

Public Document Pack

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 6 October 2014 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman), Leader of the Council
Councillor G A Reynolds (Vice-Chairman), Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Ken Atack, Lead Member for Financial Management
Councillor Norman Bolster, Lead Member for Estates and the Economy

Councillor John Donaldson, Lead Member for Banbury Brighter Futures

Councillor Michael Gibbard, Lead Member for Planning

Councillor Tony Ilott, Lead Member for Clean and Green

Councillor Kieron Mallon, Lead Member for Performance and Customers

Councillor D M Pickford, Lead Member for Housing

Also Present: Councillor Barry Richards (representing Councillor Sean Woodcock, Leader of the Labour Group)
Councillor Lawrie Stratford

Apologies for absence: Councillor Nicholas Turner, Lead Member for Joint Working and Communications

Officers: Sue Smith, Chief Executive
Karen Curtin, Commercial Director (Bicester)
Ian Davies, Director of Community and Environment
Kevin Lane, Head of Law and Governance / Monitoring Officer
Jo Pitman, Head of Transformation
Paul Sutton, Head of Finance and Procurement
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections

50 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

52 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

53 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

54 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made the following announcement:

1. Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, members of the public were permitted to film, broadcast and report on the meeting, subject to the efficient running of the meeting not being affected.

55 **Customer Satisfaction Survey Results 2014**

The Head of Transformation submitted a report which updated the Executive on the results of the annual satisfaction survey and identified any areas to be reflected in future business and/or performance plans.

In introducing the report, the Lead Member for Performance and Communications reported that overall satisfaction levels now peaked at its highest recorded level of 77%. This represented a 17% increase since the council began undertaking Customer Satisfaction Surveys in 2006.

Resolved

- (1) That the results of the customer survey, with particular reference to improvement in areas that were identified as priorities as an outcome of the survey undertaken in 2014, be noted.
- (2) That the following priorities and areas of focus for future action be agreed:

Customer Priorities

The 'top 6' key services which are perceived to be a priority by local residents in greater magnitude than other council services.

- 1) Household waste collection
- 2) Household recycling collection and food/ garden waste collection service
- 3) Dealing with anti-social behaviour/ nuisance
- 4) Providing affordable housing
- 5) Street cleaning and tackling environmental crime
- 6) Supporting the creation of jobs in the local area

Suggested Areas for Future Focus

- a) Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour: The positive increase in satisfaction with the Council's approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour and nuisance recorded last year has been maintained in 2014, with 56% satisfied. This is notably higher than the lowest recorded level of 30% in 2007. However ranked third in the above perceived priorities.
- b) Sports and Leisure facilities: Overall satisfaction with leisure activities provided by Cherwell District Council remains in line with previous years, with 56% satisfied with their provision and 11% dissatisfied. The leisure activities provided by the Council are the lead driver of overall satisfaction and as such, it is important to maintain satisfaction levels in this area. There are also areas of dissatisfaction to be addressed within Leisure Facilities. This year, ratings have remained stable; 68% are satisfied with the leisure facilities provided by the Council overall vs. 69% in 2013.
- c) Continuing to focus on Street Cleansing and dealing with environmental crime' one of the 'top 6' priorities street cleansing is a service that is experienced by all residents and plays an important part in terms of quality of life and enjoyment living within a local area. It is a service upon which the Council is judged and valued by many residents and as such should remain an on-going area of focus.

Reasons

This report presents a summary of the findings from the 2014 customer satisfaction survey. It highlights a general trend of improvement across council services as well as areas where continued focus is required.

The report also highlights customer priorities and these will be used to help inform budget setting, the development of the Council's Business Plan, Performance Pledges and 5 year Strategy.

As well as these high level findings the survey includes a wealth of service specific detail that will be used by service managers to help underpin service planning.

Alternative Options

Option 1: To accept the recommendations as outlined in part one of this report.

Option 2: To reject the recommendations and request additional work or alternative priorities arising from the survey findings.

The Head of Transformation submitted a report which presented the Council's performance for the period 01 April 2014 – 30 June 2014 as measured through the Performance Management Framework.

