

Committee: Executive
Date: Monday 6 July 2009
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA

Membership

Councillor Barry Wood
(Chairman)

Councillor Ken Atack

Councillor Norman Bolster

Councillor Michael Gibbard

Councillor G A Reynolds (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor James Macnamara

Councillor Kieron Mallon

Councillor Nigel Morris

Councillor D M Pickford

Councillor Nicholas Turner

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest that they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

3. Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting

The Chairman to report on any requests to submit petitions or to address the meeting.

4. Urgent Business

The Chairman to advise whether they have agreed to any item of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.

5. **Minutes** (Pages 1 - 6)

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2009.

6. **Forward Plan** (Pages 7 - 19)

6.35 pm

Report of Leader of the Council

Summary

To review the Leader's Forward Plan of the key decisions which will be taken by the Executive over the next four months.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- 1) To resolve to note the Leader's Forward Plan for the next four months.

Strategy and Policy

7. **Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy** (Pages 20 - 52)

6.40 pm

Report of Chief Executive and Community and Corporate Planning Manager

Summary

To agree a consultation draft of the Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) Agree a draft of the Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy prior to three months of public consultation.
- 2) Agree that any amendments on the draft arising from Cherwell Community Planning Partnership be agreed with the Portfolio Holder for Policy and Community Planning.

8. **Update on the Government's Ecotown Programme**

7.00 pm

** Report to Follow **

To provide an update on the current position.

9. **Investment Strategy** (Pages 53 - 58)

7.20 pm

** Appendices to Follow **

Report of Strategic Director Customer Service and Resources

Summary

This report sets out the revised investment Strategy for treasury operations for 2009/10 and replaces the strategy approved by the Executive on 2nd March 2009. As with the originally approved documents the attached fulfil the Council's requirement under the Local Government Act 2003 and guidance subsequently issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now CLG) in March 2004, to prepare an annual investment strategy.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) Recommend to Council approval of the revised Investment Strategy 2009/2010.

Service Delivery and Innovation

10. **Integrated Vehicle Parking Strategy: Taxi Ranks** (Pages 59 - 74)

7.40 pm

Report of Head of Urban and Rural Services

Summary

To advise Members on progress with the initial options appraisal for additional rank space for Hackney Carriage Vehicles in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) Note the review and options appraisal.
- 2) Approve further detailed design/investigation into additional rank space on the preferred options of:
 - Banbury: Bridge Street
 - Banbury: Horsefair
 - Banbury: North Bar
 - Bicester: Bell Lane
 - Kidlington: Oxford Road
- 3) Delegate responsibility to the Head of Urban and Rural Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council to:
 - Seek agreement with Oxfordshire County Council on funding and implementation of the final scheme's
 - Undertake formal consultation on the selected options, and

- Secure any approvals from Department for Transport

11. **Concessionary Fares - A Task & Finish Group Scrutiny Review** (Pages 75 - 108) 7.55 pm

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Summary

To consider the overview and scrutiny Task & Finish Group report on Concessionary Fares.

Cllr Clarke, Chairman of the Task & Finish Group, will attend the meeting to present the report.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) Note the work of the Task and Finish Group scrutiny review into Concessionary Fares as detailed in Appendix 1;
- 2) Agree the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendations regarding concessionary regarding concessionary travel as detailed below:

Recommendation 1: Smart Card Reader Scheme

That Cherwell District Council should not pursue the introduction of a Smart Card Reader scheme at this time due to the significant financial investment required and reservations about the current technical capacity of such schemes to meet the Council's needs.

Recommendation 2: Mis-ticketing

That the Portfolio Holder should publicise the importance of checking bus tickets and encourage bus pass holders to submit examples of mis-ticketing. The Portfolio Holder should follow-up examples of mis-ticketing with the bus companies; monitor the scale and value of the problem for the remainder of the financial year; and report on the results and proposed actions to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the spring of 2010.

Recommendation 3: Management Information

That the Portfolio Holder should encourage the concessionary fare service providers to move to a monthly rather than quarterly claim and settlement cycle.

Recommendation 4: National Travel Tokens

That the current arrangements for the issue of national travel tokens should continue for 2009/10 and that the Portfolio Holder should monitor the take up and use of the national travel token scheme. The Council's continued participation in the national travel token scheme should be reviewed against the findings of the independent research into the provision of community transport schemes in the district (see recommendation 5).

Recommendation 5: Community Transport

That Cherwell District Council should continue to support and promote the provision of community transport schemes across the District. In support of this corporate priority the Portfolio Holder should commission research into the feasibility of introducing alternative community transport schemes in those parts of the district where residents do not benefit from the concessionary bus pass, national travel tokens or the Dial-A-Ride service.

Recommendation 6: Consortium approach

That the Portfolio Holder should open discussions with colleagues at the County Council and the District/City councils with a view to promoting a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of the national concessionary travel scheme, subject to the outcome of the government's consultation on the administration of concessionary fares schemes.

Recommendation 7: Government Consultation

That the Portfolio Holder should be invited to use the work of this Task & Finish Group and the conclusions and recommendations in this report to inform the Council's response to the government's consultation on the administration of concessionary fares schemes.

Recommendation 8: Concessionary Travel Scheme

That the start time for the concessionary travel scheme in Cherwell should not be reviewed again and should remain at 09.30 am, in line with the statutory scheme, until April 2011 when the new arrangements for the administration of the concessionary travel scheme will come into force.

12. **Definition of Waste and Collection from Schools and Charities** (Pages 109 - 114) **8.10 pm**

Report of Head of Environmental Services

Summary

To agree the approach and the charges for collecting chargeable household waste from charities and schools

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the approach to dealing with chargeable household waste
- 2) Agree the proposed fees for the collection of waste from schools and charities
- 3) Work with other authorities in Oxfordshire through the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership to ensure a consistent approach to the different waste categories to minimise any additional cost to the taxpayer

13. Cotswold Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2008-2013
(Pages 115 - 124) **8.20 pm**

Report of Head of Planning and Affordable Housing

Summary

To consider whether to endorse the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan as supplementary guidance.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to

- 1) Endorse the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan as supplementary guidance as allowed by the provisions of paragraph 6.3 of Planning Policy Statement PPS12.

Urgent Business

14. Urgent Business

Any other items which the Chairman has decided is urgent.

15. Exclusion of the Press and Public

The following reports contain exempt information as defined in the following paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of Local Government Act 1972.

3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Members are reminded that whilst the following items have been marked as exempt, it is for the meeting to decide whether or not to consider each of them in private or in public. In making the decision, members should balance the interests of individuals or the Council itself in having access to the information. In considering their discretion members should also be mindful of the advice of Council Officers.

Should Members decide not to make a decision in public, they are recommended to pass the following recommendation:

“That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business, on the grounds that they could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act.”

16. Banbury Market Future Management (Pages 125 - 137) **8.25 pm**

(Meeting scheduled to close at 8.35 pm)

Information about this Agenda

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence should be notified to democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or 01295 221587 prior to the start of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item. The definition of personal and prejudicial interests is set out in Part 5 Section A of the constitution. The Democratic Support Officer will have a copy available for inspection at all meetings.

Personal Interest: Members must declare the interest but may stay in the room, debate and vote on the issue.

Prejudicial Interest: Member must withdraw from the meeting room and should inform the Chairman accordingly.

With the exception of the some very specific circumstances, a Member with a personal interest also has a prejudicial interest if it is one which a Member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest.

Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates

Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare the fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

Queries Regarding this Agenda

Please contact James Doble, Legal and Democratic Services james.doble@cherwell-dc.gov.uk (01295) 221587

Mary Harpley
Chief Executive

Published on Friday 26 June 2009

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 15 June 2009 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman)

Councillor Ken Atack
Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor Michael Gibbard
Councillor James Macnamara
Councillor Kieron Mallon
Councillor Nigel Morris
Councillor D M Pickford
Councillor Nicholas Turner

Apologies
for
absence: Councillor G A Reynolds

Officers: Mary Harpley, Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service
Ian Davies, Strategic Director - Environment and Community
Julie Evans, Strategic Director - Customer Service & Resources
John Hoad, Strategic Director - Planning, Housing and Economy
Mike Carroll, Head of Improvement
Richard Hawtin, Team Leader Property & Contracts
Jo Smith, Communications Manager
Andy Bowe, Implementation Officer
James Doble, Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager

Resolutions

1 **Declarations of Interest**

Members declared interests in the following agenda items:

7. Evergreen 3: Response to Public Consultation by Chiltern Rail for a New Oxford to London Route.

Councillor James Macnamara, Personal, Adrian Shooter Chairman of Chiltern Trains is an acquaintance of Councillor Macnamara.

9. Community Use of Places of Worship in Bicester.

Councillor D M Pickford, Personal, as a regular attendee at St. Egbert's Church and also the catholic church.

9. Community Use of Places of Worship in Bicester.

Councillor James Macnamara, Personal, as a member of the diocesan and deanery synods.

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

There were no petitions and requests to address the meeting.

3 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

4 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 **Forward Plan**

The Leader of the Council submitted the Forward Plan of key decisions to be taken over the next four months.

Resolved

That the Forward Plan for the next four months be noted.

Reasons – to create a Forward Plan for the Council as required by the Local Government Act 2000.

6 **Evergreen 3:Response to Public Consultation by Chiltern Rail for a New Oxford to London Route**

The Strategic Director Planning, Housing and Economy submitted a report to present information to the Executive on the proposed improvements to the railway line between Bicester and Oxford as part of proposals by Chiltern Railways for a new route between Oxford and London.

The Executive discussed the issue and agreed that the proposals should be supported and requested officers to include in the consultation response over the effect of traffic flow of an increased use of the level crossing at Bicester Town Station and also to consider whether any Section 106 money was available from the Bicester Village Development.

Resolved

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) That the report (as appended to the minutes as set out in the minute book) be agreed as the basis of the Council's response to the public consultation and in particular to agree the representations set out below:

- That the proposals be supported provided Chiltern Railways can satisfy the criteria in PPG2 and PPG13.
 - That the proposed improvements to the station facilities and rail service at Bicester Town in providing a recognised station to complement the existing services from Bicester North be welcomed. However, the response to Chiltern Railways should include the Council's concerns about the visual impact and traffic impact of Option 3 and note the need to work with the Highway Authority to look at traffic impacts within the Town. The Council should also discuss with Chiltern Railways the links between Bicester Town station and the Bicester North station. Chiltern Railways should be encouraged to improve links to Bicester Town station from Bicester in order to support the creation of a sustainable community. This should include links with North West Bicester.
 - That the proposals for Islip be generally welcomed and supported.
 - That the Council the proposed connecting line be supported.
- 2) That the Planning Committee be asked to consider and make appropriate representations on the details of the scheme as the Transport and Works Act application proceeds.

Reasons - The proposed project will improve public transport provision and provide new facilities for rail passengers in the District. On this basis, the Council should continue to discuss the details on the proposed scheme with Chiltern Railways.

7 **Roadside Sale of Cars in Banbury**

The Strategic Director Environment and Community submitted a report to consider the actions the Council is taking regarding any vehicles parked illegally on highway land, particularly for trading and sale purposes and to consider any further action.

It was agreed Recommendation 3 be amended to delete the words 'according to current trading activity'.

Resolved

- 1) That the action already taken by the District Council be noted and continued action supported.
- 2) That Oxfordshire County Council Trading Standards be urged to step up its enforcement and prosecution activity
- 3) That it be agreed to designate specific parts/whole entry and arterial roads and lay-bys in Banbury as prohibited streets for trading and to authorise the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Recreation and Health to agree the final details.

Reasons - There is clear evidence of vehicles parked illegally and for sale on highway land around Banbury. This occurs primarily on 12 roads. Coordinated action by this Council, Trading Standards of the County Council and the Police has been taken for many years. Following local member and officer initiative, Cherwell District Council has and continues to take action where it can in the fight against cars for sale parked on the roadside.

8 **Community Use of Places of Worship in Bicester**

The Strategic Director Environment and Community submitted a report to support three developments planned in Bicester's places of worship, all of which have some clear wider community benefits.

Resolved

- 1) That grant aid of £30,000 for St Edburg's Church and £10,000 each for The Church of the Immaculate Conception and Emmanuel Church be approved.
- 2) That these grants be made conditional upon the construction and operational financial viability plus a clear long term programme of accessible community use of each project.

Reasons - There are many places of worship in Bicester which play an important part in the life of the town. The Council has been approached by three of these with a request to support their planned developments. Each request has also demonstrated the willingness to receive bookings from a wide range of community groups and to adopt an open approach to non religious use by the local community. This is an important point of principle which should be a condition of any grant aid.

9 **Performance Management Framework 2008/2009 Year End Performance and Finance Report**

The Chief Executive, Strategic Director Customer Service and Resources and Head of Improvement submitted a report that covered the Council's performance in 2008/09 as measured through the Corporate Scorecard and summarises the Council's provisional Revenue and Capital performance for the financial year 2008/09.

Resolved

- 1) That it be noted that, despite tougher performance targets, the Council has met or made satisfactory progress on 86% of the performance targets in the Corporate Scorecard and met or made satisfactory progress on 96% of the performance targets in the Corporate Plan.
- 2) That it be noted that, despite tougher performance targets, the Council met 89% of the targets in the Corporate Improvement Plan, compared to 79% in 2007/08, and made satisfactory progress on another 9%.

- 3) That it be confirmed that the responses to the issues raised in the last quarterly report are satisfactory
- 4) That it be noted the many achievements be noted and officer's report in the first quarter report performance report for 2009/10 on the issues as set out below:

Cherwell: A District of Opportunity

- The ongoing impact of the economic recession on meeting targets for the provision of new homes and jobs, the rising demands on services such as Housing Benefits and Economic Development and the reduced income for Building Control, Development Control, and Land Charges.
- The progress of major regeneration and development schemes such as Banbury Canalside, Bicester Town Centre, and South West Bicester.
- Delays producing the Local Development Framework due to the pressure of work and strategic uncertainties resulting from the eco-town proposal.
- The performance for processing new benefits claims and changes in circumstances and recovering overpayment.

A Cleaner, Greener Cherwell

- Not meeting the target of reducing the CO2 emissions from Council activities by 4%.

A Safe and Healthy Cherwell

- The percentage of residents who when asked say they feel safe at home and in the community.
- The overall numbers visiting Banbury Museum were below target, despite the continued high overall usage.

An Accessible, Value for Money Council

- Collecting Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rates (both performed below target, albeit marginally, at the year end).
- The number of days lost through sickness per employee.
- Not meeting the target of 70% of residents feeling well informed about the Council.
- The performance for processing of minor and other planning applications.

- 5) That the provisional revenue out-turn position for 2008/09 detailed in Appendix 9a (appended to the minutes as set out in the minute book) of the report be noted.
- 6) That the carry forward revenue budgets which have slipped in 08/09 to be carried forward into the 2009/10 revenue budget as set out in Appendix 9b (appended to the minutes as set out in the minute book) be agreed.

- 7) That the continued improvement in accuracy and reliability that the Council has made in projecting the year end position through the embedding of the Corporate Dashboard be noted.
- 8) That the provisional capital out-turn position for 2008/09 detailed in Appendix 9c (appended to the minutes as set out in the minute book) be noted.
- 9) That the carry forward balances on capital schemes which have slipped in 08/09 to be carried forward into the 2009/10 capital programme as set out in Appendix 9d (appended to the minutes as set out in the minute book) be agreed.

Reasons - This is a report of the Council's performance in 2008/09 as measured through the Performance Management Framework. Central to this is the Corporate Scorecard, which is made up of the Council's priority performance targets. The Corporate Scorecard covers seven areas of performance. These are performance against the Community Plan, the Corporate Plan promises, National Indicators, Best Value Performance Indicators, finance targets, human resource targets, and customer satisfaction targets.

The meeting ended at 7.28 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Executive

Forward Plan

6 July 2009

Report of Leader of the Council

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To review the Forward Plan of the key Executive decisions which will be taken over the next four months. These are the key decisions of which the Council's Executive is currently aware.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- 1) To resolve to note the Forward Plan for the next four months.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The Forward Plan is updated and rolled forward on a monthly basis. As this takes place, the programme is adjusted with further key decisions being added and others rescheduled or removed. The covering introductory note identifies the Members of the Executive by name and title, as required by the Regulations.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 is a schedule of changes to the Forward Plan since the last publication and the plan itself.

Proposals

- 1.3 The proposal is to note the Forward Plan as attached.

Conclusion

- 1.4 Acceptance of these recommendations creates a Forward Plan for the Council as required by the Local Government Act 2000.

Background Information

- 2.1 The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 require that a forward plan be prepared by the Leader of the Council. The Forward Plan sets out the planned key Executive decisions which will be taken on behalf of the Council over the next four months.
- 2.2 The definition of what constitutes a key Executive decision can be found in Article 13 of the Council's Constitution which has guided the compilation of the attached Forward Plan. In particular, determination of whether a decision is "key" has been assessed with regard to its financial significance, the impact on local people and the degree of discretion that can be exercised. The content of the Forward Plan is prescribed in the Regulations and reflected in the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules of the Constitution.
- 2.3 The Forward Plan has to be updated and rolled forward on a monthly basis, and a new forward plan produced at least 14 days prior to the first day on which it comes into effect. Any outstanding matters from the previous plan will be rolled forward into latest plan.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 The Council must by law publish a Forward Plan. Acceptance of these recommendations creates a Forward Plan for the Council as required by the Local Government Act 2000.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Option One | To adopt the recommendation. The Council must by law publish a Forward Plan. The only options concern its contents. |
| Option Two | To propose amendments to the Forward Plan. |

Consultations

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| All Chief Officers | The plan has been updated in light of responses received. |
|---------------------------|---|

Implications

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Financial: | None arising directly from this report.
Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance, 01295 221564 |
| Legal: | The Council must by law publish a Forward Plan.
Comments checked by James Doble, Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager 01295 221587 |
| Risk Management: | Risk assessment - No significant risk implications have been identified in connection with this report other than the consequences of not complying with the legal |

requirement to publish a Forward Plan. Each report to the Executive on the items in the Forward Plan will carry its own risk assessment.

Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance,
01295 221564

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

The Forward Plan provides a framework for consideration of Council policies over the next four months.

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Barry Wood
Leader of the Council

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Draft Forward Plan
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	James Doble, Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager
Contact Information	01295 221587 james.doble@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk



DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Forward Plan Summary

August 2009 to November 2009

Cherwell District Council

Summary of the Forward Plan

This summary of the Forward Plan, (produced by officers on behalf of the Leader of the Council) sets out the key Executive decisions which will be taken at Cherwell District Council over the next four months. These are the key decisions of which the Council's Executive is currently aware. The Forward Plan will be updated and rolled forward on a monthly basis. As this takes place, the programme will be adjusted: further key decisions may be added, or anticipated ones may be rescheduled or removed. The summary shows the decisions programmed to be taken during each month. A likely date of decision is shown, but it is possible that a decision may be rescheduled to a later month. The full Forward Plan, including the latest position on prospective decisions is available on the council website at www.cherwell-dc.gov.uk, using the link to Council meetings.

This summary sets out the key decisions by month and says whether they will be taken by the Full Executive or by one of its individual Members, or portfolio holders as they are known (see below for details of the membership of the Executive). While key decisions may be taken by officers exercising authority delegated by the Executive, it is the Council's intention that this will very much be the exception.

Key Decisions

A key decision is a 'significant' decision that is legally within the power of the Council to make, is not precluded by statute from being made under Executive arrangements and is not otherwise retained for decision by Council or delegated to a Committee of Council or officer by the Council's constitution.

Significance – A decision is significant if it meets the financial and / or community impact criteria:

- Financial
A decision that will result in the Council:
 - Incurring potential revenue expenditure or savings above £50,000
 - Incurring potential capital expenditure or savings above £250,000
 - Procuring or awarding any contract having a total value exceeding £500,000

and / or

- Community Impact
A decision that is significant in its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards in the area of the Council. That is a decision where:
 - A significant number of users of the service in the Ward(s) will be affected and / or
 - An impact that will last for a number of years, or be permanent; and / or
 - A significant impact on communities in terms of environmental and social well-being.

The following are not regarded by the Council to constitute key decisions:

- Implementing approved budgets or policies and strategies where there is little or no further choice involved and the main decision has already been taken by the council in agreeing the budget and policy framework.
- Implementing approved actions and targets in annual service plans.
- Decisions by the Head of Finance which are part of the ordinary financial administration of the Authority, notably those relating to investments, within the agreed Treasury Management Policy.
- Implementing projects for which specific conditions have been attached by external funders, such as the Government or European Union.
- The award of contract for the provision of works, goods and services, within an agreed policy and budget and where a decision has been made.
- Changes arising from amendments to statute where there is little or no discretion.

For a decision to be key there must be a significant degree of discretion to be exercised by the decision-maker.

The Forward Plan lists documents which are currently available to decision makers. Generally these are also available to the public but some may have restrictions on the information given in them. Copies of public documents listed may be obtained on request from

James Doble,
Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager
Cherwell District Council,
Bodicote House,
Bodicote,
Banbury, Oxfordshire OX15 4AA (e-mail: democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk).

There will be a copying charge for each document. Comments on the matters for decision may be made to the relevant contact officer up to the date of the meeting, unless otherwise specified in the consultation details.

Cherwell District Council – Executive Members

<u>Portfolio</u>	<u>Member</u>
Communications and Public Relations	Councillor Mallon
Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural	Councillor Morris
Customer Service and ICT (with special responsibility for tourism)	Councillor Turner
Democratic Services and Member Development	Councillor Miss Pickford
Economic Development and Estates	Councillor Bolster
Environment, Recreation and Health	Councillor Reynolds
Performance Management and Improvement	Councillor Atack
Planning and Housing	Councillor Gibbard
Policy and Community Planning	Councillor Wood
Resources and Organisational Development	Councillor Macnamara

Cherwell District Council Forward Plan

Key decisions to be taken by the full Executive

Subject for Decision	External Consultees/ method of consultation	Executive Portfolio	Contact Officer(s)	Documents submitted to decision-maker
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Likely date of decision: August 2009

<p>Biodiversity Action Plan: Analysis of Grant Aided Bodies To consider the Biodiversity Plan analysis of grant aided bodies.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural	Chris Rothwell Tel: 01295 221712	None.
<p>Eco Town - Government Decisions and Implications To consider matters arising from the Government decision regarding proposed Eco Towns and any resulting implications for the District.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing	Philip Clarke Tel: 01295 221840	None.
<p>Banbury Cultural Quarter To consider proposals for the development of a cultural quarter.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Environment, Recreation and Health	Ian Davies Tel: 01295 221698	None.
<p>Bicester Hospital To consider a progress report on Bicester Hospital.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Environment, Recreation and Health	Ian Davies Tel: 01295 221698	None.
<p>Market Square, Bicester - Environmental Improvement To consider options with regard to the environmental improvement of Market Square, Bicester.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Estates	David Marriott Tel: 01295 221603	None.

Subject for Decision	External Consultees/ method of consultation	Executive Portfolio	Contact Officer(s)	Documents submitted to decision-maker
Food Waste Recycling Service To consider the timing and proposals to roll out the new service.	Oxfordshire County Council	Portfolio Holder for Environment, Recreation and Health	Ed Potter Tel: 01295 221902	None.
Performance Management Framework Quarter 1 Report To consider the Performance Management Framework Quarter 1 report.		Portfolio Holder for Performance Management and Improvement	Mike Carroll Tel: 01295 227959	None.
Planning for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People in the South East To consider the Council's response to the next stage of regional consultation on the number and distribution of 'pitches' and 'plots' for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show people. (Note: the item could not be delayed until September due to the provisional consultation timetable)	None	Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing	David Peckford Tel: 01295 221841	None.

