

Executive

Value for Money Review of Economic Development

4 July 2011

Report of Strategic Director for Planning, Housing & Economy, Head of Planning Policy & Economic Development and Improvement Project Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the findings of the Value for Money Review of Economic Development and the recommendations arising from the report.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note that the Value for Money Review concludes that Economic Development Service is a top performer, making a real difference to Cherwell's businesses and residents affected by the downturn.
- (2) To adopt the Economic Development Service Vision to 2016 which sets out a forward looking framework, drawing on the Council's contribution to the emerging Economic Development Strategy.
- (3) To accept gross savings of £35,000 with immediate effect, as a contribution towards the Council delivering its Medium Term Financial Strategy, recognising this reduces the flexibility of the service to undertake economic development activity in the future.

Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Corporate Improvement Plan 2011/12 includes a number of Value for Money (VFM) Reviews aimed at contributing to the Council's public promise to save £1m 2012/13.
- 1.2 Economic Development has been selected for a full VFM Review as the area is above average expenditure in comparison Cherwell's CIPFA family group of similar authorities. Also, the function received additional financial support from 2009/10 in response to the economic recession.
- 1.3 The Review assesses the value for money of this service since additional Council resource was allocated, develops a vision for the service to 2016 and considers cost savings available.

- 1.4 The Value for Money Review conclusions are attached in Annex 1 and a full copy of the Review is in deposit in the Members' Room and available on-line. The Review found Cherwell's Economic Development Service is a top performer, making a real difference to Cherwell's businesses and residents affected by the downturn and:
- offered the greatest range and depth of services to residents and businesses in comparison to other authorities
 - leveraged in multiple additional resources, both finance and in-kind, to support Cherwell's priorities
 - offers a high quality service, demonstrated through excellent feedback
 - is helping generate positive performance in the local economy where the service has focused since 2008/09, with additional Council resources, especially in areas of unemployment and number of businesses, though the overall skill level in the local economy is not improving in-line with the national and South East regional trend
 - has received external validation for its efforts to make Cherwell more resilient, as part of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies Resilience Study in 2010
 - Despite similar staffing structures to comparator authorities, Cherwell is the highest cost service per head of population; this position is distorted by greatly differing interpretations of the CIPFA costing definition and the significant income generated by many of the comparator authorities who undertake commercial lettings, run conference centres and receive government growth funding which helps offset expenditure considerably.
- 1.5 A Vision to 2016 for the future Economic Development Service is set out in Annex 2 and aims to support the new Economic Development Strategy being developed, particularly focusing on a Cherwell that is resilient and develops people, businesses - and Cherwell as a place.
- 1.6 This Review sets out a range of savings options from £20k to £200k to contribute towards the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy; however, taking savings may have implications on the Council's ability to deliver its economic development service in line with the Vision to 2016.
- 1.7 A full copy of the Economic Development Value for Money Review is on deposit in the Members Room at Bodicote House and available on-line.

Proposals

- 1.8 To adopt the recommendations of the VFM Review in full:
- note the Value for Money conclusion reached by this Review
 - adopt the Vision to 2016 for the future Economic Development Service
 - agree to gross saving of £35,000 with immediate effect from within the 2011/12 budget.

Conclusion

- 1.9 The Cherwell's Economic Development Service is a top performer, making a real difference to Cherwell's businesses and residents affected by the downturn.
- 1.10 The Vision sets out a forward looking framework drawing on the Council's contribution to the new Economic Development Strategy, within which the service can undertake its annual service and budget setting activity.
- 1.11 Agreeing to the level of savings proposed by this review assists the Council in delivering its Medium Term Financial Strategy, but reduces the flexibility of the service to undertake economic development activity in the future.