Resolved

- (1) That the following achievements be noted:

Cherwell: A District of Opportunity

- Northwest Bicester: Delivery of the Masterplan to the agreed timescales is reporting as Green. The next stage in delivering the Masterplan will be the submission and processing of planning applications for the development. It is anticipated that applications will be received for the majority of the site before the end of the year and determined during 2015.
- Graven Hill: deliver the Council's vision for this strategic site is reporting as Green. Huge progress has been made on concluding the S.106 issues and completion of the land transaction expected in early August 2014. The business case for creation of a 'group structure' of Companies Limited by Shares (Holding Company and Development Company) has been approved by the Executive (16th July) with companies incorporated and inaugural meeting of both companies held on the 7 July 2014. Six key work themes have been identified as necessary to deliver the council's vision for Graven Hill: consolidation of land assembly & boundary issues; On-going engagement with Ministry of Defence (MOD); Ecology and ground investigation; Design and planning; Delivery and procurement; Sales, marketing and investment.

Safe, Green and Clean

- Tonnage of waste sent to landfill is reporting as Green. On track and with a number of actions planned during 2014/15 to reduce amount sent to landfill.
- Number of fly tips enforcement actions (compared with same period 2013/14) is reporting as Green*. During the quarter 50 warning letters, 13 Section 71 Notices and 1 formal caution were issued. Warning letters work very well in circumstances when it would not be suitable to take a more formal approach.
- Percentage of nuisance cases responded to within prescribed period of 48 hours is reporting as Green. Case load increased from 183 in Quarter 4 2013/14 to 452 in Quarter 1 but despite the increasing case load response times have been maintained.

Thriving Communities

- Average time taken to process new claims and changes for Housing Benefit in days is reporting as Green*. Changes continue to be processed well within target and this is expected to continue through the year.
- No of households in temporary accommodation is reporting as Green*. The number of households in temporary accommodation remains within the target set. The Housing Team continue their service delivery with an on-going focus on homelessness prevention. This helps to keep the number of those progressing to make a statutory homeless application low, which in turn maintains the current performance for provision of temporary accommodation.
- Maintain a minimum usage level of visits to leisure facilities (Total of visits to District Leisure Centres and WGLC, NOA and Cooper) is

reporting as Green*. Throughputs are up 18,913 on June 2013 with:
- Spiceball Leisure Centre up 1,907, Kidlington & Gosford Leisure Centre up by 5,144 and Bicester Leisure Centre up by 11,862 - the increase is attributed to the play and teach pool figures.

- Processing of major applications with 13 weeks is reporting as Green*. The measures introduced last year continue to show improvements. A figure of nearly 91% has been achieved this quarter and this continues to represent sustained and significant progress compared to historic performance.

Sound Budgets and Customer focussed council

- Maximise income through designing services that can attract a market is reporting as Green. Some market work has been undertaken to ascertain the capacity to trade. Until the new operating model is in effect trading potential is limited.
- Increase our use of social media to communicate with residents and local businesses is reporting as Green. Facebook and Twitter continue to be used extensively at CDC, with residents engaging with the communications team on a daily basis on a variety of subjects. The range of messages that are promoted through social media also continues to grow as departments become more aware of what can be achieved on a limited or no budget.
- Deliver an annual balanced budget setting out the five year financial plan (Medium Term Financial Strategy) is reporting as Green. Currently developing updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) with actions to address future anticipated pressures

- (2) That the following performance related matters be identified for review or consideration in future reports:

Cherwell: A District of Opportunity

- Bicester town centre regeneration including the Council Community Building is reporting as Amber. Planning permission obtained for the Community Building. We are currently reviewing costs ahead of awarding construction contract. Completion is aimed for Q4 2015.
- Agree next steps for the development options for Kidlington against agreed timescales and milestones is reporting as Amber. Masterplans follow on from Local Plans. These are currently delayed while the Local Plan issues are resolved.

Safe, Clean and Green

- Number of fly tips recorded (compared with same period 2013/14) is reporting as Red. There is no obvious trend showing so far regarding the number of fly tips. It has however been noted that there has been a small increase in the number of white goods being left out on the verge, for the scrap metal collectors. Investigations cannot always identify the resident that has left them out.
- Percentage of nuisance cases resolved within 8 weeks is reporting as Amber. Of the 452 cases received in Quarter 1, 425 were resolved. Due to the high number of cases resolution, performance has continued to be good although slight slippage is inevitable. A greater level of activity tends to occur in Quarters 1 and 2 as it is

seasonal. There has been an increase in the number of complaints about barking dogs and the figures here include those from Operation Jazz which is now in its third year. This operation, running 2 nights per week, has proved very successful and consequently officers are dealing with more calls.

