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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 5 September 2016 at 6.30 pm

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

Councillor Ken Atack, Lead Member for Financial Management
Councillor Colin Clarke, Lead Member for Planning
Councillor John Donaldson, Lead Member for Housing
Councillor Tony Ilott, Lead Member for Public Protection
Councillor Kieron Mallon, Lead Member for Banbury Futures
Councillor Lynn Pratt, Lead Member for Estates and the Economy
Councillor Nicholas Turner, Lead Member for Joint Working and ICT

Also Present: Councillor Sean Woodcock, Leader of the Labour Group
Councillor Les Sibley

Apologies for absence: Councillor D M Pickford, Lead Member for Clean and Green

Officers: Karen Curtin, Commercial Director
Scott Barnes, Director of Strategy and Commissioning
Ian Davies, Director of Operational Delivery
Kevin Lane, Head of Law and Governance / Monitoring Officer
Paul Sutton, Chief Finance Officer / Section 151 Officer
Adrian Colwell, Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy, for agenda item 8
Jo Pitman, Head of Transformation, for agenda item 14
Chris Stratford, Head of Regeneration and Housing, for agenda item 16
Natasha Clark, Interim Democratic and Elections Manager

39 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

41 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

42 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 4 July 2016 and 18 July 2016 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

43 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

1. 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.
2. He would be changing the order of the agenda taking agenda item 8, Neighbourhood Planning: Decision on whether to proceed to a Referendum for the Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan and agenda item 9, Air Quality Update before agenda item 7. All subsequent agenda items would be considered in the order printed on the agenda.

44 **Neighbourhood Planning: Decision on whether to proceed to a Referendum for the Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan**

The Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy submitted a report to seek a decision on whether to proceed to a Referendum for the Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan.

In introducing the report, the Lead Member for Planning explained that the Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan had been examined by an independent examiner. The examiner has produced an Examiner's report and the Council as the Local Planning Authority was required to consider the report recommendations and determine whether the draft Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan incorporating the modifications should proceed to a referendum and confirm the area covered by the referendum.

Resolved

- (1) That all of the Examiner's recommendations and modifications be approved to enable the Plan to proceed to a referendum.
- (2) That the modifications to the Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan, in accordance with the Examiner's recommendations, be approved, the issue of a decision statement to that effect be authorised and the making of any minor presentational changes necessary to ready the Plan for referendum be approved.

- (3) That the area for the referendum as recommended by the examiner to be the administrative boundary of Bloxham Parish (which is the approved designated neighbourhood area) be approved and it be noted that there would be no extension to the area.

Reasons

The Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan as recommended for modification by the Examiner meets the necessary legal and procedural requirements. The Bloxham Neighbourhood plan as recommended for modification by the Examiner should therefore proceed to a referendum.

Alternative options

Option One - Not to approve some of the Examiner's recommendations and to proceed to a referendum. Where a LPA proposes to make a decision that differs from the Examiner's recommendation then there would need to be further consultation. This would take more time and would have cost implications.

Option Two - Not to accept the Examiner's recommendations and not to proceed to a referendum. This option can only be justified if the Examiner recommends that the Plan should not proceed to a referendum, or the Council is not satisfied that the plan has met the procedural and legal requirements.

Option Three - To extend the area in which the referendum is to take place. The Neighbourhood Plan has been produced with public involvement for the area designated.

45

Air Quality Update

The Public Protection Manager submitted a report to update the Executive on progress with the draft Air Quality Action Plan for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington prior to public and stakeholder consultation.

At the discretion of the Chairman, Councillor Les Sibley addressed Executive.

Resolved

- (1) That the current position on the review and assessment of air quality in Cherwell be noted.
- (2) That the draft Air Quality Action Plan be approved for public and stakeholder consultation.

Reasons

The production of an Air Quality Action Plan is mandatory once an order to declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) has been issued. The Council has issued an order for each of the four AQMAs: Heneff Way in Banbury; Horsefair/North Bar in Banbury; Bicester Road in Kidlington; and, Kings End/Queens Avenue in Bicester, declared.

Alternative options

Option 1: The Council could choose not to adopt an AQAP. However once an AQMA has been declared the Council is required to produce an AQAP and so for this reason this is not an alternative option.

46 Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-18 Protecting and Enhancing Cherwell's Natural Environment

The Community Services Manager submitted a report to seek approval for the 2016-18 Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

Resolved

- (1) That the Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-18 (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.

Reasons

The Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan provides a framework of aims, actions and targets, the delivery of which ensures that the Council complies with both legislative and planning policy requirements relating to important wildlife sites, habitats and species and good quality connected green spaces.

Alternative options

Option 1: To reject the Corporate BAP 2016-18. This is not proposed as the Council would not be able to clearly demonstrate that it is meeting biodiversity legislation and planning policy requirements.

Option 2: To amend the Corporate BAP 2016-18

47 Award of Liquid Fuel Contract

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report to consider the award of contracts to supply diesel to Cherwell District Council.

Resolved

- (1) That the acceptance of the recommended tender (Certas Energy UK Ltd) for the supply of diesel for October 2016-September 2018 be approved.

Reasons

Following a 'best practice' procurement exercise Certas Energy UK Ltd have submitted the lowest cost tender for the supply of Diesel to Cherwell District Council for the next two years and the Executive is recommended to authorise the award.

Alternative options

No reasonable alternatives

48

Consultation and Engagement Strategy (2016-19)

The Director – Strategy and Commissioning submitted a report to set out the Strategy for Consultation and Engagement for Cherwell District Council, and the action plan for the consultations and engagements for 2016/17.

Resolved

- (1) That the three year Strategy for Consultation and Engagement 2016-2019 (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be agreed.
- (2) That the consultation and engagement action plan for 2016/17 be agreed and the areas of joint working with partner agencies and developing closer links with our communities be noted.

Reasons

The council has undertaken regular consultations and engagement events since 2009 and the new strategy will build on this foundation. The strategy is supported by meaningful and relevant action plans to provide the detail for how this work will be carried out.

The 2016-17 action plan demonstrates how the council will continue to deliver consultations and public engagement and thereby support the stated equalities objectives over the coming year. Progress will be reported via the performance management framework on a quarterly basis. The equalities objectives are:

- Fair Access and Customer Satisfaction
- Tackling Inequality and Deprivation
- Building Strong and Cohesive Communities
- Positive Engagement and Understanding
- Demonstrating Our Commitment to Equality

Alternative options

Option 1: To note the report

Option 2: To request additional information on items within this report

49

Quarter 1 2016/17 Performance Update

The Director – Strategy & Commissioning submitted a report to provide an update on the Cherwell District Business Plan progress to the end of Quarter One 2016/17.

Resolved

- (1) That the exceptions highlighted and proposed actions be noted.
- (2) That it be noted that there was no feedback on performance issues from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 1 September 2016 provided directly to The Leader.
- (3) That the new reporting style which had been designed to improve the presentation of performance reporting be noted.
- (4) That, it be agreed that where appropriate, judgement measures used in the current business plan reporting be augmented or replaced by more specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely (SMART) measures.

Reasons

This is the first quarterly performance report for the 2016/17 Business Plan. Commentary has been developed to focus on areas not performing at the required level and provide an explanation of what has happened, why it has happened and what are we doing to improve performance.

The revised reporting template uses infographics (displaying data in a graphical form to aid understanding) and focuses on exception reporting (concentrating on the issues).

Alternative options

Option 1: To request additional information on items and/or add to the work programme for review and/or refer to Overview and Scrutiny.

50

Quarter 1 2016/1 - Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report which summarised the Council's Revenue and Capital position as at the end of the first three months of the financial year 2016-17 and projections for the full year.

Resolved

- (1) That the projected revenue and capital position at June 2016 be noted.

Reasons

In line with good practice budget monitoring is undertaken on a monthly basis within the Council. The revenue and capital position is formulated in conjunction with the joint management team and reported formally to the Budget Planning Committee on a quarterly basis. The report is then considered by the Executive.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report illustrates the Council's performance against the 2016-17 Financial Targets for Revenue and Capital. As this is a monitoring report,

no further options have been considered. However, members may wish to request that officers provide additional information.

51 **Update on the development of a devolution deal with Government and the associated independent study into options for local government reform in Oxfordshire.**

The Head of Transformation submitted a report to update the Executive on progress in relation to the development of a devolution deal between the Oxfordshire councils, the former Government ministers and the new Government ministers, and the associated study into options for the potential reform of local government within Oxfordshire, conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

At the discretion of the Chairman, County Councillor Lawrie Stratford addressed Executive on behalf of the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council.