Subject for Decision	External Consultees/ method of consultation	Executive Portfolio	Contact Officer(s)	Documents submitted to decision-maker
<p>Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan - Executive Update To consider three items on which the Executive asked officers to report back:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to landowners – re. bringing forward land for rural exception sites • Rural Housing Trust – possibility of utilising the Rural Housing Trust • Rural Housing Enabler post – appraisal of bringing this external post in-house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other local authorities – VFM of bringing Rural Housing Enabler post in-house could represent too high costs if undertaken in isolation – consultation through established partnership working • Rural Housing Trust – examination of the service they are able to offer – direct consultation through meeting 	Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing	Martyn Swann Tel: 01295 221743	None.
<p>Request for Funding for Temporary Accommodation from CDC Capital Receipts A request for members to support the provision of temporary accommodation at Warwick Road, Banbury, acquisitions of market properties and units for move on supported housing through expenditure from the capital receipts earmarked for social housing–homelessness initiatives.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing	Gillian Greaves, Fiona Brown Tel: 01295 221654, Tel: 01295 221659	None.
<p>Banbury Residents Parking Scheme To consider a range of parking matters.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural	Chris Rothwell Tel: 01295 221712	None.

Subject for Decision	External Consultees/ method of consultation	Executive Portfolio	Contact Officer(s)	Documents submitted to decision-maker
Likely date of decision: September 2009				
VFM Review of Risk and Insurance To consider the outcomes of the Value for Money Review of risk and insurance.		Portfolio Holder for Resources and Organisational Development	Neil Lawrence Tel: 01295 221801	None.
Accommodation Review To approve reform plans for old Bodicote House.		Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Estates	Julie Evans Tel: 01295 221595	None.
Local Development Framework Next Steps To consider the next steps with regard to creating a Local Development Framework		Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing	Philip Clarke Tel: 01295 221840	None.
Economic Development Strategy Review To consider the Economic Development Strategy for the District		Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Estates	David Marriott Tel: 01295 221603	None.
Pitt Review into Summer 2007 Floods - Further Implications following the Government's Response to the Report Recommendations To consider further implications arising from the Government's response to the Pitt Report.		Portfolio Holder for Environment, Recreation and Health	Tony Brummell Tel: 01295 221524	None.

Subject for Decision	External Consultees/ method of consultation	Executive Portfolio	Contact Officer(s)	Documents submitted to decision-maker
<p>Phone Access and Telephony Review To consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proposal and associated business case and plan for a single customer contact number or small suite of numbers • Revised procurement practice in respect of telephony with associated reduction in costs • Plan for upgrade for main telephone switch and decommissioning of satellite switches • A clear product catalogue for telephony services to the Council 		Portfolio Holder for Customer Service and ICT (with special responsibility for tourism)	Pat Simpson Tel: 01295 227069	None.
<p>Banbury Canalside Draft Supplementary Planning Document To consider the Banbury Canalside draft supplementary planning document.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing	Chris Thom Tel: 01295 221849	None.
<p>VFM Review of Human Resources To consider the outcomes of the Value for Money Review of Human Resources.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Resources and Organisational Development	Mike Carroll Tel: 01295 227959	None.

Subject for Decision	External Consultees/ method of consultation	Executive Portfolio	Contact Officer(s)	Documents submitted to decision-maker
Bicester Town Centre Development To consider the development of Bicester Town Centre		Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Estates	David Marriott Tel: 01295 221603	None.

Likely date of decision: October 2009				
Pensions Update To consider an update on the Cherwell District Council pension fund.		Portfolio Holder for Resources and Organisational Development	Karen Curtin Tel: 01295 221551	None.

Likely date of decision: November 2009				
None				

Agenda Item 7

Executive

Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy

6 July 2009

Report of Chief Executive and Community and Corporate Planning Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To agree a consultation draft of the Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- (1) Agree a draft of the Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy prior to three months of public consultation.
- (2) Agree that any amendments on the draft arising from Cherwell Community Planning Partnership on 10 July be agreed with the Portfolio Holder for Policy and Community Planning prior to public consultation.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy will be the top level guiding document for the Cherwell area. It will influence future policies and plans and it will be used to influence future funding including Local Area Agreements. It will be the key strategic document for Cherwell District Council and drive the content of the next Cherwell District Council Corporate Plan.
- 1.2 The current Cherwell Community Plan is becoming out of date, new requirements have been set by central government and the evidence base for the Plan needs to be refreshed. The Cherwell Community Plan will be replaced by the Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 1.3 Cherwell Community Planning Partnership, Cherwell's Local Strategic Partnership, have drafted a Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy following a trawl of current research, detailed analysis of relevant policies, and, extensive engagement with the people, businesses and organisations within Cherwell.

- 1.4 Appendix 1 sets out the draft Cherwell Sustainable Community.

Proposals

- 1.5 Executive Members are asked to agree the draft Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy for three months of public consultation.

Conclusion

- 1.6 The Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy is the key strategic document for Cherwell and Cherwell District Council. The Strategy is not owned by Cherwell District Council, it is owned by Cherwell Community Planning Partnership. The Council has a leadership role in developing the Strategy and will be responsible for the delivery of parts of it. It is therefore important to ensure that our policies don't conflict with it.

Background Information

What is a sustainable community strategy?

- 2.1 The Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy will set an overall strategic direction and long-term (until 2030) vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area. The vision needs to be ambitious and stretching. This is **not** a Cherwell District Council document. It is owned by Cherwell Community Planning Partnership which brings together the public, private and community organisations within Cherwell, Cherwell District Council is a key member of the Partnership.
- 2.2 The strategy cannot, and should not, cover absolutely everything; it is really important that it **prioritises** the most important issues for the district. Cherwell Community Planning Partnership is keen that the new strategy has fewer priorities than the current Cherwell Community Plan and that these are much more specific and measurable.
- 2.3 It is critical that the strategy is based on clear evidence and analysis. Considerable effort has been put into gathering information and analysis already but the public consultation is also a key part of this.
- 2.4 The new strategy will work alongside the Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF will play an important part in delivering the spatial aspects of the strategy.
- 2.5 The strategy will be the key strategic document for the Cherwell area. It will significantly influence our future strategies and plans and determine the new Cherwell District Council Corporate Plan.

What do we mean by 'sustainable communities'?

- 2.6 Sustainable communities meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, their children, those who do business here, and other users. They contribute to a high quality of life and provide opportunity and choice. They make effective use of natural resources, enhance the environment, promote social cohesion and inclusion and strengthen economic prosperity.

What has been done so far?

- 2.7 The strategy has been drafted taking into account an evidence base, relevant policy and local knowledge.
- 2.8 The evidence base has included; data used for recent policies, Parish Plans, recent surveys and statistical information.
- 2.9 Relevant local, regional and national policy has been explored including Oxfordshire 2030, the sustainable community strategy for the whole of Oxfordshire.
- 2.10 Local knowledge has been gained by talking to people. Much of this has happened one to one, but also special meetings and conferences have been held. These include two workshops with Cherwell District Council Councillors, one workshop with Cherwell District Council managers, workshops with Cherwell Community Planning Partnership, a rural focused

visioning event and a 'stakeholder' event. To date, local knowledge has been gained from numerous organisations and groups including; families, young people, older people, community groups, voluntary groups, carers, employers, employees, colleges, head teachers, public services, ethnic groups, faith representatives, rural representatives, and local Councillors.

Public consultation

- 2.11 Following Cherwell Community Planning Partnership on 10 July the draft will go out for public consultation for three months. The document and associated questionnaire will be available online and hard copies will be sent to those that request it.
- 2.12 During the consultation period a number of special meetings will be organised including a special meeting of the Voluntary Organisations' Forum.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 Does the draft Cherwell Sustainable Community adequately reflect the priorities for the Cherwell area?
- 3.2 Is the draft Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy consistent with Cherwell District Council policies? Are there any conflicts?

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Option One | To agree the draft Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy for public consultation as set out in Appendix 1. |
| Option Two | To make amendments to the draft Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy set out in Appendix 1. |
| Option Three | To delegate a decision on the draft Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy to the Portfolio Holder for Policy and Community Planning. |

Consultations

Numerous individuals and organisations have been involved in the development of the consultation draft, see paragraph 2.10 above.

Implications

(Financial, Legal and Risk and other implications e.g. Equalities, Human Resources, Data Quality and Environmental where relevant)

- Financial:** The Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy itself has no financial effects. However, it should be noted that it will be used as the evidence base and set priorities for future Local Area Agreements. If it does not reflect Cherwell's priorities there is a real danger that they will not be included in future Local Area Agreements and

consequently will not get funding. It is important to note that the sums involved could amount to millions of pounds.

The costs of public consultation and publication can be met from existing budgets.

Comments checked by Sarah Best, Senior Accountancy Assistant, 01295 221736.

Legal:

Cherwell District Council takes a leadership role in the development of the Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy. This means that our policies should not be in conflict with it or inconsistent with it. If they were this could be grounds for a successful challenge.

Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer 01295 221686.

Risk Management:

The Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy could commit the Council to delivering actions that either it may not agree to or it does not consider a priority.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566.

Comprehensive Area Assessment

Under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment Cherwell District Council's contribution to priorities set within the Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy will be formally assessed.

Comments checked by Mike Carroll, Head of Improvement 01295 227959.

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

All

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Wood, Portfolio Holder for Policy and Community Planning

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Draft Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Helen Couperthwaite, Community and Corporate Planning Officer
Contact Information	01295 221751 Helen.couperthwaite@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Cherwell - Our District; Our Future

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A vision for Cherwell in 2030

“A diverse economy with opportunities for all, vibrant communities connected by a sense of pride, place and purpose”.

Welcome to the Cherwell sustainable community strategy. This document presents a long term vision for the district, our shared hopes and aspirations and the challenges we face. The Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership has developed this strategy based on extensive consultation and engagement and in it we set out the steps we will take to make sure this vision takes shape in our district.

The Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership is made up of representatives from across the public, private and voluntary sectors and we work closely together, getting the most out of our collective experience, resources, knowledge and enthusiasm to ensure we meet the high expectations of the people who live and work here. We intend to ensure a bright future for the next generation.

Cherwell in 2030

We believe that by 2030, Cherwell will be a district more prosperous than it is today. Those who live and work here will be happier, healthier and feel safer with high aspirations and expectations. People will feel they belong here and diversity will be celebrated. Everyone will share in a better quality of life.

In Cherwell older people will lead independent and healthy lives for longer with access to excellent services. Young people will have high personal aspirations, satisfied by a wide variety of local opportunities to achieve appropriate skills, qualifications and jobs.

The quality of our natural and built environment will be cherished and our resources protected. We will embrace environmental technologies and adapt our behaviour to meet the global challenge of climate change.

Our economy will be vibrant and diverse; local people will be skilled and able to access good jobs. Our economy will have grown to provide employment for our increasing population and reduce the need for our residents to travel outside the district for work.

We will have maintained the vitality of our urban centres as economic and social hubs, offering a vibrant evening economy, as well as improved leisure and shopping. Our villages will be “lived in” as well as “slept in”, helping to sustain a rural way of life with an economic base that is not be reliant entirely on agriculture.

By 2030 we will have welcomed more houses, paying particular attention to both the quality and the affordability of those badly needed additional homes. Careful investment in our infrastructure will increase the capacity of our communities and address current deficiencies in provision. In particular, we will focus on reducing road congestion and improving public transport.

The Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership and people across the district will work together towards achieving this vision of the future and, as we do, we will celebrate our achievements and successes along the way.

The Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership

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1. Introduction

1.1 What is a sustainable community and what is this strategy for?

Sustainable communities meet the diverse needs of us all, current and future residents, their children and those who do business here. They contribute to a high quality of life and provide opportunity and choices for everyone. They make effective use of natural resources, enhance the environment, promote social cohesion and inclusion and strengthen economic prosperity.

The purpose of this document is to set out our overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Cherwell district until 2030, in a way that tells the 'story of the place' – a distinctive vision for the area, backed by clear evidence and analysis. All other strategies, and the plans of organisations across Cherwell delivering them, will reflect the long term aspirations contained here.

Because this strategy was developed in the turbulent economic times of 2009, we have adopted a **5 year focus** for our objectives under each pledge and a **local focus** where specific places have specific issues. These objectives are not intended to last us until 2030. Circumstances will change and progress will be made and it is vital the aims we have identified during the summer of 2009 are regularly refreshed and revisited to make sure they still work for us. This strategy has an associated implementation plan and links into the Local Area Agreement for Oxfordshire. Both will be used to drive delivery and assess our progress towards our ultimate goals.

1.2 The role of the Local Strategic Partnership

The Local Strategic Partnership is made up of representatives from Cherwell's public, voluntary and private sectors. The partnership is responsible for developing the community strategy for the district and ensuring the objectives, priorities and actions it contains are delivered.

1.3 How did we develop this strategy?

We have worked hard to speak to as many people as possible, councillors, community and voluntary groups, faith leaders, local business representatives, head teachers, and many others to develop the vision, pledges and objectives within this strategy.

We have asked about people's aspirations and ambitions for the area and their views on what we can all do to bring them about.

We have looked at the statistical evidence available both for current issues and what challenges we face in the future. We have thought about how we fit with our

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neighbouring counties and districts and considered regional strategies, the Oxfordshire vision and strategy for 2030 and our own Local Development Framework.

This plan reflects what we have heard through our consultation and builds upon the successes of our current strategy, the Cherwell Community Plan 2006 -2011. It's a shared vision and it's up to all of us to work together to make it a reality.

1.4 Our pledge to you

The purpose of this document is to focus on where we face challenges. But we must always remember that Cherwell is a great place to live and work; a thriving area of diverse population and beautiful countryside. We intend, through the use of this strategy, to make sure it stays that way. We will bring about the change and development that we need by working together across four closely linked themes.

A Diverse Economy – the economic pledge

By 2030 we will have a diverse industry base and appropriately skilled workforce that can adapt to climate change supported by a well planned and effective infrastructure of housing, transport, leisure and services. We will have experienced significant growth in housing development and have linked this to supporting the population to gain the skills and flexibility to access local jobs and attract new businesses into the area which, in turn, encourages our younger population to stay or return here. Our farming and rural areas will have seen a revitalisation following a resurgence in localism, support for local products and businesses and appropriate evolution of its villages.

Opportunities for All – the community pledge

By 2030 we will have thriving communities where everyone, regardless of their personal circumstances, feels safe in their homes and welcome in their neighbourhoods. A society where older people are able to live independently and where younger generations have the skills and opportunities to build their future. Our communities will value the contribution made by a wide spectrum of voluntary organisations and volunteers and the shared values of our faith groups. Disadvantaged families and residents will be supported to help themselves benefit from the new housing, educational and economic opportunities available to them. A consistently innovative and varied range of cultural events will build a sense of place and a unique identity for the district.

Connected and Protected – the infrastructure and environment pledge

By 2030 we will understand and adapt to environmental challenges as they arise and ensure that all infrastructure and other developments prioritise the protection our environment and biodiversity. We will protect our rich natural and built environment and heritage, using our resources wisely and helping people to live sustainable lifestyles. Our transport and housing will be appropriate to our needs and will be adaptable to the changes in our communities. Cherwell will be at the forefront of exploring alternative technologies and recycling, utilising its connections to innovative industry to do so, and making real progress towards being a carbon neutral district.

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How will we do it? - the leadership pledge

By 2030 Cherwell will be characterised by our responsiveness to our changing population. Our partnerships will take a key role in delivering services, fostering community cohesion and managing our resources, directing them to where there is most need. We will champion our identity within regional structures, and our relationships with neighbouring areas. Our public services will be open and accountable with clear lines of communication between the public, private and voluntary sectors. We will have exemplary consultation and communications processes. We'll generate and share accurate, relevant and intelligent information, and enable a vibrant, engaged and inclusive Cherwell that relishes dialogue and debate and listens to everyone's different opinions and experiences.

TO BE COMPLETED AFTER JULY CCPP LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

1.5 What is in this strategy?

This document contains the key elements that combine to reflect the district and make up the strategy. The content is based upon statistical evidence, regional and county wide strategies already in place and the opinions and views of residents. There is much to do and the priorities identified here will go into an implementation plan to be worked on by the Partnership in the short, medium and long term.

Seeing into the future is always challenging, but, what we can do is to take the best evidence we currently have, listen carefully to the sort of place and lives that our residents want, and tailor our aspirations accordingly. This process has helped us understand what we wish to protect about our area now, what we want to change and what new ideas we want to embrace in so we can hand on a thriving district to future generations.

The vision explains what we all want to see for the future of Cherwell based on what we have heard through our consultation and the key challenges that we face. A district is not simply a collection of geographic features, individuals and series of issues and agendas: a district is a place with an identity and culture of its own.

Cherwell today explains the context in which we live and work and describes the features and character of the district.

Future challenges covers what we think are the most important, cross-cutting, themes that run throughout the rest of the document and the issues that we feel are important to bear in mind as we tackle our objectives.

The four pledges: economic, community, environment and leadership. Each pledge has its own section which reflects our opportunities and challenges and contains a description of our objectives and priorities. Further analysis of the challenges can be found in the **Digging a Bit Deeper** analysis document accompanying this strategy.

2 Cherwell today

Our location

Cherwell district covers an area of 590 square kilometres (228 square miles) in north Oxfordshire. Named after the River Cherwell which flows through it, the district is located between London and Birmingham, at the most northern point of the South East region, where it meets the West Midlands and East Midlands. The M40 passes through Cherwell and there are good rail connections to London and Birmingham.

137,600 people live in Cherwell. Over 60% of the population live in the principal centres of Banbury (approx 43,000), Bicester (approx 30,500) and Kidlington (approx 13,000); the rest in more than 70 smaller settlements of between 50 and 3500 people. 85% of the district is attractive farmland and 14% lies within the Oxford Green Belt, contributing to making Cherwell the 12th least densely populated district in the South East. But the district also has a rich built heritage, with approximately 3,000 listed buildings (8.6% of the South East's total) and 54 conservation areas.

Our changing population

Between 1991 and 2001 Cherwell's population increased by almost 12% and has by a further 4.5% since. Growth predictions of a further 8% by 2016 and a cumulative 15.6% by 2026 are significantly higher than regional and national rates. Most of the recent growth has been in Banbury and Bicester and this will continue. Bicester's population is projected to grow by 13.8% between 2001 and 2016. Our challenge is to ensure that the levels of housing growth required across the district can be accommodated, while protecting and enhancing the character of our urban centres, villages and landscapes.

Our population is changing. The 2001 Census showed that 3.9% of the district's population was of non-white ethnic origin. These low numbers were generally widely dispersed, apart from higher concentrations in some Banbury Wards (such as Banbury Grimsbury where 10.9% was of black or minority ethnic origin). 2006 estimates indicate that the non-white population has grown to 5.9% overall. In 2001 7.5% of the population considered themselves to belong to a group other than white British. By 2006 this had grown to 10.7%. Our research and experience demonstrates that this growth has come and continues to come from migrant workers from Polish and other Eastern European communities.

Cherwell now has the highest proportion of 0-15 year olds in Oxfordshire and there is strong demand from parents and their children for affordable activities for young people. By 2031 the population is forecast to age dramatically, with numbers in each of the over 65s, over 75s, and over 85s bands increasing by at least 23 percentage points above national rates, and by more than 47 percentage points for over 85s. We have to continue anticipating the future services required by our older population, building on our strong track record of ensuring the needs of older residents are met.

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Economy, skills and aspirations

In 1995 manufacturing jobs accounted for 28.9% of employment in the district. By 2006 they accounted for 14.1% with this shift matched by a growth in the service and tourism sectors, particularly in distribution, hotels and restaurants, and transport and communications. Our historically high employment rates have been maintained through this change, although the employment mix means that earnings from Cherwell workplaces are 3.9% below the national average.

Residents' earnings, however, are just above the national average. Bicester, for example, has a particularly high proportion of residents employed in higher level positions. 65% of Bicester's residents leave the town to work. We must continue the push to attract more high-tech, knowledge-based industries in order to provide more local, attractive employment opportunities to these residents. At the same time we need to raise aspirations and the demand for skills in Banbury where there is an above average concentration of people employed in low-skilled and lower paid occupations. But if new opportunities are to be accessible to our own young people, the performance of school pupils at GCSE needs to be brought at least in line with county and national averages.

Our rural areas have a relatively low business density compared with the regional rural average, although levels of home-based working are higher in Cherwell than in the rest of Oxfordshire and in the South East. Although farming employment has declined almost 90% since 1990, farming retains its vital role in maintaining the environment and defining our district.

Community challenges

Cherwell is ranked as the 276th least deprived of 354 Local Authority areas by the Index of Multiple Deprivation. However, this masks a number of issues of deprivation and disadvantage. Two parts of Banbury Ruscote ward are in the 20% most deprived areas nationally and Cherwell has six of the 12 most deprived areas in Oxfordshire. In terms of education, skills and training, crime and living environment, 15 areas in Banbury and Bicester are in the 20% most deprived nationally and 15 areas across 11 rural wards feature in the 10% most deprived for barriers to housing and services. We have to focus on addressing the needs of the disadvantaged whether, for example, the rurally isolated, older people and those with disabilities, people from black or minority ethnic communities or those in particular localities.

In 2004 Cherwell had an annual shortfall of 686 affordable homes, the highest in Oxfordshire, outside Oxford. While this has been reduced to 529, increasing the numbers of affordable homes remains one of the population's and District Council's top priorities. The 2007 median house price to income ratio is 8.9, up from 7.7 in 2005, above both South East and English averages, only reinforcing the focus needed on this.

Cherwell is a safe place to live. Overall crime levels dropped by 13.2% between 2003/04 and 2007/08 (a real reduction of 794 reported crimes), compared with a 10.9% reduction across Thames Valley. Most of the crime recorded in Cherwell is committed in the urban areas. But residents are concerned about the visibility of police officers and response rates in our rural areas and a view that these are contributing to lower reporting levels and therefore lower resources. In 2006 residents across the district felt less safe than those in any other Oxfordshire district in terms of being alone and walking alone during the day or at night. And anti-social behaviour is a key concern of residents. Addressing residents' perception of crime and delivering lower levels of crime and anti-social behaviour are priorities.

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Cherwell compares well with the rest of the country on most health indicators and the health of children and young people overall is better than the national average. But there are health inequalities by location, gender and ethnicity. For example, Cherwell has a high and rising rate of teenage conception with four out of six Banbury Wards in the highest 20% in England in 2005. We must work to eliminate these inequalities, delivering affordable recreational opportunities to help residents of all ages stay healthy, and securing the long-term future of Banbury's Horton District General Hospital and, with it, accessible healthcare services for people everywhere in the district.

Environment and infrastructure

Cherwell residents travel further to work than people in the rest of the South East and nationally. Car ownership overall is high and residents in our rural areas are particularly dependent on their cars. Our dependence on our cars has produced a number of congestion hotspots in the district, not least at junction 9 of the M40, on the A34, in the centres of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington at times and in the villages with schools. Significant planned improvements to the railway infrastructure will better connect Bicester to Oxford and London and re-instate Kidlington's long-lost rail connections to Oxford. Such improvements will bring enormous benefits but will need to be complemented by much work to change attitudes to public transport and our willingness to walk more and cycle more.

High levels of out-commuting contribute of course to environmental issues and these are another reason for trying to influence the employment and skills mix in the district. Per capita carbon dioxide emissions in Cherwell in 2004 were significantly higher than regional and national levels, although domestic emissions were the lowest in Oxfordshire. Cherwell's residents are committed to recycling with excellent rates

Currently, people identify with the urban or rural settlements where they live in but not strongly with Cherwell as a district. Some residents have strong relationships with other areas outside our area, for example those who commute to other towns for work, shopping or to access services such as health services in Oxford. Banbury in particular considers itself to be independent of the other parts of Cherwell, Kidlington is keen to retain its village identity with its population of 13,000 and, in common with Bicester, wants to improve its image and demonstrate less reliance on Oxford.

Cherwell into the future

This overview provides a sense of Cherwell as a place and sets the scene for the future challenges we are facing and the steps we need to take to retain our many strengths and make the best of the opportunities we have.

3. Future Challenges

In Cherwell we have good homes, work, enjoy beautiful countryside and have a sense of pride and satisfaction with where we live. Nonetheless, we face some challenges through global warming; a changing and growing population with a higher proportion of older people, fewer young people and significant development of housing and new communities needing to be welcomed. In the coming years there will be political and policy changes along the way, we'll need to develop and deliver new services and there can never be enough resources to do everything we want.