Thriving Communities

- Processing of minor applications with 8 weeks is reporting as Red. The impact of greater overall application numbers together with a higher proportion of majors has affected the processing of minor applications. The emphasis on majors has resulted in a backlog of registration which has in turn had an impact on overall performance, 55% compared with a target of 65%. Short term measures have been put in place (allocation of additional staff and overtime working) to reduce the registration backlog. In addition the registration team has been relocated and the whole process is being modelled using "PlanSim" software which will allow the impact of changes to the process to be understood before introduction. These changes are expected to see an improvement in performance by the end of the next quarter.
- Percentage of planning appeals allowed against refusal decision (%) is reporting as Red. The performance measure is volatile as it is based on low overall appeal numbers and therefore each decision can impact on the performance measure for appeals. There is no evidence of poor performance, though this continues to be carefully monitored.

Sound Budgets and Customer Focussed Council

- Increase organisational capacity and efficiency and Improve workforce planning and development is reporting as Amber. Action Plan is being developed as part of the HR & OD Strategy work as part of 3 way working. During 2014/15 the focus will be on planning for this with implementation expected in 2015/16.
- Deliver significant reduction in phone contact by implementing additional online services is reporting as Amber. Suspension of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Customer Portal project pending 3 way working reviews will impact on the opportunity to achieve "significant" reductions. However work continues in the interim to use current software provision to implement online services where viable.

Reasons

This report presents the Council's performance against its corporate scorecard for the first quarter of 2014/15. It includes an overview of successes, areas for improvement and emerging issues to be considered.

Alternative Options

Option 1: To note the report

Option 2: To request additional information on items and/or add to the work programme for review and/or refer to Overview and Scrutiny.

57

Quarter 1 2014/15 Financial Performance

The Director of Resources submitted a report which summarised the Council's Revenue and Capital position, treasury management and procurement performance for the first three months of the financial year 2014-15 and projections for the full 2014-15 period.

The report also presented information on treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management policy during 2014-15 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice

Resolved

- (1) That the projected revenue and capital position at June 2014 be noted.
- (2) That the quarter 1 (Q1) performance against the 2014-15 investment strategy and the financial returns from the funds be noted.
- (3) That the contents and the progress against the Corporate Procurement Action Plan be noted.

Reasons

The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management which this Council has adopted requires a regular budget monitoring report. This report illustrates the Council's performance against the 2014-15 Financial Targets for Revenue, Capital and Procurement Monitoring.

Alternative Options

Option 1: As this is a monitoring report, no further options have been considered. However, members may wish to request that officers provide additional information.

58

Budget Strategy 2015 to 2016 and Beyond

The Director of Resources submitted a report which informed the Executive of the service and financial planning process for 2015-16, to approve the 2015-16 budget strategy and to agree the budget guidelines for issue to service managers to enable the production of the 2015-16 budget.

The report also presented the most recent Medium Term Revenue Plan (MTRP), sought consideration of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2015-16 and agreement of the Council's approach to Business Rates pooling for 2015-16.

Resolved

- (1) That the updated Medium Term Revenue Plan for the Council's revenue budget for 2015-16 to 2019-20 be noted.

- (2) That the overall 2015-16 budget strategy and service and financial planning process be endorsed.
- (3) That the proposed budget guidelines and timetable for 2015-16 (annexes to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be agreed.
- (4) That agreement be given to consult on the retention of the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2015-16 and authority be delegated to the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Lead Member for Financial Management, to make the final decision on the scheme.
- (5) That authority be delegated to the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Lead Member for Financial Management, to make the final decision on Business Rates pooling for 2015-16.

Reasons

The Council needs to set guidelines and a timetable for the preparation of draft estimates for 2015-16. These guidelines should support the objectives contained in the Business Plan, Service Plans and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Alternative Options

Option 1: To disagree with the recommendations set out above. This is rejected as it will unnecessarily delay the formulation of the detailed budget for 2015-16.

59

Outcome of the Review of Flooding at Hanover Gardens, Bicester

The Commercial Director (Bicester) submitted a report to update on the outcome of the investigation into the root cause of the flooding at Hanover Gardens on 24 December 2013.

Executive thanked both Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council Officers for their hard work in assisting the residents and management team at Hanover Gardens and, in particular, the efforts to ensure affected residents were rehoused as quickly as possible. Executive also extended their thanks to the companies and hotels that had supported the residents.

