arose from the heavy snow fall prior to Christmas be noted.
- (2) That the proposed actions to improve the Council's response to future severe winter weather events as set out in the annex to these minutes (as set out in the minute book) be approved.
- (3) That any proposed equipment purchased will be acquired within existing budgets during 2011/12 be noted.
- (4) That officers be requested to consider if the snow plan should be presented to a future Parish Liaison meeting.

#### **Reasons**

The heavy snowfall in December 2010 was the greatest for many years and caused disruption to services, more so due to the effect of Christmas. A number of possible improvements which would make services more resilient in the event of heavy snowfall have been investigated. Many of these are low cost or no cost improvements and involve procedural changes, better co-ordination or provision of better information.

A proposed priority of response and committing resources has been established. It is based on returning public services to normal operation as swiftly as practicable. By implementing the action plan services will be more resilient for any future heavy snowfall events.

#### **Options**

**Option One** To approve the proposed action plan as outlined in paragraph 2.29 to 2.30 of the report

**Option Two** To reject the proposed action plan

**Option Three** To ask officers to modify the proposed action plan

124 **Kidlington Pedestrianisation and Traffic Regulation Order**

The Head of Regeneration and Estates submitted a report which sought the Council's approval to enter into an agency agreement with Oxfordshire County Council, to formally promote a new Traffic Regulation Order for Kidlington High Street.

**Resolved**

- (1) That an agency agreement between Oxfordshire County Council, the Highway Authority, and Cherwell District Council to enable Cherwell District Council to formally promote a new Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for Kidlington High Street be approved.

**Reasons**

This project is identified as a priority in the Regeneration and Estates Service Plan and is a key partnership project undertaken at the request of the Kidlington Village Centre Management Board and Kidlington Parish Council.

**Options**

**Option One**                      Approve the agency agreement for the scheme to move forward.

**Option Two**                      Reject the agency agreement. However this will result in the postponement of any further work on the scheme and a failure to meet Service Plan targets.

125 **Proposals for High Speed Rail - HS2**

The Strategic Director Planning, Housing and Economy submitted a report which provided information on the Government's intentions with regards to High Speed Rail and its impact upon the District, and to enable consideration of the need to co-operate with and financially contribute to an emergent group of Councils along the declared preferred route to contest the proposals.

Councillor Cotter, Leader of the Opposition, spoke in opposition to the recommendation to make up to £50,000 from Planning Control Reserves as a contribution towards the fund being formed to campaign against the proposals and to fund consultancy work required to assist in the detailed assessment of the impact upon individual properties and communities along the Cherwell section of the preferred route (notionally £20,000).

**Resolved**

- (1) That it be agreed to join with other Authorities along the preferred route to campaign against the proposals.

- (2) That it be agreed to make available up to £50,000 from Planning Control Reserve
  - a. as a contribution towards the fund being formed to campaign against the proposals and;
  - b. To fund consultancy work required to assist in the detailed assessment of the impact upon individual properties and communities along the Cherwell section of the preferred route (notionally £20,000).
  - c. delegate to the Strategic Director Planning, Housing and Economy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder the final distribution of this funding
- (3) That Planning Committee be asked to steer the detailed assessment of impact and to make the Council's representations thereon.
- (4) That the Strategic Director Planning, Housing and Economy be required to bring a further detailed report to the Executive towards the end of the consultation period to enable consideration of Council's formal response to the consultation.

### **Reasons**

The key issues considered in this report are the degree of involvement to be had with the emergent group of local authorities, and the extent of financial commitment to that grouping, and to the need to hire in consultancy support for the assessment of the strategic case and environmental impact.

### **Options**

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Option One</b>   | Agree to co-operate with the emergent group of authorities, and our adjacent colleagues in South Northants, with a financial undertaking of £50,000 towards the campaign against the proposals, and for consultancy assistance. |
| <b>Option Two</b>   | Agree to the above co-operation with a greater or smaller, financial contribution   |
| <b>Option Three</b> | Be self contained in our assessment of the proposals within our own existing resources  |

### **Performance and Risk Management Framework 2011/12**

The Interim Chief Executive and Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager submitted a report which outlined the Council's performance and risk management arrangements for 2011-2012 reviewed in the context of significant changes to the national performance and inspection regime.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the proposed approach to performance and risk management for 2011/12 be agreed and that these changes are reflected in the Council's Performance and Risk management Framework.
- (2) That the measures and risks that will make up the Council's performance and risk management framework for 2011/12 be agreed.
- (3) That officers report on any new performance requirements instigated by the government in the quarterly Executive reports throughout 2011/12 and work to identify and adopt examples of good practice nationally to ensure the Council's performance management remains robust and transparent.

## **Reasons**

This report presents the Council's proposed approach to performance management from 2011/12. It reflects changes in national policy and outlines a clear locally determined approach to ensure performance and risk management remains robust and focused on local priorities. The report also highlights areas where savings and efficiencies in relation to performance management have been found.

## **Options**

### **Option One**

The Executive is recommended:

To agree the proposed approach to performance and risk management for 2011/12 and request that these changes are reflected in the Council's Performance and Risk management Framework.

To agree the measures that will make up the performance management framework for 2011/12.

To request that officers report on any new performance requirements instigated by the government in the quarterly Executive reports throughout 2011/12 and work to identify and adopt examples of good practice nationally to ensure the Council's performance management remains robust and transparent.

### **Option Two**

To identify any additional issues for further consideration or review.

## **2011/12 Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Practices**

The Head of Finance submitted a report which set out the strategy and policy framework for treasury operations for 2011/12 and outlines the Treasury

Management Practices for 2011/12 which fulfilled two key requirements of the Local Government Act 2003:-

- approval of the Treasury Management Policy in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management; and
- approval of the Investment Strategy in accordance with the CLG investment guidance.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Treasury Management Policy and Investment Strategy 2011/12 be recommended to Council for approval.

### **Reasons**

The highest standard of stewardship of public funds remains of the utmost importance to the Council. The 2011/12 Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Practices document sets out the Council's priorities and policies for making, and managing investments made by the Council in the course of undertaking treasury management activities during the 2011/12 financial year.

### **Options**

#### **Option One**

To review draft strategy and consider proposals arising.

#### **Option Two**

To approve or reject the recommendations above or request that Officers provide additional information.

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### **Customer Service Value for Money Review and Customer Intelligence Project**

The Interim Chief Executive submitted a report which sought consideration of the findings of the Value for Money (VFM) Review report and the Customer Intelligence Improvement report, and the recommendations arising from these.