We don't know exactly what will happen economically, socially or environmentally and the challenges will change over time, but this strategy equips us to cope whatever happens. The themes in this section indicate where we need to focus our attention and plan for what is to come.

3.1 Adapting to Climate Change

In the South East of England by the 2050s the average summer temperature could be around 3C warmer, rainfall could decrease by 40% and winter rainfall could increase by 20%. We face dramatic changes as we enter an era when fossil fuels are more expensive and less available. It is our responsibility to take a robust approach and adapt to these climate and environmental changes as they occur. We must plan effectively now so we can meet the challenge. We all as individuals, businesses or organisations need to find new ways to lead sustainable lifestyles reducing our carbon emissions, energy and water use.

Traffic volumes and limited public transport across the area are two of the biggest challenges and we have considerable commuting within and to and from the district and heavy traffic at 'hotspots'. There is significant housing growth planned for our area and this has implications for managing flood risks, making sure our buildings are as carbon-neutral as possible and providing an effective and responsive infrastructure. Protecting the countryside and our biodiversity is vital for impact on climate change and also a key priority.

3.2 Building strong communities and reducing inequality

Cherwell is a prosperous area with a history of high employment and high standards of living, but is also being affected by the 2009 economic downturn leading to some vacancies in high streets and an increase in unemployment.

Despite its prosperity, Banbury has areas within two wards that fall into the category of high deprivation, resulting in some cases in poor academic achievement, low skills and a higher rate of teenage pregnancy in Banbury than elsewhere. There are also some pockets of deprivation elsewhere and we need to find ways to identify and address hidden inequality. Hardship is especially difficult to identify in rural areas, where our traditional sources of evidence fail to provide us with detailed information to identify those who are in need of extra support and assistance.

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The challenge for Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy is to tackle existing and emerging inequalities of opportunity, especially health inequalities, and to build cohesive communities with a strong sense of belonging.

3.3 Adapting to an aging population

Like many other areas of the country, our older population is predicted to double between 2009 and 2031. It is vital that we develop flexible and accessible services that meet our future needs and support independent living for as long as necessary.

There is a need for adequate care services, both for people still living independently who want to lead active lives and for those for whom independent living is no longer possible. This is magnified in rural areas where access to services, particularly health care, and other activities is limited. Housing is also problematic for some older people who can no longer maintain their homes and need to live in smaller one-level housing with facilities for outside space a room to accommodate visiting families. There is shortage of small properties available, an issue which affects younger and older people alike and around Bicester there is also a specific issue around people retiring from the MOD and needing to resettle.

Our challenge is to address isolation and fear of crime, ensure that accommodation is appropriate to need, that a range of activities engage older people in the community and that they are well cared for in a range of settings. This older population offers Cherwell a great opportunity to fully harness the skills, knowledge and experience that is gained through maturity and many older people provide vital community activities through volunteering that would simply not exist without them. Their skills, time and experience are valuable and important. As one participant in a workshop said:

"I'm old now but you will become old, its your future we're discussing, not mine".

3.4 Empowering the next generation

Our younger people are our future, moving towards being active, engaged citizens and playing a full role in shaping and maintaining our communities. It is vital that we keep them safe, encourage them to take their place in democratic processes, they have a chance to express their opinions and help us to understand contemporary life now and in the future. They are a great resource and we are determined to offer them the best chances they can have to build fulfilling and rewarding lives.

There is concern that some young people in Cherwell seem to lack aspiration beyond basic jobs or their immediate neighbourhoods. One cause of this may be the level of academic success young people are achieving, but it also about facilities and spaces for young people, parenting influences and not having enough awareness of what is on offer. Overall there is a strong desire to improve their achievements and prospects so that they too have the opportunity to secure employment and take part in the prosperous economy around them. We are aware that not all young people are being equipped with the skills they need to get work and have a career. A common refrain from young people is about a lack of facilities and activities. Some young people are affected by rural inaccessibility and are unable to use facilities which are usually held in the three urban areas. There are sometimes very simple solutions on offer. As one young person said:

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“there are only two activities in my village during the week and they are on the same night so I can’t do both!”

Addressing the issues associated with young people requires a real commitment to include and listen to them. We need to engage young people in their communities, support everyone to gain skills, raise aspirations and ensure this has a positive impact on the quality of life for everyone.

3.5 Diverse communities

Diverse communities add to cultural vibrancy and a mix of approaches leads to a better understanding of different ways of life. Our projected growth over the coming years means existing communities evolving and some altogether new ones emerging. We will continue to welcome those who choose to make Cherwell their home, including them in our towns, villages and way of life and embrace the contribution they make to our district and identity.

Banbury has a significant Kashmiri and Polish community, the Kashmiri community is established as it has been settling here since the 1950s and plays an active role in many community activities. The Polish and Eastern European community, which has settled more recently, is not faring so well. Some people from these communities are living in overcrowded accommodation, do not have legal status here and are existing on low wages. More importantly perhaps they are not really engaging with existing communities and there is some evidence of racism in schools against these communities.

Another significant group is MOD service personnel and their families. The mobile nature of employment in this community means that it is more difficult for families to assimilate and become accepted in schools and communities.

As Cherwell continues to build exemplary inclusive communities it is vital that in celebrating and supporting our diversity we are led by the needs of our residents covering all seven strands of equalities: age, disability, faith, gender, race, sexual orientation and transgender. Effective consultation and engagement is an essential part of making sure that fair and accessible services for everyone are developed.

3.6 Managing growth

These are exciting times for our district, one of growth and expansion, welcoming new development as an indicator of our success and as the foundation for our future prosperity and dynamism. New housing development will enable us to build more successful and thriving towns and bring ideas and resources into our villages which need new families and employees, new entrepreneurs and volunteers to continue to evolve over time. This raises significant challenges to our communities in accompanying this growth with a matching rate of investment in infrastructure and community services, growing our economy to provide jobs, ensuring our centres are equipped to service this increased community and encouraging residents to identify with their neighbourhoods and take part in community life.

*“We need infrastructure **before** expansion for it all to make sense”* consultee

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It is our job to be sure that we take a strategic and holistic view of where and how we introduce this expansion. The Local Development Framework sets the direction and it is vital to keep a clear eye on how our district works, building on existing resources and introducing new ones where needed. This represents a great opportunity to plan our built environment in order to make significant contributions to all our key challenges, many of which are affected by the way our infrastructure and housing works.

3.7 Tight resources and creating prosperity

Managing resources is a key challenge for us and we will make sure that we utilise what is available across the partnership to maximum effect. The money available to support change and meet challenges is going to be affected by the economic downturn; the public sector may have rather less to spend. Many of the plans that were in development already may be delayed. We are realistic about the fact that we will not have the resources to do everything immediately.

We have some gaps in facilities, and we must now look at how we can address this in a climate of scarce public and private sector investment; ensuring the growth in housing is accompanied by investment from both the private sector through planning contributions and the public sector in their investment programmes. The prosperity of the district is not the sole responsibility of our public sector and our overall wealth and development will be immensely affected by our local economy and the wealth this generates within communities. This is why our economy is a key theme in this strategy, helping to bring about the prosperity and wealth we need locally to help fund our plans and ambitions.

Tough decisions will need to be made between sometimes conflicting priorities. It is our responsibility to balance these tensions and a key principle here is to ensure that resources follow need, balancing the focus on deprived areas and the need for services across the district. We need our community to be fully engaged and involved in decision making, and for expenditure to be based on agreed priorities and their impact on the area. More than ever we will need to harness the abilities of our public, private and voluntary sectors to improve our capacity to deliver what is needed. This may mean some significant work to increase capacity where needed so that collectively we can meet the challenges.

3.8 Strengthening local participation

We actively support the role of Councillors at all levels as champions and representatives of their local community.

An often overlooked feature of a strong community is the contribution made by volunteers in delivering services, caring for neighbours or running clubs and activities. Volunteering makes a significant contribution to wellbeing in our district and is rewarding for the volunteers as well as for those they help.

Our challenge is to work with Councillors as community leaders, to engage people from all communities, to support volunteers and to ensure that people from across the district can have a voice in political change.

⁸ ABI, 2007

4. A diverse economy – the economic pledge

By 2030 we will have a diverse industry base and appropriately skilled workforce that can adapt to climate change supported by a well planned and effective infrastructure of housing, transport, leisure and services. We will have experienced significant growth in housing development and have linked this to supporting the population to gain the skills and flexibility to access local jobs and attract new businesses into the area which, in turn, encourages our younger population to stay or return here. Our farming and rural areas will have seen a revitalisation following a resurgence in localism, support for local products and businesses and appropriate evolution of villages.

The economic pledge considers the jobs we have now and the jobs we would like to have in the future, the skills of our workforce and the wealth of enterprise and innovation on our doorstep. A vibrant and diverse economy is the bedrock on which we can build a sustainable future. Cherwell has long been a prosperous district with very low unemployment, a wide variety of successful businesses and thriving towns and villages. However, as this strategy has been developed, the national and global economy has seen its worst downturn for 50 years and this has forced us all to evaluate how comfortable we are and how potentially vulnerable we might become.

“The ‘credit crunch’ has forced us all to take a long look at what we want for our district’s economy and has given us a chance to pause and plan now for the future.” Consultee

We recognise that much of our economic stability and growth comes from small and medium sized businesses and it is these entrepreneurial companies which provide most employment and growth. These businesses and our rural enterprises need support as well as those which are at the cutting edge of innovation and technology or the larger employers who provide great opportunities locally. Retail is an important business sector, especially our town centres and Bicester Village, a creator of local jobs and a significant tourist draw.

Everyone in our community has the right to earn a good living and have an interesting job that they enjoy, enabling them to provide for themselves and their families and to reap the benefits that a stable income can provide.

There is a well-documented trend towards locally produced food, goods and services and the protection of our environment, which represents an opportunity to shape our own district. We are lucky to have some excellent food producers and rural enterprises perfectly positioned to take advantage of the growing demand and others ready to take up the environmental challenges. Our rural enterprises have already diversified into a wide range of industries and tourism is a strong contributor to our local economy.

Finally, as the key challenges section of this strategy has outlined, we are facing an aging population and a rapidly growing one. We need to be secure in the knowledge that there are opportunities to utilise the skills and experience of our older residents and that we are providing great chances for the younger ones.

Together, we will work towards an innovative and resilient economy that offers a variety of opportunities, celebrates the success of our enterprises, supports our workforce and enables Cherwell residents to thrive in our towns, villages and countryside.

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Did you know?

- There are 68,000 jobs (80% in service industries) in 5,800 VAT registered businesses in Cherwell with a healthy surplus of new VAT registrations, an illustration of an entrepreneurial culture.
- The district has a higher than average proportion of jobs in manufacturing, with 12.3% falling into this sector, compared to 8.5 % across the south east region⁸. Businesses in Cherwell are generally small with only 16% having 10 or more employees⁹.
- Farming employment in Oxfordshire has declined by almost 20% since 1990.
- Tourism related expenditure translated to over £294m¹⁰ worth of income for local businesses. It is estimated that tourism activity in the district supports 5,728 jobs in Cherwell.
- There is 3.9 % unemployment but JSA claimant levels only total 1400. In December 2008, there were 1400 claimants of job seekers allowance across the district¹¹.
- The ratio of jobs to working age population is higher than both the regional and national comparators¹² but there are 6800 economically inactive people wanting a job (45% higher than UK average)
- Cherwell has a skills profile similar to UK average (50% NVQ Level 3 +) but well below the Oxfordshire averages¹³ and wage rates are lower than figures for the region or nationally.
- 8% of 16 – 19 year olds are not in education or employment¹⁴

4.1 Our economic objectives

We will:

1. Raise expectations and ambitions and provide a range of economic opportunities for everyone including lifelong learning and retraining. We will foster and develop alternative ways of accessing employment such as apprenticeships, volunteering or work-based training.
2. Manage our infrastructure development, matching housing growth with local jobs, transport to work, facilities and services. We will plan effectively for our future workforce and employment patterns, focusing on what we need to achieve in raising our skills and attracting the right businesses into the area.
3. Promote and support business diversification and a sustainable economy in both urban and rural environments. Protect and grow local services and businesses, while supporting town centres to be attractive economic hubs for the district.

⁹ Broadly in line with the UK as a whole. ABI,2007

¹⁰ Tourism Impact Report 2007

¹¹ JSA, 2008

¹² ONS jobs density, 2006

¹³ ONS, 2001

¹⁴ 2001 Census

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4.2 5 year focus

In this section we will outline our priorities and steps we will take to meet our economic objectives in the coming five years. The list below reflects the ideas and suggestions we have developed from our consultation to date. We will finalise the list and targets after the formal consultation period ending in October 2009.

Draft Priorities – For Consultation and Review

- Tackle the causes of under achievement which include poor housing, lack of access to transport, social and economic culture, education and training.
- Improve access to skills, training and employment opportunities skills (link to national performance indicator 163 Working age population qualified to at least level 3 or higher)
- Enable a good supply of housing and a wide range of affordable housing opportunities to ensure that housing provision is able to support the development of the local economy and people's ambitions and needs (link to national performance indicator 154 Net additional homes provided)
- Create strong links between the private, public and voluntary sector with clear roles and contributions to the economic, aspiration and skills agenda.
- Promote environmentally sensitive and innovative enterprise, supporting new initiatives that may help to adapt to changes in the climate.
- Attract and retain the right sort of industries, a balance between high and lower technology industries, understanding that not everyone wants to achieve in only academic terms and that not all businesses are high-tech.
- Develop a North Oxfordshire focused inward investment strategy using the vision of the Sustainable Community Strategy to promote the area to investors.
- Fully exploit any opportunities that come from the proximity to Oxford and spin-off academic industries.

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4.3 Local Focus - Economy

We recognise that different areas across the district will have their own priorities and we will identify specific actions to address them. The list below outlines the feedback we have received from our initial consultation. We will finalise the list and targets after the formal consultation period ending in October 2009.

Draft Priorities – For Consultation and Review

Banbury

- Improve the percentage of Banbury residents with skills and qualifications (in specific areas/locations)
- Develop skills and qualifications to reflect the needs of local businesses
- Fully utilise the College resources and encourage engagement with the population and businesses.
- Support and develop the town centre to maintain thriving shops and cultural activities in a pleasant and safe environment

Bicester

- Reduce the number of residents commuting out of the area for work by increasing the number and variety of jobs available locally
- Build upon the accessibility of Bicester, its skilled workforce and location within the O2C Arc to attract new businesses
- Implement the town centre development and improved rail connections
- Tackle the congestion issues and improve the availability of business premises

Kidlington

- Encourage stronger links between all industrial areas, the airport and local residents and the village centre
- Support the development of the civic and shopping areas of the village
- Position Kidlington as a unique place in the O2C Arc on account of the airport and its proximity to Oxford
- Explore the full commercial and recreational potential of the Canal and Airport

Rural Areas

- Support local shops and businesses to serve their rural communities and create jobs
- Encourage diversification of farms and other rural businesses to enable the creation of local employment and reduce commuting
- Explore opportunities to pool resources and community facilities to provide new commercial opportunities
- Ensure that broadband provision is maintained and improved to support increased home working

5. Opportunities for All – the community pledge

By 2030 we will have thriving communities where everyone, regardless of their personal circumstances, feels safe in their homes and welcome in their neighbourhoods. A society where older people are able to live independently and where younger generations have the skills and opportunities to build their future. Our communities will value the contribution made by a wide spectrum of voluntary organisations and volunteers and the shared values of our faith groups. Disadvantaged families and residents will be supported to help themselves benefit from the new housing, educational and economic opportunities available to them. A consistently innovative and varied range of cultural events will build a sense of place and a unique identity for the district.

Cherwell does not hit national headlines for poor education, housing, or significant socio-economic problems. The communities within Cherwell are generally harmonious, healthy and have a sense of coherence. People like where they live, have a strong allegiance to their town or village and strong feelings about what does and doesn't work. Communities are often very local, at a neighbourhood or estate level, and not necessarily as attached to their surrounds or Cherwell as a whole. Some places have already experienced rapid population growth and development, which has diluted local identity and a sense of belonging. The arts, culture and creative industries of the area make a vibrant contribution to our communities. They provide recreation, companionship and shared interests within groups and societies and are often a focus for community activity.

“A successful community is comfortable, green, caring, confident, clean, sharing and learning.” Consultee

We see communities as people brought together by common interests, culture, activities and geography, including and focusing on those who do not benefit as much as they could from the area. Those which may need extra support in Cherwell include young people, older people, young families, and people moving into the area from outside the UK and marginalised communities, for example people with disabilities or from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Traditional rural villages are experiencing changes, an erosion of the younger population, local employment and services. Residents are passionate about keeping their villages thriving and inclusive. It is the areas which impact on our quality of life that are the focus of this section, specifically sense of community spirit, educational achievement and aspirations, health, well-being, housing and a sense of belonging. We want to ensure a high level of community capacity and engagement, supporting communities to find their own solutions.

There are issues which need our attention if they are not to become longer term problems. For example, secondary education is of concern in the area. Older people, young people and young families can experience isolation, especially in the rural part of Cherwell which is a significant proportion of the area. There are some areas which suffer from anti-social behaviour, especially in our town centres and at night, which impacts on those using these centres, affecting their sense of safety and may hinder our towns' development as cultural hubs in the longer term. Giving young people plenty to do, increased facilities and encouraging greater engagement has been shown to decrease the incidence of such behaviour.

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Housing is a big concern for everyone. There is a shortage of social housing, a shortage of affordable housing generally and uncertainty within communities about the impact of housing growth upon their area and how they can influence this. However, it must be remembered that Cherwell also has a breathtaking array of listed buildings and a generally high quality built environment, villages and towns. We already have the Local development Framework to structure our approach to tackling our challenges and most parishes have completed parish plans or are working on them to inform our decisions.

Did you know?

- Health indicators show that the health of residents in the area is better than in Oxfordshire or England, new facilities are opening and life expectancy is above average.
- Older people will make up an increasingly large percentage of the population, with projections of 21% of overall population for the over 65s and up to 20% for the elderly population (85+).
- The level of qualifications achieved across the area is low with only a third of Banbury residents having qualifications and 28% in Kidlington.
- The percentage of children achieving 5+ GCSE at A*- C level is significantly lower than the national average although it is improving.
- Average net household income is £24,336 and entry level property costs £118,000, leading to an increasing gap between what can be afforded and what is available.
- 96% of the population classifies itself as white.
- Fear of crime is the highest in the county although crime levels are comparatively low.
- Two parts of the Banbury Ruscot ward are in the 20% most deprived super output areas nationally. Teenage pregnancy in the area is higher than the national average and going against a national downturn, suggesting underlying problems amongst young people relating to lack of aspirations and disaffection.
- Rural isolation is a key feature of the area affecting older, younger and poorer people more profoundly. 11 rural wards fall into the 10% most deprived in terms of access to housing and services.

5.1 Our Community Objectives

Whilst overall the area enjoys a relatively high quality of life, good employment levels and relatively high standards of living, there are underlying issues around deprivation, social exclusion and disaffection emerging in some areas. In the long term, demographic shifts in population growth and age will present some priority areas to focus on. We are already working together to build stronger and safer communities and will continue to do so, ensuring that the vital role of voluntary and community groups is acknowledged and valued for the contribution it makes.

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We will:

1. Provide support for older people to ensure they can live independently for as long as possible and appropriate facilities and care are delivered.
2. Focus activity on deprived areas of both urban and rural Cherwell to ensure that communities do not develop further into the “haves” and “have not’s” leading to cohesive neighbourhoods where all people receive their fair share, get on well together, and have a real sense of belonging.
2. Offer high quality education, support and opportunities to our young people to achieve suitable and appropriate qualifications to enable them to realise their ambitions
3. Decrease the percentages of people who fear crime and feel unsafe in their area, reducing the incidences of anti-social behaviour and building confidence in the police.
4. Maintain and develop health services, including preventive health programmes, that directly address health inequality and which enable residents to access services and information in order to lead healthy lives.

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5.2 5 year focus

In this section we will outline our priorities and steps we will take to meet our community objectives in the coming five years. The list below reflects the ideas and suggestions we have developed from our consultation to date. We will finalise the list and targets after the formal consultation period ending in October 2009.

Draft Priorities – For Consultation and Review

- Support older people to live independently.
- Support the role of volunteers, the community and churches and other faiths in sustaining the wellbeing of the district and in delivering much needed local activity.
- Increase opportunities to access lifelong learning and re-training.
- Improve educational attainment and better access to post-16 qualifications.
- To ensure that the expansion of housing and provision of housing address the inherent link to community cohesion through effective design and investment, providing a range of housing options.
- Work to build a sense of strong community across the district.
- Improve access to services for BME communities to address inequalities in education, access to services and to support integration.
- Targeted support for young people to put on and engage them in appropriate activities and increase their aspirations and a reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training.
- Reduce fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Reduce levels of crime.
- Ensure that healthcare is accessible to people, particularly people in rural settings, without transport or people who have difficulty getting around.
- Undertake a health inequalities programme that narrows the gap in life expectancy across the district.
- Improve levels of health and well being in priority groups.

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5.3 Local Focus - Community

We recognise that different areas across the district will have their own priorities and we will identify specific actions to address them. The list below outlines the feedback we have received from our initial consultation. We will finalise the list and targets after the formal consultation period ending in October 2009.

Draft Priorities – For Consultation and Review

Banbury

- Address and reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy
- Improve school attendance and achievement
- Reduce incidence of anti-social behaviour
- Improve support for new communities to access services and have their needs met

Bicester

- Raise young people's aspirations, facilities and opportunities
- Manage Bicester's rapid growth with extra effort to integrate new and emerging communities
- Improve leisure facilities
- Increase the sense of pride and belonging to Bicester to create more community cohesion

Kidlington

- Increase consultation with and facilities for young people
- Ensure sufficient access to services for a village of this size
- Increase provision of a range of housing options and especially affordable housing

Rural Areas

- Design and deliver appropriate services to the right people on an outreach basis or at least being sure that there is adequate transport to centres of support.
- Develop new ways of identifying deprivation in rural areas to understand where resources are needed.
- Define the role of the police in rural low-crime areas and what it can reasonably be expected to deliver
- Provide a range of and more affordable housing, including villages in the planning process.
- Increased support for youth, senior and community activities in rural locations. Explore the options for creative use of community buildings

6. Connected and protected – the infrastructure and environment pledge

By 2030 we will understand and adapt to environmental challenges as they arise and ensure that all infrastructure and other developments prioritise the protection our environment and biodiversity. We will protect our rich natural and built environment and heritage, using our resources wisely and helping people to live sustainable lifestyles. Our transport and housing will be appropriate to our needs and will be adaptable to the changes in our communities. Cherwell will be at the forefront of exploring alternative technologies and recycling, utilising its connections to innovative industry to do so, and making real progress towards being a carbon neutral district.

The built and natural environment is a unique selling point for Cherwell and one of the main reasons that communities and businesses choose to locate or remain here. People value the unrivalled accessibility offered by the excellent transport connections, the diverse character of the settlements and their centres, the good access to local services and quality of the countryside. However, socio-economic and environmental changes (such as increased commuting for employment, an aging population and climate change) are calling into question the way our towns function into the future, the viability of our rural areas and our ability to ensure that everyone gets to share in the quality of life that we value.

The environmental pledge considers the type of infrastructure we currently have, the way this has changed over recent years and the challenges we face in balancing our economic and housing growth aspirations with maintaining our environmental quality over the coming years. Our Local Development Framework has to make provision to accommodate 13,400 homes between 2006 and 2026. We relish the challenge and the opportunities that the proposed housing and population growth brings but it is important we are able to protect the countryside that we value, retain our distinctiveness and adapt the way we do things to reflect Climate Change.

Did you know?

- 84% of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live (Place Survey, 2008)
- Despite being a rural district, over two-thirds of the population live in the three main urban areas of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington
- Approximately 14% of the District lies within the Oxford Green Belt and 8% within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- The District contains 32 scheduled ancient monuments and has a rich built heritage, with approximately 3000 listed buildings and 50 conservation areas.
- The house price to income ratio is 8.8 in Cherwell - higher than national and regional comparators but the lowest in Oxfordshire, except Vale of White Horse
- Household growth is outstripping population growth due to the falling household size in the area – as a result of socio-economic trends such as increasing life expectancy, divorce and partnering later in life.
- During 2007 / 08, 60% of new dwellings were built upon previously developed land and the average density for new dwellings was 47 dwellings per hectare (Cherwell District Council,

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2008).