Resolved

- (1) That the proactive response provided by Cherwell District Council to assist the residents and management team at Hanover Gardens be noted.
- (2) That the outcome and recommended actions from the Environment Agency Report (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be noted.

- (3) That it be noted the Council has agreed to run an information campaign in October 2014 throughout the District on the importance of preventing debris from entering all rivers in the district.
- (4) That it be noted that a partnership meeting with all interested parties continues to monitor any outstanding actions and the Council has representation through the Head of Housing and Regeneration.

Reasons

The immediate response provided by the Housing Team to the situation at Hanover Gardens on 24 December 2013 and for the period between Christmas and New Year was in line with Council policy and was at the high standard we expect. The team have been formally thanked for all the work that they undertook during the festive period.

As stated in Appendix 1 it is not possible to eliminate the risk of flooding from rivers but the recommendations identified in the report are positive steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of flooding from the River Bure in the future particularly in relation to preventing debris from entering the River Bure which was the root cause of the flood at Hanover Gardens.

The Council as a member of the partnership who worked together to review this issue will ensure that it fulfils its action by the agreed date and ensure that all residents of the District are aware of how important it is to prevent debris from entering the River Bure. An information campaign beginning with a press release concerning this report will run throughout October 2014.

Alternative Options

Option 1: To approve the recommendation

Option 2: To reject the recommendation

60

Hanwell Fields Community Centre Solar Panels

The Director of Community and Environment submitted a report which recommended the installation of solar PV panels on the roof of Hanwell Fields Community Centre, Rotary Way, Banbury and the use of a capital fund to finance the solar PV installation.

Resolved

- (1) That the installation of solar PV panels on the roof of Hanwell Fields Community Centre, Rotary Way, Banbury be approved.
- (2) That the use of capital (ref:50211" Hanwell Fields Community Development Fund") to finance the solar PV installation be approved.
- (3) That the division of resultant income as follows be approved: CDC to retain one third of the feed in tariff income to accumulate a reserve for

maintenance and the eventual replacement of the inverter which has a design life of 10 years (approximately half that of the panels) and to cover increased insurance costs of the building. The remaining two thirds of the feed in tariff income would be passed on to the Community Association.

Reasons

The proposed project will assist the HFCA to remain solvent and continue to provide and facilitate valued community services. For this reason it is legitimate use of a fund intended to promote community development.

At minimal cost to the District Council, this project will serve as a test case for provision of solar panels in CDC's other community centres.

The proposed project will reduce the carbon footprint of this CDC owned facility.

Alternative Options

Option 1: To amend the proposed split of income from the Feed in Tariff
Reason: Less than one third of the income is less likely to cover the council's maintenance costs.

Option 2: To reject the recommendations

61 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

62 **South West Bicester Sports Village**

The Director of Community and Environment submitted an exempt report relating to the South West Bicester Sports Village.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt minutes.
- (2) As set out in the exempt minutes.
- (3) As set out in the exempt minutes.

- (4) That a further update report on the project following the receipt and evaluation of construction contract tenders be submitted to Executive.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt minutes.

Alternative Options

As set out in the exempt minutes.

63

Woodgreen Leisure Centre

The Director of Community and Environment submitted an exempt report relating to Woodgreen Leisure Centre.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt decision notice.
- (2) As set out in the exempt decision notice.
- (3) That a further report on the outcome of the tendering process be submitted to Executive.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt minutes.

Alternative Options

As set out in the exempt minutes.

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm

Chairman:

Date:

GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE 2015/16 BUDGET

Principles

- Protect Frontline Services
- Focus attention on corporate and service priorities and improving performance
- Maximise joint working potential
- Maximise procurement opportunities and contract negotiations

These budget guidelines have been developed within a consistent corporate framework to ensure:

- implementation of agreed savings and efficiency proposals
- resources are allocated to Council priorities
- inappropriate competition between services for resource allocations is minimised
- there is a transparent method for charging a fair cost between internal Council services.

The guidelines are designed to positively encourage managers and elected members to do the following:

- bring forward ideas and options to make more effective use of existing resources, clearly identifying how the ideas may develop over a 3-year period, including any requirements for pump priming money.
- link the budget setting process to Service Plans and the requirement for the identification of options, which will produce efficiency savings.
- focus attention on corporate and service priorities and improving performance.

