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Committee: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **Tuesday 9 March 2010**

Time: **6.30 pm**

Venue **Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA**

Membership

Councillor Daniel Sames (Chairman)	Councillor Lynda Thirzie Smart (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Ann Bonner	Councillor Nick Cotter
Councillor John Donaldson	Councillor Alastair Milne Home
Councillor Tony Ilott	Councillor Leslie F Sibley
Councillor P A O'Sullivan	Councillor Chris Smithson
Councillor Trevor Stevens	Councillor Lawrie Stratford

Substitutes

Councillor Devena Rae
Councillor George Parish
Councillor John Wyse

Councillor Simon Holland
Councillor Rose Stratford

AGENDA

Overview and Scrutiny Members should not normally be subject to the party whip.
Where a member is subject to a party whip they must declare this at the beginning of the meeting and it should be recorded in the minutes.

1. Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members

2. Declarations of Interest

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

3. Urgent Business

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

4. Minutes (Pages 1 - 8)

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2010.

5. Built Environment Conservation Areas (Pages 9 - 22)

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, the Strategic Director, Planning Housing and Economy and officers from Planning and Housing Services will be present at the meeting.

This is an opportunity for the Committee to find out more about the policies and regulations applicable to conservation areas and to question officers on the Council's use of those policies.

Following the discussion the Committee will wish to consider whether to make recommendations to the Executive or to add the topic to their work programme for more detailed scrutiny in 2010/11.

6. Customer Access by Phone (Pages 23 - 30)

Report of Head of Customer Service & Information Services

Summary

This report outlines a new approach to using the contact centre and switchboard telephone systems to improve their resilience, make it quicker for customers to get the information they need, and improve the quality of information available to the Council about how calls are handled.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Service and ICT and the Head of Customer Service and Information Systems will be present at the meeting to present the report.

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to consider the proposed changes to the Council's telephony system and to make recommendations as appropriate to the Executive for its meeting on 12 April 2010.

7. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme (Pages 31 - 38)

Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Summary

To agree topics for future meetings, to identify issues arising from the Forward Plan (March – June 2010) and to monitor the status of items on the work programme.

The Chairman of the Anti Social Behaviour Task & Finish Group will be present at the meeting to discuss the conclusions of that review and the draft recommendations to Executive. The Strategic Director, Planning Housing and Economy will also be present and will brief the Committee on the Kidlington Pedestrianisation Capital Bid.

Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Note the current overview and scrutiny work programme for 2009/10 as set out at Appendix 1 and make amendments as necessary;
- (2) Note the contents of the Forward Plan and identify any possible topics for scrutiny;
- (3) Note the draft report of the Anti Social Behaviour Task & Finish Group and consider whether they wish to amend or add to the recommendations to the Executive.

Information about this Agenda

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence should be notified to democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or (01295) 221583 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 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 Catherine Phythian, Legal and Democratic Services
catherine.phythian@cherwell-dc.gov.uk (01295) 221583

Mary Harpley
Chief Executive

Published on Monday 1 March 2010

Agenda Item 4

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 9 February 2010 at 6.30 pm

Present:	Councillor Daniel Sames (Chairman) Councillor Lynda Thirzie Smart (Vice-Chairman) Councillor Ann Bonner Councillor John Donaldson Councillor Alastair Milne Home Councillor Tony Ilott Councillor Leslie F Sibley Councillor P A O'Sullivan Councillor Chris Smithson Councillor Trevor Stevens Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Substitute Members:	Councillor Devena Rae (In place of Councillor Nick Cotter)
Also Present:	Councillor Nigel Morris Councillor Carol Steward Francesca Heffernan, Decision Making and Young People Worker, Oxfordshire County Council Emily Little, Involvement Officer, Participation and Play, Oxfordshire County Council Participants of the Local Councillor Shadowing Programme from Banbury School and Frank Wise School
Apologies for absence:	Councillor Nick Cotter Councillor Colin Clarke
Officers:	Chris Rothwell, Head of Urban & Rural Services Grahame Helm, Head of Safer Communities & Community Development Philip Rolls, Recreation & Health Improvement Manager Craig Forsyth, Communications Officer Catherine Phythian, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer Natasha Clark, Trainee Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

6. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2009/10.

Councillor Alastair Milne Home, Personal, as a Member of the Board of the Banbury Community Transport Association.

Councillor P A O'Sullivan, Personal, as Cherwell District Council's elected Member representative on the Board of the Banbury Community Transport Association.

45 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

46 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 January 2010 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

47 Youth Engagement Scrutiny

The Chairman explained that this was an opportunity for the Committee to question officers from Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council who were involved in the provision of youth services and specifically in activities which promote the democratic engagement of young people. He welcomed the following guests:

- Francesca Heffernan, Decision Making and Young People Worker, Oxfordshire County Council
- Emily Little, Involvement Officer, Participation and Play, Oxfordshire County Council
- Phil Rolls, Recreation and Health Improvement Manager, Cherwell District Council

The Chairman also welcomed the two pupils from Banbury School, a pupil and teacher from Frank Wise School and Councillor Carol Steward. The pupils were all members of their respective school youth councils and, together with Councillor Steward, were participating in the Local Councillor Shadowing programme.

The Chairman began by asking the representatives from Oxfordshire County Council to outline their roles.

Francesca Heffernan explained that her post involved engaging young people in north Oxfordshire in three distinct areas: Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS); Connexions; and, the youth offending service. Ms. Heffernan advised the Committee that there were three funds available to support youth projects, youth groups, activities and facilities in Oxfordshire: the Chill Out Fund; Youth Opportunities; and, the Youth Capital Fund. Ms. Heffernan worked within the Participation Team which helped young people get involved in the decision-making process for the latter two funds. The Committee was advised that the Participation Workers also supported and helped build up the youth forums in the district.

Emily Little explained that her post included coordinating and facilitating the Oxfordshire Youth Parliament and coordinating and supporting the annual cycle of UK Youth Parliament elections across the county. In addition, she supported the Members and Deputy Members of the Youth Parliament during their term of office.

In the course of the discussion and questioning the following points emerged:

Youth Forums/Councils

Francesca Heffernan explained that at present in Cherwell there was an established youth council in Bicester, a youth forum in Banbury and a newly formed youth forum in Kidlington. Work was currently underway to establish a North Youth Forum which would be held three times a year and bring together the youth forums in the north and west of the county.

Members were interested to learn about how the outcomes and impact of the youth forums/parliament were measured and monitored. The Oxfordshire County Council representatives reported that there were many successful outcomes however acknowledged it was difficult to monitor the impact. They reported that from the perspective of the young people, success could be measured by their achievements and cited the examples of the Bicester Youth Council who had led the introduction of a recycling initiative in schools in the town; the manifesto of the UK Youth Parliament which had included promoting positive images of young people and had led to the production of a DVD entitled "the youth of today" which explored the reasons for the negative images of young people and highlighted the positive work of young people.