Background Information

Overview of the Area

- 2.1 There is an expectation that local authorities will undertake economic development activities within their areas. The importance placed by Cherwell on this discretionary activity is embedded in the Council's Corporate Plan through its District of Opportunity Strategic Priority; specifically the objectives for 2011/12 to "*promote local economic development through business advice and support, inward investment and the Local Enterprise Partnership*" and "*work with partners to tackle disadvantage in the district*".
- 2.2 The Economic Development VFM Review covers a range of activities:
- (i) Support and advice to Cherwell's businesses
 - (ii) Oxfordshire Business Enterprises, supporting new businesses in Cherwell
 - (iii) The new Economic Development Strategy and actions to 2016
 - (iv) Job Clubs in Banbury and Bicester and other recession responses
 - (v) Cherwell M40 Investment Partnership (CHIP) promoting Cherwell
 - (vi) Local Enterprise Partnerships and Cherwell's membership of two LEPs
 - (vii) Economic development activity, such as information management
 - (viii) Partnership working – with organisations like Chambers of Commerce and delivery of key business events in Cherwell.
- 2.3 The service employs just over 5 full-time equivalent members of staff and operates a net budget of over £400k of which just over £200k represents the controllable expenses by the service in 2011/12.
- 2.4 The service faces the following external issues:
- a) The economic downturn has challenged the 'resilience' of the local economy
 - b) Adjustment of strategy to tougher economic conditions with uncertainties over whether there will be a return to growth conditions or a deepening of problems
 - c) Resource constraints in the public sector, downsizing or closure of existing services, such as regional Business Link during 2011
 - d) Changing regional/sub-regional structures - Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and support for young people by the County (such as those not in employment, education or training - NEETs) through new hub structures.
- 2.5 Internal issues facing the service include:
- a) High political support to create a 'District of Opportunity' with a number of pledges, for example, to help young people into work and training and enable business growth
 - b) High profile service with the public, achieving high user satisfaction
 - c) Leadership of the emerging Cherwell Economic Development Strategy on behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership (and its Sustainable Community Strategy)
 - d) A clear challenge: "*The catalytic elements are in Cherwell, it just needs gluing together*" from an external assessment of the service, as part of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies Resilience Study in 2010
 - e) Ensuring that 'eco-Bicester' achieves its aims to provide new jobs in the town

- f) Sustaining current activities within a tighter Cherwell budget and with less external funding support (especially the recession response initiatives).

VFM Review Findings

- 2.6 In reaching a value for money conclusion, the Council has been compared with its family of similar local authorities as defined by CIPFA and other local authorities and regional statistics. The Review's Executive Summary and Recommendations are attached as Annex 1.
- 2.7 The Value for Money Review found the Economic Development service is a top performer, making a real difference to Cherwell's businesses and residents affected by the downturn and:
- offered the greatest range and depth of services to residents and businesses in comparison to other local authorities
 - leveraged in multiple additional resources, both finance and in-kind, to support Cherwell's priorities
 - offers a high quality service, demonstrated through excellent feedback
 - is helping generate positive performance in the local economy where the service has focused since 2008/09, with additional Council resources, especially in areas of unemployment and number of businesses, though the overall skill level in the local economy is not improving in-line with the national and South East regional trend
 - has received external validation for its efforts to make Cherwell more resilient, as part of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies Resilience Study in 2010
 - despite similar staffing structures to comparator authorities, Cherwell is the highest cost service per head of population; this position is distorted by greatly differing interpretations of the CIPFA costing definition and the significant income generated by many of the comparator authorities who undertake commercial lettings, run conference centres and receive government growth funding which helps offset expenditure considerably.

Vision for Cherwell's Economic Development Service to 2016

- 2.8 The Review sets out a Vision to 2016 for the Economic Development Service, attached to this report as Annex 2. The Vision sets out aims to supporting the new Economic Development Strategy being developed, particularly focusing on a Cherwell that is resilient and develops people, businesses - and Cherwell as a place.
- 2.9 The Vision sets out a rowing back on general inward investment activity, a preservation of current support for businesses and the Council's response to the recession, and a gearing up to support the Eco Bicester business growth potential, through specific inward investment activity, and the Council's presence in two Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- 2.10 By 2016 the Economic Development Service will have contributed towards and be able to evidence a range of strategic benefits to Cherwell:
- Increased resilience and diversity of the business community across Cherwell
 - Balanced economic development and housing growth
 - Gains from Eco-Bicester

- Added value through partnership working, including:
 - added value to the Brighter Futures in Banbury Programme
 - reduced number of young people not in education, employment or training across the district.
 - support for local people into work – such as creation of apprenticeships and co-ordination of Job Clubs
- 2.11 The delivery of the Vision will be measured against local outcomes, against baseline data, with annual targets, so that by 2016 Cherwell can show we have contributed towards and are able to evidence:

Savings Options

- 2.12 This Review sets out a range of savings options to contribute towards the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy; however, taking savings may have implications on the Council's ability to deliver its economic development service in line with the Vision to 2016:
- Savings to discretionary budgets within the control of the service, ranging from £20k - £65k gross (Options 1a to 1d)
 - Ceasing to contribute to Bicester Vision, saving up to £15k (Option 2)
 - Reducing staffing, saving up to £20k (Option 3)
 - Cease provision of the service totally, saving up to £200k (Option 4)
 - Opportunities for increasing income (Option 5).
- 2.13 Savings are offered by this Review in recognition of the Council's requirement to achieve its Medium Term Financial Strategy; however, taking savings may have implications on the Council's ability to deliver its economic development service in line with the Vision, particularly in the developing areas of economic development support for "eco-Bicester" and the two Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- 2.14 The savings options set out above have been framed in the context of the scope of the current services and the vision for the service through to 2016. A strategy is recommended to withdraw discretionary spend, preserving those areas of spend best able to support the Vision and a rowing back on general inward investment activity in particular.
- 2.15 The overall recommendation is a saving of £35k gross (Option 1b), with immediate effect within this current financial year of 2011/12. Taking the saving with immediate effect will generate an in-year saving from the 2011/12 budget and savings from subsequent years' budgets.
- 2.16 In detail, the savings will be spread across the following business areas:-
- (i) Continue to distribute the "Business Moves" magazine in electronic format only and cease to produce the printed version. This magazine is published by Cherwell Investment Partnership and moving across to electronic only will save £6,000. This saving option was identified as part of the VFM Review of Communications undertaken in 2010/11.
 - (ii) Reducing financial support for the Cherwell Investment Partnership by £24,000. This would reduce the money available for inward investment activities such as advertising and exhibitions.
 - (iii) Reducing spending on the Economic Development Strategy by £5,000. This has been a major piece of work in 2010/11 and is currently being finalised. It will require being kept under review and up-to-date but limited further expenses in the future can be taken as a saving from 2011/12

onwards.

- 2.17 Delivery of this saving being achieved by reducing the unrestricted “supplies and services” budgets by a gross amount of £35,000, recognising that £20,000 has already been taken from this budget in anticipation of savings from this VFM Review (therefore a net additional saving of £15,000 is being offered).
- 2.18 Note that in agreeing to this savings recommendation, the impact would be limited in the short-term; however, three key risks and opportunities should be noted:
- The savings offered will mean that the Council will retain a reduced degree of flexibility to deploy initiatives and interventions as needs dictate across the district. This reduced flexibility will not allow for significant spending on any new key initiatives which may emerge. An example of this could be economic promotion of eco-Bicester which may warrant a range of potentially costly activities. Therefore, the savings offered would seriously affect the Council’s ability to fund such initiatives in the future.
 - Key elements of the current Economic Development service are currently supported financially from external sources. The savings offered are based on an assumption that these funding sources continue and if they ceased it would put additional burden on the reduced budget and spending priorities would need to be re-assessed.
 - Cherwell’s in-house reserve fund LABGI (generated from Government grants no longer available) is ring-fenced for economic development purposes and stands at just under £100k of unreserved funds. This reserve offers an opportunity to fund new initiatives or provide short-term, temporary funding for services where external funding has been withdrawn. It is clear that this one-off fund would not last long if required to fund multiple priorities.

Implications

- Financial:** The review has demonstrated that Economic Development service is delivering high value for its cost to the Council and, while its staffing structure is similar to other, comparable local authorities, it does not benefit from the significant income streams that some others attract.
- The savings contributions offered by this review will assist the Council to deliver its Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- If external agencies withdraw funds this will increase the financial pressure on this budget and this needs to be monitored. The Council has available a limited pot of funds (LABGI) set aside to support Economic Development activity which it can call on to support initiatives in the short-term while longer term, sustainable financial arrangements are established.
- Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance 01295 221551
- Legal:** As this service is discretionary there are limited legal implications, however, the Council does have contractual

commitments associated with hosting services.

Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Solicitor, Legal & Democratic Services 01295 221686

Risk Management:

The savings offered will mean that the Council will retain a reduced degree of flexibility to deploy initiatives and interventions as needs dictate across the district. This reduced flexibility will not allow for significant spending on any new key initiatives which may emerge. An example of this could be economic promotion of eco-Bicester which may warrant a range of potentially costly activities. Therefore, the savings offered would seriously affect the Council's ability to fund such initiatives in the future.

Comments checked by Claire Taylor, Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager 01295 221566

Data Quality

Base data for comparison has been the Revenue Estimates 2010/11 from the Council's CIPFA defined group of similar authorities. In reaching conclusions, the final data used has been augmented with contributions received direct from a number of the comparator authorities. Other source information has been used that follows best practice guidelines such as the Council's own satisfaction surveys. Financial data/comparison has been prepared by the relevant service accountant.

Comments checked by Neil Lawrence, Project Manager, Improvement 01295 221801

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

A District of Opportunity

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Norman Bolster

Lead Member for Estates

Councillor Nigel Morris

Lead Member for Change

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Annex 1	VFM Review Executive Summary & Recommendations
Annex 2	Vision 2016
Background Papers	
Full VFM Review of Economic Development (on deposit in the Members' Room)	
Report Author	Alison Davies, Improvement Project Manager
Contact Information	01295 221580 Alison.davies@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

1. Purpose of this report

This Value for Money (VFM) Review forms part of the Council's VFM Review Programme. This Review:

- Assesses the service's value for money (in terms of performance, quality and cost) since additional resources were allocated due to the economic downturn
- Develops a Vision for the service to 2016
- Considers cost savings available to contribute towards the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

2. VFM Conclusion: Cherwell's Economic Development Service is a top performer, making a real difference to Cherwell's businesses and residents affected by the economic downturn:

- **Offers the greatest range and depth of services** to residents and businesses, against the CIPFA family group of similar authorities, where a detailed assessment has been made.
- Is **leveraging in multiple additional resources**, both finance and in-kind, to support Cherwell's priorities, such as the Job Clubs and Oxfordshire Business Enterprises service.
- Is offering a **high quality** service to Cherwell's existing businesses, start-ups and residents, demonstrated through excellent feedback and real outcomes from customers, businesses & partners.
- Is **helping generate positive performance in the local economy** where the service has focused since 2008/09, with additional Council resources, supporting local businesses and local people affected by the economic downturn, such that by 2010/11:
 - Cherwell is the second fastest to return to its Dec 2008 level of unemployment among its CIPFA comparators.
 - Cherwell's unemployment has recovered fastest among the Districts in Oxfordshire over the same time period.
 - VAT and PAYE registered businesses have remained constant since 2008, however, the number of businesses registered for Non Domestic Rates declined in the early part of the economic downturn, but has made a strong recovery during 2010/11, which indicates an increasing confidence among businesses.
 - However, skill levels in Cherwell (at NVQ level 3 and above) took a dip in 2008 to 2009, but by 2010 have recovered to 2007 levels. Cherwell has now returned to being in front of the Great Britain average, but remains just behind the South East average, and Cherwell does not building on its skill position year-on-year, which is the regional and national trend.
- Has received **external validation** for its efforts to make Cherwell more resilient as part of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies Resilience Study in 2010 which found:

"To determine resilience, the strength of relationship and level of interaction between the private, public and social sector is key to being able to determine how a locality will react to counter economic and environmental shocks. Cherwell as a locality can be seen as a resilient place when integrating the findings from the statistical analysis with the interviews that were carried out to provide a strategic insight into how Cherwell as a place functions. However, there is still room for improvement.

'The catalytic elements are in Cherwell, it just needs gluing together.'

This key area for improvement is addressed in the new Economic Development Strategy.
- Despite similar staffing structures to comparator authorities, Cherwell is the **highest cost service per head of population**; this position is distorted by greatly differing interpretations of the CIPFA costing definition and the significant income generated by many of the comparator authorities who undertake commercial lettings, run conference centres and receive government growth funding which helps offset expenditure considerably.

