

# Executive

## 2010/11 Corporate Improvement Plan

1 March 2010

### Report of Chief Executive and Head of Improvement

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

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

This report is public
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#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

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

#### Executive Summary

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##### Introduction

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

##### Proposals

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 This has subsequently been replaced by the Comprehensive Area Assessment.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

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

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

### **Conclusion**

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

### **Background Information**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- b) An update of a previously completed value for money review.

This is services which have already been reviewed and delivered savings but which remain high cost. This will involve an update of the previously gathered

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Consultations Not Applicable**

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## **Implications**

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

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

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

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

## **Wards Affected**

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All

## **Corporate Plan Themes**

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The Corporate Improvement Plan covers all of the Corporate Plan Themes

## Executive Portfolio

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Councillor Cllr Ken Atack  
Portfolio Holder for Performance Management and Improvement

## Document Information

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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