

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a meeting of **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL** will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **WEDNESDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2005** at **2:30 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

A G E N D A

PRAYER

The Right Reverend Dr John Inge, Bishop of Huntingdon will open the meeting with prayer.

APOLOGIES

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 16)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 28th September 2005.

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to personal and/or prejudicial interests and the nature of those interests in relation to any Agenda item. Please see Notes 1 and 2 below.

3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 84 - ST NEOTS, PRIORY PARK WARD

The Chief Executive to report on the resignation of Councillor N J Finnie with effect from 2nd December 2005 and that the vacancy in the Priory Park Ward will be filled at a by-election to be held in conjunction with the ordinary District Council elections on 4th May 2006.

4. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, COMMITTEE AND PANELS

The Chairmen of the Cabinet, Committee and Panels to present the following Reports -

- (a) Cabinet (Pages 17 - 34)
- (b) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) (Pages 35 - 40)
- (c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) (Pages 41 - 44)

- (d) Development Control Panel (Pages 45 - 48)
- (e) Employment Panel (Pages 49 - 50)
- (f) Appointments Panel (Pages 51 - 52)
- (g) Licensing and Protection Panel (Pages 53 - 54)
- (h) Licensing Committee (Pages 55 - 56)
- (i) Elections Panel (Pages 57 - 58)
- (j) Corporate Governance Panel (Pages 59 - 106)

5. ORAL QUESTIONS

In accordance with the Council Procedure Rules (Section 8.3) of the Council's Constitution, to receive oral questions from Members of the Council.

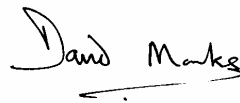
6. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 85

The Chief Executive to report on absences of Members from meetings.

7. ELECTION OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

- (a) Following the resignation of Councillor D P Holley as Leader with effect from the end of the meeting of the Council, to elect the Leader of the Council who shall be Chairman of the Cabinet for the remainder of the Municipal Year.
- (b) To consider any consequential implications arising from the preceding item of business.

Dated this 29th day of December 2005



Chief Executive

Notes

1. *A personal interest exists where a decision on a matter would affect to a greater extent than other people in the District –*
 - (a) *the well-being, financial position, employment or business of the Councillor, a partner, relatives or close friends;*
 - (b) *a body employing those persons, any firm in which they are a partner and any company of which they are directors;*
 - (c) *any corporate body in which those persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £5,000; or*

(d) *the Councillor's registerable financial and other interests.*

2. *A personal interest becomes a prejudicial interest where a member of the public (who has knowledge of the circumstances) would reasonably regard the Member's personal interest as being so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of the public interest.*

Please contact Ms C Deller, Democratic Services Manager, Tel No 01480 388007/e-mail: Christine.Deller@huntsdc.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Council.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website – www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk (under Councils and Democracy).

If you would like a translation of Agenda/Minutes/Reports or would like a large text version or an audio version please contact the Democratic Services Manager and we will try to accommodate your needs.

আপনি যদি এই লিখিত তথ্যের (ডকুমেন্ট) একটি অনুবাদ, একটি বড় অক্ষরে লেখা সংস্করণ অথবা একটি শব্দ যোগ্য (অডিও) সংস্করণ চান, তবে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সঙ্গে ০১৪৮০ ৩৮৮০০৭ নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন এবং আমরা আপনার প্রয়োজন মেটাতে চেষ্টা করব।

這份文件，若你想得到一份譯文版、一份字體大的版本或錄音版，請電 01480 388007 與我們聯絡，我們將會盡力來迎合閣下的需要。

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا ترجمہ بڑے الفاظ میں یا آڈیو ٹیپ پر درکار ہو تو براہ مہربانی ہم سے 01480 388007 پر رابطہ کریں، ہم آپ کی ضروریات پوری کرنے کیلئے اپنی طرف سے مکمل کوشش کریں گے

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Agenda Item 1

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 28 September 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor J A P Eddy – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, I C Bates, J T Bell, Mrs B E Boddington, P L Bucknell, Mrs J Chandler, K J Churchill, Mrs D E Collins, S J Criswell, D B Dew, P J Downes, J J Dutton, J D Fell, J E Garner, Mrs C A Godley, J A Gray, Mrs K P Gregory, N J Guyatt, A Hansard, C R Hyams, Mrs P J Longford, Mrs S A Menczer, I R Muir, M F Newman, R Powell, Mrs D C Reynolds, K Reynolds, T V Rogers, J M Sadler, T D Sanderson, L M Simpson, A B Stenner, C J Stephens, R G Tuplin, Mrs S J Vanbergen, J S Watt and Ms M Wheeler.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors E R Butler, W T Clough, J W Davies, N J Finnie, D A Giles, D Harty, D P Holley, P G Mitchell, P A Swales, J Taylor, I P Taylor and G S E Thorpe.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D H Bristow.

31. PRAYER

The Venerable H McCurdy Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech opened the meeting with prayer.

32. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Special Guests

The Chairman welcomed Mr S Leatham, High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire and the Venerable H McCurdy, Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech to their first meeting of the Council.

(b) Annual Cricket Match

The Chairman extended his gratitude to the players and spectators who had contributed to the enjoyment of the annual cricket match between Councillors and Officers at St Ivo Leisure Centre on 21st July 2005.

(c) Chairman's Reception

The Chairman announced that his reception would be held at Hinchingbrooke House on Friday 25th November 2005 and that formal invitations would be sent shortly.

(d) The West Africa Crisis Appeal

The Council noted that the Chairman had, on their behalf, donated £300 to a Crisis Appeal launched by the British Red Cross for those affected by drought in West Africa.

(e) **Former Councillor N Bunnage**

The Council stood in silent tribute to former Councillor N Bunnage who had died recently and who had represented the Upwood and Raveleys Ward on the District Council over the period 1978-1983.

33. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 29th June 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors I C Bates, Mrs B E Boddington, P J Downes, J J Dutton, J A P Eddy, C R Hyams and K Reynolds declared a personal interest in Minute No. 37 (a), Item No. 28 and Minute No. 37 (a), Item No. 34 by virtue of their membership of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillor I C Bates declared a personal interest in Minute No. 37 (c), Item No. 14 by virtue of his membership of Cambridgeshire Police Authority.

Councillor A Hansard declared a personal interest in Minute No. 37 (a), Item No. 54 as a trustee of St Neots Outdoor Pool.

35. ANNUAL STATE OF THE DISTRICT ADDRESS

In accordance with paragraph 12 of the Council's Procedure Rules, the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates addressed the meeting on the State of the District (a précis of Councillor Bates address is appended in the Minute Book).

In his opening remarks, Councillor Bates highlighted the extent to which the District was now working in partnership with other agencies to deliver major projects in two towns in the District. He made particular reference to the regeneration programme for Oxmoor, the new Oak Tree Health Centre and to various achievements in Ramsey. Whilst mentioning the challenges that lay ahead for the authority in the short term, the Deputy Leader also drew attention to those areas of routine work undertaken by the District Council but which he felt were often overlooked. In so doing, the Deputy Leader expressed his appreciation for the contribution made by Members and Officers of the Council to the progress and achievements of the authority over the previous year.

Before replying to the address, Councillor Downes, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, extended his best wishes to the Leader, Councillor Holley for a speedy recovery to good health. Councillor Downes proceeded to commend the major areas of achievement referred to but indicated his regret at the change in the format of the Annual State of the District presentation which had removed the opportunity for the Council to engage in a debate on the subject. Councillor Downes also was of the opinion that the District Council should communicate with the public on the challenges that lay ahead for the authority, given that financial circumstances might require a reduction in the level of services provided generally and support currently offered to the Voluntary Sector.

On other subjects, Councillor Stenner was concerned that lobbying of the appropriate agencies should not be limited to matters relating to the A14

but also should include the A1 and A428 as important routes in the trunk road system in the District.

Referring to the success which had been achieved during the past year arising from work with young people, Councillor Mrs Menczer expressed her concern that this might be lost when the funding for the post of Policy Officer engaged in developing schemes for young people was discontinued in March 2006. Particular mention was made of the Parc Project and the work being undertaken with young people by five Parish Councils. Councillor Mrs Menczer was of the view that the District Council should lead by example and make provision for young people to address meetings on a regular basis.

36. REVISED BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2005/06

In conjunction with Item No. 24 of the Report of the Cabinet, Members considered a report by the Director of Commerce and Technology (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). In the light of the decision of the Deputy Prime Minister to cap the Council's 2005/06 budget necessitating the approval of a revised budget and resultant reduction in Council Tax levels, it was moved by the Executive Councillor for Finance, duly seconded and

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Revenue Budget approved by the Council on 16th February 2005 be amended as follows:
 - (i) the Council's budget requirement be reduced by £387,000 to £15.160m; and
 - (ii) the use of revenue reserves be increased by £387,000 to £2.213m;
- (b) that the following substitute calculations now be made by the Council for 2005/06 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (the Act):-

(i)	the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2) (a) to (e) of the Act <i>gross spending including Parish precepts</i>	£ 58,230,502
(ii)	the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32 (3) (a) to (c) of the Act <i>income including use of revenue reserves</i>	39,959,505
(iii)	the amount by which the aggregate at (b) (i) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) (ii) above in accordance with Section 32 (4) of the Act <i>budget requirement including parish precepts</i>	18,270,997

- (iv) the aggregate of the amounts payable into the General Fund for the items set out in Section 33 (1) of the Act 9,508,211
government support
- (v) the aggregate of the amounts payable from the General Fund for the items set out in Section 33 (3) of the Act 3,550
collection fund deficit
- (vi) the basic amount of Council Tax for 2005/06 in accordance with Section 33 (1) 154.56
band D Council tax for District purposes plus average Parish council tax
- (vii) the aggregate of special items referred to in Section 34 (1) 3,110,997
total value of Parish precepts
- (viii) the basic amount of Council Tax for 2005/06 for those parts of the District to which no special item relates 99.71
band D Council tax for District purposes
- (ix) the basic amounts of Council Tax for 2005/06 for those parts of the District to which one or more special items relate in accordance with Section 34 (3) of the Act are shown by adding the Huntingdonshire District Council amount to the appropriate Parish Council amount in column "band D" set out in table 1 hereto
- (x) the amounts to be taken into account for 2005/06 in respect of categories of dwellings listed in the different valuation bands in accordance with Section 36 (1) of the Act are shown by adding the Huntingdonshire District Council amount to the appropriate Parish Council amount for each of the valuation bands in the columns "bands A to H" set out in table 1 hereto;
- (c) that it be noted that the amounts of precept issued to the Council by Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police Authority and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire Authority for each of the categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands in accordance with Section 40 of the Act shown in table 1 are unchanged; and
- (d) that, having regard to the calculations above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for 2005/06 for each of the categories of dwelling shown in table 2 hereto.

TABLE 1

COUNCIL TAX BY AUTHORITY AND BAND

	BAND A £	BAND B £	BAND C £	BAND D £	BAND E £	BAND F £	BAND G £	BAND H £
Cambridgeshire County Council	563.88	657.86	751.84	845.82	1,033.78	1,221.74	1,409.70	1,691.64
Cambridgeshire Police Authority	90.36	105.42	120.48	135.54	165.66	195.78	225.90	271.08
Huntingdonshire District Council	66.47	77.55	88.63	99.71	121.87	144.03	166.18	199.42
Cambridgeshire Fire Authority	32.16	37.52	42.88	48.24	58.96	69.68	80.40	96.48
PARISH COUNCILS :-								
Abbotsley	31.56	36.82	42.08	47.34	57.86	68.38	78.90	94.68
Abbots Ripton	27.36	31.92	36.48	41.04	50.16	59.28	68.40	82.08
Alconbury	20.65	24.09	27.53	30.97	37.85	44.73	51.62	61.94
Alconbury Weston	26.38	30.78	35.17	39.57	48.36	57.16	65.95	79.14
Alwalton	13.55	15.81	18.07	20.33	24.85	29.37	33.88	40.66
Barham & Woolley	9.87	11.52	13.16	14.81	18.10	21.39	24.68	29.62
Bluntisham	75.06	87.57	100.08	112.59	137.61	162.63	187.65	225.18
Brampton	39.93	46.59	53.24	59.90	73.21	86.52	99.83	119.80
Brington & Molesworth	12.61	14.72	16.82	18.92	23.12	27.33	31.53	37.84
Broughton	19.38	22.61	25.84	29.07	35.53	41.99	48.45	58.14
Buckden	28.92	33.74	38.56	43.38	53.02	62.66	72.30	86.76
Buckworth	39.91	46.56	53.21	59.86	73.16	86.46	99.77	119.72
Bury	17.57	20.50	23.43	26.36	32.22	38.08	43.93	52.72
Bythorn & Keyston	2.86	3.34	3.81	4.29	5.24	6.20	7.15	8.58
Catworth	17.97	20.96	23.96	26.95	32.94	38.93	44.92	53.90
Chesterton	8.33	9.72	11.11	12.50	15.28	18.06	20.83	25.00
Colne	29.91	34.90	39.88	44.87	54.84	64.81	74.78	89.74
Conington	9.13	10.66	12.18	13.70	16.74	19.79	22.83	27.40
Covington	18.81	21.94	25.08	28.21	34.48	40.75	47.02	56.42
Denton & Caldecote	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Diddington	10.75	12.55	14.34	16.13	19.71	23.30	26.88	32.26
Earith	26.71	31.17	35.62	40.07	48.97	57.88	66.78	80.14
Easton	14.03	16.37	18.71	21.05	25.73	30.41	35.08	42.10
Ellington	25.43	29.66	33.90	38.14	46.62	55.09	63.57	76.28
Elton	14.67	17.12	19.56	22.01	26.90	31.79	36.68	44.02
Eynesbury Hardwicke	10.01	11.68	13.35	15.02	18.36	21.70	25.03	30.04
Farcet	28.03	32.71	37.38	42.05	51.39	60.74	70.08	84.10
Fenstanton	24.44	28.51	32.59	36.66	44.81	52.95	61.10	73.32
Folksworth & Washingley	28.33	33.05	37.77	42.49	51.93	61.37	70.82	84.98
Glatton	10.03	11.70	13.37	15.04	18.38	21.72	25.07	30.08
Godmanchester	32.41	37.81	43.21	48.61	59.41	70.21	81.02	97.22
Grafham	28.53	33.28	38.04	42.79	52.30	61.81	71.32	85.58
Great & Little Gidding	34.71	40.49	46.28	52.06	63.63	75.20	86.77	104.12
Great Gransden	22.07	25.75	29.43	33.11	40.47	47.83	55.18	66.22
Great Paxton	23.36	27.25	31.15	35.04	42.83	50.61	58.40	70.08
Great Staughton	23.89	27.87	31.85	35.83	43.79	51.75	59.72	71.66
Haddon	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Hail Weston	20.17	23.53	26.89	30.25	36.97	43.69	50.42	60.50
Hamerton	16.26	18.97	21.68	24.39	29.81	35.23	40.65	48.78

TABLE 1 Cont

	BAND A £	BAND B £	BAND C £	BAND D £	BAND E £	BAND F £	BAND G £	BAND H £
Hemingford Abbots	28.81	33.61	38.41	43.21	52.81	62.41	72.02	86.42
Hemingford Grey	18.97	22.13	25.29	28.45	34.77	41.09	47.42	56.90
Hilton	25.17	29.37	33.56	37.76	46.15	54.54	62.93	75.52
Holme	21.19	24.72	28.25	31.78	38.84	45.90	52.97	63.56
Holywell-cum-Needingworth	51.91	60.57	69.22	77.87	95.17	112.48	129.78	155.74
Houghton & Wyton	29.92	34.91	39.89	44.88	54.85	64.83	74.80	89.76
Huntingdon	49.67	57.95	66.23	74.51	91.07	107.63	124.18	149.02
Kimbolton and Stonely	43.38	50.61	57.84	65.07	79.53	93.99	108.45	130.14
Kings Ripton	26.31	30.70	35.08	39.47	48.24	57.01	65.78	78.94
Leighton Bromswold	28.45	33.20	37.94	42.68	52.16	61.65	71.13	85.36
Little Paxton	29.50	34.42	39.33	44.25	54.08	63.92	73.75	88.50
Morborne	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Offord Cluny	27.46	32.04	36.61	41.19	50.34	59.50	68.65	82.38
Offord D'Arcy	26.15	30.51	34.87	39.23	47.95	56.67	65.38	78.46
Old Hurst	6.38	7.44	8.51	9.57	11.70	13.82	15.95	19.14
Old Weston	14.49	16.91	19.32	21.74	26.57	31.40	36.23	43.48
Perry	23.81	27.77	31.74	35.71	43.65	51.58	59.52	71.42
Pidley-cum-Fenton	9.53	11.11	12.70	14.29	17.47	20.64	23.82	28.58
Ramsey	27.93	32.59	37.24	41.90	51.21	60.52	69.83	83.80
St.Ives	53.92	62.91	71.89	80.88	98.85	116.83	134.80	161.76
St.Neots	41.81	48.78	55.75	62.72	76.66	90.60	104.53	125.44
St.Neots Rural	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sawtry	46.08	53.76	61.44	69.12	84.48	99.84	115.20	138.24
Sibson-cum-Stibbington	13.33	15.56	17.78	20.00	24.44	28.89	33.33	40.00
Somersham	36.28	42.33	48.37	54.42	66.51	78.61	90.70	108.84
Southoe & Midloe	30.11	35.12	40.14	45.16	55.20	65.23	75.27	90.32
Spaldwick	22.42	26.16	29.89	33.63	41.10	48.58	56.05	67.26
Steeple Gidding	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Stilton	42.29	49.34	56.39	63.44	77.54	91.64	105.73	126.88
Stow Longa	32.79	38.25	43.72	49.18	60.11	71.04	81.97	98.36
Tetworth	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
The Stukeleys	15.36	17.92	20.48	23.04	28.16	33.28	38.40	46.08
Tilbrook	12.58	14.68	16.77	18.87	23.06	27.26	31.45	37.74
Toseland	7.89	9.21	10.52	11.84	14.47	17.10	19.73	23.68
Upton and Coppingford	18.94	22.10	25.25	28.41	34.72	41.04	47.35	56.82
Upwood and the Raveleys	13.23	15.44	17.64	19.85	24.26	28.67	33.08	39.70
Warboys	24.42	28.49	32.56	36.63	44.77	52.91	61.05	73.26
Waresley	18.52	21.61	24.69	27.78	33.95	40.13	46.30	55.56
Water Newton	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Winwick	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Wistow	18.43	21.51	24.58	27.65	33.79	39.94	46.08	55.30
Woodhurst	11.11	12.97	14.82	16.67	20.37	24.08	27.78	33.34
Woodwalton	17.25	20.13	23.00	25.88	31.63	37.38	43.13	51.76
Yaxley	39.49	46.07	52.65	59.23	72.39	85.55	98.72	118.46
Yelling	4.83	5.64	6.44	7.25	8.86	10.47	12.08	14.50

TABLE 2

TOTAL CHARGE BY PARISH

	BAND A £	BAND B £	BAND C £	BAND D £	BAND E £	BAND F £	BAND G £	BAND H £
Abbotsley	784.43	915.17	1,045.91	1,176.65	1,438.13	1,699.61	1,961.08	2,353.30
Abbots Ripton	780.23	910.27	1,040.31	1,170.35	1,430.43	1,690.51	1,950.58	2,340.70
Alconbury	773.52	902.44	1,031.36	1,160.28	1,418.12	1,675.96	1,933.80	2,320.56
Alconbury Weston	779.25	909.13	1,039.00	1,168.88	1,428.63	1,688.39	1,948.13	2,337.76
Alwalton	766.42	894.16	1,021.90	1,149.64	1,405.12	1,660.60	1,916.06	2,299.28
Barham & Woolley	762.74	889.87	1,016.99	1,144.12	1,398.37	1,652.62	1,906.86	2,288.24
Bluntisham	827.93	965.92	1,103.91	1,241.90	1,517.88	1,793.86	2,069.83	2,483.80
Brampton	792.80	924.94	1,057.07	1,189.21	1,453.48	1,717.75	1,982.01	2,378.42
Brington & Molesworth	765.48	893.07	1,020.65	1,148.23	1,403.39	1,658.56	1,913.71	2,296.46
Broughton	772.25	900.96	1,029.67	1,158.38	1,415.80	1,673.22	1,930.63	2,316.76
Buckden	781.79	912.09	1,042.39	1,172.69	1,433.29	1,693.89	1,954.48	2,345.38
Buckworth	792.78	924.91	1,057.04	1,189.17	1,453.43	1,717.69	1,981.95	2,378.34
Bury	770.44	898.85	1,027.26	1,155.67	1,412.49	1,669.31	1,926.11	2,311.34
Bythorn & Keyston	755.73	881.69	1,007.64	1,133.60	1,385.51	1,637.43	1,889.33	2,267.20
Catworth	770.84	899.31	1,027.79	1,156.26	1,413.21	1,670.16	1,927.10	2,312.52
Chesterton	761.20	888.07	1,014.94	1,141.81	1,395.55	1,649.29	1,903.01	2,283.62
Colne	782.78	913.25	1,043.71	1,174.18	1,435.11	1,696.04	1,956.96	2,348.36
Conington	762.00	889.01	1,016.01	1,143.01	1,397.01	1,651.02	1,905.01	2,286.02
Covington	771.68	900.29	1,028.91	1,157.52	1,414.75	1,671.98	1,929.20	2,315.04
Denton & Caldecote	752.87	878.35	1,003.83	1,129.31	1,380.27	1,631.23	1,882.18	2,258.62
Diddington	763.62	890.90	1,018.17	1,145.44	1,399.98	1,654.53	1,909.06	2,290.88
Earith	779.58	909.52	1,039.45	1,169.38	1,429.24	1,689.11	1,948.96	2,338.76
Easton	766.90	894.72	1,022.54	1,150.36	1,406.00	1,661.64	1,917.26	2,300.72
Ellington	778.30	908.01	1,037.73	1,167.45	1,426.89	1,686.32	1,945.75	2,334.90
Elton	767.54	895.47	1,023.39	1,151.32	1,407.17	1,663.02	1,918.86	2,302.64
Eynesbury Hardwicke	762.88	890.03	1,017.18	1,144.33	1,398.63	1,652.93	1,907.21	2,288.66
Farcet	780.90	911.06	1,041.21	1,171.36	1,431.66	1,691.97	1,952.26	2,342.72
Fenstanton	777.31	906.86	1,036.42	1,165.97	1,425.08	1,684.18	1,943.28	2,331.94
Folksworth & Washingley	781.20	911.40	1,041.60	1,171.80	1,432.20	1,692.60	1,953.00	2,343.60
Glatton	762.90	890.05	1,017.20	1,144.35	1,398.65	1,652.95	1,907.25	2,288.70
Godmanchester	785.28	916.16	1,047.04	1,177.92	1,439.68	1,701.44	1,963.20	2,355.84
Grafham	781.40	911.63	1,041.87	1,172.10	1,432.57	1,693.04	1,953.50	2,344.20
Great & Little Gidding	787.58	918.84	1,050.11	1,181.37	1,443.90	1,706.43	1,968.95	2,362.74
Great Gransden	774.94	904.10	1,033.26	1,162.42	1,420.74	1,679.06	1,937.36	2,324.84
Great Paxton	776.23	905.60	1,034.98	1,164.35	1,423.10	1,681.84	1,940.58	2,328.70
Great Staughton	776.76	906.22	1,035.68	1,165.14	1,424.06	1,682.98	1,941.90	2,330.28
Haddon	752.87	878.35	1,003.83	1,129.31	1,380.27	1,631.23	1,882.18	2,258.62
Hail Weston	773.04	901.88	1,030.72	1,159.56	1,417.24	1,674.92	1,932.60	2,319.12
Hamerton	769.13	897.32	1,025.51	1,153.70	1,410.08	1,666.46	1,922.83	2,307.40
Hemingford Abbots	781.68	911.96	1,042.24	1,172.52	1,433.08	1,693.64	1,954.20	2,345.04
Hemingford Grey	771.84	900.48	1,029.12	1,157.76	1,415.04	1,672.32	1,929.60	2,315.52
Hilton	778.04	907.72	1,037.39	1,167.07	1,426.42	1,685.77	1,945.11	2,334.14