The Executive expressed their thanks to all staff in the Customer Services Team for their ongoing hard work to date in improving the service and stressed the importance of continuing to improve and develop the service to maintain the high level of service.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the overall conclusions of the Customer Service VFM and Customer Intelligence reports be endorsed.
- (2) That a new vision for Customer Service to 2013/14 that seeks to reduce the cost of the service, retain or improve on existing levels of

satisfaction, reduce avoidable contact, manage demand and encourage greater use of online services be adopted.

- (3) That a customer service transformation programme, involving all service areas, that will drive improvement in Customer Service through adopting smarter working methods to reduce avoidable contact and transactions, and through managing demand to reduce peaks and troughs in levels of transactions be commenced.
- (4) That the key performance measures of speed of telephone response and call abandonment rate for the Council's corporate score card be adopted.
- (5) That a two-year cost savings target of £257,462 for Customer Service that addresses the high cost of the service but in a sustainable way, with minimal impact on overall service to the public, as follows, be established;
  1. Include the elimination of all vacant posts by 2012/13, to allow time for the new payment kiosks to reduce current workload, and seek to reduce the establishment by an additional 1 FTE per annum as the transformation programme reduces overall levels of contact
  2. Note savings of £125,654 built into the 2011/12 budget as follows;
    - a. Install payment kiosks (saving £65,000) as approved
    - b. Remove a vacant customer service specialist post (saving £17,000)
    - c. Remove vacant hours provision (saving £20,000)
    - d. Reduce the establishment by 1FTE (saving £23,654)
  3. Make further savings of £131,808 in 2012/13 as follows;
    - a. Eliminating all remaining vacant posts (saving £85,154)
    - b. Reducing the establishment by an additional 1 FTE as levels of contact decline through improved working (saving £23,654)
    - c. Reducing accommodation costs through plans to move out of Bicester Market Square in 2012/13 (saving £23,000) as part of the town centre project, with the service being required to find this saving by other means should the scheme not progress by this date.
- (6) That discussions on the nature and number of LinkPoint offices be included in the Council's forthcoming work on its Medium Term Financial Strategy.



## Reasons

The Council's current Customer Service function has high levels of customer satisfaction and multiple access routes, but is expensive to provide and does not utilise customer intelligence effectively.

Best practice shows that transformation projects can significantly reduce costs and improve customer service through reducing avoidable contact, migrating contact to less expensive channels and greater use of customer intelligence

The pace and scale of savings is critical to the ability of the service to implement them in a sustainable manner that does not impact on overall levels of customer satisfaction.

The scope of savings possible may be limited while maintaining current approaches to service provision. For example, maintaining four LinkPoint Offices is known to consume a set level of staff resource (£296,000). The decision to continue to take cash also has cost implications.

Further savings may be possible through the proposed Transformation Programme and/or through joint working with South Northants.

## Options

**Option One** To limit savings in the service to a single year reduction of £135,654 and not implement a transformation programme. While this will be less disruptive it will not drive out the potential savings within the service or improve the customer experience

**Option Two** To implement a transformation programme with a two-year savings target of £257,462.

**Option Three** To revisit the current policy of LinkPoint office provision as part of a wider consideration of service delivery. The following table illustrates the maximum possible financial savings of a change in policy ;

	Average Transactions (monthly)	Customer Service Staff (FTE)	Salaries (Annual)	"Savable" Premises Costs
Kidlington	890	2.5	£59,135	£5,538
Bicester	2,346	3	£70,962	£35,960
Bodicote	1,959	3	£70,962	No saving
Banbury	3,521	4	£94,616	No saving

Benefits of the current LinkPoint provision are;

- The council provides of preferred means of contact for some people and provides a local council presence in towns

- it ensures the ability to pay at the point of service;
- it allows the council to share its premises with other agencies (CAB, Job Centre Plus) to provide joined-up service delivery
- it provides a distributed contact centre resilience (i.e. calls answered at Link Point offices instead of Bodicote House)
- it offers the possibility of delivering new or enhanced services, such as visitor information
- some form of face to face presence will always be needed for document presentation/verification, reception services etc.
- meeting some contractual obligations, such as delivering concessionary fares services for Oxfordshire County Council

Other than financial savings, the advantages of a change in policy are:

- it provides an incentive for customers to move to telephone or online services rather than stay with face-to-face services;
- greater volumes of contact can be processed than at present due to the more efficient nature of alternative channels, and most (current) face to face services can be provided in this way;
- more efficient staff deployment will be possible as there will be no need to provide lone working/lunchtime cover, or the need to factor in as much staff travel time;
- closure of the Castle Quay LinkPoint would enable more flexibility of service provision/shop income for the Museum/TIC Trust;
- as a predominantly rural district it could be argued that town centre provision does not provide the most equitable of service. More equitable face to face provision can be provided on an outreach or surgery basis, and using other organisations' buildings. A programme of visits could cover a wider area than at present

### **Award of Contract for a Combined Insurance Programme for Cherwell District Council**

The Head of Finance submitted a report which sought approval for the award of a contract for a Combined Insurance Programme with the deletion of one policy and the increasing of excesses to those agreed in October 2009.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the insurance policy for money be discontinued and excesses on a range of continuing policies be increased.
- (2) That a contract for a Combined Insurance Programme be awarded to Zurich Municipal for a period of three years from 1 April 2011 with the allowance purely at the discretion of the Council to extend by up to a further four years in one year increments.

**Reasons**

The solution provided by Zurich Municipal will not only provide further premium savings of more than £33,000 to those already achieved over the last few years – the 2009/10 extension resulting in savings of more than £30,000 and the 2009 VfM exercise netting an additional £65,000 of savings in 2010/11 – resulting in insurance premium costs coming down £464,000 in 2003/4 to £209,718.58 in 2011/12, but will also provide a robust support system involving telephone, email and web based advice during a substantial change in contract management responsibilities.

130 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that they could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

131 **Award of Contract for a Combined Insurance Programme for Cherwell District Council - Exempt Appendix 1**

The Committee considered the exempt annex to the report of the Head of Finance on the Award of Contract for a Combined Insurance Programme for Cherwell District Council.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the exempt annex be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm

Chairman:

Date:

### **Report on Population and Demographic Projections for Cherwell and Implications for the Local Development Framework**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 The preparation of updated demographic projections was initiated in response to the Secretary of State's announcement on 06 July 2010 that the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) had been revoked and that local planning authorities could take responsibility for assessing their own needs and aspirations for local housing development. The purpose of progressing the updated projections was to inform the Council's consideration of what a locally appropriate level of development should be. Within the south east of England, the South East Plan formed the Regional Spatial Strategy. As well as setting a housing target for Cherwell District for the period 2006 – 2026 of 13,400 homes, it also gave a broad indication as to how this development should be distributed across the district.