- The Regional Spatial Strategy requires Cherwell to make provision for 13,400 new homes across Cherwell between 2006 and 2026. The majority of these will be located in Banbury and Bicester.
- Our domestic water use is 10% higher than the national average
- Over 60% of people drive to work, with a further 7% travelling as a passenger in a car.
- The district produced 11.59 tonnes of CO₂ emissions (2006) per capita compared to 8.03 across South East Region
- Cherwell recycles (45%) of household waste, the highest % in Oxfordshire and significantly higher than the UK average of 34.5%. This has increased three-fold since 2003/04.

6.1 Our Infrastructure and Environmental Objectives

The quality of the environment is one of the features that the people in Cherwell most value. This relates to both the natural environment and also the historic built environment that defines the character of many of our towns and villages. However, our District is facing challenges at a global and more local level which are challenging the way we look after our environment into the future. We must get more efficient at recycling and reusing waste, reducing our above average carbon emissions and levels of water use. Most notably, the stakeholders we spoke to talked about their concern over accommodating the forecast levels of housing growth and the impact this will have upon the community spirit of our settlements or the provision of our infrastructure and services. The objectives below reflect what you have told us needs to happen to protect our environment and accommodate growth in a sustainable way.

We will:

1. Cherish the resources that define Cherwell's character and distinctiveness including our natural environment, our built heritage and the vitality of our towns and villages.
2. Mitigate against and adapt to the impacts of climate change including minimising our waste and resource use, combating our carbon emissions and embracing new technologies.
3. Improve accessibility and tackle congestion including a shift in transport methods from our reliance on the private car towards public transport and walking or cycling opportunities.
4. Ensure our social infrastructure grows at the same rate as our communities and current deficiencies in provision are addressed including affordable housing, community buildings, open spaces, cultural and leisure opportunities.

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6.2 5 year focus

In this section we will outline our priorities and steps we will take to meet our environmental and infrastructure objectives in the coming five years. The list below reflects the ideas and suggestions we have developed from our consultation to date. We will finalise the list and targets after the formal consultation period ending in October 2009.

Draft Priorities – For Consultation and Review

- Maintaining the vitality of our town and village centres – as economic cores, service centres and hubs of our community.
- Supporting our towns and villages to be different from each other and maintain the qualities that define their identity. Enabling rural communities to grow and evolve appropriately to support vibrant and dynamic villages.
- Provide and maintain a high quality environment (clean streets, reduced graffiti and link to reducing anti-social behaviour and enhancing a sense of community wellbeing).
- Support communities to prepare a town or parish plan for their area.
- Reduce the overall carbon emissions for the district, aspiring to eventually becoming carbon neutral.
- Supporting farmers and other land managers in protecting our environment and biodiversity.
- Develop existing and new methods of minimising, managing, recycling and reusing waste.
- Decrease the amount of energy and water used in the district, harnessing new technologies and communication methods to encourage personal responsibility.
- Improve accessibility and tackle congestion by supporting a shift from our reliance on the private car towards public transport and walking or cycling.
- Ensure new homes and existing housing are accessible and decent, with increased energy efficiency and a reduction in fuel poverty, in an environment where people want to live and which can respond to their changing life circumstances.
- Deliver more affordable housing.
- Adapt the way we do things to respond to climate change embracing new technologies and applying them to our new developments and infrastructure.
- Prepare a strategic infrastructure plan and use this to understand where the current deficiencies lie and how the provision of infrastructure can be effectively delivered into the future.

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- Adopt the Local Development Framework which sets out how and where we will accommodate growth across the district, as set out in the Cherwell Local Development Scheme.
- Invest in community transport solutions in rural areas.

6.3 Local Focus Environment and Infrastructure

We recognise that different areas across the district will have their own priorities and we will identify specific actions to address them. The list below outlines the feedback we have received from our initial consultation. We will finalise the list and targets after the formal consultation period ending in October 2009.

Draft Priorities – For Consultation and Review

Banbury

- Review and address the transport needs and traffic control for Banbury
- Address the needs of all communities within Banbury to plan for appropriate, affordable and decent housing for everyone.
- Develop Banbury Farmers market

Bicester

- Address the deficiencies in community facilities.
- Reduce out commuting and develop innovative ways of reducing its carbon impact.
- Implement the redevelopment proposals for Bicester town centre including bringing forward the environmental improvements programme for Market Square.
- Support town improved transport links
- Bicester to be used as a pilot for exemplary environmental and social practice in managing growth

Kidlington

- Directly address the issue of the main road bisecting the village and traffic management.
- Continue to explore the possibility of a new station.
- Explore the use of the canal as an alternative transport resource.
- Provide affordable and appropriate housing development in close consultation with the village community.

Rural Areas

- Identify where traffic control is both desirable and beneficial.
- Review community-based and alternative transport options.
- Include rural communities in the plans for developing both housing and commercial development.
- Identify where biodiversity and rural land management have a unique relationship with environmental protection.

7. How will we do it? - the leadership pledge

By 2030 Cherwell will be characterised by our responsiveness to our changing population and our partnerships will be take a key role in delivering services, fostering community cohesion and managing our resources, directing them to where there is most need. Our local representatives will take an active and vibrant role in representing their communities and bringing about local solutions to local problems. Our public services will be open, honest and accountable with clear lines of communication between the public, private and voluntary sectors who work together to deliver what is needed. We will have exemplary consultation and communications processes, generating and sharing accurate, relevant and intelligent information, and enabling an engaged and inclusive Cherwell that relishes dialogue and debate and listens to everyone's different opinions and experiences.

Cherwell cannot thrive or address the challenges ahead without clear leadership and accountability for results. Democratic and partnership structures are in place but these can only function if they are embraced. Communities and their representatives need to take some of the responsibility for keeping them vibrant. There is now strong evidence that community leadership lies at the heart of the development and delivery of good and sustainable community strategies.

Our consultation told us we must be clear about who is accountable for the delivery of this strategy. An integral part of accountability is being sure we know what is happening, who is doing it and assessing our progress.

Our role as the Local Strategic Partnership is to ensure that we have the right systems in place to do this and that we have methods of analysing the causes and consequences of progress. We will act promptly when results are disappointing, reassess our priorities regularly and communicate this effectively. It is vital that we all work together to maximise community involvement, use available resources as efficiently as possible and raise our common understanding of the problems and their potential solutions.

This strategy is one of a family of documents. It will sit alongside an analysis of the issues and an evidence base, a leadership framework, the Local Development Framework and an implementation plan. There are also a number of medium term strategies and the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement (LAA) that will deliver the objectives and priorities contained within the pledges.

Together they will enable us to build effective partnerships and networks and work alongside each other to bring about the change and improvement that we all want to see.

8. Thanks and Acknowledgements

As part of the development of this strategy we have held or taken part in a number of events including elected councillors, rural and stakeholders' workshops, sessions with the voluntary sector and the parish liaison group, the Cherwell Skills Summit and a session with community workers in Banbury.

We would like to thank all the people, community groups, councillors, voluntary groups and public agencies that have taken part in developing the strategy so far. Also thanks to those who have invited us to attend their events and the many individuals who have spent time with us, showing us around their areas and telling us about their expectations and aspirations for the future of Cherwell.

ADD A DIAGRAM SHOWING HOW THE CHERWELL SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY LINKS INTO OTHER PLANS AT THE REGIONAL, COUNTY LEVEL AND DISTRICT LEVEL AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT ARRANGMENTS

Executive

INVESTMENT STRATEGY

6 July, 2009

Report of Strategic Director for Customer Service and Resources

Purpose

This report sets out the revised investment Strategy for treasury operations for 2009/10 and replaces the strategy approved by the Executive on 2nd March 2009. As with the originally approved documents the attached fulfil the Council's requirement under the Local Government Act 2003 and guidance subsequently issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now CLG) in March 2004, to prepare an annual investment strategy.

Whilst the formal regulatory framework has not changed and the Council's consistent compliance has not been compromised in any regard, a substantial amount of further guidance alongside the approval of a new medium term financial strategy has emerged since the approval of the current strategy earlier in the year.

The revised strategy attached has been formulated with due regard to:

- The guidance issued by CIPFA entitled 'Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes';
- The findings contained in the report issued by the Audit Commission in March 2009 entitled 'Risk and return, English local authorities and the Icelandic banks'; and
- The Council's own Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved by the Executive on 6th April 2009.
- The Select Committee report on Local Authority Investments 11 June 2009

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) to recommend to Council approval of the revised Investment Strategy 2009/2010.

Executive Summary

1.1 The highest standard of stewardship of public funds remains of the utmost importance to the Council. The combined effects of the turbulence in the financial markets associated with the banking crises and the unprecedented fall in interest rates impact directly on the Council's investment strategy: The former driving a re-iteration of the Council's main priority to protect the security of funds. The latter driving a change in the Council's medium term financial strategy to reduce vulnerability to movements in interest rates by eliminating dependency on investment income to support revenue funding.

1.2 In March 2009, as part of our on-going commitment to regular review and maintaining best practice the Executive supported an independent review of the investment strategy. The Portfolio Holder for Resources and the Strategic Director for Customer Service and Resources commissioned Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) to undertake the review.

1.3 The process involved consultation with a wide range of Members and Senior Officers covering the full range of Treasury activities in order to establish views and synchronise the parameters of the strategy accordingly. The review covered all aspects of the investment strategy and in the light of recent guidance referenced above, gave particular regard to the following specific aspects:

Ownership and accountability; risk appetite; the monitoring of performance and compliance; the role of the external advisors, the in house team and the external fund managers; the nature of the investment instruments ; the counterparty criteria; the use of credit reference agencies and the management of working capital.

1.4 The assessment of risk appetite was the main driver of the emerging priorities at the highest level of the strategy of Security, Yield (subject to cash-flow) and Liquidity in that order. These priorities in turn set the parameters for the specific investment instruments, duration, exposure and counter party criteria reflected in the attached strategy.

1.5 The security of principal remains the top priority for members. The strategy also reflects Member's recognition that they feel further obligated to ensure Council funds work hard and some element of return is required to ensure the Council's ability to incur capital expenditure for the community is sustainable in the future. As a result, it is accepted that some element of risk is prevalent within the investment portfolio by the very nature of the activity of "investing".

1.6 Adopting this revised strategy will drive a change to the profile of our investment portfolio. The current investments remain sound and as such there is no need for any of the changes to be retrospective. A smooth transition over time will be achieved by applying the new criteria to investments entered into after the effective date of adoption.

2 Background Information

- 2.1 PWC facilitated two separate workshops; participants included Members from the Councils' Accounts Audit & Risk Committee, Scrutiny and the Executive. The information gained and views expressed by Members involved in relation to the full range of related subject matters directly shaped the recommended strategy.
- 2.2 In considering risk, and the priority for security of principal, the consultation exercise considered the role of external advisors, fund managers and the in house finance team. The recognition for appropriate expertise (given the complexity of the nature of some financial instruments) alongside the desire for diversification (not "putting all eggs in one basket") influences the provision within the strategy for retaining external advisors alongside a combination of external fund management and internally managed investments. The expertise of the internal team in relation to cash-flow management is recognised and investment activity of the team focused on specifically set out, less complex shorter term investments.
- 2.3 The portfolio of investments remains grouped into 2 categories, "specified" (short term lower risk instruments) and "non specified" – covering longer term more complex investments. As with the previous strategy 70% of the portfolio is restricted to the "specified instrument" group. Within each group express reference is made to the individual allowable instruments. Investment activity by fund managers is restricted to the instruments listed.
- 2.4 Outside the scope of this strategy, The Council will continue to engage in non cash investment activity as set out in the asset management strategy and remains committed to participating in community finance arrangements with appropriate public and voluntary sector partners. The financial areas of these activities will be supported by the In house finance team.
- 2.5 A key component of managing risk and performance is the assurance and evaluation framework. The strategy provides for monitoring in 3 distinct areas: Compliance, which will be overseen by the Councils Account Audit and Risk Committee. Quantitative financial performance in relation to budgeted outcomes, which is an integral element of the Councils performance management framework reported to the Executive. Qualitative and comparative performance monitoring of responsible parties which will be reported to the Resources and Performance Scrutiny function.
- 2.6 The agreed priorities drive the provisions within the strategy relating to counter-party criteria and appropriate bodies for investment. The strategy sets express criteria relating to credit ratings. Firstly the highest ratings from 3 agencies are pre-requisite to investment in specific bodies and additionally provision is made in relation to establishing credit worthiness of sovereignty as being pre-requisite to any investments in non UK domiciled bodies.
- 2.7 All elements of the recommended strategy relating to non UK domiciled bodies, investment in UK building societies and the permitted instruments within the specified and non specified list have been considered in the light of the investment activities of other Councils as an additional measure of assurance.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 Compliance with Best Practice in the light of recently published external guidance
- 3.2 Review of strategic investment “priorities” in the light of risk appetite and the newly approved medium term financial strategy.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

Option One Do nothing. Whilst the current strategy continues to comply fully with the regulatory framework the recommended changes reflect the Council’s consideration of the most recent external developments and newly published guidelines in keeping with our commitment to best practice.

Option Two Impose immediate changes to the Council’s investment portfolio. The Council’s current investment portfolio is sound and the parameters governing those investments appropriate and robust. There is no need to exit current arrangements. To do so could incur unnecessary financial penalties.

Option Three Continue to incorporate best practice, accommodating newly published external guidance via a smooth transitional process re-profiling investments over time.

Consultations

Members	Members Workshop: Accounts, Audit & Risk, Scrutiny group (20 May 2009)
Members, Corporate Management Team	Executive/Corporate Management Team Workshop (15 June 2009)
External Advisors	The Council’s retained advisors, Butlers

Implications

Financial: Financial Effects – Closer management of the Council’s cash-flows and working capital will increase the level of short-term investment income. This will be monitored during the year and budgets amended accordingly.

It is possible that with falling interest rates and the tightening of the counterparty strategy this could impact significantly on the level of interest income. Each 0.25% fall in interest rates has a potential impact of £138,000 on revenue budget. In order to mitigate this risk an interest rate reserve has been generated.

The additional requirements for quarterly compliance

statements from the Retained Advisors and phased increase in external investment activity could have a small financial impact on the contract costs price in the short term, however this will be an integral element budgeted accordingly in the re-tendered specification and any extended contractual arrangements.

Efficiency Savings – None is arising direct from this report.

Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance 01295 221595.

Legal:

There is a requirement for the Council to fulfil two key requirements of the Local Government Act 2003:-

- approval of the Treasury Management Policy in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management; and
- approval of the Investment Strategy in accordance with the DCLG investment guidance.

The revised strategy attached has been formulated with regard to the following recently published guidance:

- The guidance issued by CIPFA entitled 'Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes';;
- The findings contained in the report issued by the Audit Commission in March 2009 entitled 'Risk and return, English local authorities and the Icelandic banks'; and
- The Council's own Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved in 6th April, 2009
- Select Committee Report, Communities and Local Government, Local Government Investments (June 2009).

The recommendations arising from the guidance above are not regulated by statute and compliance is not mandatory but regard to such guidance is evidence of good practice.

Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, 01295 221686.

Risk Management:

a) Risk of capital loss – the prime objective of treasury management activities is to ensure the security of the amounts invested. In the past this has primarily been managed by using a counterparty list which only includes organisations having a suitable credit rating and which has a maximum amount that can be invested with each

organisation at any one time. The revised strategy provides additional measure relating to credit worthiness of sovereignty, further limitations in time and exposure limits and a clear framework for monitoring and compliance.

Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance
01295 221551.

[Other Implications] None

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

An Accessible and Value for Money Council

Executive Portfolio

Councillor James Macnamara
Portfolio Holder for Resources

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Investment Strategy
Appendix 2	Glossary of Terms
Background Papers	
CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice 2008/09 Treasury Management Strategy 2009/10 Budget Medium Term Financial Strategy	
Report Author	Julie Evans, Strategic Director Customer Services and Resources
Contact Information	01295 227967 Julie.evans@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Executive

Integrated Vehicle Parking Strategy Taxi Ranks

6 July 2009

Report of Head of Urban and Rural Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members on progress with the initial options appraisal for additional rank space for Hackney Carriage Vehicles in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- (1) Note the review and options appraisal.
- (2) Approve further detailed design/investigation into additional rank space on the preferred options of:
 - Banbury: Bridge Street
 - Banbury: Horsefair
 - Banbury: North Bar
 - Bicester: Bell Lane
 - Kidlington: Oxford Road
- (3) Delegate responsibility to the Head of Urban and Rural Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council to:
 - Seek agreement with Oxfordshire County Council on funding and implementation of the final scheme's
 - Undertake formal consultation on the selected options, and
 - Secure any approvals from Department for Transport

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The Executive received a report at its 2 March 2009 meeting and resolved that options for additional taxi rank spaces should be investigated further.

Proposals

- 1.2 A number of sites for possible ranks to be considered have been suggested to the Council by both Cherwell Valley Hackney Association (CVHA) and North Oxfordshire Hackney Association (NOHA).
- 1.3 These have been reviewed by the Council's Licensing Team and Engineers and by the Highways Department of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). Sites that are likely to be more feasible have been considered further.
- 1.4 Feasibility and initial design has been undertaken into:
 - Banbury: Bridge Street
 - Banbury: Horsefair
 - Banbury: North Bar
 - Bicester: Bell Lane
 - Kidlington: Oxford Road

These locations are proposed for more detailed assessment and formal consultation. Some are proposed as dual use: daytime for disabled parking and after 6pm for taxi ranks. This maximises the use of available town centre parking (dual use on the Highway requires Department for Transport approval (DfT)).

Conclusion

- 1.5 Following the delimitation on Hackney Carriage Vehicle licenses in Cherwell, there has been increased demand for rank space in the urban centres; particularly Banbury and Bicester.
The sites identified as preferred options in this report would provide this additional capacity and improve the service to the public in urban centres.

Background Information

- 2.1 The delimiting of Hackney Carriage Vehicle (HCV) licensing in October 2007 has seen the number of HCV's in the Cherwell district rise by 40%. At the time of delimiting the Council licensed 84 Hackney Carriage Vehicles (HCV's) and 6 taxi-buses. There are currently 122 HCV's and 6 taxi-buses. This has led to pressure on the ranks that are provided in Banbury and Bicester and to this review of rank space.
- 2.2 There are ranks at Bicester and Banbury rail stations and whilst this review takes account of these they are not controlled by the Council. Contact has been made with Chilterns Railways on several occasions over recent months to discuss driver's issues but the company has not responded.
- 2.3 A petition was received from CVHA in February 2009, signed by 65 HCV license holders requesting the Council to provide additional rank space.
- 2.4 Informal consultation then took place with the two taxi associations (CVHA and NOHA) and invited the submission of proposals for possible taxi rank sites. Consultation also took place with Banbury and Bicester town councils, Kidlington Parish Council, OCC and DfT to secure views on the scale of any problem with rank space, and views as to possible locations for additional ranks.
- 2.5 The feedback secured from these consultations has been set out in the Schedule at Appendix 1, together with brief officer comments as to the feasibility on the sites suggested.
- 2.6 Following site visits to the various locations, a short list of potential options was drawn up by the Head of Urban and Rural Services and initial feasibility and engineering design undertaken.
- 2.7 **Preferred Options- Banbury**

Bridge Street:

The existing rank has nine spaces and is the rank that is most used in the daytime. It would be possible to provide four additional spaces on this rank if the three existing disabled parking bays were re-designated, and some engineering works undertaken to alter the current rank configuration. A new egress onto the Bridge Street mini roundabout would be required.

As some of the works is on highway land this would require OCC approval.

A plan showing this outline proposal is attached at Appendix 2.

This option should only be considered if the parking bays for disabled drivers are provided in new areas close to the existing provision. There are disabled bays immediately in front of the Town hall which will not be affected and there are plans, as part of the Parson Street improvements, for five additional disabled parking spaces alongside the Nat West building; an additional three to the existing three in Market Place; and a further three in addition to the existing three spaces at the top of Parson Street in the North Bar car park. These schemes would increase disabled parking provision in this town centre area from ten spaces to eighteen spaces.

The estimated cost of extending the rank at Bridge Street is £40,000

Horsefair:

The existing rank has seven spaces and is also the location of the coach drop off/pick up with maximum waiting time of 15 minutes and spaces for two coaches. The land is not designated as highway.

This tends to be the rank that is most used in the evening.

By redesigning the traffic flows and layout of the rank and coach bays it would be possible to increase the capacity of the rank by five spaces. There are different potential options for this site, including removing coach drop off parking down to the bus station and developing a public space in this area. Informal soundings have however raised concerns that removing coach drop offs will have adverse impact on the High Street and this end of the Town and is not therefore recommended.

Appendix 3 shows outline proposals.

The estimated cost of redesigning and extending rank spaces at Horsefair is £3,000.

North Bar:

No existing rank provision.

In view of the Parson Street improvements and focal point in this area of the town of restaurants and pubs, a new rank at the top of Parson Street would be a good site offering improved public access to taxi services in the evening. This would also take pressure away from the Horsefair rank.

Options are in North Bar vehicle park, in either the existing disabled bays (note- additional bays to be included as part of the Parson Street improvements) and operating as dual use with evening rank, or on the internal car park access road with amended traffic circulation. The land is not designated as highway.

Outline proposals are set out at Appendix 4.

The estimated cost of these proposals are; Options 1 £3,000; Option 2 £3,000

2.8 Preferred Options- Bicester

Bell Lane:

No existing rank provision.

The current rank provision is in Market Hill. A new rank at the other end of the High Street would be a good location and offer improved public access to taxi services.

The existing disabled parking bays on Bell Lane have been identified as a preferred option. The lay-by has capacity for five vehicles. Surveys in April 2009 indicate average daytime occupancy of these bays by 2.7 disabled drivers.

With new signage and lining this lay-by could operate on a dual use basis after 6pm as a taxi rank. This would require approval of OCC and DfT. Informal soundings indicate that this would be supported.

This land is designated as highway. Negotiations with OCC have secured in principle support for their funding up to £5,000.

Costs are estimated to be £1,500 to £9,000 depending on the extent of any re-kerbing works.

Market Hill:

Existing rank is located here. In view of the Market Square redevelopment proposals, any work on rank location/spaces needs to be progressed through the Project Team responsible.

2.9 Preferred Options- Kidlington

Oxford Road:

There are no ranks in Kidlington. The Parish Council has indicated that they do not perceive any significant demand, but have expressed support for a trial of an evening rank in the lay by outside the Nat West bank on Oxford Road.

This is a lower priority.

This land is designated as highway. Costs are estimated at £1,500.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 Key issues for consideration are: the number of licensed HCV's and the increased demand for rank space since de-limiting; that rank locations need to be agreed with consultees, particularly OCC, Thames Valley Police and DfT; that the Traffic Regulation Order making process can take between 4 and 9 months to implement. Funding for implementing new ranks would need to be secured.
- 3.2 Additional rank space is required in view of the 40% increase in licensed vehicles since de-limiting. It is not suggested that HCV license fees be increased to recoup costs in view of the increased fee income secured from increase in license applications and in view of the difficult economic climate that is having an affect on the trade.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

Options

The Council can:

- Progress with all options or
- Progress some of the options or
- Retain the current provision with no increase

Consultations

Town and Parish Councils

As set out in this report.

Oxfordshire County Council

Support in principle. Discussions will need to resolve Traffic Regulation Orders timing and process.

Taxi Associations

As set out in this report.

Department for Transport- Bell Lane

DfT comment: The bay will need to be marked in white (diag 1028.3) with a yellow bar (diag. 1017) at the back. Signs to Diagram 650.2 and 661a will need to be erected. Authorisation from the DfT to be able to use the yellow plate with a white marking is required.