Resolved

- (1) That the independent study of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) into options for local government reform in Oxfordshire, including the proposition of the district and city council leaders' in respect of their preferred model arising from that study be received.
- (2) That it be noted that following discussions with the Department of Communities and Local Government, the leaders of the district and city councils have agreed to focus on identifying areas for collaborative working and the reshaping of a devolution deal.

Reasons

As a consequence of the recent changes in Government, including the appointment of a new Prime Minister and a new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government it has been made clear that local authorities should expect to see changes to Government priorities in the short term, including specifically in relation to devolution deals, local government reform and other areas of policy. DCLG officials have also confirmed that the focus and priorities of the Government will become clearer when the Autumn Statement is announced in/around December 2016, and through changes to business rates retention policy, which will be introduced through a new Bill, probably in January 2017.

In the meantime DCLG has made clear that the Government will not agree to any proposals for local government reform where those proposals do not have the agreement of the areas.

The leaders of the district and city councils have agreed that they will now focus on identifying areas for collaborative working and the reshaping of a devolution deal with the new Government. Consequently, it is not intended to seek decisions on the respective studies of the two independent consultants', PwC and Grant Thornton, beyond formally receiving them. Discussions between the district and city councils will continue to take place over the

forthcoming weeks with a view to achieving an acceptable devolution deal proposal.

Alternative options

Option 1:

To proceed with stakeholder consultation in respect of the district and city council leaders' preferred model for a new local government structure within Oxfordshire.

This is rejected due to the advice given by DCLG that the Government and new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government will not accept proposals for local government reform or indeed a devolution deal without the agreement of the areas, and wide support amongst key stakeholders.

To undertake stakeholder consultation on the district and city council leaders preferred model or indeed any other potential new structural model at this stage would risk wasting public funds when it is clear that the study undertaken by Grant Thornton, the county council consultants, has concluded that a county based unitary authority would be the strongest model for local government in Oxfordshire.

The county council is expected to formally receive the Grant Thornton study on 13 September (Full Council) and 20 September (Cabinet) 2016; therefore the content of their report can still only be regarded as representing the views of Grant Thornton. At this stage it is more appropriate that the focus should be upon reshaping a devolution deal and identifying areas for positive collaborative working, as agreed with DCLG.

52 Notification of Urgent Action(s) - In relation to the Contract Award for the demolition of the Bolton Road Car Park

The Chief Executive and Commercial Director submitted a report to notify Members of urgent action taken by the Chief Executive and Commercial Director in relation to the contract award for the demolition of the Bolton Road car park.

Resolved

- (1) That the urgent action taken by the Chief Executive in relation to the budget be noted and it be referred to Full Council for noting.
- (2) That the urgent action taken by the Commercial Director in relation to the award of the contract be noted.

Reasons

The Chief Executive took urgent action(s) in consultation with the Chairman of the Council and the Lead Member for Financial Management to approve the allocation of £325,000 to this scheme.

The Commercial Director took urgent action in consultation with the Leader of the Council to approve the award of the contract to the preferred bidder

Alternative options

As this report is for the information of Members there are no alternative options to consider.

53

Re-commissioning of Single Homeless Pathway

The of Head of Regeneration and Housing submitted a report to advise Executive of the proposals recommended by the District Councils, the County Council, and the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) as endorsed by the Health Improvement Board, to work jointly to provide housing related support services and accommodate single homeless from across the county for the next 3 years commencing from 1 April 2017.

Resolved

- (1) That the new proposals which provide a plan and include a financial contribution from Cherwell for a period of 3 years as calculated and recommended by the Oxfordshire Districts, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) and Oxfordshire County Council be supported.
- (2) That the proposal for a new joint governance structure to procure and manage services through senior officer representation with delegated authority be noted and supported.
- (3) That a financial contribution of £62,700pa (as calculated on Cherwell's current use of hostels with 24 hour care) and required to be paid from Cherwell for 3 financial years commencing from 1 April 2017 be approved.
- (4) That it be noted that a further report on the longer term sustainability of single homeless pathway arrangements across the county would be submitted within the 3 year period covered by this report.

Reasons

The new proposals have been a significant achievement and demonstrate excellent joint working across all partners. Officers have made considerable efforts to negotiate across the County to reach this stage and form these proposals. All parties have considered a full range of options to retain hostel beds for complex case with 24 hour support in Oxford, also to maintain and hopefully expand local service delivery to provide housing related support. This proposal provides a full overview of the preferred recommendations which will maintain the commitment to provide the current level of housing

related support funding already allocated to Cherwell to be continued during the period of the agreement. This means that although Cherwell will need to contribute £62,700 per year to maintain the service for complex needs in Oxford, this also means housing related support investment will continue to be received in Cherwell during the next 3 years.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to agree the joint county plan and financial contribution as recommended for the next 3 years. This would result in Cherwell needing to fully fund and make its own arrangements for rough sleepers with multiple and complex needs. It would also result in the withdrawal of the housing related support funding currently received from the County and spent within the district.

54 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.

55 Re-commissioning of Single Homeless Pathway - Exempt Appendices

Resolved

That the exempt appendices be noted.

56 Car Parking

The Director of Operation Delivery submitted an exempt report to consider the Council's car parks in the context of their town centre role and options for service improvement.

In introducing the report, the Deputy Leader updated Executive on the comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who had considered the report at their meeting of 1 September 2016. The Committee had endorsed the report and recommended to Executive that consideration be given as part of the proposed procurement process for improved and more flexible disabled parking provision in council car parks following an assessment of demand for such parking.

Resolved

- (1) That the review assessment and conclusions of the Council's car parking service be noted.
- (2) That it be agreed not to commit to a long term lease or other arrangement which reduces the Council's regeneration and investment flexibility.
- (3) That a procurement exercise to appoint a specialist operator to deliver the Council's car parking services be supported.
- (4) That the invitation of tenders for a services concession contract which incentivises the operator to maximise revenue over the maximum concession period available under The Concession Contracts Regulations 2016 (five years, or such longer period as the contractor would reasonably need to recoup any investment made by it to deliver the services (together with any return on its investment) be authorised.
- (5) That agreement be given to any such competitive tender contest incorporating a competitive dialogue process to maximise value to the Council.
- (6) That the opportunity through this process for a different charging regime which supports a balance of maximising income from car park assets with the wider economic growth and planning policy objectives of the Council to create attractive, sustainable and viable urban centres be considered further.
- (7) That this process be used as the opportunity to ensure consistency of charging between Bicester and Banbury.
- (8) That a requirement for bidders to price the introduction of modern revenue collection and parking control equipment which combines flexibility of payment options combined with technology based opportunities to vary their parking stay for customers be included in the tender process.
- (9) That, notwithstanding resolution (8) above, the opportunity for the Council to achieve improved value for money from this process by using its own capital resources to fund the required capital investment be explored.
- (10) That consideration be given as part of the proposed procurement process for improved and more flexible disabled parking provision in council car parks following an assessment of demand for such parking.

Reasons

Car parking services are central to the experience of most visitors to our urban centres and therefore the views of users and businesses are paramount. The customer experience is crucial to generate satisfaction and income, ensuring that repeat visits ensue whereby additional time and money is spent in the urban centres. The resultant vitality of businesses will

increasingly mean that additional business rates will be collected by the Council to continue a virtuous cycle of thriving communities.

Regardless of charging, customers typically require conveniently located car parks that are safe and clean. Information and support should be on hand if issues arise. The Council's car parking service has remained largely unchanged for many years. It uses old pay and display technology and whilst the car parks are conveniently located for users of urban centres, the service requires improving and modernising.

Soft market testing has resulted in an encouraging level of interest in the service from external operators. It is proposed therefore to undertake a competitive procurement process using competitive dialogue to appoint a specialist to run and modernise the service.