1.2 It should be noted that since this work commenced, the High Court ruled on 10 November 2010 that the statements and actions of the Secretary of State in attempting to revoke the Regional Spatial Strategies, in July 2010, were unlawful on several grounds. The High Court ruled that Regional Spatial Strategies therefore continue to form part of the statutory development plan. The effect of the High Court decision is that the South East Plan remains part of our development plan together with the saved policies of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996 and the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2005 until the existing legislation is repealed and new arrangements come into effect.

1.3 Local planning authorities are required to produce a Local Development Framework (Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 s15, s19). The Local Development Framework is required to be in conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy (Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 s24(1)).

1.4 The work on preparing updated demography projections was partly progressed by the time of the High Court decision on 10 November 2010. It was therefore decided to continue to progress this work so that it could usefully inform discussions regarding an emerging local housing target in preparation for the introduction of new plan making arrangements. Progression of this work may also help to highlight other relevant factors that may also need to be considered alongside these projections.

1.5 These projections are one of many considerations that should inform a locally determined housing target. The government has stated that any such locally determined targets, once introduced, would still need to be justified by clear evidence<sup>1</sup>. Local planning authorities would be responsible for establishing the appropriate level of housing provision in their area and the long term supply of land needed for housing development. The Council would need to consider what else should properly influence the Council's decision on how many homes should be planned for. For example, are there aspirations that the Council wishes to pursue for the district that would have an impact on the total number of homes needed, or needs within our communities that should properly be met and that would require more homes to be provided?

1.6 Key considerations are likely to include the Council's aspirations regarding housing mix, housing choice, demographic mix and economic growth. The Council may also wish, or may be required under new plan making arrangements, to consider the extent to which it's emerging development strategy affects or is affected by the wider community and the extent to which it reflects strategic considerations about economic development, movement and housing ie. the extent to which the proposed statutory duty to cooperate has been undertaken.

#### **2.0 Summary of Population and Demographic Projections**

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Chief Planning Officer 06 July 2010 and attached Q&As, see Question 11.

## How have the projections been produced?

2.1 All of the nationally produced projections, including the Office of National Statistics (ONS) population projections and the Department of Local Communities and Government (CLG) household projections (which are based on the ONS population projections), are trend based ie. they assume that recent population and household trends will continue. In the case of the recent CLG household projections published in November 2010, the development rate over a 5 year period (2004 – 2008) is projected forward. Therefore, they give an indication of what the future population might be if recent trends continue but they do not take account of potential future development strategies at the local level. Therefore work has been progressed since September 2010 to generate such projections and it is hoped that these will begin to inform a decision regarding a locally appropriate level of housing for the district. The work considers a range of scenarios to illustrate the effects of different levels of development over the plan period (2006 – 2026).

2.2 Factors taken into consideration include birth and death rates, marriage and divorce rates, average household size, migration data (movement in and out of the district by age and gender) and development that is already planned for or permitted for housing development as of September 2010. Most of this development is assumed to be built by 2016 and will influence overall population growth. For the period 2016-2026, a range of illustrative scenarios have been assessed to illustrate the effects of different levels of growth within the district.

### Description of the Scenarios:

2.3 Natural Change (adjusted for migration) – this scenario initially projects changes in an enclosed population (ie. no-one can move their place of residence in or out of the district) and the number of homes needed for this population. This provides an indication of the number of homes that are needed for local needs but is unrealistic as in reality the District borders are not closed. In reality, the movement of people in and out of the district affects the population profile, birth and death rates and the rate of population growth. Therefore Natural Change is then adjusted for migration. This assumes the same level of household growth as indicated by Natural Change but projects the effects of people moving in and out of the district at that level of growth ie. the same number of houses are assumed to be built but people are able to move in and out of the district which changes the population structure.

Nil Net Migration – this describes a population that has some flexibility to move in or out of the district but only insofar as the number of people moving in and out of the district are balanced ie. there is no net movement in or out of the district. The population profile still changes under this scenario as the age profile of people moving into the district may be different from those moving out. A household figure is provided that will meet the needs of this population.

Development Trend based on a 5 year period (2012 – 2016) – this describes a population that continues to grow based on the continued projection of the rate of development in Cherwell over a 5 year period.

Development Trend based on a 10 year period (2007 – 2016) – this describes a population that continues to grow based on the continued projection of the rate of development in Cherwell over a 10 year period.

Development Trend based on South East Plan Housing Target – this describes a population that continues to grow based on the continued projection of the rate of development needed in Cherwell to deliver the South East Plan housing target by 2026.

Development Trend based on South East Plan Employment Indicative Job Number – this describes the population and household development rate needed to deliver housing in proportion to the South East Plan Interim Job Number.

2.4 The following data is produced for each of the above scenarios:

- Projected households at 5 yearly intervals to 2026 and by type of household eg. married couples, lone parents, one person households, communal establishments.

- Projected population at 5 yearly intervals to 2026 and by age and gender structure.
- Projected labour force (economically active population) at 5 yearly intervals.

#### What do the projections indicate?

2.5 The projections suggest that in the future there will be more single-person and older households. Most of the increase in population is concentrated with the over 55 age group. There will be a significant increase in the age group aged over 65. Some people in this group will require specialist housing including housing that enables the elderly to stay in the house they already inhabit for longer. The projections also show that the average household size (the number of people per household) in Cherwell reduces from 2.3 in 2006 to 2.1 in 2026.

2.6 Most of the development that has already been planned for or permitted has been taken into account in the projections for the period up to 2016. A further approximately 700 dw have also been permitted but are expected to be developed after 2016, and these are not factored into the projections. A figure of 700 can therefore be offset against the projection figures for each scenario. (A further 128 dw are subject to applications currently subject to planning appeals.)

2.7 The Council will be required to establish a target for new housing to be built during a specified time period – at least 15 years from the date that the Core Strategy is adopted. An annual pro rata figure could be applied for years after 2026 until such time as the overall target is reviewed.