Implications

Financial:

The estimated costs for implementing the report recommendations are:

- Banbury: Bridge Street £40,000
- Banbury: Horsefair £3,000
- Banbury: North Bar £3,000
- Bicester: Bell Lane £1,500-£9,000
- Kidlington: Oxford Road £1,500

Negotiations with OCC have secured agreement in principle to OCC funding up to £5,000 for the Bicester Bell Lane proposal.

The other proposals will be subject to funding negotiations with OCC and form part of the budget preparations for 2010/11.

Comments checked by Karen Muir, Service Accountant 01295 221545

Legal:

Traffic Regulation Orders for ranks on the highway and Car Park Orders for ranks in Council Vehicle Parks will need to be formally advertised and consulted. DfT authorisation is required for dual use of disabled parking bays.

Comments checked by Paul Manning, Solicitor 01295 221691

Risk Management: Additional rank space will assist in delivering an accessible taxi service to the public. Locations in convenient places in the towns helps to move people out of town centres, particularly in the evening, and helps to reduce crime and disorder. It would also help diffuse tensions on the ranks at times when there is insufficient space to accommodate all the vehicles.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

**An Accessible Value for Money Council
A Safe and Healthy Cherwell**

Executive Portfolio

**Councillor Nigel Morris
Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural**

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Schedule of options
Appendix 2	Outline proposals for Banbury, Bridge Street
Appendix 3	Outline proposals for Banbury, Horsefair
Appendix 4	Outline proposals for Banbury, North Bar-Option 1 and 2
Background Papers	
Executive Report 2 March 2009	
Report Author	Chris Rothwell, Head of Urban and Rural Services
Contact Information	01295 221712 chris.rothwell@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Appendix 1					
Schedule of options for additional taxi ranks. Comments of key stakeholders					
May 2009					
Options for additional rank locations	CDC comments	CVHA comments Letter 21 March 2009	North Oxford Hackney Association E-mail 3 March 2009	Town/Parish Councils	Notes/ CDC position
BANBURY					
Broad Street-opposite or instead of existing disabled parking	Concerns at additional issues this will bring to this area in light of current Amos ct/St James Club. Loss of disabled parking. Not favoured.	Would like rank outside Chinese take away.	Supportive of this option-for after 1900hrs	Concerns about progressing in this area	Not progressing.
Market Place-adjacent to Nat West	This area is subject to the Parson St and Market place redevelopment. Could be dual purpose for evening use as a rank. A reasonable option with no real additional cost from Parson St works. Currently double yellows. Often parked up by Blue Badge Holders.	Would like a rank on the disabled bays outside the Banbury cake office.			Could not progress out with the pedestrianisation scheme and would not be available Thursdays & Saturdays. Review after Parson St redevelopment completed and in operation for a year.
High Street-south side (as used for Michaelmas Fair)	Is this too close to Horse Fair? On main carriageway and likely to be objections from OCC. Probably objections for shop owners (newsagent) as this		Supportive of this option		Secure OCC views. If positive response could look into further if need arises.

	relies on passing trade. Not favoured.				
George Street (outside Chicago Rock)	Pedestrian area- location of street furniture narrows the carriageway. Emergency access would be compromised. It's a hot spot for pubs. Not favoured.	Would like an evening rank on Thur/Fri/Sat.	Supportive of this option-for after 1900hrs		Not a favoured option by CDC we should be protecting our pedestrianised areas, this would lead to a dilution of the Order and encourage non- authorised users. Not progressing
Horse Fair- Existing Rank reconfigured	Offers some potential for significant increase in spaces. Could be relatively simple to achieve with internal markings and signage. This area currently has the nursery school issue. Ownership of the road? A favoured option.	Remove the coach parking and include them in the taxi rank. Provide further rank space to double the ranks. Also possible to have one entry and one exit to the rank. Entry being from South Bar/Horsefair and exit on High St.	Support this option	Banbury Town Council planning Committee resolved that CDC: prioritises the reconfiguration of the Horsefair site to allow more vehicles on the rank and encourage further day time use of this rank;	Undertake feasibility on this. Check with OCC about access and highways implications. Engineers consider feasible. Issues about coach parking and possible move to bus station or reduction to one space. Possibilities of short stay pay and display if move coaches. Also possibilities of creating high quality public space if move cpaches.
Horse Fair- cinema side in CDC car park.	Is it too close to existing Horse Fair? Loss of parking Would be better to progress improvements to existing. Not favoured.		Supportive of this option		Would restrict access to car parking spaces and compromise deliveries to the hotel and other premises. Not progressing.
High Street- Bus	Bottom of Calthorpe	Would like a rank after the	Supportive of this option-for		Not a favoured option by

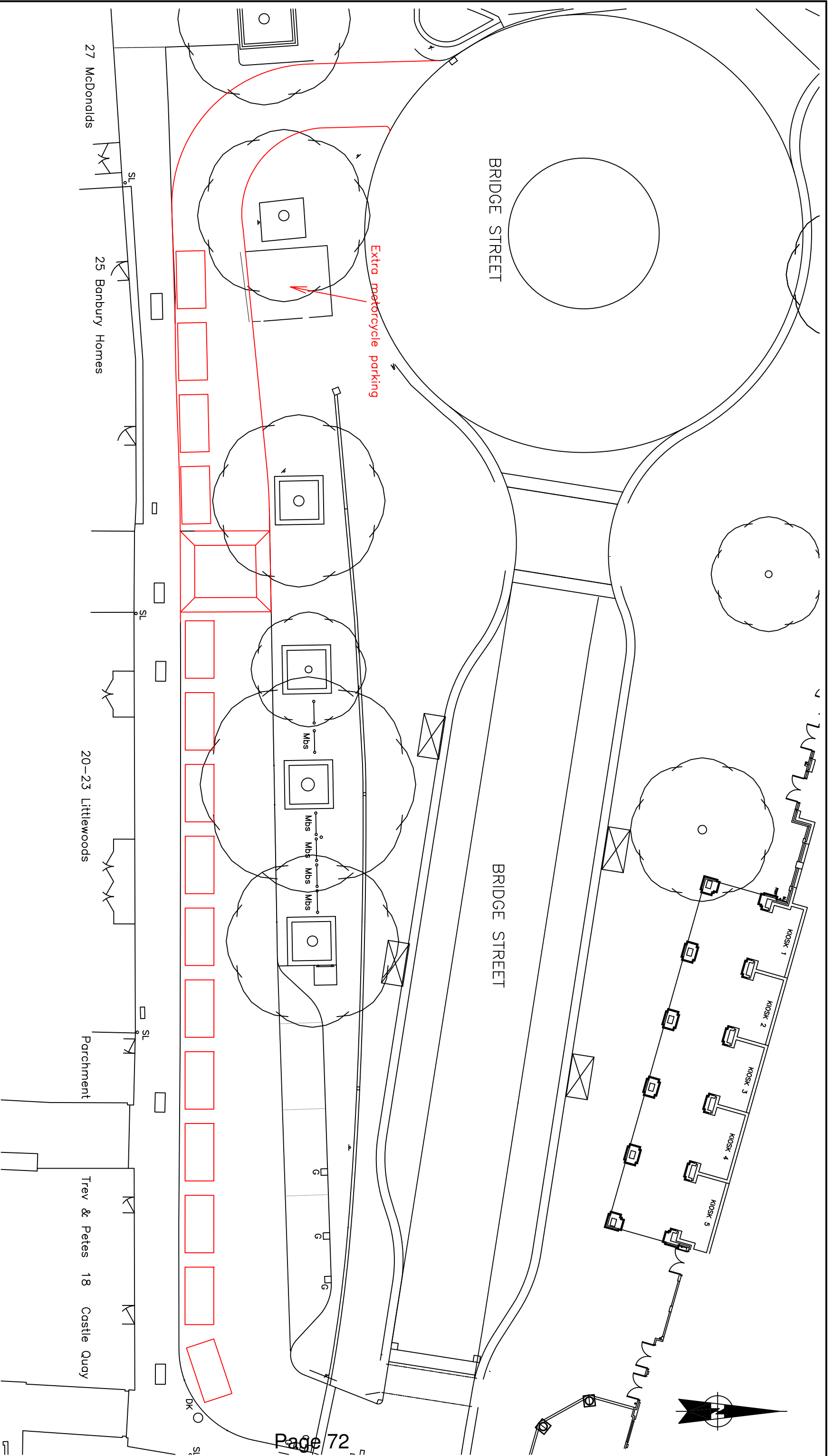
stop outside KFC	Street puts it too close to Carriage Company PHV. Not a favoured option.	last bus.	after 1900hrs		CDC. OCC have raised concerns about use of Bus pull in. Not being progressed.
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Bridge Street-15 min stop off area.	Possible, but would give rise to collection and drop off issues for bus station. May only be suitable for evening, but this area not much used in the evening by the trade.	Incorporate the 15 min waiting bays into further taxi ranks. Space for two/three taxis on the roundabout on the HMV shop side to cut into pavement.	Support this option	Banbury Town Council planning Committee resolved that CDC: considers the reconfiguration of the Bridge Street site, if disabled parking were allowed in the Market Place adjacent to the Nat West bank, and to encourage the use of this site in the evenings for those leaving the pubs and clubs in Broad Street.	HMV side is Street trading area and pedestrianised. 15 minute stop off important for bus station and possibly the new Darzie. Would result in two lines of taxis. Not favoured.
Bridge Street- Disabled parking places (3)	Similar issues to above. Loss of disabled parking...but Parson St development will include formal provision for disabled parking. Is this Highway land? Could get 4 ranks spaces but needs physical engineering works and some issues of pedestrian segregation.		Support this option	See above comments from Banbury Town Council.	Engineers consider feasible. Indicative costs £15-£30k depending on services and disabled parking. Check with OCC Undertake further feasibility
North Bar- In CDC car park at top of Parson	With Parson St pedestrianisation this area of town likely to	We want rank spaces in the car park outside Buck and Bell.		Banbury Town Council planning Committee resolved that CDC:	Undertake feasibility. Options either as dual

Street	<p>become more popular.</p> <p>Loss of parking.</p> <p>A* PHV located in Parson Street.</p> <p>4 Disabled spaces. Could be dual use.</p> <p>Look into further for evening rank and daytime disabled parking.</p>			considers the provision of a rank in North Bar, at the top of Parsons Street, close to the pubs and restaurants in this area.	<p>use with disabled parking spaces (taxi 6pm to 8pm) Note; Additional spaces as consequence of Parson st devt.</p> <p>Alternative option is amending access/egress into North bar car park to one way and having linear rank on the road. Benefit of 27/7 operation.</p>
Existing Supermarket taxi park-ups.	<p>Private Land so outside CDC control.</p> <p>Understood to be facilities at Tesco, Sainsburys, and Morrisons.</p>	Rank spaces in all supermarket car parks.			Approach each site to explore if formalising as taxi rank might be a possibility.
Bolton Road	<p>There is double yellow lined lay by...but blocks off private parking.</p> <p>Maybe too far from town centre and would not suit eastbound fares</p>				A possibility but not progressing at this stage.
New Spiceball	Possible in bus pull in during evenings.	Would like rank .			For later discussion with the management company once the centre opens and operational experience is known.
Horton Hospital	Private land so outside CDC control.	Would like rank outside A&E			
BICESTER					
Bell Lane	Popular area. 3 pubs.	Support this option		Bicester Town Council supports this option.	Links to town centre developments at this

	<p>Existing Disabled parking bays for 5 vehicles.</p> <p>Could be option for dual use. Disabled parking in the daytime. Taxi rank in the evening.</p> <p>Redevelopment close to this area with proposal for new cinema.</p>				<p>end of town. Need to consider this one seriously as post TC redevelopment d/a drivers will be catered for elsewhere.</p> <p>Engineers consider feasible and have raised with OCC.</p> <p>Reasonably low cost with lines and signs only required...with new TRO.</p>
Market Hill	<p>Desire to open up Market Square and relocate car parking. Possible re-provided rank on the other side of road at Market Hill.</p>		<p>Redesign Market Place...query if this means Market Hill</p>		<p>Outside Somerfields would appear best but only 4/5 spaces</p>
Bure Place	<p>Due to be removed as part of town centre development.</p>	<p>Support this option.</p>	<p>Request at Tesco.</p>		<p>Not progressing.</p>
Bicester Village	<p>Private Land</p>	<p>Would like rank at Bicester Village.</p>			<p>Approach to explore if formalising as taxi rank might be a possibility.</p>
Outside Litten Tree (Yates')	<p>Road too narrow</p>				<p>Not progressing</p>
Bicester North Station (Chilterns)	<p>Private Land</p>	<p>Would like rank at station</p>			

<p>KIDLINGTON</p> <p>Currently no rank.</p>			<p>Support ranks at Kidlington</p>	<p>Mixed view, but predominantly questioning the need in view of the good bus service into Oxford. Difficulties seem to be getting back from Oxford.</p> <p>Private hires seem to be servicing current need.</p> <p>Some limited acknowledgement that Fri/Sat evening might be justification.</p>	
<p>Oxford Road- Outside Nat West</p>	<p>Highways land.</p> <p>Would need TRO and re-designating existing car parking.</p> <p>Could lead to more problems in High Street.</p>	<p>Support this option</p>		<p>Possible trial basis in evenings using outside Nat West.</p>	<p>Seek views of OCC.</p>



REVISIONS:

No.	REVISION:	DATE:	BY:

CLIENT:
Urban and Rural Services

PROJECT:
Bridge Street Taxi Rank Improvements

DRAWING TITLE:
Option 1

FILE:

DATE: June 2009	DRAWN: T C
SCALE: 1 : 250 @ A3	CHECKED:
DRAWING No.: E4254_TaxiRanks_BridgesSouth_Opt1	AUTHORIZED:

JOB CODE:

DATE: June 2009	DRAWN: T C
SCALE: 1 : 250 @ A3	CHECKED:
DRAWING No.: E4254_TaxiRanks_BridgesSouth_Opt1	AUTHORIZED:



DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

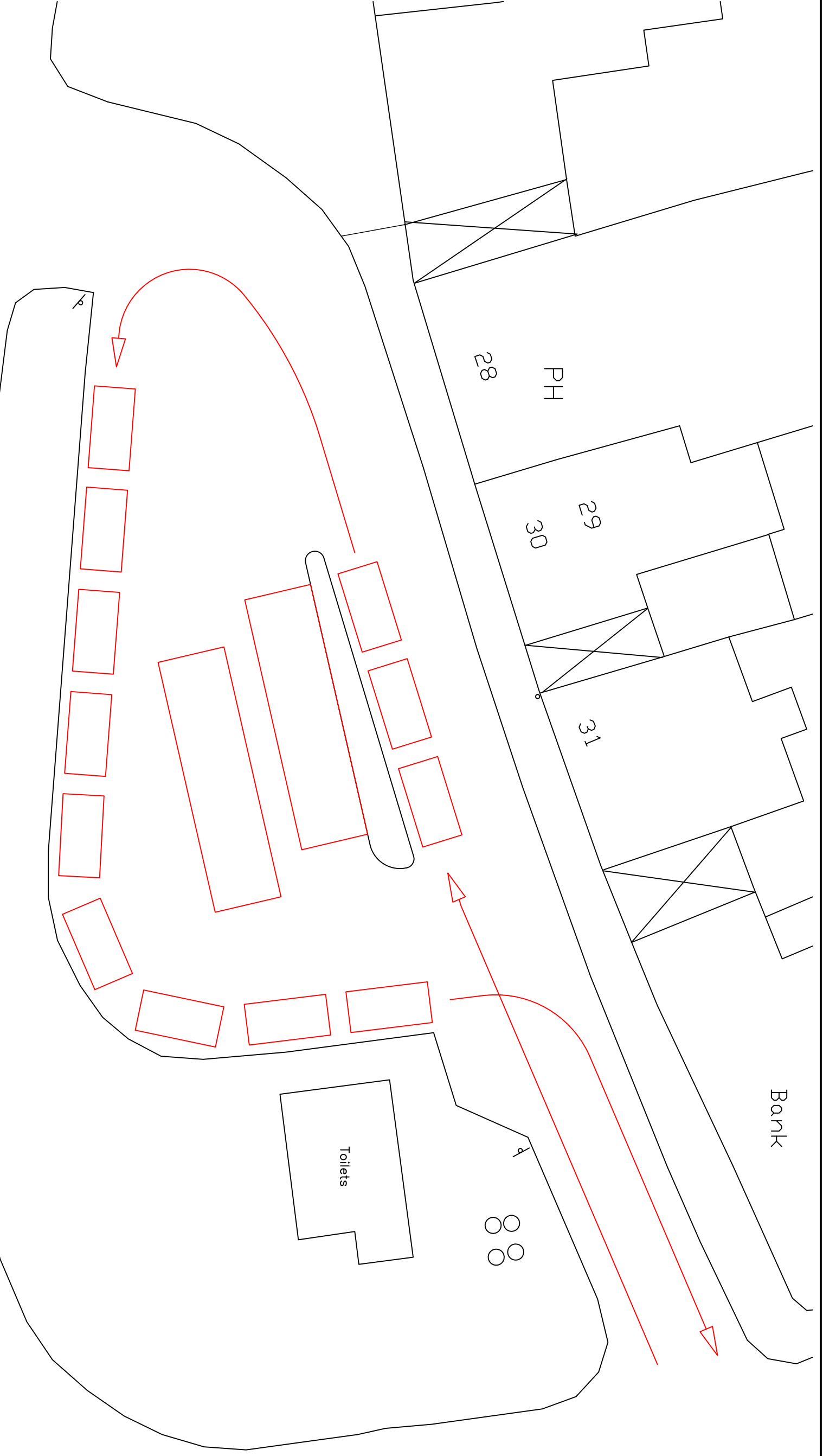
Tony Brummell MSc CEng MICE MCIWEM MIHT
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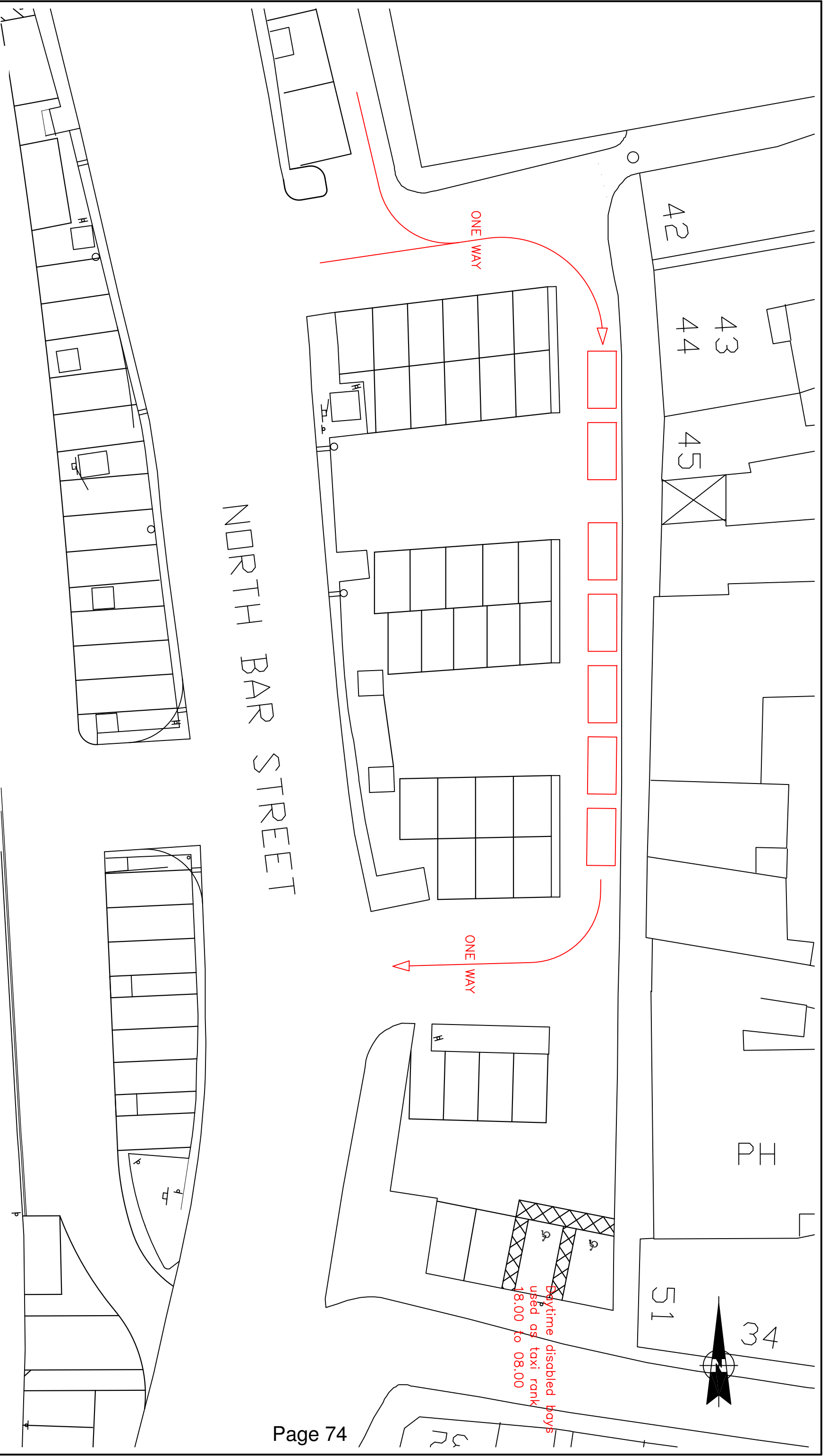
HIGH STREET

HORSEFAIR



 <p>Cherwell DISTRICT COUNCIL NORTH OXFORDSHIRE</p>		<p>Tony Brummell MSc CEng MICE MCIWEM MIHT Head of Building Control and Engineering Services Cherwell District Council Bodicote House Bodicote Banbury OX15 4AA Telephone (01295) 221597 Fax (01295) 263136 email engineering.services@cherwell-dc.gov.uk</p>			
<p>REVISIONS:</p>		<p>No.</p>	<p>REVISION:</p>	<p>DATE:</p>	<p>BY:</p>
<p>CLIENT: Urban and Rural Services</p>		<p>FILE:</p>			
<p>PROJECT: Horsefair East Taxi Rank Improvements</p>		<p>DATE: June 2009</p>		<p>DRAWN: T C</p>	
<p>DRAWING TITLE: Option 1</p>		<p>SCALE: 1 : 200 @ A3</p>		<p>CHECKED:</p>	
<p>DRAWING No: E4254_TaxiRanks_HorsefairEast_Opt1</p>		<p>AUTHORIZED:</p>		<p>JOB CODE:</p>	





REVISIONS:

No.	REVISION:	DATE:	BY:

CLIENT:
Urban and Rural Services

PROJECT:
Bridge Street Taxi Rank Improvements

DRAWING TITLE:
Existing layout

FILE:

DATE: June 2009

SCALE: 1 : 250 @ A3

CHECKED:

AUTHORIZED:

JOB CODE:

DRAWN: T C

DRAWING No: E4254_TaxiRanks_NorthBarStEast_Existing

Executive

Concessionary Travel

6 July 2009

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the report and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review into concessionary travel.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the work of the Task and Finish Group scrutiny review into concessionary travel as detailed in Appendix 1;
- (2) To agree the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendations regarding concessionary travel as detailed below:

Recommendation 1: Smart Card Reader Scheme

That Cherwell District Council should not pursue the introduction of a Smart Card Reader scheme at this time due to the significant financial investment required and reservations about the current technical capacity of such schemes to meet the Council's needs.

Recommendation 2: Mis-ticketing

That the Portfolio Holder should publicise the importance of checking bus tickets and encourage bus pass holders to submit examples of mis-ticketing. The Portfolio Holder should follow-up examples of mis-ticketing with the bus companies; monitor the scale and value of the problem for the remainder of the financial year; and report on the results and proposed actions to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the spring of 2010.

Recommendation 3: Management Information

That the Portfolio Holder should encourage the concessionary fare service providers to move to a monthly rather than quarterly claim and settlement cycle.

Recommendation 4: National Travel Tokens

That the current arrangements for the issue of national travel tokens should continue for 2009/10 and that the Portfolio Holder should monitor the take up

and use of the national travel token scheme. The Council's continued participation in the national travel token scheme should be reviewed against the findings of the independent research into the provision of community transport schemes in the district (see recommendation 5).