Budget Deliverables

1. Prepare and submit draft revenue estimates for 2015/16 and the next 4 years (5 year forecast) which fully reflect the service priority and consultation event findings and match the current duration of the MTFS.
2. Prepare and submit a draft 5 year capital programme. All schemes to carry a full project appraisal including strategic objective, priority, value for money assessment, and details of any revenue impacts. All capital project appraisals will be validated by the Budget Planning Committee. All schemes previously approved to start in 2014/15 and onwards will be carried through for consideration.
3. The 2014/15 projected outturn at September 2014, adjusted to take account of the full year effect of savings identified in setting the 2015/16 budget, and one off items will be assumed to be the “**base budget**”.

Budget Timetable

The revenue and capital budget is agreed by full Council before 11 March each year. The 2015/16 budget will be considered at Council in February 2015.

Revenue Budget Guidelines

Income

In building income budgets it is essential that a realistic assessment of income achievement is undertaken. Budget holders should use their knowledge of past trends and current market conditions in assessing income levels for the future and the scope for increases in fees and charges.

It is important to look at not only financial information but also non-financial information such as activity data on customer usage and trends to help build realistic income estimates.

Variations to the existing approved budget for income must be clearly identified and explained.

Variations in fees and charges need to be considered taking into account the Council's priorities and objective to ensure that proposals are consistent with these priorities and objectives.

Growth

- It is the aspiration that the net impact of all growth items should be **ZERO**.
- Growth arising from changes in legislation / regulation or service planning will **ONLY** be allowed if it is fully funded by transferring resources within the same service or from within the same Directorate. Any such transfer either within the same service or the same Directorate can only come from demonstrably lower priority services. A growth proforma should be completed detailing full requirements.

Financial assumptions - should be used in estimating changes in expenditure and income over the medium term.

- Provide for general inflation in 2014/15 on all expenditure (excl payroll) and fees and charges as per forecasts in our MTFS model and will be used in the budget module as below:

Year	CPI %
2015/16	2.7%
2016/17	2.7%
2017/18	2.7%
2018/19	2.7%
2019/20	2.7%

Current CPI at September 2014 is 1.5%

- Payroll – payroll inflation is included at the following levels:

Year	%
2015/16	2.0%
2016/17	2.0%
2017/18	2.0%
2018/19	2.0%
2019/20	2.0%

- Council Tax should be forecasted with 0% increases and held at 2010/11 levels.

Year	CPI %
2015/16	0%
2016/17	0%
2017/18	0%
2018/19	0%
2019/20	0%

- Interest rates should be forecasted as below:

Year	Average Interest Rate
2015/16	0.75%
2016/17	0.75%
2017/18	0.75%
2018/19	0.75%
2019/20	0.75%

All financial indices above are subject to further review in the budget process and may be subject to change.

Savings

Each Directorate is required to work up a full range of budget savings options at 10%, 15% and 20%. These options will be presented as potential Budget savings. A standard template is provided (requesting information on lead-in times, one off costs and impact on priorities, services and policies).

Directorates are encouraged to be “free thinking” in drawing up options which:

- identify opportunities for new efficiency savings.
- identify areas with reducing levels of income and identify opportunities for reducing corresponding expenditure.
- challenge current methods of service delivery and identify alternative ways of providing services.
- challenge existing policies and service levels so a complete range of service reductions are identified.
- have considered every issue relating to the potential saving (including lead-in times, one-off costs and impact on services and policies).

- have considered the statutory requirement to provide the service and at what minimum level, or whether the service is discretionary.
- Explicitly consider if there is scope for efficiencies via closer working with other local authorities particularly in light of our own, South Northants and Stratford closer working.

Capital programme Guidelines

- Capital resources are reducing over the life of the MTFs. The development of 5-year rolling capital programme and resources should be drawn up within the context of the following objectives:
 1. The generation of additional reserves and balances, with appropriate contingencies.
 2. Opportunities to invest to save.
 3. Maintaining Council assets and the Council's infrastructure to agreed standards.
- A capital project appraisal is required for each bid and this will be validated by the Budget Planning Committee who will make recommendations for schemes to be included in the 2015/16 capital programme. All schemes previously approved to start in 2015/16 and onwards will be carried through for consideration.

Procurement

When setting both the 2015/16 budget and future years, regard should be given to the Corporate Procurement Strategy and the Council's Contract Procedure rules. In particular, budgets and projections should be based on Corporate and agreed framework contracts. Further advice and guidance can be obtained from the Council's Procurement Team.

Risk

The budget process is fundamental to the Council's financial management regime and Members need to be assured that all pertinent issues are properly considered when making key decisions on the Council's future finances.

In drawing up revenue budget proposals, risk assessments should be undertaken to test the robustness of proposals and to identify key factors which may impact on the proposals put forward. Where appropriate action plans should be put in place to manage/mitigate the risks identified – this may include a risk provision within the budget which can be calculated by your service accountant.

With a £14m Revenue Budget covering all the Council's services and activities, the potential for an issue to be missed or not considered properly will always be there. The budget process is designed to minimise this risk and throughout the process there are frequent meetings with Joint Management Team and Executive to review.

2015-16 Budget Setting and Business Planning Timetable

Date	CDC
	July 2014
30/07/14	Budget Consultation Public Focus Group - CDC
31/07/14	Budget Consultation Public Focus Group - Bicester
	September 2014
08/09/14	Executive/JMT Away day
	October 2014
	Officer Budget Workshops date to be confirmed
06/10/14	Executive - Budget Strategy and Guidelines Annual Satisfaction Survey Report
07/10/14	Budget Planning Committee
21/10/14	Informal Executive - Business Plan Update
	November 2014
04/11/14	Budget Planning Committee - Capital
11/11/14	Budget Planning Committee (Proposed Informal) - IT Capital
18/11/14	Informal Executive - Business Plan year two detail
18/11/14	Budget Planning Committee – Capital & Growth
25/11/14	Overview and Scrutiny - Business Strategy Priorities
	December 2014
01/12/14	Executive - Budget and Draft Business Plan
02/12/14	Budget Consultation goes live Budget Planning Committee – Draft 1 Revenue Budget
	January 2015
05/01/15	Executive – Council Tax Base
13/01/15	Overview & Scrutiny - Service Plan activity
16/01/15	Budget Consultation Ends
20/01/15	Budget Planning Committee – Draft Budget & Review of Reserves
	February 2015
02/02/15	Executive – Final Budget Proposals, Council Tax, Business Plan and Pledges
23/02/15	Council - Final Budget, Business Strategy, Plan and Council Tax
28/02/15	Council Tax Leaflet

Hanover Garden Flooding December 2013

Environment Agency Report

July 2014

This report explains the Environment Agency's role during flooding from the River Bure in Bicester, Oxfordshire on 24 December 2013. It sets out recommendations to reduce the risk of similar flooding in the future.

Background

River Bure

The River Bure is also known as the Town Brook. It starts where a number of small watercourses join to the north of the A4095 Bicester ring road. It flows generally north to south passing under the A4095 and beneath the railway line. Through the town centre it flows alongside Manorsfield Road. At Hanover Gardens a small side stream flows off to the west, this channel is known as the Back Brook. At this point both channels enter culverts (pipes). Both channels then continue in a combination of open channel and culvert until they rejoin south of Priory Lane. The River Bure joins the Pingle Stream immediately north of the Bicester Village retail park.

As with all watercourses, riparian owners are legally responsible for maintenance along the Bure. Riparian owners are those who own the land which a watercourse flows over or under. South of the railway line the River Bure including the Back Brook is designated as Main River. The Environment Agency has permissive powers to carry out maintenance and other flood risk management activities along these sections.



Figure 1: Watercourses in Bicester. Main Rivers marked in red



Figure 2: Trash screens at Hanover Gardens during normal flows looking south west towards the Back Brook culvert



Figure 3: River Bure trash screen at Hanover Gardens during normal flows looking east

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
0345 988 1188
0845 988 1188

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

Weather

The rainfall recorded during December 2013 was above average for that month. By the end of the month the ground was starting to become saturated, any additional rainfall would lead to increased run off. During 23 December and the early hours of 24 December 28mm of rainfall was recorded at the Environment Agency's Bicester rain gauge. This caused water levels in the River Bure and other watercourses around Bicester to rise.

Between 23 December and 8 February we issued four Flood Alerts for the Langford and Wendlebury Brook; this area also includes part of the River Bure floodplain. No Flood Warnings for the Langford Brook or the Wendlebury Brook were issued over the period. We do not provide a flood warning service for the River Bure, as we have no monitoring equipment on this river.

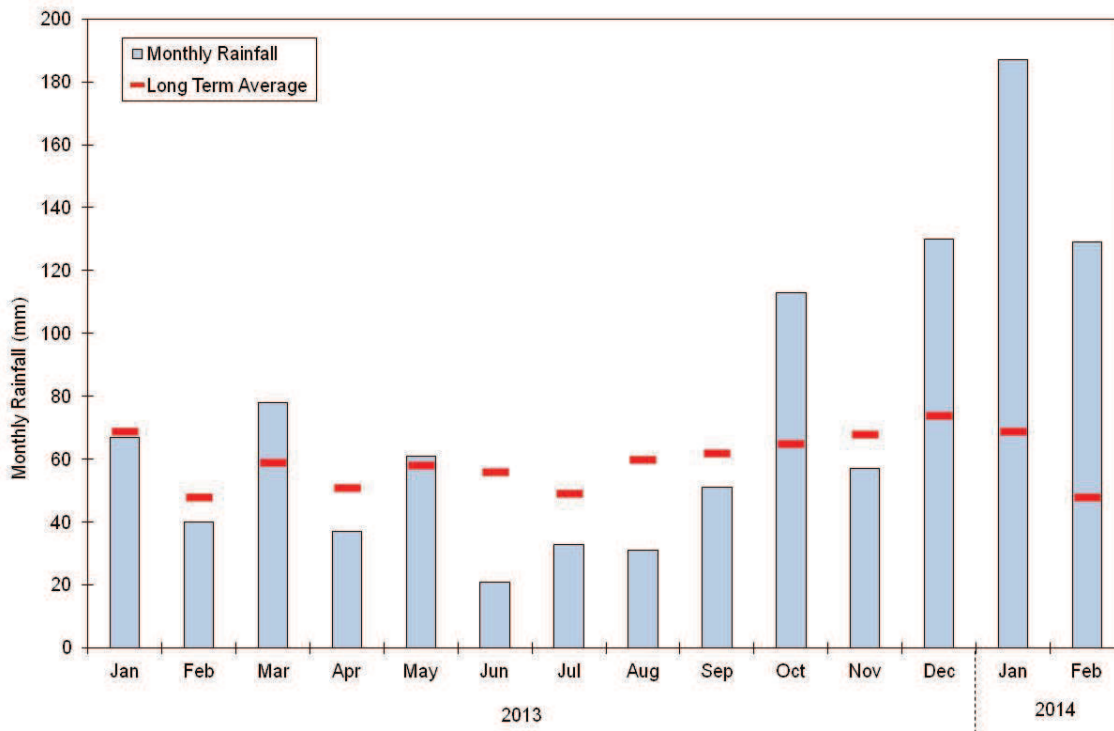


Figure 4: Rainfall in South East England January 2013 - Feb 2014

Flooding 24 December 2013

Due to the ongoing wet weather Environment Agency Operations Management Teams carried out inspections of the main river watercourses through Bicester twice on 23 December. The trash screens at Hanover Gardens were inspected and a small amount of debris removed in the morning and again at approximately 1530 in the afternoon.

At 0530 on 24 December the Environment Agency received an initial report from Oxfordshire County Council of flooding at Hanover Gardens in Bicester. At 0630 our Area Incident Room received a further report from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) confirming they were in attendance and assisting with the evacuation of the retirement home there. They requested our attendance as they believed a grating (trash screen) required clearing.

An Environment Agency Operations Management team was sent to the area. They arrived at 0800.

On arrival our team reported to the OFRS Officer in Charge. They were informed that OFRS had been in attendance since approximately 0400 that morning. The area around the retirement home was flooded with water flowing across the road at Hanover Gardens, across a car park and onto the adjacent road, named Causeway. OFRS had partially demolished a wall on the south side of Causeway to allow water to return to the Back Stream. OFRS stated they believed the gratings (trash screen) to the culverts beneath Hanover Gardens were clear and passing water. The evacuation of the retirement home had already taken place with some occupants being moved to higher floors.

We believed OFRS had taken all reasonable measures to manage the flood water so our team re-located approximately 200 meters upstream to a property which was close to being flooded. The team deployed two pumps to reduce levels around this property.

Two additional Environment Agency teams arrived on site to assist the first team. One helped deploy two pumps at the private residence. Pumping continued for two hours which prevented the property from flooding. The Environment Agency does not have a legal responsibility to assist with the protection of individual private properties during a flood, however our staff are encouraged to take a risk based approach and act pragmatically to reduce risk to communities.

Our other team checked all the trash screens on the River Bure and Back Brook for blockages. At approximately 1100 this team successfully removed a large amount of debris from below the water level at the Bure trash screen at Hanover Garden. Our team also cleared trash screens downstream at Chapel Street & Priory Road.