#### 2.8 What are the implications under each scenario (2006 – 2026): (summarised in Table 1)

##### Natural Change (adjusted for migration):

- Projected increase in population 11,839
- Projected increase in households 11,089
- The number of households created increases even under the natural change scenario. This is because births will be higher than deaths and social changes such as decreasing household size/occupancy rates will still occur.
- Significant out-migration occurs, approx. 1,500 households, and likely to include younger adults.
- Despite the population increase over this time period, the population is aging and so the labour force declines by 2026.

##### Nil Net Migration

- Projected increase in population 15,197
- Projected increase in households 12,751
- The effect of in and out flows of population on the age structure produces a higher total population and higher demand for households by 2026.
- The additional projected resident labour force is increasing slightly by 2026 but the rate of increase is much lower than in preceding years.

##### Development Trend based on a 5 year period (2012 – 2016) ie. 828 homes per year

- Projected increase in population 19,146
- Projected increase in households 14,705
- The additional projected resident labour force is increasing more positively by 2026 and more than in earlier years.

##### Development Trend based on a 10 year period (2007 – 2016) ie. 643 homes per year

- Projected increase in population 15,408
- Projected increase in households 12,855
- The additional projected resident labour force is increasing positively by 2026.

##### Development Trend based on South East Plan Housing Target

- Projected increase in population 16,509
- Projected increase in households 13,400

- The additional projected resident labour force is increasing slightly by 2026 but the rate of increase is much lower than in preceding years.

#### Development Trend based on South East Plan Employment Indicative Job Number

- Projected increase in population 27,260
- Projected increase in households 18,720
- Indicates a higher household figure than required by the SEP (but the South East Plan employment figures are disaggregated from a wider area).
- The additional projected resident labour force is increasing significantly by 2026.

#### What other factors should be considered?

2.9 Other factors will need to be considered alongside the population and demographic projections to arrive at a strategy that is robust, credible and supported by clear evidence. These will include considering a range of economic, social and environmental factors and it may also be important to take account of the wider reforms being proposed by government. Examples include social housing provision as these changes may lead to an increase in housing need.

### **3.0 How could the development strategy be revised to reflect the demographic projections?**

3.1 The Council may wish to consider whether this has any implications upon the district's development strategy, both in terms of overall growth and how this may be distributed spatially.

3.2 It is important to note that these examples do not take account of consultation comments on the Draft Core Strategy, other potential sites or a range of other economic, social or environmental factors. It is also important to note that any new plan making are still expected to require the Council to demonstrate that it's proposed development strategy is the most appropriate strategy, based on an approach that has enabled effective engagement with interested parties and a clear evidence base.

3.3 2,172 homes have been completed in the District between 2006 – 2010, and an additional 4,997 homes have already been permitted between 2006 and 2010. A total of 7,169 homes are therefore already completed or approved for this period. On the basis of these figures the following table shows what the remaining housing requirement would be at this point in time and for each scenario. There are various potential spatial distribution options under each of the scenarios that have been considered. For illustrative purposes, the table below outlines a potential spatial distribution under each scenario, based on the sites that are proposed in the Draft Core Strategy.

Eg. Based on the sites proposed in Draft Core Strategy, spatial options could include:

<b>Scenario &amp; projected household demand</b>	<b>Approx. Residual Requirement</b>	<b>Potential spatial distribution options incl. proposed strategic sites &amp; rural areas.</b>
Natural Change 11,089	3,920	Canalside 1,200 dw Bankside Phase 2 400 dw NW Bicester 3,000 dw Rural / Other sites 0 dw Total 4,600
Nil Net Migration 12,751	5,582	Canalside 1,200 dw Bankside Phase 2 400 dw Bretch Hill 400 dw NW Bicester 3,000 Rural/other sites 582 dw Total 5,582
Development based on 5 yrs 14,705	7,536	Canalside 1,200 dw Bankside Phase 2 400 dw Bretch Hill 400 dw

		NW Bicester 3,000 Rural/other sites 2,536 Total 7,536
Development based on 10 yrs 12,855	5,686	Canalside 1,200 dw Bankside Phase 2 400 dw Bretch Hill 400 dw NW Bicester 3,000 Rural/other sites 686 dw Total 5,686
Development Trend based on South East Plan Housing Target 13,400	6,231	Canalside 1,200 dw Bankside Phase 2 400 dw Bretch Hill 400 dw NW Bicester 3,000 Rural/other sites 1,231 dw Total 6,231
Development Trend based on South East Plan Employment Indicative Job Number 18,720	11,551	Canalside 1,200 dw Bankside Phase 2 400 dw Bretch Hill 400 dw NW Bicester 3,000 Rural/other sites 6,551 Total 11,551

3.4 It is suggested that the Council obtain more detailed projections for Banbury, Bicester, Kidlington and the rural areas to inform further consideration of the development strategy.

What other objectives may the Council wish to achieve through its development strategy?

3.5 Broader aspects of the Councils vision which impact upon the development strategy include the following:

- a) We want to offer our communities a good choice of affordable and market housing in order to make housing more affordable and meet the needs of all sections of the population.
- b) We want to focus development into sustainable locations, particularly where this supports regeneration of our urban areas; and thereby make efficient and effective use of land wherever possible.
- c) We want to see growth taking place in an environmentally responsible manner exploiting Bicester's opportunities as an eco-town.
- d) We want to support our economy and ensure that it is vibrant and diverse.
- e) We want to support a rural economy that is not entirely reliant on agriculture.

#### **4.0 Progressing the Core Strategy under the Current Statutory Procedures**

4.1 Public consultation on the Draft Core Strategy was undertaken between February-April 2010. In taking forward the work on the Core Strategy before new procedural arrangements are put into place, there are broadly two options available:

- Progress the Draft Core Strategy to adoption, taking advantage of the window of stability that is now established in terms of procedural arrangements; or
- Pause and wait for new procedural arrangements to be put into place.

4.2 There are several variations on these options which are set out below:

- Progress the Core Strategy to Proposed Submission consultation and then pause to wait for new procedural arrangements to be put into place before progressing the EiP; however this approach raises the risks that the evidence base supporting the



soundness of the Core Strategy will become outdated and that in the meantime the district will not have an adopted Core Strategy to guide development decisions.