In response to questions, the Decision Making and Young People Worker explained that in the long term she hoped that more young people would be represented and given a voice in the issues that affected them. This would be achieved through greater partnership working between the county, district and town/parish councils together with schools and voluntary organisations.

School Councils

The Committee was interested to learn about how the school councils functioned. The Frank Wise pupil explained that he was the Chairman of his school council which included four senior and four junior pupils. A suggestion box was available in which any student could submit an item for discussion by the school council. The teacher from Frank Wise School explained that the school council had been running for a few years and that there were links to various groups to ensure that there were opportunities for young people with special needs and also access to mainstream activities.

The Banbury School pupils explained that there were three levels at their school: year group councils; a lower and an upper school council; and, a school parliament. The pupils explained that their School Parliament had limited decision making powers but gave the members an opportunity to have an understanding of democracy and how it works.

Activities and Communication

The Involvement Officer informed the Committee that there were currently two county-wide websites which hold information in regard to young people and

include information on what is available in the district. Youth Activator boards had recently been fitted in all secondary schools (Warriner / Kidlington / North Oxfordshire Academy and Banbury School) and would be fitted in all schools by Easter 2010. The boards hold information for young people on what's going on in their area. The boards were updated monthly, so hold up to date information in the areas of Physical Activities / Arts & Culture / Health & Info and Youth Clubs.

The Banbury School pupils advised the Committee that they were not aware of the boards in their school and had not heard of the county-wide websites. Furthermore, one of the pupils explained that not all young people have frequent access to the internet as access at school was limited and not all homes have an internet connection so it was important to use a variety of means of communication.

The pupils suggested a number of ways to improve communication with young people: school websites could host links to other websites; school newspapers/magazines could contain information on general activities, the activities of youth forums and events organised by the Council such as Local Democracy Week; information could be made available to parents at parents evening; the students themselves could disseminate information submitted to the school council through year representatives to class representatives; the Council could publicise events in the local media including newspapers and radio.

The teacher from Frank Wise School reported that the school had good and frequent contact with the Involvement Officer who provided support and information on activities in the district. However, he acknowledged that not all of the information was disseminated through the school and was an area he would be addressing.

The Committee agreed that it was important to ask young people about the activities they want and the mechanism for doing this should incorporate a wide range of young people, not only those who are involved in youth/school councils. In response to the Committee's question regarding what the Council could do to improve and promote the engagement of young people in local democracy, the pupils explained that they felt it was important to ask their views about activities and to make information and activities more widely available.

Conclusions

The Chairman thanked the representatives of Oxfordshire County Council, Banbury School, Frank Wise School and Cherwell District Council for attending the meeting and making a valuable contribution to the scrutiny review. He asked the Board to reflect on the evidence presented at the meeting, on the information obtained from the earlier briefing documents, discussions with officers at the Committee's previous four meetings and on the draft report that had been circulated to Members.

The Committee agreed that based on the evidence submitted they felt that a single all encompassing recommendation that the Council should introduce a formal policy for youth engagement would be sufficient.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2009/10

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services on the overview and scrutiny work programme 2009/10.

Existing Work Programme

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the existing work programme for 2009/10. Members noted that the Task and Finish Group on Anti-Social Behaviour would be meeting on 11 February 2010 to consider the Group's recommendations to Executive. Members requested that the report be brought to their March meeting for discussion prior to submission to the Executive as there appeared to be a number of areas that overlapped with the Committee's review on youth engagement.

Forward Plan

The Committee did not identify any further items from the Forward Plan for inclusion on their work programme.

Scheduling

Tackling Deprivation

The Committee observed that "tackling deprivation" was too broad an area to be included on the work programme as a potential scrutiny topic. However, they agreed that they would consider deprivation at their next meeting but only in relation to planning policy issues and Houses of Multiple Occupancy.

Built Environment Conservation Areas

The Committee noted that the Portfolio Holder Planning and Housing, the Strategic Director Planning and Housing and officers from Housing and Planning would attend the March meeting to brief Members on this issue. The briefing would cover the existing planning policies and regulations applicable to conservation areas; additional policies and controls that might be applied to conservation areas; and the relationship between Houses of Multiple Occupancy and deprivation.

Following the briefing the Committee would be in a position to determine whether to make recommendations to the Executive or to add the topic to their work programme for more detailed scrutiny in 2010/11.

The Chairman asked Councillor Bonner, who had raised the topic, to produce a short note outlining her concerns and issues with regard to this topic. The Scrutiny Officer would circulate the note to the Committee and officers in advance of the March meeting.

Phone Access and Telephony Review

The Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that their request for the Executive to consider this item at their later March or April meeting to enable the Committee to consider the report had not yet been confirmed. The Scrutiny Officer agreed to progress this and advise Members once a decision had been reached.

Monitoring

Markets

The Portfolio Holder Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural and the Head of Urban and Rural Services updated Members on the progress with regard to the district's markets, in particular the appointment of a market operator for Banbury market, since the Committee's meeting on 10 November 2009.

In response to questions, the Head of Urban and Rural Services advised Members that the newly appointed market operator would assume formal responsibility for Banbury market on 1 April 2011. He confirmed that although the Council and the market operator would be working in partnership to deliver improvements to Banbury market, the relationship was underpinned by a formal contract that included appropriate break clauses and termination options. He reassured Members that the market traders had been given the opportunity to meet the new market operator at "drop in sessions" and make their views known.

The Committee asked whether the corporate risk register included an entry for the possible insolvency on the part of the market operator. The Head of Urban and Rural Services reminded Members that the Council had appointed the market operator following a rigorous tendering process but undertook to check and if necessary add an entry to the risk register.

Concessionary Travel

The Portfolio Holder Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural and the Head of Safer Communities and Community Development updated Members on progress with regard to the scrutiny recommendations on Concessionary Travel. The Committee noted that the responsibility for administering both the statutory minimum concession and discretionary concession for travel will transfer from district to county councils on 1 April 2011. Consequently no further action would be taken in relation to the recommendations on the introduction of a smart card reader scheme (Recommendation 1), the promotion of a concessionary travel consortium in Oxfordshire (Recommendation 6) or any changes to the start time of the discretionary scheme in 2010/11 (Recommendation 8).

The Head of Safer Communities and Community Development advised Members that the concessionary fare service providers were now providing monthly management information and that there was no evidence that mis-ticketing was either fraudulent or prolific.

Commenting on the research report on Community Transport provision in Cherwell District the Portfolio Holder Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural said that this had been an interesting piece of work that highlighted the differences between dial-a-ride and other voluntary schemes. He informed Members that he would be taking this work forward with officers in 2010/11.

The Committee expressed some concern that there was as yet no guidance on the financial implications or operational practicalities of the transfer of responsibility for concessionary travel from district to county councils. They encouraged the Portfolio Holder to initiate discussions with his counterparts at

the county council, as they felt a pro-active approach from Cherwell would do more to safeguard the interests of Cherwell residents.

Residents' Parking (Banbury)

Some Members of the Committee requested an update on this topic. The Portfolio Holder Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural reported that the Executive had considered this at their February meeting. Detailed plans were currently being developed for all of the consulted zones, however the timeframe had not yet been finalised. The Committee was advised that civil parking enforcement would pass from the County to Cherwell District Council in April 2011. The Portfolio Holder Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural advised the Committee that he would be in a position to bring further information to the Committee in the summer.

Resolved

- 1) That the current overview and scrutiny programme for 2009/10 be agreed.
- 2) That the contents of the Forward Plan be noted.
- 3) That the progress against the scrutiny recommendations on the future of markets in the district be noted.
- 4) That the progress against scrutiny recommendations on concessionary travel be noted.
- 5) That the Portfolio Holder Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural be asked to initiate discussions with the county council regarding the financial implications and operational practicalities arising from the transfer of responsibility for concessionary travel from district to county councils.

The meeting ended at 9.50 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Built Environment Conservation Areas

9 March 2010

Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To conduct an initial scrutiny review into the Council's approach to Built Environment Conservation Areas and to consider whether to make recommendations to the Executive at this time and whether to undertake further scrutiny into this topic in 2010/11.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Note the briefing on the Council's approach to Built Environment Conservation Areas.
- (2) Consider whether they wish to make any recommendations to the Executive.
- (3) Consider whether they wish to include the issue on their work programme for further scrutiny in 2010/11.

Details

1 Built Environment Conservation Areas

- 1.1. At the meeting in January 2010 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reconsidered the draft scoping document for a scrutiny review into the Council's policies towards built area conservation.
- 1.2. The Committee agreed to consider the matter at the March meeting and asked officers to provide a presentation and briefing on the existing planning policies and regulations applicable to conservation areas; additional policies and controls that might be applied to conservation areas; and the relationship between Houses of Multiple Occupancy and deprivation in conservation areas.

1.3 The Strategic Director, Planning Housing and Economy will give a presentation at the meeting but Members may wish to familiarise themselves with the background information presented at Appendices 1 and 2.

2 Conclusion

2.1 Following the briefing the Committee will be in a position to determine whether to make recommendations to the Executive and/or to add the topic to their work programme for more detailed scrutiny in 2010/11.

Implications

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

Legal: There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

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

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

A district of opportunity; A safe and healthy Cherwell; A cleaner, greener Cherwell

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Michael Gibbard
Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Conservation area briefing note
Appendix 2	Houses in Multiple Occupancy briefing note
Background Papers	
Draft Report:	
Report Author	Catherine Phythian, Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
Contact Information	01295 221583 Catherine.Phythian@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Briefing Note

February 2010

Conservation Areas

1 Role of Conservation areas

“Areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.”

Supported by:-

- Legislation (Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)
- National Guidance (PPG15, English Heritage Guidance on best practice, etc)
- Regional and local planning policy and guidance (South East Plan, Cherwell Local Plan)
- Conservation Area Appraisals

2 Role of Local authority

- Duty to designate and review
- Duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area
- Duty to assess special character

3 What difference does conservation area designation make?

- Different **permitted development rights** in conservation areas
- Opportunity to consider **removing permitted development rights** (Article 4 Directions)
- Consent required for **demolition**
- Greater control over **advertisements and trees** in conservation areas
- LPA can require **additional details** as part of planning applications
- Presumption in favour of **retaining buildings** that make a positive contribution (even if unlisted)

4 Cherwell’s approach to conservation area designation and management

- Planning policies in Local Plan and LDF
- General guidance notes
- Consider SPGs and SPDs where appropriate
- Conservation area appraisals
- Article 4 Directions
- Grant schemes to support specific local areas (new initiative)

5 Key issues

- Are there misconceptions over the role and purpose of Conservation Area?
- Are there misconceptions as to what the extra controls Conservation Area designation provides?

6 How can we best direct our efforts to protect, maintain and enhance our conservation areas?

Possible priority areas

- Shop fronts and signage
- Subdivisions of houses into flats
- Loss of traditional features
- Maintenance of buildings and public realm
- Improving quality of new development including extensions to existing buildings

1 Role of Conservation areas

Conservation areas

“Areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.”

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

PPG 15

SE Plan

Adopted Cherwell Local Plan

Non Stat Cherwell Local Plan

Supplementary Planning Documents

Conservation Area Appraisals

English Heritage Guidance on best practice

2 Role of Local Authority

Provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

S69:

- duty to designate
- duty to review from time to time

S71:

- duty to publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement
- submit proposals to a public meeting
- have regard to views expressed

S72:

- pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area

S74

- a building cannot be demolished without consent

S57

- councils can contribute towards the repair or maintenance of a listed or unlisted building of architectural or historic interest and its garden through grant or loan

SE Plan policies

POLICY BE5: VILLAGE MANAGEMENT

In preparing local development documents (LDDs), local planning authorities should positively plan to meet the defined local needs of their rural communities for small scale affordable housing, business and service development, taking account of changing patterns of agriculture, economic diversification, and continued viability of local services.

LDDs should define their approach to development in villages based on the functions performed, their accessibility, the need to protect or extend key local services and the capacity of the built form and landscape setting of the village. All new development should be subject to rigorous design and sustainability criteria so that the distinctive character of the village is not damaged.

To assist this, local planning authorities should encourage community-led local assessments of need and action planning to inform decision making processes.

POLICY BE6: MANAGEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

When developing and implementing plans and strategies, local authorities and other bodies will adopt policies and support proposals which protect, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment and the contribution it makes to local and regional distinctiveness and sense of place. The region's internationally and nationally designated historic assets should receive the highest level of protection. Proposals that make sensitive use of historic assets through regeneration, particularly where these bring redundant or under-used buildings and areas into appropriate use should be encouraged.

3 What difference does conservation area designation make?**Provisions of PPG 15 (by paragraph reference)**

- 4.3 Important that conservation areas are seen to **justify their status** and that the concept is not devalued by the designation of areas lacking any special interest
- 4.4 Definition of an area's special architectural or historic interest to derive from an **appraisal** of
 - Topography
 - Historical development
 - Archaeological significance
 - Prevalent building materials
 - Character and hierarchy of space
 - Quality and relationship of buildings
 - Trees and other green features
 - Unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the special interest
- 4.5 In deciding whether to designate LPA may take into account the **resources** required for
 - administration of controls
 - consultation with local residents
 - formulation of policies
- 4.9 **Policies** will be needed setting out what is to be preserved and enhanced and how, separate from Development Plan, in an appraisal
- 4.14 Development proposals will be judged for their **effect** on the character and appearance as identified in the appraisal
- 4.16 Emphasis on controlled and managed change, avoiding unnecessarily detailed controls
- 4.17 New buildings should be designed with respect for their context
- 4.18 LPA can ask for **detail**. Special regard should be had for
 - Scale
 - Height
 - Form
 - Massing
 - Respect for pattern of frontages
 - Vertical & horizontal emphasis
 - Detailed design eg scale & spacing of window openings, nature & quality of materials

4.19 Must give high priority to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance. If conflict, presumption against

4.20 Development can leave the area unharmed ie neutral

4.21 Different **permitted development rights** in conservation areas. Need consent for

- cladding
- dormer windows
- satellite dishes fronting highway
- smaller extensions
- Demolition of buildings over 115 cubic metres (=single garage)
- Demolition of front walls over 1m and other walls over 2m

4.22 Under Article 4(2) can withdraw permitted development rights eg for replacement of doors, windows, roofs, on frontages, subject only to publicising proposals and views of local people

4.23 Under Article 4(1) can withdraw wider PD rights, subject to SoS approval. SoS generally in favour where

- backed by clear assessment of special interest (in appraisal)
- importance to special interest is established (in appraisal)
- local support
- involves minimum necessary withdrawal.

4.24 Provision for payment of compensation for removal of PD rights

4.25 Consent required for **demolition**

4.27 General presumption in favour of retaining buildings that make a positive contribution. Must be assessed against same broad criteria as for demolition of listed buildings. Where little or no contribution, full information required about replacement and merits of this can be considered.

4.28 Demolition of part of a building: Schimitzu case

4.29 Can link by condition that a contract for redevelopment must be let before demolition

4.30 **Advertisement** control

4.31 **Trees:** need to give 6 weeks notice in writing of intent to lop, top or fell. Up to 2 years work to a group of trees can be approved at one time.

4 Cherwell's approach to conservation area designation and management

Adopted Cherwell Local Plan Policies

C18 In determining application for LBC the Council will have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest. The Council will normally only approve internal and external alterations or extensions to a listed building which are minor and sympathetic to the architectural and historic character of the building.

C23 Presumption in favour of retaining buildings, walls, trees or other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

C27 Development in villages will be expected to respect their historic settlement pattern.

C28 Control will be exercised over all new development, including conversions and extensions, to ensure that the standards of layout, design and external appearance, including the choice of external finish materials, are sympathetic to the character of the urban or rural context of that development. In sensitive areas, such as conservation areas development will be required to be of a high standard and the use of traditional local building materials will normally be required.

C30 Design control will be exercised to ensure

- i) New housing development is compatible with the appearance, character, layout, scale and density of existing dwellings in the vicinity;
- ii) that any proposal to extend an existing dwelling is compatible with the scale of the existing dwelling, its curtilage and the character of the street scene;
- iii) that new housing development or any proposal for extension... or conversion provides standards of amenity and privacy acceptable to the LPA.

C31 In existing and proposed residential areas any development which is not compatible with the residential character of the area, or would cause an unacceptable level of nuisance or visual intrusion will not normally be permitted.

C33 The Council will seek to retain any undeveloped gap of land which is important in preserving the character of a loose knit settlement structure or in maintaining the proper setting for a listed building or in preserving a view or feature of recognised amenity or historical value.

Non Stat Plan policies

Limited weight

Draft policy in emerging Core Strategy**Policy SD 13****The Built Environment**

New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design. Where development is in the vicinity of any of the district's distinctive natural or historic assets, delivering high quality design will be essential.

New development should:

- Respect local topography and landscape features, including skylines, valley floors, significant trees, historic boundaries, landmarks, features or views, in particular within designated landscapes, within the Cherwell Valley and within conservation areas and their setting.
- Preserve and enhance designated historic assets, features, areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated
- Respect the traditional pattern of routes, spaces, blocks, plots, enclosures and the form, scale and massing of buildings
- Reflect or, in a contemporary design response, re-interpret local distinctiveness, including elements of construction, elevational detailing, windows and doors, building and surfacing materials and colour palette
- Demonstrate an holistic approach to the design of the public realm following the principles set out in The Manual For Streets

- Be compatible with up to date urban design and Secured By Design principles
- Incorporate energy efficient design, whilst ensuring that the aesthetic implications of green technology are appropriate to the context (also see Policies SD 1 - 5 on climate change and renewable energy)

The Council will provide more detailed design policies in the Delivery DPD.

Where the Council prepares site specific Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), generic SPDs on non-site specific issues and Informal Development Principles, applicants should have regard to these when drawing up design proposals for these sites.

The design of all new development will need to be informed by an analysis of the context, together with an explanation and justification of the principles that have informed the design rationale. This should be demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the planning application.

For major sites and complex developments, Design Codes will need to be prepared in conjunction with the Council and local stakeholders to ensure appropriate character and that co-ordinated high quality design is delivered throughout.

SPG/Ds

- We currently only have site specific SPGs and SPDs.
- We have informal guidance notes (with limited weight) on
 - Conservation Areas
 - Listed Buildings
 - Doors and windows in Conservation Areas
 - Building in harmony with the environment
 - Householder design guide
 - The redevelopment of specific sites (eg Dashwood School, St Edburg's School)
- Informal guidance is in preparation on
 - Subdivision of Houses into Flats (held in abeyance for 2 years, work now recommenced)
 - The use of lime
 - Energy efficiency in historic homes

Conservation Area Appraisals

The role of appraisals is to define the special architectural and historic character. The Council has recently invested staff time in preparing appraisals.

- 58 Conservation Areas designated
- 43% reviewed within last 5 years
- 4 underway at present including new designation at Mollington
- 6 new designated within last 5 years
- 75% with management plans
- Programme recently of 11 pa to get all up to date within 5 years
- Future programme reduced to 6 pa due to staff reduction and other commitments
- Have concentrated on those closest to urban areas
- Now concentrating on category A and B villages

Article 4 Directions

Within conservation areas permitted development rights are automatically reduced so that more work requires planning permission. However, they are not removed altogether and a significant amount of development can still be carried out, particularly to dwelling houses, without the need for planning permission. The accumulation of minor works can have a significant impact on the character and appearance of conservation areas.

Article 4 Directions can be introduced to remove specific permitted development rights. Article 4(1) Directions require the permission of the Secretary of State. Article 4 (2) Directions do not and apply only to dwelling houses in conservation areas, enabling LPAs to bring the permitted development rights of dwelling houses into line with those for flats, shops and commercial premises within conservation areas. Article 4 (2) Directions can be introduced to take away specified permitted development rights for works which affect the frontages (only) of dwellings to a highway, waterway or open space. Works covered by the Direction then require planning permission; no fee is payable; there is the usual right of appeal.

Article 4(2) Directions are usually require that permission be sought for

- Alterations to windows such as the replacement of timber sliding sashes with mock sashes, casements or uPVC;
- Alterations to doors such as the replacement of timber panelled or boarded doors with glass or uPVC doors;
- Alterations to roofs including the replacement of natural stone flags or slate with concrete tile, or the insertion of rooflights;
- Alterations of roofing alignment and insertion of rooflights;
- The erection of porches;
- The removal of chimneys;
- The removal of boundary walls, fences or railings and gates;

Research by the English Historic Towns Forum has shown that 81% of local planning authorities have Article 4 directions for one or more of their conservation areas and that 19 % of conservation areas nationwide have Article 4 Directions applied to them.

Cherwell has 6 very specific Article 4 Directions in place at

- Kidlington: 1977 restricts motor cycle racing
- Mollington: 1970 restricts erection of agricultural building on specific land
- Balscott : 1969 restricts erection of agricultural building on specific land
- Wroxton: 1953 removed specific permitted development rights (enlargement, improvement, garage, stable, loose box) from historic part of the village.

Grant Aid

Section 57 of The Act enables LPAs to contribute towards the repair or maintenance of a listed or unlisted building of architectural or historic interest and its garden through grant aid or loan.

The Council used to operate Conservation area improvement grant schemes and also grant aid the repair of listed buildings but these programmes ceased over 10 years ago.

A bid was made for an allocation in the 2010-11 budget to target three specific areas. Although this was unsuccessful, it is now proposed to allocate £100,000 of the Planning Delivery Grant award to achieve the same outcomes. Terms of reference of the scheme to be put to The Executive shortly for approval. Initiatives such as this are very heavy on staff time so we have also applied for funding through English Heritage for financial assistance from the New Jobs Fund programme, which would pay for administrative support for this programme for 6 month period. The three proposed areas are

- shop front improvements in Parsons Street
- shop fronts improvements in Market Square, Bicester
- environmental improvements in Grimsbury.

Shop front improvement schemes

It is proposed that a combination of guidance and incentive be offered:

- A revised Shop Front Design Guidance document be produced
- Grant aid equivalent to a proportion of the costs of the repair of an historic shop front or replacement of a poor quality shop front be offered
- Effort be targeted at specific identified properties in Parsons Street and Market Square

Grimsbury Property Improvements

It is proposed that this initiative be two fold:

- Many properties, particularly in **West Street and Middleton Road**, are in a very poor state of repair, with inappropriate replacement windows etc. It is proposed to target specific property /ies, possibly working in conjunction with A2 Dominium, to achieve an exemplar project, and also to grant aid the repair of other properties in these streets.
- Detailed guidance would be produced and distributed in the area advising people how to repair their property
- Consideration will also be given to the benefits of serving an Article 4 (2) Direction with the aim of preventing any further deterioration in the character and appearance of the area.
- The **brick raised planting beds** in Centre Street and East Street, erected some 15 or so years ago to prevent rat running, are in a state of collapse. It is proposed to work with Oxfordshire Highways and Banbury Town Council, involving local residents, to secure replacement landscape schemes for these three areas.

5 Key Issues

- **Are there misconceptions over the role and purpose of Conservation Area?**
- **Are there misconceptions as to what extra controls Conservation Area designation provides?**

Discussion points:

Designation does not require consent to be sought for

- changing windows
- doors
- demolition of front boundary walls under 1m in height
- re-roofing.

How can we best direct our efforts to protect, maintain and enhance our conservation areas?

Possible priority areas

- Shop fronts and signage: Parsons Street and Market Square
- Subdivisions of houses into flats
- Loss of traditional features
- Maintenance of buildings and public realm
- Improving quality of new development including extensions to existing buildings.

Briefing Note
February 2010
Houses in Multiple-occupation (HMOs)**What is an HMO?**

The definition of HMO is contained in the Housing Act 2004. It has been much extended over previous versions so as to make it much more explicit, but it now runs to several pages.

The definition broadly includes the following:

- Houses & flats divided into bedsits (individual lettings with some sharing of amenities). These are the traditional type of HMO but are less common than they used to be. We encounter few new bedsit type HMOs in Cherwell.
- Shared houses & flats with 3 or more unrelated occupants. The 2004 definition deliberately set out to capture this use, which was previously something of a grey area. Legislation sets out which relationships are relevant.
- Houses converted into self-contained flats which were not converted to the standards of the 1991 Building Regulations and which are more than 1/3 tenanted.

The following are excluded from the definition and are not HMOs:

- Purpose built flats
- Post 1991 conversions carried out to Building Regulation standard.
- Premises under the control of RSLs, Fire & Police Authorities, specified educational establishments (a long list of universities and the like), and some religious communities.
- Premises occupied by their owner with any family members and up to 2 other people (eg lodgers).

What enforcement powers exist under housing legislation?**HMOs as houses:**

- HMOs are 'residential premises' under the Housing Act 2004 in the same way as all other houses and flats. The Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is the principle means of dealing with defects and shortcomings in all residential premises. It provides a method of identifying and assessing hazards. Where appropriate, hazards are put right using the enforcement provisions in Part I of the Act. Enforcement can take the form of Improvement Notices, Prohibition Orders, Hazard Awareness Notices and Emergency Enforcements, as appropriate. The Council's *HHSRS Policy 2008* sets out how decisions are made.

Since the enforcement regime is risk based it does not rely upon prescribed standards. In particular, since the introduction of the 2004 Act, there is now no raft of set amenity and fire protection standards which apply simply because premises fall within the HMO definition. Some HMOs may require additional facilities or increased levels of fire protection, but many do not. Many shared houses require no more provision than single-family homes of the same scale.

Enforcement powers which relate specifically to HMOs:

- All HMOs are subject to management regulations which impose particular duties and responsibilities on their landlords/managers. In particular, these

regulations make them responsible for upkeep and cleaning of shared facilities and common areas, the disposal of refuse and the maintenance of services – effectively the issues that can cause particular problems when responsibilities are unclear or are disputed. Failure to comply with the regulations is an offence.

- The Council has the power to limit occupation in HMOs according to the floor-space available, by means of Overcrowding Notices. Applicable space standards have been adopted by the Council as part of its adopted *HMO Standards 2008*.
- Some HMOs require a licence, but only those of 3 or more storeys which have 5 or more occupants. HMOs comprising self-contained flats are not subject to licensing. Processing an application requires the Council to consider the suitability of the applicant, any manager and the management arrangements. Certain (limited) conditions must be included in all licences (eg duty to produce gas safety certificates, and confirm suitability of electrical appliance and furniture), but (subject to regulations) the detailed provision of suitable facilities and most other matters are determined by the Council. The Council's adopted amenity standards for licensed HMOs are contained in its *HMO Standards 2008*. The matter of fire safety is usually dealt with separately using the HHSRS process.

Provided the Council is satisfied as to the suitability of those involved and the property is either suitable or can be made suitable by means of conditions, a licence must be issued. Its planning status is not relevant¹. Licensing is essentially a means of improving the living conditions for occupants in higher risk premises. It is an offence to operate a qualifying HMO without a licence.

- Additional licensing: It is possible to make other types of HMO subject to licensing in all or in parts of the district, but any such 'designation' must be confirmed by the Secretary of State. It would be necessary to demonstrate that a significant proportion of the HMOs to be included in the designation were being managed so ineffectively that they were causing particular problems and that licensing, as part of a strategic and coordinated approach, would contribute to a resolution. (*It is not currently the view of officers that we could make a qualifying case for any part of the district to be designated.*)
- (*NB Selective licensing: It is also possible for houses other than HMOs to be made subject to licensing in some special circumstances, but this power is intended to address the problems of low housing demand experienced in the older parts of some industrial cities. It again requires approval of the Secretary of State and is subject to particular criteria being met.*)

Other points to note:

- With the exception of those HMOs which require a licence, there is no requirement under housing legislation for HMO landlords to notify the Council that they are operating an HMO. As a consequence, it is inevitable that many shared houses are not known to us. We do however encourage landlords to consult with us in order that we can help them achieve appropriate standards. We are investigating the possibility of introducing an Accreditation Scheme²

¹ This position confirmed by the Council's solicitor.

² This is one of the actions identified in the Private Sector Housing Strategy.

which we intend will provide incentives for landlords to work more closely with us.

- Government has recently advised that it intends to introduce a new Use Class for HMOs³ which will mean that using a family home as a shared-house HMO will require planning permission. The stated aim of this change is to enable local planning authorities to 'restore community balance'. We understand that existing HMOs are exempt.
- Consultation is also underway on possible changes to the Discretionary Licensing provisions in the Housing Act 2004 (see above).

HMOs in Cherwell District:

Data for the district:

- We currently have records for 228 HMOs in the district and have noted a further 45 possible HMOs⁴.
- 75 HMOs have been inspected or re-inspected in the last 12 months.
- 54 are currently licensed. (We are not aware of any others currently requiring a licence, but this is kept under review.)
- Of 207 service requests received to the end of January, 32 related to HMOs.

Data for Grimsbury:

- We know of 45 current HMOs in Grimsbury and a further 8 possible HMOs.
- 45 out of the total 53 are in the conservation area (18 in Middleton Road & 18 in West Street).
- 15 have been inspected in the last 12 months.
- 13 HMOs in Grimsbury are licensed. 7 of these are in Middleton Road and 3 in West Street.
- 5 of 32 service requests relating to HMOs concerned premises in Grimsbury.

Working with HMOs in Grimsbury has formed a significant part of the Private Sector Team's work over many years. We are familiar with most of the premises. The great majority of known HMOs have received attention and are broadly compliant.

³ With effect from 1 April 2010, guidance to follow.

⁴ The status of premises changes as a result of letting and re-letting. Many of the Possible HMOs have previously been inspected and addressed as HMOs but have ceased to be so and are kept under review until future use is established.

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Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Customer Access by Phone

9 March 2010

Report of Head of Customer Service & Information Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report outlines a new approach to using our contact centre and switchboard telephone systems to improve their resilience, make it quicker for customers to get the information they need, and improve the quality of information available to the Council about how calls are handled.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to consider the proposed changes to the Council's telephony system and to make recommendations as appropriate to the Executive for its meeting on 12 April 2010.

Details

Introduction

- 1.1 The delivery of telephony services changed when a central Customer Service team was formed to provide a focus for all customer contact. As well as the main switchboard, the Council procured and deployed a contact centre. The two systems are quite different: a switchboard is for passing calls on as quickly as possible; a contact centre is designed to place calls with people who can deal with the enquiry. Calls passed from the contact centre cannot be passed back and tie up a line until handed off or hung up.
- 1.2 A large proportion of Council services now have their customer facing aspects delivered by customer service, and the remainder will be scheduled to transfer in the near future. It is necessary now to review the range of numbers we publish, the role of the switchboard, and the opportunities offered by our investment in the contact centre system to satisfy growing customer demand within existing resources.
- 1.3 This report offers proposals and ways of working that balance the

need for excellent customer service against limited time and staff resource. It is also intended to improve the speed of answering general enquiries.

Proposals

- 2.1 First, we are proposing the transfer of our main switchboard number into the contact centre, as a “general enquiries” number. We have analysed the reasons for customers using this number and, with the appropriate use of a menu to allow callers to select the service they want, to get more quickly to someone who can help them.
- 2.2 We are therefore also proposing the permanent introduction of a limited menu system within the contact centre, to allow us both to provide pertinent information relating to the subject on which the person is calling and to improve the speed with which the caller is speaking to someone best placed to help on that subject.
- 2.3 To support this, we are proposing a standard approach to the use of voicemail which will allow us to publish that approach and manage customers’ expectations.
- 2.4 Finally, we are proposing to supplement the measurement of the speed of answer – which can be taken to mean the speed with which a recorded message kicks in telling you all the lines are busy – with measuring the completeness of the response to dialling a particular number; i.e. did the customer get the information they needed at the first contact. An annual programme of mystery shopping is proposed as the means of measurement.

Background

The telephony service

- 3.1 People who ring the switchboard number of 252535 are passed on from the switchboard by a maximum of two advisers working as switchboard operators. These calls go into the contact centre, into other services and to individual officers. Over the past two years, these two systems have worked alongside each other. Services for which there is an application, request, payment or booking responsibility have been transferred to Customer Services and have published numbers which take callers direct to the contact centre team of many more advisers where their enquiry is handled.
- 3.2 Since moving to a central customer service approach to providing services, customer satisfaction levels as measured by the annual satisfaction survey have increased year on year. Changes since 2007:

- Being able to speak to the right person 60% → 67%
- Being respected/listened to by staff 68% → 74%
- Staff knowledge 65% → 71%
- Friendliness of staff 69% → 77%
- Using plain English 72% → 79%
- Answering all questions 63% → 71%
- Explanations and advice 63% → 70%
- Speed of response 57% → 62%

3.3 As members of the Local government Customer Service Benchmark Group we can see that in the last “wave” of mystery shopping (October 2009) our “seconds to answer” score was slightly better than the group average. We also performed better than the rest of the group in terms of answering the calls at first contact. We transferred just 2% of calls in the last wave, compared with 11% for the Benchmark Group as a whole.

3.4 We have trialled the use of menus on two service lines since November 2009. Analysis of the customer feedback on the phone system shows that “time taken” is the subject of just a fifth of all feedback, and of that, the feedback is that “time taken” is “good” 71%, “average” 11% and “poor” 18%. Looking at “before” and “after” responses on the two lines trialling the menus, the introduction of menus has reduced the “good” % from 72% to 68%, which is not significant.

3.5 Productivity and value of the contact centre. Answering customers’ questions on the phone through recorded messaging, where the question is predictable and the answer universal, allows the scarce resource of a customer adviser to be best deployed speaking with customers who need services.

Current issues

3.6 Specific events, sometimes unpredictable, cause many calls on the same subject eg gritting, bin collections after an interruption etc. block up the contact centre and switchboard.

3.7 There is a need to maximise the value of the contact centre to our customers as all advisers can end up spending all their time giving the same information to all customers who ring on something seasonal, and so being unavailable to deal speedily with customers calling with service needs.

3.8 The limitations of the switchboard dealing with 252535 calls frequently cannot cope with the sheer number of incoming calls which means that it creates a bottleneck where some calls are lost or an unacceptable time is taken to answer.

- 3.9 Customer calls to a switchboard rather than to a service adviser count as calls of “no value” in the context of National Indicator 14 (avoidable contact): the example of “no value” contact the Audit Commission gives in its training is when the customer doesn’t know the right number to call. Better publicity of fewer numbers would help more people call the right number first time.
- 3.10 The switchboard technology becomes unsupported in 2015.

Where we need to be

- 3.11 Customers getting good information or help as quickly as possible and in as few steps as possible.
- 3.12 Taking low value calls out of the system to free up scarce resource for customers with real need.
- 3.13 Clear, sensible and achievable service promise in respect of our phone contact including our voicemail use.

How we get there: the proposals in detail

- 3.14 Divert 252535 off the switchboard operator console and into the contact centre, joining with the “General Enquiries” line.
- 3.15 Publish over time a limited suite of numbers to customers - 227000 – 227009 with each number allocated to a published service area. It will take two or three years to move away from the existing published numbers during which time calls on those numbers will be pointed at the new number – invisible to the customer. All ten numbers will not be in use straight away – see Annex 1.
- 3.16 Continue using Direct Dial numbers into service teams or individuals, published on letters or given out to customers where there is ongoing need for effective service delivery .
- 3.17 Use the function of the contact centre system to actively filter calls by subject type (press one, press two, to a maximum of three, where it adds value on a service line, except general enquiries which has four levels) within the published service areas.
- 3.18 Present the four menu options on the general enquiries line in order of customer demand, and to regularly change the fourth option in response to seasonality and topicality, so the services with highest demand are always in the selection, in demand order.
- 3.19 Promote heavily the small suite of numbers for public use and allow 252535 to fall out of use ahead of switchboard itself falling out of use (becoming unsupported) in 2015. This includes removing it from letterheads, telephone directory services etc.

3.20 Put in place a published voicemail policy for the whole council, recognising that moving away from an “operator” function means calls passed out of the contact centre cannot be passed back; they have to be handled at the number to which they have been transferred or they remain occupying a customer service line.

The benefits of this proposal

3.21 Moving 252535 off the switchboard will allow all trained customer service advisers to answer calls more quickly and fully at first contact whenever possible.

3.22 Using recorded information where we know what customers are calling in response to something we’ve sent them, and know the questions they are going to ask means they get the information they need in the quickest way. We have proven success with gritting information during the recent snow event, when the presentation of information about gritting services stopped the equivalent of three adviser-days worth of calls to the contact team. Further, we can see that since separating out calls about missed bins, and giving recorded information, people who call before 3pm that a bin is not “missed” until after 3pm, around a third of callers hang up after hearing that message, illustrating they got the information they needed in a one minute phone call. In January, those calls were the equivalent of almost three days of an adviser’s time.

3.23 During the implementation of new services into the contact centre, active filtering allows calls to be diverted to specialists with deep knowledge, outside the contact centre, so that those service managers are able to make decisions and modify the service directly in response to customer feedback.

3.24 Where new advisers are being trained, we can make sure trainees only receive calls on subjects they can help the customer with.

3.25 To provide management information about the volume of calls on each service area so that the effect of promotions, changes to a service, efforts to move customers to online contact etc. can be monitored and managed.

3.26 In emergency circumstances (where we have no advisers available or have had to deploy them elsewhere) this menu function will allow us to give customers the opportunity to leave a message.

3.27 A new corporate policy on how voicemail is used will help customers access services rather than put a barrier between customers and services, and will make it clear what service level customers can expect and officers must deliver, outside of the contact centre.

Conclusion

- 4.1 Significant changes have been made over the past two years to how the Council manages its customer contact, with much progress towards a transparent, equitable, consistent and organisationally-efficient approach.
- 4.2 The centrality of the telephone to delivery of all the Council's services means it is of paramount importance that people who use the phone get the best possible service from the contact centre advisers, and the need to be responsive in terms of getting information to customers in the case of unexpected events and emergencies.

Implications

Financial: There are no financial implications arising directly from these proposals. There may be a need to replace some phones where old models do not have the necessary functionality to manage voicemail efficiently but the costs of this are minimal.

Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance 01295 221551

Legal: There are no specific legal issues arising from this report.

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

Risk Management: Customer satisfaction is at risk should the Council not have an effective telephony function. This has not been an issue to date but in an effort to achieve continuous improvement through the proposals in this report, this risk will be further minimised. In addition, the risk of an unsupported switchboard is removed.

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

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

An accessible and value for money Council

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Nicholas Turner
Portfolio Holder for Customer Service and ICT

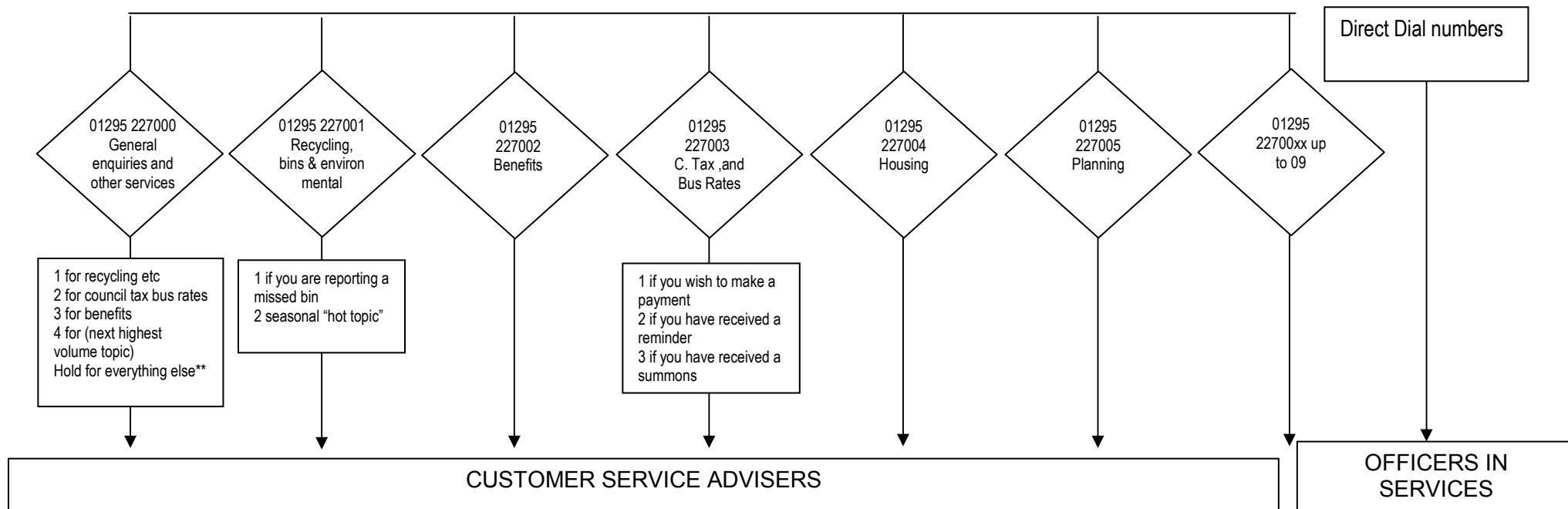
Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Diagram of the proposed telephone access arrangement
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Pat Simpson, Head of Customer Service and Information Systems
Contact Information	01295 227069 pat.simpson@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Proposed future telephone arrangement

252535

This diagram illustrates the model that is being proposed. The new series of number 7000 – 7009 will be introduced over time. The proposal allows up to 8 published service numbers plus general enquiries, with the four highest volume services at any one time being given a “filter” off the general enquiry number. Menu options on other services changes at different times of year; the council tax choice for example is different at annual billing than at other times, and will be adjusted to a maximum of four according to volume and nature of calls.



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2009/2010

9 March 2010

Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Committee with an update on the work programme for 2009/10.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Note the current overview and scrutiny work programme for 2009/10 as set out at Appendix 1 and make amendments as necessary;
- (2) Note the contents of the Forward Plan and identify any possible topics for scrutiny;
- (3) Note the draft report of the Anti Social Behaviour Task & Finish Group and consider whether they wish to amend or add to the recommendations to the Executive (Appendix 2 to follow);
- (4) Note the draft protocol for the conduct of crime and disorder scrutiny (Appendix 3 to follow).

Details

Introduction

- 1.1 Appendix 1 sets out the existing work programme for both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board, as agreed at the committee meetings in February 2010.

Proposals

Forward Plan

2.1 The Committee is asked to suggest items from the current Forward Plan (March – June 2010) on which it may wish to have an opportunity to offer advice to the Executive before any decision is taken, together with details of what it thinks could be achieved by looking at any items.

Kidlington Pedestrianisation

2.2 On 19 February 2010 Council proposed that the Kidlington Pedestrianisation capital bid should be referred to scrutiny for further consideration. The Strategic Director, Planning Housing and Economy will brief the Committee on the background to this bid.

Anti Social Behaviour Task & Finish Group Report

2.3 At the meeting in February 2010 the Committee agreed to review the report of the Anti Social Behaviour Task & Finish Group prior to its submission to the Executive. The Chairman of the Task & Finish Group will be present at the meeting to discuss the report, an updated copy of which will be circulated to Committee members in advance of the meeting (Appendix 2 to follow).

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Protocol

2.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been formally designated as the crime and disorder scrutiny committee for Cherwell District Council.

2.5 The Head of Legal Services and the Democratic, Elections and Scrutiny Manager have been delegated to develop a protocol for the conduct of crime and disorder scrutiny at Cherwell. The first draft of this protocol is still in preparation but will be circulated in advance of the meeting to allow an initial discussion of the main issues (Appendix 3 to follow).

Implications

Financial: There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The report of the individual scrutiny reviews will address any specific financial issues.

Comments checked by Denise Westlake, CSR Service Accountant, Payroll and Pensions Manager, 01295 221982

Legal: There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The report of the individual scrutiny reviews will address any specific legal issues.

Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal

and Democratic Services, 01295 221686

Risk Management: If too many items are included on the work programme there is a risk that scrutiny agendas become overloaded. This undermines effective scrutiny because Members are unable to concentrate on the key issues and officer resources are overstretched. It may be necessary to hold further meetings during the year if the risk of not achieving the work programme becomes apparent. The report of the individual scrutiny reviews will address any specific risk issues.

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

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

All

Executive Portfolio

All

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2009/2010
Appendix 2	Anti Social Behaviour Task & Finish Group Report ~ to follow
Appendix 3	Draft protocol for the conduct of crime and disorder scrutiny
Background Papers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Forward Plan (March – June 2010)	
Report Author	Catherine Phythian, Senior Democratic & Scrutiny Officer
Contact Information	01295 221583 Catherine.phythian@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme 2009/10

Title	Committee/T&FG	Comments	Meeting		
			Mar	June	Later
Scheduling – to identify and agree potential topics for scrutiny					
Built Environment Conservation Areas	Raised by Cllr Bonner	Agenda item for 9 March meeting.	✓		
Preparations for an ageing population	OSC (Cllr R Stratford to monitor developments)	Invite representatives of Oxfordshire Health & Well-Being Board to attend future meeting			?
Youth Facility Provision	OSC	Possible joint scrutiny with other Oxfordshire authorities. Watching brief to consider if this is an option.			?
Young People's VFM review	OSC	Possible future scrutiny topic			?
Phone Access and Telephony Review	OSC	Agenda item for 9 March meeting	✓		
Scrutiny – agreed topics for consideration at committee meetings					
Engaging with young people	OSC	Final report to be agreed by Chairman and submitted to Executive in April 2010.			
2010/2011 Budget	R&PSB	To note final outcomes of budget scrutiny 2010/11.			✓
Partnerships: Cherwell Safer Communities	R&PSB	Possible work programme topic for 2010/11.			✓
Contracts review	R&PSB	To consider and agree an approach for contract scrutiny			✓

Title	Committee/T&FG	Comments	Meetings		
			Mar	June	Later
Task & Finish Groups – agreed topics for review outside committee meetings					
Crime & Anti-social behaviour	Cllr Irvine Cllr Billington Cllr Tompson Cllr Smithson	Cllr Ahmed Cllr Cullip Cllr Sibley	Active – final report scheduled for Executive in 2010	✓	
Monitoring – to examine responses to scrutiny reports and to check on progress on implementation of recommendations					
Partnerships: ORCC	R&PSB	Completed. Report to Executive in April 2010			✓
Registered Social Landlords' Management Group	R&PSB	Review in spring 2011.			✓
Private Sector Housing Strategy	OSC	Review progress against action plan in spring 2011			✓
Preparation for the 2012 Olympics tourism potential in the district	OSC	Review progress and work of Member/Officer working group in summer 2010.			✓
Concessionary Fares	OSC	Completed.			
Affordable Housing & Rural Exception Sites	OSC	Completed.			
Markets in Cherwell	OSC	Completed.			
RAF Bicester	OSC	PfH and Strategic Director to provide briefing notes to keep OSC informed of progress & developments. Will bring to OSC meeting when appropriate.			
Residents' Parking Schemes	OSC	PfH and Strategic Director to provide briefing notes to keep OSC informed of progress & developments. Will bring to OSC meeting when appropriate.			

Title	Committee/T&FG	Comments	Meetings		
			March	June	Later
Partnerships: Bicester Vision	R&PSB	Work programme item for 2010/11			✓
Fees and Charges (2009/10 Budget scrutiny)	R&PSB	Review of progress against recommendations completed as part of 2010/11 Budget scrutiny.		✓	
Food Waste Processing	R&PSB/PSWG	Review autumn 2010 6 months after final stage of roll-out programme.			✓
Sports Centre Modernisation	FSWG	FSWG to review on completion in Spring 2010.	✓		

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