Recommendation 5: Community Transport

That Cherwell District Council should continue to support and promote the provision of community transport schemes across the District. In support of this corporate priority the Portfolio Holder should commission research into the feasibility of introducing alternative community transport schemes in those parts of the district where residents do not benefit from the concessionary bus pass, national travel tokens or the Dial-A-Ride service.

Recommendation 6: Consortium approach

That the Portfolio Holder should open discussions with colleagues at the County Council and the District/City councils with a view to promoting a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of the national concessionary travel scheme, subject to the outcome of the government's consultation on the administration of concessionary fares schemes.

Recommendation 7: Government Consultation

That the Portfolio Holder should be invited to use the work of this Task & Finish Group and the conclusions and recommendations in this report to inform the Council's response to the government's consultation on the administration of concessionary fares schemes.

Recommendation 8: Concessionary Travel Scheme

That the start time for the concessionary travel scheme in Cherwell should not be reviewed again and should remain at 09.30 am, in line with the statutory scheme, until April 2011 when the new arrangements for the administration of the concessionary travel scheme will come into force.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the conclusions of a Task & Finish Group review into concessionary travel at its meeting on 9 June 2009. The findings, conclusions and recommendations are set out in the attached report (Appendix 1). The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to refer the report and its recommendations to the Executive.
- 1.2 The report covers the second phase of a scrutiny review into concessionary travel. The initial scrutiny work conducted in 2008 concentrated on the financial implications to the Council of changing the start time of the concessionary travel scheme within the district. That work was completed in November 2008 but it identified a number of wider issues relating to concessionary travel that the Task & Finish Group agreed to look at in 2009.
- 1.3 Specifically the Task & Finish Group chose to concentrate on the feasibility of introducing a smart card reader scheme to address concerns about management information and data accuracy of concessionary travel and also to broaden the scope of the review to consider the Council's overall concessionary and community travel offering, which accounts for about £1.3M of Council expenditure per year.

- 1.4 In April 2009 the Government issued a consultation paper on “possible changes to the administration of concessionary travel” which clearly had a bearing on the work of the scrutiny review, and is reflected in the final recommendations. Indeed members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have worked with the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural to develop this Council’s response to the government consultation.
- 1.5 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee believe that the provision of appropriate concessionary and community travel schemes across the district has been, and must remain, fundamental to the achievement of the Council’s priorities and aims to be a district of opportunity and a safe and healthy Cherwell.
- 1.6 However, in view of the uncertainty surrounding the government consultation on the future administration of concessionary travel and the current financial climate they consider that it would be imprudent for this Council to invest in either new infrastructure or to extend the hours of the concessionary bus travel scheme in the district at this time.
- 1.7 Nevertheless the Overview and Scrutiny Committee feel that there is scope for the Council to reaffirm its commitment to concessionary and community travel by commissioning further research to explore opportunities for service rationalisation, improvement and potentially expansion.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Option One | To accept some or all of the overview and scrutiny recommendations. |
| Option Two | To reject some or all of the overview and scrutiny recommendations. |

Consultations

See Appendix 1 for details

Implications

(Financial, Legal and Risk and other implications e.g. Equalities, Human Resources, Data Quality and Environmental where relevant)

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Financial: | There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Comments checked by Denise Westlake, Service Accountant 01295 221559 |
| Legal: | There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. |

Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic Services 01295 221686

Risk Management: There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer, 01295 221566

Wards Affected

All wards

Corporate Plan Themes

A District of Opportunity
A Safe and Healthy Cherwell

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Morris
Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Scrutiny report: Concessionary Travel
Background Papers	
Possible changes to the administration of concessionary travel: consultation paper, Department for Transport, April 2009	
Report Author	Catherine Phythian, Scrutiny Officer
Contact Information	01295 221587 Catherine.phythian@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk



DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE



Concessionary Travel
Task & Finish Group Report
June 2009

Membership of the Task & Finish Group

Cllr Ken Atack

Cllr Colin Clarke

Cllr Alistair Milne Home

Cllr Devena Rae

Cllr Les Sibley

Cllr Lawrie Stratford

Acknowledgements

The Task & Finish Group would like to thank the following for providing information and evidence to the Group either in person or by written response.

- Bus operators including Stagecoach Oxford , Oxford Bus Company, Geoff Amos Coaches and Grayline Coaches
- Mr Dick Helling, Public Transport Policy Officer, Oxfordshire County Council
- Mr Philip Newbould, Rural Transport Partnership Officer, Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council;
- Members of Age Concern, Banbury
- Staff and customers of Banbury Community Transport Association (Dial A Ride)
- Residents of Cropredy
- Jennifer Sherrey, Accessibility Officer, Northamptonshire County Council
- Councillor O'Sullivan, Older People's Champion, Cherwell District Council
- Grahame Helm, Head of Safer Communities & Community Development, Cherwell District Council
- Vicki Zielinski, Community Development Manager, Cherwell District Council
- Pauline McCreadie, Community Development Officer, Cherwell District Council
- David Spilsbury, Internal Audit, Cherwell District Council

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1 Executive Summary

"Improving the quality of life for all, particularly older people, ... disabled people ..."¹

This Council's commitment to concessionary fares and community transport schemes cuts across all of the corporate priorities:

Priority	Aim
A District of Opportunity	Make it easier for you to get where you need to go.
	Improve local services and opportunities in rural areas.
A Safe and Healthy Cherwell	Make it easy for you to lead a healthy and active life through our countryside, leisure facilities and tourist attractions

Theme 10 of the Cherwell District Council Community Plan, written in 2005/06, sets out the ambitions and targets for the Council and its partners for the period 2006 – 2011. It identifies the following specific aims:

- For older people: to promote independent living and provide better transport options...
- For the disabled: Increase mobility and transport opportunities and to further develop and promote the concessionary fares schemes...

The Task & Finish Group has endeavoured to keep these objectives in focus throughout the course of this review. In our discussions about concessionary travel we have found ourselves exploring issues relating to sustainable communities, rural access, community cohesion, an aging population and value for money.

In our work we have consulted with concessionary travel passengers, learnt from best practice elsewhere and worked with service providers to improve our knowledge and understanding of this complex area.

We have not identified any obvious solutions but we do hope that our work will serve to open up the debate on concessionary travel at a fundamental and strategic level.

**Concessionary Travel Task & Finish Group
June 2009**

¹ Cherwell Community Plan, Action Plan 2006 – 2011, Theme 10

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Smart Card Reader Scheme

That Cherwell District Council should not pursue the introduction of a Smart Card Reader scheme at this time due to the significant financial investment required and reservations about the current technical capacity of such schemes to meet the Council's needs. The government consultation on the future administration of concessionary travel schemes compounds the uncertainty.

Recommendation 2: Mis-ticketing

That the Portfolio Holder should publicise the importance of checking bus tickets and encourage bus pass holders to submit examples of mis-ticketing. The Portfolio Holder should follow-up examples of mis-ticketing with the bus companies; monitor the scale and value of the problem for the remainder of the financial year; and report on the results and proposed actions to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the spring of 2010.

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3 Introduction

3.1 Objectives of the review

This Task & Finish Group report covers the second phase of a scrutiny review into concessionary travel. The initial scrutiny work conducted in 2008 concentrated on the financial implications to the Council of changing the start time of the concessionary travel scheme within the district. That work was completed in November 2008 but it identified a number of wider issues relating to concessionary travel that the Task & Finish Group agreed to look at in 2009.

Specifically they chose to concentrate on the feasibility of introducing a smart card reader scheme to address concerns about management information and data accuracy of concessionary travel and also to broaden the scope of the review to consider the Council's overall concessionary and community travel offering.

Appendix 1 details the activities and objectives of the Task & Finish Group.

3.2 Gathering the evidence

The Task & Finish Group met regularly on eight occasions from January to May 2009. They also held formal and informal discussions with members of their local communities to gather views and opinions on concessionary and community travel. In April 2009 members of the Task & Finish Group attended an open meeting at Age Concern, Banbury.

The Task & Finish Group also sought the views of representatives of some of the bus companies operating the concessionary travel scheme in the district; the Public Transport Policy Officer at Oxfordshire County Council; the Rural Transport Partnership Officer from the Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council; and officers involved in the implementation of a smart card enabled concessionary travel scheme in Northamptonshire.

Throughout the review the Task & Finish Group sought to involve the Older People's Champion and the Portfolio Holder, Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural, in their investigations.

4 Context

4.1 Concessionary Travel Statistics

The current population statistics for Cherwell indicate that there are approximately 27,000 people aged 60+.

The number of national bus passes issued to date (May 2009) is 16,501.

To date the number of people issued with travel tokens for 2009/10 is 3,943.

But not all of these bus pass and travel token holders are in the 60+ age group as some holders are disabled and some are carers.

4.2 Internal Audit Report on Concessionary Travel 2008/09

In January 2009 the Cherwell District Council internal audit team published its report on Concessionary Travel 2008/09. The objective of the review was to provide assurance that the Council was meeting its statutory responsibilities for concessionary travel and that the scheme was administered and managed effectively.

The report rated the service as “Good” rating and concluded that:

The Concessionary Travel scheme has been well administered with concise records being maintained and no issues are reported in respect of accuracy of the reimbursement calculations. The Local Transport Co-ordinator operates an effective system for checking and processing of concessionary fares claims.

There is not an effective process in place for tracking the returns for the annual certificate of accuracy and completeness which is required to be certified by a qualified Accountant and it has been recommended that a documented procedure manual should be in place”.

The Task & Finish Group considered this report at a meeting on 22 January 2009. They noted that all the recommendations had been accepted and that the Council had no contractual penalty or sanction with regard to the annual certificates of accuracy; and that other Council’s experienced similar problems usually with the smaller operators.

Concessionary Travel

4.3 Financial Assessment

In total Cherwell District Council spends about £1.3M per year on concessionary and community travel. This is spread across three main activities:

2008/09	£
Concessionary Bus Pass (re-imburements)	1,072,024
National Travel Tokens	49,230
Dial A Ride	205,463
Total	1,326,717

5 Evidence

5.1 Smart Card Readers

During the first phase of this scrutiny review the Task & Finish Group came across a number of comments and references to smart card reader technology. The implication was that this type of system would address the Task & Finish Group's concerns about management information and data accuracy. The Task & Finish Group's objective was to test the accuracy of this assumption.

Perhaps the most widely recognised smart card reader system is the Transport for London Oyster Card. This is a "tap on" / "tap off" system that records the start and end point and duration of any journey on bus or tube in London.

Another well established scheme using smart card technology is the NoWcard Multi-Authority Transport Scheme. This is a partnership covering Blackburn and Blackpool Unitary Councils, Lancashire and Cumbria County Councils and 18 District Councils in those two counties. It covers some 1800 buses owned by 8 major and 56 smaller bus operators and there are about 290,000 NoWcards in public hands. The participating authorities and operators cite reduced fraud; simplified decision making for bus drivers; and positive passenger acceptance as the main benefits of the scheme.

Northamptonshire County Council project

To find out more about the advantages and disadvantages of a smart card reader scheme the Task & Finish Group chose to speak to representatives from a neighbouring local authority, Northamptonshire County Council, about their decision to introduce a smart card scheme across a range of services, including concessionary travel, in 2009. The Task & Finish Group noted the following points:

- Northamptonshire County Council has had a long-term strategy to introduce multi-application smart cards across the county. These will not be limited to public transport and concessionary fares. They will also cover a range of activities such as libraries, sports centres, school meals & transport, and e-purse (for small value purchases such as parking, library fines and rentals).
- The move to smart cards had a strong customer service implication. Going forward residents would only need to complete one application form, stored on line, and then the service applications would be amended/updated as circumstances changed.
- The financial case for the smart card readers and back office support systems was spread across a much larger service area and had drawn on funding grants for transport and the other areas.

Concessionary Travel

- In broad terms smart card readers cost about £1500 per unit. There are a range of products and price varies according to functionality. This price is for a unit capable of capturing a reasonable level of management information. The back-office systems could cost around £30K and there are also on-going annual licence fees.
- The back office systems were expected to have a reasonably long shelf life. The bus passes and readers were expected to be “future proofed” for new technological developments and smart card replacements (e.g. mobile phone chips etc).
- This is a significant investment for small bus operators. Northamptonshire County Council accessed significant grant funding and is using some of this to make a grant to bus operators to install the machines. They are also providing a management service to small operators. Take up has been positive.
- Most national bus operators have a commitment to move the fleet to smartcards but this is dependent on their commercial pressures and not something that local authorities can easily influence.
- A key issue will be the “education” of the small bus operators to convince them of the benefits and to ensure that they capture the right journey information and understand the need to do this.
- There is a wide range of potential data capture / management information options. This will need to be very carefully considered and developed at the outset of any proposal to move to smart cards.
- Smart cards has the capacity to provide a lot of information which could allay concerns about the accuracy of re-imburement claims ~ as all journeys should be able to be mapped back to an individual card reference numbers. This would address concerns about fraudulent use of bus passes.
- Northamptonshire County Council is part of a county/district council Concessionary Fares consortium. Although each district operates its own travel scheme there is a degree of consistency which has been of benefit in the smart card project. The County Council procures the concessionary travel systems but the Consortium is the main interface with the public for issue of bus passes etc.
- The Northamptonshire consortium was also talking to Cambridgeshire to build a long-term relationship to share access to the “back-office” systems.

The bus operator experience

The Task & Finish Group also discussed the merits of smart card technology with the bus operators. The current position in the district is:

- **Oxford Bus Company:** smart card technology is in use but for commercial products not concessionary travel. Smart card readers

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were introduced onto the coach fleet in 2004 and to the bus fleet in 2006. This is an investment to support their commercial products because of the benefits of faster boarding times and the facility for season/discount and multi-journey ticketing. They are now promoting long-term and top-up products.

- **Stagecoach:** 100% of Stagecoach fleet in Scotland and Wales have smart card technology as part of the national concessionary travel scheme, funded by the national assemblies. They have already introduced smart cards where the local authorities have funded the initiative (e.g. NOW cards in north west England). They have a 2-3 year programme to introduce smart card technology across the UK to support their commercial products. They plan to roll-out smart cards across the Oxfordshire fleet within 12 months. However, the roll-out will be staggered, focusing on priority bus routes.
- **Small operators:** none of the smaller, local operators in the Cherwell District use smart card reader systems. This is primarily due to the investment cost; although some operators who cross the county boundary have been approached by Northamptonshire to consider introducing smart card readers and Dial A Ride have also been trialling hand held smart card readers.

The bus operators' view was that the smart card readers were beneficial to them as they supported commercial ticket products; increased boarding times; and were easy to use and reliable. They said that the main drawback was that most ("Tap On") schemes only recorded data on entry because of problems with controls and functionality for recording passenger exit ("Tap Off").

They pointed out that a basic smart card technology (e.g. "tap-on" with no ticket issued) will record origin of passenger (e.g. home district) and boarding point and date/time etc. It is possible to record additional journey details at point of sale but that requires driver data entry to customise ticket. But this level of detail is currently available without smart card technology (see below).

The only way to get full passenger journey data would be a "Tap-On and Tap-Off" system. But this would be open to abuse as passengers could "tap-off" early but continue travelling; and there would be delays in disembarking, resulting in passenger inconvenience and a knock-on impact for bus scheduling. They felt that the disadvantages of the current "Tap-On and Tap-Off" schemes outweighed the potential benefits.

The Task & Finish Group agreed that overall this was a very interesting and potentially exciting area to explore but they recognised that the established schemes, such as the Northamptonshire project, had been long-term, strategic initiatives which had their origins in a more robust economic climate.

The Task & Finish Group concluded that in view of the significant financial investment required and the reservations about the current technical capacity

Concessionary Travel

of the smart card reader systems to address the concerns about management information and data accuracy it would not be appropriate for Cherwell District Council to pursue the option of smart card reader technology for concessionary travel at this time. However, they did feel that topic, and in particular its wider service applications, was one which was worth considering in the future, ideally in consultation with the County Council and the other District Councils.

Recommendation 1

Cherwell District Council should not pursue the introduction of a Smart Card Reader scheme at this time due to the significant financial investment required and reservations about the current technical capacity of such schemes to meet the Council's needs. The government consultation on the future administration of concessionary travel schemes compounds the uncertainty.

Mis-ticketing

A major area of concern identified during the first phase of the scrutiny review was the frequency with which concessionary bus pass holders received incorrect tickets (mis-ticketing). This was something that the Task & Finish Group discussed with the representatives from Stagecoach Oxford and the Oxford Bus Company and with the Public Transport Policy Officer, Oxfordshire County Council.

Although the Task & Finish Group were aware of a number of examples of bus pass holders being given tickets for a longer journey duration than they had requested (e.g. Oxford to Banbury rather than Oxford to Kidlington), the Council did not keep any formal records of such occurrences.

The Task & Finish Group noted the following points:

- that there was no legal requirement for a bus operator to issue a ticket for concessionary travel; it was sufficient just to record the journey details on the ticket reader;
- there was no personal financial incentive for drivers to issue incorrect tickets;
- that tickets are subject to checking and challenge by the passenger, the inspector and local authorities;
- that the bus operators have an on-going education campaign for staff about the importance of accurate ticketing and a process for dealing with valid complaints/challenges.

Both companies said that they maintained data on volumes of mis-ticketing and they urged the Council to inform them of instances of mis-ticketing so that they could address the problem.

It was clear to the Task & Finish Group that there would always be an element of human error relating to the issue of tickets, especially on busy or unfamiliar

Concessionary Travel

routes. They also felt that the majority of concessionary bus pass holders did not appreciate the financial implications of mis-ticketing for the Council. The Task & Finish Group felt that, for a trial period, the Council should monitor the instances of mis-ticketing to gain an idea of the scale and value of the problem. To that end the Council should also encourage bus pass holders to check their tickets and report any problems.

Recommendation 2: Mis-ticketing

That the Portfolio Holder should publicise the importance of checking bus tickets and encourage bus pass holders to submit examples of mis-ticketing. The Portfolio Holder should follow-up examples of mis-ticketing with the bus companies; monitor the scale and value of the problem for the remainder of the financial year; and report on the results and proposed actions to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the spring of 2010.

Management Information and Re-imburement

One of the issues that the Task & Finish Group wanted to explore was the possibility of obtaining more detailed invoice data and management information without investing in smart card reader technology.

At present the majority of the bus operators submit quarterly passenger data and claims for re-imburement. Individually and in total these claims are of a significant value (£229K for Q3 2008/09). It would assist the Council's budgetary control and financial planning if the bus operators would agree to move to a monthly claim and settlement cycle. The initial response from the larger of the bus companies is that they would be reluctant to move to monthly claims as it would increase their administrative costs.

Similarly the representatives from Stagecoach Oxford and the Oxford Bus Company said that could provide more detailed management information about the number of passengers starting journeys at particular times and /or locations. But without smart card reader technology they would not be able to demonstrate whether the pass holder was from Cherwell, elsewhere in Oxfordshire or out of county. They questioned whether this additional data would really be of value to the Council, especially as they were likely to have to charge the Council for the provision of such detailed management information.

Nevertheless the Task & Finish Group felt that this was an option worth pursuing in more detail with the various bus operators.

Recommendation 3: Management Information

That the Portfolio Holder should encourage the concessionary fare service providers to move to a monthly rather than quarterly claim and settlement cycle.

5.2 National Travel Tokens

Background

This is a discretionary activity; there is statutory requirement for a local authority to offer travel tokens as an alternative to the national concessionary bus pass.

In considering the national travel token scheme the Task & Finish Group sought to answer the following questions:

1. Why do residents opt for travel tokens?
2. Do travel tokens represent value for money for the residents of Cherwell?
3. Do travel tokens represent value for money for the Council?
4. Should CDC
 - increase the value of travel tokens?
 - offer travel tokens on a sliding scale, by age, time &/or location?
 - introduce its own travel token scheme with time limits for surrender?
 - offer other alternatives to travel tokens (e.g. railcard)?
 - withdraw travel tokens?
5. Are there other residents who should be eligible for travel tokens?
6. Could residents' needs be met by other schemes?
7. Should CDC re-allocate the travel token funding to support other concessionary fare/community transport initiatives?
 - Would this deliver greater value for money for residents?
 - Would this deliver greater value for money to the Council?

Cherwell District Council currently offers £30 of travel tokens to eligible residents² as an alternative to the national concessionary bus pass. The value of the tokens was last reviewed in April 2006 when the rate increased from £19. Residents can apply for tokens at any time during the year but the value of tokens decreases proportionally over time.

Demand for travel tokens has remained fairly constant, despite the alternative of unlimited free, off-peak bus travel. In broad terms about 25% of the eligible population in the district opt for travel tokens rather than the national bus pass. The Task & Finish Group estimate that the financial benefits of the national bus pass to a resident is about double the value of travel tokens on offer— provided of course that they have access to and can use a bus.

Analysis of travel token activity

Year	£ value of tokens issued	# of applications processed
2006/07	174,530	5,630
2007/08	165,757	5,347
2008/09	138,570	4,470
2009/10 (May 09)	122,100	3,943

² Over 60; disabled or a carer

Concessionary Travel

Maps showing the public transport routes in the district and a breakdown of bus pass and travel token holdings by parish are at Appendices 2 – 4.

Why do residents opt for travel tokens?

The fundamental objective of providing travel tokens should be to offer an alternative to those residents who cannot use buses to travel locally and therefore cannot take advantage of the concessionary bus pass. This means primarily either those with limited mobility, who may find it difficult to walk to a bus stop or get on a bus, or those with a poor or non-existent local bus service.

However, there is evidence to suggest that this target group may not be benefiting most from the provision of travel tokens. In a survey of token recipients in Cherwell carried out in autumn 2005, prior to the introduction of free concessionary travel, people were asked why they chose tokens as opposed to the bus pass. Only 8% of people cited reasons to do with the inadequacy of the bus service, and only 4% said they had difficulty in getting on and off buses.

As a substitute for local bus travel for those without ready access to bus services, or those with limited mobility, taxis are undoubtedly the most suitable form of transport. The 2008 travel token survey results show that the vast majority of residents chose to use their tokens on taxi and train travel.

Extract from concessionary fares survey 2008	Frequency	%
Please tell us which method of transport you use your tokens for:		
Bus	1003	33%
Taxi	2010	66%
Train	1654	54%
Dial a Ride	79	3%
Total	4746	156%
The figures exceed 100% because residents could choose more than one method of transport		

This is borne out by comments made by residents to members of the Task & Finish Group which suggests that a significant portion of the travel tokens are used mainly for the purchase of a senior railcard or for single long distance taxi journeys (“it pays for the taxi to the airport for my annual holiday”) or on bus services which do not accept the concessionary bus pass (e.g. Oxford Tube and, from April 2009, Dial-A-Ride).

What do other local authorities offer?

The Task & Finish Group looked at the arrangements offered in neighbouring and other local authorities.

Concessionary Travel

There appears to be a general decline in the issue of travel tokens by local authorities. Many authorities chose to review and/or withdraw from the national travel token scheme on the introduction of the national concessionary travel scheme in April 2008. Moreover the company which issues the travel tokens, National Transport Tokens Ltd is now promoting a new product: COPS (Concessionary Operator Payment Scheme) as an alternative to travel tokens. Essentially this is a hand held card reading device which offers the same sort of service/benefits as a smart card. They cite the key benefits of the smartcard over tokens as: "it overcomes the misuse" and "reassures local authorities that the whole of the allocated budget is being used or repaid".

The position amongst neighbouring authorities in Oxfordshire is as follows:

- South Oxfordshire District Council offers £20 worth of travel tokens to people over 70 years of age as an alternative to the bus pass. Didcot Town Council supplements this with an additional £10 of tokens for their residents. If the claimant has a disability they will receive an extra £20 worth of travel tokens.
- West Oxfordshire District offer £31 worth of travel tokens or a railcard as an alternative to the bus pass.
- Oxford City and Vale of White Horse District Council do not offer travel tokens.

