

# Strategic framework & corporate priorities

## Introduction

The purpose of this first chapter of the service plan is to explain the Council's overall objectives and priorities. These set the context within which services develop their service plans. Top level objectives are cascaded into these plans and from there into staff performance targets.

At the top of this framework is the **Community Plan 2016** – this sets out what the Council and its partners in the Cherwell Community Planning Partnership are trying to achieve in order to improve the quality of life in Cherwell. The Community Plan is the Partnership's document. It has been endorsed by each of the partners, including the Council, but does not belong exclusively to any one of them. Each will take it into account when setting their own priorities and planning their services.

The responsibility for achieving the Community Plan's objectives is shared with other partners – the Council is not the lead organisation for every objective. In making its contribution, the Council does not have the resources to do everything at once. That means it has to set priorities. This is the reason for the second element of this chapter, namely the Council's **Medium Term Plan and Financial Strategy 2004-2007**.

The Council achieves its objectives through its services, which need to be organised and to work where appropriate with other services and external partners. The final element of this chapter is on **service plans and performance management**. This explains how priorities are determined at service level and how performance must be managed to achieve them.

It is important to acknowledge at the outset that not every corporate objective is relevant to every service. For some there is no obvious connection with the strategic priorities of the Medium Term Plan. This does not mean that those services are not important.

The core services of the Council play a vital role in maintaining and improving the quality of life in the District. All of them should look for continuous improvement – but they cannot all grow at the same time. Hence the Medium Term Plan sets relative priorities.

Similarly, each service will need to set priorities so that staff clearly understand what is important, and what is not important, to them in delivering their service. Service level priorities must not conflict with the Council's overall priorities.

## (A) Cherwell Community Plan 2016

In December 2000 Cherwell District Council formed a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – the Cherwell Community Planning Partnership (CCPP). The Partnership's main focus is the development and delivery of the Cherwell Community Plan 2016, which was launched in April 2002.

The CCPP comprises senior representatives of 16 organisations drawn from Cherwell's public bodies, private sector organisations and the voluntary sector. This is the core group around which is a wider network of some 600 organisations representing communities of both place (e.g. parishes and community groups) and interest (e.g. business and voluntary sectors).

### Cherwell Community Plan 2016 – 10 Themes

An extensive consultation process highlighted 10 broad *Themes* which form the basis of the Community Plan 2016. Each *Theme* has its own vision to 2016 with associated short and medium term aims and actions to 2006.

A range of medium term strategies are designed to support the delivery of the Community Plan priorities. As with the Community Plan, the Council has adopted a Cherwell-wide, partnership approach to the development of the new strategies – they are strategies for the District, not simply District Council strategies. They set out in more detail the aims of the Theme, the targets to be achieved and who is responsible for delivering them.

The 10 Themes and their associated aims are set out in more detail in the annex at the end of the service plan. Briefly, they and their supporting strategies are:

#### **Theme 1 – Reduce crime and tackle the drugs problem**

Vision 2016: 'making Cherwell a safer place to live'  
Supporting Medium Term Strategy: *Community Safety Strategy 2002-05*

#### **Theme 2 – Improve health**

Vision 2016: 'improving health and reducing inequalities'  
Supporting Medium Term Strategy: *Public Health Strategy 2003-06*

#### **Theme 3 – Improve education**

Vision 2016: 'raising standards'  
Supporting Medium Term Strategy: under consideration by the Partnership

#### **Theme 4 – Promote prosperity and sound transport systems**

Vision 2016: 'maintain a vibrant local economy with good road, rail and public transport networks'  
Supporting Medium Term Strategy: *Economic Development Strategy* (to be reviewed) and Local Transport Plan

### **Theme 5 – Secure more affordable housing**

Vision 2016: 'increasing choice'

Supporting Medium Term Strategy: *Housing Strategy to 2005* (to be renewed 2004/05)

### **Theme 6 – Protect and enhance the local environment**

Vision 2016: 'developing a culture of good practice'

Supporting Medium Term Strategy: *Environmental Strategy 2002-07*

### **Theme 7 – Improve recreational opportunities**

Vision 2016: 'improving participation in sports and culture, and improving facilities'

Supporting Medium Term Strategy: *Local Cultural Strategy to 2005*

### **Theme 8 – Rural perspective**

Vision 2016: 'preserving and enhancing the quality of rural life'

Supporting Medium Term Strategy: *Rural Strategy to 2006*

### **Theme 9 – Urban perspective**

Shared Vision 2016: 'building the unique characters of Banbury, Bicester & Kidlington'

Supporting Medium Term Strategies: *Urban Centre Business Plans*

### **Theme 10 – Focus on Cherwell's people**

Vision 2016: 'improving the quality of life for all' (Older people, Young People, Disabled People and Ethnic Minorities)

Supporting Medium Term Strategy: under consideration by the Partnership. The Council has approved an *Policy and Action Plan for Older People*, which it hopes will form the basis of a later Partnership strategy.