- Progress the Core Strategy through the EiP and to adoption reflecting the RSS policies, with the option of a focused review as and when new procedural arrangements are introduced; this approach offers the advantage of being most likely to secure an adopted Core Strategy, however this approach raises the risk that resources will be focused on the costs of the EiP and the Council may wish to progress a subsequent focused review of the Core Strategy fairly soon after adoption.
- Progress the Core Strategy through the EiP and to adoption reflecting a locally determined approach which is not in conformity with the RSS; this approach raises the risks that resources will be invested in the EiP and that the Core Strategy may be rendered unsound and will not be able to be adopted, leaving the district without an adopted Core Strategy to guide development decisions.

What are the risks in the Council progressing a locally determined approach in advance of the introduction of new procedural arrangements?

4.3 The High Court has confirmed that the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) remains as part of the statutory development plan. The Local Development Framework (LDF) is required to be in conformity with the RSS (Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (24)1). If a housing target that differs from that in the RSS is incorporated into the emerging LDF, the local planning authority will have to justify why the LDF is not in conformity with the RSS. If, in making that argument, the local planning authority seeks to rely on the statements and actions of the Secretary of State in attempting to revoke the status of the Regional Spatial Strategies, which have since been found to be unlawful in the High Court, the local planning authority would have to justify the weight that it gives to those statements and actions. The Localism bill has no weight at this early stage but by the time the Core Strategy is placed before an Inspector the Localism Bill may have progressed to a stage where it can be given some weight by the Inspector.

4.4 If the LDF is progressed toward adoption but is not in conformity with the RSS this could have the following implications:

- If the LDF is not in conformity with the RSS, the LDF could be rendered unsound and would be unable to be adopted.
- If the LDF is adopted but is not in conformity with the RSS, we may see an increase in planning by appeal and/or legal challenge.

4.5 If the adoption of the LDF is delayed until new procedures are put into place, this could have the following implications:

- Without an adopted Core Strategy in place the Council will not have an up to date vision by which to guide major decisions on planning applications, to coordinate the delivery of infrastructure or to seek funding to support growth and infrastructure. It may be difficult if not impossible to prepare and adopt other DPD's or a Community Infrastructure Levy. This may harm the Council's ability to deliver on its strategic objectives, by delaying the delivery of homes for people and by holding back economic growth.
- Without an adopted Core Strategy in place we may see neighbourhood plans starting to be prepared in advance of an adopted Core Strategy.
- Without an adopted Core Strategy in place there is likely to be further uncertainty and delay for housing and economic recovery and this may delay development on some sites. This will make it more likely that sites will come forward in an uncoordinated way and not necessarily on sites that the Council and local communities would favour, but which may nonetheless obtain permission due to wider delays in delivering development across the district. If the Council sought to resist such

schemes without good reason then there would be a risk that planning decisions will be taken through planning appeals, with the possibility of the imposition of costs against the Council. This situation is particularly pertinent to this Council as the Cherwell Local Plan is out of time and there is therefore no up-to-date adopted Local Plan covering the district. The time and costs associated with appeals is greater than it would be if we had an adopted Local Plan.

- Without an adopted Core Strategy in place to guide and encourage investment decisions about where new housing should be built, the delivery of housing in the district may decline and the Council may fail to take proper advantage of the proposed New Homes Bonus. Receipt of this grant would help to off-set proposed reductions to the local government formula grant. Limited access to the proposed New Homes Bonus may leave the District Council with limited resources with which to achieve its strategic objectives and both the District Council and the County Council may have reduced access to funds for facilities for local communities and strategic infrastructure.

4.6 The government intends to bring forward proposals from 2012 onwards to change the planning system in England as set out in the recent Localism Bill. These changes are expected to give local authorities and local communities greater responsibilities for determining the pattern and manner of development in their areas. Full details are not yet available and may change as the Localism Bill progresses through Parliament.

4.7 The Council's Core Strategy may be one of the last to complete its progress through to adoption under the existing Planning Act before new procedures are introduced. A subsequent and focused review of the Core Strategy could be undertaken to update the Core Strategy to reflect the new procedures as and when they are introduced. Currently there is no indication that the proposed procedures would exclude a mini-review from being carried out which could focus on an immediate review of the local housing target and respective development distribution strategy. However the adoption of a Core Strategy in conformity with the RSS may result in some communities, or some elements within our communities, being dissatisfied initially that the scope of future decisions over which they may be given control may be, or may be perceived as being, curtailed by the Core Strategy. It may also result in a Core Strategy being adopted which is quickly outdated as the Bill progresses.

4.8 Given the degree of uncertainty regarding the Government's emerging procedures and the risks involved in any of these courses of action at this stage, the Council could agree to take forward work including consultation on both the Council's preferred local housing strategy and the development strategy that is in conformity with the RSS. This would enable the Council to take a more informed decision at a later stage in the year regarding which strategy it will seek to adopt.

## Conclusions

4.9 Having regard to the current statutory requirements there is a clear legal requirement for the LDF to be in conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy.

4.10 However as the new procedures become clearer and on the basis of the updated population and household projections, it is considered that a case may be able to be made for having a lower housing figure in the Core Strategy if the Council consider that is the appropriate approach to take. Whatever figure is used will still need to be supported by robust evidence on a wide range of considerations.

4.11 On the basis of the most recent household projections, a figure of approximately 12,750 may be able to be justified in terms of meeting potential need within the district. Any figure less than this would mean that the likely future needs will not be met and the Council will in effect be recognising that not all identified needs would be met. This level of development may achieve a reasonable balance between meeting the identified need indicated in the projections and reducing the impact of development upon local communities to a more satisfactory level. As such this level of growth may reflect the best way of meeting future needs whilst also seeking to protect local communities.

### Next Steps

4.12 Members are asked to consider how they would wish to progress the Core Strategy. Members are also asked, without prejudice to further work to be undertaken, to agree the broad population and household figures for Cherwell for the period up to 2026 as set out in paragraph 4.11 as the basis for further work.

4.13 It is suggested that further work be undertaken and more information regarding the development strategy be presented to Executive at a later date. This work would include an assessment of more detailed projections for Banbury, Bicester, Kidlington and the rural areas based on the Council's preferred level of housing development, further consideration of the outcome of the public consultation on the Draft Core Strategy and further technical work.