3. Recommendations

- (i) Note the Value for Money conclusion reached by this Review.
- (ii) Adopt the Vision to 2016 for the future Economic Development Service, aimed at supporting delivery of the emerging Economic Development Strategy (focusing on a Cherwell that is resilient and develops people, businesses - and Cherwell as a place) and supporting key themes in the Council's Strategic Priority of a District of Opportunity.
- (iii) Recognise that this Review offers savings arising from the Council's requirement to achieve its Medium Term Financial Strategy; however, taking savings may have implications on the Council's ability to deliver its economic development service in line with the Vision set out in the Vision, particularly in the developing areas of economic development support for "eco-Bicester" and the two Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- (iv) Consider the saving options ranging from £20k - £200k and agree to:
 - Implement Option 1b), reducing the spend budgets by a gross amount of **£35,000**
 - Take the saving with immediate effect generating an in-year saving from the 2011/12 budget and savings from subsequent years' budgets.
 - Deliver this saving by pursuing a strategy of preserving areas of spend best able to support the Vision and rowing back particularly on inward investment activity. Consequently, reducing the unrestricted "supplies and services" budgets by a gross amount of £35,000, recognising that £20,000 has already been taken from this budget in anticipation of savings from this VFM Review (therefore a net additional saving of £15,000 is being offered).
 - In detail, the savings will be spread across the following business areas:-
 - a) Continue to distribute the "Business Moves" magazine in electronic format only and cease to produce the printed version. This magazine is published by Cherwell Investment Partnership and moving across to electronic only will save £6,000. This saving option was identified as part of the VFM Review of Communications undertaken in 2010/11.
 - b) Reducing financial support for the Cherwell Investment Partnership by £24,000. This would reduce the money available for inward investment activities such as advertising and exhibitions.
 - c) Reducing spending on the Economic Development Strategy by £5,000. This has been a major piece of work in 2010/11 and is currently being finalised. It will require being kept under review and up-to-date but limited further expenses in the future can be taken as a saving from 2011/12 onwards.
- (v) Note that in agreeing to this savings recommendation, the impact would be limited in the short-term; however, three key risks and opportunities should be noted:
 - The savings offered will mean that the Council will retain a reduced degree of flexibility to deploy initiatives and interventions as needs dictate across the district. This reduced flexibility will not allow for significant spending on any new key initiatives which may emerge. An example of this could be economic promotion of eco-Bicester which may warrant a range of potentially costly activities. Therefore, the savings offered would seriously affect the Council's ability to fund such initiatives in the future.
 - Key elements of the current Economic Development service are currently supported financially from external sources. The savings offered are based on an assumption that these funding sources continue and if they ceased it would

put additional burden on the reduced budget and spending priorities would need to be re-assessed.

- Cherwell's in-house reserve fund LABGI (generated from Government grants no longer available) is ring-fenced for economic development purposes and stands at just under £100k of unreserved funds. This reserve offers an opportunity to fund new initiatives or provide short-term, temporary funding for services where external funding has been withdrawn. It is clear that this one-off fund would not last long if required to fund multiple priorities.

1. Strategic Context:

Cherwell's Economic Development Service plays a key role, working with employers and partner organisations, to support delivery of the Cherwell Community Strategy's overall Vision to 2030 of "a diverse economy with opportunities for all, vibrant communities connected by a sense of pride, place and purpose".

The draft Cherwell Economic Development Strategy to 2016, being developed by partners across Cherwell and led by the District Council, sets out a vision for the aspiration and needs of the local economies of Banbury, Bicester, Kidlington and rural areas, as well as Cherwell-wide issues of:

- supporting existing companies to be successful and productive, especially in international markets, aiming to reverse the relatively low-wage local economy
- selective encouragement of inward investment, supporting diversity
- identification of development sites for economic growth
- strengthening technical capacity, leading expansion of high-technology, specialised sectors
- balancing population and business growth with infrastructure requirements
- Overall, maintaining Cherwell as a good place to live and work

Whilst intended as a Strategy delivered by many employers and partners working together, the themes for delivering the Economic Development Strategy directly shape much of the future leadership and delivery role of Cherwell's Economic Development Service:

1.1 Strategy Delivery Theme A: Resilience

- A diverse and resilient economy
- Strong and flexible partnerships that add value by working together
- Maximise the gain from the "green economy" arising from Eco-Bicester
- Responding to the challenge from the Centre for Local Economic Strategies in 2010: 'The catalytic elements are in Cherwell, it just needs gluing together.'

1.2 Strategy Delivery Theme B: People, Business and Place

Developing People: Our people are our greatest asset in our community, we will:

- create employment
- provide access to employment
- enhance skills
- improve the life chances of people living in some of Cherwell's less prosperous areas
- ensure wages keep pace with local costs of living

Developing Business: Businesses will work with public and social partners, each other to become stronger and more diverse, we will:

- promote business start-ups and entrepreneurship
- develop local procurement and supply chains
- promote business & cluster development
- attract new investment
- develop a "World Class" business community and develop the visitor economy

Developing Place: So Cherwell is an even better place to live, work and play, we will:

- promote employment sites & premises
- manage infrastructure development
- support rural areas and urban centres.

2. Economic Development Service: Vision 2011 – 2016

The service aims to lead and shape delivery of significant elements of the Cherwell Economic Development Strategy to 2016, contributing to its delivery to the best of its ability within available resources.

2.1 Strategic Benefits

By 2016 the Economic Development Service will have contributed towards and be able to evidence a range of **strategic benefits** to Cherwell:

- **Increased resilience and diversity of the business community across Cherwell:** How the economy has become more diverse and resilient over the 5 years of the Economic Development Strategy.
- **Balanced economic development and housing growth:** through promotion of economic development through business advice and support, inward investment and Local Enterprise Partnerships (Cherwell's Corporate Plan 2011/12)
- **Gains from Eco-Bicester:** Demonstrable economic gain from the significant opportunities offered by the exemplar national Eco-Bicester project of 5,000 homes and at least 5,000 jobs.
- **Work with partners to tackle disadvantage in the District:**
 - added value to the Brighter Futures in Banbury Programme (Cherwell's Corporate Plan 11/12).
 - Work with our partners to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training across the district. (Cherwell's Corporate Plan 2011/12).
 - A programme of support for local people into work – such as creation of apprenticeships and co-ordination of Job Clubs (Cherwell's Corporate Plan 11/12).
- **Value added through Partnerships:** The value added by the partnerships in Cherwell that are created or remain in place.

2.2 Local outcomes, measured against baseline data, with annual targets, so that by 2016 we can show we have contributed towards and are able to evidence:

- Numbers of employment opportunities created.
- Increased number of VAT and NNDR registered local businesses.
- Reduced number of young people not in education, employment and training (Cherwell's Pledges 2011/12) – both 16-18 year olds and under 25s.
- Retention of the low level of unemployment, experienced in 2010.
- Increased qualifications among residents of working age – particularly NVQ 3 plus.
- Wage rate levels
- Outcomes focused in priority areas: Bicester Eco Town and Brighter Futures for Banbury Wards

3. Achieving the Vision:

Taking a Strategic Lead for delivering the Economic Development Strategy:

- We will champion the overall delivery of the Economic Delivery Strategy 2016 and respond to the challenge to bringing the catalytic elements in Cherwell together.
- We will commit to deliver annual plans representing Cherwell's contribution.
- We will review progress each year through the Local Strategic Partnership which will hold partners to account for their contribution.

3.1 Strategic Delivery Theme A: Resilience

A1. Supporting the development of a diverse and resilient economy

- We will promote cohesion of the business community through close working with organisations like the Chambers of Commerce.
- We will provide a network of support to local businesses of information, advice and guidance.
- We will connect local businesses together to increase the knowledge of what is available locally.
- We will encourage local procurement and procure locally ourselves wherever we are able.

A2 Leading or contributing significantly to Partnerships that we consider add value:

- We will prioritise the following Partnerships:
 1. Local Enterprise Partnerships – both SEMLEP & Oxford City Region LEP
 2. Cherwell Job Club Strategic Alliance of Partners
 3. Brighter Futures in Banbury Steering Group
 4. Oxfordshire Business Enterprises
 5. Bicester Vision
 6. Cherwell Investment Partnership
 7. Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership
 8. Cherwell Skills Board
- We recognise the networking value associated with Partnerships, and value this benefit in the context of supporting outcomes and delivering benefits.
- We will maximise the gain for Cherwell from Partnerships to which we have agreed to be members, such as drawing on our regional professional and employers' networks.
- Where we lead, we will be clear of the objectives of the Partnership and its aims for the year with appropriate, focussed forward planning and reporting back in the Annual Report.