Alternative options

The procurement and technology options are outlined in the report. The only other alternative to this approach is to retain the service in house. This is not proposed as it is expected that the Council will achieve better value from an external operator.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm

Chairman:

Date:



**Protecting and Enhancing
Cherwell's Natural Environment**
Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan 2016 – 2018

Photograph acknowledgements:

- Front cover
Minibeast House – credit Bev James, Warriner School Farm
- Page 3
Oxford Conservation Volunteer at Enslow Marsh Local Wildlife Site - credit BBOWT
Willow Pollarding, Bletchingdon Quarry Local Wildlife Site – credit Pim Young, BBOWT
Conservation work on River Cherwell, Spiceball Park – credit BBOWT
- Page 4
Reed Cutting at Dukes Lock Pond Local Wildlife Site – credit Pim Young, BBOWT
- Page 9
Swift Boxes, Coach House Mews, Bicester (Cherwell Build Project)
Swift – credit Margers Martinsons
- Page 12
Great Crested Newt Survey, Bure Park Local Nature Reserve (Bicester) – credit Bicester Green Gym/CDC Bicester Delivery Team

**PROTECTING AND ENHANCING CHERWELL'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
CORPORATE BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN
2016-2018**

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Corporate Vision

To work with partners to protect and enhance Cherwell's natural environment for its intrinsic value; the services it provides; the wellbeing and enjoyment of people; and the economic prosperity that it brings.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is a term used to describe the variety of life, including all plants, animals, their habitats and the natural systems that support them. A healthy and stable natural environment is vitally important to economic prosperity and the District's desirability as a place to live, work and visit.

Cherwell's biodiversity resource has value for agriculture and timber production and provides the basis for many tourism and recreational activities. Fertile soils, clean water, carbon storage and flood prevention are all crucial services provided by the natural environment. There is also substantial evidence that access to nature can make a major contribution to improving people's health and well-being.

Electronic Document

This document is designed to be read online. Clear links are made to the Natural Environment pages of the Council's website for further information. As much of this online information is subject to change, the most recent publication date will always be given – see www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment

Hard copies of this document can be provided by contacting the Council's Countryside and Conservation Officer on 01295 221707



Reed Cutting
Dukes Lock Pond Local Wildlife Site

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is to demonstrate how the Council complies with its obligations relating to important wildlife sites, habitats and species under European and national legislation as well as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF),

It also sets out how the Council will fulfil its duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Section 40 of this Act states that -
“Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”

The **Council’s Business Plan 2016/17** includes the delivery of a Corporate BAP as a specific objective.

The Corporate BAP is reviewed and updated every two years.

1.2 BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES

Biodiversity 2020 is the national strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services which was published in August 2011. It sets out the Government’s ambition to halt overall loss of England’s biodiversity by 2020, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people. A summary of this document emphasises the importance of **local conservation projects** to the delivery of the national strategy’s outcomes - www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment

The Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan is based on **Conservation Target Areas** (CTAs) in the County. The CTAs include the most important areas for priority habitats and provide a focus for where conservation efforts can be most effective. The CTAs are currently being updated as part of a new Oxfordshire Biodiversity 2020 Strategy which is being led by Wild Oxfordshire.

The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) has recently launched its new **‘Strategic Plan 2016-2021: Be part of nature’s recovery’** with ambitious targets for 8% of land across the three counties to be rich in wildlife by 2020 and restoring 10% of unprotected land to wildlife-rich habitats by 2030. The strategy aims to embed nature into people’s lives, giving them more natural green spaces to explore and discover their local wildlife.

1.3 BIODIVERSITY LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Protecting and enhancing biodiversity has become a cross cutting issue with strong links to all other sustainable development issues. Important wildlife and environmental **legislation** applies directly to local government, most notably the duties under the NERC Act 2006 and the Conservation Regulations 2010, particularly relating to European protected species.

There has also been rapid change in **policy drivers** for biodiversity action over the last few years with the publication of the Natural Environment White Paper, the National Planning Policy Framework, the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and guidance relating to biodiversity accounting and offsetting.

Also, guidance on conserving biodiversity in a changing climate has emphasised the need to manage land on a landscape scale to improve ecological networks, rather than just protecting special sites which are unlikely to sustain wildlife in the long term.

A comprehensive guidance document – “Biodiversity and Planning in Oxfordshire”- has been produced which details biodiversity legislation and planning policy and how these apply to important sites, habitats and species - www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment

1.4 BIODIVERSITY AND THE PLANNING PROCESS

Biodiversity is an important consideration in the planning process and must be integrated from an early stage into the design of any development. Development can have negative impacts on biodiversity (net loss) which can be significant and lead to the decline of important habitats and species in the District. Development can also have positive impacts for biodiversity (net gain), especially for sites where there is little wildlife, by integrating new habitats into buildings and adjacent spaces.

The adopted **Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1)** sets the broad planning framework for meeting the future needs of the District. It includes strategic biodiversity, conservation target area and green infrastructure policies. Local Plan Part 2 will include additional policies and planning guidance to supplement Part 1. All policies in Local Plan Part 1 relating to the natural environment can be seen in downloads at www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) took full effect in March 2013. It replaced all the previous Planning Policy Statements as well as various other planning guidance. The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how they should be applied. It is described as a key part of the Government’s reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, to protect the environment and to promote sustainable growth. The NPPF includes three dimensions to sustainable development which the planning system needs to perform – economic, social and environmental. The environmental role is described as “contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy” (para 7).

Section 11 of the NPPF (paras 109-125) is entitled ‘Conserving and enhancing the natural environment’ and includes reference to providing net gains for biodiversity where possible, protection and enhancement of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure, promoting priority habitats and species and the importance of ecosystem services and soils. To view this full section, see downloads at www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment.

There is an emphasis within the framework on local planning authorities creating local policy and guidance which both reflects the NPPF and, at the same time, the needs and priorities of their communities. Neighbourhood planning legislation came into effect in April 2012 which aims to give communities more control over the development of their local area. Local planning authorities must provide support to

help people produce their neighbourhood development plan. Some draft guidance has been produced to advise on biodiversity and neighbourhood planning (see downloads at www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturaleenvironment)

British Standard 42020 is a code of practice for biodiversity in planning and development. It requires integration of biodiversity into all stages of the planning process from before application for permission to construction. This code is being used to achieve a more effective consideration of biodiversity as part of the Council's planning system.

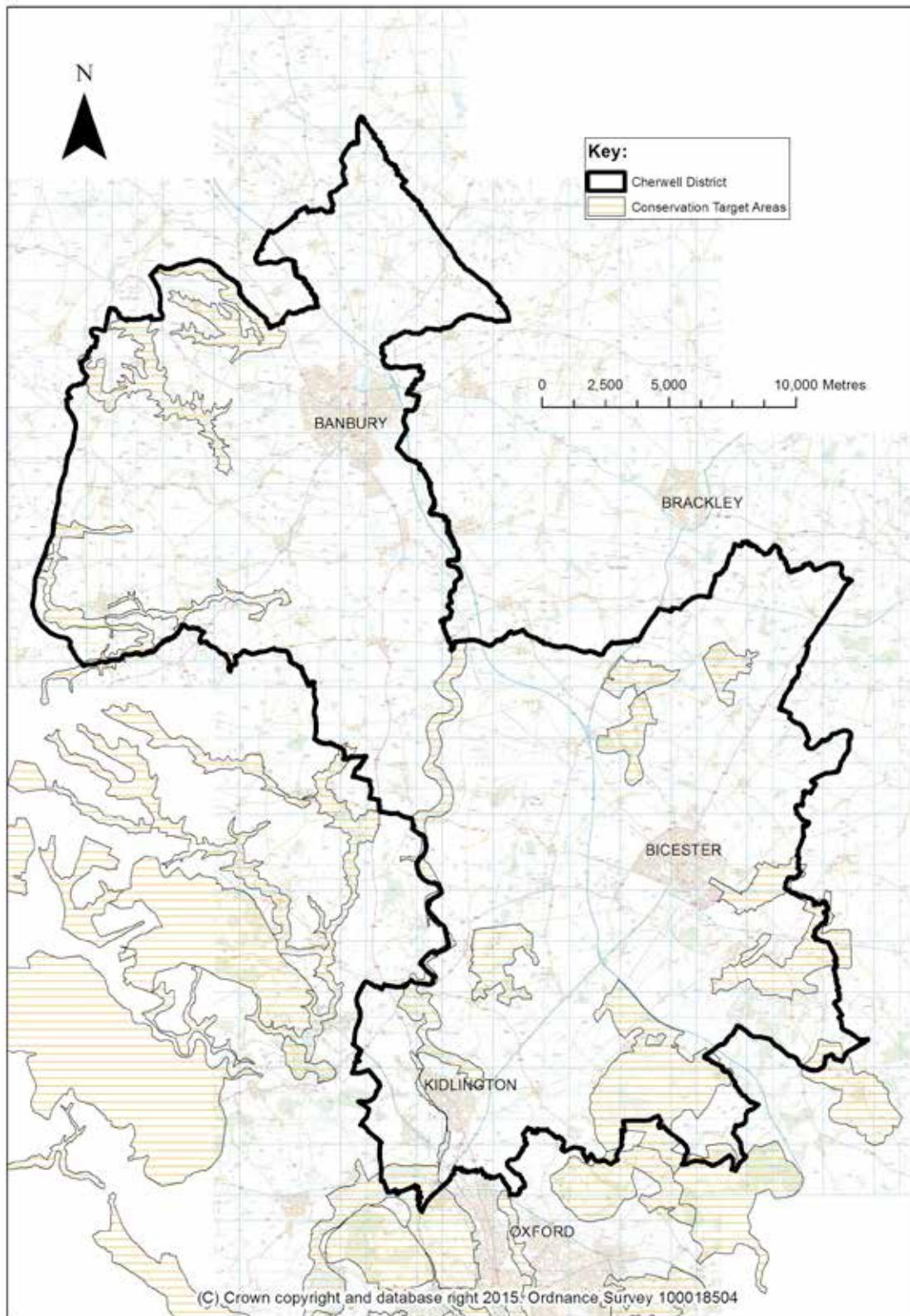
2 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WHITE PAPER