Table 1 - Summary of Population Trends Under Illustrative Scenarios

**Homes**

	New Homes				
	2006-11	2011-16	2016-21	2021-26	2006-26
Natural Change (with migration) 2016-26	2,284	4,141	2,544	2,121	11,089
Nil Net Migration 2016-26	2,284	4,141	3,163	3,163	12,751
828 pa 2016-26	2,284	4,141	4,140	4,140	14,705
643 pa 2016-26	2,284	4,141	3,215	3,215	12,855
SE Plan Homes 2016-26	2,284	4,141	3,487	3,487	13,400
SE Plan Jobs 2016-26	2,284	5,479	5,479	5,479	18,720

	New Homes per year				
	2006-11	2011-16	2016-21	2021-26	2006-26
Natural Change (with migration) 2016-26	457	828	509	424	554
Nil Net Migration 2016-26	457	828	633	633	638
828 pa 2016-26	457	828	828	828	735
643 pa 2016-26	457	828	643	643	643
SE Plan Homes 2016-26	457	828	697	697	670
SE Plan Jobs 2016-26	457	1096	1096	1096	936

**Population and Migration**

	Population					Migration	
	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026	2006-26	2016-26
Natural Change (with migration) 2016-26	132,320	134,171	139,865	142,331	144,160	11,839	-3,287
Nil Net Migration 2016-26	132,320	134,171	139,865	143,605	147,517	15,197	1
828 pa 2016-26	132,320	134,171	139,865	145,616	151,466	19,146	3,856
643 pa 2016-26	132,320	134,171	139,865	143,712	147,728	15,408	206
SE Plan Homes 2016-26	132,320	134,171	139,865	144,273	148,829	16,509	1,281
SE Plan Jobs 2016-26	132,320	134,171	142,695	151,125	159,580	27,260	8,895

**Labour Force**

	Resident Labour Force					
	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026	2006-26
Natural Change (with migration) 2016-26	72,111	72,473	75,042	75,091	74,328	2,217
Nil Net Migration 2016-26	72,111	72,473	75,042	75,839	76,215	4,104
828 pa 2016-26	72,111	72,473	75,041	77,021	78,435	6,324
643 pa 2016-26	72,111	72,473	75,042	75,902	76,333	4,223
SE Plan Homes 2016-26	72,111	72,473	75,042	76,232	76,952	4,842
SE Plan Jobs 2016-26	72,111	72,473	76,755	80,258	82,995	10,884

	Additional Labour Force				
	2006-11	2011-16	2016-21	2021-26	2006-26
Natural Change (with migration) 2016-26	362	2,569	49	-762	2,217
Nil Net Migration 2016-26	362	2,569	798	376	4,104
828 pa 2016-26	362	2,569	1,979	1,414	6,324
643 pa 2016-26	362	2,569	860	431	4,223
SE Plan Homes 2016-26	362	2,569	1,190	721	4,842
SE Plan Jobs 2016-26	362	4,282	3,502	2,737	10,884

## Executive

### Cherwell District Council's Response to Heavy Snow

7 March 2011

### Report of Head of Environmental Services

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the Council's response to the heavy snow in December 2010 and improvements to that response in similar circumstances in the future.

This report is public
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#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the problems and issues which arose from the heavy snow fall prior to Christmas;
- (2) To approve the proposed actions to improve the Council's response to future severe winter weather events; and
- (3) To note that any proposed equipment purchased will be acquired within existing budgets during 2011/12

#### Executive Summary

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##### Introduction

- 1.1 A heavy snow fall occurred on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> December. Some 8" of snow fell on the Saturday and although subsequently little additional snow fell, the temperature remained around or below zero for several days following this event. This snowfall had an impact on several of the services but the major areas of impact were on the waste collection service and car park income.
- 1.2 The snow fall in December was the largest snowfall in Oxfordshire for many years. However, this in addition to a significant snowfall in January 2010, meant it was opportune to review the impact of these events on services and look at how the Council could improve its response.
- 1.3 A review has been undertaken with wide scale representation across the Council. This concluded that the main affects of the snow on the Council's operations were
  - Waste Collection was severely affected with only around 30% of

collections completed in the week before Christmas. The catch up of these lost collections proved difficult because of when the Christmas period fell in the week.

- Public car parks were severely affected.
- Speed of snow clearance in the town centres was less than some members of the public and some traders expected.
- Increased numbers of public enquiries were made about services and our response to snow.
- Markets were affected.
- The public were not clear which Council had responsibilities for different services.
- Press interest in our service position was high.
- Other agencies sometimes gave inaccurate information leading to further public enquiries.
- Access to both Council depots was initially difficult and most of the first day was lost from having to clear both depots and the access to those depots.
- Many staff were not able to get into work.
- Those staff who did get to work struggled to park safely at Bodicote House because of the state of the car park.

1.4 Although a number of areas of possible improvement have been identified some changes made since the last snow event in January 2010 did appear to work well. These areas included

- IT systems - Home working through the Homeworker system worked significantly better than the previous Netilla system. The Netilla system had a restriction on licences which limited access to systems. Feedback on the use of Homeworker has been good.
- Information on the website was generally correct and regularly updated. Although the website listed the collections for the next day some residents felt there was insufficient information relating to when in the future their area would receive catch up collections. However the twitter page worked well & had a reasonable number of followers.
- Communication with Oxfordshire Highways generally worked well and Oxfordshire Highways made 10-15 tonnes of rock salt available for the Council to carry out gritting in the town centres on the behalf of Oxfordshire Highways.
- 8 tonnes of rock salt bought by the Council for the two depots and other areas was utilised on car parking areas as well as the two depots
- A snow plough attachment bought for use on a Land Rover worked

well for clearing an initial route through the Thorpe Lane Depot although the plough proved too small for very large areas with deep snow such as Bodicote House and other car parks.

### **Proposals**

- 1.5 An action plan has been prepared. This includes some small investment in equipment which will make services more robust in the event of heavy snowfall.
- 1.6 Clearance of large amounts of snow is too slow using manual equipment alone. Mechanical plant is required and this will be provided through a contract on a daily rate. Ownership of such equipment has been investigated but the costs of ownership are prohibitive

### **Conclusion**

- 1.7 The heavy snowfall in December 2010 was the greatest for many years and caused disruption to services, more so due to the effect of Christmas. A number of possible improvements which would make services more resilient in the event of heavy snowfall have been investigated. Many of these are low cost or no cost improvements and involve procedural changes, better co-ordination or provision of better information.
- 1.8 A proposed priority of response and committing resources has been established. It is based on returning public services to normal operation as swiftly as practicable. By implementing the action plan services will be more resilient for any future heavy snowfall events.