Looking further afield the situation is as follows:

- Aylesbury Vale offers taxi tokens (£65 less £5 fee) or a senior rail card (£2 fee).
- South Northamptonshire does not offer travel tokens
- None of the five Warwickshire local authorities offer travel tokens, although North Warwickshire Borough Council offers taxi tokens which can only be used with a local taxi companies and community transport schemes.

Some authorities, such as Hart District Council, West Berkshire or Basingstoke and Deane, produce their own colour coded travel tokens to reduce the risk of stock-piling or transfer.

West Berkshire applies a variable rate on travel tokens issued to residents based on their postcode. The postcode bands are historic and based upon local amenities and bus service frequency. Applicants living in areas of good local amenities or regular bus services will receive fewer tokens than those customers who live in an area of limited local amenities and low level of bus services. The full year allocations for 2008/09 were: £30, £45 and £60 according to the postcode banding.

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The Task & Finish Group identified a number of reasons why national travel tokens could be considered unsuitable:

- Under the current scheme the Council had no control over when, where or how the tokens were spent;
- Travel tokens were subject to fraud and misuse;
- They are effectively cash, which means they are easily passed on or even sold to people who do not need / are not entitled to them;
- There is no time limit on their use – it is known that some people store them from year to year and do not use them;
- If the tokens are not used, or are used outside the district, the value is lost to the Council, as the tokens are pre-paid by the Council;
- There is a risk to Council staff in handling what is essentially a cash substitute.
- There is an administrative cost to the Council in issuing and processing the tokens. The unit costs of these transactions has increased as the closure of the Council's cash offices means that we can no longer collect the £1 administrative charge for issuing travel tokens.

In conclusion the Task & Finish Group questioned whether the value of travel tokens was really sufficient to meet the purpose originally intended and provide real benefit to residents in need. They also felt that in some cases they were taken because they were seen as an entitlement rather than to meet a genuine need. They suggested that an option to introduce tokens which could only be used within the District and support the local economy was worth investigating. Finally they agreed that as a principle the administration costs of any travel token scheme should be kept to a minimum; so allocations linked to council tax bands or means tested were not favoured.

On balance the Task & Finish Group felt that the provision of travel tokens may not represent value for money for the Council and that further work to better understand the "customer motivation" for the current arrangements and to explore alternative options would be appropriate.

Recommendation 4: National Travel Tokens

That the current arrangements for the issue of national travel tokens should continue for 2009/10 and that the Portfolio Holder should monitor the take up and use of the national travel token scheme. The Council's continued participation in the national travel token scheme should be reviewed against the findings of the independent research into the provision of community transport schemes in the district (see recommendation 5).

5.3 Community Transport Schemes

There is only one community transport scheme operating in the district: Dial A Ride. This pre-booked service is invaluable for those with reduced mobility, as passengers are taken door-to-door to destinations in Cherwell.

Dial A Ride

Dial-a-Ride is a door to door bus service operated by Banburyshire Community Transport Association with grant funding from Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and other agencies. It operates from Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington.

The Dial-a-Ride service is for passengers who fall within one or more of the following criteria:

- passengers of any age with mobility difficulties;
- people of any age with visual difficulties;
- people with severe learning difficulties (provided the person can travel on their own or is provided with an escort throughout the journey);
- elderly frail people or others who experience significant difficulties in using conventional public transport;
- escorts and guides travelling with a registered user.

In the summer/autumn of 2008 Oxfordshire County Council undertook a review of community transport arrangements in the county. As part of that exercise they sought community views regarding the Banburyshire Community Transport Association (BCTA) Dial A Ride service. The feedback was very positive and the County Council confirmed its funding support for 2009/10; although it did identify an overall decline in passenger numbers and proposed working with BCTA and Cherwell District Council to identify ways to improve patronage or to re-allocate services to align more closely to identified client needs.

Other Community Transport Schemes

Elsewhere in the county community transport is provided by the Oxfordshire Community Transport Accessible Bus (OCTABUS) in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, Vale of White Horse, South Oxfordshire and West Oxfordshire District Councils.

The Vale also supports a hospital appointments allowance scheme; and across the rest of the county there are a number of car based volunteer driver schemes, usually in the rural communities providing essential links for medical appointments or shopping.

In the past Cherwell District Council has not developed or supported other community transport schemes due to the success of the Dial A Ride service. However, the Task & Finish Group agreed that it would be timely for the

Concessionary Travel

Council to consider what alternative community transport schemes might be available to meet the needs of all residents and to offer a complementary service to that provided by Dial A Ride and the provision of bus passes and national travel tokens.

Recommendation 5: Community Transport

That Cherwell District Council should continue to support and promote the provision of community transport schemes across the District. In support of this corporate priority the Portfolio Holder should commission research into the feasibility of introducing alternative community transport schemes in those parts of the district where residents do not benefit from the concessionary bus pass, national travel tokens or the Dial-A-Ride service.

5.4 An Oxfordshire consortium

Perhaps one of the most surprising facts to emerge from the work of the Task & Finish Group was the realisation that the local authorities in Oxfordshire are among only a few in England who have not adopted some sort of joint approach to concessionary travel.

Examples of a co-ordinated approach to concessionary travel include:

- Warwickshire County Council coordinates the scheme on behalf of its five local councils
- The Devon-wide concessionary travel scheme is funded and managed by a partnership of 7 of the District Councils in Devon. Devon County Council administers the scheme on behalf of the partnership.
- The NoWcard Multi-Authority Transport Smart Card Scheme is a partnership covering Blackburn and Blackpool Unitary Councils and Lancashire and Cumbria County Councils and 18 District Councils in those two counties.

There are considerable variations within these arrangements. Some are formal partnerships providing standardised concessionary travel; some are limited to a joint procurement arrangement for the administration and management of the bus passes; others combine the economies of scale derived from central administration with local flexibility on the discretionary elements of concessionary travel.

The representatives from Stagecoach Oxford and the Oxford Bus Company who met the Task & Finish Group both felt that this fragmented delivery of concessionary bus travel across Oxfordshire caused problems. They would prefer to deal with a single point of contact for the county and if possible to standardise on a county-wide scheme to avoid confusion and conflict for passengers and drivers at transition stages and/or times.

Concessionary Travel

The Public Transport Policy Officer from Oxfordshire County Council recognised that there could be benefits in consistency and economies of scale from a co-ordinated approach. But he had reservations about potential conflicts of interest with the County Council's responsibilities as a Transport Authority (e.g. the provision of subsidised services).

The Task & Finish Group felt that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the residents of Oxfordshire could benefit from a more co-ordinated approach to concessionary travel within the county. They agreed that despite the current uncertainty over the future administrative arrangements for concessionary travel caused by the Government's consultation, there was merit in holding preliminary discussions with the County and District/City councils.

Recommendation 6

That the Portfolio Holder should open discussions with colleagues at the County Council and the District/City councils with a view to promoting a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of the national concessionary travel scheme, subject to the outcome of the government's consultation on the administration of concessionary fares schemes.

5.5 Government Consultation³

On 28 April 2009 the Government launched a consultation on possible changes to the administration of concessionary travel. The consultation will look at various options for changing the tier of government which is responsible for administering the England-wide bus pass. If the Government takes a decision to introduce any of the proposed changes, the most likely opportunity to do so would be at the start of the next three year local government finance settlement (scheduled for April 2011).

Why is the Government considering changes?

A number of problems with the current arrangements for administering concessionary bus travel have been identified by local authorities, stakeholder groups and operators. These include:

- scheme variations across Travel Concessionary Authority boundaries
- too many negotiations with bus operators
- lack of capacity in some Travel Concessionary Authorities
- difficulty of accurately funding Travel Concessionary Authorities

³ Possible changes to the administration of concessionary travel: consultation paper, Department for Transport, April 2009

Concessionary Travel

- the non-alignment of Travel Concessionary Authority and Transport Authority responsibilities.

What options are being considered?

The consultation is looking at several proposals for how concessionary travel is administered:

- no change (remain with District Councils)
- transfer to higher-tier local authorities (usually County Councils)
- transfer to central administration (Department for Transport or agency)
- transfer to regional administration (would require primary legislation and take longer to implement)
- transfer of statutory and/or discretionary elements of the scheme

The Government’s stated preference is to transfer the administration of both the statutory scheme and any discretionary elements to “higher-tier” local authorities (County Council) in April 2011.

What does this mean for Cherwell?

An initial assessment of what this might mean for Cherwell is set out below:

Advantages of any transfer	Disadvantages of any transfer
<p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to avoid scheme variations (e.g. start time) across district boundaries <p>CDC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDC savings in administration costs • Possible budget gains depending on the formula used to transfer funding • Reduced involvement with bus operators (appeals, negotiations etc) • CDC resources released to focus on other aspects of concessionary travel/community transport <p>Bus Operators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single scheme for Oxfordshire – drivers would not need to know district boundaries • Negotiations with fewer local authorities – County Councils are already transport authorities responsible for bus service subsidies, etc. 	<p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of local contact points for bus pass applicants • Potential loss of any discretionary element (e.g. free travel for carers) <p>CDC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible budget losses depending on the formula used to transfer funding • Limited, if any, influence over discretionary elements to meet any specific needs of Cherwell residents

Funding

The consultation focuses on the principle of who should administer concessionary travel. This leaves considerable uncertainty about the funding implications of any change. The Government has indicated that this will not emerge before the DCLG consultation on the wider local government finance settlement starting in 2010.

The statutory minimum concession is funded through two channels: formula grant and the 3-year concessionary travel special grant. It is not possible to identify how much formula grant has been allocated to a local authority for any particular service.

If concessionary travel does transfer to the County Council, the Government's intention is that funding should flow through formula grant. The DCLG consultation in 2010 will therefore include consideration on what is the best distribution and could include the use of new data sources (such as concessionary bus patronage) as the basis for the distribution.

The Government claims that one of several benefits of moving the administration of concessionary travel to a higher-tier of government is that it would allow more accurate funding for concessionary travel.

Cherwell's response to the consultation

The deadline for responses to the consultation is 21 July 2009.

Members of the Task & Finish Group met with the Portfolio Holder and the Head of Safer Communities & Community Development on 17 June 2009. They considered the issues identified in the consultation document and discussed the options and the implications to the District Council of any concessionary travel service transfer.

They concluded that they would advise the Portfolio Holder to recommend that the Executive respond to the consultation that this Council's preferred option is to keep the service as a district council function.

The reasons for this include uncertainty over the funding formula which would be used to transfer grant as some initial projections suggest that the Council could be significantly worse off as a result. They also felt there were added benefits to our local residents to keep the service local so that queries could be handled by the District Council and our officers/members would have a greater understanding of local need.

If the Government consultation concludes that there should be no change to the current arrangements and that administration of concessionary travel should be the responsibility of District Councils, the Task & Finish Group emphasised the importance of negotiating with our district council colleagues to establish an Oxfordshire concessionary travel consortium and progress a

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single scheme across the county similar to many parts of the country (see recommendation 6).

Recommendation 7

That the Portfolio Holder should be invited to use the work of this Task & Finish Group and the conclusions and recommendations in this report to inform the Council's response to the government's consultation on the administration of concessionary fares schemes.

5.6 National Concessionary Travel Scheme

The first phase of this scrutiny review focused on how much the concessionary travel scheme would cost Cherwell District Council if the 9.00 am discretionary start time was re-introduced. The matter was discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 November 2008.

The Committee concluded that although some members of the Committee were personally sympathetic to the re-introduction of a discretionary 9.00 am start time the Committee as a whole were mindful of the financial considerations facing the Council and could not recommend funding the revised start time at the expense of other Council services. They recommended to the Executive that there should be no change to the statutory 9.30 am start time but that the situation should be reviewed again in six months time.

The Executive considered and accepted this recommendation on 12 January 2009 as part of the 2009/10 budget discussions.

Although the second phase of this scrutiny review has focused on the wider aspects of concessionary and community travel the Task & Finish Group believe that it is appropriate to comment here on the recommended start time for the scheme. In view of the Government consultation and the on-going financial constraints facing the Council the Task & Finish Group consider that it would be best to leave the start time at 9.30 am until the new arrangements come into force in April 2011.

Recommendation 8:

That the start time for the national concessionary travel scheme in Cherwell should not be reviewed again and should remain at 09.30 am, in line with the statutory scheme, until April 2011 when the new arrangements for the administration of the concessionary travel scheme will come into force.

6 Conclusion

This scrutiny review has given the members of the Task & Finish Group, some of whom had only a passing knowledge of concessionary and community travel schemes, a valuable insight into the complexities of delivering an equitable, value for money service across the district. This lack of prior knowledge proved helpful in so far as it obliged the members of the Task & Finish Group to take a lay person approach and insist that the officers and experts present the information in simple terms.

The Task & Finish Group believe that the provision of appropriate concessionary and community travel schemes across the district has been, and must remain, fundamental to the achievement of the Council's priorities and aims to be a district of opportunity and a safe and healthy Cherwell.

That said the Task & Finish Group feel that there is scope for the Council to reaffirm its commitment to concessionary and community travel by commissioning further research to explore opportunities for service rationalisation, improvement and potentially expansion.

Concessionary Travel
CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL TASK & FINISH GROUP OBJECTIVES GRID

KEY OBJECTIVES:

1. To investigate how much the Concessionary Fares Travel Scheme would cost the Council if the 9.00am start was re-introduced.				
COMPLETED				
No.	Key Task	Outcome	Milestones	Resources
1.1	Review Q2 utilisation data and charges from bus operators	To reach a view on the projected costs of the Concessionary Fares Travel Scheme in 2008/09 and budgeted costs for 09/10	3 Nov 08 = T&FG meeting	CDC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grahame Helm • Pauline McCreddie • Karen Muir
1.2	Review which bus services are affected by 9.30am start and explore scope for feasibility / costings of providing a partial service		13 Nov 08 = T&FG meeting	
1.3	To debate the issues with all Committee members and reach a conclusion		25 Nov 08 = Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
2. To investigate the options for introducing SMART card technology for concessionary fare travel on bus services in the District.				
No.	Key Task	Outcome	Milestones/Timescales	Resources
2.1	Audit of bus operator concessionary fares claims. Possibly through a mystery shopping campaign.	To determine the accuracy of the current bus company claims for concessionary travel within Cherwell.	Estimated 3 - 4 month review timescale, commencing in January 2009.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grahame Helm • CDC Internal Audit • Bus Operators
2.2	Briefing on SMART card technology	To gain an understanding of the operational benefits and costs of card reader technology. To determine the potential benefits to the Council in using SMART card technology.	Report findings in June 2009.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other operators • Other schemes

Concessionary Travel
CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL TASK & FINISH GROUP OBJECTIVES GRID

2.3	Review best practice, successful concessionary fares schemes in other areas.	Identify potential for replication of best practice at Cherwell.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best practice schemes in other local authorities
2.4	Review of Travel Tokens	To review the travel token scheme		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grahame Helm
2.5	Review potential for partnership working	To look at the scope for a combined approach/delivery on concessionary fares in Oxfordshire		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grahame Helm
2.6	Round table discussions with user groups	To understand the issues of concern to the user groups in the district. Focus group discussions in a range of urban/rural locations across the district.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ward Cllrs Grahame Helm
2.7	Other concessionary/community travel services (BCTA, Dial a Ride)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> look at the Council's support/contribution to these (and any other schemes?) to ensure that we offer a consistent/vfm approach to concessionary fares? Look at the results of the Dial A Ride consultation in summer of 2008 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grahame Helm
2.8	Discussions with Cllr O'Sullivan and Portfolio Holder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to discuss initial conclusions and draft report/recommendations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all T&FG

Meeting date	7 Jan	22 Jan @ 5pm	12 Feb @ 4pm	4 Mar @ 4.30pm	25 Mar @ 4pm	22 Apr @ 5 pm	21 May @ 4.30pm	27 May @ 4.30pm	9 June
Topic	Initial briefing	2.1	2.1 and 2.2	2.4 and 2.7	2.1 and 2.2	2.3 and 2.5	Draft report and recommendations	2.8	OSC meeting
Witnesses		Internal Audit	SMART experts	Travel Tokens and Dial A Ride	Bus operators	OCC and ORCC reps		Morris O'Sullivan	Consider final report

Concessionary Travel

Public Transport in Oxfordshire



Oxfordshire bus services

- More than 5 journeys a day 888
- Less than 5 journeys a day 37
- Less than daily 663
- Town services 81
- Motorway 11
- Other road 11
- Railway line used, station with more than 5 hourly services 11
- Railway line used, station with less than 5 hourly services 11
- County boundary 11
- Long distance footpaths 11

Places of interest/public buildings

- Tourist Information Centre 11
- Museum 11
- Cafe 11
- Art and craft centre 11
- Zoo/Wild life park 11
- Tourist railway 11
- Stately home / Other public building 11
- Youth Hostel 11
- Outcrops by Circular Walks (see list below) 11

Key to Community Bus Services

- FCB Footpath Community Bus
- S/CB Stalled in the Vale Community Bus
- VCB Village Community Bus

Oxfordshire Circular Walks

- 1 Banbury
- 2 Ewelme
- 3 Ewelme
- 4 Ewelme
- 5 Ewelme
- 6 Ewelme
- 7 Ewelme
- 8 Ewelme
- 9 Ewelme
- 10 Ewelme
- 11 Ewelme

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Bus Passes Per Parish

Legend

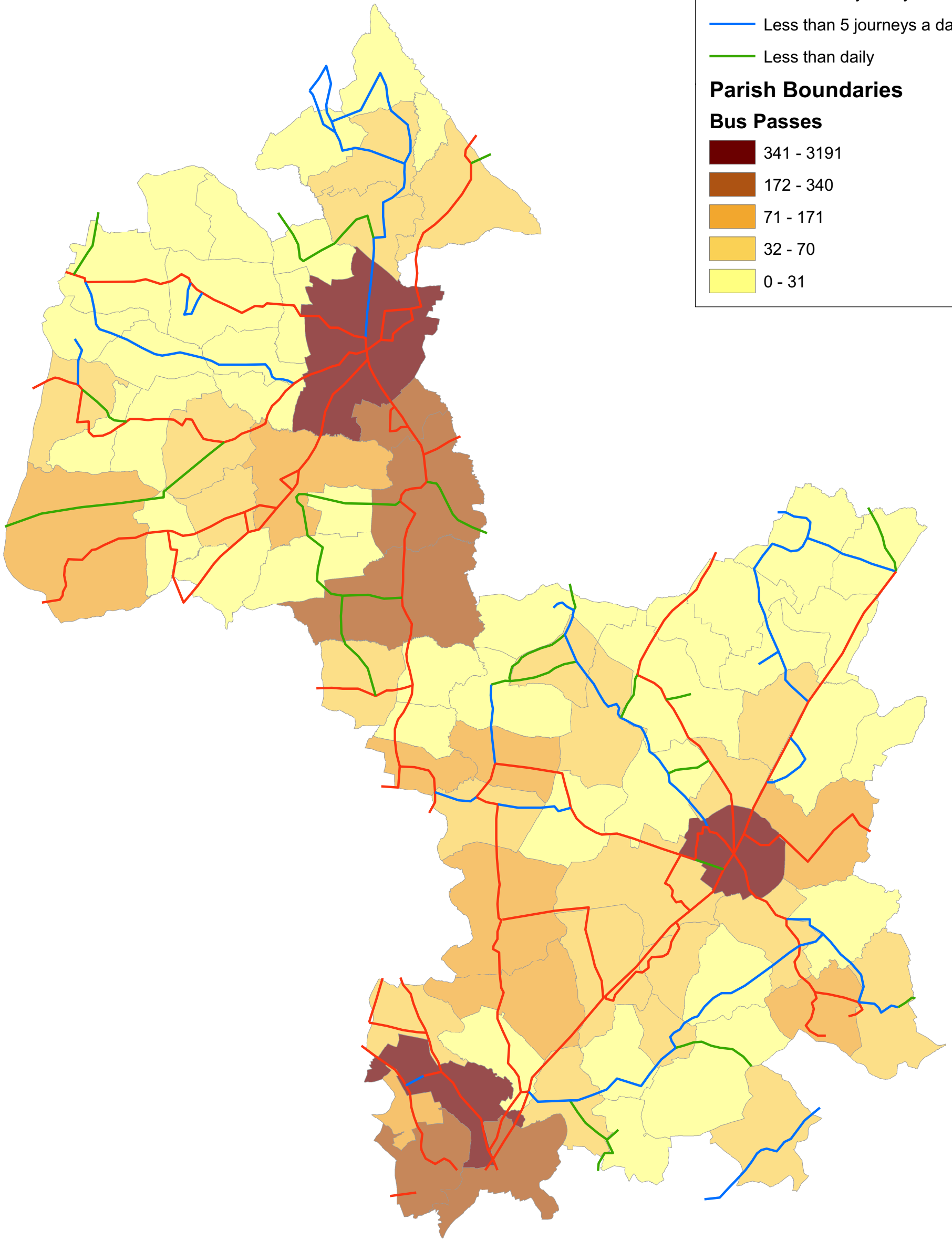
Routes
COLOUR

- More than 5 journeys a day
- Less than 5 journeys a day
- Less than daily

Parish Boundaries

Bus Passes

- 341 - 3191
- 172 - 340
- 71 - 171
- 32 - 70
- 0 - 31



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Travel Tokens Per Parish

Legend

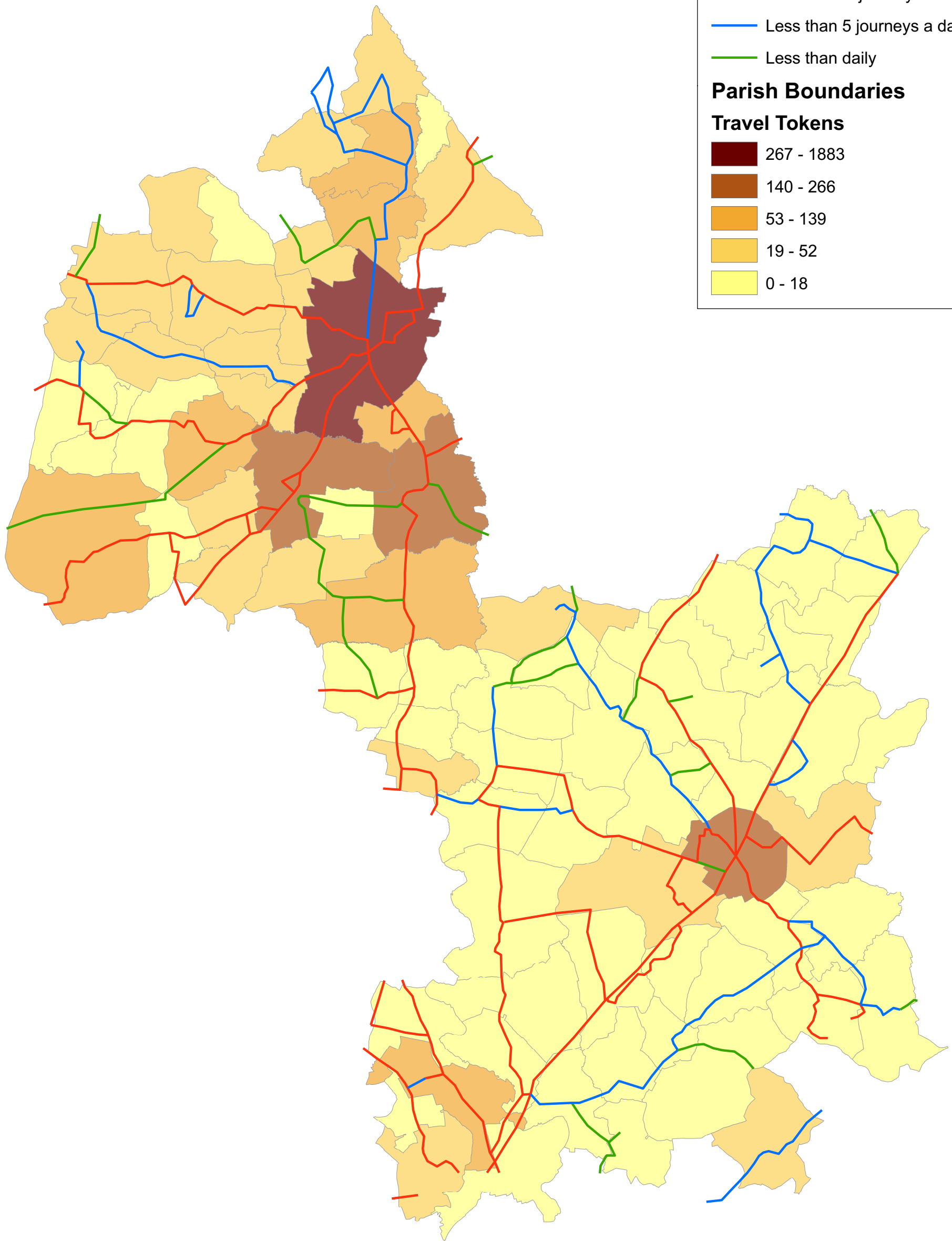
Routes
COLOUR

- More than 5 journeys a day
- Less than 5 journeys a day
- Less than daily

Parish Boundaries

Travel Tokens

- 267 - 1883
- 140 - 266
- 53 - 139
- 19 - 52
- 0 - 18



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Executive

DEFINITION OF WASTE AND COLLECTION FROM SCHOOLS AND CHARITIES

6 July 2009

Report of Head of Environmental Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To agree the approach and the charges for collecting chargeable household waste from charities and schools

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To approve the approach to dealing with chargeable household waste
- (2) To agree the proposed fees for the collection of waste from schools and charities
- (3) To work with other authorities in Oxfordshire through the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership to ensure a consistent approach to the different waste categories to minimise any additional cost to the taxpayer

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 In November 2008 a report was brought before the Executive to highlight a letter issued by Defra to local authorities relating to Defra's interpretation of the definition of Household Waste in the Controlled Waste Regulations 1992.
- 1.2 The Controlled Waste Regulations sets out waste to be treated as household waste, waste to be treated as industrial waste and waste to be treated as commercial waste.
- 1.3 In schedule 2 of these regulations, a number of wastes are identified as being household waste for which a charge may be made for collection but no charge for disposal can be made.