2.1 The Biodiversity 2020 national strategy builds on important elements of the **Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP)** (the first White Paper on the natural environment in 20 years). Published in June 2011, the NEWP aims to improve the quality of the natural environment across England, halt the decline in habitats and species, and strengthen the connection between people and nature. The proposals are directly linked to comprehensive research that shows the strong economic arguments for safeguarding and enhancing the natural environment. The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has published a briefing note explaining the implications of the White Paper for local authorities – (see downloads at www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturaleenvironment)

2.2 **Key issues** within the Natural Environment White Paper (and Biodiversity 2020) include –

- **Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs)** – encouraging new and existing local partnerships to integrate action, and work with local authorities to identify opportunities to protect and improve nature at a local level. There is a duty for local authorities to co-operate with all recognized LNPs
Oxfordshire's Local Nature Partnership was originally hosted by Wild Oxfordshire but it is no longer able to provide this function. There is a need for an alternative co-ordinating mechanism for the LNP which is currently being investigated.
- **Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs)** – encouraging local partnerships to set up Nature Improvement Areas where there are significant opportunities to enhance and reconnect nature
Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) are effectively NIAs and these have been identified in the County (see Figure 1). Wild Oxfordshire co-ordinates the CTA project and most of the environmental organisations that CDC supports contribute to the maintenance, restoration and creation of priority habitats within CTAs. See Section 4 of this document for more information about the Council's biodiversity partners.
- **Biodiversity Offsetting** – defined as a proposed approach to compensate for habitats and species lost to development in one area, with the creation, enhancement or restoration of habitat in another. Under this system, any negative impacts on the natural environment would then be compensated for, or 'offset', by developers. DEFRA published the summary of responses to the consultation on biodiversity offsetting in 2016. The responses vary widely on how or whether this approach could or should be taken forward.
The potential use of a biodiversity accounting metric is being considered as part of Local Plan Part 2.

Figure 1 – Conservation Target Areas (May 2015)



3. CHERWELL'S BIODIVERSITY RESOURCE

3.1 The Cherwell District contains many areas of high ecological value including sites of international and national importance. The District is also home to many legally protected species as well as priority species and habitats. Much of this biodiversity resource is mapped by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre so that it can be used as an information source by local authorities and conservation organisations. This biodiversity resource mapping within the District is generally illustrated in Figure 2.

3.2 Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) have been identified which include some of the most important areas for biodiversity in the District and provide a focus for coordinated action (see Figure 1). This focus is now being integrated with a river catchment based approach, led by the Environment Agency and aimed at improving water quality to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive. More information about the 'Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and CTAs' can be found in downloads at www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturaleenvironment

3.3 Cherwell's biodiversity resource is also part of its Green Infrastructure (see Figure 3). Green Infrastructure (GI) consists of the network of accessible multifunctional green space in both urban and rural settings and delivers both environmental and social benefits. Such benefits include conserving and enhancing biodiversity as well as improving the health and wellbeing of people and the economy. Conservation Target Areas form an important component of the green infrastructure network of the District. Securing adequate green infrastructure is crucial to achieving sustainable communities.

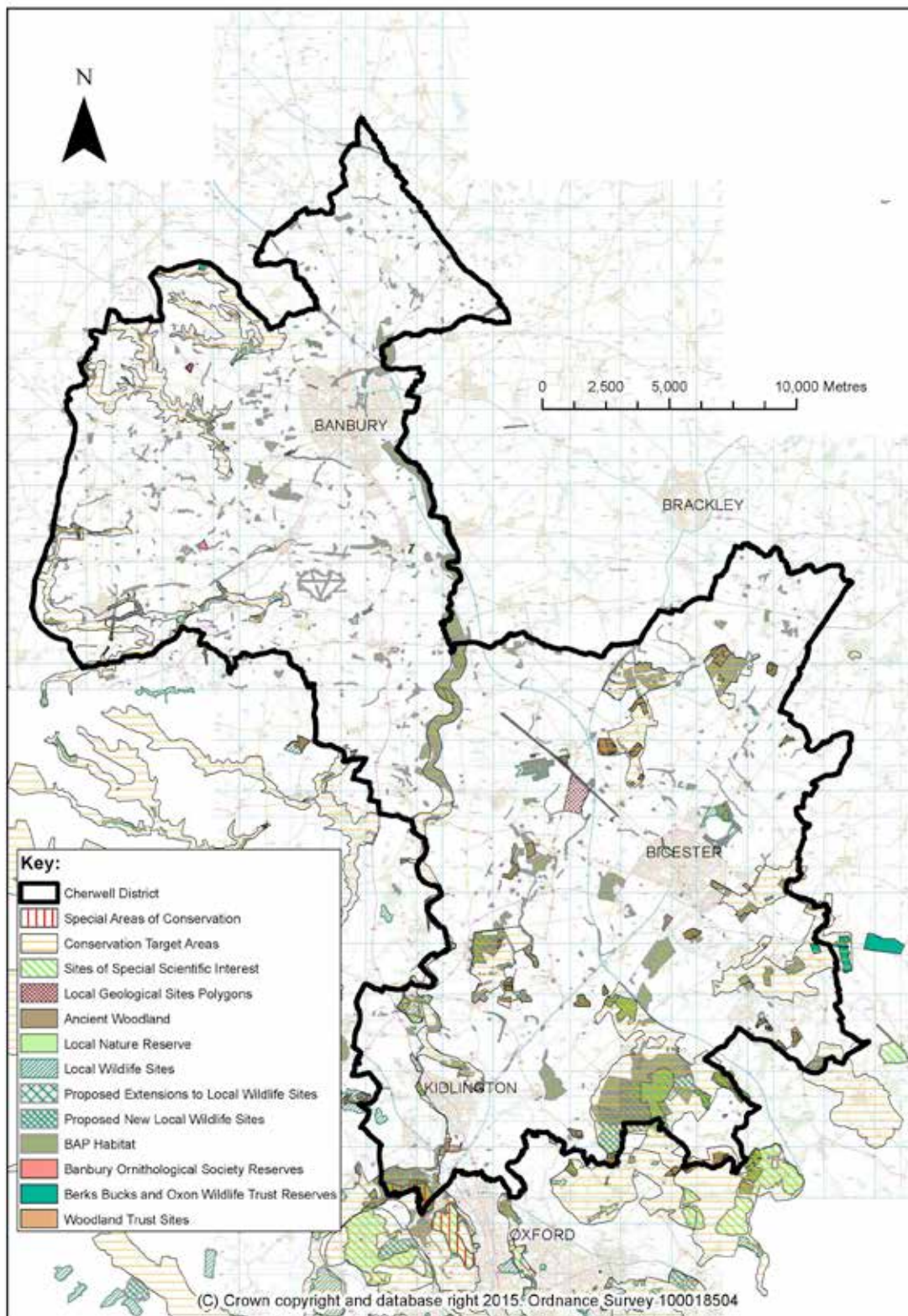


Swift Boxes, Coach House Mews, Bicester
(Cherwell Build Project)