## Background Information

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- 2.1 On Saturday 18 December 2010, snow starting fall over Oxfordshire. Snowfall continued all day. By the evening some 8 inches of snow had fallen. Temperature levels were already very low and over the next few days hardly ventured above zero and were frequently several degrees below freezing.

### Waste Collection Service

- 2.2 The Waste Collection service was severely affected by the weather. On Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> December road conditions were initially too hazardous to send out the collection crews. In addition all outlets for receiving waste were closed. For the morning, crews at both depots were used on snow clearance in Banbury, Bicester and to clear more snow at the two depots. By early afternoon Waste Collection vehicles attempted to carry out collections in Grimsbury. This was the only area attempted since the area is flat where around 1,500 collections were carried out. No collections were possible in Bicester so only 1,500 collections out of the usual 22,000 district wide were made. On Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> collections took place from both depots with around 6,000 of the planned collections taking place. As conditions gradually improved during the week around 20,000 collections took place on the Thursday and Friday, although these were limited to flat areas in Banbury, and accessible parts of Bicester and Kidlington. Very few village collections were carried out in the week before Christmas.
- 2.3 Neighbouring authorities faired no better or in some cases much worse than Cherwell. In Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire no catch up collections at all were attempted. In South Northamptonshire all collections were suspended in the week prior to Christmas.
- 2.4 Around 2.5 – 3 days worth of collections were lost due to the weather in the week before Christmas. The usual method of catch up involves working Saturdays and Mondays. However with Christmas Day and New Years Day falling on Saturdays and the Mondays were both Bank Holidays, all outlets for waste and recycling were closed. Even if collections were possible on these different days, most households would not have their bins out.
- 2.5 In snow and ice conditions the collection crews have to work at a reduced pace. This large reduction in pace can make it difficult for collection crews to complete their usual rounds. Hence the collection crews were unable to carry out additional collections beyond their usual rounds in a bid to catch up.
- 2.6 In the past, garden waste collections have been stopped in periods of bad weather so that crews can be diverted on to catching up blue and green bin collections. However, now the brown bins contain food waste as well as garden waste, this option has largely been removed.
- 2.7 In snow and icy conditions, it is not only the state of the roads which are of concern. Collection staff pulling wheeled bins in deep snow or across ice becomes hazardous. Although staff are issued with good footwear, the possibility of whether better footwear exists for such extreme conditions needs to be investigated.
- 2.8 Catching up collections is difficult as additional vehicles are no good without



the crews to operate them. By stopping activities such as bin deliveries, street cleansing, bulky waste collections, vehicle maintenance and using those staff, sufficient manpower exists for around 3 additional crews. These crews do help clear backlogs but three additional crews working four days will catch up no more than 1 complete day's worth of collections.

- 2.9 Although additional vehicles can be hired in, competent staff is the limitation. It is important that trained and competent staff are utilised in such conditions Sourcing agency staff at short notice and then having to train them for working in very difficult conditions is not a realistic option. Therefore, three additional crews is the limit of additional resources for catching up.
- 2.10 The failure to catch up all collections due to the combination of snow, bank holidays and the availability of open outlets meant that some properties had to go four weeks between collections. In the north of the district this was green bins, in the south of the district it was brown bins. Clearly this is not satisfactory and measures need to be implemented to reduce the risk of such an event reoccurring.
- 2.11 To minimise disruption, the first aim must be to try to limit the number of lost collections. For collections not to be lost road access needs to be better. This better access can only be achieved by gritting in more residential areas and initial discussions with Oxfordshire Highways have been arranged.
- 2.12 In addition, councils which have more experience of regular significant snow falls will be contacted to try and learn from their experience.
- 2.13 Finally the prioritisation of resources for use on the three respective bins needs to be further considered now food waste is present in the brown bins.
- 2.14 In most circumstances, the four day week working allows a good possibility for catch up although in the week before Christmas this didn't prove possible. Additional crews do help catch up collections. However, it requires at least three additional crews working for four days to catch up just one days worth of lost collections.

### **Urban Centres**

- 2.15 Oxfordshire County Council Highways are responsible for keeping highways clear of snow and ice. However, Oxfordshire Highways initially concentrate their resources on the main highway routes. Consequently the urban centres receive little attention.
- 2.16 Since the Street Cleansing have ceased their operations after heavy snowfall, Street Cleansing resources have been offered to Oxfordshire Highways for clearing snow and ice in the town centres under the guidance of Oxfordshire Highways. Areas for clearance are agreed with Oxfordshire Highways before commencing work.
- 2.17 Oxfordshire Highways make rock salt available for this activity. Unfortunately the amount of snow which fell meant that Street Cleansing teams didn't move on to clearing snow and ice until Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> December. In addition progress was slow since the clearance solely relied on manual tools and staff numbers.
- 2.18 The speed of gritting could be increased if a gritting unit towed by a vehicle such as a Land Rover was acquired. Such a unit could be used not only in

the urban centres but also on car parks and at the two depots.

### **Car Parks**

- 2.19 The policy for public car parks is not to carry out gritting. This policy has been derived on the basis that previously most snow and ice events are very short lived with snow and ice quickly thawing. The policy is reviewed annually, the last being after the snow event in February 2010. This led to a variation in the policy to activate snow removal/gritting if forecasts identified heavy and long lying snow as a high risk. This assumed that there was capacity to undertake the work which proved not to be the case in the December 2010 snow event
- 2.20 In December, the car parks were out of action for many days resulting in significant income loss. This position can be improved with mechanical snow clearance.
- 2.21 Street Cleansing staff carried out some clearance in the area for the market and around The Mill in Banbury. Clearance was slow due to the sole reliance on manual equipment. The Grounds Maintenance contractor also diverted resources to assist with snow clearance

