

**Committee:** Executive  
**Date:** Monday 6 December 2010  
**Time:** 6.30 pm  
**Venue:** Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA

### Membership

<b>Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman)</b>	<b>Councillor George Reynolds (Vice-Chairman)</b>
<b>Councillor Ken Attack</b>	<b>Councillor Norman Bolster</b>
<b>Councillor Colin Clarke</b>	<b>Councillor Michael Gibbard</b>
<b>Councillor James Macnamara</b>	<b>Councillor Nigel Morris</b>
<b>Councillor D M Pickford</b>	<b>Councillor Nicholas Turner</b>

## 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 - 14)

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2010.

## **Strategy and Policy**

6. **Eco Bicester One Shared Vision** (Pages 15 - 64)

**6.35pm**

Report of Strategic Director Planning, Housing and Economy

### **Summary**

- To report to the Executive the Revised Eco Bicester One Shared Vision as approved by the Strategic Delivery Board meeting on 8 November 2010.
- To report back on the consultation feedback and seek approval for the revised document to be approved for development control purposes for planning proposals in Eco Bicester.
- To provide summary of the consultation on the Eco Bicester One Shared Vision and the main issues arising from the consultation.

### **Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To consider the contents of the report.
- (2) To consider the proposed changes following the consultation on the Draft document.
- (3) To approve the Revised One Shared Vision document contained in Appendix 1 as informal planning guidance for development control purposes.

7. **Local Transport Plan** (Pages 65 - 84)

**6.45pm**

Report of Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development

### **Summary**

To present information to the Executive with a view to the council making a formal response to the public consultation on the Draft Local Transport Plan.

### **Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) That the County Council be commended on the general format of the LTP which addresses concerns raised by this Council previously that the LTP should be organised in a way which focuses on proposals for particular settlements and creates a stronger spatial link with Local Development Frameworks,
- (2) That in general, subject to the detailed recommendations made in the report, the policies and area strategies in the LTP be supported.

- (3) That the various detailed recommendations set out in paragraphs 1.16, 1.27, 1.43, 1.52 and 1.58 are submitted as the Council's formal response to the Local Transport Plan, and in particular the Council's comments on:-
- approach taken by the LTP towards the HS2 proposals in policy PT6
  - the references to major new road links (the South East and South West Relief Roads) in Banbury
  - the ways in which the vision for eco-Bicester can best be supported through the LTP
  - the proposed Water Eaton Parkway station, and how (a) this can best be implemented in a manner that makes it accessible to local communities in Kidlington and Gosford, and (b) future congestion concerns can best be mitigated.

**8. Disabled Facilities Grant Policy (Pages 85 - 124)**

**6.55pm**

Report of Head of Housing Services

**Summary**

To seek approval of a new policy setting out the Council's approach to the assessment of eligibility for Disabled Facilities Grants, those adaptations which it is appropriate to fund and how it will manage a waiting list if demand exceeds the available budget.

**Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended to:

- (1) Approve the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy.
- (2) Endorse the proposal that Registered Providers (RPs) (formerly called RSLs or Housing Associations) should be asked to sign-up to a protocol committing themselves to the principles in the Policy and to making a specified financial contribution towards the cost of adaptations for their tenants (see 2.4 in report).

**Service Delivery and Innovation**

**9. Final business case for a shared management team between Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council (Pages 125 - 132)**

**7.05pm**

Report of Portfolio Holder for Resources and Communications, Leader of the Council and Chief Executive

**Summary**

To consider the final business case for a shared management team between Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council.

**\*\* Please note Appendix 1, the Business Case has been distributed to all members under separate cover, please bring this with you to the meeting\*\***

## **Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To recommend to Council at its meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2010 that it approves the business case (and the eighteen specific recommendations included in it) for putting in place a shared management team between Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council by the end of September 2011.
- (2) To recommend to Council in addition that Council endorses the view of the Executive that, once a shared senior management team is in place, the Council can aspire to continued excellent performance.
- (3) To confirm that, after consultation with the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it is agreed that it is in the Council's interest for this decision to be taken urgently and the right to call-in is waived to enable a binding decision to be taken by Council on 8<sup>th</sup> December.

**10. Cherwell/South Northamptonshire Building Control Shared Service Proposals**  
(Pages 133 - 164) **7.15pm**

Report of Head of Building Control and Engineering Services

### **Summary**

To consider whether it is appropriate and beneficial to Cherwell and South Northamptonshire Councils to merge their Building Control services into a jointly managed operation.

### **Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) Subject to the endorsement of the Cabinet of South Northamptonshire Council who are concurrently considering this report, to agree in principle to implementing joint management arrangements for the Building Control services of Cherwell and South Northamptonshire.
- (2) To instruct the Head of Building Control and Engineering Services, and Head of People and Improvement to carry out the recruitment of the joint Building Control Manager and Team Leaders for each of the Councils as set out in this report and its appendices.

**11. Update report and request for approval of funding for Dashwood Road Primary School** (Pages 165 - 168) **7.30pm**

Report of Head of Housing Services

### **Summary**

This report is to update members on progress on the Dashwood Road Primary School site following a report submitted on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2010. Significant progress

has been made to deliver this scheme and a smaller amount of funding from the capital reserves for affordable housing is now required.

### **Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the progress made with partnership working at Dashwood Road Primary School, Banbury and approve funding for the scheme from the capital reserves for affordable housing of £200,000.

### **Value for Money and Performance**

#### **12. Corporate Improvement Plan Fear of Crime and Anti Social Behaviour (Pages 169 - 184) 7.40pm**

Report of Head of Safer Communities, Urban and Rural Services

#### **Summary**

To advise the Executive of the outcomes from the Corporate Improvement Plan Project: Fear of Crime and Anti Social Behaviour and to consider the proposed future priorities and actions for the service arising from the Project.

#### **Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the findings and conclusions from the Corporate Improvement Plan Project: Fear of Crime and Anti Social Behaviour.
- (2) To agree the future priorities and draft action plan which should form the basis of the 2011/12 Service Plan.

#### **13. Value for Money Review Corporate and Democratic Core (Pages 185 - 194) 7.50pm**

Report of Chief Executive

#### **Summary**

To consider the findings of the Value for Money (VFM) Review report and the recommendations arising from the report

#### **Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To endorse the overall conclusions of the review
- (2) To agree that improvements in value for money be sought in Democratic Services and Elections and approve the following recommendations to achieve savings of £124,803;
  - a) Merge the Democratic Services and Elections teams to provide greater resilience and achieve further efficiencies

- b) Achieve the schedule of savings set out in Annex 1
- (3) To agree that improvements in value for money be sought in Corporate Strategy, Performance and Partnerships and approve the following recommendations to achieve savings of £68,270;
- a) Delete the post of performance officer and restructure the team to accommodate the loss of this post, reallocating roles and responsibilities to reflect revised local priorities and changes in the national performance regime
  - b) Reduce the budget for research and consultation, focusing the remaining resources on high priority areas and supporting in house consultation
  - c) Change the operating arrangements for performance management software to scale back its costs and provide better value for money
- (4) To agree that improvements in value for money be sought in Treasury Management and approve the following recommendations to achieve minimum savings of £30,000;
- a) Review the Council's declining investment funds and allocate over two funds, rather than three.
  - b. Ensure that this allocation is in place by 31 March 2011.

**14. Value for Money review of Recreation and Sport (Pages 195 - 216) 8.00pm**

Report of Strategic Director Environment and Community

**Summary**

To consider the findings of the Value for Money (VFM) Review report and the recommendations arising from the report.

**Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To endorse the overall conclusion of the review that the service is below average cost for the operation of its leisure centres, according to national benchmarking. It has good performance in terms of its sports development assessment, and is high quality in terms of good and improving levels of customer satisfaction.
- (2) To agree that improvements in value for money be sought and approve the following recommendations;
  - a) Further grants to village halls be withdrawn from 2011/12, saving £39,000 per annum
  - b) Reductions be made in the service establishment through reduced hours and the deletion of a vacant project officer post, saving £56,817 per annum

- c) Additional savings of £33,077 be progressed through reductions to the Leisure Development and Sports Development budgets, as set out in paragraph 2.11
- (3) To note that the target savings of £80,000 from the joint use agreements at Coopers School and North Oxfordshire Academy are currently part of the Council's scrutiny activities and subject to negotiation with the management of the two education sites;
- (4) To agree to progress negotiations with the sports centres contract operator to achieve savings through changes to the contract specification and through income benchmarking.
- (5) To request a capital bid as part of 2011/12 budget setting for electricity generation at leisure centres outlining its costs and likely savings.

**15. Value for Money Review of Urban and Rural Services (Pages 217 - 244)**

**8.10pm**

Report of Strategic Director Environment and Community

**Summary**

To consider the findings of the Value for Money (VFM) Review report and the recommendations arising from the report

**Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To endorse the overall conclusion of the review that the service is low cost in terms of benchmark expenditure comparisons and is good quality in terms of overall positive levels of customer satisfaction.
- (2) To agree that improvements in value for money be sought and approve the following recommendations;
  - a) Implement the Medium Term Financial Strategy savings proposals set out in paragraph 2.13, saving £73,194 per annum
  - b) Secure a net saving of £60,000 per annum currently charged for the provision of specialist advice to the planning service by exploring options to achieve this, such as a reduction in the staff establishment, increasing fee income from planning advice and securing new clients to offset costs
  - c) Create a bus station safety officer post to release a vehicle parks warden post to achieve a net income of £16,000 per annum
- (3) To note the recommendations of Scrutiny with regard to increases to car park charges and recommend the inclusion of an evening tariff to generate further income of £39,640 per annum in addition to the £480,289 already recommended.
- (4) To note the scrutiny process associated with the introduction of a pay and display parking scheme in Watts Way, Kidlington and the need for further negotiations with a view to implementing the scheme within 12 months if these are successful

- (5) To consider further the proposal to extend the landscape maintenance contract for a further three years to 2015 and secure potential savings of £135,461 through negotiations with the contractor and an extended client base.
- (6) To continue the provision of a Shopmobility scheme in Bicester but in future seek to offset a proportion of its costs through service charges to tenants on completion of the town centre redevelopment
- (7) To explore the feasibility of charging residents for tree inspections to offset costs of arboricultural staff

**16. Budget 2011/12 Draft 1 (Pages 245 - 276)**

**8.20pm**

Report of Head of Finance

**Summary**

The Council has to adopt a budget for 2011/12 as the basis for calculating its level of Council Tax and has to base that budget on its plans for service delivery during the year, recognising any changes in service demand that may arise in future years. This is the first of three opportunities that the Executive has to shape and refine the interaction between the Corporate Plan, the service plans that underpin the corporate plan and financial matters before the final budget is presented to the Council on the 21st February 2011.

**Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To endorse the draft Corporate Plan for 2011-12 (detailed in Appendix 2);
- (2) To endorse the proposed service priorities for 2011-12 (detailed in Appendix 3);
- (3) To consider the draft budget (detailed in Appendix 1) in the context of the Council's service objectives and strategic priorities;
- (4) To note the areas of unavoidable revenue growth as detailed in the body of this report detailed in Appendix 1 – para 1.23;
- (5) To note the areas of additional income or cost reductions that will be considered in order to get to a balanced 2011/12 budget detailed in Appendix 1 – para 1.26 / 1.27;
- (6) To note the proposal on Council Tax for 2011-12 detailed in (para 2.10)
- (7) To note the outcome of the pay negotiations on 2011/12 pay deal (para 2.20);
- (8) To ask officers to prepare a response to the New Homes Consultation and a report detailing the implications;
- (9) To ask officers to give consideration to the impact of the recent planning fees consultation and the implications on income generation



- (10) To agree the approach to the overall capital programme and 2011/12 expenditure profile (detailed in Appendix 4);
- (11) To note the recommendations of the scrutiny reviews of training, fees and charges and capital programme that were considered at the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board on 30th November 2010 and approve which should be included in the second draft of the budget: (detailed in Appendix 5 – to follow);
- (12) To advise of any other matters they would like taken into consideration in producing a balanced budget for the meeting of the Executive on 10 January 2011;
- (13) To endorse the draft revenue and capital budget and corporate plan as the basis for consultation.

**17. Pre Order Consultation - Car Parking Proposals (Pages 277 - 284) 8.50pm**

Report of Head of Safer Communities, Urban and Rural Services

**Summary**

- To advise Members on the feedback from the Pre Order consultation on car parking proposals.
- To decide on final proposals.

**Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the feedback from the pre Order consultation.
- (2) To authorise formal Order Making on final proposals for implementation on, or as soon after, 1 March as is possible.

**Urgent Business**

**18. Urgent Business**

Any other items which the Chairman has decided is urgent.

**(Meeting scheduled to close at 9.00pm)**

## **Information about this Agenda**

### **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence should be notified to [democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto:james.doble@cherwell-dc.gov.uk) (01295) 221587

**Mary Harpley**  
**Chief Executive**

Published on Friday 26 November 2010

# Agenda Item 5

## Cherwell District Council

### Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 1 November 2010 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman)  
Councillor G A Reynolds (Vice-Chairman)

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

Apologies for absence: Councillor Colin Clarke

Officers: Mary Harpley, Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service  
Ian Davies, Strategic Director - Environment and Community  
John Hoad, Strategic Director - Planning, Housing and Economy  
Karen Curtin, Head of Finance  
Liz Howlett, Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer  
Martin Henry, Chief Finance Officer / Section 151 Officer  
Ed Potter, Head of Environmental Services  
Claire Taylor, Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager  
Sean Gregory, Environmental Protection Officer  
Steven Newman, Economic Development Officer  
David Peckford, Senior Planning Officer  
Amy Smart, Assistant Planning Officer  
James Doble, Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager

#### 63 **Declarations of Interest**

Members declared an interest in the following agenda item:

##### 7. Air Quality

Councillor G A Reynolds, Personal, as a close relative lives within the area of Grimsbury and Castle ward considered by the report.

#### 64 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

65 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

66 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2010 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

67 **Planning Policy for Wind Energy Development**

The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development submitted a report which sought approval for public consultation a draft "Planning Guidance on the Residential Amenity Impacts of Wind Turbine Development".

**Resolved**

- (1) That the draft document entitled "Planning Guidance on the Residential Amenity Impacts of Wind Turbine Development" be approved as a basis for public consultation.
- (2) That a public consultation be undertaken with relevant key stakeholders and that after this, the outcome of that public consultation be reported to members alongside a revised draft of the policy for approval.

**Reasons**

Council agreed on 19 July 2010 that as a matter of urgency, a policy be developed setting minimum acceptable distances between proposed wind turbines and dwellings.

**Options**

- |                     |                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Option One</b>   | To approve the draft document and agree that it should be taken forward for public consultation.                 |
| <b>Option Two</b>   | To approve the draft document with amendments and agree that it should be taken forward for public consultation. |
| <b>Option Three</b> | Not to approve the draft document in its current form, or to agree not to proceed with this planning guidance.   |

68 **Air Quality**

The Head of Environmental Services submitted a report to consider the issue of air quality across the district and the areas of concern identified by

monitoring and assessment. In the course of discussion Members requested Officers to report back on trains idling at Banbury Station, to continue to monitor air quality at Ardley and to contact Cllr Milne Home to be contacted re action plan.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area in Hennef Way, Banbury be supported
- (2) That the possible implications which may arise from developing an action plan to deal with an Air Quality Management Area be noted
- (3) That the further areas where elevated nitrogen dioxide levels have been identified and may lead to them being declared Air Quality Management Areas in the future be noted.

### **Reasons**

Air Quality in the area covered by Cherwell District Council is good. However there are four areas where air quality objectives may not be achieved.

An area around Hennef Way must be declared as an Air Quality Management Area following detailed assessment of monitoring data and subsequent support of these conclusions by DEFRA.

Two further detailed assessments are being undertaken.

There is a risk of future costs for dealing with implementing an action plan for an Air Quality Management Area. These costs cannot be predicted at this stage and are unlikely to arise before 2012/13.

### **Options**

**Option One**                      To support the current approach

**Option Two**                      To reject the current approach

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## **Economic Development Strategy**

The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development submitted a report to ask the Executive to consider a draft version of the Economic Development Strategy for public consultation.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Draft Economic Development Strategy attached as annex 1 to the minutes (as set out in the minute book) be approved for public consultation
- (2) That the Head of Planning Policy & Economic Development, be given delegated authority in consultation with the Portfolio Holder (Economic

Development & Estates) to make minor further modifications to the draft Economic Development Strategy prior to it being published for public consultation.

### **Reasons**

The Economic Development Strategy is an important document, not only for the Council, but also for our partner organisations working within Cherwell District. The purpose of the Economic Development Strategy is to set the direction we collectively need to take to ensure that the economy of the district remains strong and diverse for the benefit of all who live and work here.

### **Options**

- |                     |                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Option One</b>   | To approve the draft Economic Development Strategy and agree that public consultation should be undertaken on it.                 |
| <b>Option Two</b>   | To approve the draft Economic Development Strategy with amendments and agree that public consultation should be undertaken on it. |
| <b>Option Three</b> | Not to approve the draft Economic Development Strategy.                                                                           |

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### **Hardship Relief (for National Non Domestic Rates)**

The Head of Finance submitted a report to agree an up to date policy which sets guidelines for considering applications and to give authority to award relief. It was noted that an incorrect version had been circulated with the agenda pack and the correct version had been circulated prior to the meeting.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the hardship discount scheme be noted
- (2) That the proposed Hardship Relief policy framework as set out in annex 2 to the minutes (as set out in the minute book) be adopted and reviewed on an annual basis.

### **Reasons**

The Local Government Finance Act 1988 and associated Regulations gives the Council a discretionary power to award rate relief including that of Section 49 hardship rate relief in respect on the National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR). The NNDR is also referred to as "business rates". The Council has 4,409 NNDR payers with a net collectable debit of £64,728,413.

### **Options**

- |                   |                                                       |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Option One</b> | To agree the recommendations as set out in the report |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|

- Option Two** To amend the recommendations
- Option Three** Not to agree the recommendations

71 **Discretionary Rate Relief for Charities, Community Amateur Sports Clubs and 'Not for Profit' Bodies (for National Non Domestic Rates)**

The Head of Finance submitted a report which sought agreement on up to date policy which sets guidelines for considering applications and to give authority to award relief, in accordance with Section 47 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988 gives the Council discretionary power to reduce or remit business rates for Charities, Community Amateur Sports Clubs and 'not for profit' bodies.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the discretionary scheme be noted.
- (2) That the proposed Discretionary Relief policy framework as set out as annex 3 to the minutes (as set out in the minute book) be approved and reviewed on an annual basis

**Reasons**

The Local Government Finance Act 1988 and associated Regulations gives the Council a discretionary power to award rate relief under Section 47 in respect of the National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR). The NNDR is also referred to as "business rates". The Council has 4,409 NNDR payers with a net collectable debit of £64,728,413.

**Options**

- Option One** To agree the recommendations as set out in the report
- Option Two** To amend the recommendations
- Option Three** Not to agree the recommendations

72 **Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report**

The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development submitted a report which sought approval of the Local Development Framework's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, and to present the district's current housing land supply position.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the Annual Monitoring Report be approved for submission to the Secretary of State
- (2) That the district's housing delivery position be noted

## **Reasons**

The Annual Monitoring Report provides important information to assist policy making and development control decision making and is a statutory mechanism for monitoring housing delivery. It's most significant conclusion is that the district has returned to a 5 year land supply position, marking the end of a period during which the Council has been considering planning applications with a view to increasing supply. The AMR notes that significant progress has been made on the Local Development Framework. However, the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies has created some additional areas of work. The programme for completing the LDF will be revised once there is more information available about anticipated changes to local plan-making and to national planning policy.

## **Options**

- |                     |                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Option One</b>   | To accept the 2010 AMR, noting the district's housing land supply position and agree that it should be submitted to the Secretary of State.                 |
| <b>Option Two</b>   | To seek amendment of the 2010 AMR in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing before submission to the Secretary of State.           |
| <b>Option Three</b> | To take any actions required by the Executive having considered the AMR, in addition to its submission to the Secretary of State with or without amendment. |

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## **Early response to the Comprehensive Spending Review and potential implications for the 2011/12 budget and the medium-term**

The Chief Executive and Head of Finance submitted a report which highlighted the key announcements in the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, the potential implications for the Council in the short- to medium-term and the nature of the cost reductions which the Council must now consider in advance of finalising having received further information on the future grant from central government, expected in late November/early December. In the course of discussion the Executive requested that the Independent Remuneration Panel be informed that in line with staff Council is likely to agree a 0% increase in allowances for elected members.



## **Resolved**

- (1) That the outcome of the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review for local government and the very tough target of an overall 26% cut in government grant over the next four years be noted.
- (2) That it be noted that this outcome is very much in line with the council's 'realistic' planning scenario of 30% real term cuts, although the actual position will not be known until late November/early December.
- (3) That the proposed actions which are now underway to generate income and realise cumulative savings of £11.9m for inclusion in 2011/12 budget be supported.
- (4) That the informal view of the Resources Scrutiny Working Group in relation to the fees and charges review be noted.
- (5) That the options for further savings as set out in the report be noted, so that when the council receives a clearer indication of the actual government grant for 2011/12 and possibly beyond, fully worked up savings can be brought for consideration at the 6 December Executive meeting.

## **Reasons**

The actions highlighted will enable the Council to prepare a first draft of the 2010/11 budget. This will be presented to the Executive in early December and this report will include the latest position on the grant settlement and the impact on the medium term financial forecast.

## **Options**

- |                     |                                                       |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Option One</b>   | To agree the recommendations as set out in the report |
| <b>Option Two</b>   | To amend the recommendations                          |
| <b>Option Three</b> | Not to agree the recommendations                      |

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## **Value for Money Review of Development Control and Major Developments**

The Strategic Director for Planning, Housing & Economy and Improvement Project Manager submitted a report which presented the findings of the Value for Money Review report for Development Control and Major Developments (DC&MD VFM Review) and the recommendations arising from the report

## **Resolved**

- (1) To endorse the updated VFM Review conclusion that the DC&MD service:
- has exceed delivery of the savings target from the 2007 full VFM Review and delivered all the key improvements
  - has driven down its costs since the full VFM Review was undertaken
  - although, on the face of it, is above average cost, analysis shows core service costs would be closer to average when local factors and accounting practices of other comparator authorities are taken into account
  - has good performance and productivity, provides good quality with improving levels of customer satisfaction
  - is at a balanced point. There is capacity to cope if applications increase, though this may be at the expense of performance, but with the flexibility to down-size the service relatively quickly if income or applications decline.
- (2) To adopt the following recommendations from the update VFM Review, changing the way the service is delivered in the future, achieving savings of up to £167k and, thereby, reducing the Council's reliance on Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

### **Savings:**

- Reduce application advertising by only placing the minimum legal level requirement in the Oxford Times, saving £76k per annum
- Remove duplication in minor application publicity (mainly neighbourhood notifications), saving £3k per annum
- Introduce e-consultation to all parishes and internal and external consultees, saving £15k per annum
- Reduce the professional fees budget by £20k per annum by no longer utilising the services of agricultural/retail specialist advice in routine applications
- Deletion of a vacant, part-time, career planner post, saving £7k per annum
- In the event that fee income remains the same or declines, reduce staff establishment costs by ending the temporary contract to "backfill" resources allocated to the Eco Town project. This gives budget flexibility of £46k and, should there be a small upturn in fee income, allows for the continuation of this temporary post.

**Income:**

- Introduce charges for pre-application advice from 2011/12. It is estimated that income in the region of £10K per annum may be achievable.

**Service Improvements:**

- Redirect staff resources released by the changes in service delivery associated with achieving the savings above, to improve support for the application process and other resource pinch points (especially speed of validation/registration).
- (3) To note the endorsement of the findings of this Review by the Performance Scrutiny Working Group at its meeting on 21 September 2010 and their request that further consideration be given to a more efficient and less costly way of undertaking Ward Notifications such as using the e-mail system or appending Notifications to the Members' Newsletter.

**Reasons**

This updated review proposes changes to the way the service will be delivered, reducing the Council's reliance on Housing and Planning Delivery Grant. It proposes an additional income stream and enables a refocus of released resources to improve some service areas.

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**Value for Money Review of Planning Policy**

The Strategic Director for Planning, Housing & Economy and Improvement Project Manager submitted a report which presented the findings of the Value for Money Review report for Planning Policy and the recommendations arising from the report

**Resolved**

- (1) Endorse the updated VFM Review conclusion that the Planning Policy service:
- has exceeded delivery on the savings target from the 2007 full VFM Review and delivered all the key improvements
  - has steadily driven down its costs since the full VFM Review was undertaken
  - compared with similar local authorities, costs are now below average spend for the family group
  - levels of satisfaction have improved for the way the Council manages local development, which is influenced by planning policy
  - the service is achieving on or just below its performance targets

- will need to reduce the services it delivers if it is to achieve the VFM savings block of £50k.
- (2) To agree that the proposal for achieving the £50k savings block be adopted as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### **Reasons**

This updated review identifies that this service is now below average cost in comparison to its family group and proposes changes to the way the service could be delivered in order to achieve the £50k saving block towards the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

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### **Performance Management Framework 2010/11 Second Quarter Performance Report**

The Chief Executive and Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager submitted a report outlining the Council's performance for the period 1 July to 30 September 2010 as measured through the Performance Management Framework. In the course of discussion Members requested that they be advised of the new performance management reporting as it becomes clear and that a meeting be arranged with officers and Councillors Atack and Wood to consider the Performance Management Framework in detail.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the many achievements as set out below be noted:

#### **Cherwell: A District of Opportunity**

- Urban Regeneration: the Council has launched a consultation on proposals to pedestrianise areas of Kidlington.
- Economic Development: the Council's job clubs remain examples of national good practice with video footage used at this year's Conservative Party Conference. The team continue to work with community groups to improve accessibility.
- Affordable Housing: housing continues to provide support to local residents in challenging economic times with a good level of affordable housing scheme delivery. This includes the first affordable housing completion under the Armed Forces personnel Home Ownership Scheme. This is tailored to forces personnel often required to re-locate at short notice. The housing team have also worked to secure 5 mortgage rescue completions. This scheme allows families struggling with mortgage repayments to remain in their home as tenants of a registered social landlord.
- Eco Bicester: significant progress is being made on plans for the first "exemplar" phase of the eco town. This has been subject of extensive consultation in the local community.

- Urban Regeneration: the Old Town Party in Banbury had over 3,000 attendees, 300 participants in the community art wall and was supported by 5 local community groups and 26 local traders. This contributes to both the Council's community cohesion and development objectives and also to increasing the vibrancy of our town centres.

### **A Cleaner Greener Cherwell**

- Street Cleansing: satisfaction with street and environmental cleanliness has increased to 72% for 2010 in comparison to 67% in 2009.
- Rural Development: a successful countryside forum was held with over 50 attendees to discuss actions and progress with regards to conservation target areas and biodiversity across the district.
- In Bloom Awards: Bicester achieved a Silver Gilt award in the national competition awards and Gold in the regional round. Banbury and Kidlington secured Silver Gilt awards.

### **A Safe and Healthy Cherwell**

- Activities for Young People: a successful summer programme of activities has been delivered with 1473 recorded attendances. Activities included a holiday sports road show and coaching clinics.
- Reducing Crime: working with partners to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour: Thames Valley Police are showing a 30% reduction in crime for this year.

### **An Accessible Value for Money Council**

- Reducing the Council's costs by £800,000 in 2010/11: as of the 30 September £532,000 (66%) of the target has been achieved.
- Providing More Services Online: there are currently 65 transactional services available on the Council's website. The council's consultation portal has also seen increasing availability of Council consultation activities including widening access to the annual satisfaction survey.
- Delivering Savings Through Improved Procurement: a new contract procured in partnership with the Oxfordshire district councils will deliver significant savings for cleaning the district's public conveniences.
- Improving Customer Satisfaction: the results of the Council's annual customer survey show that overall satisfaction with the Council and the services it delivers has increased. General satisfaction has improved from 67% in 2009 to 73% in 2010. Full details are included in the table presented in paragraph 2.9. A

- (2) To request that officers report in the third quarter on the items identified below where performance was below target or there are emerging issues:

**Cherwell: A District of Opportunity**

- Contribute to the creation of 200 jobs in the district. Vodafone have just announced the closure of its Banbury Office with significant redundancies expected. A post redundancy support package is being prepared.
- Local Development Framework (core strategy) – the changes in national planning policy resulting in the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies raises questions as to our ability to publish the LDF to our original timetable (this issue is ongoing and will remain under review).
- The percentage of planning appeals allowed against a refusal decision: this is an indicator that can be easily affected by adverse outcomes measured against a low number of cases (there have been fewer appeal cases in the period concerned). The corporate management team are due to review the factors that may have influenced performance and will report in the next quarter report if any issues emerge that need to be addressed.

**Working in Partnership**

- The cancellation of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and changes in national policy and funding arrangements mean that there is some uncertainty with regards to future partnerships. Emerging issues include whether the LAA will continue for the rest of 2010/11, the role of the new local economic partnership and the impact of changes in community safety funding on the county wide community safety partnership. As such it is recommended that this issue is revisited

- (3) To agree the responses identified to issues raised in the quarter one performance report as set out below:

**Cherwell: A District of Opportunity**

- Achieve 300 new homes:

Following a slow first quarter (38 completions) the second quarter has seen 152 net completions making the total for the year 190. Progress has improved; however there are still some risks with regards to meeting this objective at the end of the year given the challenging economic circumstances.

- Local Development Framework (core strategy) – the changes in national planning policy resulting in the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies raises questions as to our ability to publish the LDF to our original timetable.

Work is being undertaken to establish what evidence we need to support a new position on growth levels within the district.

### **An Accessible, Value for Money Council**

- Cherwell Link (the residents newsletter)

The corporate plan for 2010/11 set an objective to increase the editions of Cherwell Link produced. Given the financial impact of another edition at the current time, no increase is planned for the current year. As such this objective will not to be met at year end. However, results from the customer satisfaction survey suggests that there are increased levels of awareness with regards to the Council's services and high levels of readership of the existing editions of the newsletter.

### **Reasons**

The Council's performance in the second quarter of 2010/11 is 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 Local Area Agreement; the Community Strategy (Our District, Our Future); the Corporate pledges; Priority Service Indicators; Financial Performance; Human Resources; and Customer Feedback.

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### **2010/11 Projected Revenue & Capital Outturn at 30 September 2010**

The Head of Finance submitted a report which summarised the Council's Revenue and Capital performance for the first 6 months of the financial year 10/11 and projections for the full 10/11 period. These are measured by the budget monitoring function and reported via the Performance Management Framework (PMF) informing the 10/11 budget process currently underway. The report also reviewed the treasury and procurement action plan performance for the first 6 months of 2010/11.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the projected revenue & capital position at September 2010 be noted.
- (2) That the transfer of £234,000 to the organisational change reserve be approved.
- (3) That the Capital Slippage of £2.2m from the 2010/11 capital programme as detailed in annex 4 to the minutes (as set out in the minute book) be approved and considered as part of the 2011/12 budget process.

- (4) That the Q2 performance against 2010/11 investment strategy and the mid year report in annex 5 to the minutes (as set out in the minute book) be noted.
- (5) That progress against the Procurement Action plan detailed in annex 6 to the minutes (as set out in the minute book) and the savings recorded in annex 7 to the minutes (as set out in the minute book) be noted.

### **Reasons**

In line with good practice budget monitoring is undertaken on a monthly basis within the Council. The revenue and capital position is reported monthly to the Corporate Management Team and formally to the Executive on a quarterly basis. This report includes the position at Q2.

### **Options**

- Option One** To review current performance levels and consider any actions arising.
- Option Two** To approve or reject the recommendations above or request that Officers provide additional information.

The meeting ended at 8.53 pm

Chairman:

Date:



## Executive

### Eco Bicester One Shared Vision

6 December 2010

### Report of Strategic Director of Planning, Housing and Economy

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To report to the Executive the Revised Eco Bicester One Shared Vision as approved by the Strategic Delivery Board meeting on 8 November 2010.
- To report back on the consultation feedback and seek approval for the revised document to be approved for development control purposes for planning proposals in Eco Bicester.
- To provide summary of the consultation on the Eco Bicester One Shared Vision and the main issues arising from the consultation.

This report is public

#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To consider the contents of the report.
- (2) To consider the proposed changes following the consultation on the Draft document.
- (3) To approve the Revised One Shared Vision document contained in Appendix 1 as informal planning guidance for development control purposes.

#### Executive Summary

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##### Introduction

- 1.1 The Eco Bicester One Shared Vision, prepared by the Eco Bicester Project team with input from partners on behalf of the Strategic Delivery Board (SDB), sets out the aims, aspirations and ambitions for the town over the next 20 to 30 years. It sits alongside other planning policies and strategies for Bicester and will be used to guide the SDB in the delivery of proposals for Eco Bicester.
- 1.2 One of the aims of the SDB was to develop a clear vision for Bicester for the next 30 years. The preparation of a shared vision was agreed by the SDB at its first meeting in April 2010. It clearly defines the aims and objectives of the SDB in delivering the eco development at North West Bicester and

integrating it with the long term aspirations for the existing town. It is designed to be a clear and concise summary of the key issues affecting the town as it continues to grow. The purpose of the shared vision is summarised as follows:

- To provide a shared vision for the whole of Bicester supported by partners
- To guide the local delivery of the eco-town of national, if not international, significance with the private sector
- To articulate key infrastructure needs to support the eco town
- To inform engagement between the local authority partners, Government departments and agencies on where they can help deliver the project

### **Consultation**

- 1.3 The Draft shared vision was agreed for consultation in late summer 2010. Consultation took place over a six week period between 23<sup>rd</sup> August and 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010. It was launched on the Cherwell District Council website and responses were invited using the online consultation portal. Local organisations, community and amenity groups were contacted directly by post and email. As a result Launton Parish Council took up the offer of a presentation on the Draft Shared Vision.
- 1.4 Students of the Cooper School and Bicester Community College were given the opportunity to give their thoughts and ideas on the Draft Shared Vision when members of the Eco Bicester Project Team visited the school. The Eco Bicester Project team also organised a market stall in Sheep Street for two days in September, distributing approximately 500 copies of the shared vision. A summary of the consultation strategy is set out in Appendix 2.
- 1.5 In addition, officers and a leading member representing the SDB attended the Bicester Vision Partnership Board meeting in September to present the One Shared Vision and record the comments of representatives of the private sector in Bicester.
- 1.6 In total 55 responses were received from individuals, agents, local groups and businesses. The comments have been collated by officers and summarised in the table contained in Appendix 3. The table summarises comments referring to a specific section in the shared vision. The comments have been considered and a summary of the officer response is provided. The responses were generally positive although there was some concern about the existing infrastructure and community facilities in the town. Other issues shared by many of the respondents included the need for housing and employment.
- 1.7 A separate table containing other comments not specifically relating to the contents of the Draft Shared Vision is included in Appendix 4. It uses a similar format to the table discussed above.

### **Revised Eco Bicester One Shared Vision and Planning Policy**

- 1.8 The final revised version of the shared vision follows a similar format to the draft version and should be published in advance of determining any

planning application submission for North West Bicester. The shared vision is not a formal development plan document. However it is suggested that it is adopted as a statement of informal policy and as such will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for major development proposals in Bicester, including any planning application at North West Bicester. It will also inform the emerging policies of the development plan as the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) progresses. It will in effect form the basis of local standards for eco development in Bicester only at this stage.

- 1.9 It is noted that the vision has strong all round support in the local community and with key partners. On that basis the Council sees the vision as the model for, and an emerging draft of, one of the “neighbourhood plans” that the Government has suggested will be a feature of their new planning system (forthcoming Localism Bill).

### **Proposals**

- 1.10 The revised shared vision sets out the aims, aspirations and ambitions for the town in six sections. The Vision statement is contained in section one and followed by sections setting out more detail on community, economy, transport and environmental sustainability. The final section provides eco development standards for the town as a whole and is informed by the eco town standards set out in the supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1: Eco towns.
- 1.11 The vision statement seeks to create a vibrant Bicester where people choose to live work and spend their leisure time in sustainable ways. The proposed eco development at North West Bicester will act as the catalyst for the wider regeneration of the town, attracting inward investment and economic development. The theme of integration is fundamental to the shared vision and this is particularly relevant to the North West Bicester eco development and the existing town. Improvements to transport, community facilities and infrastructure all follow the theme of integration.
- 1.12 Sustainable development (social, economic and environmental) is another fundamental principle of the shared vision. The Revised document emphasises zero carbon, retrofitting and energy efficiency as key objectives.
- 1.13 The vision focuses on community first and provides the opportunity for people to influence the place where they live work and spend their leisure time. The community first section has been amended following the involvement of local residents and others. It focuses on the aspirations for new development in creating new communities through new housing, community support and improvement to existing facilities.
- 1.14 Retrofitting will be an important part in the new Eco Bicester with the aim of improving energy efficiency of existing buildings. The availability and provision of high speed broadband and digital infrastructure has been included as a priority for retrofitting. The vision also sets out high standards of sustainable design and construction for eco development.

## Consultation

- 1.15 Consultation was a key requirement of the shared vision's preparation. A consultation strategy was prepared which focussed on direct contact with local groups, partners and organisations (including parish councils, amenity groups and schools) and involvement with local residents and businesses.
- 1.16 A six week consultation took place between 23rd August 2010 and 1st October 2010. The Draft Shared Vision was widely publicised in the local media and online using the Cherwell District Council website and Twitter. Response forms were distributed in the town centre and online with general comments captured as part of the various presentations and meetings taking place during the consultation period.
- 1.17 Local stakeholders were contacted including parish councils, residents associations, local partners and schools. Presentations were given to Launton Parish Council and Bicester Vision Partnership Board. In addition, a public engagement exercise was held in Bicester Town Centre (Sheep Street) at the Farmers Market and Market on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September 2010. Over the 2 days approximately 500 copies of the Vision document were distributed and officers provided information to over 100 people. Exhibitions at Bicester Community College and Cooper School took place on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> October 2010 respectively and comments have been collated as part of the further work in revising the document. As part of the engagement with partners, a local members' group meeting took place on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2010.
- 1.18 In summary, 55 responses were received from the general public, partners, agents and businesses. The majority of responses related to the draft vision but also issues affecting Bicester generally. Some responses, however, referred to detailed comments on specific issues and are more appropriate to other Council policies and strategies such as the emerging Local Development Plan (LDF). Each response has been reviewed and analysed by officers with comments and proposed changes resulting in a revised shared vision agreed by the SDB at its meeting on 8 November 2010. A copy of the Final Version of the Eco Bicester One Shared Vision including revisions is contained in Appendix 1.
- 1.19 These comments are included in a separate Appendix. The comments submitted online and using the response forms have been collated and reviewed by officers and form the basis of the revised document. A summary of the consultation comments and responses is contained in the attached tables (**Appendices 3 and 4**). Comments were received on a range of topics but generally relating to growth of the town, lack of services and facilities and infrastructure.
- 1.20 There was general support for the vision but many of the comments focussed on existing issues rather than the long term vision set out in the document. There was some uncertainty and scepticism about the proposals for future development with many respondents focussing on the proposals for eco development at North West Bicester. As a result, the area covered by the shared vision has been defined more clearly so that there is no doubt that the vision statement and other sections refer to the whole of Bicester and not just the proposed eco development. Also, the references to integration and a holistic whole town approach have been made more explicit to avoid any confusion about the geography of Eco Bicester. Transport was a major

concern for many respondents with comments referring to existing travel patterns and infrastructure requirements to accommodate further growth.

- 1.21 The meeting of the Bicester Vision Partnership Board on 21<sup>st</sup> September was attended by representatives of over 20 local businesses. Again the focus was on integration, a holistic approach to eco development and employment opportunities and support for local businesses. Representations were made on behalf of local landowners and businesses relating to specific sites and proposals. Many of these comments are more appropriately dealt with through the development plan process.
- 1.22 The Revised Eco Bicester One Shared Vision is presented to the Executive for consideration and approval, subject to any further amendments. Once the final version is agreed it will be used to guide the delivery of Eco Bicester. This report has been prepared by the Eco Bicester Project Team and will form the basis of reports to Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2010 and Bicester Town Council. The Vision will have no formal planning status as it has not been through the statutory planning process but it will be used as informal planning guidance in the consideration of proposals in the town until local standards for sustainable development are adopted in the local development plan. It will be a material consideration in determining development proposals in the town and be used for development control purposes, including in relation to in determining the exemplar proposals at North West Bicester.

### **Conclusion**

- 1.23 The Revised Shared Vision for Eco Bicester clearly defines the aims and objectives of the SDB and has evolved from the Draft Vision published for consultation earlier in the year. It has focussed on the long term aims, aspirations and ambitions for the town as a whole and has stimulated some debate among the local community. The views and comments of those responding to the consultation have been taken into account in the preparing revisions to the final version.
- 1.24 The vision recognises that there are existing issues in the town that need to be addressed such the need to provide infrastructure to support further growth. It also emphasises the importance of integrating new development with the existing town in creating a new Eco Bicester.
- 1.25 The eco town standards set out in the Eco towns PPS have been incorporated as appropriate into the shared vision as the basis for developing local standards and policies for determining planning applications. These will be further developed as the emerging development plan progresses. The Localism Bill and National Planning Framework are expected imminently and should provide more guidance on the preparation of local planning policy. In the meantime the One Shared Vision will be used as informal guidance in determining planning applications for major new development in Bicester.
- 1.26 It is intended that the Revised Vision will be published as the final version by the end of 2010 in order for it to be in place in time for the determination of the Exemplar application at North West Bicester. Going forwards, the vision statement and supporting aims will be used to measure and monitor the delivery of the Eco Bicester project.

## **Background Information**

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- 2.1 The Eco towns PPS was published in July 2009 and has been used as the basis of the eco standards in the vision. The Revised One Shared Vision was approved by the Strategic Delivery Board at its meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2010.
- 2.2 The Eco Bicester Project Team continues to discuss proposals for North West Bicester as part of the eco development of Bicester. A planning application for the first phase is being prepared and expected to be determined by the end of March 2011. A masterplan for the North West Bicester proposals is also being prepared and an outline planning application is expected in summer 2011.

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

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- 3.1 The preparation of the One Shared Vision and response to consultation.
- 3.2 The planning status of the One Shared Vision and its role in determining planning applications in Bicester.
- 3.3 The alignment of the Vision with the emerging Local Development Framework planning policy.

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

**Option One** To note the contents of the report and agree the recommendations to approve the vision as informal planning guidance for development control purposes

**Option Two** To amend the recommendations and make further amendments to the vision

**Option Three** To reject the recommendations

### **Consultations**

The Eco Bicester One Shared Vision has been subjected to extensive consultation throughout its preparation. It has been prepared by the Eco Bicester Project Team on behalf of the Strategic Delivery Board and has involved partners of the project and external consultation with local residents and businesses. Details of the consultation are summarised in the report above and also in the appendices.

### **Implications**

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**Financial:** The preparation of the vision has been funded and resourced through the Eco Bicester Project team and the financial implications will be reviewed by the Strategic Delivery Board. The Vision provides the opportunity for

attracting significant inward investment to Bicester.

Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance  
01295 221551

**Legal:**

The shared vision is not a formal development plan document. However it is suggested that it is adopted as a statement of informal policy and as such will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for major development proposals in Bicester, including any planning application at North West Bicester. It will also inform the emerging policies of the development plan as the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) progresses. It will in effect form the basis of local standards for eco development in Bicester only at this stage.

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

**Risk Management:**

The shared vision has been prepared as a statement of the Strategic Delivery Board's aims, aspirations and ambitions and will be used to guide the delivery of eco development. It includes eco development standards to be used in determining not just the planning proposals at North West Bicester but the town as a whole. It is anticipated that the vision will inform the preparation of local development standards when it's planning status will be formalised. In the meantime it will remain informal planning guidance and corresponding weight will be given to it planning decisions. The likely planning reforms to be introduced by the Localism Bill will need to be carefully considered as the vision progresses.

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

**Wards Affected**

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**Ambrosden and Chesterton, Caversfield, Bicester North and West directly but impact on whole district and sub region**

**Corporate Plan Themes**

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**Cherwell: A District of Opportunity; A Cleaner, Greener Cherwell; A Safer and Healthier Cherwell.**

**Executive Portfolio**

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**Councillor Gibbard  
Portfolio Holder for Planning Housing and Economy**

**Document Information**

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Revised Eco Bicester One Shared Vision

Appendix 2	Summary of consultation strategy
Appendix 3	Table showing consultation responses relating to the vision
Appendix 4	Table showing consultation responses – other issues
<b>Background Papers</b>	
None	
<b>Report Author</b>	Andrew Bowe, Eco Bicester Implementation Officer
<b>Contact Information</b>	01295 221842 <a href="mailto:andrew.bowe@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk">andrew.bowe@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk</a>



# Eco Bicester – One Shared Vision

**REVISED DRAFT**

November 2010





## Foreword



During August and September 2010 the Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board consulted on a first draft of their proposed ‘One Shared Vision for Eco Bicester’. This document is the resulting final version of the Vision which has benefited

from many constructive comments from individuals, businesses, partnerships and public and voluntary organisations in Bicester and the surrounding area.

This Vision is about the whole of Bicester, not just about the 5,000 home eco development at NW Bicester. We want all residents in the town and the surrounding area to enjoy a higher quality of life while at the same time reducing their impact on the environment. The standards we set out in this Vision will apply to all future development in the town and we’ll also be taking steps to reduce energy use in existing homes. This said, there are specific standards which currently will apply only to the eco development at NW Bicester as a result of its designation as just one of four eco towns nationally and its consequent role as a national exemplar.

This ‘One Shared Vision’ is the product of a fundamental rethink about how Bicester should develop in the future. Much of what it contains is not new thinking, but what is new is the way this document pulls together the thoughts and aspiration of public and private partnerships and organisations and overlays these with more

recent aspirations for Bicester to be a truly low carbon community.

It will be adopted by Cherwell District Council, Bicester Town Council and Oxfordshire County Council as an important influence on policy- and decision-making in the town and surrounding areas. It will also become an integral part of the Cherwell Core Strategy in the Local Development Framework, gaining formal weight in future planning decisions from the point of adoption. But it is not detailed planning guidance for the town. Nor is it a detailed action plan for the implementation of this Vision.

One of the most important aspects of our plans for the future of Bicester are our plans to bring more and varied jobs to the town to remove the need for residents to travel out of Bicester to work. While we want to see new employers coming to the town the retention and expansion of our current employers is just as important.

All of us on the Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board have been really encouraged by the response to the first draft of the ‘One Shared Vision’. We hope those of you who responded think we have done justice to the body of comments we received. To those of you coming to this document for the first time we hope you think this is an inspiring Vision for Bicester. It’s one the Board will work hard to ensure is delivered.

**Cllr Barry Wood**

Chairman  
Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board  
November 2010

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## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out the shared vision of the Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board (SDB). As such, it contains the aims, aspirations and aspirations for the town of Bicester as a whole as it continues to grow in the long term. The aerial view of Bicester on the front cover shows the area covered by the vision. A more detailed plan showing the major development sites in and around the town is included in the document.

The document looks at the town as a whole not just the proposed eco development at NW Bicester. The emphasis is on integrating the new development with the existing town by adopting a holistic approach to the development of the town. The work has already begun with major development underway in Bicester town centre, the completed refurbishment of the leisure centre and swimming pool, in addition to the eco town demonstration projects and housing development at SW Bicester. Bicester has been a garrison town for many years and the future of the military presence in the town is an important factor in developing the vision. Bicester's population is expected to grow and this will require further infrastructure to support the town. The aim is for all new development to be integrated with the existing town to ensure the development of a vibrant place.

The shared vision has been prepared to guide and inform the SDB's work and it is important that the document remains flexible reflecting the latest standards of eco development and changing circumstances. It does not seek to allocate land for development as this is the role of the Local Development Framework, which in time we anticipate will reflect the aspiration set out in the vision and incorporate the development standards it contains. It is ambitious and aspirational and focuses on four key themes: community, economy, transport and environmental sustainability. The future challenges facing the district and the town are recognised and include adapting to climate change, a growing population and significant housing growth. This will

require the development of infrastructure to support the town as it grows.

The following sections set out the detailed vision statement, covering people and places, the economy, transport and movement, environmental sustainability and infrastructure and the standards for eco development. The final section sets out the local standards for the eco development at North West Bicester and is based on the eco town standards set out in the supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) – Sustainable Development. The contents of the shared vision will be used to inform local standards for eco development in the emerging development plan.

As a result of the consultation, more emphasis on infrastructure and facilities has been included in the vision as part of the community first and environmental sustainability sections. The lack of facilities and the need for infrastructure requirements to keep pace with the growth of the town were common themes of the consultation responses. This is acknowledged in the shared vision and forms the starting point for the long term development of the town.

For more information please contact:  
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Cherwell District Council  
Bodicote House  
Bodicote  
Banbury  
Oxfordshire  
OX15 4AA

Email: [ecobicester@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:ecobicester@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 01295 221644



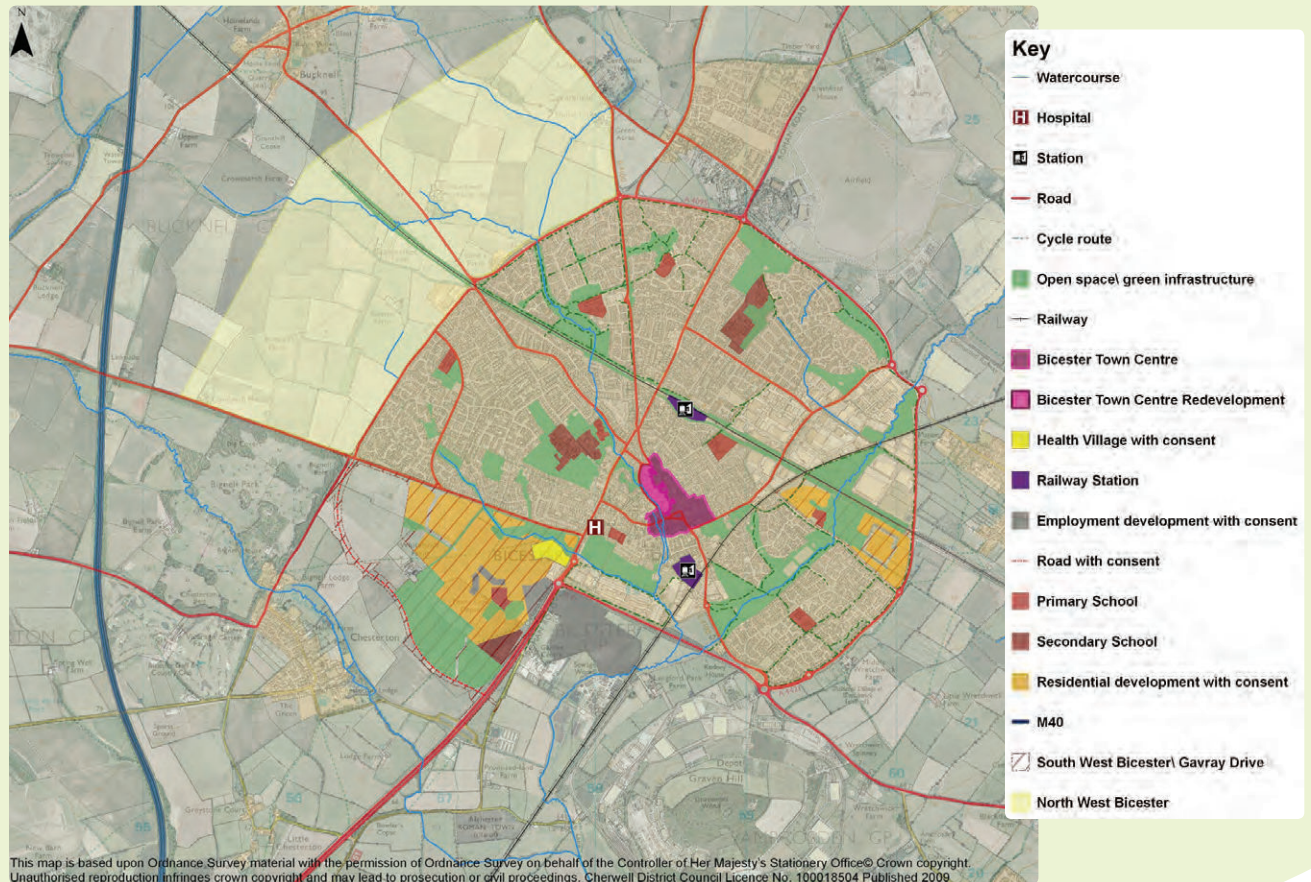
# The Vision

To create a vibrant Bicester where people choose to live, to work and to spend their leisure time in sustainable ways, achieved by:

- Effecting a town wide transition to a low carbon community triggered by the new eco development at North West Bicester;
- Attracting inward investment to provide provide environmentally friendly jobs and commerce, especially in green technologies, whilst recognising the very important role of existing employers in the town;
- Improving transport, health and leisure choices while emphasising zero carbon and energy efficiency; and
- Ensuring green infrastructure and historic landscapes, biodiversity, water, flood and waste issues are managed in an environmentally sustainable way



## Bicester - Key sites and areas for development



### Community first – people and places

Local people will have a huge opportunity to influence the ongoing development of Bicester.

#### By Bicester for Bicester

- Encouraging people to have a real say in the future of their town
- Supporting local initiatives to improve the town and the community
- Making opportunities for local communities to own and govern local community assets
- Encouraging a growth in sustainability culture, awareness and knowledge about environmental issues by the people and businesses of Bicester

#### Community first

- New development shall be designed to reduce the opportunity for crime and the fear of crime
- A mix of housing, including affordable housing, housing accessible to those with impaired mobility, high-end housing to attract managers from local companies to reside in the town will be sought in new developments to meet the needs of the whole community
- Support local communities to ensure that their area is safe and free from crime
- Support measures to enhance Bicester as a local service centre for the surrounding villages and rural area
- All new development must be integrated with the existing town to support the creation of a vibrant place

- Opportunities will be sought to improve access to the countryside
- Improvements to town centre retail facilities will be supported

### Retrofitting for a Low Carbon Community

- Supporting improved energy efficiency of homes to reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty
- Supporting improved energy efficiency of business and commercial property to reduce carbon emissions
- Increased water efficiency and reduced water use
- Supporting high speed broadband and digital infrastructure provision for the town

### Exacting Eco Standards for New Development (see also standards in section 6)

- Ensure homes built to the highest design and environmental standards

- Seek new buildings which incorporate high quality, contemporary design
- Ensure that new buildings are designed and built to the highest standards in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable construction techniques for example Passiv Haus design based on the code for sustainable homes and British Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology (BREEAM).
- Ensure that new buildings have high speed broadband to facilitate information and smart management systems
- New buildings with reduced water use
- Zero or low carbon energy provision
- Use of local and sustainably sourced materials

### Community Infrastructure and facilities

- Provision of high quality community facilities, making best use of the town centre, co location of services, shared use of facilities, public open space, play space for all, streets and gardens and encouraging maximum use of existing community facilities and assets

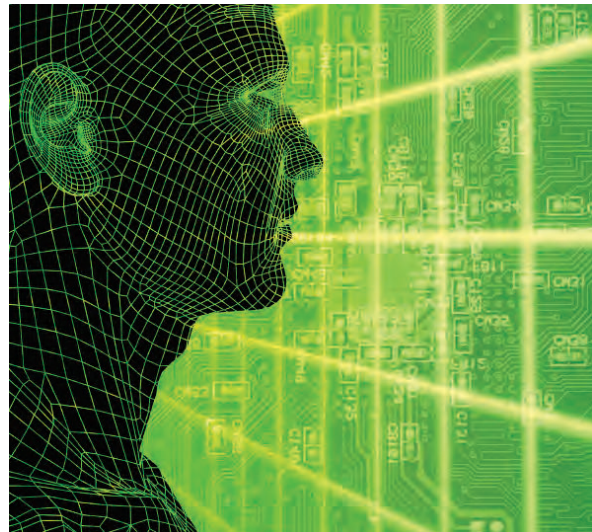




- Promote local cultural facilities, including a venue with theatre auditorium and room to accommodate formal dining. It is recognised that The Garth could have the potential to fulfil this role
- Promote a sports stadium to meet long term growth of the town
- Provide a new burial site for the town with opportunity for green or woodland burials and quiet recreation.
- Support local sports and leisure facilities
- Provide accessible high quality health and social care to include a community hospital to meet the expanding population of the town
- Support local sustainable food production
- Provision of facilities for young people
- All new development will need to provide or contribute to the provision of facilities to serve the increased population.

## Economy

**Create a nationally recognised hub of the low carbon economy and the location of choice for business and inward investment. To provide local jobs for Eco Bicester residents.**



## Employment Opportunities

- Provide new employment opportunities to complement the existing economic base to support the creation of a balanced economic base with opportunities requiring a broad spectrum of skills
- Promote Bicester as a significant location in the triangle between Oxford, Cambridge and London, for an increase in science and technology businesses, exploiting innovations and spin-outs from academic research growing from existing Oxfordshire base
- Create a centre for innovation capitalising on the location within a world class sub region
- Provide support for existing employers in the town to increase their levels of local employment.

### Sustainable Travel to Work

- Seek local jobs to reduce out commuting significantly
- Walking and cycling will be promoted through working with new and existing businesses to prepare and implement green travel plans.



### Education, Skills and Training

- Creating a learning town with good quality educational opportunities for all ages with access to local quality educational facilities to learn and train
- Provide education, skills and training focused on meeting the needs of business and allowing the local community to benefit from the emerging green economy
- Seek greater provision of higher education facilities within the town

### Employment space

- Provide employment opportunities for the eco development’s population
- Provide employment space/office stock suited to modern employment requirements, particularly those of low carbon businesses – BREEAM excellent and designed to reduce energy use
- Seek employment creation as part of large residential development sites
- Create a centre for service industries within this buoyant part of the country

## Transport and movement

Encourage walking and cycling as the first choice for travel within the town to improve health, reduce carbon emissions and improve the quality of the environment.

### A significant increase in travel by means other than the car across the town

- Promote walking, cycling and public transport within the town
- Work with employers and educational facilities to encourage sustainable travel
- Support designs for new development which support walkable neighbourhoods, public transport and provide good access to day to day services locally
- Improve non vehicular access links to town centre facilities and other important destinations from across the town



- Give priority to walking, cycling and public transport where possible
- Provide high quality cycle parking and storage
- Provide improved bus service information
- Encourage car clubs and car share



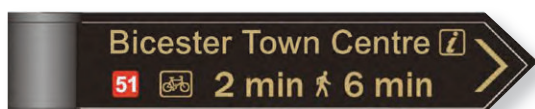
schemes where occasional journeys by car are necessary

## Travel Planning

- Ensure schemes and initiatives to promote sustainable travel planning set out in the Department for Transport's Sustainable Travel Towns document developed in more detail for Bicester
- Provide innovative approaches to personal travel, including reduced energy consumption, low emission vehicles

## Improvements to the existing transport network

- Ensure sustainable locations for development and highway improvement schemes as part of the 'Bicester Integrated Transport and Land Use Study' commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council in partnership with Cherwell District Council
- Provision of improvements to walking and cycling provision in the town
- Support Chiltern Railways' improvements to the Bicester to Oxford line and services to London
- A perimeter road at 'South West Bicester' to relieve congestion in Bicester and reduce 'rat running' through surrounding villages
- Improvements to Junction 9 of the M40 to unlock the employment growth potential of the town (Phase 1 started in August 2010)
- Encourage electric vehicles and supporting infrastructure



## Environmental Sustainability and Infrastructure

In accordance with the community plan “Our District, Our Future” this shared vision aims to understand and adapt to environmental challenges as they arise and ensure that all infrastructure and other developments protect and enhance the environment and biodiversity. The provision of green infrastructure and biodiversity and habitat creation is fundamental to Eco Bicester and already an important component of the town.

## Open Space and Green Infrastructure

- Maximise ecological and biodiversity gains from open space compatible with its recreational role
- Ensure the 40% green space at NW Bicester integrates with existing green space within the town
- Seek a network of open spaces incorporating river corridors and linking not only to existing space within the town but also the wider countryside
- Provide multi functional green infrastructure incorporating footpaths and cycle paths, sports and recreational space, play, ecological enhancement, adopted sustainable urban drainage systems and flood alleviation
- Seek opportunities for new wetland areas and creation of local priority habitats
- Use of the new cemetery as a quiet and sensitive green space



- The character of the countryside shall be protected and where new development has been identified as necessary it should be designed to be assimilated within the landscape without altering the character of the surrounding countryside.

### Biodiversity

- To protect existing habitats
- To enhance biodiversity in the town and habitat creation
- Include features in buildings such as green walls and roofs, bat tubes and swift boxes to support priority species
- Seek shelter belts to enhance the range of habitats and provide for micro climates

### Water Use

- To develop a sustainable water management approach to new development
- Seek water neutrality and more efficient water usage across town
- Promote grey water recycling
- Provide sustainable urban drainage to ensure that existing water courses are maintained and contaminants treated within surface water

### Flood Risk

- Provide measures to ensure that run off created from development does not introduce flood risk elsewhere.
- Take opportunities to address flood risk downstream within the town

### Waste and energy

- To develop a sustainable energy management approach to new development
- Seek zero or low carbon energy generation
- Explore sewerage and waste providing bio gas for energy centre.
- Provide storage for recyclable materials included in new buildings
- Provide measures to reduce all waste including that from construction

# Appendix

## Eco Bicester development standards, building on eco town standards

This section provides further detail on the development standards to be used in delivery of the Shared Vision through eco development and particularly the proposals for North West Bicester. As described earlier in the document, the vision for Eco Bicester sets out a holistic approach to future development integrating the proposed development at North West Bicester with the existing town. The following standards are taken and adapted from extracts from the PPS and will be required to be met for development at NW Bicester and other new developments. However it is recognised that for some smaller sites it may not be possible to meet all the criteria on site and in these circumstances off site provision should be investigated.

### Zero carbon

The definition of zero carbon follows that set out in the Eco towns PPS and is that over a year the net carbon dioxide emissions from all energy use within the buildings are zero or below. Proposals for the development of NW Bicester should demonstrate how this will be achieved taking into account the health and social care needs of residents, and the resulting energy demand. Other large developments will also be expected to meet the zero carbon requirement.

The definition excludes embodied carbon and emissions from transport but includes all buildings – not just houses but also commercial and public sector buildings which are built as part of Eco Bicester. The calculation of net emissions will take account of locally produced energy; production of energy imported from centralised energy networks, emissions displaced by exports of locally produced energy to centralised energy networks where that energy is produced from a plant (1) whose primary purpose is to support the needs of the Eco Bicester and (2) has a production capacity reasonably related to the overall energy requirement of the Eco Bicester.

### Climate change adaptation

NW Bicester is to be a sustainable community that is resilient and well-adapted to future climate change. It should be planned to minimise future vulnerability in a changing climate, and with both mitigation and adaptation in mind. All new developments should be designed to take account of the climate they are likely to experience. New development is to deliver a high quality local environment and meet the standards on water, flooding, green infrastructure and biodiversity set out in this Vision, taking into account a changing climate for these, as well incorporating wider best practice on tackling overheating and impacts of a changing climate for the natural and built environment.

### Homes

As well as being zero carbon, proposals for new homes should:

- (a) Achieve high standards of sustainability, for example, Building for Life Silver Standard and Level 5 of the Code for Sustainable Homes as a minimum (or any higher standards in the development plan)
- (b) Meet lifetime homes standards and space standards
- (c) Have real time energy monitoring systems; real time public transport information and high speed broadband access, including next generation broadband where possible. Consideration should also be given to the potential use of digital access to support assisted living and smart energy management systems
- (d) demonstrate high levels of energy efficiency in the fabric of the building, having regard to proposals for standards to be incorporated into changes to the Building Regulations between now and 2016 (including the consultation on planned changes for 2010 issued in June 2009 and future announcements on the definition of zero carbon homes), and
- (e) Achieve, through a combination of energy efficiency and low and zero carbon energy generation, carbon reductions (from space heating, ventilation, hot water and fixed lighting).

## Employment

It is important to ensure that NW Bicester is a genuine mixed-use community and that unsustainable commuter trips are kept to a minimum. A similar approach will be sought for all suitable development sites. Facilities to support job creation on the site and in the town should be available and as a minimum there should be access to one new employment opportunity per new dwelling that is easily reached by walking, cycling and/or public transport.

## Transport

Travel should support people's desire for mobility whilst achieving the goal of low carbon living. Options such as walking, cycling, public transport and other sustainable options should be prioritised, thereby reducing residents' reliance on private cars, including techniques such as filtered permeability. To achieve this, homes should be within ten minutes' walk of (a) frequent public transport and (b) neighbourhood services. The provision of services may be co-located to reduce the need for individuals to travel by private car and encourage the efficient use of the sustainable transport options available.

The following criteria should be considered in terms of travel planning:

- (a) How the town's growth will enable at least 50 per cent of trips originating in NW Bicester or on any other large mixed use development, to be made by non-car means, with the potential for this to increase over time to at least 60 per cent
- (b) Good design principles, drawing from Manual for Streets, Building for Life, and community travel planning principles
- (c) How transport choice messages, infrastructure and services will be provided from 'day one' of residential occupation, and
- (d) How the carbon impact of transport in the eco-town will be monitored, as part of embedding a long term low-carbon approach to travel within plans for community governance.

- (e) Options for ensuring that key connections around Bicester do not become congested as a result of the development, for example by extending some aspects of the travel plan beyond the immediate boundaries of the site, and
- (f) Ultra low carbon vehicle options, including electric car schemes should be considered to help achieve a sustainable transport system.
- (g) Bicester should grow in a way that supports children walking or cycling to school safely and easily. A maximum walking distance of 800m from home to the nearest school for children under 11 will be sought.

## Healthy lifestyles

Bicester shall be designed to support healthy and sustainable environments and enable residents to make healthy choices easily.

## Local services

A good level of provision of services within new development in Bicester proportionate to the size of the development and to complement those in the town will be sought. This should include leisure, health and social care, education, retail, arts and culture, library services, sport and play facilities and community and voluntary sector facilities.

## Green infrastructure

40% of the total area of land at NW Bicester is to be allocated to green space of which at least half should be public. For other developments the LDF will identify the standards of provision required. A network of well managed, high quality green/open spaces which are linked to the wider countryside should be provided including a range of types of green space, for example community forests, wetland areas and public parks. Green space should be multifunctional, e.g. accessible for play and recreation, walking or cycling safely, and support wildlife, urban cooling and flood management.

Particular attention should be given to land to allow the local production of food from community, allotment and/or commercial gardens.

### **Landscape and historic environment**

Development should complement and enhance the existing landscape character. Proposals should set out measures to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance heritage both assets and their settings.

### **Biodiversity**

NW Bicester will need to demonstrate a net gain in local biodiversity. All new development should seek to achieve this. A strategy for preserving and enhancing local biodiversity is required to accompany any planning applications. This will need to be based on up to date information about the biodiversity of the area including proposals for the management of local eco systems and where appropriate, the restoration of degraded habitats or the creation of replacement habitats. It should set out priority actions in line with the England Biodiversity Strategy and local biodiversity action plans, including appropriate mitigation and/or mitigation measures, required to minimise adverse effects on individual species and habitats of principle importance and to enhance local bio diversity over all. Developers should seek the advice of Natural England and other relevant statutory advisers when developing their strategies. Delivery bodies should be identified in the strategy and its implementation should proceed in parallel with the development.

### **Water**

Bicester should be ambitious in terms of water efficiency, particularly as it is in an area of water stress. NW Bicester and other large development should:

NW Bicester should:

- (a) incorporate measures in the water cycle strategy for improving water quality and managing surface water, groundwater and local watercourses to prevent surface water flooding from those sources; and
- (b) Incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) and, except where this is not feasible, as identified within a relevant Surface Water Management Plan, avoid connection of surface water run-off into sewers.
- (c) A strategy for the long term maintenance, management and adoption of the SUDS will be required. Eco-Bicester should aspire to water neutrality, i.e. achieving development without increasing overall water use across a wider area. In particular, the water cycle strategy should set out how:
  - (d) development would be designed and delivered to limit the impact of the new development on water use, and any plans for additional measures, e.g. within the existing building stock of the wider designated area, that would contribute towards water neutrality
  - (e) new homes will be equipped to meet the water consumption requirement of Level 5 of the Code for Sustainable Homes; and
  - (f) New non-domestic buildings will be equipped to meet similar high standards of water efficiency with respect to their domestic water use.

### **Flood risk management**

Development should not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and should use opportunities to address and reduce existing flooding problems. At NW Bicester all of the built-up areas (including housing, other public buildings and infrastructure) will be fully within Flood Zone 1 – the lowest risk. Flood Zone 2 (medium risk) should, as far as possible, be used for open spaces and informal recreational areas that can serve as multi-functional spaces, for example, those used for flood storage. There should be no built-up development in Flood Zone 3, with the exception of water-compatible development and, where absolutely necessary, essential infrastructure as defined in Table D.2 of PPS25: Development and Flood Risk.

## Waste

A sustainable waste and resources plan should be developed for NW Bicester and other large developments, covering both domestic and non-domestic waste, which:

- (a) sets targets for residual waste levels, recycling levels and landfill diversion, all of which should be substantially more ambitious than the 2007 national Waste Strategy targets for 2020; it should be demonstrated how these targets will be achieved, monitored and maintained
- (b) Establishes how all development will be designed so as to facilitate the achievement of these targets, including the provision of waste storage arrangements which allow for the separate collection of each of the seven priority waste materials as identified in the Waste Strategy for England 2007
- (c) Provides evidence that consideration has been given to the use of locally generated waste as a fuel source for combined heat and power (CHP) generation for the eco-town, and
- (d) Sets out how developers will ensure that no construction, demolition and excavation waste is sent to landfill, except for those types of waste where landfill is the least environmentally damaging option.



**Further Information:**

Can be found at the following locations:  
Online at: [www.cherwell.gov.uk/ecotowns](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/ecotowns)  
Offices: Bicester Town Council, Cherwell  
District Council

Alternatively you can contact the  
Eco Bicester project team by email at  
[ecobicester@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:ecobicester@cherwell-dc.gov.uk) or  
telephone on 01295 221644.

The information in this document can be made available in other languages, large print braille, audio tape or electronic format on request. Please contact 01295 227001

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać. 01295 227001

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ। 01295 227001

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。01295 227001

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو براۓ مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔  
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### **Eco Bicester – One Shared Vision – Consultation Summary**

Consultation - 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2010 – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010 (6 weeks)

Invitations to comment on the vision were sent to:

Bicester Town Council  
Ambrosden Parish Council  
Bucknell Parish Council  
Caversfield Parish Council  
Chesterton Parish Council  
Launton Parish Council  
Bicester Vision  
Bicester & District Chamber of Commerce  
Bure Park Residents Association  
Southwold Community Association  
Bicester Parklandview Residents Association  
Langford Village Community Association  
Bicester Green Gym  
The Courtyard Youth Centre  
Bicester & Kidlington Ramblers group  
Windrushers Gliding Club  
Bicester WI  
Local History Society  
Bicester Community College  
The Cooper School  
Bicester Resource Centre  
Bicester U3A

#### **Publicity included**

- An article in the local newspaper & newspaper website.
- Press release on Council's website
- posters were put up in Bicester Town centre, Bicester Town Council and Bicester LinkPoint along with notice boards around the town.
- Weekly tweeting to encourage people to comment online or at their local offices. These tweets were republished by Chamber of Commerce and Bicester Vision.

#### **Consultation Events**

23<sup>rd</sup> August – 1<sup>st</sup> October – Online consultation portal was open for people to comment on the draft document

2<sup>nd</sup> September – Presentation and Q & A session at Launton PC meeting

3<sup>rd</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> September – Public Exhibition in Bicester Town Centre during weekly & Farmer's market, which included handing out of vision document, engaging with the local resident and businesses and had displayed several plans of Bicester with present and proposed development.

15<sup>th</sup> September – OCC, CDC, and BTC Members' workshop

Presentation/Workshop at Bicester Community College – Date TBC

20<sup>th</sup> October – Attendance at Bicester Youth Council

Respondents: 35 respondents, 32 through online consultation portal and postal responses (see below).  
3 lengthier responses from: Ben Jackson, Green Coconut & John Liggins.  
Workshop summary responses were also received through Member Workshop and Bicester Vision Meeting

### **On Line & Postal Responses**

#### **How many agreed or disagreed?**

Agree: 16  
Disagree: 13  
Neither agree nor disagree: 2  
Didn't know if they agreed or disagreed: 1

### **Issues**

From the 35 respondents, 88 broad issues have been identified.

The main issues are:

The inadequate existing infrastructure currently in and around Bicester, respondents want to see infrastructure improvement for motorists, but also for pedestrians and cyclists.

The variety and lack of existing facilities within the town, people want to see a wider range of facilities for all ages to stop people leaving Bicester in the evenings and weekends to surrounding towns which have the supply of facilities.

Where are the jobs going to be created to supply the growth of Bicester? And are they going to be for local people?

### **What vision objective do people find most important?**

Community First and Transport and Movement were chosen equally as the most important with 11 respondents each.

Economy and Environment sustainability both with had 5 respondents choose them each.

### **How many people thought it was about NW Bicester and not about Eco Bicester?**

10 out of 32 respondents based their comments mainly or purely on the NW Bicester site issues.

### **Summary of Ben Jackson's Comments**

How will we know when we are a Low Carbon Economy?

Vision needs to include: Retention of existing jobs; improved education to remove need for parents to send to BGN/Marlborough; more high end housing to help lift aspirations and provide accommodation for middle and upper management and high speed broad band to whole town.

Need “good quality” education.

Consider use of Archimedes screws in existing water courses – See Kirtlington Mill Hydro Project.

Exacting eco standards - Highest design standards are well above SHC 4 or 5 – need to clarify intent.

Encourage retrofit of rainwater harvesting as well, especially Local Authority to set example.

Highlight issue of material miles

Include better use of land parallel to railways beside town walks  
Wildlife/sitting areas/art/Green Gym/etc

Is the Garth the best choice for a theatre auditorium with formal dining area?  
Better to support and grow existing facilities and clubs than provide new sports stadium.

Proper partnership with existing and new secondary schools for community use of facilities would be a more efficient use of funding.

Suggest Bicester at heart of a Diamond that includes Birmingham and position Bicester as the central meeting place – a conference hub that reduces travel distances. In addition have state of the art video conferencing facilities to allow wider conferences to take place. Utilise Evergreen 3 and Oxford Airport to promote Bicester as a location for business.

Term sub region would appear to hark back to RDA should be updated.  
Bicester to be given a clear priority over Kidlington and Banbury by CDC  
Need dedicated officer time in terms of economic development.

Need secure cycle storage, signposting with approx times, guides for rides and walking. Promote the many Oxford based clubs that could support Bicester.

Target local larger businesses that have car borne workers and encourage/support them in creating car sharing schemes.

The recent Graven Hill Debate does create an opportunity to create a community built around an existing Rail system which could be used as a Tram/transit system. This has to be worthy of consideration and would ease any land acquisition issues and spread the eco message around the town.

To support other points in the document car parking should be minimised and secure bike storage and integrated bus service given significant priority.

Rat running, outward from Bicester, through Wendelbury will not be stopped by SW perimeter road.

Highways - M40 J9 impact of phases 1 and 2 improvements  
Value/importance of aerodrome as a green space with community access.  
Bees – must encourage Bees.  
Commercial and residential waste collection point in town would increase recycling and also reduce road traffic to Ardley.  
Heavy on the what, but nothing on the how, timescales or on benchmarking for progress. To hit a target you first have to set one! The appendix refers constantly to NW Bicester, if we are being aspirational should it not be whole of Bicester? Personal view is that it is not grand enough in its ambitions, not time specific and lacks real aspiration. It did not and does not inspire me. We need to set aside the restrictions and negativity of the past and be really ambitious, but set this against a longer time scale. Say 50 years, with built in flexibility to reflect changing need along the way. Good first draft, but a long way from a finished article.

### **Summary of Comments from Stockdale Land Limited**

Final Draft to be circulated before issuing final version  
Document needs redrafting  
Possibility of higher costs of relocating in Bicester?  
Encourage existing business to stay and grow  
Road infrastructure to be provided before additional growth  
Utility provision for existing business to avoid losing them e.g. Werth  
Exemplar needs to be “state of the art”  
Some development should be on previously developed land at MOD Bicester south of the town  
Local materials should be used  
Factory for construction materials to be located in town  
Jobs – skill based jobs

### **Comments from Green Coconut**

3 main areas of concern:

1. Availability of jobs
2. Protecting the interests of the existing townspeople and integrating new sectors with the existing town
3. Infrastructure upgrades

Reduce transport miles  
Manufacturing of “green” construction materials locally.  
Theatre auditorium and formal dining must be large enough  
Need to clarify vision in terms of NW Bicester  
Need to clearly explain the benefits are across the town and not just for the NW Bicester.  
Jobs – need to address the existing unemployed.  
The document needs a timeline with milestones to review and confirm/refine next steps  
Aim high - talk about good quality education!

Table showing summary of consultation responses and proposed changes to Draft Eco Bicester One Shared Vision			
Section Ref.	Comments	Officer response	Proposed changes
Introduction	Over the past 10 to 15 years Bicester has grown. Local facilities have not kept up with growth. New developments for the town centre will only provide adequate facilities for the current residents. Confusion over population – need to be clear on population now and in 2026 (introduction). Whole project to be looked at in a holistic and integrated way and that various possible areas for development are being considered as a whole not as individual projects. Concerns about whether there would be different standards of living for those in the new eco development.	The vision acknowledges that the town needs new facilities. The development at NW Bicester will need to provide facilities to serve the increased population. Purpose of the vision to set out the aspiration for the town rather than identify specific projects. References to population growth and timescales should be confirmed. Following the adoption of the Vision and the LDF Core Strategy further consideration will be given to developing action plans.	Add separate Introduction explaining the purpose of the document and relationship with the appendix. Add separate section on Infrastructure <i>“All new development will need to provide or contribute to the provision of facilities to serve the increased population.”</i> Add “All new development must be integrated with the existing town to support the creation of a vibrant place.” Insert additional text referring to integration and holistic approach
The Vision	BTC considers that purpose of document is to set out wider targets and goals for town and is very pleased to see that it has been significantly influenced by BTC’s own vision document, published earlier this year. BTC members are very pleased to have been involved throughout the process. They have attended two workshops and a Bicester Vision session and understand that all comments made at those sessions will be taken into account. Eco principles reinforced in such a way that the Vision informs all future developments, commercial, retail or domestic, to adhere to the highest eco standards. Technical appendices are surplus to requirement and should be removed, since they confuse the document Re-emphasise eco principles apply to the whole of Bicester and any new developments in and around Bicester. It would also like to see greater emphasis on concept of building homes and sustainable communities not simply houses.	It is recognised that “sustainable” can be interpreted in many ways and throughout the document the term is used to refer to social, economic and environmental sustainability. It is recognised that “sustainable” can be interpreted in many ways and throughout the document the term is used to refer to social, economic and environmental sustainability The term “sub region” applies to the wider area. Service industries form an important part of diverse and resilient economies	Replace “sustainable” with “environmentally friendly. Replace “sustainable” with “long term” Replace references to sub region with “surrounding area”.
The Vision	Thames Valley Police (TVP) broadly supports the principles set out within the One Shared Vision document.	The comment and support is welcomed.	Suggested no change
The Vision	Flexibility and diversity. Rapid growth and expansion without the necessary concomitant development of infrastructure has meant a loss of both practicality and small town feel.	The vision acknowledges that the town needs new facilities.	No change
The Vision	Excellent, but perhaps more idealistic than realistic.	Noted support is welcomed	No change
The Vision	What are sustainable jobs?	The term sustainable/sustainability is used throughout the document and needs to be defined for	No change

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		consistency. In this context it refers to jobs that can be sustained in the long term	
Vision	The vision should say 'improving transport, health and leisure choices' – people want their local facility to be good enough not the choice to travel to one that is better.	Agreed	Replace “offering” with “improving” in Vision statement
Vision	Vision is not grand enough in its ambitions, not time specific and lacks real aspiration. It does not inspire. Need to set a longer timescale, 50 years, with flexibility to reflect changing need along the way. No timescales or benchmarking for monitoring progress. Vision needs to set targets.	The document sets a long term vision but does not define the timeframe for delivery. It sets the aims and ambitions. A separate timeframe is being prepared setting out the key milestones towards the delivery of Eco Bicester. The vision sets out the broad aims and aspirations and therefore it does not set specific targets.	No change
The Vision	How will the wish list be funded? Do we expect private investment in facilities?	The vision sets out the aspirations of the whole town. Facilities will be funded in the normal way with developer contributions or by any other mechanism such as Community Infrastructure Levy that may replace current funding.	No change
The Vision	Leisure facilities and infrastructure to be put in first.	The vision acknowledges that the town needs new facilities. The development at NW Bicester will need to provide facilities to serve the increased population. The emerging LDF Infrastructure Plan seeks to provide infrastructure in advance of development.	No change
The Vision	Ensure new development (Eco Town) is integrated with the existing town, provides more than just new homes, but other facilities for the wider community, including new jobs and leisure facilities.	It is important that all new development is properly integrated with the existing town. The vision is not simply about new development but seeks to look at the town holistically and consider its future.	No change
The Vision	Strongly agree with the Vision we need to build a vibrant society and community with shared ideas. Follow the vision – looks fantastic! As all the objectives in the vision are linked, they are all important. Would be good to include existing social hubs – schools, pubs, library & shops. Font is too small.	Support is welcomed and producing the vision is a step towards recognising the many positive things in Bicester and the great potential for its future The vision is looking at the whole town and sets out the ambition that it wants to support local communities and encourage people to have a say in the town	No change
The Vision	One of the aims set out in the vision to create Eco Bicester facilitated by the eco development at NWB is to integrate the eco development with existing development at Bicester. TVP welcomes a degree of pragmatism in this regard. An Eco-Suburb could be an option and benefit Bicester as a tailored solution within the realms of the PPS.	The vision sets out a whole town approach to the development of the proposals at NW Bicester and sees the eco development as a catalyst for the regeneration of the existing town based on eco town principles.	Suggested no change
Community first	It needs to feel a safe place to live and walk/wheel/cycle around with good community spirit the economy will naturally grow so long as opportunities and jobs are provided, a happy and safe community will be less likely to use cars to "get out" at weekends, spending more in the local area instead and	The vision seeks to put local community at its heart, recognising its importance to the town's future. Safety is an important concern that is not currently included in the vision	Add P4 Support local communities to ensure that their area is safe and free from crime.

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	more willing to take on environmental improvements		
Community first Housing	<p>Creating a vibrant Eco Bicester relies on a number of interacting factors. One important element is the provision of a choice of new housing that is sustainable, provides a high quality residential environment and has easy access to local jobs and facilities.</p> <p>Housing - Agree with vision but affordable housing should be an important objective More high end housing to help lift aspirations and provide accommodation for middle and upper management Housing for the elderly, retired. Housing for disabled people in a town centre location is needed to allow the easy access to community facilities</p>	<p>The proposed new housing development will provide a mix of eco homes in terms of size and type and the vision refer to high quality design standards.</p> <p>Cherwell District Council's current policy is to seek 30% affordable housing. The need for a range of housing, including high end housing and affordable housing is not currently set out in the vision</p>	<p>Add P4 A mix of housing, including affordable housing, housing accessible to those with impaired mobility, high-end housing to attract managers from local companies to reside in the town will be sought in new developments to meet the needs of the whole community.</p>
Community first Housing	It would be great to see all requirements met. Due to location, road and rail links and cost of housing being lower than a lot of commuter towns many people will want to buy houses here.	Noted and support is welcomed	No change
Community first - Bicester for Bicester	Education & Training - Opportunity to shape eco education, don't replicate education provision and provide choice, maybe Eco university?– Point 4 Add "good quality" before education on line one.	The vision does seek for Bicester to be a learning town with access to local education facilities.	<p>Amend Separate section re education to be added Add P4 Good quality educational facilities</p>
Community first Retrofitting	Improve quality of life for all – retrofitting existing stock, both business and residential.	The need to focus on Bicester and the existing buildings as well as new buildings is recognised in the vision. What can be achieved is limited by funding available but a scheme to provide very cheap insulation measures has been launched.	No change
Community first - infrastructure	Replacement of Bicester hospital. Swimming pool too small, library facilities are inadequate. Needs more focus on Bicester centre	The vision acknowledges that the town needs new facilities. However specific reference to health facilities could assist clarity. The town centre redevelopment will increase the retail facilities in the town centre. However it is important in the future that there is continuing support for town centre development to create the vibrant place with a range of facilities the vision seeks. The sports centre has recently been modernised to take account of the increased population in the town. It is well located for access by walking and cycling as well as having car parking on site.	<p>Add P4 "Ensure the expansion of health facilities to meet the needs of the population and seek the provision of a replacement hospital to serve the town &amp; the surrounding area."</p>

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Community first	more focus on activities for children/young adults– provision of facilities for young people.	The vision does not include reference to facilities for young people.	Insert in community infrastructure section: “Provision of facilities for young people
Community first	Infrastructure before development Need schools, hospital facilities and transport.	Infrastructure should be provided in advance of other development.	Add P4 “Improvements to town centre retail facilities will be supported.”
Community first	A single, railway station with adequate parking facilities, regular buses serving the estates and rural villages.	A second railway station is required to serve the two branches of the rail lines that cut through Bicester. This is proposed as part of Chiltern Railways Project Evergreen. Improvements to bus services are sought in the vision.	No change
Community first	Point one: Include better use of land parallel to railways beside town walks. Wildlife/sitting areas/art/Green Gym/etc	The comment on use of land is a very specific point, too detailed for the vision. However open space is currently owned and managed by Bicester Town Council who the comment will be passed to for consideration. Other areas are in private ownership where it is more difficult to influence the management of the land.	No change
Community first	Point two: Is the Garth the best choice? Cycle storage is not available, day time events can lead to pressure on parking. Venue needs to be able to seat 250 - 300 and break out rooms.	The vision only recognises that The Garth could be suitable and does not rule out other locations if more appropriate.	No change
Community first	Point three – Better to support and grow existing facilities and clubs.	The vision seeks to support local sports and leisure facilities and does not differentiate between existing and new clubs.	No change
Community first	Proper partnership with existing and new secondary schools for community use of facilities would be a more efficient use of funding.	The vision includes reference to co location of services and should include reference to shared use of facilities	Insert reference to shared use of community facilities
Community first – people and places	Need to plan for the future and looking at the future needs and the ability to expand facilities/infrastructure by leaving land aside	The development plan sets out the land use and proposals for future growth in Bicester and the District as a whole therefore it is not included in the Vision	No change
Community first - Eco standards	Digital infrastructure Broadband/Telecoms – Bicester outdated telecommunication infrastructure needs updating to allow for smart working, flexible living/working to encourage less commuting and better communities Celebrate best practices in business eco standards – and how can the concept be introduced to businesses? High speed broad band to whole town	The requirement for high speed broadband is recognised in the vision and the eco towns PPS. It is acknowledged this is important for the town as a whole	Emphasis importance of digital infrastructure including high speed broadband in eco standards section. Include separate point on high speed broadband

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Community first Eco standards	Utilities (water, waste and electricity) water and electricity supply is an issue for local businesses experiencing power cuts (“brown outs”).	Eco Bicester Project team to investigate this further as part of infrastructure plan and delivery of eco development. This issue will be addressed as part of the Infrastructure Plan to support the LDF Core Strategy.	No change
Community first - Eco standards	“highest possible environmental standards” should be sought within the realms of what is achievable to bring development forward, and there should be more overt recognition that the aims of the document are not necessarily dependent on delivery of and Eco-town; the aspiration is wider ranging New housing should be more than the standard brick type, but with add-ons to improve their eco credentials	Noted  The vision sets out exacting standards for new eco development including ensuring homes are built to the highest design and environmental standards. Planning applications for new development will provide detailed designs	Suggested no change  No change
Community first - facilities Community first - Local Leisure facilities	Provision of well-linked facilities for the community. Maximise the use of existing locations to develop other elements - eg space on school campuses for the theatre/dining provision within reach of the whole town. Work on the community organisations. Opportunities in retail and in technology with local firms. Large park for picnics, walks, duck pond, childrens play area, crazy golf. More local halls, community buildings which clubs can use, residents associations etc Theatre more sports facilities. Residents use facilities in other towns. Include leisure facilities and larger supermarkets etc. in future housing plans. Need a bigger sports centre, cinema, a bigger bowling ally. Modern leisure centre, the one in the centre of Bicester is in the wrong place too central there needs to be a centre that has water slides etc. a lake for sailing, rowing & a café. Provide an indoor shopping centre like Banbury centred around an artificial lake for pedalos and a theatre by the side.	The vision looks to support and provide new facilities. It is sensible to maximise the use of existing assets. It acknowledges that the town needs new facilities. The development at NW Bicester will need to provide facilities to serve the increased population. The vision looks to support and provide new facilities for community & leisure and jobs to reduce out commuting. It acknowledges that the town needs new facilities. The purpose of the vision to set out the aspirations for the town rather than identify specific projects. Following the adoption of the Vision and the LDF Core Strategy further consideration will be given to developing action plans. One of the key elements of the vision is to create a vibrant town where people would want to spend their leisure time. However these need to be appropriate to the size of the town and commercially viable. Town centre extension is planned but not as an indoor provision.	Add P4 “And encourage maximum use of existing community facilities and assets Add. All new development will need to provide or contribute to the provision of facilities to serve the increased population. Add P4 <i>“Support measures to enhance Bicester as a local service centre for the surrounding villages and rural area.”</i> ”
Eco Standards	Go forward together considering all possibilities. Create some contact points with the history of the town Better, more affordable parking Encourage retro fitting for lower carbon, but also to regain heritage of the town centre Set a proper standard now for new housing not less than Sus Hme Code 6 Reduce traffic queuing and congestion	The vision is the first step in the Strategic Delivery Board seeking to create a change of approach for Bicester. There are costs involved in achieving the highest code level, level 6. The vision seeks code 5 which requires improvement over building regulations and is considered ambitious but achievable.	Amend P4 Remove reference to code levels
Eco standards Delivery	Un-aspirational, Needs benchmarking to measure delivery. Appendix constantly refers to NW Bicester not whole of Bicester Contradicts minimum housing standards - highest possible - level 4 and level 5 are all referenced as being the	The vision is designed to set out the aspiration for the town and it is considered ambitious. The LDF will contain the detailed planning policies. The Core Strategy will be the first of the documents to be	Add Introduction that describes the purpose of the document and relationship with other documents

	requirement. Half hearted, bland, wishy washy and nowhere near ambitious enough, the town deserves much more.	produced and will be monitored.	
Eco town standards	No reason why all new building should have to comply with the highest standards Improve access to bicester village to reduce pollution from queining vehicles. Only alternative to the weston Otmoor proposals.	The existing traffic problems are acknowledged and the vision refers to the BICITLUS study that looks at the most sustainable locations for new development and highway improvements.	All new development must be integrated with and the existing town to support the creation of a vibrant place.
Community first - Eco standards	Need to explain spaces for all and Buildings for life. Eco Bicester can change the reputation of Bicester by becoming a town-wide exemplar – cutting edge, locally made houses, sustainable businesses, and centre for low carbon economy. Building regulations will enforce does not need Eco Bicester Vision new hospital or "primary care centre" is forced to be built to at least the environmental level 5 and ideally higher. This will save a huge amount in both energy and water usage for the future and reduce their running costs by a huge amount. The proposed developments will not achieve sufficiently high standards for housing; industry and commerce are likely to face even less stringent requirements.	The reference to specific standards should be amended to reflect a more generic approach The SDB can not change building regulations this is the job of government. The PPS suggests that new dwellings should be to at least code 4 and in area of water stress code 5 for water. It is recommended that the vision is amended to reflect this. Non residential buildings are assessed against BREEAM standards and the vision seeks Excellent The vision seeks new development to met high standards of energy efficiency and sustainable construction	Replace refer to Buildings for Life with more generic description of eco standards. Amend P4 Amend eco standards section as follows: "Ensure that new buildings are designed and built to the highest standards in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable construction techniques for example Passiv Haus design based on the code for sustainable homes and British Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology (BREEAM). This should reflect the eco town standards set out in the supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 as a minimum (unless higher standards are set out elsewhere)." Amend Appendix to ensure consistency
Economy employment opportunities	The jobs provided by the development need to be proper skill based jobs to achieve the aims and it is key to deliver jobs at the same time as houses Degree level jobs as well as construction jobs. Positive encouragement for existing businesses within Bicester to stay and grow Need an audit of existing businesses	The vision sets out an aspiration for skills and training and refers to employment opportunities requiring a broad spectrum of skills	No change

<p>Economy</p>	<p>No explanation on how 'one job per household' will be achieved in Bicester with commuters who work a long distance away. Bicester is a good location to be based. Bicester needs more jobs so that the people in the Eco Town and, importantly, in Bicester itself are able to walk or cycle to work. These jobs should provide a spectrum of roles and pay scales rather than being limited to poorly paid unskilled work. Increase in locally available jobs How are the objectives being evaluated? When can we say Bicester has become a low carbon economy? How are businesses being attracted? Current lack of good quality office accommodation and poor appearance of commercial sites. Variety of types and sizes of commercial space is needed, so that growing companies stay. Out-commuting is a problem. Bicester is dormitory town. Employment Opportunities - Point 2 - Suggest a Diamond that includes Birmingham and position Bicester as the central meeting place – a conference hub that reduces travel distances. In addition have state of the art video conferencing facilities. Utilise Evergreen 3 and Oxford Airport. Point 3 – Term sub region should be updated.</p>	<p>The vision identifies on page 4 the proposals to capitalise on Bicester's location, Oxfordshire spin outs, skills &amp; training, targeting new technology and service industries as well as provision of premises to increase employment opportunities. The vision promotes travel by means other than the private car. Improved public transport is sought but pricing is a matter for the operators. Parking standards and design policies will be set out in the Development Plan and used to determine planning proposals The vision sets the aspiration for the town. Check KPIs. What are we doing already??? The need to retain existing jobs is acknowledged Highlighting accessibility is important in attracting some new businesses. The suggestion to create a conference venue to be passed to Economic Development teams for consideration. RDA's are no longer relevant and the description sub region should be replaced with "surrounding area".</p>	<p>Add P5  <i>"Provide support for existing employers in the town to increase their levels of local employment."</i></p>
<p>Sustainable Level to Work</p>	<p>Point 1 – Requires Bicester to be given a clear priority over Kidlington and Banbury by CDC.                  Also needs dedicated officer time in terms of economic development.</p>	<p>The document focuses on Eco Bicester and does not refer to the other towns/villages in the wider District. The Eco Bicester Project Team will support the delivery of the vision. The aim is to provide one employment opportunity accessible by walking cycling or public transport for every new home. The existing traffic problems are acknowledged and the vision refers to the BICITLUS study that looks at the most sustainable locations for new development and highway improvements</p>	<p>No change</p>
<p>Economy</p>	<p>It is vital that the material construction factory is in Bicester. Manufacturing green materials locally to be used by the construction businesses of the various developments.</p>	<p>The demonstration phase may have to source materials and labour from outside Bicester until local products and workforce are available. The vision seeks to provide opportunities for local employment, materials and sustainable construction. It is acknowledged that it is important to encourage materials manufacturing and sourcing that reduces the need to travel.</p>	<p>Add Appendix                  Developers will be encouraged to ensure that the carbon emissions from transport are taken into account in the choice of materials used in the development.</p>
<p>Employment opportunities/space</p>	<p>Adequate water, electricity and gas supplies need to be available to the existing businesses</p>	<p>Eco Bicester Project Team to contact utility companies and service providers Infrastructure planning and delivery will be considered as part of the LDF infrastructure planning and delivery will be considered as part of the LDF</p>	<p>No change</p>

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Employment space	Page 5: Employment space, first bullet point; Do not understand the sentence. See Bicester as a national and international centre for Green Industries, skills and technology, and a place where businesses wish to relocate to. This goes beyond 'service industries' Point 1 –use of term Sub Region without definition. Point 4 – Numerate.	The reference to sub regional should be reconsidered or redefined in the context of the wider area.	Delete reference to sub region and consider replacing with an alternative description of the wider area. Add: "Provide one job opportunity per household for the eco development's population."
Transport & Movement	Point 4 – Secure cycle storage, signposting with approx times, guides for rides and walking. Point 8 – Promote the many Oxford based clubs that could support Bicester. Target local larger businesses that have car borne workers and encourage/support them in creating car sharing schemes.	In promoting cycling and walking as the first choice for transport the vision will support improved facilities for these modes. The vision reflects the many car clubs already in use in other developments. Car clubs will be considered on the NW Bicester development site and could form the basis of a wider scheme for the existing town. The document promotes sustainable travel planning which includes car share	Refer to Oxfordshire Car Share scheme
Transport and movement Page 50	Sustrans welcomes the publication of "Eco Bicester – One Shared Vision", particularly the emphasis on the whole town and not just the proposed ecotown at NW Bicester. We welcome the emphasis on walking and cycling, particularly as the town is flat and compact. The furthest edge of proposed development will be no more than 5km from town centre facilities and existing employment sites, a distance that be comfortably cycled in 20 minutes.	The support is welcomed	Suggested no change
Transport and movement	Bicester is a commuter town. Transport infrastructure must support proposed growth. Road infrastructure needs to be improved. Pedestrian crossings are needed to cope with more traffic. A34 congestion. Parking standards. Infrastructure for cycling, buses, walking safely. Provide fast effective alternative to the car that is cheap to use and regular. Reduce car congestion to the north of Bicester. People will have cars. residents cars in the front of homes People will not use public transport. Train travel is expensive compared to driving and less convenient. Bicester Village traffic problems. 5000 homes with an average of 1.5 cars per house will compound issue.. Rural transport provision is inadequate infrequent and expensive. therefore forced to travel by car. Already large numbers of vehicles passing through and around Bicester Inadequate transport infrastructure. The provision of adequate road infrastructure before the population grows. Need to update the transport infrastructure. the development needs to fund more buses, rail improvements, improving the ring road and creating more	This is acknowledged and is part of the reason to look to reduce short journeys in the town. The existing traffic problems are acknowledged and the vision refers to the BICITLUS study that looks the most sustainable locations for new development and highway improvements. The vision promotes travel by means other than the private car. The vision targets travel within the town for the promotion of walking & cycling as well as identifying the opportunities for improved public transport. The vision seeks to promote and give priority to walking & cycling within the town. The appendix sets out requirements for new development. It seeks to limit car trips but does not specify a parking standard. OCC are currently reviewing parking standards The vision seeks to promote walking & cycling and improve non vehicular links. Improved public transport is sought but the pricing is a matter for the operators.	

	cycle lanes and paths.		
Transport	Be clear on what density means in terms of walkable neighbourhoods	The reference to density reflects the aspiration for improved access to services and facilities in the town and a reduced need to travel	Delete the reference to densities on page 6
Transport	Aim to reduce personal carbon footprint by having better access to affordable public transport	The vision targets travel within the town for the promotion of walking and cycling as well as identifying the opportunities for improved public transport.	No change
Transport	Proposal to decrease car dependence is admirable, unrealistic aim to reduce car trips from NW Bicester by 50% or more. Proposal to improve walking and cycling provision is welcome. Get the traffic flowing freely and easily and the environment benefits, business becomes less costly and attracts more employment opportunities.	The existing traffic problems are acknowledged and the vision refers to the BICITLUS study that looks the most sustainable locations for new development and highway improvements. The appendix sets out requirements for new development. It seeks to limit car trips but does not specify a parking standard. OCC are currently reviewing parking standards	No change
Walking and cycling	Stress the importance of good quality walking and cycling routes to and through the town centre. Sustrans cycled around the town with Tony Baldry MP in August and a short report on "Walking & Cycling Gateways" was prepared. An earlier submission on town centre developments and cycling issues is also relevant.	Support is welcomed	No change
Travel Planning	Concern about the current proposals to change travel behaviour within the existing town. Mass marketing campaigns are planned, which previous experience suggests will have limited impact. A small Personalised Travel	Personalised travel planning is being considered as part of the proposals for Bicester. The experience of sustainable travel towns is also relevant.	Suggested no change

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	Planning project would be much more effective than a town-wide non-targeted marketing campaign. The Vision document refers to the Sustainable Travel Towns, but many of the lessons from Peterborough, Worcester and Darlington do not appear to be used in Bicester.		
Walking and cycling	Investigate the right of way of the cycle path leading from Tescos down to Bicester Town Station. Route 51 cycle path could usefully be re-routed by coming down from Tescos all the way to the town station, out to the London road, down to the crossing, turn left directly afterward along the cycle/footpath that's already there, and then continue across the estate to join current route at Gavray Drive.	Officers to investigate and respond separately. The right of way referred to is over private land and is secured by a legal agreement. The County Council has carried out an initial survey of existing walking and cycling links	Suggested no change No change
Improvements to the existing transport network	Point 3 – To support other points in the document car parking should be minimised and secure bike storage and integrated bus service given significant priority.	OCC and CDC continue to work with Chiltern Railways to agree the level of parking at Bicester Town Station	No change.
Improvements to the existing transport network	Point 4 – Rat running, outward from Bicester, through Wendelbury will not be stopped by SW Perimeter road.	The perimeter road is part of a package of highway improvements set out in the Bicester Integrated Transport and Land Use Study	No change.
Improvements to the existing transport network	Point 5 Junction 9 M40 improvements Highways have admitted neither phase 1 or 2 will help Bicester as no account of A41 is being taken. In fact sensors are moving closer to Bicester which will increase delays.	The improvements to Junction 9 are a priority for the Strategic Delivery Board and will unlock the potential for employment development at Bicester Business Park	No change.
Environmental Sustainability	Point 3 – Walking and Cycling Enhance & promote existing cycle and walk routes to encourage use. Green space/RAF Bicester Add – Value/importance of aerodrome as a green space with community access. Biodiversity Bees – must encourage Bees	Paths for walking and cycling will be promoted as part of multifunctional green space RAF Bicester could form part of a network of green spaces and negotiations with Defence Estates continue The vision includes and promotes biodiversity enhancement including bees	No change
Environmental sustainability	Access to countryside without driving. Local paths blocked, town green areas don't link. Would like good walking, cycling routes through the town linking to countryside with access for children to woods and ponds wildlife. Create woodland walks with children friendly activities.	The vision seeks a network of open spaces within the town. This has been a long held ambition but it has only been possible to achieve improvements when opportunities have arisen through new development.	Add P7 "Opportunities will be sought to improve access to the countryside"
Environmental sustainability - Water use	Water Use Take into account future commercial needs.	The vision document sets out the approach to water use for new and existing development including commercial uses	No change
Environmental sustainability	Environment sustainability should be a part of all new building objectives. Impacts on biodiversity, landscape, water stress and flood risk will be serious	The vision recognises the need to protect & enhance bio diversity and develop an approach to sustainable water management	Add P7 The character of the countryside shall be protected and where new development has been identified as necessary it should be designed to be assimilated

			within the landscape without altering the character of the surrounding countryside.
Environmental sustainability	Energy savings will be offset by population growth Will houses have solar power, underground heat generation, grey water tanks, wind turbines?	Housing needs surveys for the LDF identify growth in population within the district. Increasing population means that it is very important that the use of resources is sustainable and does not result in adverse impact on the environment. The vision relates to the whole town rather than to a specific development and therefore reference is made to achieving high environmental standards for sustainable homes rather than specifying a particular type of technology. This can be achieved in a number of different ways Increasingly government targets to decrease carbon emissions, reduce waste and develop more sustainably will impact on the town. Seeking to change the approach now will put Bicester at an advantage in the future.	Add to Introduction reference to UK Carbon reduction targets etc
Environmental sustainability Page 55	Land proposed currently producing food building on this land will reduce the area of land available for food production. Ideas for allotments will not address the problem.	The amount of development to be accommodated in the town and the best location is identified in the draft Core Strategy. The vision reflects the LDF strategic allocation for NW Bicester but does not seek to allocate land as this is not its purpose. The vision supports local food production.	
Environmental sustainability	Remove 'possible' from point 6 and use burial ground instead of cemetery (5.2.6)	The comment refers to the use of the cemetery	Delete "possible"
Environmental sustainability	To add 'options' after explore sewerage (5.6.2)	Noted	Add 'options' after explore sewerage
Environmental sustainability	Consider use of Archimedes screws in existing water courses	The vision supports zero & low carbon energy solutions. Existing water courses through Bicester have relatively low flows and this comment is considered too specific include.	No change
Environmental sustainability	New settlements exacerbate demand for land, food, water and energy. Rural land will be required for food production if population levels are not reduced. New towns are likely to generate significant extra traffic congestion and pollution. Government policies required. "Eco Bicester", has nothing to do with ecological/ economical/ environmental sustainability. Need to look at housing need.	It is recognised that new development does make demands on resources. The vision seeks to promote an approach to development that reduces those demands The vision can not change government policy. The rate of new housing development is determined through the Local Development Framework based on forecast population growth; the vision does not set the level of growth in the town.	
Environmental sustainability - waste and energy	Point 3 – Commercial and residential waste collection point in town would increase recycling and also reduce road traffic to Ardley.	Commercial and residential waste is currently collected in the town centre	No change

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Appendix	The appendix refers constantly to NW Bicester, if we are being aspirational should it not be whole of Bicester?	The appendix sets out the specific eco town standards for NW Bicester following the previous Government's identification of the site as a suitable location for an eco town	Clarify eco standards for whole town.
Appendix	Proposals would have more weight if the opening sentence were to be re-phrased as "The following standards will be required to be met for development at NW Bicester and all other new developments."	The eco town standards are not applicable to all new developments and are included as the basis for discussion with potential developers until a local standard for eco development is adopted.	Suggested no change
Appendix -Eco town standards	Homes a) Says code 5, elsewhere says code 4 and highest possible!	The document attempts to set a minimum standard for eco development based on the eco town standards contained in the supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1. It should be reviewed to ensure consistency. The appendices are taken from an extract from the PPS and will form the basis of a local standard for eco development	Standards for eco development to be amended in document.
Appendix - High speed broadband	Homes c) Think we should take out the where possible, line 4. `this is a must have for residential and commercial.	The document attempts to set a minimum standard for eco development based on the eco town standards contained in the supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1. It should be reviewed to ensure consistency.	Delete "where possible" as suggested.
Appendix	Wording indicates that so long as public transport can be used distance is no object. Thus travel to London etc would become acceptable – is this the case?	The vision aims to reduce out commuting and provide local jobs in Bicester. The PPS standards refer to unsustainable commuter trips being kept to a minimum. Therefore it would be unacceptable for the employment strategy to be based around travel to jobs in remote and long distance locations.	No change
Eco standards	Housing need, economic regeneration and infrastructure improvements can be more appropriately secured through development which is not encumbered by Eco standards (which have not been fully defined or justified)	NW Bicester is identified as a suitable location for an eco town in the supplement to PPS1. The eco development at NW Bicester has been shown to be viable in a concept study commissioned by CDC.	No change
Eco Standards Viability/Delivery	Industry will put financial gain first and "Eco" credentials second. Under the present financial climate this is unlikely to happen!	The vision sets out in the appendix the standards that are to be sought for new development. It will be for the Planning Committee in determining planning applications to consider the merits of each case. The vision is a long term document during which economic circumstances may change.	No change

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	<p>There are number of obstacles to deliver the Eco proposals including: An absence of a proper assessment of the economic viability of Eco development.          No clear or flexible approach to Eco standards; uncertainties regarding economic climate and likely changes to Eco standards proposed by new government. Key problems will not be directly solved through the Eco agenda. No evidence in the Cherwell Draft Core Strategy of how is the Eco Town going to act as an economic driver in the long term          Council should be seeking to clarify and refine the broad strategy for Eco Bicester in order that objectives, goals and targets are set which:-address the existing specific economic and social problems- are deliverable, viable and achievable-reflect the need for flexibility in the current economic climate - help facilitate the delivery of infrastructure needed to support new growth.          Eco town standards - conflicting standards quoted in the document and there should be flexibility to allow for future changes to eco standards and if developments comes forward in a piecemeal fashion. Eco Bicester Strategy needs flexibility to encourage initial employment growth and to encourage new employers with incentives and benefits. New employers may not invest in Bicester due to a requirement to deliver higher Eco standards than in other parts of the country. To deliver carbon zero in all development built as part of the eco town including commercial and public sector buildings may prove to be unattainable given the lack of public sector investment.          Not opposed to vision for stimulating growth of population and economy in Bicester. Directly supportive of proposals to create jobs and homes at Howes Lane. Serious reservations regarding viability and deliverability of Council's approach to Eco Development. A critical review of the broad brush vision for Eco Bicester has to be undertaken to look at the realistic viability and deliverability of aspirational Eco standards in current economic climate.</p>	<p>The NW Bicester Concept Study June 2009 showed eco development was viable. This comment needs to be considered in more detail          The eco town standards have been used and will have to be amended to reflect future changes or be replaced by local standards. A masterplan for the NW Bicester site is being prepared and will be an integral part of the Eco Bicester One Shared Vision. The Draft Cherwell Core Strategy includes NW Bicester as a strategic site allocation. More detail will be contained in the emerging LDF. This comment needs to be considered in more detail          The Eco Towns standards reflect those in the PPS and will be amended to reflect other emerging policies and strategies          The Eco Towns standards reflect those in the PPS and will be amended to reflect other emerging policies and strategies          Issues of viability and deliverability will be examined in more detail through the planning process at both the LDF and planning application stage An economic strategy is being prepared to support the proposals at NW Bicester. The Cherwell Economic Development Strategy is also in preparation and will set out the issues for Eco Bicester</p>	
<p>Eco standards Appendix</p>	<p>Points one and three are in tension (Page 8 - appendix Homes b also in tension) Highest design standards are well above SHC 4 or 5 – Need to clarify intent          Point 4 Encourage retro fit of rainwater harvesting as well, especially Local Authority to set example          Point 5 Highlight issue of material miles</p>	<p>The conflict re code standards within the document are noted. However it is considered that Code 5 is ambitious. The vision does seek reduced water use but is not specific about the means. The importance of material miles is noted (see above)</p>	<p>Amend P4          Insert amended text referring to more generic standards for sustainable construction and energy efficiency</p>

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## Appendix 4

Table showing responses to Eco Bicester One Shared Vision consultation – other issues			
Issue	Comments	Officer response	Proposed changes
Development sites	Use existing "Brown belt" land NOT productive farmland as proposed Additional housing at Gavray drive and land east of the town will not encroach on existing rural communities. Use the Bicester Airfield. Use brownfield sites instead of greenfield agricultural land. Surely this is what an "eco" monicker is all about The vision not shared by landowners	The document sets out the aspiration for the town as a whole and does not seek to identify development sites. This is the role of the LDF Gavray Drive already has permission for housing but this is not sufficient to meet the housing need identified in the LDF Core Strategy. Bicester airfield has been designated a conservation area due to its historic character and importance and therefore significant development would not be appropriate. Land owners at NW Bicester are all now aware of the proposals. A number have expressed a willingness to see their land developed.	No change
Facilities	NW Bicester needs Super Market, Doctors Surgery, Chemist or within a 5 min route to bicester Town centre. A regular public transport system that runs weekends and evenings a wheelchair friendly bungalows	The vision acknowledges that the town needs new facilities.	Add P4 Accessible housing Amend P6 Improve non vehicular links.....taking into account the needs of wheelchair users and others with impaired mobility.
Page 57 NW Bicester	The allocation (of NW Bicester) is not challenged in principle creating sustainable housing and employment at this location. TVP have highlighted previously the clear sustainability credentials of the land at Howes Lane and the opportunity it presents to deliver a well-located and comprehensive urban extension that would relate well to existing approved development at South West Bicester.	Noted	
NW Bicester	The fragmented nature of land ownership at NWB, it appears unlikely that consensus would be reached across all landowners to enable deliverability of the allocation within the near future. Provision should be made for staged development to come forward in this location, consistent with the objectives of the allocation.	The private sector is progressing with land assembly and has acquired land for the first phase of development. Land acquisition will continue as the masterplan is prepared.	No change
Town centre redevelopment	Have the new plans for the Centre of Bicester taken into account Environment Sustainability? Town needs to be revamped otherwise people will shop elsewhere. The redevelopment will offer a choice of supermarkets leisure facilities and more restaurants and cafes, which will entice locals to use the facilities.	The vision seeks to ensure all new buildings are built to high environmental standards. The town centre development was approved prior to the vision being produced and it is not possible to retrospectively impose new requirements.	No change

## Appendix 4

Lighting	Street lights in towns are left on, shopping centre lights on all night it makes a mockery of what is planned for the future.	OCC are responsible for street lighting and this comment will be passed to the highway engineers for consideration.	No Change
Timeline	Needs a high level timeline with milestones to review and confirm/refine next steps. Eco Town is planned to be built over 30 years	The vision does not include build rates or a programme of development. However historic build rates from other sites in Bicester have been used in other documents to predict the rate development is likely to take place.	Add Introduction explaining the purpose of the document and timescales (short, medium and long term).
Climate change adaptation	Focus on improvements to the sustainability of existing settlements to meet climate change objectives. Existing settlements comprise significant older building stock, upgrade of which is essential but remains largely unaddressed eco towns will not seriously address population and climate change issues	The need to focus on Bicester and the existing buildings as well as new buildings is recognised in the vision. What can be achieved is limited by funding available but a scheme to provide very affordable insulation measures has been launched. Eco Towns were designed to be national exemplars showing what could be achieved but it is recognised that they can not address climate change issues alone and can not address wider issues relating to population.	No change
Upper Heyford	Upper Heyford is a more suitable brownfield site for a new community	Planning permission has already been granted for development at Upper Heyford. The size of development at Upper Heyford is limited by planning policy due to the unsustainable location accessed from rural roads.	No change
Plan showing key sites in Bicester	The document doesn't provide a map of the site. Does the outline of the site (as presented on the Cherwell district council web site) remain unchanged?	A site location plan of NW Bicester and other development sites may be useful and has been considered. The Cherwell District Council website is accurate.	Include a map of Bicester
Social problems	Unemployment Teenage pregnancy, crime and deprivation	The Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy sets out to reduce inequality and reduce deprivation. The vision seeks increased employment opportunities, enhanced facilities and greater community involvement. The vision does not target any particular section of the community but seeks greater community involvement within the town.	No change
Communication Engagement	Communication with the whole town is essential, not just consultation, but engagement. How can Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board create an eco town to an "eco" town standard. How widely this consultation is being made public only discovered it on website How do you expect to engage with people of Bicester?	The Eco Bicester One Shared Vision has been widely publicised and a summary of the consultation process will be included in the revised document. The vision has been subject to consultation the final version of the document will make reference to this. Extensive consultation was also carried out through the LDF core strategy on the strategic allocation. Once a planning application is received there will be further opportunity to comment on the proposals. The consultation that has been undertaken on the vision will shape the final document.	Insert comment on consultation as part of preparation of Vision. Add a description of consultation carried out.

## Appendix 4

Planning policy	Cherwell's housing targets. NW Bicester proposal is over-development, now the South East Plan is scrapped. There are housing proposals for the MOD land at Graven Hill. Further housing development needs infrastructure improvements	The amount of development to be accommodated in the town and the best location is identified in the draft Core Strategy. The vision reflects the LDF strategic allocation for NW Bicester but does not seek to allocate land as this is not its purpose. The need for infrastructure improvements is recognised in the Vision.	No change
Planning Policy	This document provides a helpful framework for development in Bicester, but is outside the Core Strategy process and has not been established as planning policy. Therefore, Defence Estates is keen to understand how the vision will be linked to the Core Strategy process and ultimately implemented. This document provides a helpful framework for development in Bicester, but is outside Core Strategy process and has not been established as planning policy. Therefore, Defence Estates is keen to understand how the vision will be linked to the Core Strategy process and ultimately implemented. Alternative means of delivering the objectives of the Draft Core Strategy (DCS) and realising the Vision set out in this consultation paper could and should be explored.	Noted. The intention is to align the emerging Core Strategy and LDF policies with the vision document as the basis of local standards for eco development.	No change
MOD Bicester	If Graven Hill site was used to supply some of the Eco housing the aims here would be far easier to reach.	It is not the role of the Vision to allocate land. The site has not been identified as a strategic site allocation in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) but will be considered as part of the LDF process in view of representations that have been made to the draft Core Strategy. NW Bicester is identified as the strategic site allocation in the LDF draft Core Strategy for growth in Bicester. The Vision sets out the aspiration for the existing town as well as for future development. If in the future MOD landholdings were to be developed it would be important that they contributed to the achievement of the Vision.	No change
MOD Bicester	The MOD has suggested the provision of land to the south of the town, some of the development should be in that area on brown land rather than on green land in the north.	The land was not available at the time of the publication of the Eco Towns PPS. It is not the role of the Vision to allocate land. The site has not been identified as a strategic site allocation in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) but will be considered as part of the LDF process in view of representations that have been made to the draft Core Strategy.	No change
MOD Bicester Graven Hill	Defence Estates is seeking to develop a sustainable mixed use scheme at Graven Hill comprising employment and residential development which contributes to creating a town where people choose to live, work and spend their leisure time and meet objectives set out in 'Shared Vision'. Currently seeking allocation of Graven Hill site through Core Strategy process.	It is not the role of the Vision to allocate land. The site has not been identified as a strategic site allocation in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) but will be considered as part of the LDF process in view of representations that have been made to the draft Core Strategy. NW Bicester is identified as the strategic site	No change

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## Appendix 4

	Approximately 4,000 new jobs at Graven Hill site along with 1650 new homes, including affordable housing; an appropriate level of infrastructure, for example primary school, local shops, community centre, doctors' surgery, play areas and attractive green spaces, supported by improved transport links.	allocation in the LDF draft Core Strategy for growth in Bicester. The Vision sets out the aspiration for the existing town as well as for future development. If in the future MOD landholdings were to be developed it would be important that they contributed to the achievement of the Vision.	
MOD Bicester Graven Hill	Redevelopment of MOD site provides an opportunity to create a sustainable urban extension on brownfield land. This would reduce pressure on greenfield sites. Site has good access to the strategic road network, existing bus network and is within 1 km walk of Bicester Town railway station, and 2 km of Bicester North railway station. Proposals provide a boost to the local economy with additional jobs. MOD Bicester's rail connectivity represents a unique opportunity to improve freight transport links in the South East.	It is not the role of the Vision to allocate land. The site has not been identified as a strategic site allocation in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) but will be considered as part of the LDF process in view of representations that have been made to the draft Core Strategy. NW Bicester is identified as the strategic site allocation in the LDF draft Core Strategy for growth in Bicester. The Vision sets out the aspiration for the existing town as well as for future development. If in the future MOD landholdings were to be developed it would be important that they contributed to the achievement of the Vision.	No change
MOD Bicester Graven Hill  Page 60	Graven Hill is an opportunity to create a community built around an existing Rail system which could be used as a Tram/transit system. This would ease land acquisition issues.	It is not the role of the Vision to allocate land. The site has not been identified as a strategic site allocation in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) but will be considered as part of the LDF process in view of representations that have been made to the draft Core Strategy. NW Bicester is identified as the strategic site allocation in the LDF draft Core Strategy for growth in Bicester. The Vision sets out the aspiration for the existing town as well as for future development. If in the future MOD landholdings were to be developed it would be important that they contributed to the achievement of the Vision.	No change
MOD Bicester Graven Hill	There are no cultural, environmental or specific flood risk designations within the Graven Hill site.	It is not the role of the Vision to allocate land. The site has not been identified as a strategic site allocation in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) but will be considered as part of the LDF process in view of representations that have been made to the draft Core Strategy. NW Bicester is identified as the strategic site allocation in the LDF draft Core Strategy for growth in Bicester. The Vision sets out the aspiration for the existing town as well as for future development. If in the future MOD landholdings were to be developed it would be important that they contributed to the achievement of the Vision.	No change
MOD Bicester Graven Hill	Graven Hill site is previously developed, brownfield land; is within walking distance of Bicester town centre; is well served by bus and rail networks; would enable new business uses to be located within easy travel distance to London and Birmingham by train; has no significant constraints to development; is within	It is not the role of the Vision to allocate land. The site has not been identified as a strategic site allocation in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) but will be considered as part of the LDF process in view of representations that have been made to the draft Core	No change

## Appendix 4

	single ownership; has existing infrastructure and services	Strategy. NW Bicester is identified as the strategic site allocation in the LDF draft Core Strategy for growth in Bicester. The Vision sets out the aspiration for the existing town as well as for future development. If in the future MOD landholdings were to be developed it would be important that they contributed to the achievement of the Vision.	
MOD Bicester Graven Hill	Building neighbourhoods which are desirable, improve community cohesion and that are economically active and robust are key to sustainable development and therefore success of Eco Bicester. Other objectives will be more easily delivered if the first two objectives are given primacy.	The Vision seeks a rounded approach to creating a sustainable town. It is not considered appropriate to rank the objectives.	No change
MOD Bicester Graven Hill "workability" (affordability)	Apply objective of 'workability' to vision. Sustainability can be embedded as a way of life without relying on a dramatic shift in lifestyle. With careful planning, sustainable approach can also be the path of least resistance i.e. where it is both more convenient and more cost-effective to take the 'eco-approach'; Eco Bicester should recognise impact of market forces that either work in favour of the vision or could prevent its success. Examples of workability that would contribute to success of Eco Bicester: For land owners and developers, developments need to be financially attractive therefore planning process should take account of this and allow for a balance to be struck between various eco-standards on each development. Over-loading a development with even greater infrastructure cost than exists on a normal development will deter developers from funding infrastructure that must comply to novel and therefore relatively untested standards.	It is desirable to make the sustainable option the easiest option for people to take. To achieve the Vision more sustainable life styles will be required. The importance of viability is noted. The emerging LDF and individual planning applications will assess the deliverability of individual proposals. However it is important that the Vision clearly sets out the town's aspirations and it will be expected that these will be taken into account by landowners and developers in assessing the value of land.	No change
MOD Bicester Graven Hill	For residents of new developments, communities and environments created must be built on the principle of making the sustainable way the most attractive way e.g. public transport must self-evidently be optimum form of transport in a similar way to the Tube in London. For example, at Graven Hill very desirable open spaces will provide not only recreational space but will be well-connected to provide green links between homes, jobs, community facilities and services. Also, there will always be a contingent of residents in Bicester who will travel outside the district for work. With its close proximity to an improved Bicester Town Railway Station, Graven Hill is a location where public transport would form the preferred method for getting to London and other key locations outside district boundary.	NW Bicester is allocated as a strategic site in the Draft Core Strategy. It is not the role of the Vision to allocate land. The ability to achieve a sustainable development, including effective public transport at Graven Hill has yet to be demonstrated.	No change
LDF Core Strategy	A contingency site as stated in the DCS is Phase 2 at SW Bicester could be released to meet housing need however it	The amount of development to be accommodated in the town and the best location is identified in the draft Core Strategy.	No change

#### Appendix 4

	would only be capable of accommodating circa 750 dwellings, therefore it would need to be delivered alongside other sites. The DSC has acknowledged that NW Bicester is the most sustainable location to bring forward strategic development within the District; it therefore follows that a valid contingency should involve adjustments to the Eco-Town policy in the first instance, prior to releasing any alternative sites.	The vision reflects the LDF strategic allocation for NW Bicester but does not seek to allocate land as this is not its purpose.	
LDF Core Strategy	Due to the reduced housing targets after the revocation of the RSS, the residual figure to be provided at Bicester would be approximately 2,000 -2,500 dwellings before 2026. The revised housing requirements would not necessitate a development to Eco Town proportions. As it is not currently possible to plan for the allocated site in it's entirety, it would be more appropriate to bring the eco-development forward in smaller, neighbourhood-sized areas in accordance with overarching set of plan.	The amount of development to be accommodated in the town and the best location is identified in the draft Core Strategy. The vision reflects the LDF strategic allocation for NW Bicester but does not seek to allocate land as this is not its purpose.	No change
General comments Howes Lane  Page 62	The approach of Eco Bicester in addressing climate change impact of existing dwellings is welcomed. Improving environmental performance of existing housing stock should also be explored. Environmental tariffs placed on new build properties in lieu of higher code ratings may be pragmatic response to challenge of delivering to code level 5 and 6. It may also achieve wider benefits and persuade the existing population that new build development really can offer direct benefits to all. This could be in form of a grant fund that residents could apply to for match funding for instance, which would bring about an overall increased benefit and would not be reliant on central government funding. Howes Lane itself represents only section of the ring road around Bicester which has not been widened. This provides a unique opportunity to extend the built up area of Bicester and deliver an early 'gateway', phase of the Eco-suburb development which could readily integrate with the existing urban fabric. A concept statement, prepared by RPS on behalf of TVP in support of allocation for residential and employment at Howes Lane, was submitted to Cherwell DC in July 2007 demonstrates there are no impediments to delivery of the site as a natural and practical extension to Bicester. NW Bicester not a freestanding 'eco-town', but major urban extension with potential for excellent sustainability credentials by tapping into the existing public transport and community infrastructure to achieve the wider objective to improve social and economic containment of Bicester. Smaller eco-neighbourhoods would work in harmony with existing infrastructure and increasing the ability to retrofit	The vision sets out an aspiration for retrofitting the existing housing stock and other buildings in the town. It sets out eco standards for the eco development at NW Bicester but also other new development where appropriate. The amount of development to be accommodated in the town and the best location is identified in the draft Core Strategy. It is important that the development at NW Bicester is developed in accordance with a detailed masterplan that delivers a comprehensive scheme for the site as a whole.	No change



#### Appendix 4

	existing building and provide inspiration for behavioural change in existing residents. This would enable the appropriate changes to take place for the creation of 'Eco Bicester' in line with the vision.		
RAF Bicester	Airfield as recreational centre	The airfield forms part of the technical site and is currently not available. A Development Brief has been prepared by CDC for the site.	No change

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## Executive

### Local Transport Plan

6 December 2010

### Report of Head of Planning Policy & Economic Development

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present information to the Executive with a view to the council making a formal response to the public consultation on the Draft Local Transport Plan.

This report is public
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#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) That the County Council be commended on the general format of the LTP which addresses concerns raised by this Council previously that the LTP should be organised in a way which focuses on proposals for particular settlements and creates a stronger spatial link with Local Development Frameworks,
- (2) That in general, subject to the detailed recommendations made in the report, the policies and area strategies in the LTP be supported.
- (3) That the various detailed recommendations set out in paragraphs 1.16, 1.27, 1.43, 1.52 and 1.58 are submitted as the Council's formal response to the Local Transport Plan, and in particular the Council's comments on:-
  - approach taken by the LTP towards the HS2 proposals in policy PT6
  - the references to major new road links (the South East and South West Relief Roads) in Banbury
  - the ways in which the vision for eco-Bicester can best be supported through the LTP
  - the proposed Water Eaton Parkway station, and how (a) this can best be implemented in a manner that makes it accessible to local communities in Kidlington and Gosford, and (b) future congestion concerns can best be mitigated.

#### Executive Summary

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## Introduction

- 1.1 Oxfordshire County Council is currently preparing its third Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Oxfordshire. The LTP sets out a vision, objectives and outcomes for transport in the whole of the county. It also includes a programme of investment in new transport schemes and maintenance of the existing network.
- 1.2 This LTP covers the period 2011 – 2030. It has been prepared over many months by the County Council and has already involved a number of stages of public consultation. The most recent of these was a consultation on “scenarios” which was carried out in the early summer of 2010 and on which this Executive made comments in June (see paras. 2.2 – 2.3 below for more details).
- 1.3 The Draft Local Transport Plan was published by the County Council in October and is available for public consultation until 9<sup>th</sup> January 2011. A copy of the document has been made available in the Members’ Library.

## Proposals & Comments

- 1.4 The next section of the report looks at each of the major areas of the LTP in turn and makes comments and recommendations on each.

## General structure and policies within the Draft LTP

- 1.5 The Draft LTP is made up of four elements:-
  - An Executive Summary
  - The Draft Local Transport Plan
  - A Policy Document (which considers the rationale behind the LTP in more detail)
  - An Implementation Plan (which focuses on each of the area strategies).
- 1.6 In setting out its proposals, the Draft LTP makes it clear from the outset that there is likely to be very limited funding available for transport improvements in the first few years of the plan. The longer timescale given to the plan (up to 2030) allows the County Council to set out its aspiration whilst recognising the current economic situation.
- 1.7 The Draft LTP itself has been structured as follows:-
  - Firstly, there are a series of **general policies** for the county. One of these (policy G4) refers to County Council priorities for seeking external funding. Two projects are mentioned, Access to Oxford and transport improvements within Science Vale UK.
  - Secondly, there are a series of policies for each of the **objectives** of the LTP. These objectives are:-
    - Objective 1: to improve the condition of local roads, footways and

cycleways, including resilience to climate change

- Objective 2: to reduce congestion
  - Objective 3: to reduce casualties and the dangers associated with travel
  - Objective 4: to improve accessibility to work, education and services
  - Objective 5: to secure infrastructure and services to support development
  - Objective 6: to reduce carbon emissions from transport
  - Objective 7: to improve air quality, reduce other environmental impacts and enhance the street environment
  - Objective 8: to develop and increase the use of high quality, welcoming public transport
  - Objective 9: to develop and increase cycling and walking for local journeys, recreation and health.
- Thirdly, the LTP contains **area strategies** for Oxford, Abingdon, **Banbury**, **Bicester**, Science Vale UK, Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton, Faringdon, **Kidlington**, Henley-on-Thames, Thame, Wallingford and the **rural areas**. For each area, the challenges and then the strategy are considered.

#### General structure and policies within the Draft LTP: Comments

- 1.8 As a general comment, the County Council can be commended for the approach it has taken to the structure of the LTP document. In making its comments on the “scenarios” consultation in July 2010, this Council specifically requested that the final LTP document “*should be organised district-by-district and by settlement to create a stronger spatial link with Local Development Frameworks*” (see para. 2.3 below). The approach that the County Council has taken in presenting the draft LTP broadly does this with specific area strategies for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington. There is also a county-wide rural strategy. Whilst this is thinner on specific proposals for different parts of rural area, it does recognise some of the specific issues relating to different rural areas of the county (particularly with its corridor strategies). More details comments on the strategy for the rural areas can be found in paras. 1.53 – 1.58 below.
- 1.9 Turning to the general (non area specific) policies in the LTP, the following comments can be made.
- 1.10 As noted in para. 1.7 above, policy G4 refers to priorities for external funding that the County Council will pursue. There is no mention here of eco-Bicester. Whilst Bicester is given its own strategy later in the document (see paras. 1.26 to 1.44 below), it would appear sensible to identify eco-Bicester as a potential further project which could benefit from external funding where this is available. Both the County Council and Cherwell District Council have invested considerable resources in supporting eco-Bicester, and both Councils will wish to pursue appropriate external future funding where this is

available.

1.11 Within Cherwell's Draft Core Strategy our own vision statement (which mirrors much within the Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy) aims, amongst other things, to:-

- protect our natural resources and reduce the impact of development on the natural environment
- foster a growing economy with good transport links
- reduce dependence on the private car by improving road, rail and public transport links and increasing access to services for those that need them. There will be a focus on measures aimed to manage road congestion, improving public transport, and improving access to town centres and other shops and services.

1.12 In this context, the objectives in the LTP, and the policies that derive from these, appear to be in accordance with our priorities. In particular, the following comments can be made:-

- The objective to "improve the condition of local roads, footways and cycleways, including resilience to climate change" includes a policy to encourage sustainable drainage systems in roads and other transport assets. This reflects our own commitment to support sustainable urban drainage in the Draft Core Strategy
- The objective to reduce congestion includes a policy to identify suitable and unsuitable roads for freight movement, balancing the needs of business with protecting the local environment. This reflects issues which the Council has previously raised in relation to Banbury. The matter is not, however, addressed later in the Banbury area strategy, and this is considered further below.
- The objective to secure infrastructure and services to support development includes a commitment ensuring that the location and layout of new development minimises the need to travel and can be served by high quality public transport, walking and cycling. These measures accord with the general approach taken in the Draft Core Strategy. The commitment to reduce carbon emissions is also welcomed, particularly in the context of a district such as Cherwell which is likely to see significant further growth over the lifetime of the LTP.
- The objective to develop and increase the use of high quality, welcoming public transport includes policies to support proposals to (a) strategically enhance the rail network (policy PT4) and (b) work with partners to deliver new and improved stations and greater integration of rail and buses (PT5). These can be strongly supported as they accord with the support the council has given to the Chiltern Railways Evergreen 3 proposals.
- The objective to "develop and increase cycling and walking for local journeys, recreation and health" includes a policy to improve the local network for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. This helps to meet some of our strategic objectives as set out in the Draft Core Strategy.

1.13 Under the objective of developing and increasing the use of public transport (objective 8), policy PT6 states that the County Council "*will only support the High Speed 2 rail proposals if the local economic benefits outweigh the*

*environmental impacts*". As members will be aware, the Council, at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October considered a motion in respect of the High Speed 2 proposal and it took the position that it believes that there is an insufficient Business Case for this proposal has been made. It accordingly instructed officers to prepare a report to the Executive setting out how the Council will campaign with like minded neighbouring Councils to "Stop HS2".

- 1.14 In light of this motion, the Council could use this opportunity to support the position taken by the County Council in the LTP and furthermore re-state its position that it considers that the Business case for the HS2 proposal has not yet been demonstrated.
- 1.15 As a final general comment, it will be the case that in all of the area strategies, the LTP does not distinguish always between schemes that can be realistically taken forward (i.e. which can be actively bid for or funded through the County Council and/or with other identified funding) from any other potential scheme. In these situations, the County Council will need to ensure that it can make available its technical expertise as required to support the district(s) in making those technical decisions at the LDF level. This will include, in appropriate cases, the use of its specialist consultants.

#### General structure and policies within the Draft LTP: Recommendations

- 1.16 It is recommended that:-
- The Council commends the County Council on the general format of the LTP which addresses concerns raised by this Council previously that the LTP should be organised in a way which focuses on proposals for particular settlements and creates a stronger spatial link with Local Development Frameworks.
  - The Council supports the general policies of the LTP however would wish to see eco-Bicester identified as a priority project for seeking external funding within policy G4.
  - The Council supports the objectives of the LTP and, in general, the policies within these objectives.
  - the Council supports the approach taken by the LTP towards the HS2 proposals in policy PT6, particularly in the light of the potential impact upon communities within Cherwell District of the current proposal. The Council believes, however, that the Government has not made a sufficient Business Case for the proposal.
  - The County Council is asked to guarantee that where there is no certainty of the prioritisation or funding of schemes identified in the LTP, it commits to supporting the Council where more detailed local work is needed. This may include through the use of its own consultants.

## **Area Policies**

### **Banbury**

### Banbury: Proposals

- 1.17 The main challenges for Banbury are as follows:-
- Heavy congestion on key routes into the town centre, particularly for north-south movements
  - Air quality – particularly along Hennef Way and along Oxford Road, South Bar, Horse Fair, Warwick Road and Bloxham Road
  - Difficulties for pedestrians and cyclists
  - Bus provision, particularly to some of the employment areas
  - Pedestrian links to Banbury station
- 1.18 The strategy for Banbury focuses on walking, cycling, bus movements and reducing congestion. It includes the following:-
- Highway improvements - will focus on improving junction design where this may improve capacity and reduce congestion. New roads will be considered where alternatives have been considered and discounted. Two major road schemes for Banbury are noted: a South East Relief Road (Bloxham Road to Hennef Way) and a South West Relief Road (Stratford Road to Bloxham Road). The LTP makes it clear, however, that these schemes are unlikely to attract central government funding and will only be delivered in association with development of such a scale as would be able to wholly or mostly fund the road.
  - Buses – new information systems, new bus routes including between residential and employment areas
  - Rail – improvements to the station forecourt; improved walking routes to the station
  - Walking and cycling – improvements to the walking and cycling network, including within the town centre and between residential and employment areas.
  - Behavioural change – working with employers to produce and implement travel plans; promote car clubs and car sharing.

### Banbury: Comment

- 1.19 Within the Draft Core Strategy, the need to manage traffic congestion and to provide for more opportunities to travel in a more sustainable way, are highlighted as key issues for Banbury. The spatial strategy for Banbury (within the Draft Core Strategy) seeks to improve public transport services and opportunities for walking and cycling and to minimise traffic congestion. In this context approach in the LTP appears a sound one.
- 1.20 There is much within the Draft Core Strategy which would support the LTP strategy for Banbury, and vice versa. Many of the detailed proposals link in to areas already earmarked for development (such as at Bankside) or allocated in the Draft Core Strategy. In particular, the canalside development provides housing in a sustainable location which will limit the need for additional car movements. The scheme furthermore provides an opportunity to improve the



railway station forecourt and pedestrian and cycle links into the town centre.

- 1.21 A key concern with Banbury is traffic congestion, and the LTP strategy seeks to use a number of lower cost measures to tackle this. Congestion in the town centre (and especially due to the north/south movements through the town) is a particular challenge. The strategy for tackling this principally seeks to promote alternatives (walking, cycling and public transport) as far as possible. In the light of the restricted funds available to the LTP in the next few years, this approach is a reasonable one. It must be recognised that short of investing in major new road schemes around the town, the opportunities to address this congestion will be limited.
- 1.22 Regarding major new road schemes, the LTP is clear that there will not be the public funding to major new road schemes around Banbury and that therefore such schemes would only come forward if funded wholly, or in large part, by new development. This approach is consistent with that taken across the LTP. Whilst the lack of such public funding is regretted, it is nonetheless realistic.
- 1.23 The situation within Cherwell therefore is that the two major road schemes named for Banbury would only come forward as an integral part of major new development. Realistically, this will not happen in the lifetime of the LTP. The South East Relief Road would require large levels of development in the south of the town (beyond that already committed at Bankside) and to the south of Easington and the Salt Way to fund it. It should be remembered that the Bankside development has been planned (and given consent) without any provision for a possible South Eastern Relief Road. The alignment of such a road (which has not been identified, even in broad terms, in the LTP) would therefore presumably have to run to the south of the Bankside development and rugby club land. The South West Relief Road (which similarly has not been defined on a plan) would require large levels of development along the western side of the town including around Crouch Hill and to the west of Bretch Hill.
- 1.24 Although the Draft Core Strategy proposes some development to the west of Bretch Hill and in the Bankside area, this is not of a scale that would begin to justify or afford the provision of either of these major relief roads (estimated at £30-40m). Furthermore, the Council has consistently argued (including at the Public Examination into the South East Plan) that the environmental constraints on the town (including the flooding issues that affect parts of the town, the landscape constraints of the natural "bowl" within which the town sits, and the limited crossing points for the river, canal and railway line) mean that Banbury should not be a focus for major new development.
- 1.25 For these reasons, it is considered that it is unrealistic to maintain a reference to either of these major road schemes in the LTP. To maintain such a reference may give rise to continuing uncertainty over whether there is any future for either of these road schemes over the lifetime of the LTP. This may lead to planning uncertainty and unrealistic hopes for those wishing to see the roads built.
- 1.26 One issue that the LTP does not consider in detail is HGV movements. This was a specific matter that the District Council raised in the scenarios consultation. This matter should be considered alongside others as a means of better managing traffic through Banbury, particularly through the town

centre. There is a general reference to this within objective 2 (reducing congestion) but it is not seen in the area strategy for Banbury.

#### Banbury: Recommendations

1.27 It is recommended that:-

- The general area strategy for Banbury be supported.
- The references to major new road links (the South East and South West Relief Roads) should be deleted from the LTP as there is no prospect of them being delivered in the lifetime of the LTP and it is therefore unrealistic and misleading to retain a reference to them in the document.
- The County Council continues to work with the District council to consider the opportunities created by major development proposals in Banbury, and in particular the canalside proposals, to meet the objectives of the LTP.
- The LTP, and in particular the Implementation Plan, acknowledges the contribution made by HGV movements to overall congestion and seeks to address this as part of an overall strategy for Banbury.

### **Bicester**

#### Bicester: Proposals

1.28 The main problems and challenges for Bicester are summarised as follows:-

- Developing an eco town at North West Bicester
- Achieving eco Bicester objectives for the whole town
- Achieving a work/life balance at NW Bicester to meet containment targets
- Achieving a high level of sustainable transport from the new development
- Using the measures being implemented in NW Bicester to trigger a change in travel behaviour across the town
- Ensuring the highway network functions with the remaining car trips
- Existing weekday congestion
- Bicester Village Retail Park (B4030): The worst traffic congestion is often at weekends and Bank Holidays on the road network serving the Bicester Village Retail Park and this can create inappropriate routeing (“rat running”) particularly in Chesterton.
- M40 junction 9
- Park and Ride
- Bucknell Road/Howes Lane junction – congestion caused by traffic

accessing Upper Heyford and M40 junction 10

- Air quality – Kings End and Queens Avenue being considered as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and possibly Field Street/North Street.
- Walking and Cycling – network not complete and difficulties for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate town layout especially visitors
- Public rights of way – disjointed network particularly where paths meet the road network
- Rail and bus stations – significant use of sustainable transport to keep car travel for trips within the town to a minimum

1.29 The strategy for Bicester focuses on walking, cycling, bus movements and reducing congestion. It includes the following:-

- Behaviour change – to be promoted through the *Bicester Travel Behaviour Project*; working with employers and schools to change travel patterns
- Walking and cycling – creating and improving the town's walking and cycling network, particularly routes to key destinations and employment sites, promoting Market Square enhancements.
- Buses – delivering a rapid bus route between NW Bicester and the town centre, Premium Route standard bus stops for the town, delivering bus infrastructure and bus priority to improve reliability on A41 corridor, investigation of new electric /hybrid vehicles on key routes such as the exemplar site at NW Bicester, securing developer contributions to enhance the routing and frequencies of local bus services,
- Park and Ride – creating a park and ride facility adjacent to the A41 (subject to demand assessment). A remote Park and Ride facility is proposed at South West Bicester. The scope of the assessment is not clear from the strategy although the problems and challenges section suggests that the SW Bicester site could be a suitable for car users to transfer to the bus for journeys to Oxford with the opportunity for motorists to transfer to buses for journeys to Bicester town centre including Bicester Village.
- Low Emission Vehicles – introducing charging points for electric vehicles, working with local organisations to encourage the use of lower carbon emission vehicles and investigating options for encouraging use of lower emission private vehicles
- Rail – supporting the upgrade of Bicester Town Station; working with the East West Rail consortium, delivery of a high quality public transport and better cycle links from NW Bicester to the town's railway stations; improving cycle parking at the railway stations and introducing a bus interchange at Bicester town railway station.
- Highway infrastructure and traffic management – working with NW Bicester developers to promote integration with the existing town, incorporating *Eco Bicester* principles to promote safer, more sustainable and healthier modes of transport to and from the site, reducing the

attractiveness of Howes Lane, and Lords Lane to through traffic, improvements to the Eastern perimeter road as an attractive alternative to the central corridor, delivery of the SW perimeter road working with developers, M40 junction 9 improvements working with the Highways Agency, investigating the need to improve M40 junction 10 and its approaches, delivering the second phase of Roman Road improvements, traffic signage review on the strategic road network to ensure routeing is correct and remove clutter.

- 1.30 In summary, the key elements of the transport strategy for Bicester are: promoting travel behaviour change by looking at how to reduce the vehicle miles travelled and working with employers and schools; promoting walking and cycling by improving and creating routes and improving the public realm at key destinations, employment sites and the Market Square; developing rapid, frequent and reliable bus services; encouraging the introduction of low emission vehicles, including through the increased use of electric vehicles and provision of charging infrastructure; supporting improved rail services, the upgrade of Bicester town station and access by sustainable modes to both stations and improving highway infrastructure and traffic management including integrating new developments with the town, delivering the south west perimeter road, downgrading the attractiveness of Howes Lane and Lords Lane, improving the eastern perimeter route, and reviewing traffic signage.
- 1.31 The Executive summary identifies strategic transport schemes set out in the Oxfordshire Local Investment Plan (LIP) required to support the development of Bicester in the short term including M40 junction 9 improvements, the park and ride facility, South West Perimeter Road and sustainable transport improvements. The LTP consultation process seeks support for the above schemes as priorities in the local area whilst recognising the delivery of the scheme is unlikely in the short term due to funding constraints.
- 1.32 It is proposed that this Strategy will replace the Bicester ITLUS (2000) and ITLUS contributions will be transferred to the LTP3 Bicester Town Strategy

#### Bicester: Comments

- 1.33 Within the Draft Core Strategy, highway constraints such as the traffic congestion in the town centre, the need for improvements to M40 junction 9 and the Bucknell Road / Howes Lane junction within the town, are highlighted as key issues for Bicester. The spatial strategy for Bicester (within the Draft Core Strategy) seeks to provide for new development in accessible locations that will maximise the opportunities for providing sustainable transport choices, reducing traffic congestion and the proportion of out commuting. In this context approach in the LTP appears sound.
- 1.34 The Draft Core Strategy, recognised the traffic problems caused by Bicester's rapid growth in recent years and congestion caused by developments such as Bicester Village Retail Outlet. It refers to LTP2 and existing transport issues. The Draft LTP3 provides the opportunity to align the Core Strategy with the emerging transport strategy for Bicester and shares many of the goals and objectives.
- 1.35 There is much within the Draft Core Strategy which would support the LTP strategy for Bicester, and vice versa. Many of the detailed proposals link in to areas of committed development (such as at SW Bicester) or the proposed

eco development at NW Bicester allocated in the Draft Core Strategy. In particular, the Eco Bicester One Shared Vision for the town will form part of the transport strategy.

- 1.36 Eco development provides the opportunity to promote sustainable travel choices, behavioural change and achieve eco town standards set out in the Eco Towns Planning Policy Statement (PPS), July 2009. The NW Bicester development will be an exemplar of sustainable development and the Council would wish to ensure that the LTP reflects requirements for travel in eco towns set out in the Eco towns PPS and *Eco Bicester One Shared Vision*. The behaviour change strategy should consider using targets for trips originating within the town to be made by non-car means based on the 50 per cent target set out in the above documents. The strategy seeks to promote sustainable transport choices (walking, cycling and public transport). For example it promotes a rapid bus route between the proposed eco development at NW Bicester and the town centre. It is important that the improved bus service is extended to the town's business and employment areas as part of a fully integrated transport network.
- 1.37 A key concern with Bicester is traffic congestion, and the LTP strategy seeks to tackle this through a variety of measures including behavioural change and traffic management. Congestion in the town (and especially due to the nature of business at Bicester Village Retail Outlet) is a particular challenge. In the light of the restricted funds available to the LTP in the next few years, the opportunities to address this congestion will be limited.
- 1.38 In terms of the Park and Ride facility, this will be subject to a demand assessment to identify the need for the proposals. However it is not clear how the facility will operate and whether it will serve Oxford, Bicester town centre, Bicester Village or all of these destinations. The LTP needs to be very clear on this point as there is currently a lack of clarity on this important issue.
- 1.39 The infrastructure schemes identified in the LTP remain a priority for Cherwell District Council in delivering Eco Bicester and they should be supported. Regarding the delivery of infrastructure schemes, the LTP is clear that public funding will not be available in the short term (5 years) for major schemes in and around Bicester. The Bicester Area Strategy recognises that enhanced levels of investment will be required to deliver the transport improvements set out in the LTP and reflect Bicester's eco town status. On this basis, the delivery of the transport improvements within Bicester should be included as a priority for external funding and included in Policy G4 of the LTP.
- 1.40 Recognising the funding difficulties inherent in the development of major new infrastructure, the LTP Draft Implementation Plan for Bicester identifies a number of areas that should be further investigated in an effort to manage traffic and provide highway infrastructure. These include investigating improvements to the eastern perimeter route to provide through traffic with a viable and attractive alternative to the central corridor through the town centre. Use of new electric/hybrid buses is also put forward for further investigation. These measures should be kept under active consideration and the further work undertaken at the earliest opportunity once the scope of the further investigations and assessments has been agreed with the District Council.
- 1.41 Prior to the eco development proposed at NW Bicester, the intention was to

take traffic out of the town centre by improving Howes Lane and its junction with Bucknell Road and building the South West perimeter road to link with the A41 north of the Chesterton junction. Draft LTP3 proposes downgrading Howes Lane to enable the eco development to link with the existing town. A consequence of this is that improvements will need to be made to key junctions along the eastern perimeter road so that it provides a viable and attractive alternative for through traffic. The impact of the NW Bicester development is currently being tested by the developer's transport consultants and the results of this work will be used to inform the improvements required to the existing transport network.

- 1.42 In summary, the inclusion of the area strategy section for Bicester is broadly welcomed. The strategy provides the background to the transport issues affecting Bicester including M40 junctions 9 and 10 and existing congestion in the town with specific reference to Bicester Village and Bucknell Road/Howes Lane junction. It seeks to set out how the transport strategy for the town should respond to the eco-development at North West Bicester. As it does so, however, it is vital that issues such as the future of the Park & Ride proposal at SW Bicester and the implications of the eco-development on the functioning of the perimeter road are fully and clearly explained

Bicester: Recommendation

- 1.43 It is recommended that:-

- The general area strategy for Bicester be supported.
- The strategic transport schemes for Bicester remain a priority and should be supported, subject to receiving further information and clarification on the scope and detail of the schemes.
- The delivery of the transport improvements within Bicester should be included as a priority for external funding and included in Policy G4 of the LTP.
- The County Council continues to work with the District council to consider the opportunities created by the eco development proposals at NW Bicester, and in particular the transport and movement section of the Eco Bicester One Shared Vision, to meet the objectives of the LTP.
- The LTP, and in particular the Bicester Area strategy, acknowledges the eco town standards set out the Eco town PPS and Eco Bicester One Shared Vision as part of an overall strategy for Bicester.
- The walking and pedestrian environment strategy should investigate links and the integration between the proposed eco development and the existing town as a priority. Pedestrians should also be given priority in considering highway infrastructure improvements.
- The cycling strategy should refer to the railway stations as key locations/destinations providing cycling facilities.
- The strategy for buses in Bicester particularly the rapid bus route between the NW Bicester development site and town centre should include employment areas as part of a fully integrated transport network.

- The LTP be asked to clarify the purpose of the Park and Ride facility at South West Bicester and give a clear indication of when the demand assessment will be undertaken to inform any decision on the future of this proposal.
- The Transport Strategy for Bicester should be worked up in more detail to align with the emerging Cherwell Local Development Framework and Eco Bicester One Shared Vision. This would include looking further at the need and realistic opportunities to provide sustainable transport infrastructure in and around the town and deliver the required highway capacity and achieve the requirements of the eco town standards.
- The LTP should clarify the priority that needs to be given to exploring how improvements can be made junctions to the eastern perimeter road as a consequence of the measures as part of the eco-development to reduce the attractiveness of Howes Lane and Lords Lane to through traffic.
- All of the actions identified in the Implementation Plan under “Highways Infrastructure and Traffic Management” be considered further at the earliest reasonable opportunity once the scope of the investigations has been agreed with the District Council.

## **Kidlington**

### Kidlington: Proposals

- 1.44 Kidlington is generally well served by public transport. The key issues affecting Kidlington are identified as air quality (in the vicinity of the Bicester Road junction with the A34) and currently poor interchange arrangements for rail. This will improve, however, with the construction of the new parkway station at Water Eaton.
- 1.45 The strategy for Kidlington focuses on three elements:-
- Walking & cycling: including new links to Water Eaton Parkway and improved links to the business parks and airport.
  - Traffic management: including a traffic signage review of signage from the strategic road network to Kidlington
  - Public transport: including improving services to the airport, and investigating a range of improvements including a new service to Water Eaton Parkway.
  - Behavioural change: working with schools and businesses to develop travel plans

### Kidlington: Comments

- 1.46 This strategy appears to fit reasonably well with priorities already identified by the Council including through the Draft Core Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy. These identified the following priorities:-
- Ensuring sufficient access to services

- Ensuring stronger links between industrial areas, the airport and local residents and the village centre
  - Positioning Kidlington in economic terms in view of its unique place on account of the airport, Begbroke Science Park and its proximity to Oxford and promoting the sustainable commercial and recreational potential of the canal and airport.
  - Continuing to explore the potential for a new station
  - Addressing the issue of the main road bisecting the village and traffic management.
- 1.47 The Cherwell Non Statutory Local Plan allocates land for a railway station at Kidlington on the Banbury to Oxford line. This was supported in the first LTP (2001-06) but not in the second (2006-11). This LTP makes no provision for a new station, however it does identify the proposed new station at Water Eaton Parkway being developed as part of the Evergreen 3 Project by Chiltern Railways.
- 1.48 The Council has supported the principle of the Water Eaton Parkway station as part of the wider Chiltern Railways proposals. In order for this station to be successful, it is vital that good pedestrian, cycle and bus links are made to the new station. The references to this in the LTP are welcomed, and these should be prioritised to optimise the opportunities that the station will bring to the village. It would also be helpful if the LTP was able to take a clear position on the previous railway station proposal for Kidlington to avoid any future uncertainty.
- 1.49 It should be noted that the proposed Water Eaton Parkway does have the support (in principle) of Kidlington Parish Council which identifies a number of benefits that the station will bring to Kidlington in terms of lifting its economic profile and providing much improved public transport access for residents of the village.
- 1.50 Notwithstanding this support in principle, both Kidlington and Gosford & Water Eaton Parish Councils are concerned about the level of traffic associated with the station and the proposed level of car parking. These matters are currently being considered as part of the public inquiry into the Transport & Works Act application for the Evergreen 3 proposal. It will be important, however, that the LTP has regard to these matters in finalising its strategy for Kidlington in the event that the station is approved and that increased problems of traffic congestion may occur in the future.
- 1.51 The LTP makes few direct references to the impact of the A4260 which bisects the village, however it does refer (particularly in the Implementation Plan) to the need to support "*Cherwell District Council's principle that Kidlington Village Centre is the vibrant heart of the village*" and supporting "*schemes which provide excellent facilities for pedestrians, in particular wider footpaths and pedestrian crossings*" (Implementation Plan: Kidlington Area Strategy, para. 24.32).

Kidlington: Recommendation

- 1.52 It is recommended that:-
- The general area strategy for Kidlington be supported.



- In the event of the Parkway station at Water Eaton being approved, the County Council be asked to prioritise measures to make sure that high quality pedestrian, walking and bus links are provided from Kidlington and Gosford to the station. Furthermore, notwithstanding the mitigation measures that will be put in place arising from the current Transport & Works Act application regarding the station, the LTP should recognise the potential for increased congestion within Kidlington and Gosford. It should commit to keeping this under close review once the station is operational, and then considering further traffic management measures as a priority if these are found necessary.
- The County Council be asked to take a clear position on the future potential of a railway station in Kidlington on the Banbury to Oxford line as previously identified in the Non Statutory Local Plan and first LTP. If the provision of the Water Eaton Parkway station removes any possibility of this station being built, this should be made clear for the avoidance of future doubt.
- Priority should also be given to measures to improve pedestrian connectivity within and to Kidlington Village Centre, particularly across the A4260, along the lines noted in the Implementation Plan.

## **Rural Areas**

### Rural Areas: Proposals

- 1.53 These proposals cover the whole of rural Oxfordshire, not just that part within Cherwell District.
- 1.54 Perhaps not surprisingly, and particularly given financial constraints, the strategy for the rural areas focuses on maintaining existing services and facilities, and improving access to these.
- Buses: The aim is to improve services on major routes between towns, to retain a basic county bus service network in other areas, and to support better marketing and promotion of services. Some improvements to bus shelters will be planned as resources allow.
  - Rail: Improvements are planned to Islip station as part of Evergreen 3. The main LTP focus will be to improving access to stations.
  - Roads: There are no major highway improvements proposed in the lifetime of the Plan. There will be a roll-out of 50mph speed limits on all single carriageway roads and the County Council will support initiatives to have this adopted as a national standard.
  - Walking, cycling, behavioural change: The focus will be on improving connections between villages and to the rights of way network.
- 1.55 There are also a number of corridor strategies proposed.
- Along the A34 north of Oxford, options for a Park & Ride at Bicester will be investigated, and support given to improvements at junction 9 of the

M40 and the Evergreen 3 proposals.

- Along the A4260/A4165 corridor into Oxford, measures include improving access to Water Eaton Park & Ride, supporting the new station and improving access to this.

#### Rural Areas: Comments

1.56 This strategy appears to fit reasonably well with priorities already identified by the Council including through the Draft Core Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy. These identified the following priorities:-

- Protecting and maintaining access to local services wherever possible
- Supporting a sustainable rural economy
- Identifying where traffic controls are desirable and beneficial
- Improving road safety particularly from speeding vehicles and dangerous driving
- Improving links between villages for walkers and cyclists and equestrians.

1.57 Given that the strategy covers the whole of the Oxfordshire rural area, it is short on specific projects and initiatives which would directly benefit our district. The following comments can, however, be made:-

- The reference to improving bus services on major routes between towns and retaining a basic county bus service network in other areas is supported. Care will need to be particularly given to protecting services in those villages which offer employment and other opportunities, to ensure that these opportunities are best supported.
- The initiative to support road safety by reducing speed limits on single carriageway roads is supported.
- The measures to improve accessibility to the new Water Eaton Parkway station can be supported as recognition of some of the potential problems created by the new station.

#### Rural Areas: Recommendations

1.58 It is recommended that:-

- The general area strategy for the rural areas be supported.
- Within the strategy for bus travel, priority should be given to ensuring that a good level of service is particularly provided to those villages which offer employment and other opportunities
- Within the “corridor strategies”, priority should be given to ensuring that good access is provided to the proposed Water Eaton Parkway station to maximise opportunities for people to get to the station by means other than the private car.

## **Conclusion**

- 1.59 The consultation on the Local Transport Plan runs until 9<sup>th</sup> January. The County Council will then consider all of the comments received and anticipate approving a final LTP in April 2011.

## Background Information

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- 2.1 The County Council is required to produce an LTP by April 2011 in order to meet the requirements of the Transport Act 2000 (amended by the Local Transport Act 2008). The previous two LTPs cover a 5 year period and the current LTP runs to 2011. The emerging LTP will cover a longer time period of 20 years allowing greater flexibility in its development and sets the long term strategy and transport objectives for the area. This brings it into line with the Oxfordshire Sustainable Communities Strategy ("Oxfordshire 2030") and provides some headroom beyond 2026 which is the timeframe within which LDFs are being prepared.
- 2.2 Members will recall that in the early summer, the County Council consulted on a series of "scenarios" for the LTP. These considered various alternative approaches that could be taken towards transport planning for the county over the next 20 years. The scenarios were not place-specific (except for a section of Oxford City), but instead looked at an approach for the "large towns" (which included Banbury and Bicester), the "smaller towns" (which included Kidlington) and the "rural areas" of the county. For each area, different scenarios were put forward. (For example, for the larger towns there were scenarios for "promoting lower emissions", "promoting transport choice" and "supporting economic growth".)
- 2.3 At its meeting on 7 June, Executive approved a response from Cherwell District Council to this consultation. Although it made detailed comments on the different scenarios for each of the areas, it made an overall recommendations that:-
- The scenario-based consultation is not helpful in considering the specific transport needs and issues relating to areas of Cherwell District. There should, therefore, be specific consultation on scheme choices relating to specific locations in the county."
  - "The final LTP should be organised district-by-district and by settlement to create a stronger spatial link with Local Development Frameworks."
- 2.4 The comments that have been proposed above take as a starting point these recommendations and the detailed analysis that the Council undertook at that time. They also reflect other work that the council, and its partners, have been undertaking, and other strategies that they have been preparing, which have helped inform the recommendations in the report. These include the following:-
- The Sustainable Community Strategy "Our District; Our Future"
  - The Draft Core Strategy
  - The Cherwell Rural Strategy
  - The "Eco-Bicester; One Shared Vision" document

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

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- 3.1 The Executive is invited to consider the contents of the report and consider its response on behalf of the District Council to this public consultation.

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

- Option One** To endorse the recommendations in the report as the Council's formal response to the Draft Local Transport Plan
- Option Two** To add or amend the proposed response as the Council's formal response to the Draft Local Transport Plan
- Option Three** Not to respond to the consultation.

## **Consultations**

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- LSP Board** The LTP Team have presented the LTP to the LSP Board as part of the public consultation.
- All district councillors** All councillors were alerted of the commencement of the public consultation. A copy of the LTP and supporting material has been placed in the Members' Room.

## **Implications**

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- Financial:** There are no direct financial implications arising from making a response to this public consultation. There may, however, be financial implications when specific transport schemes have been identified in terms of how they will be funded through planning obligations and developer contributions.  
Comments checked by Joanne Kaye, Service Accountant 01295 221545
- Legal:** There are no legal implications from this report.  
Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Solicitor, 01295 221687
- Risk Management:** There are no risks to the Council in participating in the consultation on the emerging LTP3. Dependent upon the ultimate outcome of the LTP process, there may be risks to the Council being able to successfully bring forward its planning and other strategies if these rely on support from the LTP.  
Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566

## **Wards Affected**

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All

## Corporate Plan Themes

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**Theme 4 Promoting a prosperous and sustainable economy**

**Theme 6 Protecting and enhancing the local environment**

**Theme 8 Rural focus**

## Executive Portfolio

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**Councillor Michael Gibbard**

**Portfolio Holder for Planning & Housing**

## Document Information

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
None	
<b>Background Papers</b>	
Draft Local Transport Plan and supporting document: Oxfordshire County Council, October 2010 Report to Executive on Local Transport Plan, June 2010 (Other earlier background papers are referred to in the June 2010 Executive report.	
<b>Report Author</b>	Philip Clarke, Head of Planning Policy & Economic Development Andrew Bowe, Implementation Officer
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## Executive

### Disabled Facilities Grant Policy

6 December 2010

### Report of Head of Housing Services

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval of a new policy setting out the Council's approach to the assessment of eligibility for Disabled Facilities Grants, those adaptations which it is appropriate to fund and how it will manage a waiting list if demand exceeds the available budget.

This report is public

#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended to:

- (1) Approve the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy.
- (2) Endorse the proposal that Registered Providers (RPs) (formerly called RSLs or Housing Associations) should be asked to sign-up to a protocol committing themselves to the principles in the Policy and to making a specified financial contribution towards the cost of adaptations for their tenants (see 2.4 below).

#### Executive Summary

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##### Introduction

- 1.1 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are intended to ensure that disabled people of all ages are helped to remain as independent as possible. DFGs are mandatory grants provided the qualifying criteria are met. The Council is responsible for determining financial eligibility (by means of a prescribed means-test), for establishing which adaptations will properly meet the applicant's needs (in consultation with the Welfare Authority), and whether or not those works are reasonable.
- 1.2 Demand for DFGs is growing and is expected to continue to grow as our population ages. We anticipate that demand for DFGs will exceed the Council's budget. This policy is needed to explain the help we can give, why grants may not be available in some situations and why some people who are eligible will be asked to wait for help. It also explains how we will reach decisions about eligibility and about which works it is appropriate to grant-fund, and how we intend to ensure that we make the very best use of the budget available to the Council. The Policy also introduces a waiting list process based on assessed priority which will ensure we are helping those in greatest need first.

- 1.3 This Policy does not seek additional resources but is intended to ensure we make best use of those we have and the capital budget which is made available year-on-year.
- 1.4 Central Government contributes to Disabled Facilities Grants. Prior to 2007-08 it provided 60% of the budget in the form of a ring-fenced and capped grant, but now provides simply a capital contribution. For the last 3 years that contribution has remained unchanged at £375k. Although the coalition-government has said it will maintain the budget for DFGs we do not yet know what our allocation for 2012-12 will be. We have however made every effort to reinforce to GOSE that the Council's total spend on DFGs has risen significantly in the last 5 years in response to growing need, and that the government's contribution has fallen from 60% to under 40% of total grant spend.
- 1.5 The available budget for the past 2 years has been £950k and the Council's contribution £575k. In order to meet the need for budget savings a reduced capital budget of £870k has been proposed for 2011-12 with a Council contribution of £495k and an assumption of £375 from government.
- 1.6 The Council has not previously had a DFG policy but the growing number of DFG-applications, the prospect of increasing costs and the need to make significant savings to its budgets are likely to lead to a situation in which the Council cannot meet DFG demand. The proposed DFG Policy will play an important role in managing that situation.

### **Proposals**

- 1.7 The proposed policy does not change the Council's responsibility for administering and awarding DFGs to eligible residents; nor does it change the judgements and decisions officers' need to make about DFGs, although it makes them more explicit and will demonstrate consistency. We expect to face a situation in which we cannot help everyone who wants or expects assistance, so we need to establish clear criteria that ensure we make the best use of our resources. Even when we can help, we are unlikely to be able to do so as quickly as some would like. We therefore need to explain as clearly as we can why waiting may be necessary and to demonstrate that a fair and consistent approach is being applied.
- 1.8 If an applicant is dissatisfied with the Council's decisions or with a delay in approving a grant, they may seek judicial review. That right remains unchanged. The Council has not faced review at any stage since the current legislation was introduced in 1996, but has, up until now, been broadly able to keep pace with demand. The prospect of challenge, complaint and judicial review will increase if the Council has to restrict availability of DFGs. A DFG Policy will be essential in demonstrating to the public (and potentially to the courts) that the Council is taking a fair, considered and reasonable approach and is seeking to find a realistic balance between its obligations and its finite budget in a difficult financial climate.
- 1.9 The Policy contains a range of proposals. The most significant address the assessment of eligibility, how we shall seek to explore and make use of alternative solutions and how a waiting list for eligible cases will operate. Issues to note include:
  - Eligibility criteria dealing with what is appropriate and reasonable will be tightened where possible.



- We shall be seeking to find alternatives to adaptation (such as managed moves) where that is appropriate and to make sure that adapted homes are properly re-used wherever possible.
  - In particular, we shall be working with our RP partners to make sure that under-occupied social-rented homes are not fitted with adaptations which are rendered inappropriate and have to be removed when the house is next re-let to a family to which its size is more suited. (This restriction will also help make sure that best use is made of the district's over-subscribed social housing stock.)
  - Assessments by Occupational Therapists (OTs) will employ a new pro-forma which will allow individual need and priority to be determined more precisely. The waiting list will be based on the priority score established in this way.
  - We shall recover grants from owner-occupiers in appropriate circumstances in accordance with the legal provisions.
- 1.10 If demand exceeds supply, elected members are likely to receive an increasing number of enquiries about eligibility for DFGs and waiting time. The Policy will allow members to respond to such concerns and actively explain and support the Council's position. We also hope that it will help reduce the number of queries they need to refer to the Grants Team for explanation.

## **Conclusion**

Adoption of the draft policy will ensure that the Council continues to help those in most need, but also achieves the best value it can from the financial commitment it makes to disabled facilities. It will also demonstrate that the Council has carefully considered the issues it faces and is meeting them in a robust but transparent fashion. An adopted DFG policy is therefore likely to be the best means of meeting any challenge suggesting that the Council is failing to meet its legal obligation to approve mandatory DFGs.

## **Background Information**

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- 2.1 Information about the legislation which applies, the Council's role and current issues are all contained in the draft Policy itself.
- 2.2 Although the Policy anticipates a future in which demand exceeds the available budget, the proposals it contains are not conditional upon any particular budget figure and will apply in all situations.
- 2.3 The draft Policy has been prepared with input from Oxfordshire County Council who are our principle partners, are directly involved with us in the DFG process and whom we are required by statute to consult over each DFG case we deal with.

RPs (particularly Sanctuary group, which has significantly the largest stock in the district) have an important role to play in addressing demand for DFGs. Adoption of the Policy does not commit the RPs to any particular course of action but it contains a proposal that they should be asked to support the principles in the Policy and, where they do not do so at present, commit to making a financial contribution to adaptations for their tenants. If the Policy is approved, we propose to ask RPs to formally sign-up to a Protocol dealing with these issues.

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

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- 3.1 The key issue before members today is whether they wish to support the draft policy as the Council's approach to assessing DFG enquiries and managing demand.

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

- |                     |                                                             |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Option One</b>   | Adopt the draft policy in its entirety                      |
| <b>Option Two</b>   | Adopt the policy subject to specified revision or amendment |
| <b>Option Three</b> | Reject the draft policy                                     |

## **Consultations**

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The Policy has been through a consultation process with stakeholders including Oxfordshire County Council, Age UK, CAB, PCT, local RPs and the organisations and individuals represented on the Steering Panel for the Housing Strategy for Older People. It was also available for public comment via the Council's Consultation Portal. A summary of the consultation responses is attached as Appendix 2.

## **Implications**

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**Financial:** There are no negative financial implications arising from the DFG Policy. The proposals it contains are intended to ensure that best use is made of the available capital budget. The proposal to recover grant when appropriate presents an opportunity to recycle funding and I recommend that any recovered monies are retained for inclusion in the following year's budget. The greater the gap between the available budget and grant demand, the longer waiting time will become, but there are no other issues of concern.

Comments checked by Joanne Kaye, Service Accountant  
01295 221545

**Legal:** The law relating to Disabled Facilities Grants has not changed and they remain mandatory. If the Council fails to approve a mandatory grant or to do so within the specified time period, it is open to challenge. The DFG Policy does not place the Council in a position where it is in breach of its responsibilities although it makes the basis of necessary decisions more explicit and transparent. In the event of challenge the DFG Policy will demonstrate that the Council is taking appropriate measures to try to meet its legal duties.

Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Solicitor 01295 221687

**Risk Management:** An increase in grant demand, a cap on the grant budget or both together could leave the Council unable to meet its mandatory responsibilities. The Policy proposals aim to ensure that the available budget is used to address as much legitimate demand as possible, but cannot guarantee that the Council does not face challenge. In the current financial climate it does however present the best prospect of responding to any such challenge.

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

### **Wards Affected**

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All wards

### **Corporate Plan Themes**

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**Opportunities for all:** Improve the standard of housing for vulnerable people; & Focus Housing Service support for disadvantaged individuals.

**Accessible, value for money Council:** Treat everyone with dignity and respect and meet specific needs of disabled people.

### **Executive Portfolio**

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**Councillor Michael Gibbard**  
**Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

### **Document Information**

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Draft Disabled Facilities Policy
Appendix 2	Consultation summary
<b>Background Papers</b>	
None	
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# Disabled Facility Grant Policy

## 1. The Council's Strategies and Policies

- 1.1 The objectives, ambitions and targets of Cherwell District Council<sup>1</sup> (the Council) are set out in a hierarchy of related Strategies. The top-level, over-arching strategy for the Council and its partners is the *Sustainable Communities Strategy*; beneath it sits the Council's *Housing Strategy* and, building in more detail in relation to the private sector, its *Private Sector Housing Strategy*. These Strategies all reflect the Council's desire and commitment to tackle deprivation, assist older people, improve levels of health and to help people live independently.
- 1.2 The Council's Policies are documents which explain how things will be done and how decisions will be reached. They are essentially the rules the Council sets to ensure that its services are delivered fairly, consistently and clearly. Policies undergo a formal process of consultation and then checking and adoption by elected members.
- 1.3 Since 2003, when most prescriptive grant legislation was repealed, the Council has had to have in place a policy explaining how it will use the grant and assistance powers now available to it<sup>2</sup>. The Council's current grant policy was produced in 2008. This *Disabled Facility Grant Policy* expands upon the Council's *Grants and Assistance Policy 2008* (which remains in force) and has been produced in response to a need to develop our Disabled Facilities Grant work that was recognised during production of our *Private Sector Housing Strategy 2010-14*.

## 2. Introduction to the policy

- 2.1 Perfectly good homes can be quite unsuitable for occupants with mobility needs, to the extent that they can actually be dangerous and isolating. Adaptations are needed by many disabled people so that they can remain safe and independent. They can be needed by people of all ages, but as our population ages and life-expectancy increases, the number of people needing assistance to adapt their homes is expected to grow.
- 2.2 Cherwell District Council is committed to helping disabled residents and will administer Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs) (and other forms of assistance, such as discretionary grants, where available) so as to help them achieve a home which meet their needs.
- 2.3 However, the Council knows that, in future, as the number of people seeking DFG's and the cost of providing adaptations grow, its finite resources are likely to mean it cannot provide immediate help to all those needing assistance.
- 2.4 This policy is intended to explain how the Council will use its resources to help those who need disabled adaptations and how (often difficult) decisions will be made about the help it can give, the circumstances in which people may need to wait for assistance, and how the Council will seek to make the best use of the

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<sup>1</sup>In this document all references to the Council mean Cherwell District Council, whose policy this is. References to Oxfordshire County Council will use either that full name or the abbreviation OCC.

<sup>2</sup> See the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002

resources available. It has been developed with input from, and through discussion with, our key service delivery partners, and has been subject to public consultation.

### 3. Summary of the legal framework

3.1 Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs) were introduced in 1990 but the principle legal provisions are now contained in the Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996 (HGCRA) and regulations made under it. The following is a summary of the key legal provisions<sup>3</sup>:

- DFGs are mandatory grants and are available to disabled people when works to adapt their home are judged *necessary and appropriate* to meet their needs, and when it is *reasonable and practicable* to carry them out having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling or building<sup>4</sup>.
- DFGs are also subject to a means-test (except in the case of children), which means that applicants' income and savings have to be assessed to determine the amount of any contribution they are required to make towards the cost of the required work, and hence the amount of grant available to them. The way in which the means-test is carried out is set by regulations and the Council does not have any discretion in applying it. Applicants in receipt of certain specified benefits are however exempted.
- Subject to all the eligibility criteria being met, the Council must 'determine' (ie approve) properly made applications '*as soon as reasonably practicable*', but no later than 6 months from the application date<sup>5</sup> (see also 7.6 below).
- The maximum DFG is currently set at £30,000<sup>6</sup>.
- Grant can be recovered following sale of the property within 10 years of payment provided the Council '*is satisfied that it is reasonable in all the circumstances to require the repayment*'. Grants below £5,000 are however excluded and the maximum amount recoverable in any one case is limited to £10,000<sup>7</sup>.
- In the event of an applicant's death before works are complete, the Council has the discretion to pay grant towards any fees incurred, works already carried out or '*other relevant works*'.

These important factors and their implications are considered in more detail below:

### 4. Who is responsible for providing and processing DFGs?

4.1 The HGCRA makes the Council responsible for providing DFGs. The Council cannot, in law, refuse to process a properly made DFG application whether it is received from an owner-occupier or a tenant. If the eligibility criteria and proper process are satisfied the Council must approve the appropriate grant. This also

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<sup>3</sup> This is intended as a very brief overview. The legislation must be consulted for the full picture.

<sup>4</sup> Section 24(3), HGCRA

<sup>5</sup> Section 34, HGCRA.

<sup>6</sup> Set by means of statute.

<sup>7</sup> HGCRA 1996: DFG (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008

applies in the case of RSL tenants, whether or not the RSL in question has an obligation to provide a budget for the provision of DFGs, although there is a clear expectation on the part of the Government that all RSLs should be contributing to the cost of DFG work and authorities are '*strongly encouraged to enter into an agreement with the RSL which requires the latter to share a reasonable proportion of the future financial liabilities for the provision of adaptations under DFG*'<sup>8</sup>. The Council believes that this is the appropriate and responsible approach to helping meet the needs of RSL tenants.

*(Note: adaptations delivered directly by RSLs are not strictly DFGs because they do not pass through the formal application process, although the result is essentially the same.)*

- 4.2 Practice amongst local RSLs varies, with some providing significant funding and undertaking adaptation work for tenants and others doing neither. This means that the Council is dealing with adaptations for some social tenants but not others and that there is a degree of variation and potential inequity in the service they receive.
- 4.3 A second issue is that those RSL tenants who pass through the Council's DFG route are subject to means-testing. Although the majority are not required to make a financial contribution because they receive a means-tested benefit (such as Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit), some do; whereas tenants whose adaptations are funded directly by their RSL landlords are not currently means-tested. There is therefore a need to increase equity in the provision of adaptations in the district if we can, both in terms of waiting times and tenant contributions.

**We shall therefore be seeking the support of all local RSLs for this policy, their commitment to making both a financial and practical contribution to the provision of adaptations for their tenants, and asking those which undertake adaptive works to carry out means-testing.**

## **5. The grant process**

- 5.1 The DFG process is not set out in any detail in this policy although some aspects will require explanation. A step-by-step guide: *Oxfordshire Grant Aided Home Adaptations* has been produced to explain how the grant process works and the respective roles of the Council and of Oxfordshire County Council<sup>9</sup>. That Guide explains our jointly agreed approach and how we will assist disabled service users to carry out adaptations to their homes. The awarding of a grant is however a legal process which means that there are certain formal steps which we have to take in order to make sure we comply with the law.

**We shall be seeking to ensure that the determination of grant eligibility, the approval process and works of adaptation proceed as smoothly and efficiently as possible.**

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<sup>8</sup> See: Disabled Facilities Grant – The Package of Change to Modernise the Programme, CLG, February 2008, Annex C, section 6.28

<sup>9</sup> Specifically OCC's Social and Community Services which employs the Occupational Therapists (OTs) who undertake on-site assessment of clients' needs.

**A further purpose of this policy is to provide an explanation of how and why waits can occur, to demonstrate that we are seeking to reduce them wherever we can, but also to show that we are dealing with waiting times as fairly and transparently possible.**

**The policy will also confirm the Council's proposals for recovering grant money in the event of property sale or transfer in appropriate circumstances.**

## **6. Eligibility Criteria**

6.1 Eligibility for a Disabled Facility Grant is set by legislation (see Summary of Legal Framework, section 3 above). The availability of a grant is dependant on all three of the following criteria being met:-

- the works being necessary and appropriate, and
- the works being reasonable and practicable , and
- the applicant's means-tested contribution being less than the approved value of the grant.

### **Necessary and Appropriate**

6.2 In order that we can decide if adaptations are '*necessary and appropriate*' we need an assessment of the client and their home. This is usually carried out by an Occupational Therapist (OT) but may also involve the Council (see 7.1.2 below). The assessment focuses on the client's ability to continue living independently in a home of their own. Once an assessment has been carried out the OT makes a referral to the Council indicating both recommended works and an assessment of the priority for work which the client should be allocated. Judgements on both these issues have an important part to play in the proposals in this policy.

6.3 In reaching a decision as to whether works are '*necessary and appropriate*' the Council is required to '*consult the social services authority*'<sup>10</sup>. In a majority of cases our practice has been to accept the works recommended in the referral as those which are appropriate, and to use the broad priority specified by the OT. However, if we are to make best use of our resources we shall need to better identify and fully explore alternative solutions and differentiate more precisely between degrees of need. If we do not do so we are at risk of spending our budget on a smaller number of people than we could otherwise help; in effect meeting some clients' aspirational needs entirely at the expense of increased waiting time for others.

**This policy will introduce new arrangements for determining what works are necessary and appropriate and what priority each case should be given.**

### **Reasonable and Practicable**

6.4 There are times when it is simply not reasonable and practicable to adapt a property (eg if there are multiple or excessive changes in level, if space is limited or where moving existing services would be prohibitively expensive). In cases where it is not possible to adapt a property to an appropriate standard or where the

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<sup>10</sup> Section 24(3), HGCR.



cost of works is considered excessive, the Council can properly take the view that the works are not *'reasonable and practicable'*.

**This policy will introduce new arrangements for determining what works are reasonable and practicable.**

## **7. Proposals**

### **7.1 Investigation, information gathering and advice – all cases**

**7.1.1 We shall seek to ensure that advice provided to anyone making an enquiry about adaptations stresses the need for all of the available options to be carefully explored, rather than simply discussing 'how to get a DFG' <sup>11</sup>.**

**7.1.2 Any case which could require:**

- multiple adaptations (eg a stairlift in addition to a shower) or
- involve major building work (such as an extension or the demolition or building of a wall) or
- which appears to have the potential to be complex

will be flagged-up<sup>12</sup> and, wherever possible, the initial visit will be made jointly by the OT and an officer from the Council's Grants Team. If an initial OT visit is made before the need for a joint visit has been established, a joint visit will be then be arranged at the earliest opportunity. In other cases a Council officer will visit as soon as possible after receipt of an OT referral.

**7.1.3 In order that the Council can make decisions about eligibility, about the help it can give and, if the client is eligible for a grant, about the works which are most appropriate, we need to gather and consider a range of information. In addition to the OTs recommendations (their 'referral') we shall to need to take account of the following:**

- the client's financial circumstances
- the cost of works
- the time it is likely to take to deliver the adaptation(s) proposed
- the extent of any family or other practical support
- the suitability of the client's home for adaptation (including the extent of any under-occupation or over-occupation)
- the practicalities of adapting the client's home (taking into account both the site it sits on and its wider location)
- the length of time for which the client is likely to be able to take advantage of the adaptation(s)
- the likely need for future adaptations
- the availability of, and eligibility for, suitable alternative accommodation
- the extent to which the adaptation(s) make appropriate use of the funding available to the Council.

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<sup>11</sup> First contact is typically via OCC's centralised Access Team.

<sup>12</sup> Cases which require consideration by an OT are passed from the Access Team to the relevant OCC Area Team and subject to further screening to determine what might be involved prior to a visit being arranged. As a result, flagging up will usually involve the OT service flagging up cases with CDC.

**7.1.4** Case officers will ensure that all the information we need is gathered and collated using a suitable pro-forma checklist <sup>13</sup> and will complete this as soon as possible. Once we have the information we need, we will be in a position to make decisions that take into account all the relevant facts and circumstances. We also intend to develop an appraisal pro-forma to record decision making in relation to both eligibility and approved works.

**7.1.5** We shall discuss clients' options with them as soon as we can and will deal with:

- financial issues (such as advice about contributions they may have to make and any additional funding which they may need to secure to cover a shortfall in the cost of works)<sup>14</sup>
- alternative accommodation, and
- the implications of decisions that will need to be made about how their needs can be met, including their assessed priority and likely waiting time. (See section 7.5 & 7.6)

**7.1.6** We propose that clients who agree to move home will be offered a grant to cover their moving costs<sup>15</sup>, will be provided with practical assistance where possible (such as locating and securing a suitable alternative home through the Choice Based Lettings scheme<sup>16</sup>) and will be given priority for any necessary adaptations to their new home.<sup>17</sup>

**7.1.7** Owner-occupiers who might otherwise be faced with waiting for an adaptation and who are eligible for a Flexible Home Improvement Loan will be helped to explore that option and make an application.

## **7.2 Decision making criteria**

**7.2.1** Cherwell District Council, in consultation with Oxfordshire County Council's Social and Community Services, has to determine in each case whether the proposed works are necessary and appropriate and if they are reasonable and practicable. The Council cannot approve a Disabled Facilities Grant unless it is satisfied that these criteria have been met <sup>18</sup>.

**7.2.2** The Council's decision making will take into account the following specific expectations and presumptions:

- Grant works should properly and fully meet the assessed needs of the client. Grants which only partially meet those needs will only be considered in exceptional cases.

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<sup>13</sup> A suitable form will be developed.

<sup>14</sup> Final means-test results and precise cost of works may not be available initially, but realistic estimates can be provided at an early stage.

<sup>15</sup> Moving-grants are likely to be restricted to a figure less than the estimated cost of adapting the existing home but will be subject to approval by the Head of Service on an individual basis.

<sup>16</sup> Choice Based Letting is the system used to allocate social housing across the district.

<sup>17</sup> Adaptations to the new home will be assessed in the usual manner and the client will still be subject to means-testing.

<sup>18</sup> The Council also has to be satisfied, as a result of a formal means-test, that the client's financial contribution is less than the approved value of the grant.

- Works funded by means of DFG will be the simplest and most cost-effective adaptations that will meet the client's assessed needs.<sup>19</sup>
- Facilities will be provided on the ground floor unless the Council judges that to be impractical or more costly.
- Wherever the Council judges it to be a practicable and realistic option, the re-ordering and/or change of use of existing rooms will be the preferred solution and will take precedence over both the construction of extensions and the installation of equipment. This solution will also take precedence if it will result in a reduction in the requirement for, or cost of, equipment.
- There will be a presumption against provision of level-access showers on anything but the ground floor unless that is a cheaper and more practical option.
- There will be a presumption against approving a grant for adaptation of a new home if the client already occupies an adapted home.
- There will be a presumption against the refitting of any adaptations which have previously been removed by, or at the request of, the applicant<sup>20</sup>.
- There will be a presumption against the adaptation of under-occupied homes, and of under-occupied social-rented houses in particular.
- There will be a presumption against the adaptation of overcrowded homes or homes which are likely to become overcrowded.

### **7.3 Decision making responsibility**

#### **7.3.1 In the following cases, grant eligibility will be determined directly by the Grants Team Leader for the Head of Housing Services:**

- Cases involving only the provision of a simple, straight stairlift, which satisfy the decision-making criteria set out above and which the Grants Team Leader judges to require no further exploration or consideration.
- Cases involving adaptations to bungalows and to purpose-built older-peoples' accommodation and sheltered housing (provided this is ground floor or provided with a suitable lift).

#### **7.3.2 In all other situations, case consideration by the Council will include information resulting from a Housing Needs Assessment. A Housing Register application will therefore be required. All such cases will be subject**

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<sup>19</sup> In the event that the client wants to proceed with a more costly approach, the Council will consider providing grant funding to the value of the simpler option only. If we agree to this, our decision will be conditional upon the works meeting the assessed need and upon agreement that no future grant funding will be available towards works which become necessary as a consequence of the client's decision to proceed with their preferred works rather than those proposed by the Council.

<sup>20</sup> For example, an application to refit a shower in a home where a suitable shower used to exist but had been removed by the current applicant who, at that earlier time had preferred a bath, but now seeks a shower.

to review by an Assessment Panel which will comprise the Grants Team Leader (or appropriate deputy), the Assessment & Rehousing Team Leader (or appropriate deputy), the OT specifically allocated to work with the Council (or appropriate deputy) and others as judged appropriate by the Council on a case-by-case basis. Following review, and having considered the views of the Assessment Panel, the Grants Team Leader (for the Head of Housing Services) will again determine whether or not the Council is able to approve a grant and, if a grant is available, the relevant works.

**7.3.3** The Council's Head of Housing Service will have the final responsibility for determining whether the works in any particular case are judged *necessary and appropriate* and are *reasonable and practicable*.

#### **7.4 Referrals and applications received in relation to RSL tenants**

**7.4.1** These will be treated and processed in the same manner as all other referrals and applications (whether from owner-occupiers or private tenants) and, in particular, will be subject to the same assessment, means-testing, allocation of priority and placement on the waiting list (as to which, see below).

#### **7.5 Priority**

**7.5.1** In order to make sure that we can deal with all grant cases<sup>21</sup> in fair way, we shall in future use a waiting list system which reflects the priority awarded to each client on the basis of their assessed need only. Those with greatest need will be highest on the list. We are not intending to award additional priority on the basis of time on the waiting list. If a client's needs change, they must be reassessed by an OT and their priority re-determined.

**7.5.2** The assessment process is intended to ensure that cases in which adaptation is judged appropriate and which demonstrate high risk are given high priority and will therefore receive attention at the earliest opportunity.

**7.5.3** If the DFG process is unable to deliver assistance sufficiently quickly in cases requiring urgent action<sup>22</sup>, the Council will consider providing discretionary grant funding in accordance with its Private Sector Housing Grant and Assistance Policy 2008.

**7.5.4** We shall use the assessment procedure set out in Appendix A to determine priority<sup>23</sup>.

**7.5.5** In the event that changes are required to the assessment procedure, they will be determined by the Head of Housing Services following consultation with the OT service.

**7.5.6** No case will be placed on the waiting list until all of the necessary information has been gathered and considered and until all of the possible options for meeting the assessed need have been explored and considered to the Council's satisfaction.

*(In Cherwell, because we operate an 'in-house' HIA, and because almost all clients choose to make use of the HIA service, we rarely receive complete grant*

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<sup>21</sup> ie Cases where we have decided that approval of a grant is the appropriate course of action.

<sup>22</sup> For example, cases involving discharge from hospital of a terminally-ill client.

<sup>23</sup> This assessment and scoring process has been agreed with the OT service and was proposed by them as the most likely to be suitable.

*applications which simply require checking, means-testing and approval. Adaptation requests usually reach us as referrals. These have to be worked-up<sup>24</sup> before a formal application can be completed. For this reason when we talk about prioritizing, we are in most cases actually concerned with the order in which we start work on referrals rather than approval of applications (which, by the stage it is reached, is a short administrative exercise). If we receive any completed applications they will be assessed for priority in the same manner as referrals and placed on the waiting list accordingly.)*

## **7.6 Waiting time**

- 7.6.1 All appropriate steps will be taken to minimise the waiting time before a grant case can be worked on and approved. The waiting list mechanism will be kept under review to ensure it is operating as intended and as circumstances require.**
- 7.6.2 In the event that changes are required to the waiting list mechanism, they will be determined by the Head of Housing Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Housing.**
- 7.6.2 Ultimately however, the length of time someone has to wait on the list will depend upon the size of the grant budget, other resources available, and the number of cases with a higher priority.**
- 7.6.3 The Council will however reserve the right to start processing some cases out of strict priority order in exceptional cases (as determined by the Head of Housing Services) and where the Grants Team Leader determines that it is necessary to ensure either efficient allocation of staff resources, or budget allocation and spend.<sup>25</sup> (see also 8.2)**

*The issue of waiting time does however need some more explanation because waits can occur at several points in the process and for different reasons: The first part of the adaptations process is an assessment by an OT. The OCC's Social and Community Services aim to ensure that assessment and subsequent referral to the Council is made within 28 days, but in some cases clients face a wait at this point before the Council becomes involved.*

*Once a referral (or an application) reaches the Council, we carry out a preliminary means-test within 10 working days in order that we can determine the likely contribution a client will have to make towards the cost of the work. This provides a further opportunity for us to help them explore alternatives to waiting for a grant. It also means that unnecessary waiting can be avoided, if for example the client is unlikely to be awarded a grant or a grant of sufficient size to facilitate the works they require. We also send the client a grant pack within 5 working days. Once we have obtained the necessary information and have determined that a grant can be approved, the case will be placed on the waiting list for allocation to a case officer.*

*Once allocated to a Council officer for action, the time taken for a referral to reach the grant approval stage will vary according to the nature of the work involved. Cases requiring relatively straightforward fitting of equipment such as a stairlift are*

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<sup>24</sup> Which involves feasibility checking, tendering, and in some cases preparation of drawings, planning applications, building regulation applications, party-wall agreements etc)

<sup>25</sup> For example, it may be appropriate to start working up certain larger jobs in order that other necessary steps such as obtaining planning approval can be started and can run in parallel to grant approval work.

*likely to take least time. Those involving extensions and re-ordering of space are likely to take considerably longer, particularly when planning and other consents are required.*

*Once a grant has been approved, works will commence on site at the earliest opportunity, but this is dependent upon the availability of suitable contractors and their work-programme. This is a factor which is taken into careful account as part of the tendering and appointment process undertaken by the in-house HIA, but is not under the direct control of the Council.*

*(Note: the legislation requires the checking and approval of a DFG application within 6 months (where eligibility criteria are met). As a result of the HIAs involvement, much of the work (and therefore most of the time taken) occurs before an application can be made, since an application has to include the detailed specification for the work and (usually) 2 prices. In cases which need planning consent the specification can only be produced once that permission has been given. Once the specification and prices are available, the approval process is a simple administrative one taking only a short time. We remain aware however that the total time taken from the point at which a client raises an adaptation need to the completion of their installation is what matters to them.)*

## **8. Funding**

### **8.1 Government and other external funding**

**8.1.1 The Council will make the case for the maximum government funding contribution at every opportunity.**

**8.1.2 We shall seek additional funding from other sources, agencies and partners wherever possible.**

### **8.2 Council funding**

**8.2.1 In accordance with its various strategies the Council will continue to support and deliver disabled adaptations and will allocate resources to DFGs as one of its priorities.**

**8.2.2 In accordance with this policy, the Council will continue to deliver the available capital resource as efficiently and effectively as possible. In particular, whilst avoiding over-spend, the Council will permit such sufficient, carefully managed over-commitment of the DFG budget as is consistent with the likely future budget, is necessary to ensure effective budget spend, a consistent through-put of cases and appropriate allocation of the available staff resource<sup>26</sup>.**

**8.2.3 In the event that a grant applicant dies before works have commenced the application will not be pursued and any grant that has already been approved will be cancelled. In the event that works have already commenced the Council will, in principle, and having regard to the facts of the case, provide grant funding towards those works it judges necessary to make-good. In the case of major building works such as extensions, any**

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<sup>26</sup> This approach has been carefully used to delivered effective spend for a number of years.



discretionary payment will be restricted to those works necessary to make the building safe, secure and water-tight and to provide a basic standard of internal finish only. The Council will however only contribute up to the level of the approved grant and to the cost of any relevant works which exceed the applicant's assessed grant contribution.

### **8.3 Our proposal for RSL funding**

**8.3.1** An entirely equitable and transparent scheme would see all adaptations in the district being assessed, prioritised, processed and funded in the same way regardless of tenure. However, although we do not believe this is achievable at present (not least because the Council's Grants Team is already fully committed and because it would necessitate RSL's transferring capital, and possibly allocating a staff resource to the Council), it is right that it should remain an ambition.

**8.3.2** In order that resources can be enhanced and future waiting times kept as low as they can be, we propose to ask all RSLs to commit to funding and making appropriate arrangements for installing all minor adaptations and to contributing at least 50% of the cost of major adaptations provided to their tenants.

## **9. Repayment of Grant**

**9.1** In order to ensure its grant budget is used as effectively and as efficiently as possible, the Council will use the powers made available to it by the *Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008*, to recover grant in specified circumstances.

**9.2** There will be a general presumption that grants should be repaid in those cases where a property adapted with grant assistance for an owner-occupier or their child is sold or transferred within 10 years of the certified date of grant completion. Each case will however be assessed to determine whether it is reasonable in all the circumstances to require the repayment. The Head of Housing Services will specifically approve an exemption if recovery is not to take place.

**9.3** In accordance with the General Consent, no repayment will apply to grants of £5,000 or less and the maximum repayment will be £10,000.

**9.4** The Council has determined that the first £5000 of all grants greater than £5000 will be exempt but every amount over £5,000 will be repayable up to the £10,000 limit. This is intended to ensure that no one has to repay a disproportionate amount. Table 1 below shows how this will work.

**9.5** The Head of Housing Services will have discretion not to recover any very small sums where the administration costs would outweigh the value of the amount which could be recovered <sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> For example, the matter of a few pounds only.

**Table 1**

<b>Grant</b>	<b>Recoverable sum</b>	<b>Comment</b>
£4,999	No Charge	Recovery not permitted
£5,500	£500	Recovery limited to £500 rather than the £5,500 possible
£6,000	£1,000	Recovery limited to £1,000 rather than the £6,000 possible
£10,000	£5,000	Recovery limited to £5,000 rather than the £10,000 maximum
£15,000	£10,000	The maximum allowable £10,000 will be recovered
£30,000	£10,000	The maximum allowable £10,000 will be recovered

**9.6 The amount of any grant which is repayable will be made a Land Charge against the property at the time of payment. The Charge will remain in place for the period of 10 years from the certified date of grant completion. This will allow the Council to recover its money at the point of any sale or transfer.**

**9.7 DFG capital which is repaid to the Council will be recycled, that is, credited to the DFG budget in order that it can be re-used for further DFGs.**



## **Appendix A**

### **Major Adaptation Assessment Criteria – Eligibility & Priority**

1. The assessment process and criteria set out below will be used to assess both the Priority Need Band and Priority Score in all cases requiring major adaptations (ie cases requiring structural alterations or the provision of adaptations costing more than £1000). It will not be used for minor adaptations and such cases will not be referred to the Council.
2. Occupational Therapists will record their assessments on this basis in order that Priority can be assessed. Where an identified need does not fit exactly into a level of need, the level that fits most closely should be selected.
3. If a person has low need or the need is already being met by an adaptation or piece of equipment the Need level selected should be Band 1.
4. Only cases with a level of need identified as either Band 4 or Band 3 will be forwarded to the Council. (Those cases at Band 2 or Band 1 will be sign-posted elsewhere.) A copy of the completed Priority Assessment Summary sheet (see below) will be included as part of each referral.

## 1. ACCESS

### 1.1 Internal Access

BAND 4	BAND 3	BAND 2	BAND 1	NOT APPLICABLE
<p>Totally unable to mobilise to essential facilities e.g. toilet, bedroom, or unable to access toilet in time even with assistance of carer</p> <p><b>AND</b> all alternative long term measures have been considered and are inappropriate</p>	<p>Most of the time is unable to mobilize to essential facilities eg toilet, bedroom, or most of the time is unable to access toilet in time even with assistance of carer.</p> <p><b>AND</b> all alternative long-term measures have been considered and are inappropriate.</p> <p><b>AND</b> the medical condition is such that there is likely to be significant deterioration over the next 12 months.</p>	<p>Is able to access the majority of rooms within the home but with difficulty.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there is potential risk to independence in the foreseeable future.</p>	<p>Has indoor access but difficulties are increasing</p> <p><b>AND</b> limited risk to independence in future.</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>

### 1.2 External Access

BAND 4	BAND 3	BAND 2	BAND 1	NOT APPLICABLE
<p>Unable to access the property even with carer assistance.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there is essential need for access for health purposes.</p>	<p>Has great difficulty or is unable to access property even with carer assistance.</p> <p><b>AND</b> needs access for leisure or social purposes.</p> <p><b>AND</b> would be able to access community facilities/activities on a regular basis</p>	<p>Able to access the property with minimal carer assistance.</p> <p><b>AND</b> would only need to go out very occasionally</p>	<p>Is able to access property but access in/out is becoming more difficult.</p> <p><b>AND</b> limited risk to independence in future.</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>

### 1.3 Negotiating Stairs

<b>BAND 4</b>	<b>BAND 3</b>	<b>BAND 2</b>	<b>BAND 1</b>	<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>
<p>Unable to negotiate stairs</p> <p><b>AND</b> has essential need to access essential upstairs facilities</p> <p><b>AND</b> unable to make alternative arrangements to overcome difficulties</p>	<p>Unable to negotiate stairs without a high risk of injury to self and/or carer.</p> <p><b>AND</b> essential needs to access upstairs facilities and alternative measures cannot reduce risk to independence.</p>	<p>Able to negotiate stairs with difficulty and/or some assistance from a carer.</p> <p><b>AND</b> alternative measures can be made</p> <p><b>AND</b> there is potential risk to independence in the foreseeable future.</p>	<p>Able to manage stairs but becoming more difficult.</p> <p><b>AND</b> limited risk to independence in future.</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>

## 2. TRANSFERS

### 2.1 Toilet

BAND 4	BAND 3	BAND 2	BAND 1	NOT APPLICABLE
<p>Unable to transfer on/off toilet.</p> <p><b>AND</b> unable to weight bear</p> <p><b>AND</b> unacceptable level of physical assistance given by carers, high risk of injury to self and/or carer.</p> <p><b>OR</b> no care available.</p> <p><b>AND/OR</b> a commode has been provided but an increased care package is required to empty it <b>OR</b> a commode is being used within a family/communal space.</p> <p><b>OR</b> bowel management is taking place on the bed as access to a commode/WC is not possible</p>	<p>Able to carry out toilet transfers with great difficulty even with carer assistance.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there is serious risk of injury to self and/or carer in near future.</p> <p><b>AND/OR</b> use of a commode severely restricts room space available to the rest of the family.</p> <p><b>OR</b> use of commode is possible with assistance from 2 carers and/or a hoist.</p>	<p>Able to carry out toilet transfers but with some difficulty.</p> <p><b>AND</b> sometimes needs help from a carer.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there is potential risk to self and/or carer in the foreseeable future.</p> <p><b>AND/OR</b> a commode has been provided and can be used independently or with minimum assistance.</p> <p><b>OR</b> a commode has been provided and is used in a private area e.g. bedroom or second sitting room.</p>	<p>Able to transfer on/off toilet.</p> <p><b>AND</b> the transfer is becoming more difficult.</p> <p><b>AND</b> limited risk to independence in future.</p> <p><b>AND</b> a commode is not required at this time.</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>

## 2.2 Chair

BAND 4	BAND 3	BAND 2	BAND 1	NOT APPLICABLE
<p>Unable to transfer from a chair/wheelchair.</p> <p><b>AND</b> unable to weight bear.</p> <p><b>AND</b> unacceptable level of assistance provided by carer, high risk of injury to self and/or carer.</p> <p><b>OR</b> no care available</p>	<p>Able to stand from sitting but with great difficulty even with carer assistance.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there is potential risk of serious injury to self and/or carer in near future.</p>	<p>Able to transfer with some difficulty.</p> <p><b>AND</b> sometimes needs assistance from carer.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there is potential risk of injury to self and/or carer in the foreseeable future.</p>	<p>Able to transfer from chair/wheelchair.</p> <p><b>AND</b> the transfer is becoming difficult.</p> <p><b>AND</b> limited risk to independence in future</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>

## 2.3 Bed

BAND 4	BAND 3	BAND 2	BAND 1	NOT APPLICABLE
<p>Unable to move around in bed or transfer on/off bed.</p> <p><b>AND</b> unable to weight bear.</p> <p><b>AND</b> unacceptable level of assistance provided by carer, high risk of injury to self and/or carer.</p> <p><b>OR</b> no carer available</p>	<p>Able to alter position in bed, sit up in bed and transfer from the bed but with great difficulty even with carer assistance.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there is potential risk of serious injury to self and/or carer in near future.</p>	<p>Able to carry out bed transfer with some difficulty.</p> <p><b>AND</b> sometimes needs assistance from carer.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there is potential risk of injury to self and/or carer in the foreseeable future.</p>	<p>Able to carry out bed transfer.</p> <p><b>AND</b> the transfer is becoming difficult.</p> <p><b>AND</b> limited risk to independence in future.</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>

## 2.4 Bath / Shower

BAND 4	BAND 3	BAND 2	BAND 1	NOT APPLICABLE
<p>Unable to transfer into existing bath/shower.</p> <p><b>AND</b> an unacceptable level of personal hygiene cannot be achieved by other means e.g. strip wash, bed bath</p> <p><b>AND</b> there is risk of imminent breakdown of care situation resulting in admission to hospital or residential/nursing care.</p>	<p>Unable to transfer into existing bath/shower.</p> <p><b>AND</b> unable to strip wash independently.</p> <p><b>AND</b> carer experiences/will experience difficulty assisting to give strip wash and is at risk of injury <b>OR</b> carer has difficulty achieving an acceptable level of personal hygiene for the service user within existing arrangements <b>OR</b> it is not possible to provide a carer/assistance.</p>	<p>Unable to transfer into existing bath/shower independently.</p> <p><b>AND</b> is unable to strip wash independently and requires assistance from carer to complete task.</p> <p><b>AND</b> carers are able to help service user to achieve an acceptable level of personal hygiene.</p> <p><b>AND</b> carers are at low risk of injury.</p>	<p>Experiences some difficulty or unable to transfer into existing bath/shower. May sometimes require carer assistance.</p> <p><b>AND</b> able to strip wash independently to achieve an acceptable level of personal hygiene.</p> <p><b>AND</b> limited risk to independence in the future.</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>

### 3. FOOD AND DRINK PREPARATION

BAND 4	BAND 3	BAND 2	BAND 1	NOT APPLICABLE
<p>Unable to carry out essential tasks</p> <p><b>AND</b> no carer assistance available.</p> <p><b>AND</b> severe risk of self neglect and poor nutrition.</p> <p><b>AND</b> imminent risk to independence.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there are no other options available.</p>	<p>Unable to carry out essential tasks.</p> <p><b>AND</b> no carer assistance available.</p> <p><b>AND</b> risk to independence in near future.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there are no other options available.</p>	<p>Limited ability but can complete tasks with some difficulty/assistance.</p> <p><b>AND</b> no carer assistance available.</p> <p><b>AND</b> risk to independence in foreseeable future.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there are no other options available.</p>	<p>Can complete tasks but becoming more difficult.</p> <p><b>AND</b> no carer assistance available.</p> <p><b>AND</b> limited risk to independence.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there are no other options available.</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>

#### 4. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

BAND 4	BAND 3	BAND 2	BAND 1	NOT APPLICABLE
<p>There is an urgent need to access essential health services as identified by GP/Consultant/other medical professional, or social care support services identified in current care plan, that cannot take place in the home</p> <p><b>AND</b> there is an imminent risk to physical or mental health for self and/or carer.</p>	<p>There is a substantial risk to physical or mental health of self or carer if these services are not accessed.</p> <p><b>AND</b> services can no longer take place with the home.</p>	<p>There is a potential risk to physical or mental health of self and/or carer if these services are not accessed.</p> <p><b>AND</b> services cannot take place within the home.</p>	<p>Some difficulties accessing these services but low risk to physical or mental health of self and/or carer if services are not accessed.</p> <p><b>AND</b> services could be received within the home.</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>

#### 5. FAMILY ROLE

BAND 4	BAND 3	BAND 2	BAND 1	NOT APPLICABLE
<p>Unable to sustain family role.</p> <p><b>AND</b> physical and/or mental health is imminent risk.</p> <p><b>AND</b> family members are fully dependent on service user.</p> <p><b>AND</b> immediate loss of independence.</p>	<p>Family role could be sustained with assistance.</p> <p><b>AND</b> health at risk in near future.</p> <p><b>AND</b> puts unacceptable strain on others.</p> <p><b>AND</b> loss of independence in near future.</p>	<p>Family role could be sustained without assistance.</p> <p><b>AND</b> health at limited risk in foreseeable future.</p> <p><b>AND</b> some strain on others.</p> <p><b>AND</b> loss of independence in foreseeable future.</p>	<p>Family role could be sustained without assistance.</p> <p><b>AND</b> independence/health at low risk.</p> <p><b>AND</b> limited strain on others.</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>



## 6. LIFESTYLE/CULTURE/RELIGION

BAND 4	BAND 3	BAND 2	BAND 1	NOT APPLICABLE
<p>Unable to carry out essential religious/cultural requirements.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there is evidence that these are of crucial importance to the religion/culture.</p> <p><b>AND</b> imminent risk to health due to loss of role.</p>	<p>Majority of needs not met.</p> <p><b>AND</b> serious risk of loss of independence in near future.</p> <p><b>AND</b> serious risk to physical/mental health in near future.</p>	<p>Some religious /cultural needs not met.</p> <p><b>AND</b> may cause depression/isolation in foreseeable future.</p>	<p>One or two religious/cultural needs not met.</p> <p><b>AND</b> there is evidence that these are not of critical importance to the religion/culture.</p> <p><b>AND</b> health at low risk.</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>

## 7. ACCESS TO WORK/EDUCATION

BAND 4	BAND 3	BAND 2	BAND 1	NOT APPLICABLE
<p>Unable to sustain vital involvement in work or education.</p> <p><b>AND</b> physical and/or mental health is at risk.</p> <p><b>AND</b> immediate loss of independence.</p>	<p>Involvement in vital work or education is at substantial risk of breakdown.</p> <p><b>AND</b> physical and/or mental health at risk in near future.</p> <p><b>AND</b> loss of independence in near future.</p>	<p>Difficulty in accessing maintaining principle daytime work or education activity.</p> <p><b>AND</b> could be sustained with some support</p> <p><b>AND</b> health and independence at limited risk in foreseeable future.</p>	<p>Would like to participate in educational or vocational activities as it would improve quality of life.</p> <p><b>AND</b> some assistance is needed to access them.</p> <p><b>AND</b> health at low risk.</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>

## 8. CARERS

BAND 4	BAND 3	BAND 2	BAND 1	NOT APPLICABLE
<p>Totally dependent on carer for all essential personal care activities.</p> <p><b>AND</b> responsibility is too great for carer to manage and carer is at high risk of severe injury to self and/or service user.</p> <p><b>OR</b> care situation has broken down or is at imminent risk of breakdown with potential for hospital/residential/nursing care being sought.</p> <p><b>AND</b> provision of equipment will not alleviate the situation.</p>	<p>Reliant on carer for majority of activities of daily living.</p> <p><b>AND</b> carer has significant disabilities and is at risk of injury in near future.</p> <p><b>OR</b> care situation is at risk of breakdown in near future.</p> <p><b>AND</b> carer has very low support networks.</p>	<p>Dependent on carer for assistance with many activities of daily living.</p> <p><b>AND</b> carer manages with difficulty to provide assistance or is unable to provide some aspects of care.</p> <p><b>AND</b> possibility of breakdown of care situation in foreseeable future.</p> <p><b>AND</b> carer has limited support networks.</p>	<p>Very little reliance on carer for assistance with activities of daily living.</p> <p><b>AND</b> no foreseeable risk of care situation breaking down.</p> <p><b>AND</b> carer has good support networks.</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>

## 9. HEALTH AND SAFETY

BAND 4	BAND 3	BAND 2	BAND 1	NOT APPLICABLE
<p>No understanding of risk and constantly putting self at risk of accident/injury.</p> <p><b>AND</b> total lack of independence due to unpredictable nature of behaviour.</p>	<p>Has limited understanding but still putting self at significant risk.</p> <p><b>AND</b> at risk for majority of tasks.</p> <p><b>AND</b> loss of independence now or in the near future.</p>	<p>Some understanding of risks with awareness causing occasional stress/anxiety now or in foreseeable future.</p> <p><b>AND</b> significant loss of independence due to inability to carry out many tasks safely.</p>	<p>Cautious of risk.</p> <p><b>AND</b> has clear understanding and will be able to contact appropriate services/professional staff when situation deteriorates.</p> <p><b>AND</b> level of risk may cause occasional stress/anxiety in the near future.</p>	<p>This area is not being considered at this time as it has no impact on the adaptation being recommended.</p>

**PRIORITY ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

<b>SECTION 1</b>		<b>BAND</b>				
<b>ACCESS</b>	1.1. Internal Access	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
	1.2 External Access	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
	1.3 Negotiating Stairs	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>SECTION 2</b>						
<b>TRANSFERS</b>	2.1 Toilet	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
	2.2 Chair	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
	2.3 Bed	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
	2.4 Bath/Shower	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>SECTION 3</b>	Food and Drink Preparation	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>SECTION 4</b>	Community Involvement	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>SECTION 5</b>	Family Role	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>SECTION 6</b>	Lifestyle/Culture/Religion	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>SECTION 7</b>	Access to Work/Education	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>SECTION 8</b>	Carers	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>SECTION 9</b>	Health and Safety	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>

**PRIORITY NEED BANDING**

*Circle only the HIGHEST Need Banding as determined above*

<b>4 (High)</b>	<b>3 (Medium)</b>	<b>2 (Low)</b>	<b>1 (No need)</b>
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**PRIORITY SCORE CALCULATION**

*Insert total number for each level from summary table above, use multiplier to determine total for each level, add total for each level to give priority score.*

No. of Band 4s	Multiplier	Total A	No. of Band 3s	Multiplier	Total B	No. of Band 2s	Multiplier	Total C	No. of Band 1s	Multiplier	Total D
	x4			x3			x2			x1	

**PRIORITY SCORE:**

*(Sum of Totals A, B, C & D)*

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## Appendix 2

### Consultation Responses and comments arising

Consultee	Comment Received	CDC Comments/Action
<b>OCC Nigel Homes, Lead officer on Housing Policy for Social &amp; Community Services</b>	<p>Welcomes the policy and the process, especially the involvement of OCC in its formulation.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
	<p>Proposes specific inclusion of review and monitoring arrangements within the policy. Emphasis the need for OTs to be involved in implementation and review. Suggests the Older Persons Accommodation Steering/Implementation Group as an appropriate means of providing governance.</p>	<p>Comment: This is our first DFG Policy and will be kept under active review. The Policy specifically recognises that the assessment procedure and the waiting list mechanism may require changes in light of experience. OTs will be included in review as they are implicitly involved. The Policy is however a CDC document and external governance is inappropriate. DFGs do not relate solely to older people.</p>
	<p>Supports the intention to maximise available capital.</p>	<p>This supports our view</p>
	<p>Supports the intention to seek greater contributions from RSLs.</p>	<p>This supports our view</p>
	<p>Supports the proposal for grant repayment.</p>	<p>This supports our view</p>
<b>OCC Maria Melbourne</b>	<p>Emphasises that property location and site are key factors in determining suitability for disabled people and must be accorded more importance in the decision as whether or not adaptation is appropriate.</p>	<p>Agreed. Revision made to section 7.1.3</p>
	<p>Proposes that reserve grants are held to address emergencies such as supporting discharge from hospital of terminally ill individuals or to avoid admission.</p>	<p>Noted. The Council has a discretionary grant which is used for precisely this purpose.</p>
	<p>Proposes that the policy stresses the need for close working with RSLs and the use of CBL.</p>	<p>Noted. We believe this is already implicit in the policy and the proposal to seek their support for the policy (4.3). Section 7.1.6 has however been amended to included specific reference to CBL.</p>

Proposes that RSLs should implement the same eligibility criteria for adaptation and the same means testing as are used for other applicants.	Noted. This is specifically proposed at 4.3
Supports inclusion of reference to joint Oxfordshire Grant Aided Home Adaption booklet and the common process followed.	Noted
Recommends that adaptation should not support overcrowding (see also point 17 below).	Agreed. 7.2.2 revised to make this more explicit
Emphasises the need for good communication between all agencies dealing with incoming referrals.	Noted. We agree, but this is more a matter of practice than policy.
Emphasises the need for effective early assessment of all relevant social and health needs (triage).	Noted. This is already specifically addressed (see sections 7.1.1 & 7.1.2)
Recommends that the cheapest adaptive options are considered first.	Noted. Already addressed in 7.2.2
Recommends use of a DFG panel to consider more complex or costly adaptations.	Noted. Already included in 7.1.1
Suggests consideration of a contract for stair lifts to reduce costs.	Noted. This is more a matter of practice than policy. It has already received consideration and been rejected
Asks whether an appeals process is required in relation to DFG decisions and what response timescales it would work to.	Comment. The legislation provides no appeal mechanism. The right to seek Judicial Review remains in place. Complaints will be addressed in accordance with the Council's Complaint procedure. We judge that no additional route is required
Recommends the inclusion of dignity and safety in the list (7.1.2) of the Council's decision making expectations.	Noted. We judge these criteria to be implicit in the assessment procedure included in the policy and the OTs assessment.
Recommends revision of text dealing with presumption against level access showers above ground floor so that the stated exception is further qualified to take account of cheaper cost alternatives.	Agreed. Revision made to 7.2.2
Recommends the inclusion of a further expectation that DFGs should not be provided in the case of an RSL tenant transferring	Agreed. Revision made to 7.2.2



	from an adapted to an un-adapted home.	
	Suggests specific inclusion of 'whether owner-occupiers or private tenants' in para 7.1.3 to add additional emphasis.	Agreed. Revision made to 7.4.1
	Recommends that overcrowding is specifically included in para 7.2.1 (see also point 6 above).	Agreed. Revision made to what is now 7.2.2
	Para 7.22: Emphasises that client's will need best possible information about likely waiting times to help inform their decisions.	Agreed. Revision made 7.1.5 to re-emphasise.
	Suggests inclusion of statement that it is inappropriate for high risk cases to wait.	Noted. We believe the need to respond as quickly as possible to those with the greatest need is implicit in the policy.
<b>OCC Clare Tall, Acting Unit Manager, OT Team North</b>	Para 6 of consultation draft: Suggests replacement of ' aspirational needs' with 'level of need', and notes that OTs only recommend essential facilities.	Noted. We believe that the original text is appropriate in seeking to make the point that addressing need is not always the same as meeting aspirations.
	Para 7.1.1 Raises a number of questions in relation to process and decision making rather than policy.	Noted. Not policy issues
	Para 7.1.1 Raises question about use and availability of FHIL.	Noted. Not policy issues
	Para 7.1.2 Seeks clarification of ' last sentence para 1.	Noted. Text revised to improve clarity
	Para 7.1.2 recommends inclusion of referring OT on assessment panel.	Noted. Already included.
	Para 7.1.2 bullet-point 1, Notes that fully meeting assessed needs is not always achievable.	Agreed. 7.2.2 revised to reflect this.
	Para 7.1.2 Questions whether the stated expectation that the Council will provide facilities on the ground floor unless impractical or more costly is realistic, siting possible need to provide new facilities and sleeping provision.	Noted. We judge that the policy already provides appropriate flexibility on this issue.
	Para 7.1.2 Stresses the need to seek the most cost effective solution when considering reordering of space.	Noted. We judge that the policy already provides appropriate flexibility on this issue.
	Para 7.1.2 Recommends review of text dealing with presumption against level access showers above ground floor so as to provide	Agreed. Text of what is now 7.2.2 revised

	more clarity.	
	Para 7.2.1 Seeks clarification of which Council, CDC or OCC (para 5) and asks whether the proposed delay in entry onto waiting list is justified.	Agreed. Footnote added to page 1 to confirm Council refers to CDC. Proposal to delay entry to waiting list removed. Para 7.5.6 revised
	Para 7.2.2 Queries which date will be used for waiting list, referral or final assessment.	Noted. Revision above has made this issue irrelevant.
	Para 7.2.2 proposes that decision to take cases out of strict order should be made in consultation with OT staff.	Noted. However, we judge this to be a CDC process issue
<b>Age UK Bee Myson, Manager, Banbury Centre</b>	Recommends making specific reference to links with Older People.	Noted. However, we judge this inappropriate since this is not just an older people issue.
	Recommends policy is written in layman's language and avoids jargon.	Agreed. Text has been reviewed and revised to add clarity.
	Proposes that expectations of timescales and financial implications are explicit from the outset to help manage expectations.	Noted. This is already implicit in the policy especially 7.1.5
	In response to the specific question asking whether it is appropriate to award a DFG when the premises is under-occupied advises that: Although fair to include discussion of moving when considering adaptive needs of under-occupied property, it is inappropriate to expect it. Factors such as support networks are relevant. Recommends that each case must be assessed on the basis of objective criteria which take account of individual need. Tenure should not itself be a factor in proposing a move.	Noted. The policy makes decision-making subject to a number of presumptions. The facts of each case will be relevant. No revisions are judged appropriate.
	Supports proposal to seek greater contributions from RSLs.	Noted
	Stresses need to ensure that extra demands should not deter RSLs from taking tenants with DFG needs	Noted
	Suggests minimum annual review for those on waiting list, with review in the event that condition changes. Believes that waiting time should confer additional priority.	Noted. A specific review period is judged inappropriate in terms of OT resources. Any change in circumstances will however generate a re-assessment (as at present). We have concluded that the waiting list will only take account of assessed need.

	Stresses need for good links with other agencies and arrangements for their proactive early involvement.	Noted.
	Suggests annual review of DFG criteria to take account of legislative issues, social climate, demand and budget. Noted. As a new policy this will be under constant review to ensure	Noted. This is our first DFG Policy and will be kept under active review. The Policy specifically recognises that the assessment procedure and the waiting list mechanism may require changes in light of experience.
<b>A2Dominion Mark Butler, Area Housing Manager- North</b>	In response to the specific question asking whether it is appropriate to award a DFG when the premises is under-occupied: Does not consider award of a DFG appropriate, especially in the social-rented sector because this does not make best use of in-demand family homes, and because demand can ultimately lead to future removal of adaptations.	Noted. This supports our view
	Suggests that provision of appropriate advice at an early stage will facilitate moves. Believes that clients are often reluctant to move because they start by being told adaptation can be done. Proposes involvement of a Specialist Housing Advisor.	Noted. This supports our view
	In response to the specific question asking whether it is appropriate to build extensions if a move could meet physical need: Extension should be last resort since they use a disproportionate amount of the DFG budget.	Noted. This supports our view
	Suggests the use of modular buildings.	Noted. This is a process issue rather than policy
	In response to the specific question asking how much weight should be given to applicants' wishes to remain in their current home when alternatives are available: Suggests that the Council fund the cheaper option	Noted
	In response to the specific question asking about the extent of RSL commitment we should be seeking: Co-funding agreements should be sought for all RSLs.	Noted. This supports our broad view
	Proposes a cap of £5k funding in each case if RSLs are to be asked to pay 50% contribution.	Noted
	Supports proposal to means test RSL tenants (but believes this may result in some RSLs seeking DFGs who do not do so at	Noted. This supports our broad view

	present).	
	In response to the specific question asking whether clients on the waiting list should receive additional priority to reflect time waiting: Believes this should be the case to avoid some applicants waiting indefinitely.	Noted. We have concluded that assessed need will be the only criteria.
<b>Paradigm Geoffrey Grigg, Regional Manager</b>	In response to the specific question asking whether it is appropriate to award a DFG when the premises is under-occupied: Generally supports this approach but considers that factors such as location and access to support services need to be taken into account. Asks whether incentives such as removal costs would be available.	Noted. This supports our view
	In response to the specific question asking whether it is appropriate to build extensions if a move could meet physical need: Believes that extensions have the benefit of meeting need without adding to the pressure for larger properties which are already at a premium..	Noted. There are cases in which extension is appropriate, but that decision will only be reached after consideration of all options and factors
	In response to the specific question asking how much weight should be given to applicants' wishes to remain in their current home when alternatives are available: No firm view but factors such as location and access to support services are again relevant (see point 1 above).	Noted. This supports our view
	In response to the specific question asking about the extent of RSL commitment we should be seeking: Confirms Paradigm's preparedness to receive nominations for prospective disabled tenants.	Noted
	In response to the specific question asking whether clients on the waiting list should receive additional priority to reflect time waiting: Proposes that waiting list should reflect assessed need only unless there are 'blocking' issues.	Noted. This supports our broad view
	<b>Paradigm Disabled Facilities Officer</b>	In response to the specific question asking whether it is appropriate to award a DFG when the premises is under-occupied: Under-occupancy has a negative effect on the community. Moving is preferable but should be offering positives and not forced.

	In response to the specific question asking whether it is appropriate to build extensions if a move could meet physical need: Asks if this is achievable. Raises question about relative waiting time for move compared with grant..	Noted. There are cases in which extension is appropriate, but that decision will only be reached after consideration of all options and factors
	In response to the specific question asking how much weight should be given to applicants' wishes to remain in their current home when alternatives are available: Considers factors such as location and access to support services are relevant. Noted. This supports our view	
	In response to the specific question asking about the extent of RSL commitment we should be seeking: Confirms that RSL contribution is becoming more common and that a number of agreements to contribute financially are already in place.	Noted
	In response to the specific question asking whether clients on the waiting list should receive additional priority to reflect time waiting: Does not support this approach.	Noted. This supports our view
<b>Charter Community Housing Harjinder Lota, Managing Director</b>	In response to the specific question asking whether it is appropriate to award a DFG when the premises is under-occupied: Considers this inappropriate. Advises that incentives should be used where possible, that proposing alternative accommodation is likely to be difficult to achieve for private property, but that the need to achieve best use of resources.	Noted. This supports our view
	In response to the specific question asking whether it is appropriate to build extensions if a move could meet physical need: Advises that moves should be actively considered rather than extending.	Noted. This supports our view
	In response to the specific question asking how much weight should be given to applicants' wishes to remain in their current home when alternatives are available: Suggests that a maximum grant of £10k might be applied if an applicant was not prepared to move where that was otherwise appropriate	Noted. This approach is not judged to meet legal obligations.
	In response to the specific question asking about the extent of RSL commitment we should be seeking: Supports RSL contributions. Suggests that RSLs should provide for the cost of all	Noted. The proposal for RSL contribution will be a subsequent piece of work.

	minor adaptations up to £750. For other adaptations, a maximum contribution of £10k per property.	
	In response to the specific question asking whether clients on the waiting list should receive additional priority to reflect time waiting: Suggests that additional priority should be given after a 6 month wait.	Noted. We have concluded that assessed need will be the only criteria.
	Supports the proposal that RSL tenants should be means-tested to achieve a more consistent approach.	Noted. This supports our view
	Supports the proposal that adaptations should not be removed and confirms CCH have a policy not to do so following re-letting.	Noted.
	Advises that RSL contributions should apply only to their own stock.	Noted. The proposal for RSL contribution will be a subsequent piece of work but we are likely to agree.
	Supports the proposal to recover grant where applicable	Noted. This supports our view
	Suggests that the threshold for minor adaptations is reduced from £1000 to £750.	Noted. We have no such proposal at this stage

## Executive

### Final business case for a shared management team between Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council

6 December 2010

### Report of Portfolio Holder for Resources and Communications, Leader and Chief Executive

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the final business case for a shared management team between Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council.

This report is public
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#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To recommend to Council at its meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2010 that it approves the business case (and the eighteen specific recommendations included in it) for putting in place a shared management team between Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council by the end of September 2011.
- (2) To recommend to Council in addition that Council endorses the view of the Executive that, once a shared senior management team is in place, the Council can aspire to continued excellent performance.
- (3) To confirm that, after consultation with the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it is agreed that it is in the Council's interest for this decision to be taken urgently and the right to call-in is waived to enable a binding decision to be taken by Council on 8<sup>th</sup> December.

#### Executive Summary

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##### Introduction

- 1.1 On 11<sup>th</sup> October 2010 the Executive considered the draft business case for putting in place a shared management team with South Northamptonshire Council. At the same time Executive members heard from the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Resources and Performance Board who reported back the findings and the recommendations of the two

Committees which had met jointly on 6<sup>th</sup> October to consider the business case and the consultation feedback from staff and unison.

- 1.2 In light of the feedback from the two scrutiny committees approved the draft business case, but made two additional recommendations. Firstly, that the Joint Working Group consider mechanisms for making the recruitment to the shared Chief Executive an open recruitment process. Secondly, that a joint ICT Steering Group be set up comprising members and officers from both councils to ensure that the required ICT support which is needed for joint working is properly considered in advance of the appointment of the first shared posts.
- 1.3 The Joint Working Group has considered the question of recruitment to the shared Chief Executive post and the business case now recommends that this is an open recruitment process, supported by recruitment consultants appointed by both councils. Appendix 8 of the final business case lays out the proposed Job Description and Person Specification. Recruitment consultants are being selected in advance of the 8<sup>th</sup> December by the Leaders of the two councils, supported by a small project team. The successful firm will be formally appointed on 9<sup>th</sup> December, subject to the decisions at both full councils, and recruitment to the shared Chief Executive post will start immediately after that.
- 1.4 A joint ICT Steering Group has been established and has already met for the first time. Its agreed terms of reference are laid out in Appendix 2 of the final business case.
- 1.5 The final business case is attached as Appendix 1. The Joint Working Group took into account the findings and recommendations of the scrutiny committees at both councils, as well as the consultation feedback from staff and unions at both councils and agreed a series of further changes to the final business case. None of the annual savings or costs projected for Cherwell have changed since the draft business case. The projected payback periods also remain the same.
- 1.6 Section 2 of the final business case lays out the main changes and additions to the final business case. In summary,

**Timetable** The final recommendation is for the shared senior management team to be in place by September 2011, rather than March 2011 as previously and assumes that the shared Chief Executive will be in post sometime between 1 March and 1 June 2011.

**Outline structure of the senior management team** The proposed structure remains unchanged as Chief Executive, 3 Directors and 8 Heads of Service, but the reasoning behind it is now explained in detail.

**Ringfencing of current post holders to roles** Changes have been made to this in light of feedback from staff here at Cherwell District Council.

**Further developments** The business case now recognises the opportunity we will have as two councils sharing one management team to work in partnership in a 'confederation' with other public sector organisations (other local authorities, health, the police and others) to secure further savings.



## **Proposals**

- 2.1 The Joint Working Group recommends that Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council put a shared management team in place by the end of September 2011. It is proposed that the Executive accept this recommendation and recommend this in turn to full Council who will take the final decision on whether to go ahead on 8<sup>th</sup> December.

## **Conclusion**

- 3.0 The business case is now finalised and should be recommended to full council.

## Background Information

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- 4.1 Since July a great deal of work has taken place between members and officers of South Northamptonshire Council and Cherwell District Council in order to formulate and deliver a full business case on creating a shared senior management structure that will serve both councils.
- 4.2 The draft business case resulting from this work was published by the Joint Working Group on 17<sup>th</sup> September. This final version takes into account the formal recommendations from the scrutiny committees of both councils as well as consultation feedback from staff and unions at both councils.
- 4.3 All of this work has taken place alongside work to develop 2011/12 budgets and updated medium Term Financial Strategies both here and at South Northamptonshire Council. We now know from the Comprehensive Spending Review report that grants from central government to local government will be cut by 26% over the next four years. This cut, combined with the loss of the concessionary fare budget and other factors, means that we are now facing a possible total budget shortfall of between £13.8m and £15.8m between now and the end of 2014/15 on the basis that we take no action until the very end of this period. However, the sooner we act, the smaller the cut in actual expenditure we will need to make. Putting this proposed shared management team (15 shared posts in total) in place by September 2011 makes a £2.3m contribution to the total shortfall and contributes £333,000 to the 2011/12 budget. It also opens up the possibility of further savings over the next four years should both councils agree to take joint working further.
- 4.4 Should this proposal for a shared management team not be accepted by both full councils then we will have to find the £2.3m from elsewhere. The joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Resources and Performance Board on the 6<sup>th</sup> October considered our 'Plan B' – the cutting of five posts from our Extended Management Team and a range of actions to out-source and in-source work from/to our finance, human resources and legal teams. Members concluded that this was a far inferior option to the proposal for a shared management team.

## Summary of the proposal

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- 5.1 The business case proposes a shared senior management team of twelve posts, with three further posts to be shared at this stage. Putting these shared posts in place will deliver an **ongoing annual saving of £686,000** to this council, adding up to **£3.430m cumulative savings over 5 years**.
- 5.2 The implementation costs associated with achieving this annual saving of £686,000 will vary depending on which staff leave the two organisations and therefore a range of costs have been estimated in the draft business case. The lowest cost estimate is £817,000. The middle case (as used in the business case) is £1.384m and the highest cost estimate is £1.693m.
- 5.3 The Joint Working Group has recommended that, regardless of which staff in which organisations are made redundant, the costs will be split on a 60:40 basis, with Cherwell District Council picking up 60% of the costs. Both District Auditors have agreed with this approach.
- 5.4 The expected overall pay back period for Cherwell District Council is 1.21 years, working on average one-off costs. This will improve to 0.71 years if

one-off costs prove to be our best case costs or drop back to 1.48 years if we face the worst case one-off costs.

- 5.5 The business case is based on a maximum of 30 weeks redundancy compensation being given at both councils in line with the policies at both councils. Should either council award, at their discretion, redundancy compensation exceeding 30 weeks then that council will be responsible for covering that additional cost.
- 5.6 The business case also identifies the possibility for further savings elsewhere in the organisations if a joint management team structure is put in place. Indicatively it sets out the level of additional savings if costs in the next tier of management were reduced by 15%, 20% and 25%.
- 5.7 If 20% reductions were identified in the next tier of management, as a result of the opportunities to work more closely once the senior management team were in place, this would equate to an approximate further **ongoing annual saving for Cherwell District Council of 392,000 (or £1.960m cumulative over 5 years)**.
- 5.8 These savings would be in addition to the ones detailed at 5.1, and if delivered, **would bring the total annual saving to potentially £1.078m per year**, subject to further business cases which would explore the costs and benefits of services on a case by case basis.

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

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The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward. The following option has also been identified.

<b>Option One</b>	Not to recommend the business case to full Council. However, the financial benefits are clear and the risks of delivery are manageable. If this case was not to be recommended to full Council the £3.430m saving generated directly by the business case would have to be found from making cuts to the council's own management team, from out-/in-sourcing a range of corporate services and almost certainly from cuts to other services, in light of the greater difficulty and time required in securing these alternative savings. Future savings of the type identified in the business case would also be foregone.
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### **Consultations**

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**Elected members** The Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board and Overview and Scrutiny Committee met jointly on 6<sup>th</sup> October to consider the business case and their findings and recommendations have been taken into account in this final business case.

**Unions and staff** UNISON and staff at both councils have been formally consulted on the draft business case and their comments have been taken into account in this final business case.

## Implications

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**Financial:** These are set out in full in the business case. The contribution to the 2011/12 budget would equate to a minimum of £333,000 if the timetable proposed in the business case was achieved.

Comments checked by Karen Muir, Corporate Systems Accountant 01295 221559

**Legal:** These are dealt with in Section 8 of the business case and the proposed section 113 agreement between the two councils is set out in Appendix 3. It is proposed that, subject to the decisions of both councils on the 8<sup>th</sup> December, this legal agreement is signed by both councils on the 9<sup>th</sup> December.

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

**Risk Management:** These are dealt with in Section 9 of the business case and the risk register at Appendix 6. The risk register has been updated since the draft business case to take into account the fact that time has either eliminated risks or further mitigations have reduced their impact. There remain two risks still assessed as high even after mitigation measures. We believe we should tolerate these at this level going forward, but continue to pay detailed attention to them.

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

**Human Resources** No immediate impact at this stage although all recruitment and redundancy processes which may follow must comply with the council's policies and legal obligations.

Comments checked by Anne-Marie Scott, Head of People and Improvement 01295 221731

## Wards Affected

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All

## Corporate Plan Themes

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All

## Executive Portfolio

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**Councillor James Macnamara**  
Portfolio Holder for Resources and Communications

**Councillor Barry Wood**  
Portfolio Holder for Policy, Community Planning and Community Development

## Document Information

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Final business case
<b>Background Papers</b>	
<p>12 July 2010 Report to Executive, The Case for Considering Close Joint Working between Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire Councils</p> <p>6 October 2010, Minutes of Extraordinary Joint Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board</p> <p>11 October 2010, Report to Executive, Business case for a shared management team between Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire District Council</p>	
<b>Report Author</b>	Mary Harpley, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Information</b>	01295 221573 <a href="mailto:mary.harpley@cherwell-dc.gov.uk">mary.harpley@cherwell-dc.gov.uk</a>

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## Executive

### Cherwell/South Northamptonshire Building Control Shared Service Proposals

6 December 2010

### Report of Head of Building Control and Engineering Services

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider whether it is appropriate and beneficial to Cherwell and South Northamptonshire Councils to merge their Building Control services into a jointly managed operation.

This report is public
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#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) Subject to the endorsement of the Cabinet of South Northamptonshire Council who are concurrently considering this report, to agree in principle to implementing joint management arrangements for the Building Control services of Cherwell and South Northamptonshire.
- (2) To instruct the Head of Building Control and Engineering Services, and Head of People and Improvement to carry out the recruitment of the joint Building Control Manager and Team Leaders for each of the Councils as set out in this report and its appendices.

#### Executive Summary

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##### Introduction

- 1.1 The joint management arrangements proposed for the Building Control services of the two Authorities are not dependent on those being considered for their joint corporate management. The proposals set out in this report are viable without such corporate arrangements, and equally if such corporate arrangements are put in place the two Building Control services could continue to exist as entirely separate operations.
- 1.2 The work of a Local Authority Building Control (LABC) service comprises two elements. Firstly, it receives and handles applications under the Building Regulations. This accounts for typically 65% to 75% of a LABC's workload. In addition LABC's are tasked with various administrative duties such as the registration and collation of development information and they also have to accept applications which are exempt from building control fees, mainly adaptations for the disabled.

- 1.3 Other peripheral services are also often housed in a LABC environment. For example, in Cherwell there is the role of Access Officer which provides advice on accessibility within the built environment. In South Northamptonshire there is the Council's service which names new streets and assigns addresses to new properties.
- 1.4 For the past 20 years or so LABC's have had to compete with private sector "Approved Inspectors" who can receive Building Regulation applications, and approve these and inspect the resultant works as if they were in the public sector. Approved Inspectors charge their customers for this work as do Local Authorities. Each Local Authority sets a scheme of fees and charges which are in direct competition to those set by Approved Inspectors.
- 1.5 This competition is increasingly putting LABC's at risk and in order to meet the challenge many now have joint management arrangements or have merged completely. This has given those LABC's increased resilience and efficiency and has allowed them to become much more commercially focused than they would otherwise have been through the development of marketing skills and strategies.

### **Proposals**

- 1.6 It is proposed that the Building Control services of Cherwell and South Northamptonshire are brought together under single management. With effect from 1 April 2011 there would be a team of practitioners in each Authority lead by Team Leaders reporting to a joint Manager.
- 1.7 The Building Control Manager and two Team Leader posts will be new positions for which interviews would be held over the winter. The Head of People and Improvement has identified four incumbent officers, two in each Authority, who would be ring fenced to apply for these three new positions.
- 1.8 The Building Control Manager would report to a joint Service Head or two Service Heads if the joint corporate management proposal does not proceed. The Building Control Manager's remit would not only be to manage the shared service on a day to day basis but also, and importantly, to develop the shared service into an organisation that is strong enough to resist increasing market pressures in a way that the services cannot do individually.
- 1.9 Although it is not proposed that on 1 April 2011 there will be a single team resourcing both Districts, the shared service will create the opportunity for this to evolve organically and under the leadership of the new Manager. When appointed he will be charged with developing a vision whereby this could occur and in an appropriate timescale and if circumstances warrant.
- 1.10 The paper and appendices attached to this report provide the background to this proposal.
- 1.11 Appendix 1 shows that there are strong business reasons for the shared service joint venture as it would significantly enhance the ability of both Building Control services to face future pressures. The financial case, particularly for Cherwell, is less compelling and in the short term, benefits occurring in this regard only in the medium to long term. It is considered that this "spend to save" policy is the only one that will assure a long term future for both Authority's Building Control services.



- 1.12 Appendix 2 shows the proposed staff structure most appropriate to the shared service, and the reasons for it. It also details the measures that will have to be taken to achieve this staff structure.
- 1.13 Appendix 3 sets out how governance would be applied to the new shared service. A Management Board comprising Members and Senior Officers of both Authorities have been considered but on balance Cherwell's Democratic Services Manager came to the clear view that management and reporting through a conventional officer hierarchy is all that is needed in this case.

### **Conclusion**

- 1.14 The shared service first started to be investigated some 6 months ago since when the appendices to this report have been prepared and agreed with South Northamptonshire. The South Northamptonshire Cabinet will receive its version of this report together with all its appendices at the same time as Cherwell. The initiative cannot proceed unless endorsed by both our Executive and their Cabinet.

## **Background Information**

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- 2.1 A background paper has been prepared explaining the detailed financial and non-financial aspects of the shared service proposal. These have been agreed by Cherwell's Portfolio Holder and by South Northamptonshire. The paper goes into specific detail on the business case for forming a shared service, the governance arrangements under which it will operate, and the proposed staffing implications and structure of the shared service.

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

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- 3.1 The key reasons for proposing this venture are that it will give both Cherwell and South Northamptonshire Building Control Services a more assured future and over a relatively short period of time the revenue costs borne by both Authorities to fund the non fee element of building control work will decrease.
- 3.2 This is an imperative more for South Northamptonshire than Cherwell at present as South Northamptonshire have suffered more in recent times as a result of competitive forces. However, even though Cherwell has held its own until now it is unrealistic to think that the competitive pressures will not increase. As such alliances are formed in and around Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire it is appropriate that this joint venture should not be delayed.
- 3.3 The alternative is that both Cherwell and South Northamptonshire will continue to stand alone in this service for as long as can be sustained. That will leave it vulnerable to becoming a third or fourth partner in an already formed alliance, or to its becoming only a Building Control Authority of last resort, picking up only non fee earning work or work which the private sector do not want.
- 3.4 The benefits that this shared service will bring to both Authorities are:
- It will increase the resilience and flexibility of both Authorities to respond to increasing demands and competitive pressures on its Building Control services.
  - It will place in the newly created post of Building Control Manager a clear responsibility to develop the shared service through strong marketing and other strategies so that competition can be resisted and market share maintained or even increased.
  - It will allow direct comparisons and exchanges of management and working practices across both Authorities from which can be selected the best.
  - With the flexibility that will come about, it will enable a single pool of technical knowledge and excellence including specialism's which can be shared across the two Authorities and marketed to other LABCs or LABC groupings.
  - It will facilitate the prospect of a better resourced long term business plan and succession strategy.
- 3.5 There will be immediate financial benefits accruing in Cherwell. Because South Northamptonshire would be entering the shared service from a worse financial position they would be seeing such benefits far earlier in the process. Cherwell would have to be prepared to stand still in this regard for two-three years until South Northamptonshire caught up before realising its financial benefits further down the line.

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

**Option One** Adopt the shared service approach contained and recommended in this report.

**Option Two** Not to form a shared service but for each Building Control service to continue to operate entirely separately. The risk of this do-nothing approach is that each service would continue to struggle in the face of increasing private sector competition, losing flexibility and resilience, and perhaps unable to recruit replacement staff effectively. This would hasten a decline to each service becoming one of last resort and without the ability to contribute effectively to other relevant services of both Councils. Cherwell would probably have to seek shared service elsewhere where it might have to become the third or fourth partner in an already formed and established alliance,

**Option Three** To agree to a joint venture in principle but to delay bringing it about. There is a strong prognosis that if conditions change for the two services they will worsen. The reasoning behind a shared service would be less compelling and the net benefits may be lost if a decision to proceed is delayed.

## Consultations

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**Financial:** The financial implications are detailed in full in the business case background paper in Section 5 and within Appendix 4 and 5.

For Cherwell this proposal is not being recommended on financial grounds but should be seen as an investment in the service in order for it to develop, grow and make it more resilient following a management departure.

The additional costs can be offset against the building control reserve corporate change reserve. The financial model shows an improved position for Cherwell financially and although revenue is expected to increase this has not been built in to the financial model. The one off implementation costs will be funded through the corporate change reserve and using all scenarios payback will be within 1 year.

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

**Legal:** There are routine legal implications arising from this proposal in respect of joint working, cross border issues and professional indemnity. However, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services is satisfied that these issues pose no practical or legal impediments to the proposal. There are very many such joint arrangements that operate

up and down the Country from which advice can be taken if needed.

Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Solicitor 01295 221687

**Risk Management:**

Not forming a shared service will in time put Cherwell's Building Control Service at greater risk of competition from the private sector and its long term viability would thus be questionable. The business and operating model suggested in this report is already tried and tested at many Authorities in the Country. The main residual risk is that of Cherwell and South Northamptonshire not being able to operate together due to irreconcilable differences in cultures and priorities. However, a management structure has been designed to mitigate this as much as possible.

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

**Efficiency Savings**

Clear efficiency savings to both Cherwell and South Northamptonshire are identified in the Business Case and detailed in Appendix 4 and section 5.

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

**Wards Affected**

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All wards.

**Corporate Plan Themes**

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A District of Opportunity  
A Value for Money District

**Executive Portfolio**

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**Councillor Michael Gibbard**  
**Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

**Document Information**

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Cherwell and South Northamptonshire District Councils – Business Case for a Shared Building Control Service
Appendix 2	Service Performance Data
Appendix 3	Existing Costs 2010/11
Appendix 4	Projected Costs 2011/12
Appendix 5	Implementation Costs
Appendix 6	Proposed Staffing Structure
<b>Background Papers</b>	
None	
<b>Report Author</b>	Tony Brummell, Head of Building Control and Engineering Services
<b>Contact Information</b>	01295 221524 tony.brummell@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk



**CHERWELL AND SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS:  
BUSINESS CASE FOR A SHARED BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE**

**1.0 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The two Council's Building Control services face serious issues that affect their viability, in terms of finances, resilience and ensuring a level of resourcing that will continue to deliver the Councils' priorities at an affordable cost.
- 1.2 The cost profile of the 2 Councils is very different - Cherwell District Council income is twice that of South Northamptonshire, direct costs are lower as a % of income and support costs charged to the building control service are also lower. On the basis that Cherwell District Council has taken an annual management saving of ~ £20,000 in 2010/11 and has a building control reserve of approx £50,000 it is proposing to invest this in order to develop a shared service with South Northamptonshire.
- 1.3 The output being a competitive, resilient, cost effective service, reduction in costs to South Northamptonshire with effect from April 2011 and a commitment that Cherwell District Council position within 3 years should be on a par with 2010/11 projection.
- 1.4 The business case in this paper proposes and assumes a shared service commences on 1 April 2011. It considers the projected individual financial positions of each service during 2010/11 and the combined positions at the end of 2011/12 and 2012/13, taking account of the opportunities for saving and efficiencies. The assumptions are financially conservative – it may be possible, and would be intended where feasible, cost-effective and appropriate – to make the savings sooner. It is envisaged that the proposals will reduce the overall costs to the two Councils by a minimum of £120,000 by the end of 2012/13, create a resilient building control service which will be competitive in the open market therefore potentially leading to additional income generation
- 1.5 The Councils are required to provide certain statutory building control functions (such as enforcement, the collection of data and statistics for transmission to DCLG, and giving technical advice to other Council services such as development control and conservation) which cannot be charged. But they may also provide other services (related to Building Regulation applications) on a commercial basis. The latter are required to break even, but (especially in recent years for South Northamptonshire) make substantial losses, and are under pressure from aggressive private sector competition.
- 1.6 Addressing this issue requires a serious adjustment to the services' cost base, in parallel with re-positioning in marketing terms to maintain and re-build the client base. These issues were evident, to differing degrees, in both Councils a couple of years ago, but the recession has exacerbated them significantly. The two Councils therefore need to address these issues in any event. But the financial pressure that both now face means that urgent action cannot be delayed.
- 1.7 However, if the two Councils sought to reduce costs independently, there is a real risk that the remaining resource would not be sufficient to contribute to an integrated approach to development services. It would also become more difficult to maintain existing market share, thus triggering a business 'spiral of decline' in the face of private sector competition. Sharing resource and expertise should reduce costs in a way that enables service resilience, marketability and efficiency improvements. This will lead to better long-term prospects for recruitment and retention, and better ability to cope with future financial pressures as a result of greater flexibility.

- 1.8 This paper therefore sets out a business case for developing a shared building control service. The aim is to ensure a financially viable (not loss-making) commercial part of the service, by facilitating a single, more realistically resourced team of technical excellence which will have the resilience and flexibility to work to a more appropriate long-term business plan and marketing/charging strategy.
- 1.9 The business case envisages a single service manager supported by two teams, one for each district, but which are capable of supporting each other across the whole area. It assumes a rapid but controlled evolution from the two current independent services to one that is jointly managed but with two separate teams, leading to one that is still jointly managed and team-based but where the teams routinely cover for each other and share specialist and non-specialist resource. It envisages early reduction in staffing of one post, with at least one further post being lost as soon as practicable thereafter (the timing to depend on further consideration of the practical transitional arrangements by the new service manager).
- 1.10 This business case is separate from the wider discussions between the two Councils about shared senior management arrangements. The issues underlying it need to be addressed by both Councils in any event, and the opportunity for a joint service was identified and initial work to investigate its potential was in hand some time before the wider opportunity was identified. This proposal could therefore proceed irrespective of any decision to adopt shared senior management arrangements. However, some details of the proposal would need to be different dependent on the outcome of those wider discussions (reporting lines to senior management); and proposals in relation to staff terms and conditions have been deliberately framed to ensure nothing is done in implementing this proposal which is prejudicial to the wider opportunity.

## **2.0 Background: How Local Authority Building Control is Funded**

- 2.1 Local Authority Building Control (LABC) operations receive funding from two sources. When Building Regulation applications are received from builders or members of the public they are accompanied by a fee. Typically, this fee earning work accounts for about 65% to 75% of the total workload of a LABC operation. The remaining work comprises other statutory functions such as enforcement, the collection of data and statistics for transmission to DCLG, and giving technical advice to other Council services such as development control and conservation.
- 2.2 When performing the fee earning element of its work, each LABC Service is in competition with the private sector. Licensed "Approved Inspectors" have set themselves up as private enterprises to bid for and receive applications under the Building Regulations and deal with them in all respects as if they were the LABC.
- 2.3 Each LABC has to have set a schedule of fees and charges through which it derives the external income which it wins. In Cherwell and South Northamptonshire these fees and charges are reviewed annually. Inevitably, the fees and charges currently set by Cherwell and South Northamptonshire differ. It will be the intention of the shared service to converge these at the earliest possible opportunity, being mindful also that retaining competitiveness is paramount at all times.
- 2.4 There is clearly a balance between maximising external income and keeping the scale of fees and charges sufficiently competitive to attract the required workload. Each LABC is notionally tasked by DCLG to break even in this regard. But whereas in the past the break even requirement may have been of less concern for a Council than delivering its priorities (in other words, councils might have been willing to accept a loss for non-financial reasons), in the current financial climate that position is now untenable. This implies that charging aims and the supporting fee structures need to change, within the framework imposed by the market context.

- 2.5 The cost of the statutory operations not funded by external income is what is termed in this report “Internal Regulatory Supplement” or IRS. The IRS is the cost to the Council (i.e. the draw on its revenue resources) of providing an effective regulatory Building Control service. This cost to the Council of the Building Control service may then be increased if it incurs a loss on the discretionary aspects of the service (i.e. when the costs of the chargeable parts of the service exceed its income) or reduced if a surplus is made.

### **3.0 Key Issues facing the services**

#### **(i) Cherwell and South Northamptonshire Recent Financial Performance**

- 3.1 For the work carried out in direct competition with the private sector over the last two complete years Cherwell had posted deficits of £32,000 and £28,000, representing some 9% and 8% of turnover. This followed several years of similar surpluses.
- 3.2 For South Northamptonshire the deficits over the same period have been £135,000 and £166,000, representing of 67.5% and 88% of turnover. These figures may be comparatively high because of the Council’s allocation of corporate and departmental overheads. These have been recently reviewed and will be considerably less in 2010/11. However, the point remains that there has been a substantial deficit of costs over income which reflects high ‘unit costs’ when measured in terms of case-work productivity. South Northamptonshire’s deficit has been commented upon by the Audit Commission, which has made a specific reference about the statutory requirements to break even not being met, and advised that action should be taken to address this.
- 3.3 South Northamptonshire clearly needs to take steps to address this deficit. It is questionable whether this can be achieved without a step change in the way its Building Control service is operated. To avoid a downward spiral where increasing fees would inevitably lead to a reducing market share, the only alternative option to a shared service would seem to be a positive action not to seek any external work and thus become simply a Building Control service of last resort.
- 3.4 Likewise, Cherwell is not in a position where continued surpluses in its Building Control trading account can be taken for granted. It too is in need of an innovative stimulus to ensure its long term future.

#### **(ii) Resilience**

- 3.5 The Building Control shared service has been promoted not only on the basis of the necessity for both Councils to make savings in order to address their current market positions (and the levels of deficit being incurred on their fee earning accounts) but also because making the essential savings together will provide a stronger overall basis for continuing with commercial services. Working together will provide more stability and resilience to a service which is coming under increasing threat from private sector competition. It seems clear that service delivery, marketability and efficiency improvements should result from sharing expertise and increasing resilience. These should also result in better prospects for recruitment and retention of professional staff, and through greater flexibility the service should be better able to cope with future pressures. An important consideration for Cherwell in this context is the need to address an imminent management ‘gap’ in the service.



### **(iii) Delivering the Objectives and Priorities of both Councils**

- 3.6 A key issue of the shared arrangements is having certainty that a shared service would deliver the objectives and priorities of both Councils. An important area, from both Councils' viewpoints, is ensuring that sharing does not prejudice the objective of integrating Building Control closely with other development services such as development control and planning enforcement. This was an important aspect of South Northamptonshire's "organisation design review". At a headline level South Northamptonshire and Cherwell organisational structures for the services are relatively similar, so on the face of it the two Councils' overall priorities are aligned.
- 3.7 It is also essential to ensure that the two Councils have a shared vision at all levels on which to deliver future Building Control services. Key issues in ensuring a unified approach are:
- Service standards e.g. speed and timeliness of response, level of detail and frequency of advice given;
  - The nature and detail, and level of pro-activity, in giving advice to builders etc. to promote accessible and sustainable development approaches to construction;
  - The level of involvement of Building Control (at planning application and pre-application advice stages) in development control, to ensure problem-free construction as a result of planning decisions and to promote accessible and sustainable development approaches to building design; and
  - The role of Building Control in supporting planning enforcement (as Building Control officers often see new buildings at the early stages of construction they are able to see emerging problems from a planning viewpoint and by close liaison could help prevent those becoming serious enforcement issues).
- 3.8 All these issues need some further work to ensure the professional staff have a similar view about how they would address them, and are confident they have the necessary skills and experience to cover such work across both districts. Understanding clearly the perspectives of both Councils, and their professional staff, is essential if a correct choice is to be made about a future approach.

## **4.0 The Business Case Proposal**

### **(i) Overview**

- 4.1 This Business Case is predicated on the organogram shown at Appendix 1A, which may be compared to the existing organograms for the two Councils at Appendices 1B and 1C. It assumes a joint Building Control Manager with strong business management and business development skills, as well as extensive technical skills and experience in Building Control, who will be responsible for two teams, one in each Council.

- 4.2 Initially the proposal to merge the service will concentrate on bringing the teams together in as straightforward an approach as possible. The proposed structure means that there will be a Building Control presence in each Council office, a continuing presence in each office is considered essential as the service has strong links to development control, and its customers, who would expect a local presence, are often also concurrently those of other services of each Council. In turn, this will allow the main staff structure in each Council to be retained. Each service receives a combined administration function (shared with other Council services), so the business case has deliberately not looked at the sharing of administration functions at this stage. This, however, could follow in due course.
- 4.3 The Business Case assumes a rapid but controlled evolution for the two independent services that exist at present, to one jointly managed but with two separate teams, and then to one still jointly managed and team-based but where the teams routinely cover for each other and where there is a sharing of specialist and non-specialist resource. At this point the administrative boundary between Cherwell and South Northamptonshire becomes largely irrelevant.
- 4.4 With this evolution, but inevitably at a less rapid pace, will come a convergence of working practices and business culture and in the personal terms and conditions of those involved in the service.
- 4.5 However, crucially, there will need to be a very early convergence of the fees and charges for Building Control applications. DCLG directed all Local Authority Building Control bodies to review and publish by 1 October 2010 new fee scales to reflect the outcome of their recent consultation on adopting a more risk-based approach to charging. From 1 October 2010 Cherwell and South Northamptonshire have set different fee scales based on their differing service costs. However and importantly, the methodology behind each scale has been the same, and with some minor recalculation it will therefore be possible to publish a unified scale on 1 April 2011 or very soon after. That will be the intention of the joint service.
- 4.6 The Business Case is therefore based on a single set of fees applicable equally in South Northamptonshire and in Cherwell.

#### **(ii) Governance and Reporting Lines**

- 4.7 The joint Building Control Manager will report to Head of Service level. In the event that a shared senior management approach is adopted by the two Councils, he would report to whichever Head of Service is deemed to be the appropriate manager for the service under the new arrangements (which may become clearer in early 2011). In the event that a shared senior management approach is not adopted, he would report to the relevant Head of Service of each Council (there would be a dual reporting line) and the two Heads of Service would be jointly responsible to their Directors and Portfolio Holders for the service on behalf of their respective Councils.
- 4.8 However, if the shared senior management approach did not proceed, it will be appropriate to consider the need for a specific formal partnership agreement which covers issues such as recruitment, termination, dispute resolution, indemnities, budget setting and suchlike. Those details have not been considered at this stage, to avoid wasted work since (at the time of drafting this paper) it seems likely to be unnecessary.

- 4.9 In either case, the relationship of Building Control Manager to Head(s) of Service is a purely operational one. In the view of both Councils' Monitoring Officers, therefore, it does not require Member involvement in the governance arrangements. It would be for each Council to decide on its own Member-level monitoring arrangements for assessing the performance and effectiveness of the joint arrangements.

#### **(ii) Work Processes**

- 4.10 There are inevitably current differences in the working practices and cultures of Cherwell and South Northamptonshire which are reflected in their respective Building Control services. These differences are also inevitably reflected in the costs of the respective services and emerge at two levels.
- 4.11 Firstly, the day-to-day routines of processing applications and dealing with customers and their queries are different in each Authority. While the beginning and end points are the same the means of getting there varies. That is not to say that one Authority is wrong and the other right. Indeed, the most effective means probably lies somewhere in between the two. It will be for the Building Control Manager to assess the processes of each office, select the best practices from each and then blend them into a single transferable process.
- 4.12 Similarly there are differences in the way customer care is approached in each Authority. Building Control is a business which is reliant not only on external income but on balancing the books. It will be for the Building Control Manager to converge the cultures of each organisation so that a sustainable balance of customer care and profitability can be achieved.
- 4.13 The internal technical support provided by Cherwell and South Northamptonshire also differs at present. It is logical and sensible that under a shared service and unified management these should in time be brought into alignment. However, that will be a matter for a future exercise and it is not considered here in any detail.
- 4.14 South Northamptonshire's Building Control service includes its service to name streets and number properties on new developments, and to provide new and maintain existing street nameplates throughout its district. This service fits well beside Building Control and therefore Cherwell will realign its address management service similarly.
- 4.15 Cherwell is currently developing the role of Access Officer within its Building Control service. Through this it will discharge Cherwell's responsibilities under the equalities legislation that relates to the built environment, which can be reinforced by South Northamptonshire's existing expertise in this area. Other areas of mutual aid will be developed as part of the shared service.

#### **(iii) Convergence of Cultures, Customer Care and Business Approach**

- 4.16 A successful shared service will be measured not only on its financial performance but also on its ability to progress as one integrated service rather than two disparate ones, which offer a high but affordable level of customer care. Such a vision requires the adoption of a single culture and set of standards.
- 4.17 Appendix 2 shows the key data taken from 2008/09 and 2009/10. This provides a comparison between each Council's operation, from which the following are evident.
- The value of the average commission won by Cherwell is some 34% higher than by South Northamptonshire.

- The cost of processing each commission is 24% higher in South Northamptonshire than in Cherwell. This is due in large part to the fact that South Northamptonshire's Building Control Officers make 14% more site visits to each application site than their Cherwell counterparts.
  - Each Cherwell Surveyor deals with 22% more applications than his South Northamptonshire counterpart.
  - Cherwell employs an external structural engineer (amounting to 0.6 FTE) to check relevant submissions whereas South Northamptonshire do not.
  - Market share in Cherwell is some 10%-15% higher than in South Northamptonshire.
  - Satisfaction ratings in South Northamptonshire are marginally higher than in Cherwell (although up to date ratings for SNC are not available)
- 4.18 The conclusion of these headline statistics is that despite each South Northamptonshire commission being of lower value than Cherwell's, South Northamptonshire are putting more resource into each. South Northamptonshire's clients clearly appreciate this high level of service but whether they will continue to do so, and be prepared to pay higher fees to reflect the true costs of a high quality service at a time of increasing financial pressure for them in an increasingly competitive market, is questionable.
- 4.19 Private sector competition is very active in the South Northamptonshire area, which probably accounts for their lower market share. However, as markets and margins become tighter it would be unrealistic to think that such inroads in Cherwell will not be made sooner or later unless action is taken to rebut them. There is already evidence of this in Cherwell's inability to secure the Building Control commission for the prestigious Sainsbury's development in Bicester. Winning that would have earned fees approaching £30,000, close to 10% of Cherwell's annual income from applications.
- 4.20 The challenge facing a joint venture would be for both services to move to a more financially sustainable position. Clearly South Northamptonshire has further to go in this regard and it is not realistic to think that their journey would be with no compromise to their high customer care culture. For Cherwell, the marginal efficiencies brought about by a shared service would probably negate the need for such a step culture change.
- 4.21 The key question for South Northamptonshire in considering this proposal is therefore whether the Council and its customers are prepared to accept this compromise and reduction in service quality. The alternative would be the imposition of higher fees and/or a severe reduction in costs and therefore service quality in order to meet the DCLG's break even requirement, which would in turn inevitably lead to a reduction in its client base. The process would then become self-propagating.
- 4.22 For the South Northamptonshire service to be sustainable in isolation a balance would have to be struck. If the DCLG requirement of driving up fees is to be avoided, a severe reduction in costs and a probable reduction of service quality has to take place. At least under the scenario of a shared service, an element of control over the situation could be achieved with careful management and communication with South Northamptonshire's remaining clients.

## 5.0 Financial considerations

5.1 The existing financial positions of the Building Control services of each Council are shown in Appendix 3.

5.2 Appendix 4 shows the projected position as at 2011/12 split between the two Authorities.

5.3 The following assumptions are made throughout the financial modelling:

- There are no increases in individual salary costs (i.e. no index linked salary increases).
- The migration of the two existing organograms to a single streamlined one will entail a reduction in the salary of at least one member of staff and/or redundancies. The Business Cases shown in the appendices assume that any pay protection and redundancy payments are outside it.

5.4 In Appendix 4 it is assumed that:

- There is agreement that there is a 60%/40% split of both costs and income - 60% in favour of Cherwell and 40% in favour of South Northamptonshire.
- There is agreement that savings from the reduction in posts is split 60% in favour of Cherwell and 40% in favour of South Northamptonshire.
- The level of support costs is limited to £296,800 in 2011-12. SNC will charge a maximum of £145,000 to the unit and CDC £151,800. These costs will be capped at this amount for the next three years to provide certainty for the unit.
- The 10% premium for a building control manager is included and based on total costs.
- Although support costs are expected to reduce over the period due to medium term financial strategy of both authorities no consideration is built into the model for such further reductions.
- Income is expected to increase as a result of the shared service but for the purposes of the financial model – the 2010/11 projected income is used consistently across the years.
- No inflation adjustments are considered in the model.
- Consultancy costs remain at their present level, but it is appreciated that there is scope to reduce these and the Building Control Manager will be tasked to investigate this as soon as the shared service commences.
- The Internal Regulatory Supplement is the budget incurred by both Authorities to meet the costs of the regulatory element of the Building Control service net of any surpluses or deficits made on the operation funded by external fee income.
- Cherwell District Council will use their existing building control reserve to fund their additional costs over the period with the aim of having an internal regulatory supplement which is equal to or less than the 2010/11 projection.

- 5.5 Naturally, if and when redundancies or staff retirements occur there should be a presumption that overheads will be shed proportionately.
- 5.6 The recruitment of the Building Control Manager and the two Principal Surveyors leading the teams in each Authority will leave an existing Principal or Team Leader without that role. There will then be a skills audit of the remaining personnel in the team and one post will be deleted no later than 1st July 2011 generating a saving across the 2 councils of £40,000 annually.
- 5.7 A further post will be deleted by March 2012 – generating a further reduction of £40,000 across the 2 councils.
- 5.8 The financial model assumes that a further reduction in direct costs is required to be actioned by March 2013 in order to reduce costs by a further £40,000.
- 5.9 In considering this planned timetable consideration has been given to continuing service delivery. Moreover, should market conditions improve to the point where the income/workload increases there is an opportunity to be flexible and review the staffing levels.
- 5.10 The range of redundancy/retirement costs on the basis of 3 deleted posts is between £54,042 and £83,040 with an average of £68,541. However, it should be noted that there is a significant risk that an adequate level of service delivery could not be maintained if three posts are deleted.
- 5.11 On the basis of the direct staff reductions and cumulative savings of £120,000 this would equate to a payback of between 0.45years and 0.69years. This is detailed in Appendix 5.
- 5.12 The range of redundancy/retirement costs on the basis of 2 deleted posts is between £41,658 and £69,100 with an average of £55,379.
- 5.13 If the building control service gains additional income as a result of its competitive position then the direct costs reduction could be compensated for by an increase in income of the same £40,000. If this is achieved then payback would improve to between 0.35yrs to 0.58 years.
- 5.14 All implementation costs will be split 50% to Cherwell, 50% to South Northamptonshire on the basis that Cherwell District Council is using a building control reserve to offset the additional costs it will bear in the initial years and on the basis that South Northamptonshire will generate savings from April 2011. It is proposed that both Councils will use an earmarked reserve to fund these payments.

#### **Financial Effect on Cherwell**

- 5.15 The primary reason for Cherwell progressing this project is to take advantage of the opportunity to make the service more competitive commercially and therefore to grow the business and to provide greater resilience for the service as a result previous management reductions.
- 5.16 Appendix 4 details the following investments required from Cherwell to progress this proposal:
- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| 2011-12 | £56,498 |
| 2012-13 | £26,498 |
| 2013-14 | £2,498  |

- 5.17 Total costs over the next three years £85,494
- 5.18 These costs will be funded using earmarked reserves with up to £50,000 coming from the Building Control Reserve and the balance coming from the corporate change reserve.
- 5.19 However, it should be remembered that £20,000 per annum of management costs has already been taken from the base budget in 2010-11 and over the period 2011-12 to 2013-14 £60,000 will have been saved as a result of this previous budget reduction.
- 5.20 Therefore the net cost of this proposal over the three year period is £25,494.
- 5.21 If, as anticipated, the service does grow or the market picks up and income increase then 60% of that additional income, regardless of where it is generated will flow back to Cherwell.
- 5.22 There has been no account taken of this increase in income, as it is unknown at this stage, in the business case. A modest increase in demand or indeed fees could meet this shortfall but that cannot be relied on upon this stage.
- 5.23 For Cherwell, therefore, this proposal is not being recommended on financial grounds but should be seen as an investment in the service in order for it to develop, grow and make it more resilient following a management departure.

#### **Financial Effect on South Northamptonshire**

- 5.24 As well as the anticipated service benefits the financial benefits are attractive for South Northamptonshire and can be summarised as follows:

2011-12	£ (86,498)
2012-13	£ (106,498)
2013-14	£ (122,498)

- 5.25 On the face of it these are significant savings but as part of the discussions with Cherwell it has also been agreed that the level of recharge to the Building Control account will be reduced by approximately £55,000 and on the grounds that unless there are support reductions (and there will be some as a result of other budget proposals progressing) these will have to be charged elsewhere within the authority then these costs need to be netted off the savings stated above reducing each year by £55,000. The 'real' savings as a result of this proposal is therefore as follows:

2011-12	£ (31,498)
2012-13	£ (51,498)
2013-14	£ (67,498)

#### **One-off costs**

- 5.26 The one off costs are detailed in appendix 5 and range from £42,000 to £83,000.
- 5.27 It has also been agreed to share these implementation costs on a 50:50 basis between the two Councils. These will be funded using the Partnership Working Earmarked reserve at SNC and a Corporate Change Earmarked reserve at Cherwell.

## **6.0 Marketing and Retaining Market Share**

- 6.1 The threat of losing fee income and market share to the private sector is an issue that has affected the South Northamptonshire service in recent years but will inevitably apply also to Cherwell. To date the response by both Councils to this has been largely passive, which is not untypical of the way many LABC operations have reacted.
- 6.2 It is, however, worth noting that in the experience of both Cherwell and South Northamptonshire the relationship between price, quality and market share is not straightforward.
- 6.3 Nevertheless, a joint service will provide an opportunity to avert any potential decline, and one of the responsibilities placed on the new Building Control Manager will be to design and implement a strategy to raise the profile of the service in the face of increasing competition, to both halt and indeed reverse the loss of business in the existing client sectors where the Councils' core business currently exists and also to secure new business.
- 6.4 The best tool for this will be the closeness of the shared service to the Development Control service of each Authority and therefore access to the weekly planning application (and pre-application enquiry) lists. This is one of the major reasons why it is important for the shared service to retain its presence within the planning environments of each Authority.
- 6.5 More generally, addressing private sector competition will require a focused approach to market development. A shared service will release some of the resource of the Building Control Manager to find innovative ways of marketing the joint service, perhaps by holding development forums with major clients, providing pre-application advice in liaison with Development Control colleagues, and generally meeting potential clients either to retain their allegiance to the public sector or wooing them back to it.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

- 7.1 The financial models shown in Appendix 4 are achievable, being based on the current financial position of each Authority and with realistic year-on-year savings targets.
- 7.2 Appendix 4 shows these savings in comparative terms and vindicates the proposal to enter into this shared service. In summary it suggests that the two Councils will save a minimum of **£120,000** by the end of 2012/13 and that the commercial Building Control service will be resilient and complete. The overall positions for both authorities will have improved from 2010/11 projection and the building control service will be competitive, resilient and financially viable.
- 7.3 Appendix 6 (with Appendix 1A) sets out more detail on the proposed staffing structure, including the underlying rationale and related human resources issues
- 7.4 The key issues for South Northamptonshire to consider may be summarised as follows:
- It is doubtful whether the South Northamptonshire operation could exist independently in the medium to long-term without significant financial savings, unless the Council were to accept continued major deficits.
  - One option is for the Council to provide only a statutory level of service, and abandon any involvement in the discretionary commercial aspect of the current service.



- Assuming the Council wishes to maintain a full service, because of the benefits that provides to wider corporate objectives, achieving those savings would inevitably come at a cost to its current high customer care culture.
- The question for South Northamptonshire therefore comes down not to whether its Building Control service is prepared to make this compromise, but – if it is to survive in its present form – how it is prepared to make that compromise. This compromise will need to be made with or without Cherwell or any other partner.

7.5 There are three options here:

- Keep its Building Control Service independent of any others. This will involve a serious reduction in costs (staffing levels), and then attempting to deliver the best service possible within the resources made available. In reality, the result would be a service that is very stretched, has limited resilience and could rapidly trigger a business ‘spiral of decline’.
- Re-open negotiations with other Northamptonshire neighbours. In this context, previous negotiations with one authority in the county concluded that there were serious differences in culture and working practices that a shared service approach was unlikely to be successful; and starting negotiations with another neighbour would take time to bring to fruition.
- Progress a shared service arrangement with Cherwell. The work done to develop this business case suggests that differences in working practice and cultures between South Northamptonshire and Cherwell do not seem to be so wide that with goodwill and effort from both sides they cannot be bridged in a reasonably short time.

7.6 The key issues for Cherwell to consider may be summarised as follows:

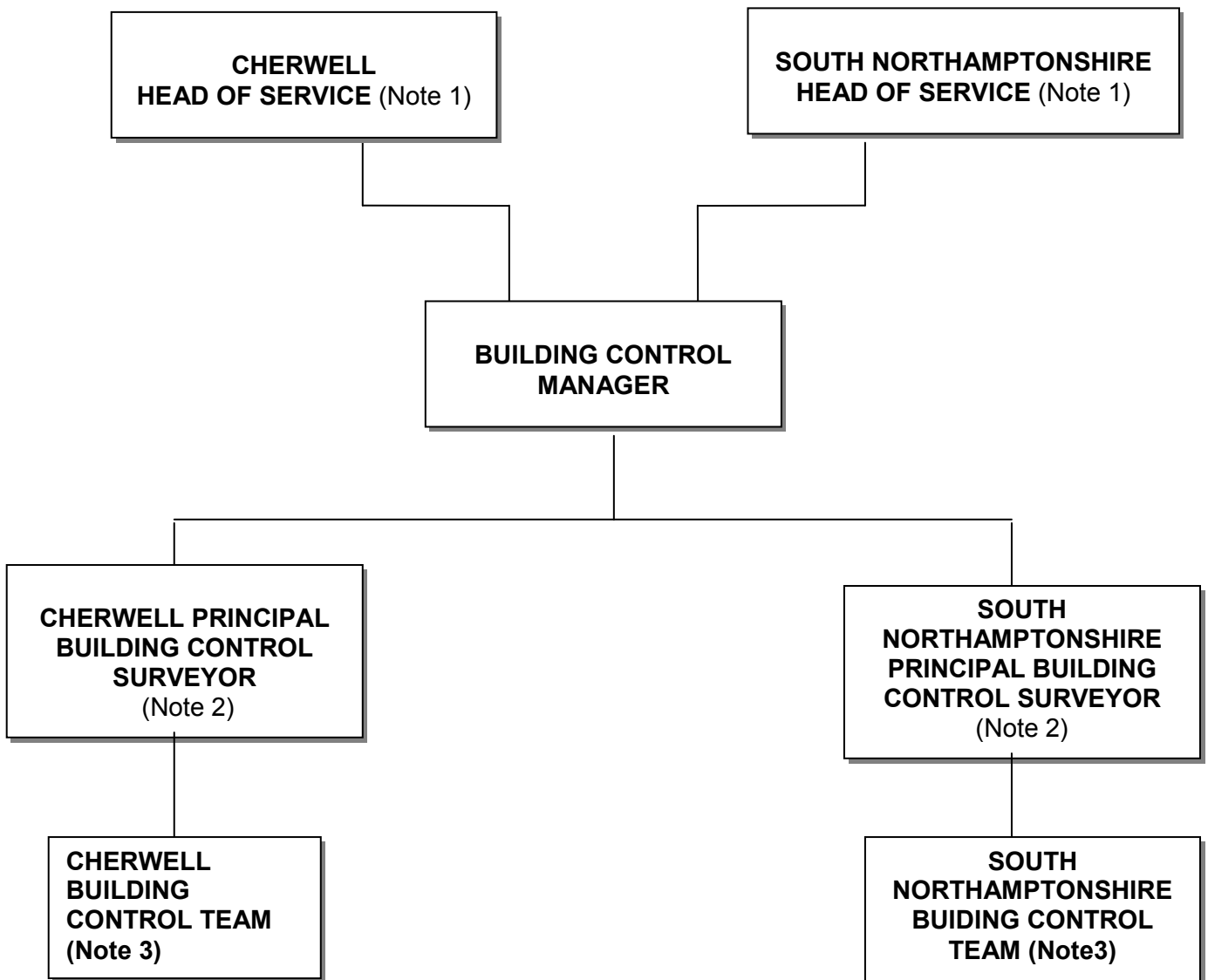
- Under increasing threat from a diminishing market and from growing private sector predators, Cherwell cannot afford to take a neutral position. Alliances have already been formed between West Oxfordshire and Cotswold, and South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse Districts, and therefore its options have already become limited.
- On the basis that Cherwell District Council has taken an annual management saving of ~ £20,000 in 2010/11 and has a building control reserve of approx £50,000 it is proposing to invest this in order to develop a shared service with South Northamptonshire.

7.7 If it cannot form a shared service with South Northamptonshire it too has the following alternatives.

- The first is to keep its Building Control service independent of any others and prepare for a steady decline which will eventually result in its becoming a service of last resort having little resilience and no ambition.
- The second is to join an existing alliance as a third or fourth partner and therefore be constrained to the working culture and practices that have already developed within that partnership.

APPENDIX 1A

CHERWELL/SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE BUILDING CONTROL SHARED  
SERVICE:  
PROPOSED STAFF STRUCTURE

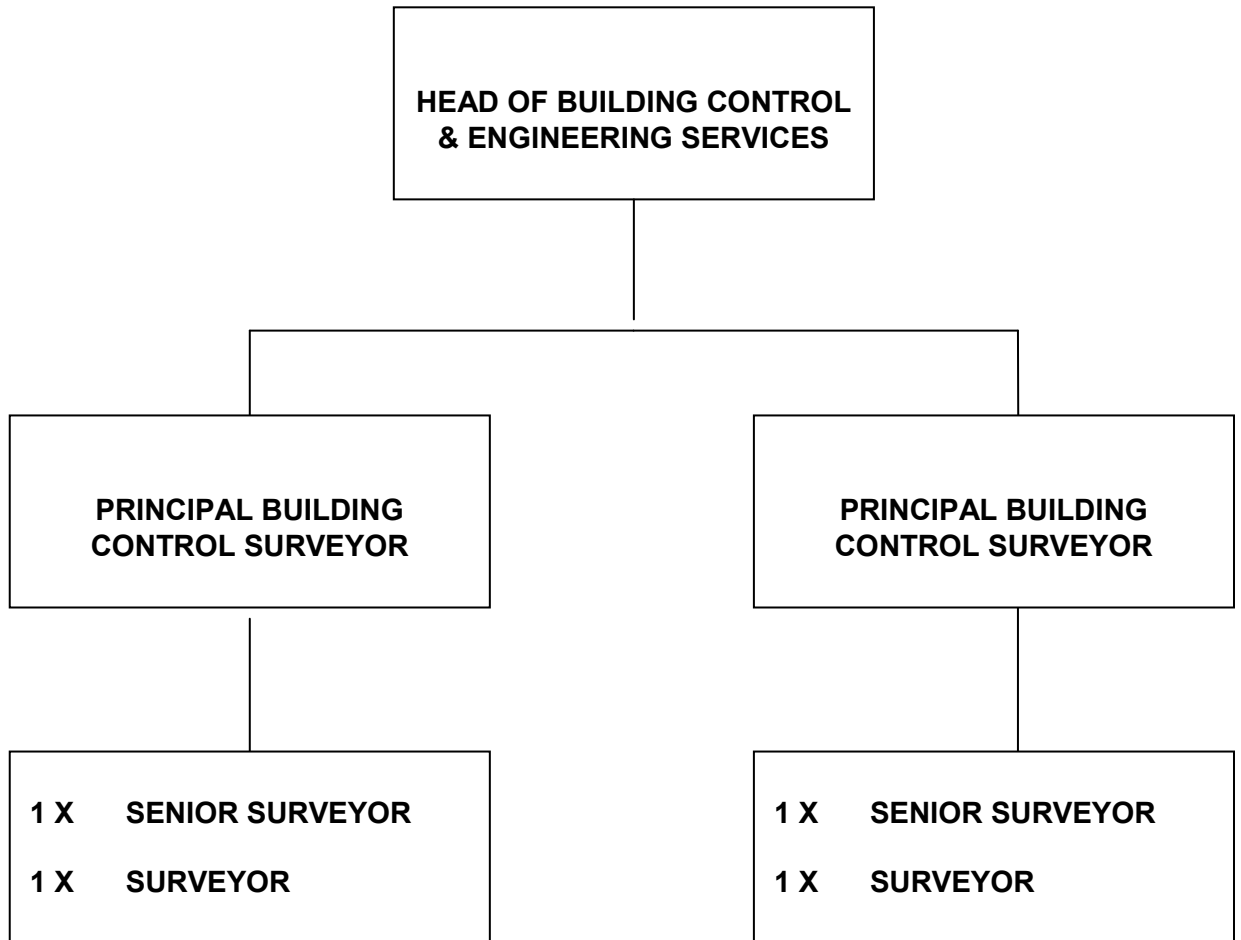


**Notes:**

1. Diagram assumes Building Control as a shared service if a wider shared senior management approach is not adopted by the two Councils. In the event that a shared senior management approach is adopted by the two Councils, he would report to whichever Head of Service is deemed to be the appropriate manager for the service under the new arrangements.
2. Job requirement to be that that work base location of Team Leaders is flexible, but likely arrangement is that, at outset, one team leader will be based in Cherwell's offices and one in South Northamptonshire's.
3. The number in each team will evolve as a result of the future quantum and distribution of work. The business case assumes a reduction in staff below Principal Building Control Surveyor level from 8 to 6 or 5 over time.

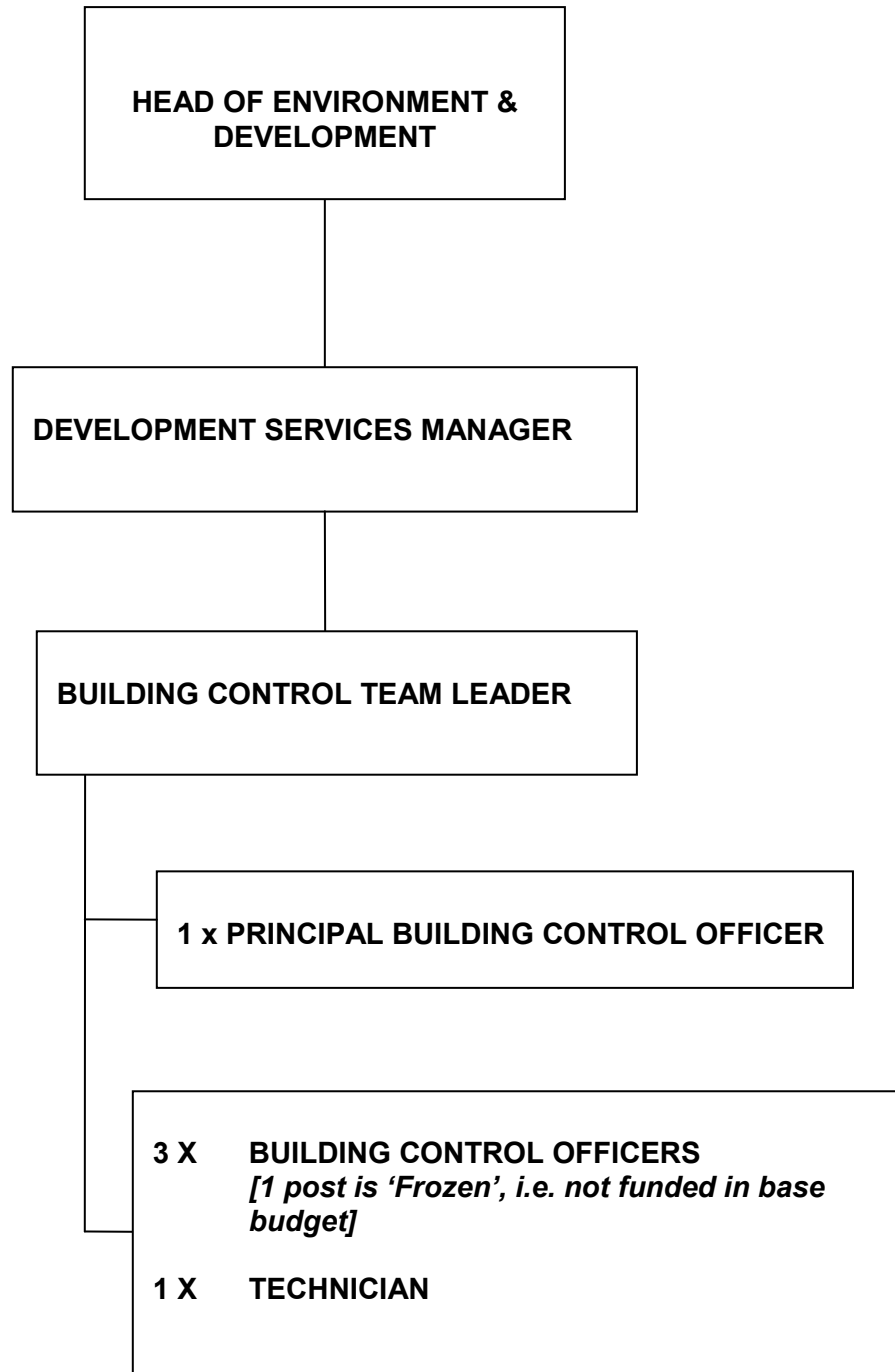
**APPENDIX 1B**

**EXISTING CHERWELL STAFF STRUCTURE**



APPENDIX 1C

EXISTING SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE STAFF STRUCTURE



## APPENDIX 2

### SERVICE PERFORMANCE DATA

2008/09 Actual				
		<b>Cherwell</b>	<b>South Northamptonshire</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Income/Expenditure	0.92	0.57	0.77
	Surplus (Deficit)	(35268)	(148159)	(183427)
	Income/App (FP+BN)	£449	£295	£383
	Cost/App (FP+BN)	£487	£514	£499
	Mileage/App (FP+BN)	37.0	40.8	38.6
	Mileage/BC Surveyor	5612	5520	5570
	Market Share (FP+BN/FP+BN+AI)	84.2%	74.4%	79.7%
	Site Inspections/APP (FP+BN)	6.51	6.96	6.70
	Apps (FP+BN)/BC Surveyor	152	135	144
	Satisfaction Rating	93%	95% *	94%
	Urban Pop/Total Pop	62%	27%	49%

2009/10 Actual				
		<b>Cherwell</b>	<b>South Northamptonshire</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Income/Expenditure	0.93	0.53	0.74
	Surplus (Deficit)	(28068)	(165395)	(193463)
	Income/App (FP+BN)	£378	£320	£370
	Cost/App (FP+BN)	£408	£600	£501
	Mileage/App (FP+BN)	36.3	45.0	41.3
	Mileage/BC Surveyor	5744	5319	5551
	Market Share (FP+BN/FP+BN+AI)	84.5%	69.2%	77.6%
	Site Inspections/APP (FP+BN)	5.63	6.85	6.35
	Apps (FP+BN)/BC Surveyor	158	118	135
	Satisfaction Rating	91%	95% *	93%
	Urban Pop/Total Pop	62%	27%	49%

**FP** = **Full Plans**  
**BN** = **Building Notices**  
**AI** = **Approved Inspectors**

\* Note – SNC figure is 2005/06

APPENDIX 3

CHERWELL/SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
BUILDING CONTROL JOINT VENTURE

EXISTING COSTS 2010/2011

	Existing Costs		
	CDC Costs 2010/11	SNDC costs 2010/11	Total 2010/11
<b>Direct Costs</b>			
Salary Costs	274,158	223,449	497,607
Discretionary Costs	17,178	21,620	38,798
Transport	17,515	17,000	34,515
Consultancy	37,110	1,000	38,110
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	345,961	263,069	609,030
<b>Income</b>			
External Fee Income	(410,000)	(226,465)	(636,465)
	<b>(64,039)</b>	<b>36,604</b>	<b>(27,435)</b>
<b>Support Costs</b>			
Accommodation	7,425	11,115	18,540
IT Support	28,323	39,204	67,527
Central Support	29,649	46,510	76,159
Departmental Support	86,414	67,302	153,716
Management	17,852	36,525	53,377
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	169,663	200,656	370,319
<hr/>			
Internal Regulatory Supplement	105,624	237,260	342,884
<hr/>			

**CHERWELL/SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
BUILDING CONTROL JOINT VENTURE  
PROJECTED COSTS 2011/2012**

	Projected Costs		
	CDC Costs 2011/12	SNC Costs 2011/12	Total 2011/12
<b>Direct Costs</b>			
Salary Costs	277,277	226,568	503,845
Discretionary Costs	17,178	21,620	38,798
Transport	17,515	17,000	34,515
Support Costs	151,811	145,034	296,845
Consultancy	37,110	1,000	38,110
Recharge to Development Control	0	(24,465)	(24,465)
	500,891	386,757	887,648
<b>Income</b>			
External Fee Income	(410,000)	(202,000)	(612,000)
	<b>90,891</b>	<b>184,757</b>	<b>275,648</b>
Internal Regulatory Supplement			
Re-allocated on 60% / 40%	165,389	110,259	275,648
Increase/Decrease in costs	74,498	(74,498)	0
	<b>CDC 60%</b>	<b>SNC 40%</b>	<b>Total 100%</b>
<b>Part year effect</b>			
<b>Saving (1)</b> - Delete £40k post - no later than July 2011	(18,000)	(12,000)	(30,000)
Net Position of each Authority	56,498	(86,498)	(30,000)
<b>Full year effect</b>			
<b>Saving (1)</b> - Delete £40k post - no later than July 2011	(6,000)	(4,000)	(10,000)
<b>Saving (2)</b> - Deletion of 1 further post by March 2012	(24,000)	(16,000)	(40,000)
Net Position of each Authority	26,498	(106,498)	(80,000)
<b>Saving (3)</b> - Deletion of 1 further posts by March 2013	(24,000)	(16,000)	(40,000)



Net Position of each Authority	2,498	(122,498)	(120,000)
Amended Internal Regulatory Supplement as at March 2013	93,389	62,259	155,648

## APPENDIX 5

### CHERWELL/SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE BUILDING CONTROL JOINT VENTURE

#### IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

##### Option 1 - Redundancy Costs - 3 Posts

	Low	Average	High
Post 1	14,758	22,579	30,400
Post 2	12,384	13,162	13,940
Post 3	26,900	32,800	38,700
<b>Total Redundancy Costs</b>	<b>54,042</b>	<b>68,541</b>	<b>83,040</b>
<b>Total Projected Savings</b>	120,000	120,000	120,000
<b>Payback Period in Years</b>	0.45	0.57	0.69

##### Option 2 - Redundancy Costs - 2 Posts (assumed 2 most expensive)

	Low	Average	High
Post 1	14,758	22,579	30,400
Post 2	26,900	32,800	38,700
<b>Total Redundancy Costs</b>	<b>41,658</b>	<b>55,379</b>	<b>69,100</b>
<b>Total Projected Savings &amp; Income</b>	120,000	120,000	120,000
<b>Payback Period in Years</b>	0.35	0.46	0.58

## APPENDIX 6

### PROPOSED STAFFING STRUCTURE, INCLUDING THE UNDERLYING RATIONALE AND RELATED HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction</b>																																																
1.1	The proposed staff structure for the shared service is set out in Appendix 1A. The existing staff structures of Cherwell and South Northamptonshire Building Control teams below Head of Service are shown in Appendices 1B and 1C.																																																
1.2	The proposed structure will create three new posts at Manager and Team Leader levels. At this stage the structures below Team Leader level will not change in either Authority. However, it is envisaged that, following appointment of the management/supervision team, achieving success in joint working will necessitate a wider review of resources and staffing. This will allow the business case parameters around costs and joint working to be met (see below for further pointers on how this will be achieved).																																																
1.3	The existing terms and conditions of equivalent Cherwell and South Northamptonshire officers inevitably differ. When recruiting for the new Manager and Team Leader posts it is essential that there are clear job descriptions and other terms and conditions applying to the posts. This paper sets out a rationale to achieve that objective. It also notes that some disparities of terms and conditions will continue below the Manager level unless and until convergence occurs in the two Councils' reward systems.																																																
1.4	<p>The shared Building Control Manager post has been graded using the respective job evaluation systems within each authority with the following outcomes:</p> <p><b>Grade / total costs</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">CDC grade 11</th> <th colspan="3">SNC grade 3</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Salary</th> <th>Total cost</th> <th>+ 10%</th> <th>Salary</th> <th>Total cost</th> <th>+ 10%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>£42,500</td> <td>£55,133</td> <td>£60,646</td> <td>£38,778</td> <td>£51,003</td> <td>£56,103</td> </tr> <tr> <td>£43,500</td> <td>£56,478</td> <td>£62,125</td> <td>£40,191</td> <td>£52,885</td> <td>£58,173</td> </tr> <tr> <td>£44,500</td> <td>£57,823</td> <td>£63,605</td> <td>£41,598</td> <td>£54,805</td> <td>£60,285</td> </tr> <tr> <td>£45,500</td> <td>£59,168</td> <td>£65,084</td> <td>£42,987</td> <td>£56,701</td> <td>£62,371</td> </tr> <tr> <td>£46,500</td> <td>£60,513</td> <td>£66,564</td> <td>£44,388</td> <td>£58,614</td> <td>£64,475</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	CDC grade 11			SNC grade 3			Salary	Total cost	+ 10%	Salary	Total cost	+ 10%	£42,500	£55,133	£60,646	£38,778	£51,003	£56,103	£43,500	£56,478	£62,125	£40,191	£52,885	£58,173	£44,500	£57,823	£63,605	£41,598	£54,805	£60,285	£45,500	£59,168	£65,084	£42,987	£56,701	£62,371	£46,500	£60,513	£66,564	£44,388	£58,614	£64,475						
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1.5	The highlighted rows in this table indicate the respective salary points at which it is recommended that the joint manager post be appointed. This approach is considered in detail below.																																																
1.6	The plus 10% column indicates the overall financial effect of adding a cross working responsibility allowance (including the additional costs that might result, such as extra mileage between the two Councils' offices). This is the assumption in the general CDC/SNC shared management business case. At this stage, for simplicity, the financial impact is calculated as plus 10% on																																																

1.7	<p>the total cost of the post. This gives a worst case total cost figure that can be used to inform the business case for joint working. Thus a maximum cost assumption of £62,371 is used in the business case paper.</p> <p>The successful candidate would remain with their current employer which would result in a very small difference in pay for the post dependant on who the successful candidate and therefore employing authority are.</p>
1.9	<p>It is recommended that the Team Leaders also remain employed by their existing employing Council, on their current terms and conditions until any arrangements for convergence of reward systems are agreed between Councils. This may create reward differences, but they are relatively insignificant.</p>
2.0	<p><b>CONVERGENCE OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS THROUGHOUT SERVICE</b></p>
2.1	<p>There will be slight anomalies in pay between other officer posts in building control across the two authorities but these will not be significant.</p>
2.2	<p>As joint working progresses it will be necessary to establish a position on work base which will affect travel payments and also determine training requirements to ensure resources can be effectively shared.</p>
2.3	<p>However, for the purpose of the business case, these anomalies are not material and therefore not addressed in this paper.</p>
3.0	<p><b>Proposed Process</b></p>
3.1	<p>On approval of the Executive and Cabinet meetings in October, proceed with ring-fenced recruitment to the following posts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared Building Control Manager [either CDC grade 11, <b>£42500</b> + 10% responsibility allowance or SNC grade 3, <b>£42,987</b> + 10% responsibility allowance]</li> <li>• 2 x Principal Surveyors [current employer and grade]</li> </ul> <p>Recruitment will be on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ring-fence to include current 1 x Team Leader and 1 x Principal post at SNC and 2 x Principal posts at CDC</li> <li>• Simultaneous offer of voluntary redundancy to this group [with no commitment of either side at this time, as redundancy costs and the needs of the service will need to be considered alongside options for the future structure of the service below Team Leader level, including redeployment opportunities].</li> <li>• Appointment to shared manager post using panel of 2 x Directors and 2 x Service Heads. Newly appointed manager to then join panel to appoint 2 x team leaders with service heads.</li> </ul>

3.2	There is potential to be left at this point with 1 displaced employee (assuming there are no volunteers for redundancy or that redundancy does not meet the needs of the service). The options at this point will include retention of over capacity at senior/ supervisory level in the short term, with a view to achieving a “natural” reduction in whole teams numbers, possibly through retirements, or to invoking the appropriate redeployment/compulsory redundancy procedures.
3.3	Clearly it will be important to find the most effective and speedy route to achieving the new lower staff cost base set out in the business case.

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
4.1	Moving to the staff structure required for the joint service business case should be achieved as outlined above as this is consistent with the broader business case for shared management.

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## Executive

### Update report and request for approval of capital funding for Dashwood Road Primary School Site, Banbury

6 December 2010

#### Report of Head of Housing Services

##### PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is to update members on progress on the Dashwood Road Primary School site following a report submitted on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2010. Significant progress has been made to deliver this scheme and a smaller amount of funding from the capital reserves for affordable housing is now required.

This report is public

##### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the progress made with partnership working at Dashwood Road Primary School, Banbury and approve funding for the scheme from the capital reserves for affordable housing of £200,000.

##### Executive Summary

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###### Introduction

- 1.1 Following the report to Executive in May 2010 regarding the Dashwood Road Primary School, staff from the council, Oxfordshire County Council, Paradigm Housing Group and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) have met to agree how this scheme can be funded. Since the report the scheme has been granted planning permission. The scheme comprises of 18 units of housing to be let at social rents (current HCA target rent levels). These meetings have led to the parties agreeing a reduction in the land price for the scheme of £200,000 plus a reduction in the S106 commuted sums costs of around £100,000. CDC has agreed that five of the units can be let as supported housing for people with a learning disability. These people will be assessed as in need of housing via the District's Housing Register. This is a group that needs specialist provision and there is currently insufficient provision in the District.
- 1.2 The reduction in costs has increased the scheme's overall financial viability. Although the Homes and Communities Agency is very unlikely to be able to fund the scheme from the 2010/11 National Affordable Housing Programme

due to lack of available grant, Paradigm are able to fund from private borrowing and reserves from recycled capital grant. The funding provided by this Council will enable the delivery of this scheme which will cost in the region of £3.5m. With this funding in place the scheme will be able to start on site early in 2011. As well as providing much needed affordable housing units, this will provide new life for the school building which is currently standing empty.

### **Proposals**

- 1.3 That Dashwood Road Primary School site is funded from the CDC capital reserves to allow the scheme to start on site by March 2010. The scheme includes five units for people with Learning Difficulties. All units will be subject to nomination rights from the CDC Housing Register

### **Conclusion**

- 1.4 These scheme will enable a further 18 affordable properties for target social rent to be delivered in the District. The scheme can start on site by March 2011 and will be completed in 2012.

### **Background Information**

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- 2.1 Dashwood Road Primary School is within the 'Brighter Futures' area of deprivation and development of this scheme will not only provide units of affordable housing but bring an empty property back into use. The scheme is a good example of partnership work whereby value for money has been significantly improved and joint strategic objectives of both the District and County Council have been achieved. Paradigm funding the scheme from recycled capital grant has saved significant amounts of new public funding.
  - 2.2 This scheme is being prioritised for CDC capital funding because of the additional leverage it will bring from recycled capital grant and the RSL's own private borrowing. It is appreciated that the Council does not have sufficient funds to deliver large amounts of housing on its own but can use resources to lever in additional funding and enable schemes to be developed.
  - 2.3 The scheme will all be at existing social rent levels. The units will comprise of 3 one bedroom flats, 5 two bedroom flats, 2 three bedroom flats and 6 three bedroom maisonettes with private gardens.
-



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

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- 3.1 Affordable housing remains a key priority for the Council but it is likely to become more challenging to deliver affordable housing in the current economic climate. This provides a good opportunity for much needed provision.
- 3.2 Although there is not sufficient capital to deliver significant amounts of housing from the current capital reserves this can be used to add value and leverage for larger amounts of funding (in this case over £3m)

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

- Option One** To fund the Dashwood Road Primary School site from the CDC capital reserves
- Option Two** Not to fund the Dashwood Road Primary School site from the CDC capital reserves

## **Consultations**

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- Oxford County Council** Consultation has been carried out with the Learning Disability Commissioning and Contracting team about the strategic housing needs for this client group.

## **Implications**

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- Financial:** If this funding is approved this will result in an estimated capital expenditure of £200,000 from the earmarked reserves for capital expenditure for affordable housing.  
Comments checked by Joanne Kaye, Service Accountant 01295 221545
- Legal:** There are no legal implications arising from the funding of these schemes although Legal and Democratic services have helped secure nomination rights to the properties.  
Comments checked by Pam Wilkinson, Team Leader – Planning and Litigation 01295 221688
- Risk Management:** No payments will be made until the schemes have started on site and final payments will be withheld until completion.  
Not providing sufficient affordable housing leaves the Council at increased risk of homelessness which could increase the costs of this service.  
Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566

**Equalities**

The provision of good quality affordable housing underpins the Councils commitment to equality for all groups in our communities. The Dashwood Road Project now provides more a mixed scheme including provision needed for people with learning difficulties.

Comments checked by Claire Taylor , Community and Corporate Planning Manager 01295 221563

**Wards Affected**

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**Grimsbury and Castle**

**Corporate Plan Themes**

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**Strategic Priority 1 – Cherwell A District of Opportunity includes the aim of securing more housing through an appropriate mix of market and affordable housing.**

**Executive Portfolio**

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**Councillor Councillor Gibbard  
Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

**Document Information**

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<b>Appendix</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Background Papers</b>	
Executive Report of the 24 <sup>th</sup> May 2010 ; Request for approval of funding for affordable housing schemes from CDC capital reserves	
<b>Report Author</b>	Fiona Brown, Strategic Housing Officer
<b>Contact Information</b>	01295 221659 fiona.brown@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk

## Executive

### Corporate Improvement Plan Fear of Crime and Anti Social Behaviour

6 December 2010

### Report of Head of Safer Communities, Urban and Rural Services

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise the Executive of the outcomes from the Corporate Improvement Plan Project: Fear of Crime and Anti Social Behaviour and to consider the proposed future priorities and actions for the service arising from the Project.

This report is public

#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the findings and conclusions from the Corporate Improvement Plan Project: Fear of Crime and Anti Social Behaviour.
- (2) To agree the future priorities and draft action plan which should form the basis of the 2011/12 Service Plan.

#### Executive Summary

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##### Introduction

- 1.1 Anti social behaviour (ASB) is a blight on the lives of individuals who are directly affected; on the perceptions of communities for whom it signals neglect in their neighbourhoods; and on the reputation of the agencies who are often thought to be unconcerned or ineffectual.
- 1.2 The core difficulty in developing a coherent response to ASB is the breadth of the term and the fact that it means different things to different people. ASB is a mixed bag of crime, disorder and their precursors, with rowdy/disorderly behaviour being the overwhelmingly majority of reported events [Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC)].
- 1.3 ASB does not have the same status as 'crime' for the police. There are consequences of this. Very importantly, the public draw no meaningful distinction between crime and ASB (HMIC).
- 1.4 This Fear of Crime and ASB Corporate Improvement Plan Project was prioritised

because of the apparent continuing and disproportionate perception of fear of crime and ASB in comparison to the year on year reductions in the levels of crime across Cherwell. It was subsequently extended to include a short Value for Money (VFM) analysis of the service.

- 1.5 The project was also undertaken at a time when the Council was preparing for future budget reductions and was experiencing loss of external income relevant to the community safety and ASB activities it provides. These matters were considered at a special meeting of the Cherwell Community Safety Partnership (CSCP) in September where partners prioritised the services and initiatives currently delivered.

### **Proposals**

- 1.6 The Project recognised that the public perception of crime and ASB in a low crime area is influenced by many factors and that the Council's services need to change using the better information and understanding now available. There is therefore a need to achieve greater clarity of intent and to prioritise activity against where the Council can make a real difference with the reducing budget it has.
- 1.7 The Project identified a number of key priorities and lessons learned that are set out in an Action Plan. The key priorities can be summarised under 5 broad headings which involve a greater focus on addressing the fear of crime as follows:
- Improved information and communication with the community and with victims of crime and ASB.
  - Improvements to the effectiveness of working in partnership because it makes business sense not because of funding or targets.
  - Improve our visibility and accessibility particularly through the Street Wardens.
  - Adding value to what we have already and seek to make further efficiencies to transfer resources to support the priorities.
  - Improved data quality, recording, information sharing and performance monitoring to achieve better targeted resources/actions.
- 1.8 The approach proposed involves a better targeting of reduced resource levels and more effective partnership working based on a business model - not partnership because of funding or targets. This targeting centres on a lighter touch over crime reduction activities and a shift towards specific activities which address the fear of crime. The key priorities and action plan will require a further review with the CSCP and finalised once the Council's and partners' funding positions are clear to ensure that the priorities can be delivered. In this report, the priorities are presented in the context of the currently known reductions in funding. A specific focus on **Priority A. Information/Communication** and **Priority C. Improve our Visibility** will be given in the first instance as a direct response to resident feedback and satisfaction levels in relation to the fear of crime.

### **Conclusion**

- 1.9 The VFM analysis indicates that, out of the 14 councils in its family group, Cherwell is the seventh most expensive, spending 5.1% above the average. This is partly because of the employment of street wardens in this service area which, whilst being very beneficial, does have cost implications when compared to other councils who do not have such employees. This comparative financial position is likely to change in relation to the Council's service cost base given the planned budget reductions and loss of external income for local projects and activities. However, the same sort of changes are likely to

affect other local authorities.

- 1.10 The Project report has identified many lessons learned from market research and service analysis which have informed the proposed key priorities and actions. The work was undertaken at a time of significant change arising from the new Coalition Government's revised approach, reduced funding and proposals for changes in guidance. Considerable uncertainty still remains as revised guidance is still awaited and further clarity required around Government grant settlement for the Council. Further adjustments and prioritisation are going to be required once the final budget position for 2011/12 is finalised and the implications of the changes in the police force are known in the form of any revised approach from them arising from the HMIC report.

## **Background Information**

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### **2.1 Why a Corporate Improvement Plan Project?**

In 2008, the Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership launched its Community Safety Strategy 2008-2011: Working Together to Create a Safe and Healthy Cherwell. The Foreword states:

'Cherwell is enjoying the lowest recorded rates of crime for more than a decade. These figures are still falling. We live in a safe district where the chances of being a victim of crime are very small'.

The Strategy promises to achieve the Cherwell Vision of:

A Safe and Healthy Cherwell  
Improving Community Safety and reducing the drugs problem  
Making Cherwell a Safer Place to Live

Three years on, this commitment and partnership working remain, with the trend of falling crime continuing, but where fear of crime still remains disproportionate to the actual levels in Cherwell. It is for this reason, and because dealing with antisocial behaviour (ASB) has very low levels of satisfaction from the Cherwell Residents Survey data with a high priority by the public for improvement, that this Corporate Improvement Plan project has been undertaken.

### **2.2 Scope of the Project**

The project focused on understanding and addressing the issues around:

1. Fear of crime
2. Dealing with antisocial behaviour.

The Project set out to examine the Council's work on community safety and anti social behaviour, and the best practice in these areas from high performing councils. It also secured views on the Council's performance in these services from key partners in Cherwell and undertook focused research with members of the public.

What the Project has not attempted to do is focus on work around tackling crime this is the responsibility of the police. However both service areas have a remit to work to reduce crime so the Project has sought to identify/address issues that support this objective and in which the Council has direct influence and can make an impact/add value.

## 2.3 Project Objectives

### **Fear of Crime**

Understand the key drivers behind current levels of performance for fear of crime Clarify the Council's statutory responsibilities and discretionary functions. Determine changes appropriate to Cherwell that will result in tangible performance improvement

### **Anti Social Behaviour**

Understand the key drivers behind current levels of performance for antisocial behaviour

Clarify the Council's statutory responsibilities

Assess our ability to deliver against the statutory requirements

Determine changes appropriate to Cherwell that will result in tangible performance improvement

## 2.4 Current Services

### **The Community Safety Service includes:**

- Supporting and promoting community safety initiatives
- Monitoring performance of 4 action groups as part of the Safer Communities Strategy
- Lead for the Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership
- Managing street warden schemes in Banbury and Bicester
- Coordinating 6 Neighbourhood Action Groups
- Managing the partnership budget
- Managing the CCTV partnership

### **The ASB Service comprises:**

- The investigation of complaints of nuisance (including high hedges) this encompasses performing the role of Responsible Authority for public nuisance under the Licensing Act 2003.
- Partnership working to tackle anti social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse  
Operation of Night safe including administrative support to Bicester and Kidlington Pub Watch Schemes and a new Banbury Rural scheme.

Across Oxfordshire, it is the Local Area Agreement 2008-2011 and targets that have been the drivers for all of Oxfordshire's community safety activities over recent years. These have been lead by the Oxfordshire Community Safety Partnership and are then co-ordinated and delivered across Cherwell by the CSCP, which has statutory responsibility for this.

These District wide priorities have informed the work that the ASB Team and the Safer Communities Team undertake through the Service Plan and whilst LAA targets have now been dropped by the Coalition Government, the CSCP has continued to focus on these areas of work.

## 2.5 Funding Issues

Since the Project scope was agreed by CMT in April 2010, the Coalition Government has come to power following the May 2010 General Election. This has seen a significant shift in the Policy framework around community safety and ASB and a Comprehensive Spending Review that will see Government Grant to the Council reduced by in the order of 26%.

At the time of writing, the precise settlement and impact on services is not clear. What is known is that: there are already areas of funding that have been cut; that further

reductions in Government grant will affect services; that savings as part of the Council's MTFS will reduce the resources available and will limit either the extent or timetable of improvement actions that have been identified by this project.

## 2.6 Current Budget

There are 4 elements to the **current** Safer Communities and ASB budget:

1. Cherwell District Council Revenue budget
  - ASB £242,795
  - Safer Communities £571,529
2. Thames Valley Police Basic Command Unit budget £55,500 which will be lost from 2011/12
3. Area Based Grant £110,000 (ABG) which is likely to be lost in whole or part in 2011/12
4. Local Area Agreement Reward Grant £25,000 capital and £25,000 revenue (both one off) which will not be available in 21011/12.

It is clear that future service planning cannot rely on external partnership funding as it has for many years as demonstrated by the funding loss from items 2, 3 and 4 above. This is further exacerbated by the loss of a proportion of Charter Community Housing funding for the street warden service which is part of the Council's core Safer Communities budget.

## 2.7 Value For Money

Comparison of the 2010/11 RA budget estimates amongst CIPFA comparators reveals that Cherwell is the second most expensive authority, spending 30% above the average. However, on further investigation of the three components that make up the RA return (crime reduction, safety services and CCTV) the picture is significantly different once adjustments are made for comparative purposes (See Appendix 1). The net effect of these adjustments puts Cherwell at the seventh most expensive (out of 14), spending 5.1% more than the average.

While the Council is cost effective for CCTV and crime reduction, once adjustments have been made, it remains comparatively expensive for community safety services due to the model for funding and the eight street wardens it employs.

## 2.8 MTFS

The MTFS and Building Block work has identified £50,000 potential savings. These are from

- Reduction in Street Warden services saving £16,000 – this reflects the loss of partnership funding and will result in a reduction in street wardens from 8 to 6 in 2011.
- New Street Wardens enforcement capability generating income of £16,000
- Reduction in Night Safe Service saving £13,000
- Reduction in out of hours ASB service saving over time costs of £5,000

The post of Neighbourhood Management Support Officer (which has been funded annually from ABG) also comes to an end at the end of December 2010 and is not being renewed at this time. This enables a review of the priorities for any future post

linked to the outcomes of this project and to the level of funding then available.

## 2.9 CSCP Prioritisation

At a special meeting of the CSCP in September, work was undertaken to plan future Partnership priorities around funding scenarios. The 5 priority areas from the existing 10 key areas of work were identified as:

- ASB
- Serious Acquisitive Crime
- Young People
- Domestic Abuse
- Alcohol related crime

Partnership priorities need to be factored into the outcomes of this Project to ensure Co-ordinated approach to service delivery through partner organisations.

## 2.10 Project Report

A full copy of the detailed project report has been made available in the Members Room. The methodology used in delivering the Project Brief has included:

- Identifying the legislative requirements for the services
- Benchmarking against other top performing local authorities for best practice and value for money
- Interrogation of the Annual Public Satisfaction Survey
- Further on street survey work to identify key public requirements
- Survey of all the key agencies that make up the Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership
- Citizens jury- research the reasons for fear of crime and identify suitable courses of action.

## 2.11 Satisfaction Levels

Satisfaction levels around fear of crime in all the areas that were surveyed in 2009 have improved in 2010. People do generally feel safe in their homes and communities. Public responses to these criteria consistently achieve higher than 90%. However, there remain areas of concern - a considerably lower percentage of people feeling safe after dark in their community (66%) and in town centres (44%). Full extract of the survey results are available in the Project Report.

The Cherwell Satisfaction Survey outcomes for how the Council and its partners deal with Anti Social Behaviour are significantly lower. Examples of this are:

- Dealing with noise: 36%
- Speed of response to complaints: 37%
- Visual presence of Police: 28%.
- Dealing with vandalism and graffiti: 28%.



- Visual presence of Street Wardens: 29%.
- Dealing with youths hanging around on streets: 23%.

This gives some key messages about how and where the Council and its partners need to focus their attention in the future particularly in relation to the fear of crime.

## 2.12 Citizens Jury

As part of the project further detailed work was undertaken to understand peoples' perceptions and fears through citizens' juries. This involved engaging residents from different age groups and locations (rural and urban) to achieve an overall picture of opinion across the district. Participants were asked to identify the key problems and the solutions to address fear of crime in Cherwell and this work has been taken into account in the key outcomes.

This was an extremely valuable exercise and identified that Rural residents don't have a problem in their areas, only a perception that urban areas were places of high crime, that perception and reality in crime figures were widely different, and that targeted action in key locations may lead to improved satisfaction through visible action being taken on perceived hot spots

A copy of the Citizens Jury outcomes is available with the main Project report

## 2.13 Benchmarking

Comparison work was undertaken with the CIPFA Family Group and with the other councils in Oxfordshire. Comparative performance across Oxfordshire available from NI21 performance for 2009/10 is shown below.

	Indicator	Oxfordshire	Cherwell	City	South	Vale	West
NI21	Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the police/council	28.1% (best third)	26.9%	32.6%	26.1%	26.4%	26.9%

The top performing councils for NI21 were Ribble Valley at 40.1% and East Dorset at 37.7%

This level of satisfaction is significantly better than in Cherwell and will lead to further work to try and understand how these council areas are achieving this.

## 2.14 HMIC: ASB Inspection Findings

The Project took place at the same time that HMIC undertook national research into ASB across the 43 Police forces and this Executive report draws on the HMIC inspection findings from its report "Stop the Rot".

In September 2010 the Chief Inspector of Constabulary said that cutting efforts to fight anti social behaviour would be a very serious mistake for the police and warned that if spending cuts led police to neglect the problem, some areas could fall into a spiral of decline.

The HMIC report concluded: "...there is an alternative which offers the prospect of nipping much more of the problem in the bud. This is an early intervention strategy...it will require reform of police availability and a refocusing on what causes harm in

communities, rather than what is or is not a “crime”, or what can be managed out of the police system. Make no mistake; it requires feet on the street. It will also require better pace and focus of partnership efforts to deal, for example, with wayward tenants, and shops selling alcohol, knives and spray paints.

## 2.15 Budget Consultation and Other Resident Feedback

This Corporate Improvement Plan Project considered the outcomes of the 2010 Customer Satisfaction Survey, and the Council’s budget consultation. Overall residents were divided in their views on community safety services. For some this is a service priority area that should remain untouched, while for others it is less of a concern.

Generally speaking, the majority of residents felt that the Safer Communities services could afford to take a hit in the budget cuts. This is largely because Cherwell is not seen to be an unsafe area. However when people were asked whether or not community safety and ASB is a priority people tend to agree that it is. This is a dilemma for planning priorities and in making decision on service and budget cuts.

The Project undertook additional survey work, most importantly with its partners and through Citizens Juries to try and ‘unpick’ this variation in views and inform priorities and financial commitments.

The HMIC report stated: Confronted by spending cuts, Community Safety Partnerships may be tempted to reduce the amount of work they do in relation to ASB and to concentrate instead on volume crime. All the evidence HMIC have available indicates that this would be a very significant mistake. Managing ASB is crucial to sustaining the vitality and confidence of communities. Untreated ASB acts like a magnet for other crime and disorder problems and areas can quite easily tip into a spiral of economic and social decline.

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

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- 3.1 There are some clear messages arising from this Project and a need to reposition the Council’s Community Safety and ASB services. The funding position has changed markedly where there is now a position where there cannot be any reliance on external funding to drive project work. The generally low satisfaction levels evident from the Council’s annual survey provide and the Citizens Jury messages provide a clear indication of where the Council needs to concentrate its effort and resources in the future. From this feedback, there is a strong argument to adjust the service with a lighter touch over crime reduction activities and a shift towards specific activities which address the fear of crime.
- 3.2 The Council’s own financial position also needs to be factored into what it should and can do in the future. Not only is there declining external funding, but the consequences of the MTFs proposals means that its own resources will diminish in the future which means that clarity of priorities and a focus on what is most important will be essential.
- 3.3 One key issue which arises from this report is the role of street wardens. There is significant evidence to suggest that their role is appreciated by the wider community due to their flexibility and variety of functions. However,

given that their prime function when originally established was to create safer neighbourhoods in Banbury and Bicester, the wide range of tasks they undertake now needs to be questioned. Their cost also needs to be justified as it is the employment of the eight post holders which positions the Council as above average cost when compared to other similar councils.

- 3.4 There is therefore a need to achieve greater clarity of intent and to prioritise activity against where the Council can make a real difference with the reducing budget it has. Members need to consider, external funding reductions and the how its safer communities and ASB services address resident needs particularly in relation to the fear of crime. The key priorities which frame the action plan at Appendix 2 are intended to reconcile all these issues in a way which prioritises activities and makes the best use of reducing Council resources. A specific focus on Priority A. Information/Communication and Priority C. Improve our Visibility will be given in the first instance as a direct response to resident feedback and satisfaction levels in relation to the fear of crime.
- 3.5 Achievement and timing of these actions will depend on the level of funding confirmed through the CSR process and also the decisions taken by the Council on the MTFS.

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

- Option One** Approve the Key Priorities, Aims and Objectives set out in this report
- Option Two** Amend the Key Priorities, Aims and Objectives.

### **Consultations**

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- Cherwell Community Safety Partnership** Work on the Partnership priorities and survey work on performance and satisfaction with community safety and ASB services.
- Citizens Jury** See main Project Report
- Cherwell Customer Satisfaction Survey** See main Project Report

### **Implications**

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- Financial:** There is a clear loss of external funding which the service must take account of. This has already begun where it affects posts. Further cost reductions are planned and in hand as part of the Council's MTFS.
- Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance, 01295 221551
- Legal:** There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

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

**Risk Management:**

The main risk arising from this report is reputational. The Council has been proactive within the communities it serves with its various community safety and ASB services and there is therefore a public expectation that the Council will continue to respond to local need. However, reducing external and internal resource levels will mean that it will have far less capability in the future. Focus on what is important and prioritisation will assist but expectation also needs to be managed.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, 01295 221566

**Wards Affected**

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All

**Corporate Plan Themes**

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Safe and Healthy

**Executive Portfolio**

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**Councillor Nigel Morris**

**Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural Services**

**Document Information**

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Value For Money Summary
Appendix 2	Key Aims and Objectives
<b>Background Papers</b>	
1. Corporate Improvement Plan; Fear of Crime and Anti Social Behaviour 2. HMIC ASB Inspection Findings: Stop the rot" 3. Cherwell Customer Satisfaction survey 2010 4. Report of Citizens Juries 4. Project File and Work Packages	
<b>Report Author</b>	Chris Rothwell, Head of Safer Communities, Urban and Rural Services
<b>Contact Information</b>	01295 221712 chris.rothwell@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk

### Fear of Crime/Antisocial Behaviour Value for Money Summary

	Community safety	Exp/head	Rank
Basingstoke and Deane	£909,000	£5.62	1
<b>Cherwell</b>	<b>£740,000</b>	<b>£5.35</b>	<b>2</b>
Test Valley	£615,000	£5.33	3
Colchester	£959,000	£5.30	4
Braintree	£585,000	£4.12	5
Eastleigh	£467,000	£3.86	6
Maidstone	£555,000	£3.82	7
Aylesbury Vale	£564,000	£3.20	8
Chelmsford	£535,000	£3.20	9
Ashford	£344,000	£3.03	10
Tonbridge and Malling	£326,000	£2.78	11
East Hertfordshire	£375,000	£2.77	12
Vale of White Horse	£255,000	£2.18	13
Harrogate	£281,000	£1.75	14

Comparison of the 2010/11 RA budget estimates amongst CIPFA comparators reveals the following;

- Cherwell is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most expensive authority, and is £1.62 per head (30%) above the average or £2.51 (47%) above the lowest quartile spending authority
- This equates to a spend of £223,500 above average, or £346,730 above the lowest quartile spending authority

The RA return for Community Safety was looked at in more detail to discover more about the apparently high cost, and additional benchmarking work was carried out with authorities to better understand their funding and operation. The RA return is made up of 3 separate lines; crime reduction, safety services and CCTV

#### CCTV

- For CCTV, Cherwell was only the 8<sup>th</sup> highest spend out of 14, and spending 27% less than the average (or £49,800 less).

Capital charges of £15k were allocated incorrectly to Crime Reduction on the 2010/11 RA form. Exclusion of this from the net expenditure sum results in Cherwell being the 9<sup>th</sup> most expensive authority, 35% below the average (or £63,700 less).

A comparison was made of authority expenditure for the number of cameras deployed (for the 8 authorities that gave figures). This revealed;

- The average cost per camera deployed was £2,670, with Cherwell's cost for 50 cameras at £2,380 each (10.8% lower than average).
- The lowest cost authority was Harrogate, who deploy 118 cameras for £138,000 of (net) expenditure, largely due to £130,000 received in income

This suggests that Cherwell obtains good value for money from its current CCTV arrangements, although further efficiencies could still be found through shared arrangements, joint procurement or through additional income

### **Community Safety Services**

- For Community Safety Services, Cherwell was the 4<sup>th</sup> most expensive authority, spending 57% more than the average (or £112,700 more)

Community Safety Services comprises spending on areas such as provision of lighting for safety, provision of safety railings, providing home safety advice and community or neighbourhood wardens

A comparison with how other authorities approach these costs revealed;

- 6 authorities have no street wardens (Braintree, VOWH, Chelmsford, East Herts, Aylesbury Vale and Harrogate)
- Kent authorities (Maidstone, Ashford and Tonbridge & Malling) have between 7 and 9 community wardens that are provided by the County Council at no cost to the District Council
- Colchester has 6 street wardens which are part funded by Essex County Council, and two of which are paid for by Colchester Borough Homes,
- Eastleigh has county council funded accredited community safety officers and 5 police PCSOs which it jointly funds to the tune of £35k

The number of wardens and the nature of their funding is a policy decision by the council. Although the number of wardens does not appear to be significantly higher than elsewhere the nature of how they are funded could be the source of higher than average costs in this area.

### **Crime Reduction**

- For Crime Reduction, Cherwell was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most expensive authority, spending 117% more than the average (or £160,600 more)

The RA guidance for Crime Reduction suggests that this should include areas such as fees paid to police forces to secure extra police for a particular area, providing crime prevention advice or any community safety (crime reduction) expenditure that cannot be clearly or properly allocated to any other specific service.

Currently the Cherwell RA return for Crime Reduction includes the Street Scene Enforcement cost centre, which accounts for £203k of net expenditure. This is not in the spirit of the guidance and could, arguably, be included in line 522 (Environmental Protection). Exclusion of this sum, and correct allocation of the £15k CCTV capital charges, results in a net Crime Reduction expenditure of £99,000 (£0.72 per head) which is 19% lower than the average (or £23,200 less than the average authority)

### **Overall RA Total**

- Cherwell is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most expensive authority, and is £1.62 per head (30%) above the average or £2.51 (47%) above the lowest quartile spending authority

The net effect of the charges above result in an overall spend of £527k (£3.81 per head) making Cherwell the 7<sup>th</sup> most expensive authority and spending 5.1% more than the average (or £25,700 more)

### **Income**

An analysis of the most recent available RO (outturn) data for 2008/09 for the comparator authorities was examined as this contains additional information on employee costs, running costs and levels of income.

In 2008/09 Cherwell appeared to be 50% below average on the level of income it used to offset its costs (8<sup>th</sup> out of 14, or £106,700 below average), with three authorities obtaining income of over £600,000 per annum. When viewed as a proportion of total expenditure Cherwell was just 10<sup>th</sup> highest at 12% compared to Ashford whom obtained 68% of its expenditure as income.

Area Based Grant (ABG) is received from the Home Office on an area basis and then divided amongst authorities by Public Service Boards according to local priorities and policies. An analysis of ABG allocation for the 10 authorities that provided data for the current year revealed the following;

- The average ABG per 1,000 population was £0.59, with Cherwell obtaining £0.94, or 58.7% above the average
- Unlike Cherwell, a number of authorities were reliant on ABG to fund mainstream community safety posts.

Assuming that ABG levels have not changed radically since 2008/09 this would indicate that other sources of income are used to supplement community safety expenditure.

## Appendix 2

### Fear of Crime and ASB - Key Priorities, Aims and Objectives

<b>Priority A. Information/Communication:</b>		
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Objective</b>
A	Improve information and communication with the community and with victims of crime and ASB.	A1. Establish a communications approach to addressing perceptions around fear of crime and ASB.
		A2. Improved publicity about crime statistics and success stories from the Partnership.
		A3. Establish a 'name and shame' policy of offenders and use media channels to bring this to public attention.
		A4. Establish a clear Vision and agreed set of priorities around community safety and ASB that flow through all the tiers of community safety working.
<b>Constraints:</b> 1. Loss of the Neighbourhood Management Support Officer to coordinate information. 2. Uncertainty about funding and partner priorities 3. Potential loss/reduction of ABG funding that supports ASB with £25,000		

<b>Priority B. Effective Working.</b>		
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Objective</b>
B	Improvements to the effectiveness. Working in partnership because it makes business sense not because of funding or targets.	B1. Improved internal working within CDC to maximise the resources we have in the community.
		B2. Targeting our efforts in a more coordinated way and at what the public and the available intelligence tells us are the priorities.
		B3. Provide the right tools for staff to undertake their work more effectively and be seen by the public to make a difference.
		B4. Establish a risk driven approach to managing ASB case load...and more effective management of public expectations for case load on nuisance investigation.
		B5. Simplify structures. Work in partnership because there are business reasons to do so, not because of funding or targets.
<b>Constraints:</b> 1. Reduction in staffing levels could limit the range of partnership working 2. Funding reductions may limit the extent to which technology/IT systems can support this aim 3. Potential loss/reduction of ABG funding that supports ASB with £25,000		



<b>Priority C. Improve our Visibility</b>		
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Objective</b>
C	Improve our visibility and accessibility.	C1. Improve the visibility of street wardens (and the police).
		C2. Improve public access to information about community safety.
		C3. Community volunteering to play a part in helping to solve neighbourhood issues.
		C4. Deal with issues at first point of contact and before they escalate.
		C5. Better use of/profile of/public reporting using CCTV.
Constraints: 1. Reduction in number of street wardens from 8 to 6. 2. Reduction in external funding of Street Warden service 3. Reduction in staffing to support coordination of information 4. Cost of the CCTV provision.		

<b>Priority D. Efficiencies.</b>		
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Objective</b>
D	Add value to what we have already and seek to make further efficiencies to transfer resources to support the priorities.	D1. Improve the effectiveness of the existing resources.
		D2. Achieve savings from Joint procurement arrangements (across services and with partners).
		D3. Demonstrate the benefits of Community Intelligence Hub (CIH) to external partners to explore whether CIH can be the system of choice across the partnership to record data and provide information/performance reports to guide resourcing.
Constraints: 1. Upgrade costs of CIH		

<b>Priority E. Data Quality:</b>		
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Objective</b>
E	Improve data quality, recording, information sharing and performance monitoring to achieve better targeting of resources/actions.	E1. Agreed sharing of information across the partner agencies
		E2. Ensure standardised approach to data input within CDC
		E3. Determine the future of CIH
		E4. Improved performance management
Constraints: 1. Willingness of partners to further share information under the Data Sharing Protocol 2. Future of CIH		

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## Executive

### Value for Money Review of Corporate and Democratic Core

6 December 2010

### Report of the Chief Executive

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the findings of the Value for Money (VFM) Review report and the recommendations arising from the report

This report is public

#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To endorse the overall conclusions of the review
- (2) To agree that improvements in value for money be sought in Democratic Services and Elections and approve the following recommendations to achieve savings of £124,803;
  - a. Merge the Democratic Services and Elections teams to provide greater resilience and achieve further efficiencies
  - b. Achieve the schedule of savings set out in Annex 1
- (3) To agree that improvements in value for money be sought in Corporate Strategy, Performance and Partnerships and approve the following recommendations to achieve savings of £68,270;
  - a. Delete the post of performance officer and restructure the team to accommodate the loss of this post, reallocating roles and responsibilities to reflect revised local priorities and changes in the national performance regime
  - b. Reduce the budget for research and consultation, focusing the remaining resources on high priority areas and supporting in house consultation
  - c. Change the operating arrangements for performance management software to scale back its costs and provide better value for money
- (4) To agree that improvements in value for money be sought in Treasury Management and approve the following recommendations to achieve

minimum savings of £30,000;

- a. Review the Council's declining investment funds and allocate over two funds, rather than three.
- b. Ensure that this allocation is in place by 31 March 2011.

## **Executive Summary**

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### **Introduction**

- 1.1 This review forms part of the Value for Money programme of reviews for 2010/11, which aims to cover all services within the council and improve the value of services offered to residents of Cherwell, and contributes to meeting the Council Promise of securing £800,000 of new savings by 1 April 2011.
- 1.2 The Corporate and Democratic core was selected for review during 2010/11 because high-level comparative budget information available through 2010/11 RA form analysis indicated it may be comparatively expensive. A key element of the review was to better understand these comparative costs where possible and to identify any possible savings. Three areas were looked at; Democratic Service and Elections, Corporate Strategy Performance and Partnerships, and Treasury Management
- 1.3 A savings target of £100,000 for the review was set as part of the £800,000 Council Promise. The review has exceeded this target and identified total savings of £223,073, a proportion of which can only be achieved after 2011/12

### **Proposals**

- 1.4 To adopt the recommendations of the Review in full

### **Conclusions**

- 1.5 Significant reductions to spending on the Corporate and Democratic Core are possible and will improve the council's overall comparative spend position.
- 1.6 Improvements identified from the review will help reduce the council's cost base for its support services and contribute towards its Medium Term Financial Strategy targets.

## **Background Information**

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- 2.1 The Corporate and Democratic Core is a collection of council functions brought together solely for accounting purposes in line with CIPFA accounting requirements. It includes, Democratic Services, Elections, Member Services, Improvement Team, the Chief Executive's office, Communications, Corporate Strategy, Performance and Partnerships, Corporate Charges, Treasury Management and Accounts, Reports and Public Plans.
- 2.2 Cherwell's combined budget for these areas was £3.018m for 2010/11, which made it the 7<sup>th</sup> most expensive council in its CIPFA comparator group costing £33,700 more than the average or £460,250 more than the lowest quartile spend. This led to the inclusion of this review within the 2010/11 VFM Programme.
- 2.3 To undertake the review, three discrete service areas were chosen to focus on, with each undertaken as a separate project;
- Democratic Services and Elections (including Member Services) (8.81FTE of staff and total expenditure of £1.5m)
  - Corporate Strategy, Performance and Partnerships (5.72 FTE of staff and total expenditure of £393,000)
  - Treasury Management (total expenditure of £287,500)
- 2.4 As part of the council's Corporate Promise of securing £800,000 of new savings by 1 April 2011 a target of £100,000 was set for the review, with individual targets set for each of the three service areas as follows;
- Democratic Services and Elections - £70,000
  - Corporate Strategy, Performance and Partnerships - £20,000
  - Treasury Management - £10,000

## **VFM Review Findings – Democratic Services and Elections**

- 2.5 The Democratic Services and Elections teams manage and deliver the democratic decision making process within the council, including meetings, scrutiny, member training and member support. They also manage and deliver elections and electoral registration.
- 2.6 This is a time of rapid change in both the democratic and elections areas, with many of the new governments' initiatives impacting directly on the work of the team. These include the planned national referendum on electoral reform, the implementation of the alternative vote, individual registration, elected police chiefs, fixed term parliaments and forced removal of MP's, community governance review, referenda on council tax increases, new constituencies with increased cross boundary transfers, referenda on community rights to build and possible elected NHS boards.
- 2.7 The review used benchmarking information from other councils and national

data to assess how well the service performs along with comparisons on its costs. Key findings from the review of this area can be summarised as follows;

- For Democratic Services, Cherwell's staffing was found to be in the lowest quartile (1.32FTE less than the average District Council) when measured by staff per electorate. It was also shown to have a low level of meetings compared to other authorities (9<sup>th</sup> lowest against the size of electorate)
- In contrast, Cherwell's elections team was found to be relatively well staffed with the 5<sup>th</sup> highest level of staff per 10,000 electorate for all authorities, or the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest for District Councils.
- Cherwell had the 6<sup>th</sup> highest number of portfolio holders per 10,000 electorate. Its member allowances were found to be 6% below average compared to other south east authorities
- In looking at other councils no standard approach was found for how elections are organised and managed, although it was identified that Cherwell's recent approach in using a project manager from Democratic Services has been very successful. This highlighted the need for greater cross-working between the two teams
- There are potentially significant savings to be found through a move to all-out elections every four years, although these cannot be quantified at present and could not be introduced before 2015.

2.8 The Review identified a number of options for achieving savings. These were subject to additional consultation with members due to the impact these would have on the scope and level of member activity.

2.9 The total value of savings identified was £124,803 of which £68,035 can be achieved in 2010/11, £14,857 in 2011/12 and the remainder of £41,911 in 2012/13. A schedule of these savings is attached as Annex 1, with the main aspects summarised below;

- Merger of the two teams, with the deletion of a vacant Democratic Services trainee post. We will retain one trainee post in the Democratic Services team. Further staff savings to be identified in 2012/13 following the 2011 elections –savings of £30,718 can be achieved in 2010/11 and a further £30,000 in 2012/13 making a total of £60,718
- The deletion of the Standards Committee (when and if anticipated changes in legislation permits this) – total savings of £25,451
- Efficiencies in democratic services and elections such a reduced IT budget better procurement arrangements, less publicity and less printing and publications – total savings of £11,666
- Efficiencies in member services such as less catering for meetings, a reduced training budget and reductions in scrutiny activity – total savings of £15,857
- Removal of the subsidy for parish council elections, resulting in savings of £11,111

## **VFM Review Findings – Corporate Strategy, Performance and Partnerships**

- 2.10 The Corporate Strategy, Performance and Partnerships team manages the community strategy and the local strategic partnership, consultation and engagement activities, community knowledge and profiles (e.g. Living in Cherwell, deprivation profiles, data observatory), corporate and service planning, performance and risk management, equalities work and community cohesion.
- 2.11 During the course of the review the Government announced the abolition of CAA, the National Indicator Set, the Place Survey, Local Area Agreements and the Audit Commission Use of Resources assessments. At the same time the Equalities Act has been passed, and proposals for a Localism Bill have been outlined which are likely to lead to increased local consultation and community engagement.
- 2.12 The review found it was not possible to employ benchmarking to make meaningful comparison with other councils around these functions as each council has a different approach to their discharge and location of functions, resulting in large differences in staffing provision and expenditure. Instead, the focus of the review was in identifying areas for efficiency savings against its target.
- 2.13 The service has had an annual consultancy budget of £70,000, which has been used to improve and develop the council's internal systems and processes, and has supported the establishment of a corporate consultation programme including the consultation portal. The budget is also used to deliver research commissioned to support local priorities such as citizen's juries for the fear of crime improvement project and Banbury Brighter Futures (connecting communities). Savings in this budget are now possible through the loss of the Place Survey, the completion of improvement work (such as data quality) and the reduced national performance regime.
- 2.14 It is proposed that the post of Performance Officer is deleted through redundancy and that the new duties and responsibilities which are being set out by the coalition government will be allocated across the remaining posts within the team. Performance management remains absolutely critical.
- 2.15 A final aspect of the review focused on the costs of software used by the team to perform its work, particularly Performance Plus. Changes in operating arrangements and a reduction in consultancy days have generated immediate savings, with further savings possible in the future through renegotiating the contract or sharing the system with another authority. A further small saving was identified through removing the capital charges on a redundant item of software.
- 2.16 The total value of savings identified through the review was £68,270. The details are set out below;
- Delete the post of performance officer. Restructure the team to accommodate the loss of this post, reallocating roles and responsibilities

to reflect revised priorities - saving of £28,882

- Reduce the budget for research and consultancy – saving of £30,000
- Change the operating arrangements for performance management software to scale back its costs and provide better value for money – saving of £7,338
- Removal of the depreciation budget for Keypoint – saving of £2,000

### **VFM Review Findings – Treasury Management**

- 2.17 Treasury Management is the management of the council's £70m investment portfolio to achieve the best financial return whilst maintaining security of the principle. Despite currently low interest rates performance from 2 of the 3 pots has been in accordance with budget and this investment income will fund 7% of the Council's 2010/11 revenue budget.
- 2.18 The current medium term financial strategy assumes that the Council will end its reliance on investment income to fund revenue services by March 2012 and use the funds to fund one off projects and replenish reserves.
- 2.19 The portfolio is currently split into 3 'pots', in accordance with the CIPFA code, with £45m handled by private sector experts in 2 pots and the 3rd pot of £25m handled internally by council staff.
- 2.20 Costs include council staff time, payment for advisors and third party commissions, the latter being based on interest rates.
- 2.21 A 'desktop' review was undertaken to explore an optimum cost model while still meeting the requirements of the CIPFA code. This identified that on top of reducing the payment to 3<sup>rd</sup> party advisors (£8k saving achieved) that by reducing the number of 'pots' from three to two would give rise to a significant level of savings.
- 2.22 Negotiations have begun but early indications are that savings of around £30,000 will be possible to achieve for 2011/12.

### **Implications**

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- Financial:** The review has identified savings totalling £223,073 against a target of £100,000. Sufficient savings have been identified to meet the council promise requirement; with further savings providing flexibility should other aspects of the Medium Term Financial Strategy not be deliverable.
- Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance  
01295 221551
- Legal:** The proposed recommendations will not impact on the council's statutory functions in the areas covered by the review. Savings from changes to the Standards regime are dependent on forthcoming legislation and so cannot



be assured at this time.

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

**Risk Management:** The proposed level of savings present no risk to service delivery

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

**Data Quality** Data for comparison has been obtained through rigorous benchmarking. Financial data has been prepared by the relevant service accountant

Comments checked by Neil Lawrence, Improvement Project Manager 01295 221801

**Wards Affected**

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All

**Corporate Plan Themes**

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An Accessible, Value for Money Council

**Executive Portfolio**

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**Councillor Attack**  
**Portfolio Holder for Performance Management, Improvement and Organisational Development**

**Document Information**

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Annex 1	Schedule of proposed savings in Democratic Service and Elections
<b>Background Papers</b>	
Corporate and Democratic Core VFM - Update Report: Democratic Services and Elections (exempt) - Update Report: Corporate Strategy, Performance and Partnerships (exempt)	
<b>Report Author</b>	Neil Lawrence, Improvement Project Manager
<b>Contact Information</b>	01295 221801 neil.lawrence@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

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### Schedule of proposed savings in Democratic Service and Elections

Proposed Savings	Amount	Year	Comment, Detail and Implications
Deletion of vacant Trainee Democratic and Scrutiny Post	£30,718	2010/11	The saving is achievable through the merger of the democratic and elections team and the sharing of work, demise of the standards regime, reduction in planning committee meetings, no duty to promote democracy and a reduction in member development and slight reduction in proactive parish support.
Reduce Elections IT replacement budget	£5,055	2010/11	Reduces dedicated IT replacement budget (stand alone scanners, servers, pcs laptops) and instead rolling IT replacement will be implemented within remaining budget
Removal of Publicity Budget	£3,000	2010/11	This budget was intended to be used for positive promotion of democracy and the duty to promote democracy, which will not now be enacted.
Cease publishing Member Diary and Yearbook	£750	2010/11	This saving has been achieved, with the diary being replaced by off the shelf diaries for members available on request and an information booklet printed quarterly
Savings on canvas printing procurement	£383	2010/11	This saving has been achieved through renegotiating the 2010/11 contract
Cease member photograph	£277	2010/11	This saving has been achieved
Joint procurement of Statutory Notices	£1,000	2011/12	This estimated saving has been difficult to co-ordinate on a county basis, but has now occurred on some statutory notices (5% and Forward Plan) and others are planned.
Market Testing of Canvas/ Ballot Printing	£800	2012/13 and 2013/14	It is envisaged that this estimated saving can be achieved through re-procurement for 2012/13 and 2013/14
Recycling Presiding Officer Sundries Bags for district elections	£401	2011/12	Rather than supply all new sundries bags costs will be saved by recycling left over materials, using admin staff time.
Reduce Scrutiny Activities Budget	£4,828	2010/11	This budget has been under spent for several years. This reduction would limit options open for members in additional scrutiny activity.
Reduce Member Training Budget	£7,505	2011/12	Over 80% of member training is now internally delivered and therefore there have been under spends in this budget area since 2008, with under spends all being returned to corporate funds. It is envisaged this level of internal training provision can continue, however (with the exception of briefings) 80% of this training is delivered by the Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager and the continued delivery of this internally relies on him remaining with Cherwell District Council or a suitable replacement being recruited. Therefore, in considering budget reductions members should consider possible future calls on this budget in the event that suitably skilled and experienced staff are not available for internal delivery.
Reduce catering for Member meetings	£2,744	2010/11	This will mean ending the provision of sandwiches at all meetings (with the exception of Executive meetings) and no annual council buffet. Refreshments will be restricted to biscuits at meetings and cold drinks will no longer be provided in the member's room.

### Schedule of proposed savings in Democratic Service and Elections

Proposed Savings	Amount	Year	Comment, Detail and Implications
Cease providing personal copies of Municipal Journal	£280	2010/11	A single copy will still be available in members room
Member printing and postage reductions	£500	2011/12	These are relatively limited as most reductions have already taken place, with the change from the print room. These savings will result from the reduction in postage and not printing decision sheets, forward plan and agendas for non-committee members introduced on 1 September 2010. Savings will appear against customer services postage budgets and MFD printing costs.
Further efficiencies created through the merger of democratic and elections teams and opportunities created through shared services	£30,000	2012/13	Following the merger of the democratic and elections team further work will take place on the structure of this team following the 2011 elections and how economies of scale can be achieved through the early merger of the team as part of joint working with another local authority. It is anticipated that further efficiencies will be possible through this approach..
Remove/reduce subsidy paid to Parish Council's for elections	£11,111	2012/13	Proposals will be introduced following 2011 elections to allow councils to precept for 2012/13.
Deletion of Standards Committee	£5,451	2011/12	Requires primary legislation in Localism Bill to be realised
Deletion of Standards Committee investigation budget	£20,000	2011/12	Requires primary legislation in Localism Bill to be realised
<b>Total</b>	<b>£124,803</b>		

## Executive

### Value for Money Review of Recreation and Sport

6 December 2010

### Report of the Strategic Director Environment & Community

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the findings of the Value for Money (VFM) Review report and the recommendations arising from the report.

This report is public
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#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To endorse the overall conclusion of the review that the service is below average cost for the operation of its leisure centres, according to national benchmarking. It has good performance in terms of its sports development assessment, and is high quality in terms of good and improving levels of customer satisfaction.
- (2) To agree that improvements in value for money be sought and approve the following recommendations;
  - a. Further grants to village halls be withdrawn from 2011/12, saving £39,000 per annum
  - b. Reductions be made in the service establishment through reduced hours and the deletion of a vacant project officer post, saving £56,817 per annum
  - c. Additional savings of £33,077 be progressed through reductions to the Leisure Development and Sports Development budgets, as set out in paragraph 2.11
- (3) To note that the target savings of £80,000 from the joint use agreements at Coopers School and North Oxfordshire Academy are currently part of the Council's scrutiny activities and subject to negotiation with the management of the two education sites;
- (4) To agree to progress negotiations with the sports centres contract operator to achieve savings through changes to the contract specification and through income benchmarking.
- (5) To request a capital bid as part of 2011/12 budget setting for electricity generation at leisure centres outlining its costs and likely savings.

## **Executive Summary**

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### **Introduction**

- 1.1 This review forms part of the Value for Money programme of reviews for 2010/11, which aims to cover all services within the council and improve the value of services offered to residents of Cherwell.
- 1.2 Recreation and Sport was selected for a 'health check' review during 2010/11 along with a number of other services as these had not previously been covered by the VFM programme but account for a high level of expenditure. The aim of such reviews is to quickly identify potential savings using information that is readily available.
- 1.3 As part of recent planning for the Medium Term Financial Strategy arising from the Comprehensive Spending Review a number of savings options had been identified for the service which amounted to £175,000. An objective of the VFM review was to examine the feasibility of these and, where possible, identify further efficiencies that would allow for greater flexibility in the council achieving its medium term savings targets.
- 1.4 The overall conclusion of the review is that the service is below average cost for the operation of its leisure centres, according to national benchmarking. It has good performance in terms of its sports development assessment, and is high quality in terms of good and improving levels of customer satisfaction.
- 1.5 The review has identified savings to meet the £175,000 target along with an additional £33,894 of efficiencies.
- 1.6 Although impact on the public and customers has been minimised wherever possible, there will be some reduction in service delivery as a result of these savings.

### **Proposals**

- 1.7 To adopt the recommendations of the Review in full

### **Conclusion**

- 1.8 Significant reductions to expenditure on Recreation and Sport are possible and these will help reduce the Council's cost base and contribute towards its Medium Term Financial Strategy targets.

## Background Information

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- 2.1 This report sets out the findings of the Recreation and Sport VFM Review with recommendations to achieve its Medium Term Financial Strategy savings target of £175,000 and further savings of £33,077.
- 2.2 The agreed scope of the review included the current leisure centres contract, Woodgreen pool, the joint use agreements in place at Cooper School, Bicester and North Oxfordshire Academy, Banbury, sports development and leisure development.
- 2.3 The VFM review has used a range of evidence to inform its conclusions, including the national benchmarking service for sports and leisure centres to which Cherwell subscribes, and which is used as an integral tool for monitoring its contract with the operators, Cherwell Leisure Ltd/Parkwood Community Leisure (CLL/PCL).

## VFM Review Findings

- 2.4 Appendix 1 contains the Executive Summary of the VFM review. Key findings from the review can be summarised as follows;
  - Net expenditure of the service is £2.1m which includes £0.75m of income from partnership grants, joint use agreements and course fees. Net expenditure has reduced by £791,000 (-27%) since 2008/08, largely through reductions in the cost of operating the refurbished sports centres, but also through reductions in the staff establishment.
  - 2010/11 budget comparisons with CIPFA family comparators show that for Recreation and Sport Cherwell is the 9th highest spending authority out of 14, with costs 5.1% (£77,812) lower than the CIPFA family average, and 18.4% higher than the lowest quartile spend (+£226,742).
  - For all three Cherwell leisure centres, independent national benchmarking identifies them as performing in the best (lowest) quartile for indicators relating to the level of public subsidy, the only exception being a 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile performance for Spiceball for the level of public subsidy per resident. This demonstrates excellent value for money for Cherwell residents from the Parkwood contract.
  - Public satisfaction with leisure facilities increased in 2010/11 from 68% to 71%, and the range of leisure facilities available is now ranked as number one in drivers of overall satisfaction with the council. Agreement that local leisure facilities provide value for money increased significantly from 43% to 50%
  - The 2011 budget consultation indicated that residents would be happy to see less money spent on recreation and sport, which is likely to be a reflection of recent investment. The scale of reduction indicated was in excess of the MTFS target saving of £175,000
  - The council's Quest assessment for sports development improved in 2010 to 85% (categorised as "excellent") from its previous level of 72%

- 2.5 As the leisure centres contract is the largest single area of spend within the service it was examined in detail to identify any scope to vary its specification in order to achieve cost savings to the council which would have a minimal impact on service provision. Initial discussions with CLL/PCL have been fruitful, and these will progress in the coming months to clarify the scope and savings potential of the options identified but could be in the order of £25,000.
- 2.6 A key factor in the realisation of savings is the nature of the contract with regard to energy consumption and cost, with the operator meeting the costs/reductions in consumption changes and the council meeting the cost/reductions in energy rates. The contractual requirement is for the council to pay the difference in energy cost increases when consumption crosses a certain threshold, and this has occurred during 2010/11 leading to an additional £68,000 in payment required from the council. These will be offset to some degree by the savings from contract specification changes.
- 2.7 In addition, parallel discussions with the operators have taken place with regard to savings in energy consumption as part of the Council's Use of Natural Resources improvement project. These discussions have identified a spend-to-save opportunity by investing in energy generation through photovoltaic panels mounted on leisure centres. A capital bid is currently under development for consideration by Executive at a later date. The business case for this investment is likely to show an investment of around £700,000 will generate an annual return of £80,000 per annum for the council.
- 2.8 A further opportunity for savings through the leisure centres contract is the income benchmarking review, where the Council and operator share in any upturn in profit above a threshold. The operator has approached the council with a proposal to 'buy out' the 5-year review, and negotiations on this are proceeding.
- 2.9 Negotiations are also in hand with regard to the two joint use agreements at Cooper School and the North Oxfordshire Academy. A combined savings target of £80,000 is being progressed by exploring a number of options with the two schools. Initial discussions have been positive but a final agreement is not yet in place. The proposed target is considered a challenge by the service, but best efforts will be made to realise as much of the saving as possible. This proposal is also subject to scrutiny.
- 2.10 Other MTFS savings proposals explored by the Review were;
- The withdrawal of further grants to village halls (£39,000): The review concluded that parish councils are able to raise necessary funding for such facilities through increased precepts.
  - The deletion of a project officer post (£30,190): This post is currently vacant and has already been progressed as a saving. The loss of this post will result in reduced capacity within the service.
  - The reduction of staff hours (£26,627): this relates to the permanent reduction of surplus hours, which have not been used in recent years, so will have a minimal impact
- 2.11 Individual cost centres within Leisure Development and Sports Development have been explored as part of the review to identify additional savings



opportunities. A total of £33,077 in savings were identified as follows;

- Discontinuing membership of the Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association (£4,100) which has limited benefit to the council
- Discontinuing the cardiac referral arrangement with the leisure centre operators and refocusing this on alternative options such as health walks (£4,700)
- Reducing a miscellaneous costs budget used to fund expenditure for areas covered by other cost centres (e.g. training) but also ad-hoc projects (£15,000)
- Increasing income from the Holidays scheme through increased fees, as an alternative to reducing the scope of the scheme (£5,000)
- Reducing the grants and bursaries budget from the School Links programme (£4,277)

2.12 Although impact on the public and customers has been minimised wherever possible, there will be some reduction in service delivery as a result of these savings.

## Implications

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<b>Financial:</b>	<p>The review has identified savings totalling £208,894 against a target of £175,000. Sufficient savings have been identified to meet the council MTFs requirement, with further savings providing flexibility should other aspects of the Strategy not be deliverable.</p> <p>Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance 01295 221551</p>
<b>Legal:</b>	<p>Changes to contractual arrangements with the leisure centre operators are subject to negotiation. Provisions for income and utility benchmarking are part of these arrangements and changes will need to be through mutual agreement.</p> <p>Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic Services 01295 221686</p>
<b>Risk Management:</b>	<p>The proposed level of savings present no risk to service delivery</p> <p>Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566</p>
<b>Data Quality</b>	<p>Data for cost comparison has been obtained through 2010/11 RA forms of comparable CIPFA family authorities, which has been subject to extensive checking with these authorities. Financial data has been prepared by the relevant service accountant</p> <p>Comments checked by Neil Lawrence, Improvement Project Manager 01295 221801</p>

**Wards Affected**

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All

**Corporate Plan Themes**

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An Accessible, Value for Money Council

**Executive Portfolio**

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**Councillor George Reynolds**  
Portfolio Holder for Environment, Recreation and Health

**Document Information**

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Recreation and Sport VFM: Executive Summary
<b>Background Papers</b>	
None	
<b>Report Author</b>	Neil Lawrence, Improvement Project Manager
<b>Contact Information</b>	01295 221801 neil.lawrence@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

## Recreation and Sport VFM Review

# Executive Summary

## Cherwell District Council

<b>Timetable</b>	<b>Papers Finalised</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>
CMT	1 October 2010	6 October 2010
Use of Resources	4 November 2010	10 November 2010
Executive	24 November 2010	6 December 2010

<b>Revision History</b>		
<b>Revision Date</b>	<b>Previous Revision Date</b>	<b>Summary of Changes</b>
9 September 2010		First draft
15 September 2010	9 September 2010	PMW comments
17 September 2010	15 September 2010	'clean' version with agreed changes from PMW/NL meeting
29 September 2010	17 September 2010	Final amendments by PMW
07 October 2010	29 September 2010	CMT amendments
26 November 2010	7 October 2010	Incorporating feedback from Use of Resources Steering Group

## Value for Money Review of Recreation and Sport - Executive Summary

### 1 Introduction

#### Purpose of this report

- 1.1. Given current financial circumstances, the nature of VFM reviews have changed significantly. Previously, savings identified would be through efficiencies found. This review, while focusing partly on efficiencies, seeks also to identify the full range of savings required of the service covered by the scope of this review.
- 1.2. This report sets out the findings of the Recreation and Sport VFM review with recommendations and options to achieve the savings target within its scope of £175,000. The total savings target for the Recreation and Health service is £894,235.

#### Introduction

- 1.3. The Recreation and Sport area of the service performs the following functions;
  - Managing the Parkwood leisure centres contract (Spiceball Leisure Centre, Bicester Leisure Centre, Kidlington and Gosford Leisure Centre) and fulfilling all client roles and responsibilities. Managing a separate short term contract with Parkwood for Woodgreen Leisure Centre.
  - Directly managing the Joint use facilities at North Oxfordshire Academy, Banbury and Cooper School, Bicester.
  - Providing opportunities and recreational activities through a range of initiatives and support
  - Undertaking strategic planning and co-ordination of Recreation and Health Service activities such as policy formulation and development, feasibility studies, and S106 requirements.
  - Administration of Village Halls, Recreation and Sports Facilities and Play and Youth Activity Areas Grant Schemes

#### VFM Conclusion

- 1.4. The overall conclusion of the review is that the service is **below average cost** for the operation of its leisure centres, according to national cost benchmarking. It has **good performance** in terms of its sports development assessment. It is **high quality** in terms of good and improving levels of customer satisfaction for leisure centre users

#### Staffing

- 1.5. The staffing structure is as follows;

Established Posts	At 30 June 2010	
	Posts	Vacancies
	FTE	FTE
Head of Recreation & Health	1.00	0.00
Rec & Health Improvement Manager	1.00	0.00
Senior Rec & Sport Dev Officer	0.6	0.00

Recreation & Sport Dev Officer	1.00	0.00
Senior Recreation Dev Officer (PYP)	1.00	0.00
Leisure Development /Recreation Officer	1.00	0.00
GO Active Co-ordinator	1.00	0.00
Youth Activator	1.00	0.19
Youth Activator	1.00	0.19
Recreation Facilities Manager	1.00	0.00
Snr Recreation Facilities Off	1.00	0.00
Recreation Facilities Officer	0.32	0.00.
Recreation Dev Off Older People	0.50	0.00
	<b>11.42</b>	<b>0.00</b>

1.6. Key points to highlight are

- Of this total, only 7.92 FTE relate directly to the provision of sports and recreation services (see below)
- A Recreation and Sport Development Officer post was removed in 2009/10 as part of achieving savings in the service
- The Recreation and Health Improvement Manager allocates 50% of his time to work in this area, with the remaining 50% divided between younger and older people's services.
- The two Youth activators and the Go Active Coordinator are externally funded and temporary until 31/3/2011, and although their costs/income are included here they provide services exclusively for young people.
- The Recreation Development Officer (Older People) is employed on a temporary contract until 30/3/2011 to provide future staffing flexibility.
- Staff hours reductions, as part of building block savings targets, for the Recreation Facilities Officer and the Senior Recreation Officer have already been implemented and are reflected in this table

### Expenditure

- 1.7. The budget and expenditure of the cost centres within the scope of this review is set out in the table below. A more detailed examination of each of these is set out in Section 2

	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
	Actual	Actual	Budget
Employee Costs	757,114	514,645	510,975
Premises Costs	203,475	133,255	187,285
Transport Costs	39,862	66,511	15,161
Supplies & Services	416,377	360,355	322,216
Third Party Payments	1,532,730	1,107,703	1,038,240
Support Services	173,303	167,406	170,715
Internal Support Services	165,258	92,938	120,782
Capital Charges	383,335	711,239	516,122
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>3,671,454</b>	<b>3,154,052</b>	<b>2,881,496</b>

Other Grants Reimbursements	(537,560)	(651,554)	(653,224)
Sales Income	(9,314)	(957)	0
Fees And Charges	(182,357)	(98,591)	(98,113)
Chgs To Other Mgt Centres	(20,224)	(50,500)	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(749,455)</b>	<b>(801,602)</b>	<b>(751,337)</b>
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>2,922,000</b>	<b>2,352,450</b>	<b>2,130,160</b>

1.8. Sources of income for this area are listed below;

Grant Source	Purpose	Budget 2010/11
Banbury Town Council	Contribution to Woodgreen	£ 50,000
Oxfordshire County Council	Joint Use -Coopers School	£ 7,084
	Joint Use - BPSC	£ 215,590
	Joint Use - KGSC	£ 115,339
	Joint Use - SPSC	£ 169,365
Sports Development	School Club Links	£ 7,846
Sport England/Oxford Sports Partnership/Oxon PCT	Go Active	£ 32,000
Oxfordshire County Council	Play Ranger funding	£ 56,000
<b>Total Grants</b>		<b>£ 653,224</b>

Income	Source	Budget 2010/11
Sponsorship and Course Income	School Club links, Community Development & holidays schemes	£ 17,289
Income from Joint Use Centres	Cooper School	£ 37,487
	North Oxon Academy	£ 43,337
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>£ 98,113</b>

1.9. Play ranger funding is included in this breakdown for completeness, although its functions are limited to younger people activities and are therefore outside the scope of this review

### Statutory functions

1.10. The Recreation and Health Service has statutory cost centres amounting to £292,350, which all relate to the Public Protection team. No cost centres within the scope of this review are considered statutory, and so there are no savings targets relating to these.

### 'Building Blocks' savings

1.11. Recreation & Health, as a Service, has building block savings totalling £434,000 for the realistic scenario, and a further £431,000 (making a combined total of £865,000) for the worst case scenario.

- 1.12. Below is a list of the building blocks covered within the scope of this review, together with their status and savings target;

Block No.	Description	Scenario/ Status	Total Saving
18	Reduced hours for some staff	Exec approved	£30,000
23	No sports development for clubs or projects	<i>On Hold</i>	£14,000
24	No leisure development projects officer	Exec approved	£26,000
25	No grants to village halls	Exec approved	£39,000
27	Withdraw from joint use agreement/enter trust status for Cooper School	Review required for Scrutiny	£40,000
28	Withdraw from joint use agreement & lease/enter trust status for North Oxon Academy	Review required for Scrutiny	£40,000
82	Reduce work in youth activities and sports development by 25%	<i>Exec declined</i>	£47,000
		<b>Total approved</b>	<b>£175,000</b>

## 2 Findings from the Review

- 2.1. The review has used a range of evidence including national benchmarking of leisure centres, analysis of the positive impact of sport and recreation on society, the most recent resident satisfaction and budget consultation data and a detailed examination of key cost centres.

### Benchmarking of Leisure Centres

- 2.2. The RA 2010/11 comparative position of the service was examined as part of the initial project brief and found that;
- Cherwell is only the 9<sup>th</sup> highest spender out of 14 authorities
  - Cherwell spends 5.1% below the average of comparator authorities (an equivalent of £77,812 less expensive) and 18.4% above the lowest quartile cost (an equivalent of £226,742 more expensive)
- 2.3. However, this analysis is not considered reliable as the number and range of facilities provided by each authority can vary widely. A more reliable benchmarking framework is provided by the National Benchmarking Service for Sports and Leisure Centres, to which Cherwell subscribes.
- 2.4. All three leisure centres have been surveyed and compared with similar properties (a five-way categorisation system is used to ensure comparability) within the last 8 months. Their performance when measured against a basket of 15 indicators is set out in detail as Annex 1 and is summarised below;
- 2.5. Bicester Leisure Centre;
- achieves top quartile performance in 5 areas; level of participants aged 60 and above, value of subsidy per visit/per square metre/per resident and level of income per visit.
  - has 2nd quartile (above average) performance across 9 other indicators.
  - performs at 3rd quartile (below average) for the level of ethnic minority users it attracts
- 2.6. Spiceball Leisure Centre;



- achieves top quartile performance in 5 areas; level of visits from 11-19 year olds, value of subsidy per visit/per square metre, maintenance & repair costs per square metre and level of income per visit.
  - has 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile (above average) performance across 6 other indicators.
  - has 3<sup>rd</sup> quartile (below average) performance for the level of users aged 60+ and the operating costs per visit.
  - has bottom quartile performance for the level of disabled users below 60 and energy costs per square metre.
- 2.7. Kidlington Leisure Centre;
- achieves top quartile performance in 7 areas; level of participants aged 60 and above, level of disabled users below 60, value of subsidy per visit/per square metre/per resident, operating cost per square metre and level of income per visit.
  - has 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile (above average) performance across 5 other indicators.
  - has 3<sup>rd</sup> quartile (below average) performance for the level of ethnic minority users and the level of visits per metre squared.
  - has bottom quartile performance for the level of residents from the most deprived areas using the facility
- 2.8. For all three leisure centres the benchmarking identifies them as performing in the best quartile for public subsidy, the only exception being a second quartile performance for Spiceball in the level of subsidy per resident. This demonstrates excellent value for money for Cherwell residents from the new contract.
- 2.9. The outputs of this annual survey are integral to the monitoring of the council's contract with Parkwood, with prescribed performance required to be achieved in order to maintain levels of contract payment. This is an excellent use of benchmarking data, not seen in any other areas in the council, and is driving improvement and increased value for money.

### **Resident's Satisfaction and Budget Consultation 2011**

- 2.10. Satisfaction with leisure facilities has increased from 68% to 71%, and the range of leisure facilities available is now ranked number one in the drivers of overall satisfaction with the Council. This can be seen as a direct result of recent investment in facilities around the District and, in particular, the opening of the new Spiceball Leisure Centre at the end of 2009 and highlights the influence this investment had in increasing levels of overall satisfaction with the Council. Activities for young people is also ranked highly (4th) and is likely to be linked to perceptions of anti-social behaviour, although it may well be a reflection of the timing of the survey, which coincides with the summer holidays.
- 2.11. Users of Kidlington and Gosford Leisure Centre are the most satisfied (82%). Agreement that local leisure facilities managed by the Council provide value for money has also increased significantly from 43% in 2009 to 50% this year. However, the fact that almost one in five (19%) still disagree with this statement supports the notion that there is still room for improvement in terms of making these facilities accessible and affordable for all.
- 2.12. The only aspect not to see an increase in satisfaction this year was the cost of using the facilities, which actually fell from 43% to 42%. We know from the Budget Consultation that the current economic climate has reduced disposable income for many homes across the District, so ensuring these facilities remain affordable is a key consideration.
- 2.13. Given the recent investment in facilities across the District, it may have been hoped that more residents would be using these facilities, so the fact that these figures (51%) remain comparable to last year is slightly surprising. Indeed, one key finding in this area from the

Budget Consultation was that residents would like the Council to make these facilities more accessible and encourage more people to take advantage of them.

- 2.14. In terms of areas where residents would be happy to see less money spent, sports and leisure facilities was selected by 20% of residents, which is likely to be a reflection of the fact that there has recently been investment in this area, removing the need for new facilities. It possibly also reflects the fact that people expect to pay to use these facilities.
- 2.15. When faced with deciding how to allocate a council budget reduced by 25% the public decided Recreation and Health's overall proportion could be reduced from its current 19% (of a 100% budget) to 12% (of a 75% budget); a 16% proportion of a re-allocated budget. In financial terms this equates to a total reduction of £252,000 for Recreation and Sports comprising;
- A 5% reduction in Sports facilities (a reduction of £157,000 from the 2010/11 budget)
  - A 4% reduction in Sports Development & Grants (a reduction of £95,000 from the 2010/11 budget)
- 2.16. This suggested £252,000 saving contrasts with the £175,000 savings target allocated by the council for Recreation and Sports.

### **Benefits of recreation and sport; research findings**

- 2.17. The Culture and Sports Evidence Programme (CASE) is a £1.8m, three-year programme of research into strengthening understanding of how best to deliver high quality culture and sporting opportunities to the widest audience, generating positive outcomes for society. Its findings highlight the direct benefits of increased participation in recreation and sport activities;
- Young people's participation in organised sport improves their numeracy scores, on average, by 8% above that of non-participants
  - The participation of underachieving young people in extra-curricular learning activities linked to sport increases their numeracy skills, on average, by 29% above that of non-participants, and increases their transferrable skills by 12-16%
  - Sport generates substantial long-term economic value in terms of avoided health costs and improved health-related quality of life. For example, the total economic value generated by doing sport varies between £11,400 per person (for badminton) and £45,800 per person (general health and fitness)
  - Engagement in sport has a positive and quantifiable effect on a person's perceived wellbeing
- 2.18. Other research conducted by the Department of Health in 2004 highlighted that sport and recreation make a significant contribution towards overall physical activity levels in the population, with local authorities providing an important role in providing these opportunities. Sport was also seen as being attractive to many people and offering them social networks, with strong community bases and engagement being possible. An example of this within Cherwell was the identification of a participant in the council's apprenticeship scheme after she had been identified through sports development's work to support disadvantaged and disaffected young people.

### **Active People Survey performance and Quest Assessment of Sports Development**

- 2.19. The only available comparator for performance in this area is NI 8 - *"The percentage of the adult (age 16 and over) population in a local area who participate in sport and active recreation, at moderate intensity, for at least 30 minutes on at least 12 days out of the last 4 weeks (equivalent to 30 minutes on 3 or more days a week)"*.

- 2.20. The last available analysis of this indicator as part of NI 8 reporting shows Cherwell's performance is close to bottom quartile of its comparator family, being 10th out of 14 authorities. However, a study by Sheffield University highlighted that the closure of a facility can have a detrimental effect on participation during the year. The Sport Centre modernisation programme and change of Leisure Providers would have had an effect on participation figures. Now they are completed and embedded participation figures are expected to increase.
- 2.21. The Council is only one of many organisations that are able to influence this measure and therefore it does not necessarily reflect the performance of CDC work. IDEA suggest a more appropriate measure for Local Authorities would be a Local Outcomes Framework.
- 2.22. Sports Development is quality assessed by a similar process to that implemented on the sports centres. In 2010 the Councils Quest assessment score 85% which is categorised as "Excellent" (previous score was 72%).

### **Sports and Leisure Centre contract specification**

- 2.23. The 2010/11 net budget of £996,269 for the operation of leisure centres makes up 47% of the overall expenditure of this service, and so appears significant in identifying potential areas for efficiency savings.
- 2.24. Discussions have taken place with the operators, Parkwood, in order to identify means to reduce the ongoing contract payments, primarily through exploring a change in the council's specification for service provision. A key factor in the realisation of savings is the nature of the contract with regard to energy consumption and cost, with the operator meeting the costs/reductions in consumption changes and the council meeting the cost/reductions in energy rates. The contractual requirement is for the council to pay the difference in energy cost increases when consumption crosses a certain threshold, and this has occurred during 2010/11 leading to an additional £68,000 in payment required from the council.
- 2.25. Changes to specification which alter energy consumption (e.g. reducing swimming pool temperatures) are, contractually, of benefit to the operator rather than the council. Any other changes in specification that can be shown to impact on income cannot be forced on the operator, but rather achieved through negotiation. A series of meetings has been held to this effect during September 2010 but had not concluded at the time of writing, and will be reported verbally to CMT at its 6 October 2010 meeting.
- 2.26. The contract for operating Woodgreen with Parkwood is a separate one. A decision has been made to extend the existing contract for a further year when it expires in March 2011, with a full procurement exercise for a 10-15 year contract undertaken in January 2012. A variety of alternatives to operate the facility have been explored; a self-manage arrangement for the bowls club, returning the community-related operations to the community, an external operator managing the pool only or looking to an in-house operation. More information on progress here will become apparent between now and November/December.
- 2.27. However, any savings identified will be needed to offset utility benchmarking increases amounting to £59,000 and NNDR increases of around £30,000. This is likely to mean that there will be little, if any, net additional saving to be found here.
- 2.28. A further study is being undertaken by PWC on contract assurance, looking into the contract management arrangement for major contracts within the council. However, this was ongoing at the conclusion of the review and so its findings are not able to be reported here.

### **Joint Use Agreements for Sports Facilities in Schools**

- 2.29. As part of the building blocks proposals, Executive proposed exploring Trust status for the two joint use centres that the council operates under formal agreements with Oxfordshire County

Council; North Oxfordshire Academy (NOA) and Cooper's School. The original savings target for this was £107,000, but this has since been reduced to £80,000 (£40k for each centre) based on feasibility work carried out to date.

- 2.30. The agreement for Coopers School has a five-year review period, whereas NOA has no review system in place. Reviews that do take place are currently limited to exploring costs and detailed operating arrangements rather than the fundamentals of the agreements themselves, as no automatic right to terminate exists; this would need to be undertaken through negotiation.
- 2.31. Trust status, as proposed, does not necessarily offer advantages that would translate into the savings required, so other options have been explored in parallel.
- 2.32. For Coopers School the options being explored are;
- Substantially reduce in-house operational costs by handing back the operation of the sports hall, and performance hall to Cooper School, but retain CDC operation of Astro turf pitch (this will require their agreement and a variation to the JUA), introducing club key holder arrangements for opening Astro turf facility, reduce staffing levels, reduce opening hours and increase income. (Saving of £38,714, no redundancies)
  - Try to terminate current agreement and negotiate a new agreement for Cooper School to take on operation of all facilities for club and community use. Would have to grant fund this option and protect current usage levels. (Saving of £12,714, would require redundancy for 8 casual staff)
- 2.33. For NOA the options being explored are;
- Substantially reduce in-house operational costs by introducing club key holder arrangements for opening facilities, reduce staffing levels, reduce opening hours, increase fees and charges and increase income. (Saving of £44,625)
  - Try to terminate current JUA's with Academy (United Learning Trust) and negotiate a new agreement for UTL to take on operation of facilities for club and community use. Would have to grant fund this option and protect current usage levels. (Saving of £11,625, would require redundancy for 6 casual staff)
  - Seek an external contractor to operate the facility on a 'cost plus' basis, similar to Woodgreen.
- 2.34. Negotiations are in progress around these options to secure the savings targets required, and the latest position will be reported verbally to CMT. Initial discussions with schools will take place in the late part of September.

### **Examination of other cost centres within Leisure and Sports Development**

- 2.35. The cost centres within Leisure Development and Sports Development have a combined budgeted expenditure of £404,383 for 2010/11, with income of £57,130. A detailed examination of the purpose of and activity within each of these cost centres has been carried out as part of this review.
- 2.36. Leisure Development – budget £126,178
- The majority of this cost centre comprises staff, accommodation and support service recharge costs. It also has a miscellaneous costs budget of £32,000 which has been used to fund a variety of areas, such as technical assistance and small scale feasibility studies, policy development, S106 development work, software, staff training and running costs for Hanwell Fields pavilion. With Hanwell Fields likely to be transferred to Banbury Town Council, and other aspects of this budget better met through other controlled budgets this could be substantially reduced.

- 2.37. GO Active – budget £1,496 (includes £32,000 income)
- GO Active aims to help everyone lead a more active lifestyle by creating more social and fun activities to make getting fit more enjoyable. A co-ordinator is funded from income from Oxfordshire PCT provided through the Oxfordshire Sports Partnership.
- 2.38. Sports Projects – budget £8,807
- This cost centre comprises two elements; a contribution to the Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association (£4.1K) and GP referrals for sporting activity for cardiac patients (£4.7k). The payment to OPFA buys occasional advice and acts as a consultee to both this Council and to the Town/Parish Councils across the District. Applications to many funding bodies for grants towards improving play areas, playing pitches, etc. can sometimes require OPFA support.
  - The GP referrals are now dealt with through the Parkwood contract, leaving the remaining funding to ensure Parkwood can supply “adequately trained staff” to deal with the referrals, although this should be a transitional arrangement.
- 2.39. Grants to Public Halls – budget £61,815
- Comprises £39k for grants, £11k support charges, 2k accommodation costs and £6.5k salary costs.
  - Officers administer the grant scheme and provide a funding advice service to help local organisations seek funding from other sources.
  - This cost centre has been used in the past to match fund improvements in order to secure funding from other sources (e.g. lottery funding), land fill tax credits, etc), last year the grants awarded helped to generate a further £894,000 for improvements towards community facilities in the District. The grants element of this is an identified building block saving.
- 2.40. Sports Development – budget £169,086
- This is the main staffing budget for this area, with the large majority of the budget made up of employee costs (£90k) and support costs (£67k). The main delivery budgets for Sport Development are detailed in the next three headings.
- 2.41. School Club links – budget £10,311 (including income of £9,779)
- The focus of the budget is to introduce to and encourage young people to join sports clubs in order to sustain an interest in sport activity through the support a club can offer. The council selects sports to support that do not require any specialist kit or equipment to ensure sustainability, and do not support football as this is well represented across the district
  - There are mutual benefits through clubs gaining additional members, and the council gaining access to coaches at a greatly reduced cost. Grants and bursaries amounting to £7.5k are made available to sports clubs to buy equipment, and to fund the quality improvement of coaches used.
- 2.42. Community Development – budget £12,275
- This budget is focused on encouraging adults back into sport or recreational activities. Initiatives include touch rugby sessions and promoting the establishment of women’s netball teams (which have risen from 2 to 12 in the district as a result of these interventions).
- 2.43. Holidays – budget £14,415 (includes income of £13,413)

- This is used to fund Easter and summer holiday activity schemes, the focus of which is to provide activities in rural areas that do not have easy access to sports and leisure facilities.
- At a charge of just £6 per session there is a perception within the service that it is being used as a cheap childminding service for residents, particularly as charges made for private courses of a similar nature are much higher. There is some scope to increase fees to reduce the net costs of this activity

### 3 Options for Change

3.1. Three options are presented that provide for the following levels of savings;

- Option 1 – Savings to meet the agreed Building Block total of £175,817
- Option 2 – Additional areas for saving of £33,077 (bringing the total to £208,894) identified through the Review to bring the service closer to the level of savings that the public have stated they would wish to see.
- Option 3 – Areas of saving currently 'on hold' for further consideration amounting to £10,000

#### Option 1

3.2. These represent the approved building block savings to date

Option 1 Savings	Amount	Year	Comment
Reduce costs associated with Joint Use Agreement for Coopers School	£40,000	2011/12 & 2012/13	The options for achieving this are set out in the body of the report. Some redundancies possible
Reduce costs associated with Joint Use Agreement for North Oxfordshire Academy	£40,000	2011/12 & 2012/13	The options for achieving this are set out in the body of the report. Some redundancies possible
Withdraw any further grants to village halls	£39,000	2011/12	Parishes will be able to raise necessary funding for facilities through increased precepts
Deletion of Project Officer post from the establishment	£30,190	2011/12	The loss of this post will result in fewer projects, limited S106 activity and no support to parishes and other voluntary sector bodies. Currently vacant as post holder has resigned, so no redundancy costs (contract expires 31/3/2010). Already implemented as a saving.
Permanent reduction of hours for; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts and Visitor Services Manager</li> <li>• Senior Sports Development Officer</li> <li>• Recreation Officer</li> </ul>	£26,627	2011/12	This relates to the permanent reduction of unused hours which have been used previously only for one-off savings. Most of these surplus hours have not been used in recent years or only for specific time limited projects/activities. Minimal impact. Already implemented as a saving.

#### Option 2

3.3. These savings have been identified as part of the Review process and are in addition to those in Option 1.

Option 2 Savings	Amount	Year	Comment
Discontinue membership of the Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association	£4,100	2011/12	Currently offers poor value for money for this Council but it does buy occasional advice and consultation input for the Town/Parish Council
Discontinue cardiac referral contribution to Parkwood	£4,700	2011/12	Contribution was intended as being transitional, as the main cover is now provided within the main Parkwood contract.
Reduce miscellaneous costs budget from Leisure Development cost centre	£15,000	2011/12	This is a non-specific budget that has been used to fund expenditure for areas covered by other cost centres (e.g. training) but also ad-hoc projects.
Increased income from Holidays scheme	£5,000	2011/12	Continue with a revised scheme and increase fees to reduce operating costs.

Option 2 Savings	Amount	Year	Comment
Cut Grants and Bursaries budget from School Links	£4,277	2011/12	Currently in the "on hold" group but Officers feel that this can be cut without having a significant impact on support to individuals and clubs

### Option 3

3.4. These savings are currently classified as 'on hold'

Option 3 Savings	Amount	Year	Comment
Reduce Club coach support by 50%	£5,000	2011/12	This will reduce the support available by 50%
Reduce Holiday schemes by 50%	£5,000	2011/12	This will allow scheme to run in school summer holidays only and not at Easter

## 4 Recommendations

- 4.1. In order to achieve the building blocks savings target of £175,000 Option 1 should be pursued (saving a total of £175,817).
- 4.2. To realise the further savings possible of £33, 077, bringing the total savings to £208,894, Option 2 should be pursued in full.
- 4.3. It is not recommended that Option 3 is pursued as there are greater implications for the sustainability of service and a greater impact on the public and on the voluntary sector
- 4.4. The service pursue the most feasible savings identified through contract negotiations with Parkwood



Results from National Benchmarking Service for Sports and Leisure Centres (Cherwell)

Indicator	Actual scores			Sector quartile comparisons (specific to each Centre)									Quartile position			Polarity
	Bicester	Banbury	Kidlington	25th percentile	50th percentile	75th percentile	25th percentile	50th percentile	75th percentile	25th percentile	50th percentile	75th percentile	Quartile Bicester	Quartile Banbury	Quartile Kidlington	
				Average (Bicester)			Average (Banbury)			Average (Kidlington)						
% Visits 11-19 years	0.99	1.55	0.99	0.5525	0.795	1.1325	0.5525	0.795	1.1325	0.5125	0.7375	1.0625	2	1	2	H
NS-SEC 6&7	0.6	0.53	0.34	0.4275	0.52	0.7625	0.4275	0.52	0.7625	0.4025	0.4875	0.7325	2	2	4	H
Ethnic minorities	1.22	2.24	1.56	1.1725	1.86	3.08	1.1725	1.86	3.08	1.1875	1.7575	2.9475	3	2	3	H
60+years	0.67	0.4	0.88	0.385	0.508	0.67	0.385	0.5075	0.67	0.39	0.5125	0.7	1	3	1	H
Disabled <60 years	0.73	0.48	1.01	0.5325	0.69	0.9	0.5325	0.69	0.9	0.4875	0.6625	0.865	2	4	1	H
Visits per sq m	91	88	70	58	85.75	123.25	58	85.75	123.25	63	87.25	133.5	2	2	3	H
Subsidy per visit	-1.28	-0.59	-1.2	1.3275	0.553	-0.258	1.3275	0.5525	-0.258	1.21	0.46	-0.34	1	1	1	L
Subsidy per sq m	-101	-41	-72	92	27.75	-26.25	92	27.75	-26.25	77.5	26.25	-32	1	1	1	L
Subsidy per resident	-14.78	-5.62	-13.74	12.528	4.903	-5.773	12.528	4.9025	-5.773	11.013	4.6125	-6.558	1	2	1	L
operating cost per visit	3.16	4.15	3.15	4.7875	3.615	2.8325	4.7875	3.615	2.8325	4.65	3.675	2.87	2	3	2	L
operating cost per sq m	249	287	190	381.5	298.3	190.25	381.5	298.25	190.25	399.75	314.25	212.25	2	2	1	L
maint&repair per sq m	8	6	8	25.75	13.5	6.5	25.75	13.5	6.5	29.25	15.75	7.5	2	1	2	L
energy cost per sq m	26	54	29	42.25	29.5	19.25	42.25	29.5	19.25	43.75	31.25	20.25	2	4	2	L
income per visit	4.44	4.74	4.35	2.555	3.23	4.0825	2.555	3.23	4.0825	2.78	3.375	4.15	1	1	1	H
income per sq m	350	328	262	171	225.8	373	171	225.75	373	197.75	254.5	400	2	2	2	H

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## Executive

### Value for Money Review of Urban and Rural Services

6 December 2010

### Report of the Strategic Director for Environment & Community

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the findings of the Value for Money (VFM) Review report and the recommendations arising from the report

This report is public

#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To endorse the overall conclusion of the review that the service is low cost in terms of benchmark expenditure comparisons and is good quality in terms of overall positive levels of customer satisfaction.
- (2) To agree that improvements in value for money be sought and approve the following recommendations;
  - a. Implement the Medium Term Financial Strategy savings proposals set out in paragraph 2.13, saving £73,194 per annum
  - b. Secure a net saving of £60,000 per annum currently charged for the provision of specialist advice to the planning service by exploring options to achieve this, such as a reduction in the staff establishment, increasing fee income from planning advice and securing new clients to offset costs
  - c. Create a bus station safety officer post to release a vehicle parks warden post to achieve a net income of £16,000 per annum
- (3) To note the recommendations of Scrutiny with regard to increases to car park charges and recommend the inclusion of an evening tariff to generate further income of £39,640 per annum in addition to the £480,289 already recommended.
- (4) To note the scrutiny process associated with the introduction of a pay and display parking scheme in Watts Way, Kidlington and the need for further negotiations with a view to implementing the scheme within 12 months if these are successful
- (5) To consider further the proposal to extend the landscape maintenance

contract for a further three years to 2015 and secure potential savings of £135,461 through negotiations with the contractor and an extended client base.

- (6) To continue the provision of a Shopmobility scheme in Bicester but in future seek to offset a proportion of its costs through service charges to tenants on completion of the town centre redevelopment
- (7) To explore the feasibility of charging residents for tree inspections to offset costs of arboricultural staff

## **Executive Summary**

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### **Introduction**

- 1.1 This review forms part of the Value for Money programme of reviews, which aims to cover all services within the council and improve the value of services offered to residents of Cherwell.
- 1.2 The Urban and Rural service was selected for a 'health check' review during 2010/11 along with a number of other services as these had not previously been covered by the VFM programme but account for a high level of expenditure. The aim of such reviews is to quickly identify potential savings using information that is readily available.
- 1.3 As part of recent planning for the Medium Term Financial Strategy arising from the Comprehensive Spending Review a number of savings options had been identified for the service which amounted to £730,096. An objective of the VFM review was to examine the feasibility of these and, where possible, identify further efficiencies that would allow for greater flexibility in the Council achieving its medium term savings targets.
- 1.4 The overall conclusion of the review is that the service is low cost in terms of benchmark expenditure comparisons and is good quality in terms of overall positive levels of customer satisfaction.
- 1.5 The review has identified savings to meet the £730,096 savings target along with an additional £14,488 of efficiencies.

### **Proposals**

- 1.6 To adopt the recommendations of the Review in full

### **Conclusion**

- 1.7 Significant reductions to expenditure on Urban and Rural are possible and these will help reduce the council's cost base and contribute towards its Medium Term Financial Strategy targets.

## Background Information

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- 2.1 This report sets out the findings of the Urban and Rural VFM Review with recommendations to achieve its Medium Term Financial Strategy savings target of £730,096.
- 2.2 The agreed scope of the review included the grounds maintenance and landscaping contract, street scene expenditure, vehicle parks (including income), licensing, rural and countryside services and Banbury bus station
- 2.3 The VFM review has used a range of evidence to inform its conclusions, including the CIPFA RA (budget) benchmarking for 2010/11, current satisfaction surveys, car park charge benchmarking, landscape maintenance rate benchmarking and a detailed examination of street scene expenditure.

## VFM Review Findings

- 2.4 Appendix 1 contains the Executive Summary of the VFM review. Key findings from the review can be summarised as follows;
  - Total expenditure of the service is £3.8m, with total income of £3.9m through car parking charges/excess charge notices, income for landscaping works carried out for external clients, income for Licensing charges (for taxis, pubs and clubs etc), contractual income for the operation of Banbury market and contributions for operating a banksman service at Banbury Bus Station. Income has increased by £491,000 since 2008/09, largely due to increases in car parking fees. However, income from car parking in 2010/11 is currently failing to meet its budgeted profile which could amount to an £80,000 shortfall by the end of the financial year.
  - Cherwell's six-year contract with Continental Landscapes is worth over £5m and due to expire in March 2012. Gross expenditure per annum is £1.5m with a net expenditure of £566,475 due to recharges and income from external clients (Oxfordshire County Council, Kidlington Parish Council, Bicester Town Council, Gosford and Water Eaton Parish Council and Parkwood).
  - 2010/11 budget comparisons with CIPFA family comparators show that Cherwell is lowest spending quartile for the three comparable service areas relevant to this review (Parking, Licensing and Open Spaces). The collective spend below average for all three service areas amounts to £1.5m.
  - Extensive benchmarking of landscape and grounds maintenance rates against those of neighbouring authorities shows that Cherwell's current contract offers excellent value for money.
  - A survey of private sector car parks in Banbury and council-owned car parks in neighbouring authorities shows that for short stay parking Cherwell's rates are currently between 19% and 21% cheaper. Longer stay parking ranges from being 4% more expensive to 54% cheaper for 24hr parking.
  - Levels of satisfaction with local car park facilities have remained fairly

stable for the last three years at 63%, and have increased in relation to five of the seven aspects relating to local facilities, but 21% of residents remain dissatisfied overall. 34% of residents agree and 42% disagree that car parks operated by the council offer value for money.

- 74% of residents are satisfied with the way parks and playgrounds are looked after by the council, and overall satisfaction with street scene work in urban centres is high (61%)

- 2.5 Given the good value for money offered by the rates currently paid for the Landscape and Grounds Maintenance contract, as demonstrated via benchmarking undertaken with other local authorities and the wider market, the Corporate Strategic Procurement Manager has concluded the Council would be best placed to extend the current contract for a further 3 years (until 2015) rather than approach the market when it expires in March 2012. Such an extension would help facilitate negotiations with the incumbent contractor to secure additional savings from the contract, and also releases staff time which would otherwise be locked into procurement activity. It is important to note that in the view of the Procurement Manager that in the event of a re-tender such rates would not be offered again even by the incumbent contractor and that any reductions agreed will simply reflect the money saved by the contractor in not having to pay for the re-tendering costs for another three years. Before any commitment, further consideration is required of potential additional cost benefits from an extended public sector landscape contract particularly in Banbury.
- 2.6 Savings of £135,461 through reduced expenditure on landscape maintenance have been set as a MTFS building block target for the service. While the review concluded that these should be pursued, they are contingent on the extension of the current landscape and grounds maintenance contract, and also the agreement of other external clients currently served by the contract to continue to receive this service through the council. Further, part of these savings relate to securing extra income through an extended client base, which is still subject to negotiation. Work is ongoing to progress these issues, and a further report will be brought to Executive in due course reflecting the level of savings that can be secured in 2011/12.
- 2.7 The review concluded that spending within Licensing is 'ring fenced' in that the fees charged for the grant of licences cannot to be used as a revenue raising measure under the relevant legislation. At present any surplus is retained for funding special service-related projects. Management overheads have already been added to this area to offset costs to the maximum degree permissible but steps are in hand to add the relevant costs of the service provided by the central admin support team into this cost centre and offset such costs as legitimate charges to licensees.
- 2.8 The review found that the Shopmobility scheme in Bicester town centre currently costs the council £45,900 per annum in contrast with the schemes operated by Castle Quay (Banbury) and Bicester Village which operate at no cost to the Council. It was not possible to include the transfer of this scheme to the Bicester Town Centre developer as part of negotiations, but an alternative may be open to the Council in using a service charge to tenants to offset part of the scheme's ongoing costs.
- 2.9 A number of proposals were prepared for the MTFS in relation to increases in

car park income, amounting to £519,929 per annum, and were considered within the scope of the review. Scrutiny have examined these and recommended most, but not all, of the proposals to the Executive. The review concluded that the proposal for introducing an evening tariff, generating income of £39,640 per annum, should be included in the final order to ensure that the Council obtains the maximum level of revenue possible.

- 2.10 The MTFS proposal for the introduction of pay and display car parking at Watts Way, Kidlington was explored and found to be problematic. A covenant currently exists on the land to prevent charging for car parking unless under the supervision of an attendant. This is currently subject to consideration by scrutiny and negotiation with the land owner, but these may take some time and additional costs are likely. A 2012/13 commencement is the earliest anticipated for this scheme should negotiations prove successful.
- 2.11 A further MTFS proposal for a reduction in specialist advice to the planning service from Urban and Rural has been considered by the review. Currently, this advice is provided by staff in the Landscaping service, the Arboricultural Service and the Ecology Officer. The latter post has previously been funded through the Planning and Housing Delivery Grant, which has been recently discontinued. The specialist advice has been provided on a rechargeable basis, with Urban and Rural receiving £60,000 per annum in income.
- 2.12 To achieve savings in other areas of planning, specialist advice is being reduced with a greater reliance on applicants to provide necessary evidence as part of their planning application. In line with this approach, saving options to reduce the staffing establishment in Urban and Rural to offset the £60,000 reduction in internal recharges have been included in Option 1. This would involve the reduction in hours of two posts and not renewing the fixed-term contract of the Ecology Officer. However, since the Government announced its plans to review the charging regime for planning applications it may be possible to achieve a proportion of these savings through increased fee income. Further savings may be achieved by securing new clients for the landscaping service, which would require capacity in the service being retained. For these reasons, it is recommended that alternatives to staff reductions first be explored in order to achieve the target saving of £60,000
- 2.13 Other MTFS savings proposals explored by the Review were;
- Recovery of 50% of expenditure for Christmas lights through income from partners (£36,189). Options to fund the full cost of this scheme through external income were explored but found not to be feasible. A 50% contribution is thought to be more realistic, and negotiations are in hand to achieve this.
  - Reduced activity and grants within the Rural and Countryside team (£10,000). The review found that these were already in hand to be implemented and would end the funding to 3 projects which were not considered to be essential to the service offered by the team.
  - Increased income from fines through street wardens taking on enforcement for littering and dog fouling (£15,750). This was found to be supportive of the Council's Clean and Green objective, and that other authorities already employ this policy

- Reduced frequency of cash collection from car parks (£6,825). This has already been implemented resulting in 21 fewer collections per week at no impact to service quality
  - Cancelling subscriptions in the service (£4,430). This has already been implemented.
- 2.14 Other savings opportunities looked into as part of the review are set out below;
- Currently, a Vehicle Parks Warden is used as a banksman at Banbury Bus Station to oversee the safe manoeuvring of buses, delivery vehicles and pedestrians. This results in lost income from enforcement activity, and the post is at a higher salary than the real cost of the work. The appointment of a lower grade post is being pursued that will allow the vehicle parks warden to return to enforcement duty, and will result in net income of £16,000 per annum.
  - Best practice research has highlighted that some authorities are currently charging residents for tree inspection activity. Further work into the feasibility of this area is required in order to ascertain if it would provide an additional income stream for the Council.

## **Implications**

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<b>Financial:</b>	<p>The review has identified potential savings totalling £744,584 (made up of savings £616,750 and budget reductions £127,834) against a target of £730,096. Sufficient savings have been identified to meet the council MTFs requirement, with further savings providing some flexibility should other aspects of the Strategy not be deliverable.</p> <p>Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance 01295 221551</p>
<b>Legal:</b>	<p>The extension of the landscape and grounds maintenance contract is consistent with the council's procurement strategy and relevant legislation</p> <p>Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic Services 01295 221686</p>
<b>Risk Management:</b>	<p>The proposed level of savings present no risk to service delivery</p> <p>Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566</p>
<b>Data Quality</b>	<p>Data for cost comparison has been obtained through 2010/11 RA forms of comparable CIPFA family authorities, which has been subject to extensive checking with these authorities. Financial data has been prepared by the relevant service accountant</p>



Comments checked by Neil Lawrence, Improvement  
Project Manager 01295 221801

**Wards Affected**

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All

**Corporate Plan Themes**

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An Accessible, Value for Money Council

**Executive Portfolio**

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Councillor Nigel Morris  
Portfolio Holder for Environment, Recreation and Health

**Document Information**

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Urban and Rural VFM: Executive Summary
<b>Background Papers</b>	
None	
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## Urban and Rural VFM Review

# Executive Summary

## Cherwell District Council

<b>Timetable</b>	<b>Papers Finalised</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>
CMT	29 October 2010	3 November 2010
Use of Resources	4 November 2010	10 November 2010
Executive	24 November 2010	6 December 2010

<b>Revision History</b>		
<b>Revision Date</b>	<b>Previous Revision Date</b>	<b>Summary of Changes</b>
16 September 2010		1 <sup>st</sup> draft
14 October 2010	16 September 2010	Consultation results
20 October 2010	14 October 2010	Parking comparisons added
26 October 2010	20 October 2010	CR, PA & KL comments. Amended recommendations
28 October 2010	28 October 2010	Final CR amendments, amended savings options and recommendations, comments on car park charge rises
4 November 2010 (v6)	28 October 2010	CMT amendments
24 November 2010 (v7)	4 November 2010 (v6)	Further amendments

## Value for Money Review of Urban and Rural - Executive Summary

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### 1 Introduction

#### Purpose of this report

- 1.1. Given current financial circumstances, the nature of VFM reviews have changed significantly. Previously, savings identified would be through efficiencies found. This review, while focusing partly on efficiencies, seeks also to identify the full range of savings required of the service covered by the scope of this review to meet the realistic Medium Term Financial Strategy savings target.
- 1.2. This report sets out the findings of the VFM review of Urban and Rural Services (excluding Community Safety and Anti Social Behaviour) with savings identified to achieve the savings target within its scope of £730,096. The total (maximum) savings target for the Community Safety, Urban and Rural Services is £848,077.

#### Introduction

- 1.3. The main activities of the services within the scope of the review are set out below;
  - Grounds Maintenance and Landscaping – Manage the landscape maintenance contract and liaison with external customers, manage the Council's tree stock and provide professional arboricultural and landscape advice on planning consultations, manage promote and liaise with town councils on Cherwell in Bloom, secure commercial sponsorship for Cherwell in Bloom, manage & inspect parks, open spaces and play areas, manage the floral provision contract,
  - Street Scene – Manage fairs, manage the weekly markets and promote farmers markets, organise, supply & install Christmas Lights/Trees, maintain and inspect street furniture in urban areas, client for Bicester Shopmobility and administering highway closures
  - Vehicle Parks – manage and operate off-street car parks, enforce Parking orders, administer and enforce excess charge notices, manage council staff parking permits, assist with Town Centres management
  - Licensing – Administer, regulate, provide guidance and enforce licensing for alcohol, entertainment, temporary events, late night refreshments, gambling, street trading, charitable collections, and taxis/private hire vehicles.
  - Rural and Countryside – Develop and implement the rural strategy, organise parish liaison meetings, develop and implement a biodiversity statement, provide expert advice on ecological matters, maintain improve and promote the 17 Cherwell walks, provide advice on public rights of way and deal with Public Path Orders
  - Bus station – provide a banksman to oversee the safe manoeuvring of buses, delivery vehicles and pedestrians at Banbury Bus station

#### VFM Conclusion

- 1.4. The overall conclusion of the review is that the service is **low cost** in terms of its RA expenditure comparisons. It is **good quality** in terms of overall positive levels of satisfaction in most areas. There are no measures from which to judge its current performance

## Staffing

1.5. The staffing structure as at 30 June 2010 is as follows;

Established Posts	Posts	Vacancies
	FTE	FTE
Head of Safer Com Urban & Rural	1.00	0.00
Street Scene & L/scape Manager	1.00	0.00
Landscape Officer	2.00	0.00
Landscape Design Officer	0.50	0.00
Street Scene Officer	1.00	0.00
Landscape Architect	1.00	0.00
Arboricultural Officer	2.00	0.00
Rural Devt & Countryside Mgr	1.00	0.00
Countryside & Conservation Off	0.65	0.00
Ecology Officer	0.50	0.00
Licensing & Vehicle Parks Mgr	1.00	0.00
Vehicle Parks Team Leader	1.00	0.00
Parking Services Officer	1.00	0.00
Vehicle Parks Supervisor	1.00	0.00
Senior Vehicle Parks Warden	1.00	0.00
Vehicle Parks Warden	7.50	0.50
Licensing Team Leader	1.00	0.00
Licensing Officer	1.00	0.00
Assistant Licensing Officer	1.00	0.00
Senior Licensing Officer	1.00	0.00
Senior Inspector	0.00	1.00
	<b>27.15</b>	<b>1.50</b>

1.6. Points to highlight from the staffing structure are set out below;

- The vacant 0.5 FTE Vehicle Parks Warden post has been approved to employ a Bus Station Safety Officer for 26hrs per week on a 12 month basis
- The vacant Senior inspector post is being used to fund a temporary Licensing Officer post on a 12 month basis
- The Ecology Officer is technically part of the service, but almost all the work is advising planners on the ecological implications of planning proposals. Having an ecologist is considered important by the service in fulfilling the responsibilities under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC). It is currently a temporary (3 year) contract running to September 2011. Funding for the post was from the Planning and Housing Delivery Grant, and sufficient funds remain to cover the extension of the post until 2012/13 if necessary. The post has been recently reduced to 0.3FTE (12 hours/week) as part of a flexible working application
- A proportion of the staffing costs and other overheads for the landscape officers is recovered as part of income received from external clients. Currently, temporary additional services are being provided to Banbury Town Council, renewed on a two-weekly arrangement, to manage their grounds maintenance contract due to a long-term staff absence.

## Expenditure

- 1.7. The budget and expenditure of the service within the scope of this review is set out in the table below.

Description	2008/2009 Actual £'s	2009/2010 Actual £'s	2010/2011 Budget £'s
Employee Costs	960,951	953,227	985,249
Premises Costs	1,260,097	1,201,701	1,235,380
Transport Costs	41,817	68,614	31,317
Supplies & Services	317,246	293,891	300,647
Third Party Payments	370,227	396,919	278,638
Support Services	335,993	311,204	316,869
Internal Support Services	336,866	296,884	352,116
Capital Charges	327,998	352,604	357,928
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>3,951,195</b>	<b>3,875,044</b>	<b>3,858,144</b>
Government Grant Income	(18,000)	(18,000)	0
Other Grants Reimbursements	(632,000)	(613,910)	(566,471)
Sales Income	0	179	0
Fees And Charges	(2,400,489)	(2,714,188)	(2,756,600)
Rent Income	(177,984)	(192,414)	(162,091)
Chgs To Other Mgt Centres	(230,594)	(447,445)	(465,276)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(3,459,067)</b>	<b>(3,985,778)</b>	<b>(3,950,438)</b>
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>492,128</b>	<b>(110,734)</b>	<b>(92,294)</b>

- 1.8. The main cost centres within this total are set out in the following tables. Gross expenditure and income have been split due to the high levels of income raised within the service;

Management Centre	Gross Expenditure					
	2008/09 Actual £'s	%	2009/10 Actual £'s	%	2010/11 Budget £'s	%
Grounds Maintenance / Landscaping	£1,507,607	38.2%	£1,647,901	42.5%	£1,594,337	41.3%
Street Scene	£367,911	9.3%	£367,129	9.5%	£387,079	10.0%
Licensing	£344,718	8.7%	£292,358	7.5%	£328,609	8.5%
Car Parks	£1,350,246	34.2%	£1,187,986	30.7%	£1,143,939	29.6%
Bus Station	£165,191	4.2%	£177,790	4.6%	£194,243	5.0%
Rural and Countryside	£215,524	5.5%	£201,880	5.2%	£209,935	5.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£3,951,197</b>		<b>£3,875,044</b>		<b>£3,858,142</b>	

- 1.9. Key issues to highlight for the gross expenditure table are;
- Gross expenditure has reduced slightly by £93k (-2.4%) since 2008/09. This is largely due to a fall in expenditure on car parks (-£206k or -15.7%)
  - Three areas have seen an increase in expenditure since 2008/09 (street scene, bus station and grounds maintenance) amounting to an extra £135k

Management Centre	Income					
	2008/09	%	2009/10	%	2010/11	%
Grounds Maintenance / Landscaping	-£877,261	25.4%	-£1,053,055	26.4%	-£1,030,922	26.1%
Street Scene	-£158,671	4.6%	-£4,425	0.1%	-£68,072	1.7%
Licensing	-£333,094	9.6%	-£352,550	8.8%	-£348,440	8.8%
Car Parks	-£2,025,317	58.6%	-£2,514,131	63.1%	-£2,451,394	62.1%
Bus Station	-£46,726	1.4%	-£42,866	1.1%	-£32,288	0.8%
Rural and Countryside	-£18,000	0.5%	-£18,750	0.5%	-£19,322	0.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-£3,459,069</b>		<b>-£3,985,777</b>		<b>-£3,950,438</b>	

1.10. The main areas of income are;

- Car park charges and Excess Charge Notices (ECN) (over double that of its gross expenditure)
- Landscaping/grounds maintenance (65% of its gross expenditure); received from recharges to town and parish councils, and council service areas, for work carried out on their behalf.
- Licensing income (106% of its gross expenditure); charges for taxis, pubs and clubs etc for which some fees are set nationally, with the service expected to break even rather than make a profit

1.11. Key issues to highlight for the income table are;

- Total income has increased by £491,000 (+14.2%) since 2008/09, although dipped by £35k between 2009/10 and the 2010/11 budget. The largest areas of increased income were car parks (£426k or +21%) and grounds maintenance (£153k or +17.5%)
- However, 2010/11 actual income for car parking is not currently meeting its budgeted profile (see para 2.22)
- Income for Street Scene has decreased by £90,500 (-57%) since 2008/09 which relates to the market contractor going into administration in January 2009. The levels of income obtained from this contract in 2008/09 proved to be unsustainable.
- Income from the bus station has fallen by £14k (-30.9%) since 2008/09

### Statutory functions

1.12. Below is a summary of the main statutory provisions covering the service. Figures have been adjusted to account for all controllable costs (i.e. where not immediately clear in the budget). This does not include the Environmental Protection aspects of Community Safety which are outside the scope of this review

Work Area	Statutory provision		Costs (less income, support costs and capital charges)
Highways Closures	Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984		£4,699



Work Area	Statutory provision		Costs (less income, support costs and capital charges)
Hackney Carriage Licensing	Licensing of Private Hire Vehicles and Hackney Carriage Vehicles	We do not have to carry out the level of inspection that we do nor deliver service to license holders that we do, but failure to do so is likely to lead to significant increase in licensing issues and public complaint. Key risks around Health and Safety if not delivered.	£11,299
Other Licensing (Admin Dept)	Gambling Act 2005; Licensing Act 2003, Street Trading on the Highway	Fees and charges governed by legislation. (This currently generates a net income of £111k, so has been excluded)	0
Hackney Carriage & P H Licensing			£2,904
Nature Conservation	Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 (s.40)	Local authorities must have "due regard" to nature conservation in discharging their duties. Includes Ecological advice on Planning applications, funding of partnership delivery organisations (e.g. FWAG, BBOWT, ONCF) Cherwell Corporate BAP 2010	£46,497
Paths Orders	Town & Country Planning Act 1990 s.257 & DEFRA circular 1/09 para 7.2	Includes advice on Planning applications. Effect on public rights of way is a material consideration in planning decisions	£5,563

- 1.13. A 5% reduction, based on the net spend of these services (building block 87a), equates to £3,548. A further 5% (building block 87b) would increase this to £7,096.

#### 'Building Blocks' savings

- 1.14. Below is a list of the other blocks covered by this review, together with their status and revised savings target;

Block No.	Description	Scenario/ Status	Total Saving
32	Reduced countryside partnership activity	Exec Approved	£10,000
34	Reduce frequency of cash collection from car parks	Exec Approved	£7,000
36	Share cost of Xmas tree lights with urban centres	Exec Approved	£36,000
38	Pay and display charges for off-street disabled parking bays	Exec Approved	£96,000
39	Introduce evening car park tariff	Exec Approved	£39,000
40	Raise car park fees by between 3-5%	Exec Approved	£200,000
41	Lay over charge for coaches in coach park	<i>Exec Declined</i>	£13,000

Block No.	Description	Scenario/ Status	Total Saving
42	Increased fines (through Street Warden enforcement)	Exec Approved	£16,000
45	Introduce a low-cost pay and display in Watts Way car park, Kidlington	Exec Approved	£184,000
70	Reduce landscaping contract specification (and other associated landscaping work)	Exec Approved	£135,000
95	Specialist Landscape, Tree and Ecology Advice – reduce/remove service (and its recharge)	Exec Approved	£60,000 (to Planning)
		<b>Total approved</b>	<b>£723,000</b>

1.15. These bring the maximum savings target for the service to £730,096. Of these, 79% relate to increased income and 21% to reduced expenditure.

## 2 Findings from the Review

2.1. The review has used a range of evidence including benchmarking of landscaping and car parking charges, the most recent resident satisfaction and budget consultation data and a detailed examination of key cost centres within the service.

### Cherwell Residents Satisfaction Survey 2010

2.2. The 2010 headline findings for residents' 'satisfaction with local car parks' is set out below

- Levels of satisfaction with local car parking facilities remain stable for the third consecutive year, with around two-thirds of residents (63%) satisfied. Levels of satisfaction with parking in Kidlington are particularly high, with 78% of residents satisfied compared to 59% in Bicester and 60% in Banbury.
- Satisfaction has increased with five of the seven aspects relating to local parking facilities, with a statistically significant increase in the case of information about how long you can stay, which has increased from 62% to 68%. Satisfaction with the ease of finding car parking facilities continues to improve, with 81% of residents now satisfied, which is consistent across the District.
- However, around one in five residents (21%) remain dissatisfied with parking facilities overall. Low levels of satisfaction with the ease of payment using the 'Ring Go' mobile telephone payment service (50%) are likely to be contributing to this dissatisfaction, although by far the largest source of discontent appears to be the cost of parking. Two in five residents (42%) disagree that the car parks operated by the Council provide value for money (compared to only 34% who agree). The cost of parking appears to be a particular issue in Banbury and Bicester where 45% of residents don't believe the parking offers value for money compared to only 18% of residents in Kidlington (where some parking is free).
- Car parking is the most popular service to spend less on (37%) and joint third lowest area for additional spending (12%). It is considered the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest area of importance to improve
- The 6<sup>th</sup> most important driver for overall satisfaction is "number and location of pay and display machines"

2.3. The headline findings for 'parks and play areas' is set out below;

- Parks and playgrounds in the District are well used by residents, with 65% having visited a park and playgrounds being used by 46%. Unsurprisingly, parents and younger residents are the primary users.
- Overall, three-quarters of residents (74%) are satisfied with the way parks and playgrounds are looked after by the Council, which, although not directly comparable due to a wording change in the questionnaire, is on a par with levels of satisfaction seen last year (73%). It should be noted, however, that satisfaction falls to 65% amongst parents, who are key service users.
- There have been no significant changes this year to levels of satisfaction with the different aspects within this service area. How well plants and floral displays are cared for (73%) and the maintenance of parks and open spaces (69%) remain the areas of greatest satisfaction.
- The quality of playgrounds/play equipment is the only aspect where satisfaction has declined this year, falling from 56% to 53% this year, which has effectively halved the gains in satisfaction seen in this area last year. This may also go some way to explain why parents are less satisfied with this service area overall. Indeed, 14% of parents express dissatisfaction with the quality of playgrounds/ play equipment, making it the aspect which they are most dissatisfied with. It is worth noting that 13% of parents are also dissatisfied with safety/ how safe they feel when using the parks and open spaces [it should be noted that some dissatisfaction may be a reflection on facilities for which this Council is not responsible for].
- This is the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest area of importance to improve. It is the 6<sup>th</sup> highest area for additional spending, but also the 5<sup>th</sup> highest area for spending less!
- The 7<sup>th</sup> most important driver for public satisfaction is “how well plants and floral displays are cared for”

#### **Street Scene and Landscape Services public consultation 2009/10**

- 2.4. The service carries out its own satisfaction survey, although this is not executed to the same standard as the residents' satisfaction survey. The findings of the latest survey are set out below;
- Overall satisfaction for the service across the three urban centres is high, with 61.6% considering that the services provided are either good or excellent.
  - The highest levels of satisfaction are with floral displays (83.7%), Cherwell in Bloom roundabouts (76%) and the cleanliness of landscaped areas (75%).
  - The lowest areas of satisfaction are with the grounds maintenance of play areas (47.5%), Christmas lights provision (45%) and with tree works (44%, although based on a small sample)
  - The areas where more customers considered works to be just satisfactory or poor were tree works (44.7%, although based on a small sample), the amount of street furniture (40%) and grassed roadside verge maintenance (38.7%)
  - The main negative comments relating to tree works were around incomplete work or a lack of response. Those relating to street furniture concerned the need for more seats (particularly in Bicester) and decorating existing furniture. Comments on Christmas lights concerned the lack of variety and area covered by the lighting.

### **Cherwell Budget consultation 2010**

2.5. Street Scene & Landscape was categorised by many residents as a luxury and was identified as an area where savings could be made, with many being willing to reduce the budget in this area by up to 50% (£990k of gross expenditure or £441k of net expenditure). Key findings were;

- There were a number of cost saving suggestions that could reduce cost without impacting on quality, such as the Council providing a nursery service for plants, with residents or local businesses actually planting these and displaying them, using perennial plants that don't need to be replaced each year or getting more private sponsorship/ payment.
- Christmas lights did polarise respondents. For some these were vital whilst many were happy to see them go (some believed that those currently provided are not of a high standard). The scenario suggestion of sharing the cost of Christmas lights (with the risk of them being removed if agreement could not be reached) was felt to be acceptable.
- Lower frequency grass cutting was acceptable provided safety aspects were considered (in particular keeping clear sights of vision at road junctions).

2.6. Licensing was considered an important service where savings were thought to be difficult to find. However, the budget was reduced from 4% down to 3% (a reduction of 25%) in line with overall reductions. This equates to £82k of gross expenditure, or £5k in net income. Key findings were;

- Given the relatively small proportion of the budget currently allocated to licensing combined with the fact that this service also generates income, respondents didn't feel there was a great deal of scope for savings.
- The scenario presented back to respondents, that the reduction in spend could result in longer waiting times to receive licenses was very much in line with respondents' expectations and was considered acceptable during a period financial austerity.

2.7. Rural and Countryside Services was considered an important service where savings were thought to be difficult to find. As such, respondents were anxious not to reduce existing funding dramatically. Key findings were;

- There was widespread agreement that the quality of the countryside was a major strength of the area. It was also felt that during these difficult financial times this was one area that residents could enjoy without any cost implications to them.
- The reduction in the realistic spend scenario suggested that there would be no impact on services in the short term. The longer term issue of less support for parish councils was largely felt to be acceptable (although there was no awareness of what this support currently entailed). It was felt that parishes could raise funds locally if required for specific projects.
- The only concern raised was that rural areas did not lose out on support as a consequence of the Council concentrating on projects in urban areas.

### **Benchmarking of Landscape Maintenance**

2.8. Initial benchmarking information for the review was provided by the 2010/11 RA benchmarking with CIPFA family comparators, which indicated that Cherwell's spend was significantly lower than average.

RA 2010/11 CIPFA Family Comparisons	Open spaces (RA line 503)	Expenditure per head	Relative Family Rank
Ashford	£1,236,000	£10.89	7
Aylesbury Vale	£1,186,000	£6.74	11
Basingstoke and Dean	£4,284,000	£26.49	1
Braintree	£1,110,000	£7.81	10
<b>Cherwell</b>	<b>£600,000</b>	<b>£4.34</b>	<b>14</b>
Chelmsford	£3,385,000	£20.26	2
Colchester	£1,956,000	£10.81	9
East Hertfordshire	£1,506,000	£11.11	6
Eastleigh	£1,745,000	£14.42	3
Harrogate	£2,130,000	£13.27	4
Maidstone	£1,691,000	£11.63	5
Test Valley	£1,254,000	£10.87	8
Tonbridge and Malling	£611,000	£5.22	13
Vale of White Horse	£687,000	£5.88	12

- 2.9. To obtain additional benchmarking information the review looked at landscaping work undertaken in authorities neighbouring Cherwell to identify differences in approach and costs. The commercially confidential nature of the benchmarking means that details of the individual rates are not detailed here.
- 2.10. Cherwell's six year contract with Continental Landscapes is worth £5m over 6 years (£833,000 per annum), and is due to expire March 2012. Gross expenditure per annum is £1.5m with a net expenditure of £556,475 due to recharges to clients and sponsorship income. Staff resources used to oversee **all** aspects of landscaping services amount to £276,000
- 2.11. The council has 5 external clients (Oxfordshire County Council, Kidlington, Bicester, Gosford & Water Eaton and Parkwood) with a combined contractual spend of £433,900 but an income of £536,300 (after salaries and on costs are recharged). On a medium term basis there may be an opportunity to take on the contract and its management from Banbury Town Council, which is currently being undertaken on a temporary basis to cover a long term absence.
- 2.12. Spending on 'Cherwell In Bloom' is £154,500 with £47,163 received in income through sponsorship. The scheme covers Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington, with the majority of expenditure within Banbury, and comprises winter and summer bedding plants around the towns. The 'In Bloom' competition is more a consequence of undertaking attractive planting works rather than the driver for entry. There is scope to reduce costs through more effective planting, a lower maintenance specification or to look for increased sponsorship.
- 2.13. Spending on internal service comprises;
- Planning, corporate properties and car parks (£252,500)
  - Parks (£157,842)
  - Retained open spaces/commuted areas (£300,367), which largely comprise left-overs from the housing stock transfer and other small strips of land that no one else would want to adopt. Some income is received from commuted sums to cover these (£27,000)
  - 50% of the work undertaken by the arboricultural officers and landscape design officers is to provide a service to planning and these costs are recharged. Potential savings are included in one of the building blocks and requires the future service requirements to be determined.

- 2.14. After benchmarking the contract against rates obtained from neighbouring authorities the Strategic Procurement Manager's view is that the current contract offers good value for money, and the council would be best placed to extend this for a further 3 years (until 2015) rather than go out to market at this time in order to secure cost reductions with Continental. This would also save staff resources being tied up with a lengthy procurement process.
- 2.15. An independent assessment of contract assurance has been undertaken by Price Waterhouse Cooper as part of ongoing internal audit work. Their report was not available at the time of writing, but will be reported to CMT once final conclusions are reached.
- 2.16. The review also looked at the contracting and management arrangements of landscaping and grounds maintenance work in adjacent authorities;
- Landscaping works in Northamptonshire are part of a wider Environmental Service contract that includes Daventry and Northampton Borough councils landscaping work, with other councils in the area drawing down on other components of the contract. The grounds maintenance work is based on an outcome specification. South Northants have no direct responsibility (or cost) for grounds maintenance, these being delivered by other agencies. There is no scope currently to join this contract.
  - West Oxfordshire has an in-house service, and carries out work for other agencies; it acts as a contractor for various housing associations, maintains county highways verges, manages country parks, maintains all the council's corporate buildings and engages in private sector work for profit. It also works with both local and national housing developers with regard to S106 works prior to adoption, and has a long term public open space plan in place for future needs.
  - South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse manage two grounds maintenance contracts using a single team comprising a Parks Manager, a Parks Officer (Grounds Maintenance), Parks Officer (Monitoring - 4 days per week) and two admin officers (one 4 days/week and one full time). These staff also deal with parks, open spaces, play areas and closed churchyards etc. The work ranges from land ownership issues to producing tree surgery specifications and overseeing additional works. Both councils are looking to jointly procure a grounds maintenance contract from 1st April 2012.

### Benchmarking of car parking

- 2.17. The best available data for benchmarking is the RA 2010/11 data. This has been supplemented by identifying those with civil parking enforcement activities to make more comparable, as this is thought to increase overall costs. In this analysis, Cherwell has the highest income per head of those authorities without civil parking enforcement powers.

Authority	Car parks	Civil Parking Enforce	RA 2010/11	£/head
Chelmsford	20	Y	-£ 2,709,000	-£ 16.21
Colchester	10	Y	-£ 2,547,000	-£ 14.07
Harrogate	28	Y	-£ 1,750,000	-£ 10.90
<b>Cherwell</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>-£ 1,547,000</b>	<b>-£ 11.19</b>
East Hertfordshire	25	Y	-£ 1,379,000	-£ 10.18
Test Valley	21	Y	-£ 1,068,000	-£ 9.25
Eastleigh	11	N	-£ 1,006,000	-£ 8.31
Basingstoke and Dean	17	N	-£ 905,000	-£ 5.60
Aylesbury Vale	17	N	-£ 719,000	-£ 4.09
Tonbridge and Malling	30	Y	-£ 692,000	-£ 5.91
Maidstone	17	Y	-£ 609,000	-£ 4.19
Ashford	12	Y	-£ 529,000	-£ 4.66

Braintree	8	Y	-£ 392,000	-£ 2.76
Vale of White Horse	16	N	-£ 193,000	-£ 1.65

- 2.18. A review of fees and charges reported to Executive in December 2008 and resulted in implementing the first rise in car park charges in 5 years, in January 2009. This led to increased parking income of £390,000 per annum in 2009/10. The Executive resolution was for these charges to be reviewed again after 2 years.
- 2.19. A survey of private sector car parks in Banbury, and council-owned car parks in neighbouring authorities, shows that for short stay parking Cherwell's prices are currently between 19% and 21% cheaper. Long stay parking varies from being 4% more expensive for short stays but up to 54% cheaper for 24hr parking. However, there are some private car park rates where any significant increase by Cherwell may make them more expensive and less attractive.
- 2.20. A further note of caution needs to be introduced; Income targets for 2010/11 currently are not being achieved. In January 2010 income was shown to be £200,000 below expected performance, and September 2010 projections estimate the year end position to worsen to £268,000 below target. This is being offset to a degree by increased excess charge income through more effective enforcement practices. At September this stood at £63,454 (22%) in excess of its profiled position. The full year effect of such a difference could amount to £80,000. The car parking changes in Bicester will also have significant budget implications.
- 2.21. A further area for income generation is the lack of parking charges in Kidlington. A covenant exists on the land to prevent charging for parking unless under the supervision of a 'paid attendant'. Free parking also exists at the nearby Exeter Hall, Tesco and Co-op car parks, which could undermine attempts to generate revenue through parking being displaced to these free parking areas.

### Examination of other cost centres within Urban and Rural

- 2.22. Street Scene – accounts for 9 separate cost centres with an overall (net) spend of £319,000
- Urban centres - £175,667; covers minor improvements and the maintenance and repair of items of street furniture. Salaries and support costs account for £70,325 of the total, and capital charges a further £66,000, leaving a controllable budget of just £39,336. This is a small sum to cover the safe condition of items of furniture, which if neglected could give rise to claims from the public.
  - Shopmobility - £45,900, including a £26,000 grant for the Bicester scheme, and £11,900 for capital depreciation on the buggies purchased. This contrasts with the schemes operated by Castle Quay (Banbury) and Bicester Village (Bicester) which operate at no cost to the council. The redevelopment of Bicester Town Centre into a significant shopping centre gives rise to the potential to move the operation of this scheme into the private sector.
  - Christmas lights - £73,000, with £5,000 in income from Banbury Town Council. The existing contract is a 3 year (+2) contract which commenced in 2009, and has annual costs of £49,645. There is scope to look at sharing costs with the three urban councils (Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington) and/or reducing the scope of the lighting scheme to reduce costs here.
  - Street Markets - £63,400 costs against which £46,000 in income received. The council currently pays £34,000 in NNDR for the proportion of use of car park for the market and £12,000 in advertising to promote market days. This area has been recently market tested after the previous contractor went into administration, and it is unlikely there is scope for any additional income here, although the nature of the contract provides for income sharing from growth of the market.



### 2.23. Licensing

- Spending within Licensing is considered as 'ring fenced'. The fees charged for the grant of licences cannot be used as a revenue raising measure under the relevant legislation. At present any surplus is retained for funding special service-related projects. Management overheads have already been added to this area to offset costs to the maximum degree permissible
- Any reductions in Licensing spend would need to be addressed through reduced charges, and so would not generate any savings. Benchmarking using RA 2010/11 data shows Cherwell to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest cost authority for providing this service already.

### 2.24. Rural and Countryside – accounts for 5 cost centres with an overall (net) spend of £189,621

- This area had benefitted until recently from £18,000 in income from the Planning and Housing delivery Grant, which has funded the part-time Ecology officer. Failure to consider ecological aspects of planning applications adequately runs the risk of any planning decision being quashed at judicial review. However, the phrasing of the NERC Act is that "every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity". Interpretation of the flexibility of "having regard was tested by a 2009 judicial review which found that local planning authorities must consider whether the tests of the Habitats Directive can be met when European Protected Species are affected by planning applications. Reduction of this service is one of the building blocks and requires the future service requirements to be determined. For example, these judgements may need to rely more heavily on technical work funded by the applicant developer.
- Around 30% of the total spend (£57,433) is made up of grants to outside bodies. Of this, £23,550 is allocated to ORCC in relation to rural development initiatives such as community led planning, providing services to village halls, village shops, and hosting the Oxfordshire Rural Forum. Cherwell's relationship with ORCC is partnership rather than contractual, but in line with a scrutiny recommendation a service level agreement for ORCC to be in place by 2011/12.
- Of the remainder of the grants budgets, £13,000 is allocated to a number of agencies to further the council's biodiversity responsibilities and rural action plan initiatives, and £6,130 to TVERC for environmental records. A contingency of nearly £9,000 is retained to cover issues that arise through the year. Due to an underspend in 2009/10, some agencies had their 2010/11 grants paid in advance at the end of 2009/10 in order to offset the impact of any loss of grant in 2011/12.
- The Team organise the twice yearly Parish liaison meeting and are the point of contact for town and parish councils.

### 2.25. Bus Station – accounts for £194,243 with £32,288 in income

- The council is responsible for providing a banksman to oversee the safe manoeuvring of buses while reversing at Banbury Bus Station. A portion (33%) of costs are recovered from Castle Quay, with a further proportion (33%) from levying a bus departure charge of 30p, which is calculated on bus company information.
- The manpower for this activity is provided by a Vehicle Parks Warden, although there is scope to use a less expensive post to carry out this work and release the Warden to generate additional income.



### 3 Conclusions

3.1. The conclusions that can be drawn from the evidence gathered are as follows;

- Landscaping is a large spending area and so a popular one to look to reduce but it has limitations due to its contract, which is seen to offer good value for money at present. A balance needs to be struck to ensure that any taking savings out of the contract do not jeopardise the sustainability of the contract itself. Residents' suggestions for cost reduction/income generation have limitations and consequences that make their adoption impractical (e.g. council-led nursery, only cutting longer grass)
- Contract management of landscaping work is currently being reviewed by PWC, and this may recommend we amend our approach in this area. Until the report is completed it is not possible to judge what the implications (if any) of this may be.
- The value for money offered by the contract is such that the Strategic Procurement Officer is satisfied that this can be extended for a further 3 years, which will allow for contract cost reductions to be negotiated and other procurement options to present themselves or be investigated over time.
- The revenue generated by external clients is significant and there may be scope to increase this. The income received offsets a proportion of the staffing and overhead costs to manage the contract.
- Aspects of the Street scene budget are seen as luxuries by the public (e.g. Christmas lights, bedding plants) and there is general support for reducing net expenditure through additional income. However, town centre businesses see these services as significant in attracting people to local shops.
- Licensing is very low cost. Any reductions in expenditure can't be drawn off in savings as legislation prevents it. There is public appreciation of the limited scope to achieve any such savings.
- There is public support for not reducing rural and countryside spending. A small staff complement exists but with a high proportion of budget spend (30%) through grants to enable others to undertake work (and responsibilities) in this area.
- Whilst there is not an explicit obligation to employ an Ecology Officer, we would be less well equipped to fulfil our NERC act duties without one. DEFRA's "Guidance for Local Authorities on implementing the Biodiversity Duty" (section 4) states "It is important that local authorities screen development proposals for potential effects on biodiversity to ensure biodiversity is fully considered and prevent delays in determining planning applications". First-stage screening can be done by planning staff, but where there are potential effects on protected habitats, sites and species, expert input is required. Without an ecology officer we would have to procure services from an external consultant or rely on work funded by the developer / applicant. Further work is needed to specify future service requirements
- Car parking still has potential for further charge increases if comparing with the private sector and neighbouring authorities. Lower public satisfaction with the value for money offered by car parking prices appears to be at odds with other facilities within urban centres and neighbouring authorities.

## 4 Options for Change

4.1. Three options are presented that provide for the following levels of savings;

- Option 1 – Total savings of £748,555 which can be achieved through increased income generation, reduced countryside activity, the reduction of planning advice from the service and a reduction in landscaping specifications and activity
- Option 2 – Additional areas of saving, some of which cannot be costed at this stage which would involve significant changes or ending some service provision

### Option 1

- 4.2. The majority of the savings set out in this option are taken directly from the building block proposals which have been assessed for their impact, feasibility and savings potential.
- 4.3. The reduction in planning advice (building block 95) is not counted as a saving to the service as these costs are recovered by an internal recharge to the Planning service,
- 4.4. Of the remaining savings, £616,750 (82%) relate to income generation and £131,805 (18%) to reduced expenditure. This reduction in expenditure equates to 3.4% of the current gross service budget.

Option 1 Savings	Amount	Building Block	Year	Comment
Reduced countryside partnership activity – reduced grants	£5,924	32	2011/12	Currently being implemented Current budget is £36,760. Withdraw funding to Oxfordshire Kids on Farms (£2k), BBO Food Group (£1.5k), Cotswold AONB (£2.4k)
Reduced countryside partnership activity – Reduced “rural initiatives” budget	£4,076	32	2011/12	Currently being implemented
Reduce Ecology Officer hours	£3,971	-	2010/11	Currently being implemented. This is a reduction in hours from 16 to 12 per week
Reduce frequency of cash collection from car parks	£6,825	34	2010/11	Already implemented. An amendment to the schedule of cash collections from ticket machines will allow 21 less collections per week.
Cancel subscriptions within the service	£4,430	75	2010/11	Already implemented Cease subscribing to British Parking Association (£550), Chipside User Group (£50), TRL benchmarking (£675) and Park Mark (£3,155)
Cut funding for Xmas lights by 50%	£36,189	36	2011/12	The first option to secure this saving will be to recover 50% of existing costs from partners. Any shortfall will be met by scaling back the lighting displays to reduce cost. Discussions with partners are currently in hand
Car parking charges introduced for blue badge holders	£96,289	38	2011/12	Charges of between 70p and 80p per hour introduced at designated disabled spaces (£69,275) and at general spaces (£27,014), with disabled badge holders able to stay 1 hour over and above the maximum stay in all short stay car parks free of charge. Will require revised parking orders, changes to signing and reprogramming of machines.

Option 1 Savings	Amount	Building Block	Year	Comment
Introduce evening car park tariff	£39,640	39	2011/12	Introduce chargeable parking after 6pm Monday to Sunday across all council operated car parks. Will result in additional pay and display income (£26,640) and additional excess charge income (£13,000) Scrutiny has recommended not to proceed with this change as it would not generate significant income and would be difficult to enforce
Increase car parking charges from 1 February 2011	£167,000 to £356,000 (assume £200,000)	40	2011/12	Increase existing hourly parking rates by either 10p or 20p, and bring in additional charging periods (start at 7am, bank holidays, Sundays as per rest of week) Calculations are based on 2009/10 actual parking demand rather than those budgeted for in 2010/11, as parking activity has fallen.
Increased income from fines through Street Wardens taking on enforcement role	£15,750	42	2011/12	Street Wardens would have enforcement powers for littering and dog fouling. Income levels based on 7 wardens issuing 2 PCNs per week. Retraining costs would be in the region of £1,000 While altering the nature of Street Wardens from information providers to enforcers this would allow for the council's 'cleaner and greener' priority to be furthered.
Introduce pay and display parking in Watts Way, Kidlington	£184,000	45	2012/13	Based on long stay income of £46,886, short stay income of £111,193 and excess charge notice income of £25,878 A covenant exists on the land to prevent charging for parking unless under the supervision of a 'paid attendant'. Negotiations will be required and there will be a price to implement this scheme as a result. Free parking also in situ at Exeter Close, Tesco and Co-op car parks nearby Purchase and installation costs of pay and display machines estimated to be £18k. Negotiations to achieve this are likely to take 12 months.
Reductions to Cherwell in Bloom	£48,061	70	2011/12	This will be achieved by a £36k reduction in grounds maintenance, £10k reduction in bedding supply and a £2k reduction in sign replacement
Reduced standard of grounds maintenance for retained open spaces	£46,021	70	2011/12	This will be achieved by a lowering in the standard of grass cutting (£11.7k), 50% less on purchasing and planting trees and shrubs (£14k) and a £20k reduction in infrastructure improvement works (i.e. hard landscaping)
Reduced standard of grounds maintenance for CDC parks	£8,497	70	2011/12	This will be achieved by a 50% reduction in the purchase of trees and shrubs (£4k), a 30% reduction in sign replacement (£2.5k) and ceasing to maintain Widnell Park (£2k)
Reduction in arboricultural works in CDC car parks	£4,000	70	2011/12	This will be achieved through a 50% reduction in arboricultural work for car parks

Option 1 Savings	Amount	Building Block	Year	Comment
Increase the external income for grounds maintenance by increasing the client base	£28,882	70	2011/12	This saving would be achieved through a £55k increase in the external client base and is dependent on securing the Banbury Town Council contract, but it is stated that additional contract management support (£26k) would be needed to achieve this.
Landscape Service; Reduce existing 1 FTE by 0.5 FTE	£19,823	95	2011/12	The implications of this reduction could be a reduction in consultations on planning applications, only being able to provide advice on developments which qualify for on site play, open space or outdoor sports provision (Application advice & Construction monitoring), no ability to provide advice on none qualifying planning applications.
Aboricultural Service; Reduce existing 1 FTE by 0.5 FTE	£19,823	95	2011/12	The implications of this reduction could be a reduction in consultations on planning applications, only being able to provide advice on developments which qualify for on site play, open space or outdoor sports provision (Application advice & Construction monitoring), no ability to provide advice on non qualifying planning applications, no ability to administer or lead on notifications for works to trees within Conservation Areas, only provide advice if Town or Parish make comment or Planning Case Officer identifies potential TPO meeting agreed criteria.
Ecology Officer – remove post	£11,913	95	2011/12	This specialist advice has been pared back to what is considered a minimum acceptable level to ensure the council can still receive the specialist advice it requires to comply with the law. This option would remove all the in-house Ecology advice.
Create Bus Station Safety Officer post to release Vehicle Parks Warden post	£16,000	-	2010/11	Currently being implemented Post to be at lower grade to Warden post and also allows a reduction in overtime costs. The savings are through additional income generated from the Warden carrying out enforcement activity (estimated at £500-750 per week), less the cost of the post (£14,000)

**Option 2**

4.5. Further savings of at least £189,089 may be possible through implementing the additional savings options below. In some cases the potential saving cannot at this stage be estimated, but may be looked into further

Option 2 Savings	Amount	Building Block	Year	Comment
Bicester Town Centre developer to take on Shopmobility /support for scheme is ended	£45,900	-	2012/13	This will depend on the willingness of the Town Centre developer to take over this scheme, which would remove the need for the council to fund it. However, given that negotiations have completed it is unlikely that the developer will now take this on.
Cancel the erection of Christmas lights/fully subsidise the lights through sponsorship	£36,189	-	2012/13	This option would seek to fully fund the cost of erecting Christmas lights each year through sponsorship, or alternatively no longer have a lights display at Christmas. Additional sponsorship is unlikely in the current economic climate, and cancellation may be unpopular with residents
Cancel the In Bloom programme/fully subsidise the programme through sponsorship	£107,000	-	2012/13	This option would seek to fully fund the cost of the In Bloom programme, or alternatively cancel the programme. Additional sponsorship is unlikely in the current economic climate and cancellation may be unpopular with residents.
Charging for tree inspections	TBC	-	2012/13	Highlighted as good practice by CLG (with Dundee council as an exemplar) although there are concerns within the service that it does not have the capacity to undertake this additional work. Would need further investigation to assess its feasibility
Further Statutory/Discretionary savings areas to be explored	TBC	-	TBC	There are further savings opportunities that have not been fully covered by this Review but may arise from; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Externalising the parking service</li> <li>• Reducing Landscaping contract management provision</li> <li>• Further reducing the level of rural and countryside provision</li> <li>• Examining the best use of rural, countryside, ecology and arboricultural resources with client services</li> <li>• Considering the level of rural community development support provided (in conjunction with partner agencies)</li> </ul>

## 4 Recommendations

- 4.1. In order to achieve the building blocks savings target of £730,096 option 1 should be pursued (saving a total of £748,555). This will involve;
- Increasing car park income through raised charging levels on existing car parks, the establishment of a new charging regime in Kidlington, additional enforcement activity by Street Wardens, introducing evening tariffs and charging for disabled parking
  - Achieving reductions in landscaping contract costs through reducing the scope and standards of current work
  - Achieving additional income for landscaping work through increasing the client base
  - Reducing countryside partnership activity and grants
- 4.2. To achieve the £60,000 savings on recharges to the Planning service it is recommended that the 3 options proposed in the Option 1 block to reduce staffing capacity be re-assessed alongside other options to meet the target (such as increasing fee income from planning advice and securing new clients to offset costs)
- 4.3. The following savings outlined in Option 2 be not pursued;
- The likelihood of income through full sponsorship of the In Bloom and Christmas lights schemes is low, and their cancellation would be unpopular
  - A number have not yet been assessed for their feasibility and cost reduction potential
- 4.4. The following savings outlined in Option 2 be pursued further;
- The feasibility of charging for tree inspections has not been fully assessed, and capacity within the service to achieve may be limited, but the service should investigate its potential
  - The likelihood of Bicester Shopmobility being taken on by the Town Centre developer is unlikely at this late stage, and ending this provision would be unpopular. The service should seek to offset a proportion of its costs through service charges to tenants on completion of the town centre redevelopment

## Executive

### Draft Budget 1, Corporate Plan and Service Plans 2011 - 2012

6 December 2010

### Report of Head of Finance

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

The Council has to adopt a budget for 2011/12 as the basis for calculating its level of Council Tax and has to base that budget on its plans for service delivery during the year, recognising any changes in service demand that may arise in future years. This is the first of three opportunities that the Executive has to shape and refine the interaction between the Corporate Plan, the service plans that underpin the corporate plan and financial matters before the final budget is presented to the Council on the 21st February 2011.

This report is public
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#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- 1) to endorse the draft Corporate Plan for 2011-12 (detailed in Appendix 2);
- 2) to endorse the proposed service priorities for 2011-12 (detailed in Appendix 3);
- 3) to consider the draft budget (detailed in Appendix 1) in the context of the Council's service objectives and strategic priorities;
- 4) to note the areas of unavoidable revenue growth as detailed in the body of this report detailed in Appendix 1 – para 1.23;
- 5) to note the areas of additional income or cost reductions that will be considered in order to get to a balanced 2011/12 budget detailed in Appendix 1 – para 1.26 / 1.27;
- 6) to note the proposal on Council Tax for 2011-12 detailed in (para 2.10)
- 7) To note the outcome of the pay negotiations on 2011/12 pay deal (para 2.20);
- 8) to ask officers to prepare a response to the New Homes Consultation and a report detailing the implications;

- 9) to ask officers to give consideration to the impact of the recent planning fees consultation and the implications on income generation
- 10) to agree the approach to the overall capital programme and 2011/12 expenditure profile (detailed in Appendix 4);
- 11) to note the recommendations of the scrutiny reviews of training, fees and charges and capital programme that were considered at the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board on 30th November 2010 and approve which should be included in the second draft of the budget: (detailed in Appendix 5 – to follow);
- 12) to advise of any other matters they would like taken into consideration in producing a balanced budget for the meeting of the Executive on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011;
- 13) to endorse the draft revenue and capital budget and corporate plan as the basis for consultation.

### **Executive Summary**

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- 1.1 The significant savings and efficiencies delivered by the Council up to 2010/2011 had helped to achieve a sustainable medium term budget. Although further savings would have been required these were not on the scale of the financial challenge that now faces the council, which is a direct consequence of the Government's requirement to address a significant national budget deficit.
- 1.2 In light of the severe financial challenges a huge amount of work has been progressed from May 2010 to November 2010 in order to identify actions to reduce the Council's net budget position in 2011/12 and over the medium term forecast period to 2014/15. A number of cost reductions were approved for inclusion in the 2011/12 draft budget as part of the November report to the Executive "Early response to the CSR"
- 1.3 The Council has met its 2010/11 public promise to deliver £800k of budget reductions by April 2011 as well as delivering the 2010/11 Improvement plan which includes 12 Value for Money Reviews.
- 1.4 In light of the projecting government grant reduction a programme of identifying further areas of budget reductions or income generation has resulted in a comprehensive list of building blocks and general budget efficiencies. These reductions have been matched to the Council's priorities, recognise the requirements of the Corporate Plan and have focussed on minimising the impact on front line services.
- 1.5 The budget will form the financial expression of the Council's strategic priorities and service delivery plans for 2011/12; the allocation of resources against agreed service priorities (as seen in Appendix 3) is necessary in



order to achieve its strategic priorities.

- 1.6 The Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board have been reviewing the outcome of the public budget consultation exercise. This committee has reviewed expenditure allocated by public priority, conducted a detailed analysis of fees and charges, training budgets and reviewed all bids submitted for consideration in the 2011/12 Capital Programme. The outcome of this work will be reported to the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board meeting on November 30th 2010 and any recommendations will be considered in by the Executive for inclusion in subsequent drafts of the 2011/12 budget.
- 1.7 There is a statutory requirement for the Council to set a balanced budget by 11 March 2011 and this report provides a first draft of the 2011/12 revenue and capital budget.
- 1.8 As far as possible it takes account of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) to the extent that details have been disclosed and indicates other areas that may have financial implications.
- 1.9 The projected shortfall at draft 1 requires a further reduction in costs or increase in income of £1,114,180 is required. On the assumption that the Executive approve the scrutiny recommendations and the shared management business case with South Northamptonshire is approved by both Councils on December 8<sup>th</sup> 2010 then this will contribute circa £900,000 therefore reducing the deficit to a manageable £215,000.
- 1.10 A number of areas to review have been identified in Appendix 1(Para 1.26 / 1.27) The outcome of these reviews together with the updated position of the local government grant settlement and its implication on the current budget shortfall will be presented to the Executive in January 2011. At this stage it is expected that these together with the Councils ability to utilise reserves will deliver the remaining £215,000 shortfall and achieve a balanced budget for 2011/12.
- 1.11 Further work will continue on identifying additional budget reductions for future years and these will be detailed in the Medium Term Forecast which will be updated and presented as part of the final budget report.
- 1.12 This report also considers the draft capital programme for 2011/12.
- 1.13 The Spending Review will mean cuts in services but the Council will do all it can to minimise the effects of the cuts on front line services and build on its record of providing cost effective services and delivering efficiencies.
- 1.14 The draft 2011/12 revenue and capital budget and corporate plan will form the basis for consultation with our stakeholders and the output of this consultation will be considered in formulating the final 2011/12 budgets and Corporate Plan.

## **Background Information**

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### **2.1 Corporate Plan**

The corporate plan has been reviewed for the period 2011- 2012. This review reflects the changing economic situation, the implications of local government grant reductions as detailed in the comprehensive spending review and significant strategic developments affecting the district such as the eco-town. The corporate plan takes into account the wide range of public consultation we undertake around local priorities through both our annual satisfaction survey and budget consultation workshops.

The objectives within the corporate plan for 2011 -12 are currently in draft form and will be confirmed after the public consultation in December. Detailed milestones and measures will be set in the final quarter of the year taking into account the latest performance information and budgetary position. As in previous years a set of council tax pledges will be drawn from the corporate plan. These will form a core set of performance milestones for the council which directly reflect the strategic priorities and will be monitored through our corporate performance scorecard. The developing corporate plan measures will be presented to Executive and Council with the drafts of the budget in January and February 2010.

### **Service Plans**

2.2 Service plans are being developed alongside the draft budget and corporate plan. They will include comprehensive consultation feedback, a review of the strategic challenges facing each service and robust peer and member challenge. The service plans underpin the corporate plan and provide the operational detail that ensures the council's strategic priorities are delivered.

2.3 Copies of the draft Service Plans for 2011/12 will be made available on the Council's intranet site for Members to review in January 2011. Final drafts will form part of the background papers for the Budget and Corporate Plan reports presented to Executive and Council in February 2011.

### **Funding Implications**

2.4 In light of the challenging financial position that faces the Council over the medium term, work has been in progress on the 2011/2012 budget since setting the 2010/2011 Budget in March 2010 in order that cost reductions could be considered well enough in advance to maximise contribution to the 2011/12 budget and understand the Medium Term Implications.

### **2.5 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR 2010)**

The Comprehensive Spending Review 2010 (CSR 2010) was announced

on 20 October 2010, this provided a high-level indication of the Government resources that will be available to local government for the next four financial years. The details of the CSR10 and implications for Cherwell District Council were reported to the Executive in November 2010.

2.6 The most significant point for this report is that the level of Government funding for local authority revenue expenditure at the national level will reduce by 26% in real terms over the next four years and that the reductions would be front loaded.

2.7 It should however be noted that the projected net budget deficit still remains subject to potentially significant change, this is because the Council's own grant figures and impact of the concessionary fare transfer will not be known until the announcement of the local government finance settlement in early December 2010 and this could potentially be very different from the average for local government based on the national level information in the CSR2010.

2.8 In addition CSR2010 did not include comprehensive details of all aspects of the spending review, this further important information should however become clear as the various Government White Papers and Consultation papers are released.

2.9 We have seen additional information and consultation papers on Council Tax Freeze in 2011/12, the new homes bonus and changes to setting planning fees which we are reviewing and considering the financial implications.

2.10 **Council Tax**

The Government's intention to freeze Council Tax for 2011/2012 has also been reflected in the draft budget. SR2010 confirmed that the Government will provide a revenue grant equivalent to a 2.5% increase in Council Tax to fund this freeze; this has therefore been included within the projected resources of the Council.

2.11 **New Homes Bonus**

The Government has just launched a consultation on the "New Homes Bonus Grant", a new "core" grant that will apply from 2011/12 to reward authorities that increase their council taxbase.

2.12 At one level the proposed scheme is very straight-forward. Each October, DCLG will collect information on housing stock by council tax band on the standard council tax form. Any additions to the total stock will attract funding through this scheme at a rate of £1,439 per Band D per year for six years. There will be an additional £350 per year for new "affordable" homes.

2.13 Changes in numbers of empty homes and new builds / demolitions will all

be taken fully into account in assessing the grant because payment will be based on the net change. Shire districts will receive 80% of the grant in two-tier areas, with nothing for police or fire authorities or the GLA.

- 2.14 From our early review one issue is clear that after the first year it is not fully-funded, with any shortfall coming from Formula Grant. By year six and beyond, around 80% of the money will need to come from the existing settlement. This means that the cash allocations in the CSR10 will be reduced from 2012-13 in order to pay for the New Homes Bonus; we assume 2011-12 will remain the same.
- 2.15 The consultation closes on 24 December 2010 and a detailed review of the scheme and implications for Cherwell District Council will be prepared in providing our consultation response. At this stage no budgetary impact has been built into the budget.

### **Planning Fees**

- 2.16 This consultation paper seeks views on proposed changes to the planning application fees regime which would decentralise responsibility for setting fees to local planning authorities. We also propose to allow authorities to charge for resubmitted applications and to set higher fees for retrospective applications.
- 2.17 Proposals will help to reduce the subsidising of planning applications by local taxpayers. If accepted and approved by Parliament, the changes would be implemented from April 2011, with a six month transition period until October 2011.
- 2.18 The consultation closes on 7 January 2010 and a detailed review of the operational and financial implications for Cherwell District Council will be prepared in providing our consultation response. At this stage no budgetary impact has been built into the budget.

### **Other**

- 2.19 We are also waiting for further information on the implications of the benefit reform, funding arrangements for housing benefits and council tax and these in particular may result in further substantial financial implications on the Council. Papers are due to be published in the coming weeks and months, so the funding situation will therefore continue to evolve for some time.

### Pay Deal Update

- 2.20 In early 2010 the Council and Unison entered into a collective agreement which set out the local pay award for the following 3 years, as follows:

Year	% increase
2010-11	0%
2011-12	1.80%
2012-13	1.90%

- 2.21 This agreement was made on the basis of the known financial position at the time and was built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The cost for 2011-12 would have been £225,000. However, since the agreement was made there have been significant changes to the Council's financial position and that of the public sector generally, as a result of the new government's approach to addressing the national deficit.
- 2.22 The Chancellor announced a pay freeze across the public sector in his emergency budget in June. The Comprehensive Spending Review report, as we know, announced significant cuts to local authority funding (with cuts coming hardest in the next two years) and confirmed that the public sector is expected to lose approx 490,000 jobs over the next four years.
- 2.23 The combination of the government's pay freeze and the Council's financial position has made it very difficult now for the Council to honour the agreement for 1.8% next year. To do so would not only directly contradict the national advice from government but would also be very difficult to justify to Cherwell's residents who are themselves facing pay freezes, pay cuts, redundancy and many other pressures on their income.
- 2.24 Although we anticipate the government will enforce the public sector pay freeze via legislation this was not forthcoming and therefore does not to date provide a mechanism to over-rule local agreements.
- Officers were therefore tasked with attempting to re-negotiate the agreement with Unison in an attempt to bring in broadly in line with both the government's position and the budget position. Thanks in main to co-operation from the local Unison branch, a new agreement has been reached, without ballot.
- 2.25 The new agreement is as follows:
- April 2011** 0% general pay award  
£250 flat rate increase applied to all grades below £25,000;  
this relates to FTE substantive salaries.
- 2.26 This also replaces the remaining period of the three year agreement (and there is therefore now no agreement for pay awards beyond 2011/12) but we have agreed to undertake detailed negotiations during 2011 to reach a new local agreement for 2012/13 onwards. By this time the financial position of the Council and the broader effects of the public sector cuts will be clearer.
- 2.27 The government's proposed flat rate increase of £250 to all public sector employees earning less than £21,000 would have applied to 216 members

of staff at Cherwell. The agreement to extend the payment of this flat rate to FTE salaries below £25,000 means the increase will apply to 304 (56%) members of staff. The additional cost of extending to salaries between £21,000 and £25,000 is not yet built into draft 1 of the revenue budget but will be added to draft 2 and is listed as a further pressure in Appendix 3.

- 2.28 This agreement saves the Council £0.7m over the next 4 years and contributes directly to reducing the strain on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.29 This new agreement is subject to a collective agreement with the Council's recognised Trade Union as part of the agreed collective bargaining process. As such it becomes part of the individual contracts of employment of all staff and the Council is therefore protected from future challenge relating to the previous local agreement.

#### Pension Fund Valuation

- 2.30 We have received the provisional results of the triennial pension fund valuation and this indicates an increase of 2.9% in employer contributions. These increases can be staggered over 3 years at 0.9% and equate to ~ £118,000 additional costs per annum which have been built into draft 1 of the budget. This preliminary result is slightly better than MTFS scenarios where we had anticipated an increase in the range of 3% - 5%. The main factors which impact on the valuation apart from investment returns are the profile of membership, changes to profile in membership and previous funding levels.
- 2.31 The figures make no allowances for changes from the Hutton Commission including any increase in employee contributions (which we are expecting from April 2012), so there may need to be some revision to these figures before the final certificate is signed off. The Department for Communities and Local Government are advising Actuaries to delay final sign off to as close to the 31 March 2011 deadline as possible.
- 2.32 A report on the pension valuation and financial implications for the Council over the medium term forecast will be considered at the Executive in February 2011.

#### Budget Guidelines and Timetable

- 2.33 The Executive agreed the budget guidelines, service priorities and timetable at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2010 after considering the medium term financial forecast and underlying financial strategy.

#### The Status of the Budget

- 2.34 The draft revenue budget as presented has been left, quite deliberately, with a funding gap to emphasise that it is work in progress. This type of gap is not unusual at this stage in the process and it can be covered by considering the actions listed within Appendix 1. The funding gap in the draft budget as presented is £1,114,181 and it is important that Members

are aware of this potential deficit before they finally commit funding against particular priorities and/or divert funding from low priority services.

- 2.35 As in previous years, the final allocation of central Government Grant and the amount available for distribution from the Collection Fund will be confirmed for Draft 2 of the budget. At this stage however given the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending review we have anticipated a reduction in grant of 13% and have already incorporated this reduction into this first draft of the Budget. Additionally we have incorporated an additional strain of £800K in respect of the transfer of Concessionary Fares and its associated funding to the County Council.
- 2.36 On the assumption that the Executive approve the scrutiny recommendations and the shared management business case with South Northamptonshire is approved by both Councils on December 8<sup>th</sup> 2010 then this will contribute circa £900,000 therefore reducing the deficit to a manageable £215,000. A number of areas to review have been identified in Appendix 1(Para 1.24) The outcome of these reviews together with the updated position of the local government grant settlement and its implication on the current budget shortfall will be presented to the Executive in January 2011. At this stage it is expected that these together with the Councils ability to utilise reserves will deliver the remaining £215,000 shortfall and achieve a balanced budget for 2011/12.
- 2.37 Further work will continue on identifying additional budget reductions for future years and these will be detailed in the Medium Term Forecast which will be updated and presented as part of the final budget report.
- 2.38 All capital bids received have been appraised by the Capital Investment Delivery Group according to the capital appraisal criteria and can be seen in Appendix 4a.
- 2.39 The bid appraisal matrix considers the driver behind the capital expenditure with anything which is compulsory or required for legislation gaining the maximum of 20 points. The bid is then scored accordingly to how directly or indirectly the expenditure supports the Councils strategic directives. Further points are awarded according to which of the Councils consultation priorities the bid meets, and finally the impact on service delivery, organisational risk and positive revenue implications are considered with points awarded accordingly. The maximum score any bid could achieve was 50 and the final scores ranged from 45 to 12.
- 2.40 These bids have then been reviewed by a working group of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board and their recommendations will be considered in Appendix 5.
- 2.41 The Capital Strategy for 2011/12 has a direct impact on the Treasury Management revenue budget in terms of the opportunity cost of reduced cash balances from the use of capital receipts and reserves. Decisions on the future capital programme will need to take into account the overall priorities and affordability in revenue as well as capital terms. A review of the capital bids, financing and impact on cashflow and investment income will be considered for the next draft of this budget.

## Budget Consultation

- 2.42 Consultation will commence following approval of this report so that views can be sought in sufficient time for them to be taken into consideration when formulating the 2011/12 budget and council tax. The general consultation will take place via the Council website and in order to meet its statutory obligation to consult with business ratepayers meetings will be held with our local chambers of commerce.

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

- 3.1 This report presents the Council's draft 2011/12 Revenue Budget, Capital Bids for consideration and Corporate Plan.

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

**Option One** To review draft revenue and capital budget to date and consider actions arising.

**Option Two** To approve or reject the recommendations above or request that Officers provide additional information.

## Consultations

### **Executive**

11/10/10 and 01/11/10

### **Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board**

28/09/10, 12/11/10, 23/11/10, 30/11/10

### **Corporate Management Team**

Various meetings throughout May 2010 to Nov 2010

## Implications

### **Financial:**

Financial Effects – the significant financial effects of the budget are identified in Appendix 1. Any decisions made in relation to ongoing expenditure or income in the budget for 2011/12 will have repercussions in future years when current forecasts indicate the financial environment is likely to become increasingly difficult. The Council has a statutory duty to set a balanced budget and could incur the intervention of the Secretary of State if it failed to do so.

Consideration of this item will fall within the provisions of Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act



1992, and Members affected by those provisions should declare accordingly and refrain from voting on the matter.

The council has developed a number of building blocks to meet the strain created through the reduction in Government grant, these in addition to the £800K public promise and additional efficiency savings have been built into this first draft of the Budget for 2011/12.

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

**Legal:**

There is a statutory requirement for the Council to set a balanced budget by 11 March 2011 and the draft budget is part of that process.

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

**Risk Management:**

The significant risks and assumptions associated with the draft budget are outlined in Appendix 1 and a risk provision has been considered. On a broader front, if due consideration is not given to matching scarce financial resources carefully against properly assessed service priorities, the Council may fail in achieving its strategic priorities and in its duty to demonstrate value for money. A full appraisal of risk will be included in the final budget report detailing mitigations and a sensitivity analysis will be included in calculating the risk provision

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

**Wards Affected**

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All

**Corporate Plan Themes**

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All

**Executive Portfolio**

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**Councillor James Macnamara**  
**Portfolio Holder for Resources**

**Document Information –**

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Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1 Appendix 2 Appendix 3 Appendix 4 ,4a, 4b Appendix 5	Draft Revenue 2011/12 Budget and Analysis Draft Corporate Plan 2011/12 Service Priorities Draft 2011/12 Capital Bids and Funding Analysis Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board – Budget Scrutiny recommendations (to follow on after Nov 30 <sup>th</sup> meeting)
<b>Background Papers</b>	
2010/11 Budget Booklet 2010/11 Capital Programme Medium Term Financial Strategy Budget Guidelines 2010/11 Service Plans November 2010 – Response to CSR	
<b>Report Author</b>	Karen Curtin, Head of Finance Karen Muir, Corporate System Accountant Jessica Lacey, Technical Accountant Claire Taylor, Corporate Strategy & Performance Manager
<b>Contact Information</b>	01295 221551 <a href="mailto:karen.curtin@cherwell-dc.gov.uk">karen.curtin@cherwell-dc.gov.uk</a>

## Draft Revenue 2011/12 Budget and Analysis

### The Status of the Budget

- 1.1 This is the first draft of the budget and is currently subject to scrutiny of both revenue and capital together with amendments for new information relating to economic climate, confirmation of central Government Grant and the amount available for distribution from the Collection Fund. The draft budget will be presented to the Executive again on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011. Final version of the budget will be presented to the Executive on February 7<sup>th</sup> 2011 before approval by Council on February 21<sup>st</sup> 2011.

### Budget Guidelines

- 1.2 The draft General Fund Revenue budget has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines agreed by the Executive at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

### Economic Climate

- 1.3 UK economy - following the general election in May 2010, the coalition government has put in place an austerity plan to carry out correction of the public sector deficit over the next five years. The inevitable result of fiscal contraction will be major job losses during this period, in particular in public sector services. This will have a knock on effect on consumer and business confidence. House prices have started a negative trend during the summer and mortgage approvals are at very weak levels and also declining.
- 1.4 This downturn in the economy has given rise to a number of unanticipated budget pressures. One of the most immediate impacts of the credit crunch in Cherwell, like elsewhere, is the housing market slowing rapidly. This has seen a reduction in the current year of planning and land charge income, increase in benefit applications, increased fuel costs and these assumptions have been assumed to continue and built into the formation of the draft budget and considered in the review of risk.
- 1.5 Inflation beyond 2011 is forecast to fall back rapidly once the second increase of VAT by 2.5% (which in the short term will add 1.5% to CPI) next January falls out of the index after 12 months, together with other recent sharp increases in food and commodity prices. Consequently inflation at the two year horizon is forecast to fall to around 1.5%, below the target rate of 2%.
- 1.6 Sector, the Council's Treasury Management Advisors, are currently of the view that the Bank Rate may start to increase during Q3 and Q4 of the 2011/12 financial year by 0.5%. For the purpose of this draft of the budget we have assumed a reinvestment rate of 2% for investment income purposes.
- 1.7 The Council's decision in preparing the last MTFs forecast not to rely on investment income to deliver services assumes a 3 year profile and this together with the low interest rates will result in a reduction in investment income for 2011/12.

### Medium Term Financial Forecasts

- 1.8 Our medium term financial forecasts were updated as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review and as a result we are working on the basis of a £16.8m requirement over 4 years. The savings identified in draft 1 of the 2011/12 will provide a substantial contribution to this and a new medium term financial forecast will be included with the budget report in February 2011 once the final government funding is confirmed.

## Investments in Iceland

- 1.9 The Council currently has a total of £6.5 million in short term investments (i.e. those with maturity periods of up to one year) with one of the affected banks Glitner. The latest position is that, the Council currently does not have preferential credit status and as such would only recover 29% of this balance. Local Authorities have objected to this creditor status and legal action is being taken.
- 1.10 Local authorities' objections will now be considered under the processes followed under Icelandic insolvency law, and court action will be taken as necessary. 14 test cases which contain legal arguments to support preferential creditor status and 100% recovery have been presented to the Icelandic Courts in September 2010. Cherwell represent 3 of these cases (each deposit is a separate test case).
- 1.11 The defendants including the winding up board are in the process of filing their submissions in response. If local authority deposits are awarded priority status, claims will be fully repaid. If local authority deposits do not get priority status, the Council will receive much less of its investment back.
- 1.12 No payment is expected before the court cases and any appeals for priority status. The earliest likely date by which payment could be made is June 2011 and on this basis we would need to write off the debt in 2010/11 accounts.
- 1.13 The Council have made a capitalisation request to Secretary of State to use capital receipts to offset this loss and a decision is expected on whether this has been approved no later than December 17 2010. If this request is declined then the Council will use earmarked revenue reserves to offset the loss which is part of the medium term financial strategy.
- 1.14 No investment income has been built into the 2011/12 budget for the return of the £6.5m principle at this stage but this will be reviewed as we progress legal proceedings and prepare the final 2011/12 budget.
- 1.15 The LGA is confident that local authorities' priority status as depositors will in due course be secured and 100% recovered and we will keep this committee informed of progress.

## General Fund Revenue Budget

- 1.16 The draft General Fund Revenue budget is shown in Table 1. The revenue budget as presented has been left, quite deliberately, with a funding gap of £1,114,180. This type of gap is not unusual at this stage in the process and it can be covered by considering the actions listed in 1.23 / 1.24.

Table 1

SERVICE EXPENDITURE - excluding support allocation	Budget	Projection	Budget	Variance from 10/11 Projection	Variance from 10/11 Budget
	2010/11	2010/11	2011/12		
Corporate Core	£4,543,693	£4,399,250	£3,817,502	-£581,748	-£726,191
Environment & Community	£11,622,769	£11,846,690	£10,906,076	-£940,614	-£716,693
Planning, Housing & Economy	£4,947,243	£4,938,910	£4,801,858	-£137,052	-£145,385
<b>Services Sub-Total</b>	<b>£21,113,705</b>	<b>£21,184,850</b>	<b>£19,525,436</b>	<b>-£1,659,414</b>	<b>-£1,588,269</b>
Capital Charges Reversed	-£2,850,060	-£2,850,060	-£2,735,110	£114,950	£114,950
<b>Net Expenditure Services</b>	<b>£18,263,645</b>	<b>£18,334,790</b>	<b>£16,790,326</b>	<b>-£1,544,464</b>	<b>-£1,473,319</b>
(% decrease)	9%	0%	8%		0%
<b>Reserves and Provisions</b>	<b>£263,881</b>	<b>£192,736</b>	<b>£421,624</b>	<b>£228,888</b>	<b>£157,743</b>

	<b>£18,527,526</b>	<b>£18,527,526</b>	<b>£17,211,950</b>	<b>-£1,315,576</b>	<b>-£1,315,576</b>
<b>Funding</b>					
Investment Income	£1,348,753	£1,348,753	£891,127	-£457,626	-£457,626
Government Grant	£10,905,340	£10,905,340	£8,687,646	-£2,217,694	-£2,217,694
Collection Fund	£84,477	£84,477	£142,403	£57,926	£57,926
Council Tax	£6,188,956	£6,188,956	£6,376,594	£187,638	£187,638
	<b>£18,527,526</b>	<b>£18,527,526</b>	<b>£16,097,770</b>	<b>-£2,429,756</b>	<b>-£2,429,756</b>
<b>Potential Shortfall</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£1,114,180</b>		
<b>COUNCIL TAX</b>					
Relevant Tax Base	50113	50113	50396		
Council Tax Rate for Band "D"	£123.50	£123.50	£123.50		
<b>Council Tax Collection</b>	<b>£6,188,956</b>	<b>£6,188,956</b>	<b>£6,376,594</b>		

- 1.17 Our assumption for Council tax is that we will set a 0% increase for 2011/12. CSR2010 confirmed that the Government will provide a revenue grant equivalent to a 2.5% increase in Council Tax to fund this freeze for a period of 4 years; this has therefore been included within the projected resources of the Council.
- 1.18 The revenue budget shows an overall 8% decrease in service expenditure in comparison with the 2010/11 revenue projection and a reduction from 2009/10 outturn of £3,587,491.
- 1.19 In light of the challenging financial position the Council faces in both this and forthcoming years, work has been in progress on the 2011/12 budget since setting the 2010/11 budget in March 2010. The Council made a public promise to deliver £800K worth of savings and in addition has developed Building Blocks across the organisation, identifying opportunities to either reduce costs or increase income generated. The aim being to compensate for the financial pressures arising from the Comprehensive Spending review, general economic climate and our strategy to reduce our reliance on investment income.
- 1.20 This first draft of the 2011/12 revenue budget demonstrates that we have delivered the £800K public promise and incorporated building blocks to the value £972K. In addition, we have also identified £580K worth of additional efficiencies which has also been built into this first draft.
- 1.21 There are three value for money (VFM) reviews going to the Executive in December for approval as part of the same agenda when this draft budget will be considered. Some of the proposals have been included in draft 1. If these proposals are not approved then alternative reductions will be required to offset these in draft 2. There are a number of these savings that have not been built in and these will be considered in addressing the budget deficit in draft 2.

Table 2 on the following pages provides a further breakdown :-

**Table 2**

Review of Savings	Building Block Description	B Block Number	£800K Savings Promise	Building Blocks	Efficiencies	Total	CRP	PHE	EAC	Total
Finance VFM 2009/10	Reduce 2 posts		£100,000			<b>£100,000</b>	£100,000			£100,000
Legal VFM 2009/10	Further £50k to be identified in 2010/11		£57,000			<b>£57,000</b>	£57,000			£57,000
Communications VFM 2010/11	Full review of printing, advertising and marketing - target 100k reduction		£115,000			<b>£115,000</b>	£115,000			£115,000
Corporate & Democratic Core VFM 2010/11	Review use of 3 Fund managers - target reduction in costs to Treasury Management		£10,000			<b>£10,000</b>	£10,000			£10,000
Corporate & Democratic Core VFM 2010/12	Review of democratic services - VFM - target £70k reductions		£70,000			<b>£70,000</b>	£70,000			£70,000
Corporate & Democratic Core VFM 2010/13	Review of community planning activities - target £20k reductions		£31,000			<b>£31,000</b>	£31,000			£31,000
Community Planning VFM 2009/10	Insurance review - merge with Finance and reduce 1 post		£49,000			<b>£49,000</b>	£49,000			£49,000
ICT review 2009/10	ICT review		£93,000			<b>£93,000</b>			£93,000	£93,000
Regeneration & Estates VFM 2009/10	Canteen - staff reductions and fee review		£27,000			<b>£27,000</b>		£27,000		£27,000
Housing Services VFM 2010/11	VFM - Annual Programme - Housing Services		£100,000			<b>£100,000</b>		£100,000		£100,000
Procurement Self Financing Target	Contract Negotiations - cashable savings		£150,000			<b>£150,000</b>	£150,000			£150,000
Admin Review II	Total Admin in PHE, EAC and Corporate equates to £1m - reduce by 10%	<b>66</b>		£13,000		<b>£13,000</b>	£13,000			£13,000
Contract Management	Review the contract management resource throughout the Council and centralise within one team with Procurement - reduce by 2 posts	<b>85</b>		£53,000		<b>£53,000</b>	£53,000			£53,000
Performance Regime	Consider the performance regime of the Council on the back of the demise of CAA - target reductions in performance team and admin as a result of reviewing what is measured and what is no longer necessary - assume 1 post deleted	<b>108</b>		£29,000		<b>£29,000</b>	£29,000			£29,000
Benefits Advertising	Not a statutory function to promote the take up of benefits - was an audit commission indicator	<b>106</b>		£5,000		<b>£5,000</b>	£5,000			£5,000
Training	Sell externally	<b>54</b>		£25,000		<b>£25,000</b>	£25,000			£25,000
Internal Audit	Review specification and consider reduction in light of CAA demise and stat/disc reviews - assume 20 day reduction in new contract negotiation in 12/13	<b>112</b>		£9,000		<b>£9,000</b>	£9,000			£9,000
Statutory / Discretionary Review		<b>87</b>		£6,000		<b>£6,000</b>	£6,000			£6,000
Street Wardens	Review budgets and target reduction of £16k	<b>33</b>		£15,800		<b>£15,800</b>			£15,800	£15,800

Review of Savings	Building Block Description	B Block Number	£800K Savings Promise	Building Blocks	Efficiencies	Total	CRP	PHE	EAC	Total
Car Parks	Reduced frequency of cash collections from machines	34		£6,800		£6,800			£6,800	£6,800
Subscriptions	Safer Communities Urban & Rural Services Cancel specified subscriptions within Service	35		£2,700		£2,700			£2,700	£2,700
Christmas Lights	Negotiate shared costs of Christmas Lights with Urban Centres	36		£36,000		£36,000			£36,000	£36,000
Nightsafe	Reduce officer time to 50%	43		£13,000		£13,000			£13,000	£13,000
Recycling Income	Improved recycling performance through increased targeting.	8		£45,000		£45,000			£45,000	£45,000
Gate Fees	Negotiated reduction in gate fees	9		£77,000		£77,000			£77,000	£77,000
Glass Collection	Lower net cost in-house collection service requires capital of £130k.	10		£76,000		£76,000			£76,000	£76,000
Bring Banks	Various operational efficiencies	11		£20,000		£20,000			£20,000	£20,000
	Reduced replacement bin costs by more repairs etc	13		£12,500		£12,500			£12,500	£12,500
Street Cleansing	Reduce staff levels through non-use of seasonal staff and not filling a vacancy created through natural turnover of staff.	14		£54,000		£54,000			£54,000	£54,000
Vehicle Maintenance	Increased income on MOT's	16		£5,000		£5,000			£5,000	£5,000
Vehicle Maintenance	Improved cost base	17		£2,500		£2,500			£2,500	£2,500
WFM Programme	Scalable structure, selective external hosting, alternative procurement etc	1		£134,000		£134,000			£134,000	£134,000
Colour printing	Substantial reduction to internal colour printing	2		£24,000		£24,000			£24,000	£24,000
Parish Websites	Alternative parishes website hosting	3		£2,100		£2,100			£2,100	£2,100
Cash Handling	Install 4 Autotellers.	6		£71,000		£71,000			£71,000	£71,000
Staffing	Implemented reduced hours for 3 posts	18		£29,000		£29,000			£29,000	£29,000
Leisure Development	No Projects Officer resulting in fewer projects, limited S106 activity and no support to parishes and other voluntary sector bodies	24		£26,000		£26,000			£26,000	£26,000
North Oxford Academy	Joint User Agreement	28		£41,000		£41,000			£41,000	£41,000
Cooper School	Joint User Agreement	27		£34,000		£34,000			£34,000	£34,000
Grants	No grants to village Halls	25		£39,000		£39,000			£39,000	£39,000
Expressions of Interest	Reduction in resources through expression of interest process	15		£58,000		£58,000			£58,000	£58,000
Facility Management	Centralisation of all and general reduction in service maintenance budgets - budget clarification required as costs covered in devolved budgets	100		£7,400		£7,400		£7,400		£7,400

Review of Savings	Building Block Description	B Block Number	£800K Savings Promise	Building Blocks	Efficiencies	Total		CRP	PHE	EAC	Total
<b>EFFICIENCIES</b>											£0
Efficiencies Corporate Core					£180,152	<b>£180,152</b>		£180,152			£180,152
Efficiencies PHE					£223,813	<b>£223,813</b>			£223,813		£223,813
Efficiencies EAC					£226,094	<b>£226,094</b>				£226,094	£226,094
<b>Total</b>			<b>£802,000</b>	<b>£971,800</b>	<b>£630,059</b>	<b>£2,403,859</b>		<b>£902,152</b>	<b>£358,213</b>	<b>£1,143,494</b>	<b>£2,403,859</b>
								<b>38%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>48%</b>	



1.22 The following table provides details of the “New Effects” in the 2011/12 budget. These are either additional expenditure or increased income. You will see that the net effect of these changes is minimal to the Councils bottom line budget, but they do represent in many instances uncontrollable changes from last year’s budget. They have been incorporated into service budgets whilst those services have still delivered their building blocks, contribution to the Councils £800K savings promise and further efficiencies.

**Table 3**

<b>New Effects</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>CRP</b>	<b>EAC</b>	<b>PHE</b>
	<b>Total</b>			
Removal of Capital Charges	-£33,000	-£33,000		
Movement in Subsidies - Exchequer Services	-£108,000	-£108,000		
Legal - Net effect Increased Planning fee Income and reduced Land Charge Income	-£31,000	-£31,000		
Reduced Admin Subsidy - Benefits Investigations	£9,000	£9,000		
NNDR - Increased Cost	£61,245		£47,932	£13,313
Increased Utility Charges	£23,710		£2,815	£20,895
Career Grade Increases	£13,000		£13,000	
Emergency Flooding and Land Drainage Services transferred to County	-£66,000			-£66,000
Completion of Town Centre Redevelopment - No further legal costs recovered.	£50,000			£50,000
Loss of Rental Income Orchard Way shops (redevelopment)	£28,000			£28,000
Impact of full year rent received for Lodge Bodicote House	-£4,800			-£4,800
Estimated strain of Car Park / Excess Charge and Season Ticket Income	£128,000		£128,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£70,155</b>	<b>-£163,000</b>	<b>£191,747</b>	<b>£41,408</b>

1.23 In addition there are areas of Unavoidable Growth which have also been incorporated into the 2011/12 budget. These are of a more significant nature to New Effects and are detailed within the table below;

**Table 4**

<b>Unavoidable Growth</b>		<b>Budget Increases</b>
Concessionary Fares	Mid Point Impact of £800K for the transfer of Concessionary Fares to the County - incorporated within Draft 1 - awaiting notification.	£800,000
Reduction In Revenue Support Grant	13% Reduction of Revenue Support Grant incorporated into Draft 1- awaiting notification.	£1,417,694
Increased Pension Provision	Impact of 2010 pension revaluation -staggered over three financial years – 2011/12 impact detailed across.	£117,624
Loss Of Housing Planning Delivery Grant	Impact Offset By VFM Review of Service.	£0
Loss of Community Cohesion Grant	Impact Offset By Reduction in expenditure	£0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£2,335,318</b>

1.24 Our Medium Term Financial Strategy requires efficiency savings and we have a NI target of 3.1% in 2010/2011. The draft budget presented includes a significant level of qualifying efficiencies which will be collated and reported to the February Executive meeting. From a budgetary point of

view only cashable savings are relevant since non-cashable savings do not reduce the overall cost to the Council. Although the national indicator NI179 that is used to measure this has been withdrawn the ongoing identification of efficiency savings must continue to be treated as a high priority.

- 1.25 In order to balance the budget a further reduction in costs or increase in income of £1,114,180 is required.
- 1.26 On the assumption that the Executive approve the scrutiny recommendations and the shared management business case with South Northamptonshire is approved by both Councils on December 8<sup>th</sup> 2010 then this will contribute circa £900,000 therefore reducing the deficit to a manageable £215,000.

**Table 5**

<b>AREAS PENDING APPROVALS</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>	<b>CONTRIBUTION RANGE</b>
Scrutiny Recommendations re Training	Reduce Costs	Up to £72,000
Scrutiny Recommendations re Fees & Charges	Increase Income	£300,00 - £500,000
Joint Working Decisions SNDC or Plan B	Reduce Costs	£333,000 (business case)

- 1.27 The following areas will be considered and an estimated range of contribution to the deficit is included.

**Table 6**

<b>AREAS FOR FURTHER REVIEW</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>	<b>CONTRIBUTION RANGE</b>
Building Block - Administration Review	Reduce Costs	Up to £87,000
Revenue Implications of Capital Programme	Increase / Reduce Costs	-£20,000 to £140,000
Pay Grade Adjustments - (£250 for over £25K)	Increase Costs	£20,000 to £30,000
Grant Reductions (Appendix 3 1st November Executive Report)	Reduce Costs	£25,000 to £75,000
Other Reductions (Appendix 4 1st November Executive Report)	Reduce Costs	£150,000 to £322,000
VFM Reviews (Executive in December)	Reduce costs	£25,000 to £100,000
Review of Interest Calculations	Reduce / Increase Income	
Review of Risk Contingency and Reserves	Increase/Reduce Provision	
Finalisation of Collection Fund	Increase / Reduce	
Notification of Revenue Support Grant (13% reduction in DRAFT 1)	Increase / Reduce	Each 1% increase or decrease equals £110,000
Concessionary Fares – awaiting final confirmation of budget pressure	Increase / Reduce	

- 1.28 The outcome of the reviews in 1.23 and 1.24 together with the updated position of the local government grant settlement and its implication on the current budget shortfall will be presented to the Executive in January 2011 but at this stage it is expected that these together with the Councils ability to utilise reserves will deliver the remaining £215,000 shortfall and achieve a balanced budget for 2011/12.
- 1.29 Further work will continue on identifying additional budget reductions for future years and these will be detailed in the Medium Term Forecast which will be updated and presented as part of the final budget report.

## Risk

- 1.30 As ever the Council needs to plan its budget amidst a high degree of uncertainty, which brings with it risks. As well as specific mitigating actions on individual issues, risks are also addressed as part of our corporate risk register, proactive budget monitoring, service planning process and consideration of risk in all key decisions and committee reports.
- 1.31 The draft budget includes a specific service risk provision of £100,000 and a general provision of £160,000 which equates to 1% of projected net expenditure and is in line with our budget planning.
- 1.32 A full appraisal of risk will be included in the final budget report detailing mitigations and a sensitivity analysis will be included to calculate the specific risk provisions.

## Reserves

- 1.33 In addition to the robust risk control measures it will be necessary for the Council to maintain a general fund general balance as the ultimate safeguard. This balance is projected to be circa £1m. A full review of Council reserves will be detailed in the February report to the Executive.

## Further Document Information

Detail	
<b>Scrutiny Reports</b>	28/09/2010 , 12/10/2010 , 23/11/2010 , 30/11/2010
<b>Executive Reports</b>	1/11/2010 Early Response to Comprehensive Spending Review.
<b>Building Blocks</b>	1/11/2010 Early Response to Comprehensive Spending Review.
<b>£800K Savings Promise</b>	1/11/2010 Early Response to Comprehensive Spending Review.

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Cherwell District Council's new corporate plan will be developed for the same period as covered by the comprehensive spending review (4 years 2011/12 - 14/15). This version outlines the Council's priorities for **year one** of the period (**2011-2012**) taking into account the possible reduction in the Council's net budget from £18.5m to £17m.

This draft outlines the Council's four strategic priorities and the objectives that underpin each one. The performance of each objective will be monitored through either progress against projects, key milestones or numerical performance measures. The detail behind these measures and milestones will be set out in January 2011 after the completion of public consultation.

*\* Specific note should be made of objectives A3 and C1 which will be further developed when national policy implications are fully understood including the Localism Act and policy guidance relating to the role of the voluntary sector (the 'Big Society').*

	<b>A</b> <b>A District of Opportunity</b>	<b>B</b> <b>A Cleaner Greener Cherwell</b>	<b>C</b> <b>A Safe, Healthy and Thriving Community</b>	<b>D</b> <b>An Accessible Value for Money Council</b>
Page 267	<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Work with partners to tackle disadvantage in the District.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brighter Futures in Banbury (project measure)</li> <li>Homelessness, Benefits, take up, improving service, supporting residents through benefits reforms, to include mortgage rescue (project and numerical measures)</li> <li>Support people into work - apprenticeships and the Job Club (project measure)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Provide excellent waste collection and recycling services, working to reduce the amount of waste produced and to increase recycling across the district.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recycling rates (% numerical measure)</li> <li>Total waste reduction (numerical measure)</li> <li>Customer satisfaction (numerical measure)</li> </ol>	<p><b>* Support the local community, voluntary and not for profit sectors to play an active role in the district.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the local voluntary sector to provide advisory services for the local community (project measure)</li> <li>Support volunteering across the district (project measure)</li> <li>Develop a new community development strategy to ensure the Council's work in this area provides value for money and addresses local need (project measure)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Provide value for money and a financially sound organisation, minimising the impact of smaller council budgets on frontline and priority services.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve annual savings plan targets (financial measure against medium term financial strategy)</li> <li>Ensure the Council's budget is matched to strategic priorities and services are able to demonstrate they provide value for money (finance/project measure)</li> <li>% of people who feel the Council provides value for money (satisfaction measure annual survey)</li> </ol>
	<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Balance economic development and housing growth.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major new housing projects (measured through the AMR) (numerical measure)</li> <li>Affordable housing delivery(% numerical measure)</li> <li>Promoting economic development through business advice / support, inward investment, Local Enterprise Partnerships (project measure)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Work to ensure our streets, town centres, open spaces and residential areas are clean, well maintained and safe.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Street and environmental satisfaction (numerical measure)</li> <li>Litter/graffiti/fly-tipping/dog mess (numerical measure)</li> <li>CCTV TBC – may need an alternative</li> </ol>	<p><b>Provide good quality recreation and leisure opportunities in the district.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain current levels of visits/usage to district leisure centres (measure to be determined)</li> <li>Maintain high customer satisfaction with Banbury Museum (attendance figures and schools attendance - numerical measure)</li> <li>Work with partners to develop the SW Bicester multi-sports village (project measure)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Work with partners to reduce Council costs.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce senior management costs by implementing a single shared senior management team with South Northants Council (financial measure)</li> <li>Explore opportunities to share further services with South Northamptonshire Council, for example building control (project measure)</li> <li>Explore opportunities to develop other service delivery models to further reduce the Council's costs (project measure)</li> </ol>

	<b>A</b> <b>A District of Opportunity</b>	<b>B</b> <b>A Cleaner Greener Cherwell</b>	<b>C</b> <b>A Safe, Healthy and Thriving Community</b>	<b>D</b> <b>An Accessible Value for Money Council</b>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>* Develop a robust and locally determined planning framework.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Localism – implement the Localism Act in the district (project measure)</li> <li>2. Transport/infrastructure (project measure)</li> <li>3. Development control (project measure)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Work to reduce our impact on the natural environment, limit our use of natural resources and support others in the district to do the same.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Energy Efficiency / local energy generation (project measure)</li> <li>2. CO2 reduction (project measure)</li> <li>3. Fuel poverty / affordable warmth (project measure)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Work with partners to tackle anti-social behaviour and support community safety.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with partners to reduce crime and the fear of crime in the district. (numerical measures)</li> <li>2. Work with partners to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour in the district (numerical measure)</li> <li>3. Provide a programme of activities for young people (project measure)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Demonstrate that we can be trusted to act properly for you by being transparent about our costs and performance.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Publish financial and performance data on our website on a monthly basis to enable local people to scrutinise us (project measure)</li> <li>2. Publish an annual report of our performance and accounts providing a summary of our performance in respect of local priorities (project measure)</li> <li>3. Consult with local residents in a cost effective manner to ensure the Council has a good understanding of local priorities (project measure)</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Work to improve the quality and vibrancy of our town centres and urban areas.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Canal side Banbury (project measure)</li> <li>2. Bicester Town Centre (project measure)</li> <li>3. Bolton Road Banbury (project measure)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Work with partners to support the development of Eco-Bicester, creating a centre of excellence in terms of green or sustainable living.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make progress delivering the first phase of housing (400 homes built in to the highest environmental standards) (project measure)</li> <li>2. Demonstration projects (project measure)</li> <li>3. Community participation (project measure)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Support improvement of local health facilities, services and standards across the district.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support the local NHS to retain and develop health services at the Horton General Hospital (project measure)</li> <li>2. Continue to support new and improved health services in Bicester and the surrounding area (project measure)</li> <li>3. Promote active lifestyles (project measure e.g. the Ageing Successfully programme)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Work to ensure we provide good customer service through the delivery of high quality and accessible services.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain existing levels of customer satisfaction (numerical measure)</li> <li>2. Maintain existing levels of satisfaction with information provided by the Council (numerical measure)</li> <li>3. Increase the number of our services accessible online / make it easier to deal with the Council online (project measure)</li> </ol>
<b>Pledges? Possible areas for public pledges could include the following service areas:</b>				
<b>1</b>	Affordable Housing (%)	Recycling	Leisure Centres	Savings
<b>2</b>	Bicester Town Centre	Street and Environmental Satisfaction		Customer Satisfaction
<b>3</b>		Eco-Bicester		Increase the number of online line services

## Frontline Service Priority Framework for 2011/12

Service Area	Priority Ranking 2010/11	Priority Ranking 2011/12
Refuse collection & Recycling	1	<b>1</b> ⇔
Strategic Housing	1	<b>1</b> ⇔
Anti-social behaviour	1	<b>2</b> ↗
Economic Development and Regeneration	2	<b>2</b> ⇔
Sports facilities	3	<b>3</b> ⇔
Local Development	3	<b>3</b> ⇔
Community Development	3	<b>3</b> ⇔
Housing Needs	4	<b>3</b> ↗
Private Sector Housing	4	<b>3</b> ↗
Local Transport and Concessionary Fares	4	<b>4</b> ⇔
Leisure development	3	<b>4</b> ↗
Revenues & Benefits	4	<b>4</b> ⇔
Cleansing	4	<b>4</b> ⇔
Environmental Protection	4	<b>4</b> ⇔
Arts	4	<b>4</b> ⇔
Rural Areas	4	<b>4</b> ⇔
Car Parking	4	<b>4</b> ⇔
Estates	4	<b>4</b> ⇔
Safer communities	3	<b>5</b> ↘
Health Promotion	3	<b>5</b> ↘
Building Control and Engineering	5	<b>5</b> ⇔
Public Protection	5	<b>5</b> ⇔
Conservation & Urban Centres	4	<b>5</b> ↘
Planning & Enforcement:	5	<b>5</b> ⇔
Planning control	6	<b>6</b> ⇔
Diversity and equality	6	<b>6</b> ⇔
Landscape	7	<b>7</b> ⇔
Banbury Museum	7	<b>7</b> ⇔
Tourism	7	<b>7</b> ⇔
Licensing	Page 269	<b>7</b> ⇔

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## Draft Capital Programme 2011/12

- 1.1 A total of 27 bids were received of which 3 were deleted at appraisal stage. This leaves 24 bids for consideration and these are analysed according to consultation priority below:

Priority	No. of bids
<b>1</b> Refuse collection & recycling, housing (needs, strategic & private sector), anti-social behaviour	6
<b>2</b> Economic development & regeneration	2
<b>3</b> Sports facilities, local, community & leisure development, safer communities, health promotion	2
<b>4</b> Cleansing, local transport & concessionary fares, environmental protection, conservation & urban centres, arts, rural areas, car parking, estates	1
<b>5</b> Building control & engineering, public protection, enforcement	0
<b>6</b> Planning control, diversity & equality	0
<b>7</b> Landscape, Banbury museum, tourism, licensing	0
<b>Corporate</b> Revenue & benefits, democratic services, chief executive office, member services, corporate charges, communications, treasury, improvement, community planning, elections, land charges	13
	<b>24</b>

- 1.2 The draft capital proposals to date for 2011/12 are shown in Appendix 4a these bids totalling £3,933,314 still need to be considered in the context that they must meet with the Council's priorities. Each scheme is supported by an appraisal and these have been scored according to priority by the Capital Investment Delivery Group.
- 1.3 At least one third of the capital bids can be categorised as spend to save initiatives and generate positive revenue implications which if considered for inclusion in the final 2011/12 capital programme will contribute to the financial challenges ahead.
- 1.4 The new capital bids have been scrutinised by the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board and their observations and recommendations are detailed in Appendix 5.
- 1.5 The Capital Strategy for 2011/12 has a direct impact on the Treasury management revenue budget in terms of the opportunity cost of reduced cash balances from the use of capital receipts and reserves. Decisions on the future capital programme will need to take into account the overall priorities and affordability in revenue as well as capital terms.
- 1.6 Capital balances are expected to reduce to less than £20m in 2014/15 and a detailed forecast will be included in draft 2 identifying the financial implications.
- 1.7 The Executive has agreed that 21 capital schemes which were approved as part of the 2010/11 budget process but which work has been delayed until

2011/12 will also be delivered in 2011/12 and these are detailed schedule in Appendix 4b.

- 1.8 A summary of the draft capital programme and recommended financing is summarised below:

	<b>Total Scheme Cost</b>	<b>2011/12 Profile</b>
Schemes approved and slipped from 2010/11 (Appendix 4b)	<b>£12,012,000</b>	£6,762,000
Proposed programme (Appendix 4a)	<b>£5,912,314</b>	£3,893,980
<b>Total Capital Programme to be Financed</b>	<b>£17,924,314</b>	<b>£10,655,980</b>
<b>Financed by:</b>		
Capital Receipts	<b>£13,902,264</b>	£8,156,980
<b>Government Grants</b>		
<i>£375k per annum Governmental Grant Funding towards Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants</i>	<b>£1,500,000</b>	£375,000
<b>Use of Reserves</b>		
<i>Wheeled Bins Reserve</i>	<b>£15,000</b>	£15,000
<i>Vehicle Replacement Programme</i>	<b>£605,050</b>	£207,000
<i>Housing Reserves</i>	<b>£1,902,000</b>	£1,902,000
	<b>£17,924,314</b>	<b>£10,655,980</b>

- 1.9 The Capital programme review is still ongoing and therefore a revision to the Capital programme with full financial implications will be included for consideration in the January and February 2011 budget reports.

#### **Further Document Information**

<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 4a	New Capital Bid Proposals
Appendix 4b	Schedule of capital schemes slipped from 2010/11

**Capital Bids 2011/12 by Score**

Bid No.	Consultation Priority	Capital Scheme	Service Head	Service	Capital Bid Score	Total		
						Estimated Capital Cost £s	Estimated Cost for 2010/11 £s	Revenue Costs / (Savings) £s
24	1	Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)	Gillian Greaves	Housing Services	45	£860,000	£860,000	
19	4	Vehicle Replacement Programme	Ed Potter	Environmental Services	44	£2,186,000	£207,000	(£5,000)
9	C	Extended Contract for Website Hosting	Pat Simpson	Customer Service & Information Systems	40	£59,000	£19,666	(£8,000)
5	C	Photovoltaics at Bodicote House and Banbury Museum	David Marriott	Economic Development & Estates	39	£350,000	£350,000	(£109,436)
20	C	Solar Photovoltaics at Thorpe Lane Depot	Ed Potter	Environmental Services	39	£100,000	£100,000	(£10,000)
21	C	Solar Photovoltaics at Sports Centres	Paul Marston Weston	Recreation & Health	39	£785,000	£785,000	(£370,500)
14	C	Uniform & Corporate Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Database & Application Upgrades	Pat Simpson	Customer Service & Information Systems	38	£15,000	£15,000	
22	1	Delegated Affordable Housing Capital Pot	Gillian Greaves	Housing Services	36	£500,000	£500,000	
23	1	Discretionary House Condition Grants	Gillian Greaves	Housing Services	36	£325,000	£325,000	
6	1	Orchard Way Refurbishment	David Marriott	Economic Development & Estates	34	£250,000	£250,000	(£216,000)
8	3	CCTV Internet Protocol Transmission	Chris Rothwell	Urban & Rural Services	34	£100,000	£100,000	
17	1	Mini MRF (Materials Recovery Facility)	Ed Potter	Environmental Services	34	£29,000	£29,000	(£30,000)
18	1	Recycling Bins Programme	Ed Potter	Environmental Services	34	£15,000	£15,000	(£4,000)
4	2	Fees of Future Regeneration Schemes	David Marriott	Economic Development & Estates	31	£50,000	£50,000	
1	C	Replacement Voicemail Service	Pat Simpson	Customer Service & Information Systems	29	£10,000	£10,000	
1	C	Highfield Depot Repairs	David Marriott	Economic Development & Estates	29	£10,000	£10,000	
1	C	Virtual Server Infrastructure Expansion	Pat Simpson	Customer Service & Information Systems	29	£30,914	£30,914	(£9,462)
1	C	Storage Area Networks (SAN) Expansion	Pat Simpson	Customer Service & Information Systems	29	£41,900	£41,900	(£7,328)
1	C	Core Business System Integration	Pat Simpson	Customer Service & Information Systems	28	£52,500	£52,500	
2	3	Corporate Bookings System	Ian Davies	Environment & Community	23	£50,000	£50,000	£22,500
2	C	Community Intelligence Hub	Chris Rothwell	Urban & Rural Services	21	£20,000	£20,000	(£17,000)
2	2	Kidlington Pedestrianisation	David Marriott	Economic Development & Estates	18	£50,000	£50,000	
10	C	SMS Text Messaging Functionality	Pat Simpson	Customer Service & Information Systems	17	£13,000	£13,000	£10,000
15	C	Contact Centre Call Recording	Pat Simpson	Customer Service & Information Systems	12	£10,000	£10,000	£1,000
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>						<b>£5,912,314</b>	<b>£3,893,980</b>	<b>(£753,226)</b>

C = this service was not consulted on as part of the public consultation exercise

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**APPENDIX 4b**

**2010/11 APPROVED BIDS SLIPPED INTO 2011/12**

<b>Bid No.</b>	<b>Capital Scheme</b>	<b>Service Head</b>	<b>Strategic Priority</b>	<b>Score given 2010/11</b>	<b>Slippage agreed as at 1st Nov 2010</b>	
<b>P/Y 1</b>	Funding for Mollington & Hornton Rural Exception Sites	Gillian Greaves	District of Opportunity	30	£	60,000
<b>P/Y 2</b>	Purchase of Temporary Accommodation Bryan House Bicester & Edward Street Banbury	Gillian Greaves	District of Opportunity	31	£	330,000
<b>P/Y 3</b>	Kidlington Pedestrianisation	David Marriott	District of Opportunity	19	£	20,000
<b>P/Y 4</b>	Fees for Future Regeneration Schemes	David Marriott	District of Opportunity	17	£	50,000
<b>P/Y 5</b>	Climate Changes Initiatives Fund	Ed Potter	Cleaner, Greener	Pre 10/11	£	16,000
<b>P/Y 6</b>	Bicester Cattle Market Car Park Phase 2	David Marriott		Pre 10/11	£	94,000
<b>P/Y 7</b>	Old Bodicote House	David Marriott	Accessible Value for Money	Pre 10/11	£	371,000
<b>P/Y 8</b>	Land at Claypits Lane Bicester	David Marriott		Pre 10/11	£	187,000
<b>P/Y 9</b>	Orchard Way Banbury Redevelopment	David Marriott		Pre 10/11	£	1,100,000
<b>P/Y 10</b>	Financial Ledger - Agresso 5.5	Karen Curtin		Pre 10/11	£	50,000
<b>P/Y 11</b>	Budget Module	Karen Curtin		Pre 10/11	£	15,000
<b>P/Y 12</b>	Fleet Management System	Ed Potter	Accessible Value for Money	27	£	28,000
<b>P/Y 13</b>	Village Hall, Recreation Play Grants	Paul Marston-Weston		Pre 10/11	£	19,000
<b>P/Y 14</b>	South West Bicester Sports Village	Paul Marston-Weston		Pre 10/11	£	270,000
<b>P/Y 16</b>	Urban Centres Improvements	Chris Rothwell		Pre 10/11	£	7,000
<b>P/Y 17</b>	Replacement Cabling Infrastructure for CCTV	Chris Rothwell		Pre 10/11	£	55,000
<b>P/Y 19</b>	Online Service Provision via Forms	Pat Simpson		Pre 10/11	£	20,000
<b>P/Y 21</b>	Banbury Pedestrianisation	David Marriott		Pre 10/11	£	20,000
<b>P/Y 23</b>	Thorpe Lane Depot	David Marriott		Pre 10/11	£	50,000
<b>P/Y 24</b>	Bicester Town Centre Development	David Marriott		33	£	4,000,000
						<b>£ 6,762,000</b>

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## Executive

### Pre Order Consultation - Car Parking Proposals

6 December 2010

#### Report of Head of Safer Communities, Urban and Rural Services

##### PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To advise Members on the feedback from the Pre Order consultation on car parking proposals.
- To decide on final proposals.

This report is public

##### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the feedback from the pre Order consultation.
- (2) To authorise formal Order Making on final proposals for implementation on, or as soon after, 1 March as is possible.

##### Executive Summary

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###### Introduction

- 1.1 A range of car parking proposals have been considered as part of service development for 2011/12, and through the budget preparation process.
- 1.2 These were advertised informally in October with key agencies and consultees in accordance with the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 1.3 The full feedback from this process will be tabled at the meeting as the deadline for receipt falls after the agenda is issued.

###### Proposals

- 1.4 The proposals consulted on are
  - **Increase in car parking charges.** Consideration will be given to charges being increased by 10p per hour (Banbury from 70p to 80p per hour, Bicester

from 60p to 70p per hour and all other hourly charges by a 10p multiple per hour). Commencement of charging hours to be brought forward from 8.00 am to 7.00 am.

- **Introduction of charges for Blue Badge holders.** Consideration will be given to all blue badge parking becoming chargeable. Charging to be in line with standard hourly rates, but with one additional hour free of charge at all car parks (excluding drop off/pick up bay at Bridge Street, Banbury).
  - **Introduction of evening charges.** Consideration will be given to charges being introduced from 6.00pm to 12.00 midnight at all car parks, at a charge of 50p per two hour /part two hour period.
  - **Increase of Excess Charge Notice charges.** Consideration will be given to Excess Charge Notice levels being increased by £10 for each contravention. A 'Premium Charge' of £100 to be introduced for failure to pay within specified timescale, in line with civil parking enforcement regime.
  - **Season tickets.** Pricing structure to be retained in line with increase in pay and display charges. Consideration will be given to a greater discount being offered to encourage further take up.
  - **Bringing Sunday and Bank Holiday charges in line with Monday-Saturday charges.** Consideration will be given to charging hours being brought into line with the rest of the week and hourly charges to be revised on the same basis.
  - **Charging on Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.** Consideration will be given to introducing charges on these days in line with standard hourly rates.
- 1.5 It is also intended that the amendments that were discussed and agreed in May 2010 for the changes to car parking in Bicester as a consequence of the town centre redevelopment, be formally advertised and implemented at the same time as these proposals.
- 1.6 These proposals, if adopted, would require amendment to the Orders which currently regulate the Council's off-street car parks. It is now intended that those proposals that are agreed be introduced in March 2011.
- 1.7 To implement on 1 March 2011 requires formal advert week commencing 13 December 2010.

### **Conclusion**

- 1.8 The feedback from pre Order consultation will help guide final proposals for formal advertising of revised car park Orders to be effective on or as soon after the 1 March 2011.



## **Background Information**

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- 2.1 The full pre Order consultation summary-To be tabled at the meeting.

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

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- 3.1 Members to consider the feedback from pre Order consultation and to determine final proposals to be formally advertised.

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

**Option One** Consider the feedback from pre-Order consultation to assist in determining final car park proposals.

**Option Two** Disregard the feedback.

## **Consultations**

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**Statutory, voluntary and local agencies.** Feedback included at Appendix 1. Further consultation feedback to be presented at the meeting.

## **Implications**

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**Financial:** There are no direct financial implications from the pre Order consultation. However, the proposals do seek to maximise our use of resources whilst remaining competitively priced with other private car parks, but without bearing a further burden on council tax payers.  
Comments checked by Denise Taylor, Service Accountant, 01295 221982

**Legal:** This report relates only to responses received to the pre-order consultations. Any objections received following publication of the formal notice of proposals will be submitted to the Executive in due course.  
Comments checked by Malcolm Saunders Senior Legal Assistant 01295 221692

**Risk Management:** By undertaking this pre-Order consultation and securing feedback from stakeholders, and by the Executive considering this feedback in determining the final proposals for formal advert, the Council is at reduced risk of Judicial Review. The formal Order making provides a further opportunity for formal comment by stakeholders on the final proposals ahead of the Council publishing final Notice. Depending on final proposals, there are risks that implementation could lead to reduction in numbers using

Council car parks and there is a risk of the Councils reputation being harmed.

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

**Equalities**

The proposals were presented to the Cherwell Disability Forum in view of the proposals around Blue Badge Holder charges.

**Wards Affected**

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All

**Corporate Plan Themes**

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**District of Opportunity**

**Executive Portfolio**

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**Councillor Nigel Morris**

**Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural Services**

**Document Information**

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Initial summary of feedback from the Pre-Order consultation.
<b>Background Papers</b>	
Feedback from consultation- To be tabled	
<b>Report Author</b>	Chris Rothwell, Head of Safer Communities, Urban and Rural Services
<b>Contact Information</b>	01295 221712 chris.rothwell@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk

## Proposed Increase to Car Parking Charges

### Initial Summary of Pre Order Consultation Responses

Ref	Proposal	Consultation Responses (numbers received in brackets)
1	<b>10p per hour increase on car parking charges</b>	<b>Object: (1)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charges already too high.</li> </ul> <b>Approve: (3)</b>
2	<b>Blue badge holder parking increase of fees / charging hours</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All blue badge parking to become chargeable.</li> <li>• Charging in line with standard hourly rates</li> </ul>	<b>Objections (19)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unacceptable especially charging the same amount as able bodied people as the Disabled cannot work / little comprehension regarding emotional &amp; psychological effects if situations like this (1)</li> <li>• This is a critically handicapping move for mobility impaired people. It will stop many being part of the community in the main centres (1)</li> <li>• It will raise the first barrier they have to their independence (1)</li> <li>• A discounted charge should be paid by blue badge holders (1)</li> <li>• Free parking should continue due to the cut in benefits for the disabled (1)</li> <li>• Unfair penalising of their 'helpful privileges' (1)</li> <li>• Badge holders would park on yellow lines free of charge thus causing congestion on the streets. (4) Double-yellow parking will potentially cost much more than you'll recoup in the parking charges.</li> <li>• Would result in less business for Banbury &amp; Bicester shops / businesses (2)</li> <li>• Discrimination: Some disabled people would not be able to use the ticket machines</li> <li>• Charging the same rates as able bodied is discrimination (2)</li> <li>• Many Badge holders depend on very busy / stressed carers. This is an obstacle resulting in them being less inclined to donate their time (1)</li> <li>• Victimisation because badge holders are vulnerable / an easy target. Totally unjust</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One additional hour FOC at all short/ultra short stay car parks</b></li> </ul>	<p>as they have previously worked, paying taxes &amp; dues (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Another burden for the poorer people (1)</li> <li>• This is a money grabbing exercise which will penalise the general public and bleed the existing scheme. It will alienate the Council further (2) Outrageous.</li> <li>• Cannot carry shopping therefore cannot use public transport. (1)</li> </ul> <p><b>Approve (4)</b> In support with the proviso of 1 free hour. (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DLA is based on your ability and is not means tested, therefore any charges effect those rich or poor - as they do everyone else. You are not 'poorer' because you are disabled (1)</li> <li>• It is reasonable to expect all members of the community, including Blue Badge holders, to help achieve the savings required by the current financial climate. It would be more pertinent for Blue Badge holders to seek a reasonable number and placement of reserved car parking spaces, and perhaps some degree of concessionary charge (such as a reduced season ticket), rather than expecting to be excluded from paying a reasonable level of car parking fee (1)</li> </ul>
3	<b>Introduction of evening charges</b>	<p><b>Object: (2)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This will adversely affect the night time economy of the town at a time when it should be supported.</li> <li>• If you go for an evening meal, you don't want to be timed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Approve: (2)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No objection in principal but would prefer a flat tariff i.e. 50p or £1.00 to park from 6pm to the following morning.</li> <li>• As long as it's well signposted.</li> </ul>
4.	<b>Increase of Excess Charges Notice charges.</b>	<p><b>Object: (1)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive, surely does not reflect admin involved.</li> </ul> <p><b>Approve: (3)</b></p>
6	<b>Unifying Sunday &amp; Bank Holiday charges in line with Mon-Sat charges</b>	<p><b>Object: (5):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended hours for Wardens thus more money paid on 'unnecessary things'.</li> <li>• Disagree - the Sunday charge is fairly new and expensive when you only need to</li> </ul>

		<p>spend an hour in town.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunday and BH should be lower than the rest of the week - it encourages shoppers!</li> <li>• Having a daily fee that is chargeable whatever day of the week would be easy to administer, and would be easily understood, but seems a bit tight for Sundays and Bank Holidays. Might it be more acceptable (and be seen as more generous) to have a reduced daily flat rate on these days (50p for 2hrs, similar to your proposed evening charges)? Obviously depends on what financial benefit would accrue.</li> <li>• Bank holiday charging –No</li> </ul> <p><b>Approve: (1)</b> Sunday charging yes.</p>
7	<p><b>Charging on Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Christmas Day, Boxing Day &amp; New Year's Day.</b></p>	<p><b>Object: (3)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much will it cost to enforce on Christmas day?!</li> <li>• These are British, but Christian, festivals. Seems a bit Scrooge-like to charge on such days but, without including other ethnic festive days, there is a logic to having some form of parking charge for every day. Is the forecast level of income on these days worthwhile, considering the level of public outcry that may be generated? Might some degree of generosity in approach achieve public good-will?</li> <li>• Yes - if people want to go shopping on Good Friday and Boxing Day let them pay! Seems a bit uncharitable on Christmas Day and Easter Sunday though! (1Yes &amp; 1 No)</li> </ul> <p><b>Approve: (2)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completely right, the busiest times of the year so why not take in money?</li> </ul>

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