TABLE 2 Cont

	BAND A £	BAND B £	BAND C £	BAND D £	BAND E £	BAND F £	BAND G £	BAND H £
Holme	774.06	903.07	1,032.08	1,161.09	1,419.11	1,677.13	1,935.15	2,322.18
Holywell-cum-Needingworth	804.78	938.92	1,073.05	1,207.18	1,475.44	1,743.71	2,011.96	2,414.36
Houghton & Wyton	782.79	913.26	1,043.72	1,174.19	1,435.12	1,696.06	1,956.98	2,348.38
Huntingdon	802.54	936.30	1,070.06	1,203.82	1,471.34	1,738.86	2,006.36	2,407.64
Kimbolton and Stonely	796.25	928.96	1,061.67	1,194.38	1,459.80	1,725.22	1,990.63	2,388.76
Kings Ripton	779.18	909.05	1,038.91	1,168.78	1,428.51	1,688.24	1,947.96	2,337.56
Leighton Bromswold	781.32	911.55	1,041.77	1,171.99	1,432.43	1,692.88	1,953.31	2,343.98
Little Paxton	782.37	912.77	1,043.16	1,173.56	1,434.35	1,695.15	1,955.93	2,347.12
Morborne	752.87	878.35	1,003.83	1,129.31	1,380.27	1,631.23	1,882.18	2,258.62
Offord Cluny	780.33	910.39	1,040.44	1,170.50	1,430.61	1,690.73	1,950.83	2,341.00
Offord D'Arcy	779.02	908.86	1,038.70	1,168.54	1,428.22	1,687.90	1,947.56	2,337.08
Old Hurst	759.25	885.79	1,012.34	1,138.88	1,391.97	1,645.05	1,898.13	2,277.76
Old Weston	767.36	895.26	1,023.15	1,151.05	1,406.84	1,662.63	1,918.41	2,302.10
Perry	776.68	906.12	1,035.57	1,165.02	1,423.92	1,682.81	1,941.70	2,330.04
Pidley-cum-Fenton	762.40	889.46	1,016.53	1,143.60	1,397.74	1,651.87	1,906.00	2,287.20
Ramsey	780.80	910.94	1,041.07	1,171.21	1,431.48	1,691.75	1,952.01	2,342.42
St.Ives	806.79	941.26	1,075.72	1,210.19	1,479.12	1,748.06	2,016.98	2,420.38
St.Neots	794.68	927.13	1,059.58	1,192.03	1,456.93	1,721.83	1,986.71	2,384.06
St.Neots Rural	752.87	878.35	1,003.83	1,129.31	1,380.27	1,631.23	1,882.18	2,258.62
Sawtry	798.95	932.11	1,065.27	1,198.43	1,464.75	1,731.07	1,997.38	2,396.86
Sibson-cum-Stibbington	766.20	893.91	1,021.61	1,149.31	1,404.71	1,660.12	1,915.51	2,298.62
Somersham	789.15	920.68	1,052.20	1,183.73	1,446.78	1,709.84	1,972.88	2,367.46
Southoe & Midloe	782.98	913.47	1,043.97	1,174.47	1,435.47	1,696.46	1,957.45	2,348.94
Spaldwick	775.29	904.51	1,033.72	1,162.94	1,421.37	1,679.81	1,938.23	2,325.88
Steeple Gidding	752.87	878.35	1,003.83	1,129.31	1,380.27	1,631.23	1,882.18	2,258.62
Stilton	795.16	927.69	1,060.22	1,192.75	1,457.81	1,722.87	1,987.91	2,385.50
Stow Longa	785.66	916.60	1,047.55	1,178.49	1,440.38	1,702.27	1,964.15	2,356.98
Tetworth	752.87	878.35	1,003.83	1,129.31	1,380.27	1,631.23	1,882.18	2,258.62
The Stukeleys	768.23	896.27	1,024.31	1,152.35	1,408.43	1,664.51	1,920.58	2,304.70
Tilbrook	765.45	893.03	1,020.60	1,148.18	1,403.33	1,658.49	1,913.63	2,296.36
Toseland	760.76	887.56	1,014.35	1,141.15	1,394.74	1,648.33	1,901.91	2,282.30
Upton and Coppingford	771.81	900.45	1,029.08	1,157.72	1,414.99	1,672.27	1,929.53	2,315.44
Upwood and the Raveleys	766.10	893.79	1,021.47	1,149.16	1,404.53	1,659.90	1,915.26	2,298.32
Warboys	777.29	906.84	1,036.39	1,165.94	1,425.04	1,684.14	1,943.23	2,331.88
Waresley	771.39	899.96	1,028.52	1,157.09	1,414.22	1,671.36	1,928.48	2,314.18
Water Newton	752.87	878.35	1,003.83	1,129.31	1,380.27	1,631.23	1,882.18	2,258.62
Winwick	752.87	878.35	1,003.83	1,129.31	1,380.27	1,631.23	1,882.18	2,258.62
Wistow	771.30	899.86	1,028.41	1,156.96	1,414.06	1,671.17	1,928.26	2,313.92
Woodhurst	763.98	891.32	1,018.65	1,145.98	1,400.64	1,655.31	1,909.96	2,291.96
Woodwalton	770.12	898.48	1,026.83	1,155.19	1,411.90	1,668.61	1,925.31	2,310.38
Yaxley	792.36	924.42	1,056.48	1,188.54	1,452.66	1,716.78	1,980.90	2,377.08
Yelling	757.70	883.99	1,010.27	1,136.56	1,389.13	1,641.70	1,894.26	2,273.12

37. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEE

(a) Cabinet

Councillor I C Bates, Deputy Leader and Vice-Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 30th June, 21st July, 1st and 15th September 2005.

.....
In connection with Item No. 24, it was noted that the recommendation had previously been considered under Minute No. 36 ante.

.....
Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 25 was declared to be CARRIED.

.....
Upon being put to the vote the recommendations contained in Item No. 26 was declared to be CARRIED.

.....
In connection with Item No. 27, the Council agreed to defer consideration of the recommendations contained therein as the last item of business.

.....
In connection with Item No. 38 and in response to a question from Councillor Mrs S A Menczer requesting information on leisure projects from which funding would be transferred to meet a shortfall of £59,000 in capital available for an extension to Sawtry Leisure Centre, the Deputy Leader undertook to reply to the questioner in writing.

.....
In connection with Item No. 56 and in response to a question from Councillor R Powell regarding the loss of car parking spaces as a result of the proposed redevelopment of the Grand Cinema site in Ramsey, the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy replied that he was not aware that there was a shortage of parking spaces in Ramsey and that redevelopment should secure the site for housing and community use.

.....
In connection with Item No. 57 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, the Executive Councillor for Leisure replied that given the Council's current financial status it would not have been prudent to fund a Big Gig event in St Neots, that various options had been considered to enable the event to proceed as planned but that both the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery & Resources) and the Cabinet had concluded that it would be inappropriate for it to proceed.

In connection with Item No. 60 and in response to questions from Councillors Mrs K P Gregory and K Reynolds, the Deputy Leader commented that whilst the District Council did not have a statutory duty to provide public conveniences the recently reconstituted Advisory Group would consider the programme for refurbishment of existing facilities and that Councillor Mrs Gregory's views would be welcome when the papers for the first meeting were distributed.

.....

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that with the exception of Item No. 24 and subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 30th June, 21st July, 1st and 15th September 2005 be received and adopted.

(b) **Standards Committee**

Mr D H Bristow presented the Report of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 25th August and 8th September 2005.

.....

In connection with Item No. 6 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, the Chairman replied that no indication had been given at a recent Standards Board conference that proposals for the abolition of the Board were being considered.

.....

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 25th August and 8th September 2005 be received and adopted.

(c) **Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance)**

Councillor M G Baker, Vice-Chairman of the Panel, presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) held on 12th July and 13th September 2005 and of a joint meeting with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) held on 13th September 2005.

.....

In connection with Item No. 14 and after a question from Councillor C R Hyams, the Vice-Chairman reported that arrangements had been made for Councillor Mrs Vanbergen to "shadow" a PCSO on duty and for the Panel to meet PCSOs at an event in October to which all Members would be invited.

The meeting had been organised in response to the Panel's concerns over the level of PCSO involvement in rural areas given funding by the District Council to the Police for their employment.

.....

In connection with Item No. 15, the Vice-Chairman reported on the progress of a review of Member Development, that the Cabinet had been requested to consider the provision of broadband to Members and that further recommendations would emerge when the review had been concluded. The Executive Councillor for Operations and IT added that a number of trial connections to a broadband service were underway but that there were concerns over the security of the Council's systems which needed to be overcome. He indicated that he would keep Members updated on progress.

.....

In connection with Item No. 19 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, the Vice-Chairman concurred with the views of the questioner in terms of the constructive debate which had taken place at a Panel meeting on the County Council's speed policy and his anticipation that a request for the issue to be raised at a County Council Scrutiny Panel would result in a review of the present policy.

.....

In connection with Item No. 22 and in response to a question from Councillor T D Sanderson, the Vice-Chairman confirmed that the Executive Councillor for Leisure and the Head of Community Services had been invited to the next meeting of the Panel to respond to Members' concerns that sums available from Section 106 Agreements remained unspent. The Deputy Leader added that he had subsequently attended an Officer Group meeting at which he had raised similar concerns.

.....

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Reports of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) held on 12th July and 13th September 2005 and of a joint meeting with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) held on 13th September 2005 be received and adopted.

(d) **Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources)**

Councillor K Reynolds presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) held on 5th July and 6th September 2005.

.....

Whereupon, it was

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) held on 5th July and 6th September 2005 be received and adopted.

(e) **Development Control Panel**

Councillor D B Dew, Vice-Chairman of the Panel, presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 25th July and 19th September 2005.

.....
In connection with Item No. 7, the Chairman of the Council reminded Members that the recommendations in respect of a proposed departure from the development plan could not be taken unless Council Procedure Rule 13.2 was suspended because a Motion in similar terms had been rejected by the Council within the preceding six months. In the circumstances, the Vice-Chairman indicated that the recommendations could be deferred for consideration to a future meeting of the Council.

.....
RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraph, the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 25th July and 19th September 2005 be received and adopted.

(f) **Employment Panel**

Councillor Mrs B E Boddington, Vice-Chairman of the Panel presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 21st September 2005.

.....
Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 21st September 2005 be received and adopted.

(g) **Corporate Governance Panel**

Councillor C J Stephens presented the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 27th July 2005.

.....
Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No.1 was declared to be CARRIED

.....
In connection with Item No. 2, the Chairman extended the Council's appreciation to those Officers who had been engaged

in servicing the Licensing Sub Committees over the past two months following the implementation of the Licensing Act 2003.

Whereupon, on being put to the vote the recommendations contained in Item No.2 were declared to be CARRIED.

.....
Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 27th July 2005 be received and adopted.

38. ORAL QUESTIONS

In accordance with the Council Procedure Rules (Section 8.3) of the Council's Constitution, the Chairman proceeded to conduct a period of oral questions addressed to Executive Councillors and Panel Chairmen as follows:-

Question from Councillor R Powell to the Executive Councillor for Operations and Information Technology, Councillor L M Simpson

In response to a question regarding the reinstatement of a weekly domestic wheeled bin collection in the summer months, Councillor Simpson replied that the extension of the scheme to enable kitchen waste to be placed in green wheeled bins would mean that waste likely to generate odours could be collected weekly and should overcome the problems experienced with decaying waste in the summer.

Question from Councillor Mrs C A Godley to the Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport, Councillor Mrs P J Longford

In response to a question regarding the operation and funding of the "Dial-a Ride" service, Councillor Mrs Longford replied that she was hopeful that the problems currently experienced by the service would be overcome and the community better served in the future and that she would respond to the questioner in writing on the level of support extended to community transport schemes in the District by the Council.

Question from Councillor P J Downes to the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy, Councillor A Hansard

In response to a question regarding the timescale for undertaking a review of Parish boundaries in Huntingdonshire, Councillor A Hansard agreed to respond to the questioner in writing.

Question from Councillor J D Fell to the Executive Councillor for Operations and Information Technology, Councillor L M Simpson

In response to a question regarding the action being taken to ensure traders and businesses were not continuing to dispose of their waste in domestic black sacks, Councillor Simpson replied that an exercise had been undertaken to examine refuse sacks left for domestic collection and where business waste had been found the persons concerned were being advised of the arrangements and cost of the business collection.

This had resulted in a decrease in the number of black bags set out for collection.

Question from Councillor R G Tuplin to the Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport, Councillor Mrs P J Longford

In response to a question regarding the arrangements in place to respond to emergencies in the District caused by adverse weather conditions, Councillor Mrs Longford reported that an emergency plan was in place for securing the wellbeing of communities in Huntingdonshire and that this involved the co-operation and support of the other emergency services.

Question from Councillor C R Hyams to the Deputy Leader, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding the adequacy of the drainage arrangements and soakaways in Godmanchester, Councillor Bates advised that due to the complexities of the issues involved it would be preferable for the questioner to discuss the matter with the Head of Environment and Transport after the meeting.

Question from Councillor J J Dutton to the Deputy Leader, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question as to whether the Council had been informed of the County Council's proposals for the Cromwell Museum and County Records Office, Councillor Bates replied that he would inform the questioner of the situation after the meeting.

Question from Councillor Mrs M Banerjee to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor N J Guyatt

In response to a question regarding traffic management problems at the A14 Spittals interchange, Huntingdon, Councillor Guyatt confirmed that the Highways Agency were due to commence work shortly to install traffic signals at that junction.

39. NOTICE OF MOTION

Before proceeding to the Motion on the Agenda, the Chairman announced his intention to invoke the discretion afforded to him under paragraph 9.5 of the Council Procedure Rules and to rule that the Motion submitted by Councillor M G Baker, on being moved and seconded would stand referred to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Members Allowances.

Accordingly, it was moved by Councillor M G Baker and duly seconded –

“that the three tier system of Members car travel allowance be scraped and replaced with a single mileage payment rate of 37.0p per mile irrespective of car engine size. This rate should be paid, as at present, up to 8,500 miles per annum and the rate above that mileage should be at 10.8p per mile.”

Whereupon, the Motion was referred to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Members Allowances.

40. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 85

The Chief Executive reported that there were no absences of Members from meetings for consideration in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

41. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the identity of parties tendering for a contract, the terms proposed for the acquisition or disposal of property and/or the supply of goods or services and the amount of expenditure which would be incurred under the said contract.

42. CABINET (CONTINUED)

Further to Minute No. 37 (a) and in connection with Item No. 27 of the Report of the Cabinet relating to the procurement process for the Council's new headquarters and other accommodation, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the recommendations set out in paragraph 6.1 (a) – (d) of the report of the Director of Operational Services be approved; and
- (b) that a final decision on the proposed awarding of a contract and consequential changes to the Medium Term Plan be taken by the Council at their meeting to be held on 7th December 2005.