## **Central and Local Government 'Shared Priorities'**

The Community Plan reflects the shared priorities agreed between the Government and the Local Government Association. The work of the Partnership will contribute to their achievement. The shared priorities are:

- raising standards across our schools
- improving the quality of life:
  - of children, young people and families at risk
  - of older people
- promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities
- creating safer and stronger communities
- transforming our local environment
- meeting local transport needs more effectively

- promoting the economic vitality of localities.

### **(B) The Medium Term Plan and Financial Strategy 2004-2007**

The Cherwell Community Plan 2016 sets out the strategic direction for the future of Cherwell District and so provides the overall context for the Council's Medium Term Plan. The Medium Term Plan is the Council's own corporate plan for making its contribution to the achievement of the Community Plan vision over the next three years. The national Shared Priorities have also been taken into account together with requirements being placed on the Council by the Government.

The Medium Term Plan and Financial Strategy was developed once the Council's financial position became clearer following the tenants' vote in favour of transferring the Council's housing stock. It reflects the balance between the future development and direction of service investment, both revenue and capital, and a prudent and sensible approach to maintaining the Council's sound financial base. In short, the Council does not have the resources to do everything, even with the receipt from the transfer of the housing stock. That means it has to set priorities.

The Financial Strategy provides the platform for the Medium Term Plan. The Plan would have no relevance if it had no financial basis. The Financial Strategy provides the funding which ensures the contents of the Medium Term Plan can be delivered.

#### **Development of the Medium Term Plan**

The Medium Term Plan assumes substantial investment in services. It also assumes redirection of some service expenditure. The Council accepts that it cannot fund all the demands placed on it. It also recognises that in some areas it will need to refocus its current level of funding to a lower level it considers more appropriate.

The Council also recognises that in some areas it will need to work on partnership with others, notably the private sector, if it is to deliver the programme contained in the Medium Term Plan.

The Plan has therefore been developed through a process involving:

- an assessment of service priorities, based on local priorities (drawn from the Community Plan), the national shared priorities and Government requirements
- an understanding of service needs and pressures
- the ability of the Council to fund its priorities

- the need to reduce expenditure in certain service areas not considered a high or medium priority for the Council
- the need to maintain a focus on cost efficiency
- the investment opportunities that have opened up to the Council following going debt free in March 2003 and which could give a better return than solely investing in cash investments
- the recognition of the need for a realistic approach to setting future levels of Council Tax, in particular listening to the Council Tax payer and Government.

The Plan comprises the following elements:

- A statement of medium term priorities for services. These are reproduced in the Service Plan Annex. They have been further refined by a consideration of detailed priorities within the main budget areas. This is explained further in section (D) below.
- Three year revenue Estimates: Summary
- Three year Capital Programme: Summary

### **The Five Strategic Priorities of the Medium Term Plan**

The Council's Medium Term Plan has five strategic priorities which will be the focus for revenue and capital investment. These five themes have been used to develop the Revenue Estimates and the Capital Programme for the spend up to 2006/2007.

The key themes and investment intentions of the Council are:

#### **1. Regenerate key sites in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington**

- Bicester Town Centre
- Bicester Market Square
- Canalside, Banbury
- Cultural Quarter, Banbury
- Pedestrianisation – Banbury
- Kidlington Village Centre

#### **2. Tackling crime and disorder**

- Community based initiatives (e.g. Street Wardens)
- CCTV (e.g. Vehicle Number recognition systems)
- Drugs misuse (Government funded)
- Licensing

### **3. Deliver Housing Transfer (LSVT) promises plus new affordable housing**

- Ensure Charter Community Housing delivers its promises on home improvements
- New affordable housing
- Environmental improvements

### **4. Better sports centres and leisure facilities**

- Sports Centre Modernisation Programme: Spiceball and Woodgreen, Banbury; Bicester & Ploughley, Sports Centre; Kidlington & Gosford Sports Centre
- Recreation land for sports pitches, Bicester
- Contribution to redevelopment of Garth House, Bicester as community, civic and cultural venue
- Encouragement of commercial leisure facilities

### **5. Help people recycle more**

- Develop the customer focus of the new recycling scheme

These five strategic priorities deliver against almost all the ten themes of the Community Plan 2016.

## **(C) Service Plans and Performance Management**

### **The Council's corporate framework**

The Council has in place a corporate framework to ensure it fulfils the commitments which flow from the Community Plan, the Medium Term Plan, statutory responsibilities and other priorities. The structures and processes that make up the framework are not simply about getting tasks done: they are also designed to ensure that they are done in the right way. To this end the Council has endorsed the principles of good corporate governance.

A fundamental element of the corporate framework is the integration of service and financial planning. This takes place at a strategic level through the Medium Term Plan. At service level, the service plan should be prepared so that the standard of core services to be provided and the priorities for improvement are matched to the resources that are available.

The corporate framework is underpinned by a set of principles which guide all the Council's work:

- A commitment to 'community governance': community leadership and community planning
- Improve Cherwell District's economic, social and environmental well-being

- Consult with and involve the many individuals and communities in Cherwell and communicate with them regularly, including reporting back on the outcome of consultation
- Manage the Council's resources properly and prudently
- Deliver services which meet the principles of Best Value and which reflect the priorities of residents and users, and the availability of resources.
- Deliver equitable, accessible services, without discrimination and with consideration to Human Rights
- Train and develop all staff.

### **Performance Management**

The Council has a performance management system to ensure it delivers its objectives at corporate and service level. Critical to good performance management is regular monitoring and review – this involves actively managing services and responding to monitoring data so that corrective action is taken as soon as there is a risk of targets not being achieved.

### **Service plan structure**

Service plans are an essential element of the performance management system and are structured to facilitate monitoring by elected members and officers. For each service unit the relevant Executive Member (portfolio holder), Select Committee and, where appropriate, Council Committee are shown.

Service objectives and priorities are identified. These are drawn from the Community Plan and medium-term strategies, the Medium Term Plan and from statutory duties and responsibilities. Core services are described in the narrative and their performance is tracked through performance indicators (see below). Key issues and risks that demand attention or could impact on services' ability to achieve their targets are listed.

Each service unit has performance indicators and targets against which performance can be measured. Some of these indicators - Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) - are set nationally by the Government. Councils are expected to set targets against these and in some cases the Government will tell councils what their targets and standards should be.

The planned 'service actions' for the coming year are generally the new activities being undertaken to improve performance in priority areas. They can also include significant targets associated with core services as well as developments being required by Government. The source of each action is identified so that the links between the individual action and the corporate framework are clear. Medium term planning is demonstrated through other actions which cover the period to 2007.

### **Service priorities and the medium term plan**

To give direction and guide investment decisions over the period 2004 – 2007 the Council has classified services under three categories in its Medium Term Plan:

\*\*\* Priority - Services where the Council wishes to improve service delivery, expand provision or restructure the form of service delivery and in which it needs to invest in order to do so.

\*\* Priority - Statutory and other service areas which the Council wishes to maintain at current or improved levels but it does not expect to increase investment. Service improvements will be achieved by greater efficiency and improved productivity. In some areas there will be lower priority specific services where the Council may wish to reduce expenditure.

\* Priority - Services which the Council expects will not be maintained at current levels over the period up to 2006/2007. These services will be subject to review with revised levels of service delivery implemented over the period of the Plan.

† Priority - Services which will arise from Government direction or legislation and over which the Council has little or no discretion. In some cases the scale of the Council's involvement will be at the stage where it is not possible to determine the impact with exact precision.

The following priority rankings have been adopted for the main budget cost centres in the xxx Department:

Landscape Services	**
Sports and Recreation	***
Sports Centres	*
Other Services	
Arts and Tourism	*

The detailed priorities set within the main budget areas are identified in the budget summary at the end of each section of the service plan.

### **Service plan priorities**

Within the service plan, both performance indicators and service actions are prioritised as follows:

- ● Three bullets are the highest priority – these include the corporate objectives in the Medium Term Plan and strategies. It is, however, important to note that the service plan identifies the *relative* priorities for each service unit. Thus it is possible that a \* priority is given a highest priority ranking within the service plan because it demands particular attention e.g. because resources need adjusting.
- ● Two bullets are medium priority – these are important for the service to achieve its objectives.
- One bullet is low priority – to be undertaken after resources necessary for higher priorities have been allocated.

### **Comprehensive Performance Assessment**

The Audit Commission has been charged with implementing CPA to produce a judgement for every local authority based on:

- the quality of its local services
- its corporate and managerial effectiveness
- its capacity to improve local services.

The outcome of the CPA process is an improvement plan agreed between the Council and the Audit Commission. This improvement plan will influence the Council's priorities and may cause the priorities identified in the service plan to be reviewed.

### **Performance Indicators**

Each Service area in this plan has a set of performance indicators and targets. These fall into one of two categories:

1. National Best Value Performance Indicators – these are set by the Government and are identified as BVPI
2. Local Performance Indicators – these are set by the Council to enable it to monitor its performance in its priority areas, in combination with the national indicators

2003/04 Indicators marked with an 'E' are estimated returns as the final actual return was not available at the time of publication.