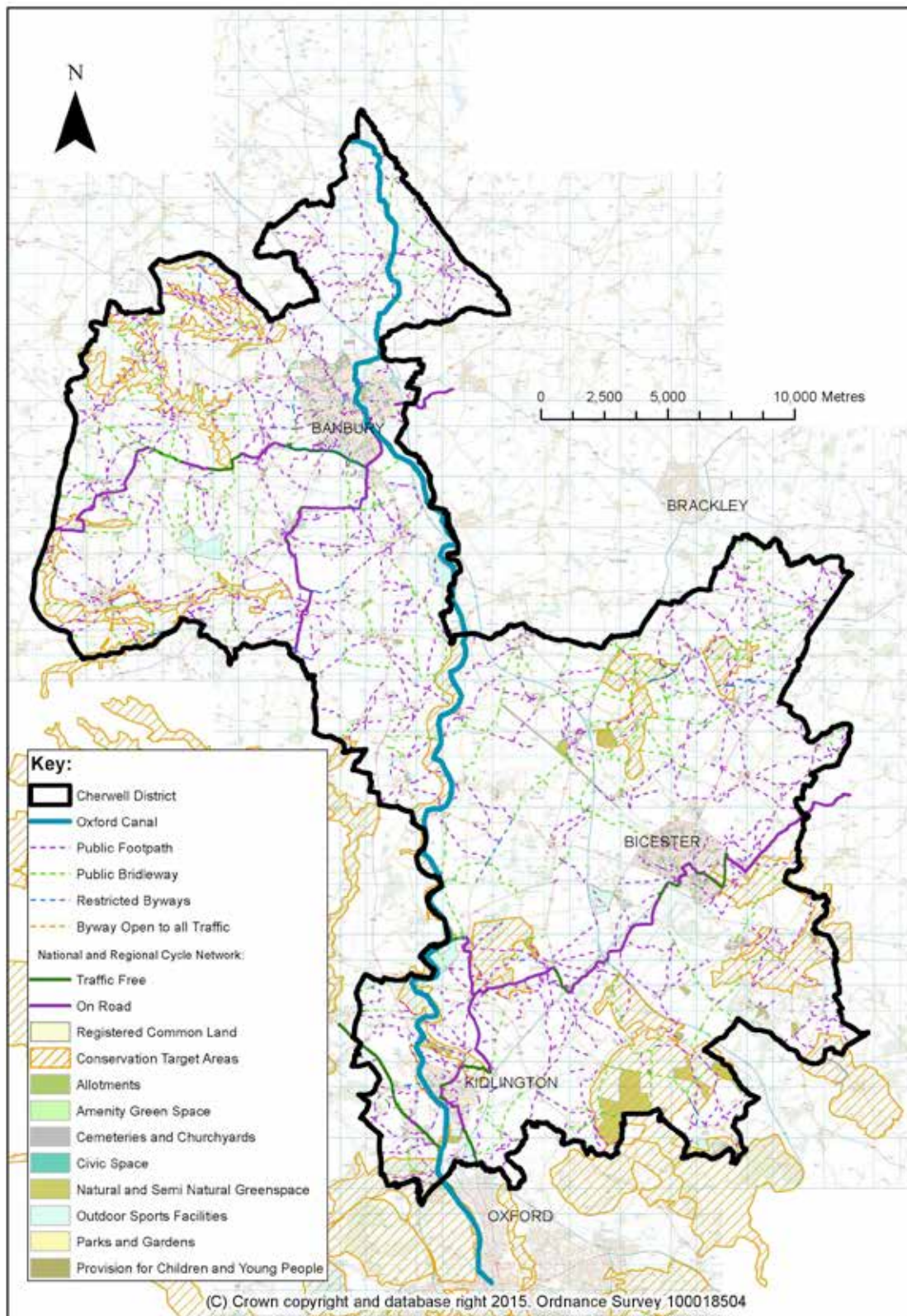


Swift

**Figure 2 – Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1)
Biodiversity Theme Map (July 2015)**



**Figure 3 – Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1)
Green Infrastructure Theme Map (July 2015)**



4. BIODIVERSITY PARTNERS

4.1 The delivery of the Corporate BAP relies heavily on partnership work. The Council supports five main environmental organisations with annual funding in accordance with service level agreements. These organisations provide progress reports during and at the end of each year which are published on the Council's biodiversity partners webpage – see www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment

4.2 **The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC)** supplies high quality, up to date habitat, species and site data that is required as an evidence base for the Local Plan process and for the ecological assessment of planning applications. TVERC's service involves intensive mapping work using aerial photography and survey work to assess habitat condition. TVERC also reports on Local Plan indicators, information which is required for the Council's Annual Monitoring Report.

4.3 **Wild Oxfordshire** leads on partnership work to maintain and improve the District's Conservation Target Areas which are used as a planning focus for biodiversity improvement. It also organises successful citizen science projects eg water quality testing blitz events across the County involving many volunteers and providing much valuable information about local waterbodies

4.4 **Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)** provides land management advice to Local Wildlife Site (LWS) owners/managers. LWSs are sites of substantive nature conservation value or geological interest which are protected by planning policy. The advice helps to improve site value and maintain the robustness of the LWS designation. This is important as LWS designation is a constraint in the planning process.

4.5 **RSPB** provides land management advice to landowners/managers within the Cherwell and Ray river valleys on wetland habitat creation, restoration and maintenance. Such habitat is a national priority which supports birds and other wildlife which are national priority species.

4.6 A successful programme of primary school and youth group visits about the importance of the natural environment as a food source, for its health benefits and for its intrinsic value was delivered in 2015/16 by **Warriner School Farm**. This will be continued in 2016-18.



Great crested newt survey, Bure Park Local Nature Reserve, Bicester

5. CORPORATE BAP DELIVERY

The Council's approach to protecting and enhancing biodiversity within the Cherwell District is summarised below:

- A Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) will be produced every two years to set out, monitor and review the Council's compliance with the NERC Act Duty and other legislative and policy requirements
- TVERC, Wild Oxfordshire, BBOWT, RSPB and Warriner School Farm are key partners in the delivery of the Corporate BAP. Partnerships will be maintained in accordance with Service Level Agreements
- The Council's key policies relating to biodiversity will be included in the Local Plan and related documents
- The Council will participate in partnership working with the Oxfordshire natural environment sector, particularly with regard to the formation of a new Local Nature Partnership, and relevant projects will be supported

6. 2015-2016 REVIEW

Aims, actions and targets are divided into **five main themes**. Highlights and some areas of limited progress are listed below and expanded on within the Action Plan tables which follow on the next page.

6.1 Planning and Sustainable Development

a) Planning Policy

- Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) includes robust policies relating to biodiversity, green infrastructure and Conservation Target Areas
- Re-establishment of Green Business Award was not achieved

b) Development Management

- At least 554 planning applications were assessed in 2015/16 by the Council's Ecology Officer (small increase from 2014/15)
- Updated digital datasets for protected and notable species, priority habitats, Local Wildlife Sites and swifts data were made available to Planning Officers for use as an evidence base

6.2 District land and buildings management

- A number of biodiversity sites received, or are being considered for, external funding as a result of CDC action. For example, the Slade Nature Reserve in Bloxham was awarded a Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE2) grant; and Network Rail has prioritised Island Pond Wood in Launton and the Bicester Wetland Reserve for potential funding as part of its "East West Rail Net Biodiversity Positive" programme
- A third bat box project has been established in Daeda's Wood (the first was established in Kirtlington Quarry in 2012 and the second in Grimsbury Wood north of Banbury in 2014)

6.3 Council owned and managed land/buildings

- Cherwell Build continues to include provision for wildlife in most of its projects
- Several CDC funding bids have been approved as part of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (OXLEP's) Strategic Environmental Investment Plan (SEEIP) including the proposed Cherwell Country Park

- Assessment of the tower at Trow Pool (owned by CDC and a designated Local Wildlife Site (LWS)) for provision of artificial nesting sites has been made. The structure is not suitable due to access but work is progressing on the biodiversity enhancement of the overall site as part of the LWS Project

6.4 Green Infrastructure

- Conservation Target Areas continue to be the focus of partnership work. See biodiversity partners' progress reports – www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment

6.5 Health, Wellbeing, Economy and Education

- Funding support towards encouraging and facilitating community engagement has been given to the "Wild Banbury" Project based in Spiceball Park which is being led by BBOWT in partnership with Banbury Town Council
- At least 12 primary school and youth group biodiversity visits to Warriner School Farm and Forest School sessions at 9 primary schools were supported

7. 2016-2018 AIMS, ACTIONS AND TARGETS

Some actions and targets have changed from the 2015-2016 Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan. Where this is the case, the 2015/16 actions and/or targets have been specified and reviewed in the last column of the tables below.

Theme 1: Planning and Sustainable Development

(a) Planning Policy Context

- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity are important elements of sustainable development. The adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) includes strategic policies relating to biodiversity and the natural environment, green infrastructure and conservation target areas that will contribute to, and help ensure, sustainable development.
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicates that planning authorities should enhance as well as protect biodiversity and, where possible, provide net gain. The importance of ecosystem services and soils are also specifically noted (Para 109)
- The NPPF recognises the importance of good evidence and data for decision-making (Paras 167 and 188-192).