### **Depots**

- 2.22 On Monday 20 December Street Cleansing staff initially had trouble gaining entry to Thorpe Lane depot since padlocks were frozen due to the extremely low temperatures (below -10 C) A snow plough which was fitted to the Land Rover at Thorpe Lane depot quickly cleared a route through the depot. Manual gritting of the route and clearance of the staff car park took place although progress was slow due to the amount of snow which had fallen and the equipment available. Consequently, it took most of Monday to clear out routes through the sites and free many of the Street Cleansing vehicles. In addition, as Thorpe Lane Depot is under refurbishment storage is temporarily limited. This limitation meant that some equipment was stored in Highfield and had to be collected. These delays meant that vehicles could not be despatched to collect rock salt from the Oxfordshire Highways Deddington depot until late afternoon. The delays in collecting rock salt meant little resource was despatched to Banbury Town Centre to assist Oxfordshire Highways until Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> December
- 2.23 At Highfield Depot, no snow plough exists and clearance was manual using snow shovels and rock salt. Clearance of the depot and the entrance to the depot took all day. Consequently no crews were able to be despatched to help Oxfordshire Highways clear snow in Bicester town centre until Tuesday 21 December.
- 2.24 To utilise Street Cleansing staff on town clearance activities requires the depots to be cleared. Hence the quicker the depots can be cleared the quicker Street Cleansing resources can be deployed supporting Oxfordshire Highways in the urban centres. Manual snow shovels, manual gritting proved to be insufficient for dealing with large volumes of snow and progress could be accelerated by more appropriate equipment. The snow plough on the Land Rover was effective. However, snow clearance equipment is also required for Highfield Depot and, in addition, the gritting process at both depots could be considerably speeded up by the purchase of towed equipment.
- 2.25 An additional snow plough for the other 4X4 vehicle which is usually based at

Highfield costs less than £2,000. Gritting equipment which can be towed by a Land Rover costs in the region of £5,000 - £12,000 depending upon requirements. Such equipment would make gritting quicker and reduce the time taken to move Street Cleansing resources away from depot clearance. It also appears quite possible that such equipment could be purchased as part of the approved Environmental Services Vehicle capital programme 2011/12 and probably within the current allocated budget.

### **Customer Service & the website**

- 2.26 The Customer Service Centre received a significant increase in calls in the week prior to Christmas. A high proportion of these calls were from customers enquiring about Waste Collection
- 2.27 Good quality information on the website is important so that customers do not need to ring. Generally the information provided on the website was good. However, improvements to access, presentation and responsibilities on updating have been identified.
- 2.28 The Communications team will take responsibility for updating the website in severe weather conditions. Waste Collection will produce an update by 8am each day with the plans for collections and this will be updated again later in the day

### **Bodicote House**

- 2.29 Bodicote House car park was covered in eight inches of snow, therefore when staff started to arrive they could not gain access. This caused traffic to overflow into White Post Road. The Land Rover from the depot was sent to clear snow along with some Street Cleansing crews. However progress was slow and the snow plough was damaged on the speed humps within the car parks. The size of the car park combined with the depth of snow was too great for the equipment being used. However, eventually staff were able to access some of the car park.
- 2.30 Whilst many staff walked to Bodicote House in severe weather, there are still some who are able to drive. It is important for those who do drive and who operate essential front line public services such as the Customer Services Centre that they have easy access to and safe parking at Bodicote House.

### **Proposed Priority of Response**

- 2.28 Based on the experiences and lessons learnt from the recent heavy snowfall, the following locations should be cleared of snow in order of priority:
  - CDC depots – unless the depots are cleared resources cannot get out to support the public.
  - Banbury Bus Station – Bus routes are a high priority for gritting with Oxfordshire Highways. Hence it is important that the bus station can be accessed.
  - Urban Centres particularly the pedestrianised areas and on Market days.
  - Car Parks - This requires individual car park priorities to be identified

since some car parks are more important to be reopened than others.

- Pathways around public buildings
- Bodicote House – Clearance of the car park especially the public parking area

### **Resources Available to Allocate to the Priority Locations**

- 2.29 The Council has limited specialist snow clearance equipment. Manpower can be supplemented from the Council's Street Cleansing and Vehicle Maintenance staff plus Continental Landscapes. However in deep snow manual equipment is insufficient to clear the snow quickly.

The option for snow clearance is to either purchase relevant equipment or contract in or a contribution of both. The cost of buying and owning a JCB or loading shovels is c£40,000 per vehicle, therefore a combination of contracting these vehicles with drivers on a day rate and minor equipment purchases is recommended.

Minor items to purchase include;

Snow plough unit for a 4X4 vehicle – estimated cost up to £2,000 and Gritting equipment and bins for use at the depots, urban centres for Oxfordshire Highways, car parks and Bodicote House – up to £12,000

### **Understand what should trigger an event**

- 2.30 Such snow events on some occasions can be predicted and where this is possible, a pro active response should be adopted to include;
- Secure and circulate copy of OCC severe weather plan and consider how the CDC Snow Plan would integrate.
  - Review of severe weather warning information received how we get it, who gets it and how we might organise communication of this in the Snow Plan.
  - Secure from OCC their priority gritting route; review and seek to suggest any priority areas across the District that we would ask OCC to include.
  - Provide copy and agree arrangements with Continental Landscapes.

### **Communications**

- 2.31 Informing members of the public in times of disruption about what services they can expect and when is clearly important. The following improvements are proposed to achieve this;
- Have specific arrangements in place for updating the website and ensure updates are communicated daily to the Communications Team.
  - Consider the information the Council wishes to get across and the positive messages that need to be part of the communications approach.
  - Investigate automated response protocols to emails.

- Consider the trigger for the Snow Plan (to be aligned with the OCC Plan), and how corporately this is enacted

### **Other issues**

2.32 These include;

- Check insurance position and liability especially where we are taking money for car parks.
- Look at councils where snow events are more frequent for best practice
- Establish a sub set of priority car parks.

### **Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options**

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3.1 Considering the proposed action plan for adapting services to severe snow events

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 action plan as outlined in paragraph 2.29 to 2.30

**Option Two** To reject the proposed action plan

**Option Three** To ask officers to modify the proposed action plan

### **Consultations**

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Dialogue has commenced with OCC about those proposals in this report relevant to them.

### **Implications**

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**Financial:** There are some revenue and capital implications arising from the proposed actions. The amounts are relatively small and it is expected that these can be contained within approved budgets in 2011/12. In addition, the relatively small sums involved are far less than the loss of car parking income which can be substantial.

Comments checked by Denise Taylor, Service Accountant, Tel 01295 221982

**Legal:** There are no legal implications with this report

Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer. Tel 01295 221686

**Risk Management:** The likelihood of very heavy snowfall in Oxfordshire has been low but the consequence of such an event can be significant. With a changing climate it is difficult to forecast whether such events are likely to be more or less likely. However, it is prudent to make small investments to reduce the consequences of such an event.

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

**Wards Affected**

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All

**Corporate Plan Themes**

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Accessible and Value for Money Council

**Executive Portfolio**

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**Councillor Reynolds**  
Portfolio Holder for Environment, Recreation and Health

**Document Information**

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
None	
<b>Background Papers</b>	
None	
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