Following the removal of this debris, the water levels in the River Bure were observed to have dropped around the retirement home and the water started to return within banks.

By the time the first Environment Agency team left the area at approximately 1230 the River Bure was back within its banks at Hanover Gardens and further upstream. The final Environment Agency team left the site at approximately 1530 as OFRS were closing down their incident response. By this time, the entire River Bure and other connected watercourses were flowing within their banks.

The Environment Agency received reports that 19 properties at Hanover Gardens were affected by the flooding. Although extensive flooding occurred along Causeway the number of properties that were affected is not known.

Once the flood water of 24 December 2013 had receded, Environment Agency operational teams continued their routine of daily inspection and maintenance to ensure the watercourse was clear of blockages. There has been no further flooding from the River Bure to date.



Figure 5: River Bure out of banks looking north from Hanover Gardens towards Manorsfield Road



Figure 6: Flooding along Causeway looking west

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
0345 988 1188
0845 988 1188

www.gov.uk/environment-agency



Figure 7: Section of wall removed on south side of Causeway by Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service to allow flood water to return to Back Brook



Figure 8: Guard rail of Back Stream culvert headwall surrounded by flood water

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
0345 988 1188
0845 988 1188

www.gov.uk/environment-agency



Figure 9: Environment Agency operational team removing debris from the River Bure trash screen at Hanover Gardens

customer service line
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incident hotline
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floodline
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0845 988 1188

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

Recommendations

It is not possible to eliminate the risk of flooding from rivers but the following recommendations are positive steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of flooding from the River Bure in the future. The lead authority or person has been listed below to help with delivery of the recommendations, however many of the recommendations will require the Environment Agency to work in partnership with other organisations and individuals. The actions for partner organisations have been discussed and agree with them.

Recommendation	Description	Lead	Target date
Make improvements to trash screen at Hanover Gardens	It is likely that unseen debris on the trash screens at Hanover Gardens reduced the capacity of these culverts during the flooding. Oxfordshire County Council has already reduced the numbers of bars on the trash screen to reduce the risk of future blockages. A number of permanent improvements to the main trash screen have been agreed to reduce the risk of debris build up and improve maintenance access. Environment Agency consent for the works has been granted.	Oxfordshire County Council	Autumn 2014
Continue regular inspection and debris clearance along River Bure	Regular inspection and maintenance of the watercourse is important to ensure it is clear of debris that could lead to blockages during floods. The Environment Agency carries out regular maintenance along the river but requires riparian owners to fulfil their responsibilities too.	Riparian owners and Environment Agency	Ongoing
Information campaign on the importance of preventing debris from entering the River Bure	Reducing the amount of debris entering the River Bure by raising awareness amongst residents, including businesses and encouraging good practice by riparian owners will reduce the risk of blockages during floods.	Cherwell District Council	October 2014
Raise awareness of Environment Agency Incident Reporting Service in Bicester	With a number of organisations involved in flood response it can be difficult for residents to know who to contact. Raising awareness of our Incident Reporting Service (0800 80 70 60) and other useful contacts during a flood should help residents know who to contact for help during a flood.	Environment Agency	October 2014
Carry out review of trash screens and other structures along the River Bure to identify whether any could be removed or modified to reduce flood risk	Improvements have already been agreed for the trash screen at Hanover Gardens but there may be other structures along the River Bure that could be improved or removed to reduce the risk of future flooding. If any such structures are identified the Environment Agency will contact the owner of the structure to request this work is carried out.	Environment Agency	November 2014

Improve flood warnings on the River Bure	The Environment Agency is not currently planning to install any new flood warning stations. We would be happy to provide advice to riparian owners and partner organisations who may wish to install their own flood warning systems.	Riparian owners	No set date
Formalise spillway back into Back Stream	The wall in Causeway which was removed by OFRS to allow water to return to the Back Brook has not been rebuilt. It has been replaced with a pedestrian hand rail. This will reduce the risk of water backing up along Causeway.	Oxfordshire County Council	Complete

Report compiled by

Lewis Purbrick MCIWEM C.WEM

Flood Risk Advisor

Partnership and Strategic Overview Team (Oxfordshire and Berkshire)

Environment Agency West Thames Area

Report Approved by

Barry Russell

Area Operations Manager

Environment Agency West Thames Area