Aim	2016-2018 Action	Measure/Target	2015-2016 Review
1.1 Ensure protection, management and opportunities for enhancement and extension of biodiversity are taken into account in the preparation and implementation of the Local Plan	1.1.1 Include policies and proposals relating to biodiversity, green infrastructure (GI) and conservation target areas (CTAs) in Local Plan documents	<p>Policies/proposals to be included in Cherwell Local Plan Part 2 and the Partial Review of Local Plan Part 1</p> <p>Supplementary planning guidance relating to biodiversity to be included in all relevant Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)</p>	<p>New target for 2016-18</p> <p>2015-16 target <i>Policies/proposals to be included in the Local Plan</i></p> <p>2015-16 outcome <i>Relevant policies included in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1)</i></p> <p><i>Work on these planning documents was progressed, particularly relating to the Developer Contributions SPD</i></p>
	1.1.2 Support the provision of high quality, up to date biodiversity information and evidence required by the Local Plan process through funding biodiversity partners	<p>Collation, analysis and supply of data from TVERC associated with Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)</p> <p>Supply of constraint GIS layers from TVERC required for planning projects and site assessments</p>	<p><i>TVERC data supplied in October for the AMR</i></p> <p><i>TVERC data supplied in July 2015 and January 2016 (swifts, protected/notable species), January 2016 (BAP habitats and whole District mapping project) and March 2016 (Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites).</i></p>

Aim	2016-2018 Action	Measure/Target	2015-2016 Review
1.1 contd Ensure protection, management and opportunities for enhancement and extension of biodiversity are taken into account in the preparation and implementation of the Local Plan	1.1.2 contd Support the provision of high quality, up to date biodiversity information and evidence required by the Local Plan process through funding biodiversity partners	<p>TVERC to progress District Wildlife Sites (DWS) Project (ie establish clear DWS selection protocol/provide surveys of other sites)</p> <p>Wild Oxfordshire to facilitate the conclusion of the review/update of Conservation Target Area (CTA)</p> <p>BBOWT to provide Single Data List report (LWS Project) associated with AMR</p>	<p>New target for 2016-18</p> <p>2015-16 target <i>TVERC to deliver District Wildlife Sites Project 2015 (sites identified in 2013 mapping project)</i></p> <p>2015-16 outcome <i>Final report and data received on 1 April 2016. Six sites were surveyed, one of which has secured funding due partly to the availability of survey information</i></p> <p><i>CTA review and update is ongoing. Proposals for minor amendments, extensions and new CTAs prepared but not yet approved.</i></p> <p><i>Report provided in November 2015</i></p>

(b) Development Management Context

- Where it is likely that a proposal will impact on any protected or priority species, designated site, important habitat or other biodiversity feature, appropriate surveys and reports will need to be provided with any planning application.
- British Standard (BS) 42020 has been developed to provide clear guidance to ensure that actions and decisions taken at each stage of the planning process are informed by sufficient and appropriate ecological information.

Aim	2016-2018 Action	Measure/Target	2015-16 Review
1.2 Incorporate biodiversity management into each stage of the planning process	1.2.1 Work towards achieving British Standard 42020 – a code of practice for biodiversity in planning and development	Review validation checklist and biodiversity planning conditions	<p>2015-16 target <i>Review validation checklist and biodiversity planning conditions</i></p> <p>2015-16 outcome <i>Review did not take place. Validation checklist and planning conditions to be reviewed in 2016-18</i></p>
1.3 A net gain in biodiversity will be sought when considering proposals for development by protecting, managing, enhancing and extending existing resources	1.3.1 Screen all planning applications with regard to their impact on important sites, habitats and species	Ecology Officer to be consulted whenever important sites, habitats and species are affected	<i>Planning application checklist which includes all protected sites, habitats and species and some additional constraint information (eg swifts, District Wildlife Sites) is used by all Registration Officers</i>

Aim	2016-2018 Action	Measure/Target	2015-16 Review
<p>1.3 contd A net gain in biodiversity will be sought when considering proposals for development by protecting, managing, enhancing and extending existing resources</p>	<p>1.3.2 Assess planning applications that impact upon important sites, habitats and species with regard to relevant biodiversity legislation/policy</p>	<p>Send comments to relevant Planning Officer within required timescale</p> <p>Consider using a biodiversity accounting tool to assess net gain</p> <p>Produce internal standing advice for Planning Officers relating to biodiversity and planning applications</p>	<p><i>At least 554 planning applications have been assessed by the Council's Ecology Officer with regard to relevant biodiversity legislation/policy (small increase from 2015-16)</i></p> <p>New target for 2016-18</p> <p>New target for 2016-18</p> <p>2015-16 target <i>Assessment to be made of need for additional staff resource</i></p> <p>2015-16 outcome <i>Capacity of the Ecology Officer will be considered as part of the joint service development management restructure</i></p>
	<p>1.3.3 Assess the impact of the NW Bicester ecotown on important sites, habitats and species with regard to relevant biodiversity legislation/policy</p>	<p>Secure biodiversity net gain</p> <p>Ensure that all planning applications accord with relevant development requirements and principles set out in the draft NW Bicester SPD</p> <p>Ensure that all planning applications include relevant ecological surveys that are sufficiently current</p>	<p><i>Offsite compensation scheme relating to loss of farmland bird habitat which is required to achieve net gain has yet to be secured.</i></p> <p><i>Conditions will be reviewed before issue to ensure that planning applications accord with the SPD</i></p> <p><i>Conditions will be reviewed before issue as there could be specific areas that will require survey prior to implementation</i></p>
	<p>1.3.4 Support the provision of high quality, up to date biodiversity information required by development control through funding of biodiversity partners</p>	<p>Annual supply of ecological constraint GIS layers from TVERC</p>	<p><i>TVERC data supplied in July 2015 and January 2016 (swifts, protected/notable species), January 2016 (BAP habitats and whole District mapping project) and March 2016 (Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites).</i></p>

Aim	2016-2018 Action	Measure/Target	2015-16 Review
<p>1.3 contd A net gain in biodiversity will be sought when considering proposals for development by protecting, managing, enhancing and extending existing resources</p>		<p>TVERC to progress District Wildlife Sites (DWS) Project (ie establish clear DWS selection protocol/provide surveys of other sites)</p> <p>Wild Oxfordshire to facilitate the conclusion of the review/update of Conservation Target Areas</p>	<p>New target for 2016-18</p> <p>2015-16 target <i>TVERC to deliver District Wildlife Sites Project 2015 (sites identified in 2013 mapping project)</i></p> <p>2015-16 outcome <i>Final report and data received on 1 April 2016. Six sites were surveyed, one of which has secured funding due partly to the availability of survey information</i></p> <p><i>CTA review and update is ongoing. Proposals for minor amendments, extensions and new CTAs prepared but not yet approved..</i></p>
	<p>1.3.6 Provide information/training for officers, members and the Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership Board (LSP) on new and updated legislation, policy and issues relating to important sites, habitats and species</p>	<p>Promote internal training and provide information about relevant external training, co-ordinating attendance as and when required</p> <p>Provide legislative, policy and issue updates as and when required</p> <p>Update natural environment web pages and maintain as a source of biodiversity information</p>	<p><i>Ecology Officer attended IEEM course on biodiversity and buildings as well as 'The Role of Planning in the Future of Oxfordshire' event organised by Wild Oxfordshire in July. Summary of the latter was circulated to all planners. Two biodiversity related lunchtime seminars for planners scheduled for June and July 2016.</i></p> <p><i>Presentation about Council's engagement work with Local Enterprise Partnership (OXLEP) delivered to LSP Board by Oxfordshire County Council's Economic Development Strategy Officer</i></p> <p><i>Web pages updated throughout the year to include 2015/16 Corporate BAP, biodiversity partners' reports and swift project update – see www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment</i></p>

Theme 2: Land and buildings management

There are various ways that the Council can influence the management of land and property for wildlife throughout the District.