- 1.4 This list of wastes includes educational establishments, wastes from domestic properties or caravans used for self catering holidays, wastes from charities, waste from hospitals, military establishments and even prisons.
- 1.5 These wastes have largely never been collected by Waste Collection Authorities in Oxfordshire. There are many other authorities across the country in a similar position
- 1.6 With disposal costs rapidly rising some authorities are being approached regarding the free disposal of such wastes. Disposal costs used to represent only a small proportion of the overall waste collection and disposal cost. However as disposal costs have soared this situation has changed.
- 1.7 With Oxfordshire County Council having tough Landfill Allowance Targets (LATS) collecting these wastes could have an impact on achieving landfill targets
- 1.8 Following representations from the LGA Defra have indicated they will review the waste categories on Schedule 2 and have commenced a consultation. The LGA have advised that no change be made for collecting from hospitals, military establishments and prisons until the review is complete. However, discussions should take place locally regarding schools and charities.
- 1.9 Oxfordshire County Council took legal advice in early 2009 and Oxfordshire County Council has acknowledged that the current position leaves the County Council open to legal challenge. Consequently there is a need to move towards offering free disposal to charities and schools.
- 1.10 In conjunction with the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership a consistent approach is being developed.
- 1.11 Cherwell District Council has been approached in the last few weeks by two organisations, one a private school and one charity to have chargeable collections and free disposal.
- 1.12 The Oxfordshire Waste Partnership is monitoring the situation. OWP are due to agree in July the implementation of a joint approach to collection charges to charities by October 2009 with schools to follow quickly after.

Conclusion

- 1.13 Cherwell District Council needs to offer collections to charities and schools with a reasonable charge structure which recovers all costs as well as encourages waste reduction and recycling.

Background Information

- 2.1 The Council has been collecting household waste from all domestic properties. In addition to domestic properties, places of religious worship and village halls have been largely treated in a similar manner to domestic properties.
- 2.2 Waste from other establishments has been treated as commercial waste. Currently commercial refuse and recycling is collected only via pre-paid sacks or labels, these are largely used by very small businesses, typically located in the centre of Banbury, Bicester & Kidlington. Consequently waste from most non domestic establishments are currently collected by commercial contractors.
- 2.3 Schools waste has been an area of debate with the County Council. The County Council has considered it to be commercial waste and have a contract which schools can access for both refuse and recycling using Grundons. Since school waste budgets are devolved to individual schools, schools do not have to use this contract and many choose not to utilise it.
- 2.4 A few years ago Cherwell District Council commenced a recycling trial for a small number of schools. This still continues and has not been expanded to cover all schools in the district due to the County Council's view regarding it to be commercial waste.
- 2.5 There are a number of potential advantages offering recycling collections to schools since school children will then receive the same service they receive at home. In addition collections costs are relatively low since our vehicles pass virtually all schools in the process of standard domestic collections.
- 2.6 Cherwell District Council makes no charge for any household waste except for bulky waste collections. The only other chargeable collections are for around 150-180 tonnes/year of commercial refuse and recycling.
- 2.7 Introducing chargeable household waste collections could present issues regarding administration and the charging mechanism. However it is proposed that for charity shops the existing pre-paid commercial refuse & recycling sacks (orange – for refuse, blue for recycling) are offered with the disposal and treatment charges removed. This is the easiest way of administering charges to small charities.
- 2.9 For larger charities and schools to encourage these institutions to recycle as much of their waste as possible it is proposed that they are treated as households receiving an alternate week collection service only. Consequently each school or charity would be issued with containers that have at least 50% capacity for recycling. The proposed charges are set out in Appendix 1 are annual charges. The larger the residual waste bin required then the greater the charges made. Brown bins will be made available once food waste collections commence across the district.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 Currently the Waste Collection service does not comply in all areas with Defra's guidance on Schedule 2 of The Controlled Waste Regulations 1992 .
- 3.2 Changing the service to collect chargeable household waste will increase the amount of waste collected but the amount of refuse collected can be minimised by encouraging schools and charities to recycle as much waste as possible by only offering an alternate week collection service.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

Option One	Collect waste from schools and charities but make no charge. This will increase Cherwell's Waste Collection costs
Option Two	Implement a chargeable Household Waste scheme to schools and charities which covers all the costs of the Waste Collection service and ensures the service complies with Defra's interpretation of The Controlled Waste Regulations

Consultations

Oxfordshire Waste Partnership	This paper has been discussed and agreed with the OWP Co-ordinator. The overall principal has been discussed with other OWP partner councils.
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Implications

Financial:	<p>The financial effects of collecting additional wastes from additional types of premises will be covered if reasonable charges are made. Collecting increased refuse tonnages could effect bonus payments made for outperforming landfill targets, hence it is important that recycling is encouraged and refuse tonnages minimised.</p> <p>Comments checked by Karen Muir 01295 221545</p>
Legal:	<p>The Controlled Waste Regulations 1992 do set out the waste to be treated as Household Waste and the types of Household Wastes for which a charge for collection may be made. Defra has given their interpretation of these regulations.</p> <p>If central government do not review these regulations Cherwell and other Oxfordshire authorities maybe in breach of them if approached for collections</p> <p>Comments checked by Liz Howlett 01295 221686</p>
Risk Management:	<p>There is a risk of increasing the overall amount of waste collected if all types of premises approach Cherwell for collections. However by launching a system which</p>

encourages recycling and makes charges for the overall service any rise will be minimised.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts 01295 221566

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

Cleaner Greener Cherwell

Executive Portfolio

Councillor George Reynolds
Portfolio Holder for Community, Health & Environment

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	<i>Chargeable Household Waste Charges</i>
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Ed Potter, Head of Environmental Services
Contact Information	01295 221902 ed.potter@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

CHARGEABLE HOUSEHOLD WASTE CHARGES

2009/10

Pre paid sacks

Orange refuse sacks £29.25 /roll inc VAT

Blue recycling sacks £25 /roll inc VAT

Bins

All bin packages are for a minimum of 12 months. No side waste will be collected. Bins will be emptied on an alternate week basis. Payment to be made in advance. Multiple packages can be bought.

240 litre green bin package - £104/year + VAT

package includes one 240 litre residual bin and up to two 240 litre blue bins.

360 litre green bin package - £156/year + VAT

package includes one 360 litre residual bin and up to three 240 litre blue bins

660 litre green bin package - £260 /year + VAT

package includes one 660 litre residual bin and up to 1100 litres of blue bins

1100 litre green bin package - £364/year+ VAT

package includes one 1100 litre residual bin and more than 1100 litre of blue bins

Executive

COTSWOLDS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY MANAGEMENT PLAN 2008-2013

6 July 2009

Report of Head of Planning and Affordable Housing

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider whether to endorse the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan as supplementary guidance.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- 1) To endorse the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan as supplementary guidance as allowed by the provisions of paragraph 6.3 of Planning Policy Statement PPS12.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 This report considers a request from the Cotswolds Conservation Board to the Council to endorse the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan as supplementary guidance under the provisions of Section 6.3 of PPS12.
- 1.2 The report summarises the background to the request and the content of the management plan, and highlights those policies of most relevance to this Council. None of the policies in the management plan are likely to conflict with the existing policies contained in the Council's local plans or those to be developed under the LDF, as the Board and the Council have shared objectives in relation to the protection and enhancement of the AONB. Endorsement of the Plan would enable reference to be made to the Plan's policies and objectives in planning application decisions, and assist in demonstrating that the Council is meeting its obligations under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and complying with Policy C3 in the South East Plan.

Proposals

- 1.3 To endorse the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan as requested by the Cotswolds Conservation Board.

Conclusion

- 1.4 To endorse the Cotswold AONB Management Plan as supplementary guidance.

Background Information

- 2.1 The Cotswolds Conservation Board (the Board) formally adopted the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2008-2013 (the Plan) on 27th March 2008, and the Plan was published on 28th April 2008. The Board is a statutory body created as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000 and established in 2004. This Council is represented on the Board by Councillor Reynolds. The main aims of the Board are to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB, and to increase understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB ensuring that these complement the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. The Plan sets out a vision for the management of the AONB, together with the Board's aims and objectives over the five year period.
- 2.2 Paragraph 6.3 of the Government's Planning Policy Statement PPS12 allows for the preparation of supplementary guidance to assist the delivery of development by bodies such as the Board, where this would provide economies in production, and avoid duplication (for example where the guidance would apply to areas greater than single districts). The PPS states that such guidance would not be a supplementary planning document, but indicates that if the guidance has been subject to consultation and sustainability appraisal (where necessary) it might be afforded equivalent weight to an SPD in decision making. The PPS indicates that this may be more likely if the supplementary guidance has been endorsed by the Councils to which it relates.
- 2.3 The Board has therefore formally requested that this Council, together with others within the Cotswolds AONB, endorses the Plan as supplementary guidance under the provisions of Section 6.3 of PPS12.
- 2.4 In support of the request, the Board considers that the Plan meets the criteria set out in paragraph 6.3 of PPS12. It indicates that during the preparation of the Plan, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (as required by the SEA Regulations 2004) and an Appropriate Assessment (as required by the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006) have been undertaken. The Plan was also the subject of extensive consultation.
- 2.5 The Board also indicates that the Plan is an amplification of Policy C3 of the South East Plan. The South East Plan acknowledges the importance of AONB Management Plans in identifying priorities and approaches to effective management in AONBs, and Policy C3 indicates that Local Planning Authorities should have regard to the Management Plan in drafting Local Development Documents.

Content of the Plan

- 2.6 The Plan sets out the Board's vision for the AONB for the next 25 years. The introductory section looks at external forces for change which will impact on the AONB, identified as climate change, globalisation on land use, and pressures from development, changing lifestyles and transportation. The next two sections on Conserving and Enhancing, and Understanding and Enjoyment reflect the two main aims of the Board. Each section contains a

set of associated objectives, policies, actions and tasks. The objectives and policies are intended to be taken up by organisations and individuals involved in managing the AONB whilst the actions and tasks set out how the Board will pursue the objectives, sometimes in partnership with others. The final section on implementation, monitoring and evaluation indicates that implementation of the Plan will require the support and involvement of a range of organisations, and will be monitored by the Board by reviewing progress and reporting in its Annual Review.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 Only a small part of Cherwell District, around the village of Epwell, is included in the Cotswolds AONB, as indicated on the plan attached at Appendix 1. The area of AONB straddles the boundary of Sibford and Wroxtton Wards.
- 3.2 Under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 all relevant authorities, including District Councils, have to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of an AONB “in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty”.
- 3.3 The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) advises (Defra 2005) that AONB Management Plans can provide a useful mechanism for securing relevant authorities’ active involvement in the management of the AONB and demonstrating their compliance with the duties set out in the CROW Act.
- 3.4 In addition the South East Plan indicates that Local Planning Authorities should have regard to AONB Management Plans in drafting Local Development Documents.
- 3.5 The reason for the Board requesting the Council’s endorsement of the Plan is to ensure that its vision, objectives and policies are reflected in the strategies, plans and action plans of local authorities. A list of the policies is attached at Appendix 2, with those of most relevance to this Council highlighted in bold.
- 3.6 The Council’s Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 and the Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 both contain policies to protect and enhance the AONB (Policies C12 and EN33 respectively), consistent with the aims of the Board. It is likely that the Local Developed Framework will also contain a policy relating to the AONB. None of the policies outlined by the Board in its Plan are likely to conflict with the existing policies contained in the Council’s local plans or those to be developed under the LDF, as the Board and the Council have shared objectives in relation to the protection and enhancement of the AONB. Endorsement of the Plan would enable reference to be made to the Plan’s policies and objectives in planning application decisions within the AONB. As such there would seem to be no reason to refuse the Board’s request to endorse the management plan as supplementary guidance, and its endorsement would assist the Council in meeting its obligations under Section 85 of the CROW Act and Policy C3 of the South East Plan.
- 3.7 The Plan indicates the Board’s intention to prepare a three year rolling Business Plan and recognises the need to secure partners’ agreement to activities, targets, responsibilities and resource allocations outlined in the

Business Plan to ensure commitment to Plan tasks that require their involvement. However at this stage there are no financial/resource implications for the Council.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward for the reasons outlined under paragraph 3.5 above.

Option One To endorse the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan as supplementary guidance

Option Two To not endorse the Cotswolds AONB Management as supplementary guidance

Consultations

Development Control and Major Developments No comments

Rural Development and Countryside Manager No comments

Implications

Financial: There are no financial effects arising from this report.
Comments checked by Eric Meadows, Service Accountant 01295 221552

Legal: Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 indicates that “in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.” A “relevant authority” includes district councils. Endorsement of the Plan could assist in demonstrating the Council’s compliance with this duty.
Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Solicitor 01295 221687

Risk Management: No issues arising from this report
Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566

Wards Affected

Sibford, Wroxton

Corporate Plan Themes

Theme 6: Protect and enhance the local environment
Theme 8: Rural perspective

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Michael Gibbard
Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Economy

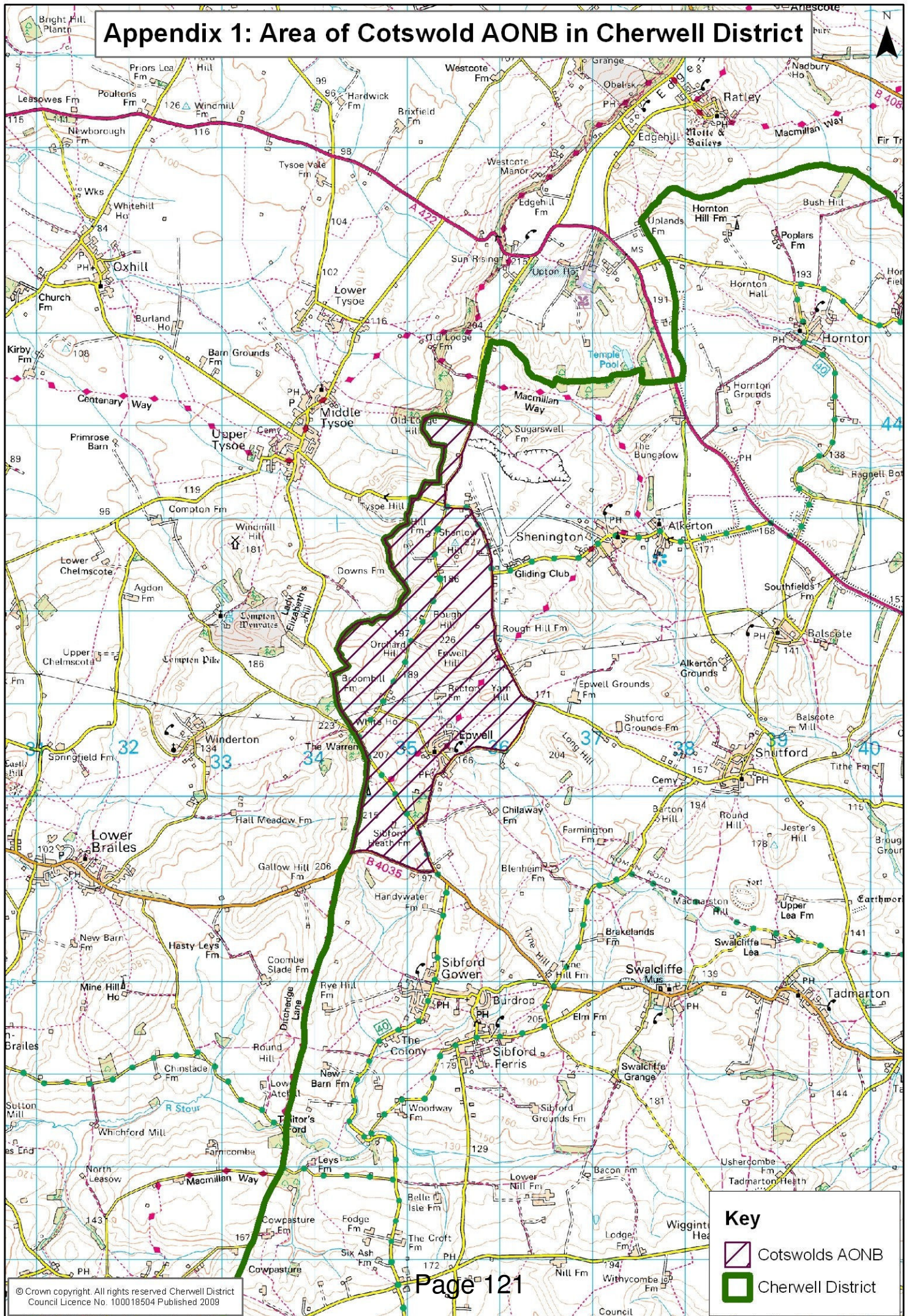
Document Information

References

Defra, 2005 *Duties on relevant authorities to have regard to the purposes of National Parks, AONBs and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads- Guidance Note*

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Map of Cotswolds AONB in Cherwell District
Appendix 2	List of Cotswolds AONB Management Plan Policies
Background Papers	
A copy of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-2013 has been placed in the Member's Room and can be viewed on the AONB website using the following link: http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/management_plan/	
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Appendix 1: Area of Cotswold AONB in Cherwell District



Key

- Cotswolds AONB
- Cherwell District

List of Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-2013 Policies

Climate change

CCP1: That the impact of climate change on the Cotswolds AONB is understood and a strategic response is developed.

CCP2: That measures are taken to mitigate the causes of climate change.

CCP3: That measures are in place to adapt to the likely impacts of climate change.

GLOP1: That the likely impact of globalisation on agricultural land use in the AONB is understood and a strategic response is in place.

PP1: That the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and its special qualities is fully taken into account in strategies, plans and guidance produced to address development, transport and service provision in and around the AONB.

Landscape

LP1: That the unique character, tranquillity, and special qualities of the Cotswolds landscape are conserved and enhanced.

Rural land management

RLMP1: That viable, sustainable farming that meets environmental standards remains one of the principal land uses within the Cotswolds AONB and contributes to maintaining the quality of the landscape.

RLMP2: That rural land management that conserves and enhances natural resources including biodiversity and landscape character, and aids public enjoyment of the Cotswolds AONB is supported and rewarded.

RLMP3: That all landscape management is in accordance with guidance based on landscape character assessments which identify the special qualities of the Cotswolds landscape.

RLMP4: That a sustainable rural economy, which provides economic viability whilst enhancing the Cotswolds landscape and biodiversity, is developed.

RLMP5: That the conservation and enhancement of ancient woodland, parkland, hedgerow, urban and veteran trees is undertaken to maintain their landscape, ecological and cultural value.

RLMP6: That the skills required to care for and promote the landscape and its special qualities are increased, with opportunities to acquire and develop such skills available to all.

Natural resources

NRP1: That the exploitation of natural resources is managed so as to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.

NRP2: That carbon emissions from activities within the AONB are reduced through a combination of reducing energy consumption by applying energy conservation measures and encouraging more sustainable patterns of development, together with renewable energy generation by technologies that are of an appropriate scale for their siting.

NRP3: That less waste is produced through waste minimisation and recycling of waste materials generated by residents and visitors, construction and redevelopment, agriculture and tourism providers. Any residual waste is disposed of locally where there is no harm to the distinctive characteristics of the AONB.

NRP4: That soils are used sustainably by maintaining the protection and management of soils within a range of land uses so as to reflect good agricultural practice and to minimise the direct pollution of soils and loss of this irreplaceable natural resource through soil erosion.

Historic environment

HEP1: That change is managed in ways that protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and the cultural heritage of the AONB.

HEP2: That the wealth of historic resources in the Cotswolds AONB is better identified, recorded, and understood.

Biodiversity

BP1: That UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and species in the Cotswolds AONB have been maintained and where possible, enhanced, by the end of the plan period.

BP2: That 95% by area of designated sites and UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats in the Cotswolds AONB are in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable improving' condition by the end of the plan period.

BP3: That a co-ordinated programme of work is in place to restore, recreate, link and buffer UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and species assemblages.

BP4: That by the end of the plan period, baseline biodiversity data will be available across the AONB in a readily accessible form.

Development and transport

DTP1: That all Local Development Framework documents and planning decision-making processes will use the following criteria to determine the acceptability of a proposed development in the Cotswolds AONB. Development will:

- be compatible with the distinctive character of the location as described by the relevant landscape character assessment, strategy and guidelines
- incorporate designs and landscaping consistent with the above, respecting the local settlement pattern and building style
- be designed to respect local building styles and materials
- incorporate appropriate sustainability elements and designs
- maintain or improve the existing level of tranquillity
- not have an adverse impact on the local community amenities and services and access to these
- protect, or where possible enhance, biodiversity
- be in accordance with a more sustainable pattern of development, reducing dependence on car travel

DTP2: That only development which supports the local economy, improves access to local services, and increases the opportunity for people to live and work in their local community will be promoted in Regional Spatial Strategies

and Local Development Frameworks, unless required for some clearly identified national interest.

DTP3: That the special qualities of the AONB are fully respected in the planning, design, provision and management of all types of transport.

DTP4: That those involved in the care of the AONB have the opportunity to live within it.

DTP5: That the current level of local services and access to those services is maintained or enhanced where possible, to support sustainable communities.

DTP6: That issues of importance for the management of the landscape are fully reflected in community focused strategies and plans.

DTP7: That opportunities are taken to promote public transport and reduce the use of private cars.

Awareness and appreciation

AAP1: That there is greater awareness and appreciation by those who live in and around the AONB, work in or visit the Cotswolds, of the purposes of designation, the special qualities of the AONB and the positive benefits of actively experiencing and helping to sustain them.

AAP2: That landowners and the public have a greater awareness of the positive benefits obtained by sustainable land management in conserving and enhancing landscape character and how they can support this by the production and consumption of the goods, products and services provided by such management.

Enjoying and exploring

EEP1: That visitors and the tourism industry understand the need for, and support the conservation and enhancement of, the special qualities of the AONB as the key assets upon which tourism in the Cotswolds is based.

EEP2: That the tourism industry makes a vital contribution to the Cotswold economy while at the same time seeking to manage in a positive and sustainable manner the pressures tourism places on the natural beauty of the AONB.

EEP3: That there is a co-ordinated approach to the appropriate management and promotion of public access and quiet recreational activities with planning to ensure access for all.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted