

2011/12 Budget Scrutiny Outstanding Actions, Recommendations and Conclusions

Recommendations		
Having undertaken a review of the Council's revenue and capital budget proposals for 2011/12 with specific focus on the building blocks, fees and charges and capital programme, reviewing the capital bids received as part of the 2011/12 process, the Executive is recommended to consider the following recommendations from the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board:		
Recommendations	Reasons and Comments	Projected additional income/savings 2011/12
Capital Programme 2011/12		
<p>1. That the following capital bids be recommended for inclusion in the capital programme 2011/12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bid 1: Replacement Voicemail Service • Bid 3 Highfield Depot Repairs • Bid 4: Fees of Future Regeneration Schemes • Bid 5: Solar Photovoltaics at Bodicote House and Banbury Museum • Bid 6: Orchard Way Museum • Bid 7: Community Intelligence Hub • Bid 8: CCTV Internet Protocol 	Members were satisfied with the evidence presented for each of these bids.	-

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<p>Transmission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bid 9: Extended contract for Website Hosting• Bid 10: SMS Text Messaging Functionality• Bid 11: Virtual Server Infrastructure Expansion• Bid 12: SAN Expansion• Bid 13: Core Business System Integration• Bid 14: Uniform & Corporate GIS Database and Application Upgrades• Bid 17 Mini MRF (Materials Recovery Facility)• Bid 18: Recycling Bins Programme• Bid 19: Vehicle Replacement Programme• Bid 20: Solar Photovoltaics at Thorpe Lane Depot• Bid 21: Solar Photovoltaics at Sports Centres• Bid 22; Delegated Affordable Housing Pot• Bid 23: Discretionary House Condition Grants• Bid 24: Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)		
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<p>2. That the following capital bid not be included in the capital programme 2011/12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bid 15: Contact Centre Call Recording 	<p>There are no tangible revenue implications arising from this bid and an alternative means of implementing contact centre call recording can be considered as part of the Value for Money review of Customer Services.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>3. That consideration of bid 17, Kidlington pedestrianisation, be deferred until such time as discussions with external partners are concluded and more information available and at this time the bid be rescored and submitted as a supplementary bid.</p>	<p>At present there is no external funding for the bid which contributes to the relative low score for the bid. Discussions will take place with external partners regarding funding, the outcome of which may result in the rescoring of the bid.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>Staff Training</p>		
<p>4. That within staff training the Executive should:</p>		
<p>i. Reduce the budget allocation for staff attending conferences by 50%.</p>	<p>The current budget allocation for staff attending external conferences and seminars is extremely high in comparison to the other categories.</p>	<p>c. £60k</p>
<p>ii. Give the Learning and Development Manager authority to approve or refuse requests from staff to attend external training, with a right of appeal to the Chief Executive (through CMT).</p>	<p>The approvals system for officers attending conferences and seminars should be tightened. The Council could consider developing a robust policy that would govern criteria for attendance on external courses and that this would contribute to the reduction of unnecessary expenditure.</p>	<p>Linked to 2 - i</p>
<p>iii. Agree that conferences and seminars need to be identified during the performance appraisal process and unless identified at this stage attendance should normally be refused.</p>	<p>The approvals system for officers attending conferences and seminars should be tightened. The Council could consider developing a robust policy that would govern criteria for attendance on external courses and that this would contribute to the reduction of unnecessary expenditure.</p>	<p>Linked to 2 - i</p>

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Member Training		
5. That within Member training the Executive should:		
i. Reduce the member training budget by £7,505 and this reduction should be included in the 2011/12 budget build.	The Member training budget has traditionally been under spent however reducing the budget beyond the proposed could result in the Council not achieving the Member development Charter which it had already invested in	£7505
ii. Agree that following achievement of the Member Development Charter this budget be further reviewed as part of the 2012/13 budget build.	The Council has already invested in achieving the Member Development Charter. Once this has been achieved the budget can be further reviewed.	-
Environmental Services		
6. That within Environmental Services the Executive should:		
i. Amend the pricing for bulky waste collections as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £9 for up to three recyclable items • £18 for up to three non-recyclable items 	Promotes reduce, re-use, recycle principles and supports the Cleaner, Greener corporate priority.	£30k
ii. Remove concessions for bulky waste collections.	Online ordering of bulky waste will reduce the number of calls to the customer service centre	see 6 – i
iii. Reduce the charge for a blue bin to £18.	Increase blue bin use and so increase recycling rates. Supports the Cleaner, Greener corporate priority.	

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<p>iv. Introduce a charge of £5 for a third and any subsequent blue boxes.</p>	<p>Reduces the amount spent on boxes and increase blue bin use and so increase recycling rates. Supports the Cleaner, Greener corporate priority.</p>	
<p>v. Increase the charge for 25 trade waste sacks to £39.50 (plus VAT).</p>	<p>Linked to the reduced price of dry recycling trade sacks. Encourages businesses to recycle waste rather than send it to landfill and supports the Cleaner, Greener corporate priority.</p>	
<p>vi. Reduce the charge for 25 dry recycling trade sacks to £29.50 (plus VAT).</p>	<p>Linked to the increased price of trade waste sacks. Encourages businesses to recycle waste rather than send it to landfill and supports the Cleaner, Greener corporate priority.</p>	
<p>vii. Introduce a 12 month trade contract for small business with three categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard Recycler - £7 per month (1 roll waste sacks and 1 roll recycling sacks) • Good Recycler - £9.50 per month (1 roll waste sacks and 2 rolls of recycling sacks) • Excellent Recycler - £11.50 per month (1 roll waste sacks and 3 rolls of recycling sacks). 	<p>Will help small businesses and encourage greater use of the trade recycling service. Supports the Cleaner, Greener corporate priority.</p>	
<p>viii. Include a taxi test in the price of the MOT for taxis</p>	<p>By amending the price, the facility should be more attractive to taxi owners and this should make the MOT bay at Thorpe Lane depot more competitive and bring in additional income.</p>	
<p>ix. Continue to offer a pest service</p>	<p>This keeps the Council in line with neighbouring services who provide a pest service</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>x. That the concession for wasps be removed.</p>	<p>In a full year the cost of the concession is more than £20k</p>	<p>£14k</p>

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xi. That the concession for rats and mice be retained.	The cost of the concession is relatively low. There are concerns that there would be an increase in rats and mice should the concession be removed.	-
Finance		
7. That within Finance the Executive should:		
i. Recharge to customers the fees incurred by Cherwell District Council for processing credit card payments.	Passes on costs incurred by CDC. Brings CDC in line with many other Local Authorities.	£30k p/a based on 10/11 spend
ii. Increase court fees as detailed below subject to approval by the Magistrates Court: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax issue of summons: £55 • Council Tax liability order: £40 • National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) issue of summons: £70 • National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR): £48 	Brings CDC in line with the average charged by other Local Authorities in the county.	Circa £108k based on 10/11 spend
Safer Communities, Urban and Rural Services		
8. That within Safer Communities, Urban and Rural Services the Executive should:		
i. Increase the car park tariffs by 10p per hour (Banbury £0.70 to £0.80/hr, Bicester £0.60 - £0.70/hr)	The 2009 fees and charges review recommended that car park tariffs be reviewed and increase biannually. The increase takes account of the rise in VAT from 17.5% to 20% from January 2011. Members of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board raised concerns	£167k - £356k

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	<p>about the impact of the parking increases on businesses and the local economy in Banbury and Bicester.</p> <p>With reference to Bicester, Members of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board requested that the Executive take into consideration the redevelopment currently underway in Bicester which is causing disruptions and impacting on the town centre.</p>	
<p>ii. Increase the Excess Charge Notice (ECN) fees by £10 for each contravention</p>	<p>The current charges were set in 2009 on the basis the Council would move to Civil Parking Enforcement. This has not happened and is unlikely to be implemented for at least 18 months. CDC can set 'fine' levels as it sees fit. This maintains the fees in line with expected Civil Parking Enforcement charges.</p>	<p>c. £30k based on current performance</p>
<p>iii. Introduce a 'premium' charge for failure to pay within the specified time scale in line with the Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) regime but set at £100</p>	<p>Moves Excess Charge Notice charge for failure to pay within specified timescale in line with Civil Parking Enforcement 'Charge Certificate' process.</p>	<p>see 8 – ii</p>
<p>iv. Retain the pricing structure for season tickets in line with increases in pay and display charges</p>	<p>Season ticket prices will still be significantly below private competitor rates and offer generous discounts on daily tariff.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>v. Bring the charging period for Sundays and Bank Holidays in line with the rest of the week and introduce hourly charging on the same basis</p>	<p>Unifies car park tariffs</p>	
<p>vi. Introduce a flat rate evening parking charge and when determining the fee the Executive should be mindful of the impact of the effect of the charges on the night time economy and existing businesses.</p>	<p>The 2009 fees and charges review recommended that car park tariffs be reviewed biannually. The introduction of evening charges would generate additional income however the Executive are requested to consider the effect on the night-time economy in Bicester and Banbury when considering the charge.</p>	<p>Depends on fee applied</p>

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vii. Agree that the implementation date for the above recommendations i – vi be 1 March 2011	This will allow for the required consultation period.	detailed in recommendations 8 - i – vi
viii. Not extend the chargeable period from 08.00 to 07.00	This would not generate significant income.	Nil impact
ix. Not introduce charges on Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Easter Sunday.	This would not generate significant income and would be difficult to enforce.	Nil impact
x. No increase be made to Licensing fees	Licensing fees are already being recovered and statute does not allow the grant of licences to be a revenue raising measure	Nil impact
xi. Increase the fee for Public Path Orders to £1200 with immediate effect.	The fee has not been reviewed for several years. Current CDC cost is £400 which does not cover the time invested. The proposed fee is in line with other Councils.	£800 per application

Conclusions

In addition to the recommendations detailed above, during the budget scrutiny process the Resources and Performance Scrutiny considered the areas below for which there are no recommendations. Members agreed to submit comments for consideration by the Executive during their budget discussions.

Service Area / Issue	Conclusion / Comments
Safer Communities, Urban and Rural Services: Introduction of parking charges for blue badge holders	<p>In deliberating the introduction of parking charges for blue badge holders, Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board members request that the Executive take their comments into consideration.</p> <p>During the budget scrutiny process the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board considered Building Block 38 – Blue Badge spaces. The building block proposes the introduction of car parking charges for Blue Badge holders which could generate an income of up to £96k.</p>

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	<p>The Board discussed the proposals in detail and questioned the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities, Urban and Rural, the Head of Safer Communities, Urban and Rural Services and the Head of Finance about the building block. Members noted that there were various options for the introduction of charging blue badge holders within the building block including permitting blue badge holders an additional hours parking free of charge and introducing a new season ticket discount scheme for blue badge holders.</p> <p>Whilst acknowledging the need for the Council to generate income in the current economic climate, noting that blue badges are not means tested, that a number of Local Authorities in the country charge blue badge holders to park and that privately operated car parks in Banbury already charge blue badge holders, some Members of the Board raised the following concerns about the introduction of parking charges for blue badge holders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A potential increase in parking on double yellow lines (as this is permitted for blue badge holders in certain circumstances)• Additional pressure on vulnerable people• Financial implications, notably the cost of engineering works making the pay and display machines accessible• No other Oxfordshire districts currently have parking charges for blue badge holders (although Members noted that Oxford City applies blue badge charging in the city centre)
Concessions Policy	<p>During the budget scrutiny process a number of areas Members considered related to concessions. The Council does not currently have a Concessions Policy. Members agreed that the Council needs a clear and consistent concessions policy based on equitable access to all services. Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board members agreed to work with Finance officers to develop a Concessions Policy in spring 2011.</p>