Future funding of OBE may become an issue as early as April 2012 and Cherwell is already in discussions with key partners. The Council may need to look to alternative partnership funding sources or fill the funding gap from its own resources (as it has done previously).

A3 Maximising the economic development gains from Eco Bicester:

- We will explore joint marketing with P3Eco of Bicester as the eco destination for commercial investment.

- We will use our unique position to promote Eco Bicester to our business contacts, particularly new business start-ups such as to clients of Oxfordshire Business Enterprises.
- We will support our partners to maximise their offer, such as the College's plan for eco skills training centres in Bicester.

3.2 Strategy Delivery Theme B: People, Business and Place

B1 Developing People

(i) Get local people back into local jobs:

- We will co-ordinate Cherwell's Job Clubs and the associated website, while resources allow and until such time as the economic situation improves.
- We will re-focus Cherwell's support for Job Clubs towards "special events":
 - specific employment sectors (e.g. Health & Social Care) or employers
 - specific groups of clients (e.g. young people or graduates)
- We will look to Partners to increase co-ordination of "routine" elements of the regular Job Clubs, particularly developing the offer at alternative venues such as libraries. This will need to be actively considered during 2011/12.

Future funding for Job Club is a key issue to be addressed. The Council will need to seek increased sponsorship, greater self help and also make more of its remaining project budgets available to support this service. It is to be hoped that an improving economic climate will allow a careful re assessment of the form of service needed.

(ii) Careers Advice: improving skills and access to jobs

- We will support local co-ordination of careers advice for the benefit of Cherwell's residents.
- We will work with partners, like JCP and local GPs, to increase resident referrals for support in access skills and jobs.
- We will work with partners to increase local, accessible venues for careers advice.

(iii) Employer Support:

- We will work with employers with local vacancies looking to recruit local people.
- We will co-ordinate special recruitment events for significant opportunities.
- We will work with local employers looking to make redundancies, tailoring the package accordingly, co-coordinating Partners to support employees.

(iv) Supporting Young People:

- We will focus our economic development activity towards supporting young people not in employment, education and training, specifically we will:
 - host Young People's Job Clubs with our partners.
 - encourage employers to take on apprentices and work-based training.
 - We will employ apprentices ourselves.
 - We will support mentoring schemes through the local schools and encourage schemes such as Young Enterprise.

B2 Developing Businesses

- We will support existing businesses in Cherwell, prioritising supporting local businesses ahead of attracting new businesses into Cherwell (inward investment).
- We will increase the profile of what we have to offer existing businesses, recognising the withdrawal of regional Business Link support, such as:
 1. Support and advise local businesses looking to expand or relocate.

2. Host business events & clubs to support business growth, such as the Export Club and Cherwell Investment Partnership.
3. Support new businesses starting up with free, expert advice and information from Oxfordshire Business Enterprises.
4. Promote Cherwell M40 Investment Partnership, its website and Working Group as a portal for businesses to find answers to their queries and help to invest.
5. We will maintain an up-to-date database of businesses in Cherwell and available land and premises.

B3 Developing Place

- We will support Bicester Vision and Banbury Town Centre Partnership as they develop the sense of place and identity of these Towns.
- Offer use of our premises to Partners if it helps our residents affected by the economic downturn, such as Jobseeker Allowance claimants signing-on at Cherwell's Bicester Linkpoint and expert careers advisors from the Government's Next Step Service using the Council's Linkpoints to offer free, confidential careers advice to Cherwell's residents.

3.3 Funding the Vision

The Vision will need to be funded from existing resources. The most significant element of spending is staff costs and discretionary spend on "supplies and services". Some current activities rely on other funding (either internal funds for Job Clubs or external funding for OBE and Job Club expenses). The continued availability of this funding will need to be assessed on an annual basis and will be considered through the annual budget and service planning process.