Aim	2016-2018 Action	Measure/Target	2015-16 Review
2.1 Support environmental organisations that manage, or provide advice on the management of, land in the District	<p>2.1.1 Continue to fund the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)</p> <p>2.1.2 Support conservation projects in the active Conservation Target Areas of the District – the Ray and Cherwell Valleys</p> <p>2.1.3 Support Network Rail's 'Net Biodiversity Positive' project relating to East West Rail</p>	<p>Organisations to provide a report twice a year to demonstrate delivery of land management/land management advice in accordance with funding agreements</p> <p>Promote relevant projects</p>	<p><i>Satisfactory interim and end of year reports received. Available to view on the Council's website</i> www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment</p> <p><i>Funding support has been given to BBOWT led 'Wild Banbury' project based in Spiceball Park. Annual support of RSPB for its Upper Thames Wader Project.</i></p> <p>New action and target for 2016-18</p>
2.2 Support local groups/communities to fulfil their biodiversity obligations and to improve management of land and buildings for habitats and species	<p>2.2.1 Support local projects that involve land/building management for important habitats and species</p> <p>2.2.2 Support BBOWT with bat and bird box provision on local sites</p> <p>2.2.3 Investigate the potential for a water vole project based on the Oxford Canal through Kidlington</p>	<p>Support three local projects</p> <p>Provide bat/bird boxes for The Slade Nature Reserve in Bloxham and Warriner School Farm Wood</p> <p>Progress in partnership with BBOWT's Water Vole Project Officer, Canal & River Trust and Kidlington Parish Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Continuing support for Cherwell Swift Conservation Project</i> • <i>Advice given to Sibford Gower PC on community orchard and pond – TOE2 funding achieved</i> • <i>Advice given to The Slade Nature Reserve, Bloxham – TOE2 funding achieved</i> <p>New action and target for 2016-18</p> <p>New action and target for 2016-18</p> <p>2015-16 target <i>Support BBOWT & Woodland Trust with bat box project in Daeda's Wood, Deddington</i></p> <p>2015-16 outcome <i>16 bat boxes were donated to the project and erected in May 2015</i></p>

Aim	2016-2018 Action	Measure/Target	2015-16 Review
2.3 Secure improved management for habitats/ species as part of new build/refurbishment	2.3.1 Provide guidance on biodiversity and the built environment	Biodiversity guidance to be included in Sustainable Buildings in Cherwell Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	<i>Work on this planning document will progress in 2016-18</i>

Theme 3: Council owned and managed land and buildings

The Council has specific responsibility for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity on its own estate and on sites that it manages.

Aim	2016-2018 Action	Measure/Target	2015-2016 Review
3.1 Secure improved management of parks and open spaces for habitats and species	3.1.1 Encourage protected and priority habitats and species at appropriate sites 3.1.2 Work in partnership with others to deliver biodiversity improvements associated with the development of Cherwell Country Park	Work in partnership with the Local Wildlife Sites Restoration project to improve Trow Pool Work in partnership with the Local Wildlife Sites Restoration project to improve Enslow Marsh Liaise with stakeholders with a view to protecting and enhancing biodiversity	<i>New target for 2016-18</i> <i>2015-16 target</i> <i>Assess suitability of Trow Pool tower for provision of artificial nesting sites</i> <i>2015-16 outcome</i> <i>Assessment of the tower at Trow Pool (owned by CDC and a designated Local Wildlife Site (LWS)) for provision of artificial nesting sites has been made. Structure not suitable due to access</i> <i>Some small scale management works involving clearance of sedge were undertaken in September 2015 involving the Oxford Conservation Volunteers and the Kidlington fire crew</i> <i>Surveys and two stakeholder workshops have informed emerging masterplan. Purchase of the northern field is still being negotiated with the Environment Agency</i>
3.2 Secure improved management of buildings and associated external environments for habitats and species	3.2.1 Encourage protected and priority species at appropriate sites	Monitor wildflower meadow at Bodicote House with a view to plantings at other sites if successful Cherwell Build team to include biodiversity protection and enhancement measures within its projects	<i>Bodicote House survey to be carried out in summer 2016. Wildflower meadow to be planted at the Dovecote site in Milcombe</i> <i>Eight projects completed overall which include provision for swifts/bats</i>

Theme 4: Green Infrastructure

- Green infrastructure comprises the network of accessible multifunctional green space in both rural and urban areas. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is a key benefit resulting from the provision of high quality, connected open space.
- Nature conservation has traditionally focused on the protection of special sites such as SSSIs and Local Wildlife Sites. However, isolated reserves are unlikely to be able to sustain wildlife in the longterm and connectivity is crucial. Sites will need to be buffered, extended and linked if wildlife is to be able to adapt to climate change. Habitat fragmentation should be avoided as plants and animals need large, functional areas or networks which give them room to adapt, resilience to change and the opportunity to spread.
- Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) are an important component of the GI network in the Cherwell District. They include some of the most important areas for biodiversity and provide a focus for co-ordinated action.

Aim	2016-2018 Action	Measure/Target	2015-16 Review
4.1 Support the establishment and development of GI through implementation of relevant policies	4.1.1 Ensure new development meets local and qualitative standards of open space provision to form a multi-functional and resilient network	Progress GI work within the District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bicester GI project (led by the Oxford University Environmental Change Institute and in partnership with CDC's Bicester delivery team) is underway involving considerable work around the collation of baseline information</i> • <i>Work relating to aspects of the District's GI evidence base has been commissioned by Local Plan team and will be extended to inform the preparation of Local Plan documents and decisions on planning applications</i> • <i>The preparation of masterplans for Bicester, Banbury and Kidlington is taking GI considerations into account</i>
4.2 Support the establishment and development of ecological networks through delivery of the Conservation Target Area (CTA) project.	4.2.1 Continue to fund the environmental organisations that coordinate and deliver the CTA Project	Organisations to provide a report twice a year to demonstrate that they are working towards the development of ecological networks in accordance with funding agreements	<p><i>Satisfactory interim and end of year reports received from Wild Oxfordshire, RSPB and BBOWT. Available to view on the Council's website -</i></p> <p>www.cherwell.gov.uk/biodiversitypartners</p>
4.3 Support Oxfordshire partnership work relating to GI and strategic biodiversity issues	4.3.1 Work collaboratively to progress the County's Local Nature Partnership	Attend and contribute to partnership meetings	<p><i>New action and target for 2016-18</i></p> <p><i>2015-16 target</i> <i>Work in partnership to deliver a County GI Strategy</i></p> <p><i>2015-16 outcome</i> <i>County GI Strategy has not been progressed</i></p>

Theme 5: Health, Wellbeing, Economy and Education

- The value of the natural environment for the health and wellbeing of both people and the economy is well recognised. A Nature and Wellbeing Green paper, prepared by the Wildlife Trusts and RSPB, sets out the evidence showing how much people need nature for their mental and physical health; and how important natural capital is to the economy.
- Biodiversity conservation should not just be left to land managers and nature conservation organisations. It needs to involve many sectors of society and people in all walks of life. Public understanding and education are vital.
- BBOWT's recently published **Strategic Plan 2016-2021 Be part of nature's recovery** aims to embed nature into people's lives, giving them more natural green spaces to explore and discover their local wildlife.

Aim	2016-2018 Action	Measure/Target	2015-16 Review
5.1 Work in partnership with others to link action to improve the natural environment with social and economic priorities	<p>5.1.1 Support and contribute to BBOWT's Strategic Plan 2016-2021</p> <p>5.1.2 Provide replacement biodiversity information boards in Bure Park Local Nature Reserve in partnership with Bicester Green Gym and Bicester Town Council as part of Bicester Wayfinding Project</p>	<p>Support 'healthy for wildlife, healthy for people' initiatives at Meadow Farm near Bicester and other District sites</p> <p>Information boards to be provided by March 2017</p>	<p>New action and target for 2016-18</p> <p>New action and target for 2016-18</p> <p>2015-16 target <i>Contribute to Wild Oxfordshire's work through support for the "Health and Natural Environment" strategic project</i></p> <p>2015-16 outcome <i>Specific project not progressed by Wild Oxfordshire</i></p> <p>2015-16 action <i>Facilitate involvement of appropriate Officers with the SEEIP (Strategic Environment & Economic Investment Plan)</i></p> <p>2015-16 outcome <i>Engagement of CDC Officers resulted in approval of several funding bids as part of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (OXLEP's) SEEIP including the proposed Cherwell Country Park</i></p>
5.2 Support and promote initiatives to encourage involvement in the natural environment and improve public understanding of biodiversity	5.2.1 Engage young people through promotion of conservation activities in/with schools and organised groups	Support Warriner School Farm to provide subsidised school and youth group visits	<i>At least 12 primary school and youth group biodiversity visits were supported as well as Forest School sessions at 9 primary schools</i>

Aim	2016-2018 Action	Measure/Target	2015-16 Review
	<p>5.2.2 Engage Parish Councils and interested groups/individuals through provision of information</p> <p>5.2.3 Produce publicity material</p>	<p>Promote Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE2's) grant funding for local projects and provide support where possible</p> <p>Maintain information on web pages and use website/Cherwell Link for promotion</p>	<p>New target for 2016-18</p> <p>2015-16 target Send 'Nature Conservation News' to all Parish Councils and local groups annually</p> <p>2015-16 outcome Not achieved in this way but TOE2 environmental project funding presentation at November Parish Liaison meeting</p> <p>Web pages updated regularly – Corporate BAP, biodiversity partners reports, annual swifts report. Autumn 2015 Cherwell Link – Daeda's Wood bat box project.</p>

How to contact us

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Call **01295 221707**
or visit [www.cherwell.gov.uk/
naturalenvironment](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment)

Community Services JB03417

The information in this document can be made available in other languages, large print braille, audio tape or electronic format on request. Please contact 01295 227001

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać. 01295 227001

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ। 01295 227001

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。01295 227001

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔
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Appendix 1

Cherwell District Council

Consultation and Engagement Strategy

2016 - 2019

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1. Aim of Strategy

The Consultation and Engagement Strategy will form the basis for a medium term action plan to guide the specific consultation and engagement activity undertaken by the council during the period 2016 - 2019.

Services will be expected to use this strategy when undertaking service-specific consultation and engagement exercises and apply the principles when they work with residents, communities, businesses and customers.

The Performance and Insight Team will deliver this strategy and apply the principles to all generic engagement and consultation exercises (e.g. the council-wide customer satisfaction survey) as well as providing support and advice for any service specific consultation and engagement activity that is proposed and carried out.

2. Context

The council is keen to enhance performance by ensuring we understand what people want and that people understand what we do. This will be supported through effective communication and engagement with communities. CDC already has strong links with the local community and voluntary sector as well as other public service providers and recognises the importance of ensuring consultation and engagement includes these organisations.

The “Localism” agenda (The Localism Act 2011) set out in national government policy placed new and greater emphasis on the importance of effective community engagement and the role of local people in decision making and neighbourhood planning. The council is also committed to working with partners where it benefits local communities because ‘joined up’ engagement can help both the public and the council to address local problems that cut across agencies.

The strategy outlines our developing approach and commitment to consultation with residents, communities and customers. It does not replace any statutory or formal consultation processes that we currently undertake, for example in relation to

planning, licensing or any appeals processes.

In preparation for the council's Local Plan, there is a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which provides the consultation strategy for the Local Plan. The SCI sets out the framework for planning-related consultations which will ensure there is genuine involvement in plan and decision making. It also enables the council to demonstrate how they have met statutory requirements. The SCI is a requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The SCI needs to comply with statutory requirements and Government policy for plan making and consultation on planning matters.

The council also incorporates the Equality Act into its consultation and engagement work. The Equality Act came into force on 6 April 2010 with many of its provisions coming into effect in October 2010. The intention of the Act is to harmonize the fragmented discrimination legislation but it also introduced new restrictions.

Existing good practice (e.g. 'Connecting Communities' events for the public, 'Knowing our Communities' information sharing events for officers and members, etc.) will form the basis of our consultation and engagement work going forward, enabling us to replicate successes and learn from any issues that have previously arisen.

3. Applying the strategy

The key objective of this strategy is to capture and use relevant and meaningful insight from a wide range of stakeholders on how they use and/or perceive our services, what changes they would like to see and where there is scope to provide improved or additional services.

Under-pinning the objective are clear aims to:

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

3.1 How we will engage and consult

The council is determined to move away from consultation that speaks about "hard to reach groups" and to ensure our consultative approach is inclusive to all and effective in gathering feedback that can help drive service improvement.

Engagement with local people is vital. Engagement is part of the process of actively involving people in the delivery and development of services. When engaging with residents, community, business and customers, all services should follow these distinct principles for effective engagement.

Informing	This involves raising awareness about the subject by providing relevant, balanced, clear and easily understood information. We will also ensure that people are kept up to date.
Consulting	This means asking what people think and inviting comment on proposals and approaches.
Participating	This entails a more interactive approach of encouraging people to put forward views, ideas and proposals for discussion.
Giving Feedback	This is the stage of the process where people can see how their involvement has informed decision making.

3.2 Methods of consultation and engagement

The types and methods of engagement used will be proportionate and appropriate to the nature and subject matter with a much greater emphasis on partnership working. Potential techniques that could be used include:

Connecting Community events

The public will be invited to attend open events that will provide the opportunity for relevant services to showcase what they can deliver alongside the services provided by connected agencies (Police, NHS, Education, etc.), the Town/Parish and County Councils and voluntary groups.

After each event an evaluation will be made of how it impacted upon the community and what we can learn to improve our service and overall satisfaction of residents of both councils.

The existing **Faith Forum** and **Disability Forum** of CDC will form part of a Connecting Community event but with a direct focus on those areas to ensure that the focus is driven from those with a direct need or understanding of the service area.

Links with other Council and District forums

There are existing forums to which the Consultation and Engagement Officer attends to ensure the opportunities to engage are taken forward. It will be good practice to ensure that the existing forums review their terms of reference and validity of function. Where opportunities existing to ‘piggyback’ on connected forums then the possibility will be explored in order to share resources and link them with Connecting Communities events.

Presentations and Attendance at Meetings

Where appropriate (and by arrangement) the council may deliver presentations, hold question and answer sessions or attend meetings of external groups and organisations, in order to consult or engage upon particular issues.

Public Exhibitions and Meetings

Where appropriate, the council may hold exhibitions, with staffed or unstaffed drop-in

sessions, to help inform the community, or hold public meetings to allow people to debate particular issues.

Annual Satisfaction Survey

The council conducts an annual Customer Satisfaction Survey. The Customer Satisfaction Survey will cover overall satisfaction, satisfaction with individual services, value for money, communications and the ability to measure performance year on year. The Survey is sent both electronically and in paper form to capture feedback from as many residents as possible.

Targeted Surveys

The council can use online surveys via Survey Monkey to contact residents either in targeted groups or as a percentage of all on the Land Registry database. The Performance and Insight team can assist services in setting up online surveys as well as providing guidance on question setting.

Targeted surveys can also be set up for postal or telephone contact or indeed gathering information face to face. The method of delivery for a targeted survey will depend on the requirements of the residents, community or customers being asked and also with whom the service needs to consult and engage.

For example, a targeted survey asking users of a leisure centre for their opinions and improvement decisions could be carried out by specifically targeting people at the leisure centre by giving them a survey/return envelope or link to an online survey as they leave the centre, ensuring we are only getting the views of people who will be able to feedback on the facilities on offer.

Internal Staff Surveys

The council will continue to look inwards to consider the views of staff with staff surveys conducted across both sites in a two year rolling programme. The last survey was conducted in early 2016.

Town/Parish Councils and other existing community forums

Where appropriate, the council may utilise Town/Parish Council meetings, as well as other existing community forums or local liaison groups, to raise awareness of new services or to hold consultations regarding access to services.

Workshops/Focus Groups

Where appropriate, the council will hold workshops or meetings with key stakeholders to discuss particular issues and key technical matters in depth.

Knowing our communities

The 'knowing our communities' events will be used as a mechanism to share information with the staff. A programme of new topics will be provided in line with the Equalities Action Plan. It is aimed to link these 'knowing our communities' staff

briefings to the appraisal and personal development plans as a way to encourage greater staff uptake of the events.

3.4 Communications

Council publications

The council publishes a quarterly newsletter which is delivered to all households across the district. This newsletter will publicise the community engagement events.

Email/Letters

The council will email/send letters to those who are on our consultation database who have requested to be consulted or engage within forums.

Internet and Social Media

The council will seek to publicise the public community engagements on its website and will raise awareness of consultations and engagement through social media such as Twitter and Facebook.

Local Media

The council will prepare press releases to circulate to local newspapers and/or radio stations to raise awareness of the consultations and engagement to encourage community involvement.

4. Consultation & Engagement – Annual Action Plans & using the data

4.1 Action Plans

Each year the Action Plan to implement the Consultation Strategy will be refreshed to take into account any new developments and respond to lessons learned from the previous year. The Action Plan aligns activity to the 5 aims and also will support the Corporate Business Plan for the council.

4.2 Using the data collected

All information collected through engagement and consultation activities will be treated appropriately to conform with data protection legislation. The information will be used to help:

- a) Evidence satisfaction with the council's services.
- b) Show progress over time, particularly when gauging improvement in service delivery.
- c) Capture ideas from residents, communities and customers that will help the council with service design and resource allocation.
- d) Identify concerns that need investigation and resolution.

5. Contact details

For information about planned consultation and engagement events please contact the Performance and Insight Team

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