The meeting concluded at 4.05pm.

Chairman

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Cabinet

Report of the meetings held on 13th October and 3rd, 10th and 24th November 2005

Matters for Decision

61. FINANCIAL STRATEGY - UPDATE

Further to Item No. 26 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 28th September 2005, the Cabinet has been reminded of a number of uncertainties, including potential changes to government grant which has made it difficult to recommend a Financial Strategy to the Council in December to assist in determining the Budget and Medium Term Plan for the forthcoming year. A copy of the relevant report by the Director of Commerce and Technology is appended hereto (Appendix A). It is anticipated that notification of the grant settlement will be received early in December 2005 and given difficulties which this presents, the Cabinet

RECOMMEND

that consideration of a decision on the Council's Financial Strategy be deferred until the meeting to be held on 22nd February 2006 to enable the Strategy to be considered in parallel with the budget and 2006/11 MTP.

62. CORE POLICIES DPD – AFFORDABLE HOUSING TARGETS PREFERRED OPTION FOR CONSULTATION

The Cabinet has discussed a preferred option for affordable housing targets and contributions for inclusion in the Council's Core Strategy Development Plan Document. (A copy of the report by the Head of Planning Services is appended hereto [Appendix B].) The Core Strategy is the first part of the Local Development Framework to be determined by the Council and will set out a vision for the District and policies for guiding the development and use of land.

In noting that a target figure of 40% or more for the total number of affordable dwellings in future housing developments is in line with the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan, the Cabinet

RECOMMEND

that the proposed preferred option for affordable housing targets and contributions be approved as a basis for public consultation.

**63. HEADQUARTERS AND OTHER ACCOMMODATION –
FINAL TENDER EVALUATION**

Members will have received under separate cover a copy of a report by the Chief Officers Management Team entitled “Headquarters and Other Accommodation – Final Tender Evaluation”. The report has been considered by the District Council Headquarters and Other Accommodation Members’ Advisory Group and the Cabinet and has been the subject of discussion at a joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. The recommendations of the Advisory Group have been circulated separately to all Members and have been endorsed by the Panels and the Cabinet.

Due to the confidentiality of the information contained in the report, the Council will need to exclude the press and public during its consideration.

The Cabinet therefore

RECOMMEND

- (a) that the press and public be excluded from the meeting by virtue of paragraphs 8, 9 and 10 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 to enable consideration of the report by the Chief Officers Management Team; and**
- (b) that the Council approve the recommendations set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report of the Advisory Group.**

(NB. The Council will need to resolve to re-admit the press and public following consideration of this item.)

Matters for Information

**64. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES –
DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF –
CHARITIES AND KINDRED ORGANISATIONS**

The Cabinet has re-examined and modified the Council’s policy for assessing entitlement to discretionary rate relief for charities and kindred organisations which was last reviewed in January 1996. In so doing, the Cabinet has agreed that existing recipients of discretionary relief should be advised of the changes to the scheme and their cases reassessed as required following a change in rateable value. The Cabinet also has authorised the Head of Revenue Services and

the Local Taxation Manager to grant relief under the new policy and the Director of Commerce and Technology to deal with appeals from dissatisfied applicants. The rateable value referred to in the policy will be reviewed on the occasion of the issue of a new rating list every 5 years and all new cases will be assessed using the revised criteria.

**65. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES –
DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF BRAMPTON PARK GOLF CLUB**

Having considered a request from Brampton Park Golf Club, the Cabinet has agreed not to award discretionary rate relief from non-domestic rates to the club. This decision was subsequently called in by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance), (Item No 28 of their Report refers) who decided not to refer the matter back to the Cabinet.

**66. HUNTINGDON TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENTS:
REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS**

The Cabinet has approved the release of appropriate funds from the 2005/06 Medium Term Plan for a series of studies on issues likely to impact on the redevelopment and economic viability of Huntingdon Town Centre, some of which will involve a transfer from capital to revenue funding. Should revenue savings fail to cover the impact of this change the Cabinet has agreed a supplementary revenue estimate of up to £54,000 in the current year and the variations and revenue impact relating to 2005/06 onwards will be included in the plan.

67. MEDIUM TERM PLAN: REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

Having considered details of three schemes in the Medium Term Plan, the Cabinet has agreed to release appropriate funding for a programme of maintenance work at the District's Leisure Centres, a contribution towards a partnership project for an indoor activity hall at the Grafham Water Centre and the replacement of the bar air conditioning unit at St Neots Leisure Centre.

68. RECYCLING CREDITS

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) the Cabinet has been acquainted with changes to the Recycling Credit Scheme proposed by Cambridgeshire County Council, the Waste Disposal Authority. The new proposals aim to harmonise the recycling credits awarded to local authorities in the County. In noting the expected growth in recycling income from 2005 to 2010, the Cabinet has authorised the Head of Environment and Transport, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport, to agree a draft revised recycling credits scheme and to confirm the Council's support at the next meeting of the Cambridgeshire Councils Association Waste Forum.

69. CONEYGEAR COURT, HUNTINGDON: REVENUE FUNDING

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the details of a bid by the Granta Housing Association for capital funding from the Housing Corporation to provide an additional six units of accommodation for homeless people at Coneygear Court, Huntingdon. In supporting the bid, the Cabinet has considered a request from Granta for an increase in the level of revenue funding from the Council to finance additional staffing posts required to support the increase in accommodation. In that respect, Executive Councillors have expressed the view that the additional cost of £30,000 should be met from within the Government's Supporting People Budget. However, given the limited funds available and in noting the pressures in the District for this type of accommodation, the Cabinet has agreed a transfer of funds from the housing benefit budget to the homelessness budget to finance the increased revenue funding of this scheme.

70. CHOICE BASED LETTINGS, CAMBRIDGESHIRE SUB-REGION: RECOMMENDED OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Cabinet has approved in principle a partnership approach in developing a sub-regional choice-based letting scheme with other local authorities and housing associations in the Cambridge sub region. By working together the partnership will be in a position to submit a bid for up to £100,000 from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to develop a regional scheme.

The Government intends to introduce choice based lettings throughout the country by 2010 and the scheme will allow applicants to choose their own accommodation through available properties being advertised and interested households bidding for properties of their choice. In discussing the possibility of Government funding, the Cabinet has expressed reservations that resources are unlikely to meet the overall costs of the scheme and have requested that a further report on this matter be submitted to a future meeting.

71. THE COUNCIL'S SCHEME OF DELEGATION: INTERIM VARIATION PENDING THE APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES

The Cabinet has approved interim arrangements relating to the Council's Scheme of Delegation pending the recruitment of a Director of Operational Services. With effect from the 14th November 2005, the Chief Executive will undertake the powers delegated to the Director in the scheme on a temporary basis.

72. COMMISSIONING A PATIENT- LED NHS: PRIMARY CARE TRUST

The Cabinet has been acquainted with arrangements for the proposed development of options by the North Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Strategic Health Authority (SHA) for consultation on the future configuration of Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). Having been

advised that the SHA may well be inclined to put forward two alternatives for Huntingdonshire - the amalgamation of Cambridgeshire's four PCTs to create one trust with the same geographical boundaries as the County Council or the amalgamation of Cambridgeshire's four PCTs with the Greater Peterborough Primary Care Partnership - the Cabinet has authorised the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Leader of the Council, to make appropriate representations to the SHA to include an option of retaining the Hunts PCT based on or similar to its existing boundaries in any future reconfiguration of Primary Care Trusts in the Eastern Region.

73. QUARTERLY SUMMARY OF DEBTS WRITTEN-OFF

The Cabinet has been advised of those debts which have been written-off as irrecoverable during the period July-September 2005.

A summary of the list is available on request from the Democratic Services Section.

74. FINANCIAL MONITORING – REVENUE BUDGET

The Cabinet has noted the expected revenue budget variations already identified in the current year.

75. MONITORING OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2005/06

Consideration has been given by the Cabinet to a monitoring report of Capital Programme expenditure in 2005/06. Having noted variations to the approved programme the Cabinet has approved increases of £151,000 for the implementation of the car park strategy scheme and associated additional staffing costs of £59,000.

76. FIXED PENALTY NOTICES

Further to Item No. 40 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 28th September 2005, the Cabinet has approved in principle the adoption of the 2005 Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act's default penalties to deal with various environmental misdemeanours. Officers required to enforce the penalties will be trained and competent in both the interpretation of the relevant law and the process to be followed. The Director of Operational Services has been authorised to appoint persons to issue fixed penalty notices on behalf of the District Council.

**77. MOBILE HOME SITE, ST. NEOTS:
CONTAMINATED LAND SURVEY**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the initial findings of a contaminated land survey of the Council's mobile home park at Eynesbury, St. Neots which had been undertaken as part of a general review of the site. Having been informed that further tests will be undertaken due to the levels of carbon dioxide and benzo(a)pyrene in

the soil, the Cabinet has requested further updates once these tests are completed.

78. REVIEW OF MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's (Planning and Finance) review into Member Development. In acknowledging the need to improve certain aspects of Member support and development, the Cabinet has approved the introduction of briefing sessions for Members to be organised, as far as possible, by service areas every second month and have requested Chief Officer's Management Team to remind Officers of the need to notify Members on matters of significance affecting their wards. Alternative training mediums will be investigated but the Cabinet were of the opinion that responsibility for mentoring schemes for newly elected Councillors and the appointment of training champions should be referred to the Leaders of political groups represented on the District Council. A report on the possible provision of a broadband internet connection for Members will be considered at a future meeting of the Cabinet.

79. POLICE FORCES: RE-STRUCTURING

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the outcomes of a report by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary – "Closing the Gap: A Review of the "Fitness for Purpose" of the Current Structure of Policing in England and Wales" The response by the Home Secretary and the timescale set for the consideration of options for the restructuring of police forces in England and Wales has also been drawn to Members' attention.

Having expressed concern about the timescale involved, the potential impact on the morale of the force in Cambridgeshire and the potential impact of a larger force comprising either three or six County Constabularies both in terms of the level of service provided and loss of local accountability, the Cabinet has authorised the Chief Executive to make representations to the Home Secretary for a preferred option to retain the existing single force option in Cambridgeshire.

**80. OPERATIONAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE:
APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES**

In accordance with paragraph A (e) of the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, Cabinet has informed the Chief Executive that there was no material or well founded objection to the proposal of the Appointments Panel with regard to the offer of appointment to fill the post of Director of Operational Services.

81. REVIEW OF COUNCIL BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE

The Cabinet has noted the findings of a review into the Council's budget and expenditure undertaken by a Working Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) (Item No.29 of their Report refers).

In discussing the Panel's individual recommendations, the Cabinet requested that the Panel be advised of the following response -

- ◆ that the distribution of a total spend analysis similar to Annex A of the Panel's report would be helpful to Members and could be supported;
- ◆ that the Cabinet already monitors the Medium Term Plan (MTP) closely with specific approval being required before each scheme in the programme is able to proceed;
- ◆ that the recommended advice to Officers on the formulation of MTP bids mirrors Management Team instructions with final consideration being given to individual proposals by the Cabinet and Council;
- ◆ that future inflation levels are reviewed on an ongoing basis and are included in budget reports;
- ◆ that the Cabinet also currently favour option 3 in respect of Council Tax increases, subject to the content of the final grant settlement;
- ◆ that the Cabinet also supports early savings in the Council's budget and should be informed of the savings that have been achieved in the past year;
- ◆ that the decision on the operational arrangements for the call centre had been made by the Council and that the Cabinet can not support any change in those arrangements;
- ◆ that it is anticipated that efficiency savings will become apparent as services are transferred to the call centre and that all vacant posts are evaluated to ensure that a need exists for them to be filled;
- ◆ that the Cabinet does not support any consideration of alternative funding strategies for the leisure centres in the short term; and
- ◆ that a decision on alternative office accommodation can not be taken in advance of receipt of the grant settlement.

A report to this effect will be submitted to the December meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance).

82. CONCESSIONARY FARES

Following the Government's 2005 budget announcement that a free concessionary bus fare scheme for those over 60 years of age and those with disabilities will be introduced from April 2006, the Cabinet has been advised of the implications for the District. The scheme makes provision for concessionary travel within the boundaries of an individual authority after 09:30 hours only and a study has been commissioned by the Cambridgeshire local authorities in an attempt to identify a deliverable scheme for implementation by next April. Given that the scheme will result in some recipients being worse off than previously and having expressed concern over the imposition of a further initiative on local authorities without the accompanying financial resources, the Cabinet have agreed to adopt a statutory minimum concessionary fares scheme for an interim period of 12

months and requested the submission of a further report and associated Medium Term Plan bid to a future meeting.

83. TREASURY MANAGEMENT INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE

The Cabinet has reviewed the respective levels of performance achieved during the quarter 1st April – 30th September 2005 by three external Fund Managers in the matter of investment of the Council's Capital Receipts.

84. HUNTINGDON HIGH STREET – ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

The Cabinet has approved the release of appropriate funds from the 2006/07 Medium Term Plan for Phase II of the Huntingdon High Street Environmental Improvements Scheme for improvements to the St Benedict's Court area including the removal of the present gazebo structure. Phase I of the works, involving the laying of new surfacing and drainage channels in the High Street from the Market Square to Hartford Road has been successfully completed.

85. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Cabinet has noted the Council's property portfolio performance for 2004/05 against National Property Indicators including four new performance management initiatives covering maintenance, environmental property issues, suitability and accessibility. At the same time, the Cabinet has agreed the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy being designated as "Champion" to promote efficient and effective asset management in respect of all District Council land and property.

86. LICENSING ACT 2003 – IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACT

Further to Item No. 66 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 24th September 2003, the Cabinet has been acquainted with progress in implementing the Licensing Act 2003. The Act abolished several licensing regimes, including liquor licensing (by the Licensing Justices) and public entertainment, cinemas, theatres and late night refreshment houses (by District Councils) replacing them with three new types of licences, as follows -

- ◆ a premises licence for all venues selling intoxicating liquor or at which regulated entertainment is provided or late night refreshment provided between 11 pm and 5 am;
- ◆ a club premises certificate; and
- ◆ a personal licence which permits an individual to supply alcohol in venues with a premises licence or a club premises certificate.

Members have been advised that the changeover has been progressed successfully with Officers dealing with over 550 applications for premises licences and club premises certificates and 600 for personal licences being received by the end of October 2005.

To deal with the extra workload, two additional members of staff have been employed for a temporary period of two years within the Licensing Section of the Central Services Directorate. Given the likely ongoing workload created by the Act and the implementation with effect from September 2007 of the Gambling Act 2005, the Cabinet has approved the preparation of a Medium Term Plan bid in respect of the estimated additional income which will be received and the cost of making permanent the two temporary members of staff.

87. STAFFING REVIEW – PATHFINDER HOUSE RECEPTION

Arising from Item No. 13 of the Report of the Employment Panel, the Cabinet has approved a supplementary estimate to grant early retirement and redundancy to a member of staff employed at the main reception at Pathfinder House following the transfer of the Council's switchboard to the call centre in September 2005.

D P Holley
Chairman

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FINANCIAL STRATEGY - UPDATE
(Report by the Director of Commerce and Technology)

1 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Cabinet on items that will affect the Financial Strategy report considered at their September meetings and by Council on the 28 September. At that time the Council decided to defer consideration of the Financial Strategy to their meeting on the 7 December as:

- ◆ significant changes to the Council's financial support from the government might result from changes to the grant formula.
- ◆ the clarification process with the tenderers for new office accommodation would lead to changes in the financial impact.

1.2 Subsequently, officers have been identifying another tranche of savings and have commenced reviewing the MTP. Chief Officers' Management Team have produced the guidance attached as an Annex for this purpose.

1.3 Reference was made in the report to a request to the LGA to try and get the Government to exclude Authorities in certain positions from being capped. Unfortunately the LGA considered that it would weaken their total opposition to capping if they were to approach the Government in this way.

2. GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT

2.1 The latest information is that the Council will receive the Government's draft figures in mid-November or early December. Given the significant changes in the formula this year and the LGA's recent comments that, unless the Government significantly increase financial support, average Council Tax increases of 10% will be likely the announcement may be towards the end of this time frame.

2.2 Two types of change may emerge -

- ◆ the grant resulting from the **last** formula change may be received more slowly or quickly than forecast. This will not affect the eventual level of savings required but may move the date by which they must be achieved forwards (slower receipt of grant) or backwards (quicker receipt of grant).
- ◆ The new formula may result in an underlying increase or reduction in the level of financial support that has been forecast. This will also have an impact on the date by which savings must

be achieved but will also increase (less grant) or reduce (more grant) the eventual level of savings that must be achieved.

3. NEW OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

- 3.1 Clarification of the lowest two tenders has now been undertaken and a robust estimate of refurbishment costs has been obtained. These figures are considered in a separate report on your agenda.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Given the anticipated late notification of the draft grant settlement, the ongoing identification of savings and the review of the MTP there would be significant benefits from leaving further discussion of the Financial Strategy until the new year.
- 4.2 This would also allow members to assess the various pronouncements that the Government are likely to make on Council Tax levels though these will inevitably not give a clear indication of their proposed capping levels.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 **Cabinet are asked to recommend to Council that they defer consideration of the Financial Strategy to their February meeting and consider it in parallel with the budget and 2006/11 MTP.**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Correspondence from the LGA and ODPM

Contact Officer: Steve Couper, Head of Financial Services
☎ 01480 388103

GUIDANCE FROM COMT TO OFFICERS ON REVIEWING THE MTP

I refer to the email I sent at the beginning of August which asked you to undertake certain actions for the MTP Review.

COMT have now identified a list of efficiency savings and/or budget reductions and are currently checking to confirm how soon they will come on stream.

As far as the remaining efficiency savings assumptions are concerned, any major amount will reflect business process reviews or other one-off projects. It may therefore be appropriate to adjust the savings profile to reflect the sort of work programme that the Business Analysts can achieve. However, we must also continue to seek and introduce small improvements, and these should certainly be considered whenever staff “hand in their notice”. Any staff departure must be seen as an opportunity to do things differently and / or to change roles and responsibilities so that the vacancy doesn’t need to be filled.

The Efficiency Savings line is only part of our challenge. Total savings, based on the lowest bid for new offices requires a **cost reductions of £7.1M on top of the efficiency savings of £1.3M by 2016/17.**

We therefore need to set some guidelines to minimise abortive MTP bidding.

New Schemes

Obviously any Unavoidable bids will have to be included (**as long as the unavoidable is absolute - this includes the preservation of physical assets**) but any other new bids (including new 2010/11 bids) are only worth preparing if they have a **high impact on high priority**** Council targets **AND** reductions on another bid or in the base can be identified to fund them. Obviously colleagues may not share your view of priorities and may be unwilling to reduce spending in their services to accommodate an increase in spending in yours, so the easiest way to achieve this is to find the savings from within your own service area. This also applies to any areas with significant overspending where you cannot solve them by virement. [Form to be completed - separate forms for unavoidable and high impact on high priority are available].

Revisions to existing schemes

Please be realistic rather than optimistic when slipping schemes. A significant proportion of the Council’s underspending is due to delays in completing schemes.

If there is an increase in cost and if the scheme is high impact on a high priority and the increase is minimal or a reduction in cost then a revision form can be used. Otherwise it must be treated as a new scheme (see above). [Shortened form to be completed - copy available]

Reviewing existing schemes

We also need to review those planned schemes that will **NOT** have a major impact on a high priority area. Some/all of these are likely to be deleted because it is obviously easier to achieve reductions in planned spending by not doing something we haven't yet started than to stop something we are already doing. [List to be provided of those that are not high impact on high priority showing those that should be considered for retention]

Base Review

We will need to address service reductions in the base, so if you can identify any low priorities now so that those reductions can be made sooner rather than later. [Details to be provided]

Efficiency projects

Identify any significant projects that could lead to efficiency improvements (other than Customer First and BA review programme which will be reviewed anyway). [List to be provided].

****** ***High Priority and High Impact** are defined in the table on page 7 of "Growing Success 2004/05" produced and circulated by the Policy Division in June 2005.*

COMT subsequently agreed on the 15 November that where a manager has a new "high impact on a high priority" scheme but has been unable to identify compensating savings then, if the case is supported by their Director, COMT will consider whether it should be funded by savings identified in other services.

**CORE POLICIES DPD – AFFORDABLE HOUSING TARGETS
PREFERRED OPTION FOR CONSULTATION
(Report by Head of Planning Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report informs Cabinet of the suggested preferred option for inclusion in the Council's Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD). Cabinet is requested to recommend approval of the preferred option as a basis for public consultation.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Core Strategy is the first policy document that the Council will produce as part of the new system of plan production. It will set out a spatial 'vision' for the area and criteria-based policies for guiding the development and use of land. It will also provide an over-arching framework for other documents, including a Planning Proposals DPD that will contain site-specific allocations.
- 2.2 All other policy approaches in the Core Strategy were recommended to Council for approval for consultation by Cabinet on 19 May 2005. These were subject to public consultation during July and August and responses to the representations received are currently being considered.

3. REASONS FOR ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION

- 3.1 The Core Strategy: Preferred Options Report included a definition of affordable housing but did not set any targets or thresholds of the scale of development where affordable housing would be sought. The intention was to set targets and thresholds in a separate Planning Obligations Development Plan Document.
- 3.2 Following the publication of Circular 05/2005 on Planning Obligations advice has been given by Go-East that if the Council's targets and thresholds for affordable housing are included in the Core Strategy Development Plan Document then all other planning obligations matters can be included within a Supplement Planning Document rather than a Development Plan Document. The Supplementary Planning Document would involve less onerous statutory procedures and could be produced more quickly and at lower cost.
- 3.3 To incorporate the affordable housing targets and thresholds into the Core Strategy before it is submitted to the Secretary of State (expected in April 2006) it is necessary to conduct public consultation on the Council's preferred option as was done with all other preferred approaches in July/ August. The preferred approach must also be subject to a sustainability assessment and the results of this made

available for public consultation too. It is hoped that consultation can be commenced in December.

4. PREFERRED APPROACH

4.1 The initial consultation with key stakeholders commenced on 19th September and the representations made and the Council's proposed responses to them are set out in a Schedule which is available in the Members' Room.

4.2 The current Housing Needs Survey (2002-2007) confirmed that a 40% target would be justified. Policy P9/1 of the Structure Plan states that '**40% or more** of the new housing in the Cambridge sub region will be affordable'. The level currently stands at 29%.

4.3 The target figure of 40% was put forward for consultation purposes with stakeholders. Consultation responses have raised the possibility that our target should reflect the Structure Plan target of '40% or more'. This approach has been adopted by neighbouring Districts e.g. South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City who are seeking a target of 50%. Our H12 policy attached has therefore been amended to seek '40% or more' as a target. The Council will undertake further work on housing need and site viability in order to inform a viable target in the final Core Strategy. This work will be completed prior to the submission of the Core Strategy in April 2006.

4.4 Until then the preferred approach for the next stage of the consultation and the reasons for it are set out in appendix 1. This suggests that:

- ◆ Proposals for housing development should provide 40% or more of the total number of dwellings as affordable housing, as defined in preferred approach H2, on housing sites
 - of 0.5 ha or more and all developments containing 15 dwellings or more in market towns or key centres as defined in the settlement hierarchy
 - on all developments containing 2 or more dwellings in smaller settlements as defined in the settlement hierarchy, subject to the effect of such provision on the financial viability of any scheme
- ◆ Contributions should be made in the form of free serviced land. Additional contributions, including capital, may be sought to ensure that at least half of the resultant affordable housing is of social rented tenure.
- ◆ Where the 40% target would result in less than 1 complete dwelling unit being sought an equivalent capital contribution will be sought for off-site provision.
- ◆ Account will be taken of any particular costs associated with the development. Alternative levels of affordable housing may be negotiated where the 40% target is shown to make development

unviable or where there are other planning objectives which need to be given priority.

- ◆ The appropriate mix of housing tenures and sizes of affordable housing within a development will be determined in response to identified needs in the local area and funding priorities at the time of the development

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 The preferred option will represent the Council's proposals for the content of the Core Strategy DPD. There will be a statutory six-week period for public consultation during December and January. A short piece will be placed in the next edition of District Wide to raise awareness of the forthcoming consultation as well as statutory notices. The results of that consultation will need to be considered by the Council in finalising the Core Strategy that will be submitted to the Secretary of State.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 **It is recommended that Cabinet:**

Recommends to Council that the preferred approach for affordable housing targets be approved as a basis for public consultation.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

ODPM, 2004, *Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks*
Report to Cabinet, 19 May 2005, and Minutes, Core policies DPD - *Preferred Options for consultation*

Contact Officer: Clare Bond (Principal Planner)
☎ 01480 388435

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Overview and Scrutiny (Planning and Finance)

Report of the meetings held on 11th October, 2nd and 8th November 2005 and a joint meeting with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery & Resources) held on 22nd November 2005.

Matters for Information

24. INFRASTRUCTURE RELATING TO NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The Panel has received a presentation by the Head of Planning Services on infrastructure provision for new development and the negotiation of planning obligations.

Having been acquainted with the process for securing obligations, the Panel has discussed issues associated with the viability of individual sites to provide infrastructure contributions and the need to ensure that Huntingdonshire receives an adequate distribution of funds from the combined Section 106 contributions managed by Cambridge Horizons. With regard to the latter, the Panel have been informed that the joint strategy presents the best method of achieving community infrastructure funded by development although the content of each agreement will remain a matter for determination by the local planning authority through the Development Control Panel and that Development Control Officers will continue to try to achieve relevant benefits from developers in the interests of local communities.

25. SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS MONITORING

As part of their continued monitoring of the use of Section 106 Agreement receipts, the Panel has discussed with Councillor Mrs J Chandler, Executive Councillor for Leisure and the Head of Community Services the reasons why a number of sums negotiated from Section 106 Agreements for leisure and open space remain unexpended, even though in some cases a number of years had elapsed since their receipt by the Council. As a result of their questioning, the Panel has been informed that a number of aspects of the Section 106 negotiation and monitoring process had been improved recently and that service divisions were now involved to a much greater extent in the early consultation process.

In respect of the outstanding amounts relating to leisure and open space, the Panel has been informed that the sums have accumulated

over a number of years and that several were awaiting the completion of agreements and indemnities with town and parish councils for the transfer of funding for local use. The Executive Councillor has also assured the Panel that she is aware of the reasons for delay in the cases identified, but that the Council had to be assured that parish and town councils would spend receipts in a manner which met the Section 106 Agreement criteria and in accordance with the requirements of the individual agreements. The Head of Community Services has indicated that he expects the vast majority of expenditure to have been incurred by the end of the financial year.

Having expressed their satisfaction with the information provided, the Panel has agreed to continue to monitor the situation on a quarterly basis.

**26. DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT:
WIND POWER**

The Panel has outlined its support for the Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Wind Power which had been approved by the Cabinet as a basis for public consultation.

In considering the document, the Panel has been informed that the SPD should not be interpreted as a definitive statement that a landscape is suitable for a particular development and that there are other factors which need to be taken into account. However the document will assist the local planning authority in making decisions on planning applications and will therefore need to be sufficiently robust to withstand challenge at any planning inquiry.

27. REVIEW OF MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

The Panel has considered the outcome of their review into Member Development. Whilst recognising that existing support mechanisms have worked well over time and that there is much to commend, the evidence examined during the course of the review has highlighted the need for a number of potential improvements to Member support and development. The Panel have therefore endorsed the following recommendations for submission to the Cabinet -

- (i) briefing for Members on specific topics;
- (ii) notification of ward related committee reports;
- (iii) introduction of a mentoring scheme;
- (iv) appointment of training champions; and
- (v) use of alternative training mediums.

The recommendations of the Panel have been considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 3rd November 2005. (Item No. 78 of their report to Council refers.)

As a result of the Panel's previous request for a broadband facility to be made available for Members on request, a Medium Term Plan bid is in the process of being compiled which will be considered as part of the budgetary process.

28. CALL-IN: NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF – BRAMPTON PARK GOLF CLUB

Through the use of the Council's "Call In" procedure, the Panel has reviewed the Cabinet's decision to refuse an application by Brampton Park Golf Club for discretionary rate relief.

The Panel has been advised by Councillor P J Downes of the reasons for his decision to call in the matter for further consideration, which included the Council's approval of discretionary rate relief to other organisations, the absence of any debate at the Cabinet meeting on the item and the Council's rejection of the Golf Club's assertion that they did not place any limitations on their membership. Information was also obtained from the Finance Director of the Club in relation to his own perceptions of the Cabinet meeting and the Club's policy on membership admission which was the area of assessment in which the difference of opinion between the Golf Club and the District Council arose.

The Panel has also received evidence from the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates in relation to the process by which the application came to be considered by the Cabinet and the way in which it was dealt with at the meeting. Councillor Bates has reassured the Panel that notwithstanding the Golf Club's perception of the local decision making process, Cabinet Members had been fully briefed on the matter and that, based upon the balance of evidence provided and the absence of any further information which might influence the decision, he still considered that the Cabinet decision remained correct.

Having regard to the comments made, the details of other organisations in receipt of rate relief and a reminder by the Deputy Leader that if the Golf Club were willing to change their membership procedure the Cabinet would reconsider the matter, the Panel has agreed not to refer the matter back to the Cabinet.

29. REVIEW OF COUNCIL BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE

The Panel has considered the findings of a review into the Council's budget and expenditure by a working group which had been established for this purpose.

Having regard to the comments of the Head of Financial Services on the outcomes of the review and as a result of their own discussions, the Panel has agreed that further information is required in relation to a number of findings before decisions (if any) can be taken on the recommendations submitted. In this respect the relevant Executive Councillors and Heads of Service are to be invited to attend future meetings and Panel Members been asked to investigate and report

back on the implications of reducing the Council's information and promotion budget, together with the Council's decision on the operation of the Call Centre.

Having regard to the timings of the forthcoming budgetary cycle, the Panel has invited the Cabinet to consider a number of recommendations relating to -

- ◆ the Medium Term Plan;
- ◆ the Financial Strategy and the identification of savings;
- ◆ revenue inflation;
- ◆ efficiency savings arising from the implementation of the Customer First programme; and
- ◆ the funding of Leisure Centre provision.

The Cabinet's consideration of the recommendations are summarised in Item No. 81 of their Report.

30. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

In considering the quarterly performance monitoring report, the Panel has noted those areas in which performance was not being achieved in the current year and the progress being made towards the achievement of the Council's Improvement Plan.

Members have outlined their concerns in respect of the lack of clarity as to the actions which are being taken to address those areas which are identified as being below target. Having regard to the fact that there are a number of measures which contribute to any given outcome area and Members' need to obtain a better understanding of the overall process, the Panel has requested further information on those measures contributing to the outcome for Accessible Services & Transport Choices.

31. SCRUTINY

Arising from their consideration of the latest edition of the Council's Decision Digest of decisions made by the Council over the previous month, the Panel has agreed to consider at a future meeting the problems that can arise from the operation of private hire businesses from residential properties.

32. HEADQUARTERS AND OTHER ACCOMMODATION

As a result of their request for further information, the Panel has received an additional report relating to the refurbishment of Pathfinder House, issues associated with the decanting of staff, car parking and the overall project cost and affordability. The Panel has discussed further the issue of funding the new development with particular attention to the impact on the Council's Financial Strategy. In that respect the Panel have recommended the Cabinet to defer any decision in relation to office accommodation until such time as the Council have considered and determined the Financial Strategy.

At a subsequent joint meeting of the Planning & Finance and Service Delivery & Resources Panels, consideration was given to the final evaluation of the shortlisted tenders submitted for the procurement of new headquarters, together with an analysis of a scheme for the refurbishment of Pathfinder House. Having regard to the deliberations of the District Council & other Accommodation Advisory Group on the matter the Panel has agreed to endorse their recommendations.

Any potential questions with regard to the Panel's deliberations on this item should be dealt with as part of the Cabinet's report on office accommodation when the press and public have been excluded from the meeting.

P A Swales
Chairman

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Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources)

Report of the meetings held on 4th October and
1st November 2005

Matters for Information

21. RECYCLING CREDITS

The Panel has reviewed proposals by the County Council to change the recycling credit scheme prior to its submission to the Cabinet. The proposals have been prompted by the Government's plans to impose a national scheme for recycling credits should no local arrangements be in place.

The Panel has discussed the gate fee paid by the County Council to landfill site operators to accept waste, the landfill tax credit paid to the District Council and the landfill tax escalator mechanism. Members have been informed that an objective of the local scheme is to harmonise the landfill tax credits paid to all District Councils in Cambridgeshire.

The Panel also has discussed the financial implications for the District Council of the Waste Private Finance Initiative, the proposed agreement and the activities undertaken countywide to promote recycling. Finally, Members have been acquainted with the further work that would be required on its effect and impact on local community organisations that collect glass at present, if glass is to be included in the Council's recycling scheme.

22. STUDY: THE RURAL ECONOMY AND SERVICES – HEALTH SERVICES

Pursuant to Item No.18 of the Report to the meeting of the Council held on 28th September 2005, the Panel has been presented with information on the health service provision in the District by locality. Given the loss of a NHS dental surgery in Somersham and the large areas that exist without provision, together with the lack of public transport, the Panel has agreed to study all health services but pay particular attention to the distribution of dental services in the District.

The Panel has requested various additional information and will invite a representative of the Primary Care Trust to a future meeting to discuss the provision of NHS dental services. A public consultation exercise also will be carried out and all Members will be surveyed for

their views on the availability of health services in their respective wards in the District and on the public transport available to reach these services.

23. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The Panel has invited Dr C Macleod, Huntingdonshire Director of Public Health, to its meeting in November 2005 to discuss the measures being taken to combat pandemic flu should it arise.

Dr Macleod has stressed that currently there is no pandemic flu in the world and she outlined the chances of pandemic flu occurring. An outbreak is likely within the next 11 years and it is suggested that 25% of employees of organisations could be effected.

With regard to recent media coverage concerning the possibility of avian flu becoming pandemic, Dr Macleod has informed Members that this would require the current strain to mutate into a form that could be passed between humans. At present only those who come into direct contact with infected birds are in danger of contracting avian flu. Dr Macleod has also stated that older people, carers and those with chronic medical conditions are at greater risk from seasonal flu, which could result from the predicted cold weather.

Dr Macleod concluded by discussing the duty placed on public bodies, including the District Council to produce a Pandemic Flu Plan for submission to the Department of Health by December 2005. She has also outlined the medical prevention and treatment being stock piled and the assistance that would be required of the District Council to staff vaccination centres.

The Panel has discussed the development and administration of vaccines, the potential of pigeons to carry avian flu and the adverse effect on agricultural businesses of negative press interest in pandemic flu.

24. FIXED PENALTY NOTICES

The Panel has reviewed a report on Fixed Penalty Notices prior to its submission to the Cabinet. Members have been acquainted with the legislative background, the powers available to the Council, the resource implications of adopting an enhanced enforcement role and the possibility of involving Town and Parish Councils in enforcement.

The Panel has discussed the cost of enforcement, the approach to be taken for repeat offenders and the Council's ability to take action against those who discard rubbish from cars. Having commented on enforcement of dog fouling and the resources currently used to administer this role, Members have concluded that the possibility of using Council's existing resources to undertake additional enforcement should be explored.

25. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Panel has reviewed the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan. Members have commented on the absence of data against some measures and requested clarification of the policy on how targets and intervention levels can be changed within services. Having been reminded of the role of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Plan Working Group in monitoring the Council's performance, further information has been requested on the Employee Opinion Survey and the steps being undertaken to address the low results which resulted.

Other Matters of Interest

26. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY AND RESOURCES) - PROGRESS

The Panel has reviewed the progress of its studies. Following receipt of an expression of interest, the Panel has agreed to appoint Councillor M G Baker to the Sub-Group undertaking the study on Twinning and the Chairman of the Panel has replaced Councillor I P Taylor on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan Working Group.

The Panel has added cleaning regimes in town centres to the programme of studies and agreed a course of action to deal with a suggested study on the involvement of Members in the determination of planning applications.

27. FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the Forward Plan of key decisions, which has been prepared by the Leader. Further information has been requested on items on the Mobile Home Park at St Neots, Fixed Penalty Notices, the New Highways Agency Agreement, Concessionary Fares, the Local Area Agreement and the Members Advisory Group for Public Conveniences.

28. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest editions of the Decision Digest. A number of queries raised with regard to items appearing in the Digest have been answered to their satisfaction.

K Reynolds
Chairman

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Development Control Panel

Report of the meetings held on 17th October and
21st November 2005

Matters for Information

14. **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF – THE GRAND CINEMA, RAMSEY**

The Panel has been invited to comment on the content of a Development Brief produced to guide development of land associated with the Grand Cinema site in Ramsey. Whilst indicating their support for a scheme which will improve that part of the town, the Panel has expressed concern that the development could result in the loss of 22 parking spaces and possibly impact upon the future viability of shopping in the town centre. In recommending the Cabinet to adopt the brief as Interim Planning Guidance to the Huntingdonshire Local Plan, 1995, the Panel has requested that further consideration be given to the possibility of an extension to Mews Close car park to compensate for the loss of car parking that might result from development of The Grand cinema site.

15. **DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – WIND POWER**

The Panel has acknowledged that it is essential for the Council to have guidance in place to enable proposals for wind turbine developments to be assessed in a structured, consistent and transparent way. Having been assured that every application site and turbine proposal will be supported by a detailed assessment of its potential impact and that town and parish councils would be consulted as part of the normal planning process, the Panel has recommended the Cabinet to adopt a Supplementary Planning Document on wind power as part of the Local Development Framework.

16. **DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) forms one of a range of documents required under the new system for the production of the development plan and details how the Council proposes to consult residents and other stakeholders in the preparation of the Local Development Framework and in the determination of planning applications. Having noted that the proposed approach to consultation reflects that currently practiced by the District Council and the mechanisms that will be used to encourage community involvement, the Panel has endorsed the content of the Statement of

Community Involvement and recommended the Cabinet to adopt the document as part of the Local Development Framework.

17. DESIGN GUIDANCE: RIPARIAN RESPONSIBILITIES AND DEVELOPING NEAR A WATERCOURSE – A GUIDE FOR OWNERS AND DEVELOPERS

Having requested that the content first be verified by the Middle Level Commissioners, the Panel has endorsed a proposal to publish a Guidance Note for owners and developers which explains the nature, rights and responsibilities of riparian ownership. A copy of the Guidance Note will be sent to all town and parish councils.

18. APPEAL DECISIONS

Pursuant to Item No.7 of their Report to the last meeting of the Council, the Panel has noted that the Planning Inspectorate has following a public enquiry, allowed an appeal against non determination by the Council of a planning application for residential development on land off Bydand Lane/rear of Park Crescent, Little Paxton. The recommendations by the Panel in respect of the application which were deferred by Council at their last meeting (Minute No.37 (e) refers) now will not require to be considered. Given the interest in the application the Panel has requested that a copy of the appeal decision be sent to all Members of the Council.

19. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Panel has considered a statistical report on the performance of the Development Control section of the Planning Division over the period 1st April – 30th June 2005.

Having been advised that 87.1% of all applications received in the quarter had been determined within the target period and that performance had improved to such an extent that the Council had avoided being designated as a planning applications “standards authority” in 2005/06, the Panel has asked that their congratulations be conveyed to staff in the Development Control section on this achievement.

20. DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

Over two meetings, the Panel has determined a total of 18 applications of which 6 were approved, 11 refused and 1 deferred.

In response to an appeal against non determination of an application for the erection of a bungalow on land adjacent to 19 Infield Road, Glatton, the Panel has indicated that they would have refused the application to enable the Council to respond appropriately at a forthcoming appeal hearing.

As Mineral Planning Authority, the County Council, also has been advised that the District Council has no objection subject to planning conditions, a Section 106 Agreement and other issues raised by the

Panel to the creation of wetland and reed bed habitat areas including agricultural restoration, through extraction of sand and gravel on land north east and south west of Manor Farm, Diddington Road, Diddington. The development will eventually increase the size of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve from 78 to 285 hectares.

P G Mitchell
Chairman

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Employment Panel

Report of the meeting held on 23rd November 2005

Matters for Information

9. APPRAISALS AND PERFORMANCE PAY

The Panel has reviewed the changes to the appraisal scheme and the linkages to performance pay which were agreed in November 2004.

Having regard to the results of the performance development reviews undertaken earlier this year and some problems brought to light by changes to the scoring bands, the Panel has -

- ◆ agreed that with effect from 2006 and in subsequent years, annual appraisals should be undertaken in May of each year; and
- ◆ amended the scoring mechanism to avoid employees scoring a higher or lower overall score than the results of their individual key performance areas.

The amendments have been the subject of discussion with Employees' Side representatives.

10. CONTROL OF LEGIONELLA

Having regard to the adoption of a policy by the Safety Advisory Group in respect of the control of legionella bacteria in water systems the Panel has considered management arrangements to mitigate the risk to the Council.

Arising from the desirability of appointing a nominated person to assume corporate responsibility for the delivery of the policy and an opportunity to establish centralised arrangements for the recording, monitoring and reviewing of other aspects of the management of the Council's premises, the Panel has agreed to make permanent the post of Facilities & Access Manager (OP 150) on local salary Grade 8. The Panel has also appointed this postholder as the nominated person for the control of legionella.

11. REQUESTS TO FILL VACANT POSTS

Having considered the circumstances applicable to vacancies in the relevant Directorates for a -

- ◆ Senior Housing Advice Officer;
- ◆ Development Plans Manager;
- ◆ Director of Commerce & Technology; and
- ◆ Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive

the Panel has authorised the Head of Personnel Services to commence recruitment in each case.

12. **RESTRUCTURING – FINANCIAL SERVICES**

Arising from a request by a member of staff, the Panel has approved the offer of early retirement to the current Accountancy Manager.

Following a subsequent review of the Council's Financial Services Division the Panel has approved a new staffing structure for the Division which will result in an overall financial saving to the Council and the delivery of services in a more efficient manner.

Having regard to the resultant extra workload to be undertaken by the Audit Manager & Financial Resources Manager under the new structure and the lack of opportunity to recompense them by means of accelerated increments, the Panel has approved a one-off honorarium to be paid to both postholders.

13. **PATHFINDER HOUSE RECEPTION**

As a consequence of a reduction of the workload in Pathfinder House reception following the transfer of switchboard duties to the Council's Call Centre, the Panel has agreed to delete one post of receptionist (CN046) in the Administration Division. The Panel has approved a redundancy package to be awarded to the employee affected, subject to Cabinet being able to approve the necessary funding.

14. **RETIREMENT OF PERSONNEL - ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Panel has placed on record its recognition of, and gratitude for, the excellent contributions made by the following employees during their employment in the local government service and conveyed its best wishes to them for a long and happy retirement.

Name	Local Government Service
Mr A D Ward	36 years
Mr F W Semon	32 years
Mr G Dolan	31 years
Ms A Fergusson	18 years

J W Davies
Chairman

Appointments Panel

Report of the meeting held on 10th November 2005

Matter for Information

1. APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES

Having interviewed the shortlisted candidates for the post, the Panel has appointed Mr M Sharp as Director of Operational Services with effect from 21st November 2005 at a commencing salary within the range for Local Grade 2.

L M Simpson
Chairman

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Licensing and Protection Panel

Report of the meeting held on 20th October 2005

Matters for Information

7. **CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ENVIRONMENT ACT**

The Panel has been acquainted with the implications for the Council of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. Having noted the new powers and duties created by the Act and the matters that fall within their remit in relation to the statutory noise nuisances, the Panel has authorised the Director of Operational Services to appoint authorised Officers to enforce Part 7 of the Act and, after consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Panel, to institute proceedings for the prosecution of offenders for offences under that Part.

8. **THE COUNCIL'S SCHEME OF DELEGATION: INTERIM VARIATION PENDING THE APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES**

The Panel has approved interim arrangements pending the recruitment of a replacement Director of Operational Services following the resignation of the previous incumbent of the post.

9. **LICENSING OF TAXIS AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES**

The Panel has endorsed a response to a consultation exercise by the Department for Transport on Best Practice Guidance for local authorities on taxi and private hire licensing which has been issued following an Office of Fair Trading report on the subject. The Panel has been informed that the Council already complies with most aspects of the draft Guidance. However, Members have noted the recommendation in both the draft Guidance and the Office of Fair Trading report that quantity restrictions on taxi licences should be dispensed with by licensing authorities or their retention justified by authorities by means of a triennial survey of both demand and the implications of limiting the number of licences issued.

J M Sadler
Chairman

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Licensing Committee

Report of the meeting held on 20th October 2005

Matter for Information

5. LICENSING ACT 2003 – PROGRESS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION

The Committee has been apprised of progress to date with the implementation of the Licensing Act 2003 and the work still to be undertaken. Members have been advised that –

- ◆ 538 applications for premises licences and club premises certificates have been received
- ◆ 570 applications for personal licences have been received
- ◆ 74 hearings by a Licensing Sub-Committee have been arranged following representations from the fire authority and local residents to applications
- ◆ 53 hearings by a Sub-Committee have taken place
- ◆ 1 appeal has been submitted to the magistrates court against a decision by a Sub-Committee
- ◆ Over £135,000 has been received from application fees.

Further applications continue to be received and arrangements are being made to contact those premises for which a licence has not yet been sought.

The Panel has also been informed that with effect from 10th November 2005, the provisions of the Act relating to temporary events notices will come into force and additional responsibilities will transfer to the Council from the courts concerning gaming machines in licensed premises.

J M Sadler
Chairman

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Elections Panel

Report of the meeting held on 31st October 2005

Matter for Information

1. PERIODIC ELECTORAL REVIEWS – CONSULTATION PAPER

The Panel has considered a consultation paper produced by the Electoral Commission on their evaluation of how periodic electoral reviews are undertaken.

In so doing the Panel has been acquainted with the background to the review which is seeking views on how the statutory criteria for electoral reviews – community identity, electoral equality and effective and convenient local government – have been applied and if they can be improved.

Having regard to the questions outlined in the consultation paper, the Panel has asked that their comments and conclusions be conveyed to the Electoral Commission.

D Harty
Chairman

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Corporate Governance Panel

Report of the meeting held on 29th September 2005

Matter for Decision

8. REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is attached at the Appendix hereto) on the findings of a review by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels of the way in which scrutiny is carried out within the Council. The review proposes changes to the structure and composition of the Panels and the adoption of an action plan for the future development of the overview and scrutiny function.

The Panel has discussed the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels suggested under the new structure, the potential difficulties associated with achieving political balance for the suggested Corporate and Strategic Framework Panel and the date when the new arrangements should be introduced. Having expressed the view that the changes should come into effect at the start of the next municipal year, the Panel

RECOMMEND

- (a) that a Corporate and Strategic Framework Overview and Scrutiny Panel be established, to be politically balanced as far as is practical, with the terms of reference set out in the attached report; and
- (b) that, at the Annual Meeting in May 2006, an additional 3 Members be appointed to each of the proposed Service Delivery and Service Support Panels and that consequential amendments be made to the Constitution to implement the aforementioned measures.

Matters for Information

9. CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Panel has been acquainted with the outcome of a review of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance. Having noted the main

areas in which changes have been made and on the understanding that in future the Code's dimensions will incorporate, where appropriate, indicative completion dates for achieving compliance, the Panel has adopted the revised Code.

10. ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE ON CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Pursuant to Item No.6 of their Report to the Council held on 28th September 2005, the Panel has approved the Statement of Assurance on Corporate Governance for 2004/05 and authorised the Chairman of the Panel and the Chief Executive to sign the Statement on behalf of the Council. The Statement summarises the corporate governance work carried out in 2004/05 and identifies matters to be addressed during 2005/06.

C J Stephens
Chairman

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
REVIEW OF OPERATION
(Report by Head of Administration)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At an informal meeting of Members of both Overview & Scrutiny Panels held on 28th July 2005, the attached report (Annex A) was considered to comply with the requirements of the CPA Improvement Plan for the Panels to implement their development plan and integrate the corporate performance management framework into the scrutiny process.
- 1.2 Work on the latter is ongoing and the informal meeting concentrated on reviewing the development plan and the working practices of the Panels, together with the preparation of a new Action Plan.

2. REVIEW OF OPERATION

- 2.1 In reviewing their existing development plan, Members acknowledged that the working practices of the two panels had diverged somewhat in the past 18 months with some of the ideas previously approved having been trialed and proving successful in the case of one or other of the panels only. The discussion also had regard to the outcome of a visit to Maidstone earlier in the year by a number of Members to observe that authority's scrutiny arrangements.
- 2.2 On the whole, Members felt that scrutiny was operating well in Huntingdonshire with many of the measures contained in the development plan being welcomed and valued. However there remained concern over the capacity of two panels to undertake the workload of overview and scrutiny and Members were conscious of the remarks of CPA inspectors that panel agenda were 'congested'. There was an acknowledgement that the panels need to avoid duplication and overlap and that there has been a growing prevalence for joint meetings of the panels to be held to discuss issues of major significance. Nevertheless, Members also were aware that the Council has consistently rejected the establishment of a third panel.
- 2.3 To address the dilemma, Members propose a change to the size and terms of reference of the existing panels and the replacement of the present joint meetings by a new panel with membership drawn from the two existing panels. The new format would be:

Service Delivery Panel

Cabinet portfolios of –

Environment & Transport
Leisure
Housing & Public Health
Planning Strategy

Service Support Panel

Finance
Resources & Policy
Operations & Information
Technology

Management Team have invited the Panels to adopt a variation in the allocation of portfolios by transferring Planning Strategy to the Service Delivery Panel and Operations to Service Support. This would entail Service Delivery scrutinising four portfolios and Service Support three. While some synergy might be achieved by aligning Planning Strategy with Environment and Transport, others would be lost by moving Operations to Service Support.

The constitution currently provides for a maximum membership of each panel of 16 and it is proposed that 15 be appointed to each panel compared with the current number of 12. All other aspects of the present arrangements will remain unchanged.

- 2.4 In addition, Members suggest that a third panel be formed, again with a membership of 15 and the title of 'Corporate and Strategic Framework', to deal with matters of a corporate nature, the strategic and financial framework of the Council and issues of major significance, including the budget and financial strategy, community strategy, corporate plan and replacement office accommodation project. Membership will comprise 5 Members nominated by each panel, including the chairmen and vice-chairmen, plus an additional 5 Members co-opted on a meeting by meeting basis from either of the other two panels. Meetings of the new panel will be held on an ad hoc basis, potentially on the same evening as one of the other panels. The chairmanship of the new panel will be shared by the two existing chairmen, dependent upon the subject area under discussion. Chairmanship will therefore fluctuate between and possibly within meetings, thereby avoiding the necessity for the payment of an additional Special Responsibility Allowance.
- 2.5 Agenda for the Corporate and Strategic Framework Panel will be sent to the full membership of the other panels and any Member wishing to attend a meeting (other than those permanently appointed) will need to notify the Democratic Services Section not less than 48 hours prior to the meeting. It will be necessary to give delegated authority to the Head of Administration to co-opt those Members wishing to sit on the panel on a meeting by meeting basis, after consultation with one or other of the chairmen. Any additional Member wishing to attend will have the opportunity provided for in the constitution to attend and speak with the consent of the chairman. Call-in will be exercised in the normal way by any three of the Members forming the panel.
- 2.6 The approval of the Corporate Governance Panel and the Council will be required for the establishment of the additional panel and, if the proposals are accepted, the Council will need to appoint an additional three Members to each of the Service Delivery and Service Support Panels.

3. ACTION PLAN

- 3.1 Members also agreed upon an action plan to continue those elements of the existing development plan which were thought to be working well and to incorporate additional measures with the intention of building upon the successful implementation of overview and scrutiny arrangements in Huntingdonshire. These have been grouped into a timescale for implementation over the next 2 years as explained in the attached Annex (Annex B).

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Overview and scrutiny needs to continuously evolve and learn from best practice elsewhere. The comments of the CPA inspectors were largely supportive following the last review as reflected in the CPA improvement plan. Following the discussion at the informal Member meeting, the panels are now invited to consider the conclusions set out in this report and the attached action plan.

4.2 It is therefore

RECOMMENDED

- (a) that the Panels approve the proposals contained in the attached action plan, as expanded upon in this report;
- (b) that the Corporate Governance Panel be recommended to endorse the establishment of a Corporate and Strategic Framework Panel with the terms of reference set out in this report for submission to the Council for approval;
- (c) that subject to the approval by the Council of the creation of a new panel, the Head of Administration be authorised to appoint up to 5 Members to the panel on a meeting by meeting basis from the membership of the Service Delivery and Service Support Panels, after consultation with one of the panel chairmen; and
- (d) that the Council be recommended to appoint an additional three Members to each of the Service Delivery and Service Support Panels and to approve the consequential amendments to the constitution to implement the above measures.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

As set out in Annex A

Contact Officer: Roy Reeves, Head of Administration
☎ (01480) 388003.

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
(Report by the Head of Administration)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 'Effective scrutiny is the lynchpin of the new political arrangements. If scrutiny isn't working, this poses a significant threat to the success of democratic renewal.' The words of the Audit Commission demonstrate the importance of the scrutiny process to the effective political management of the Council.
- 1.2 The scrutiny arrangements in Huntingdonshire have now been in operation for just over 4 years, 2 of which formed part of the trial of the Cabinet system before the new constitution was adopted under the Local Government Act 2000. Throughout that time, initiatives have been introduced to develop the role of scrutiny, culminating in the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment in July 2004 and the Improvement Plan adopted by the Council in response to the issues raised in the CPA report.
- 1.3 In September last year, the two Overview and Scrutiny Panels discussed a report (copy attached as Appendix A) on the further development of scrutiny in response to issues raised as part of the annual constitutional review earlier that year. No firm proposals emerged from those discussions but since that time a number of Members have carried out a fact finding visit to Maidstone Borough Council which is regarded as one of the forerunners in local government scrutiny.
- 1.4 This report attempts to draw together the various themes and to address the need to revisit the Panels' existing development plan in the search for continuous improvement in the provision of overview and scrutiny in Huntingdonshire.

2. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

- 2.1 It is worth recalling the assessment of the Audit Commission on the Council's scrutiny performance – 'There are some weaknesses in the effectiveness of the scrutiny system in that although there is some good practice for example a clear forward plan, scrutiny agendas are congested given the current volume of business, the forward plan is not thus as focused as it could be on strategic issues. There are however examples of the scrutiny function working innovatively, for example taking on a broad range of issues put forward by parish councils, voluntary organisations and the public, having a stand-alone budget to appoint specialist advisers, taking scrutiny meetings out around the district and have specific training for scrutiny councillors by a local MP experienced in aspects of select committee workings. The innovations have yet to develop into service outcomes.'
- 2.2 The only defined criticism was the size of meeting agenda and the fact that service outcomes have yet to be developed. On the other hand, the Commission complimented much of the work undertaken by the Panels as innovative.

3. LESSONS FROM ELSEWHERE

- 3.1 Scrutiny is probably the most difficult part of the new constitutional arrangements to deliver successfully. If developed imaginatively, scrutiny can be both challenging and rewarding, presenting Members with the opportunity to explore issues of topical concern in Huntingdonshire, while at the same time exerting pressure on the Cabinet to achieve targets and levels of performance that have been set by the Council.
- 3.2 Authorities continue to try to identify best practice from others with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (www.cfps.org.uk) at national level acting as a clearing house for ideas that have been tried or implemented elsewhere. Visits to the CfPS website provide examples of investigations undertaken by other Councils, scrutiny guidance notes and structural and support arrangements.
- 3.3 As Maidstone Borough Council is often regarded as one of the leading authorities on scrutiny, a number of Members undertook a fact-finding visit in February to observe Scrutiny Panel meetings and discuss with both Members and Officers what has worked well for them. A summary of the Maidstone arrangements is attached as Appendix B. Those Members who attended the visit will no doubt have formed a view as to whether any of what they observed might be suitable for Huntingdonshire.
- 3.4 Conversely, enquiries are regularly received by officers from other authorities wishing to learn about the way in which scrutiny is delivered in Huntingdonshire.

4. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 Many of the questions often raised by Members in terms their scrutiny role were addressed in the report of last September and decisions on those issues have yet to be made. The salient points are reproduced below together with other matters which the Panels are invited to consider. Where this was raised in the earlier report, the relevant paragraph number is shown.
- 4.2 **Development Plan** (paragraph 3.1 and Appendix C)

The Development Plan approved by the Panels in 2003 has largely been achieved with the Plan being reproduced in Appendix C and annotated with the progress made. Of those matters not implemented, some have been the result of unsuccessful funding bids while others have been progressed by one Panel and not the other. Those which have yet to be tried are quarterly discussions on potential study areas (*because the Panels already have sufficient workload*), study suggestions by voluntary organisations (*for the same reason*), and an overview and scrutiny forum biennially.

The Panels are invited to consider whether there are any items implemented from the Development Plan that are no longer relevant and should be changed.

- 4.3 **Capacity** (paragraphs 3.2 to 3.8)

Both Panels have previously proposed the creation of more panels but this has been rejected by the Council. There is no doubt that the work

programme of the two existing Panels has grown as Members have become more experienced in their scrutiny role and identified subjects that they wish to consider. This can be summarised as resulting in –

- ◆ longer meetings
- ◆ the creation of working groups to investigate and monitor individual subject areas as opposed to the main Panel
- ◆ a limitation on the number of studies that can be carried out
- ◆ an additional workload for Panel Members and pressure on their availability
- ◆ added difficulty for the Members of each Panel to come to grips with the content of 4 portfolios per Panel
- ◆ abortive time on the part of executive councillors and officers waiting for the items for which they have been invited to a meeting to be discussed
- ◆ greater difficulty in bringing studies to a timely conclusion
- ◆ lack of time to address performance monitoring.

- 4.4 A third panel would enable more Members to become involved in the scrutiny function, unless the existing membership of 24 was divided into three panels of 8 Members each. Currently the constitution provides for the two existing panels to have a maximum of 16 Members each, although advantage has not been taken of the scope for larger panels.

Should a third Panel be established and if so, what should be the size of the Panels?

Informally, the structure of Overview and Scrutiny has changed through the emergence of the Joint Panel in the last year.

Should these arrangements be formalised in the Constitution and more use made of this Forum?

4.5 **Co-option**

The Council's constitution provides for the co-option of both other Members and members of the public to Overview and Scrutiny Panels either on an ad hoc or more permanent basis. Co-option could be used to supplement the membership of the panels or working groups both to expand the size of a panel where this was thought to be appropriate and to bring particular expertise to a subject area.

Recent legislative change has also enabled co-opted members of the public to be permitted to vote at scrutiny panel meetings if an authority has introduced a scheme to enable them to do so.

Should greater use be made of the availability of co-option and if so, should co-opted members of the public be permitted to vote at panel meetings?

4.6 **Terms of Reference**

The creation of a third panel would enable a wider distribution of scrutiny work but consideration needs to be given as to how this should be allocated between 3 as opposed to 2 panels. The terms of reference of individual

panels could continue to be allocated on the basis of Cabinet portfolios or alternatively functions could be divided between the separate panels e.g. policy formulation, scrutinising of Cabinet decisions, performance management. Some of the issues are examined below.

The principle advantage of a continued allocation of specific portfolios to panels is that this enables the panels to be more focused, allowing Members to concentrate on and obtain greater experience of the executive responsibilities within their remit. This should reduce duplication and overlap and ensure that executive councillors are held to account by a specific panel.

An alternative would be to allocate specific functions to individual panels. One panel could be responsible for policy formulation and review, one for scrutinising the decisions of the Cabinet/call-in and one for performance management. In practice this might lead to confusion, with panels addressing the same issue from different perspectives. It is also possible that this would create a disparity in the respective workloads between the individual panels and reduce the number of in-depth studies that could be undertaken if these were restricted to a single panel.

A third option would be to adopt a more corporate approach and allocate a number of the Council's priorities contained in the corporate plan to each panel. The priorities are a clean, green and attractive environment; housing that meets local needs; safe and active communities; a healthy population; accessible services and transport choices; and a strong and diverse local economy. However provision would also need to be made for the other services provided by the Council, together with the various support services which are not included within the named priorities. Whilst this would be attractive in aligning the terms of reference of the panels to the corporate plan, this could create some difficulty in identifying responsibilities and cause overlap where subjects were affected by more than one of the priorities

Whichever option is chosen, the existing panels need to eliminate the present duplication on issues such as the corporate plan, budget, CPA, Customer First, office accommodation which is both time consuming and involves executive councillors and officers attending both panels for the same subject. Where subjects are of major importance, they could be dealt with by a joint meeting of the panels but in view of the number of Members involved, this is not always practicable nor conducive to an effective scrutiny of the subject area.

What should be the terms of reference of the panels and how can duplication be avoided?

4.7 Names of the Panels

The current names of the Panels are designed to reflect the portfolios that fall within their terms of reference. If a third panel is to be created or the terms of reference of the panels are altered, a change in name will be inevitable. If two panels remain but their terms of reference are changed, would the roles of the panels be more easily understandable if their names were change.

Are the existing names of the panels appropriate or should they be changed?

4.8 Existing Practices

It may be worth mentioning again the wide scope that the existing panels have in conducting their duties, either as part of the constitution or as a result of budgetary provision –

- ◆ Budget of £10,000 to spend on the work of the panels
- ◆ Flexibility in the size of panels and co-option (both voting and non-voting)
- ◆ Creation of ad hoc working groups
- ◆ Identification of subjects for scrutiny and investigation
- ◆ Developing Study Methodologies
- ◆ Call-in of executive decisions
- ◆ Public consultation
- ◆ Setting their own agenda

In addition some of the working practices adopted by the panels since the approval of the development plan have emphasised the clear distinction between scrutiny arrangements and other meetings formats.

Members are invited to consider whether changes should be made to the present arrangements.

4.9 Other Proposals

Most authorities have developed their own approach to scrutiny and many continue to find difficulty in making scrutiny effective. The visit to Maidstone highlighted a number of practices adopted by that authority which Members may wish to consider. They include –

- ◆ Specialist support on specific subjects
- ◆ Training for middle managers on the expectations of scrutiny
- ◆ Single item agenda
- ◆ Attendance by Cabinet Members three times per annum to explain aims and achievements
- ◆ Determination of work plans at the start of each year
- ◆ Written response by Cabinet to Overview and Scrutiny recommendations
- ◆ Engaging and consulting stakeholders
- ◆ E-bulletin after each scrutiny meeting.

The Panels are invited to consider whether to adopt any of the working practices of Maidstone or any other innovative proposals to develop the role of scrutiny.

4.10 Officer Support

The Panels have previously identified a need for additional support to assist them in becoming more effective. However a proposal for the creation of a dedicated Overview and Scrutiny Officer has been rejected by the Council previously as part of the MTP process and the allocation in the programme for a Member Support Officer who also could have assisted with scrutiny was deleted in the last review.

4.11 Training

Various training formats have been tried for scrutiny, involving trainers from the Improvement & Development Agency, Institute of Local Government Studies, Institute of Public Finance and a Member of Parliament. Often the trainers tend to dwell on the principles of scrutiny with which Members are already familiar. Training is also being arranged on performance management with external consultants who have been assisting the Council on the implementation of the balanced scorecard performance monitoring system

Members are invited to suggest forms of training on scrutiny that they would prefer to have provided.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Council's CPA Improvement Plan requires the Overview and Scrutiny Panels to implement their development plan and to integrate the corporate performance management framework into the scrutiny process. The Panel's development plan has largely been implemented with the exception of those issues that are considered no longer to be relevant and steps are being taken to develop the Panels' role in monitoring performance.
- 5.2 Nevertheless the Panels have continued to adopt new methods of working and to identify best practice elsewhere that may of relevance to Huntingdonshire. Members are invited to address the issues raised both in this report and that submitted to the Panels in September of last year and prepare a revised development plan for the further enhancement of the scrutiny function for the Council.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

As attached as appendices to the report now submitted.

Contact Officer: Roy Reeves, Head of Administration
☎ (01480) 388003

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY – REVIEW OF OPERATION
(Report by Head of Administration)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As part of the review of the constitution earlier in the year, all Panels of the Council and individual Members were invited to submit comments as to how the internal operation and structure of the Council might be improved. Following consideration by the Standards Committee, proposals were submitted to the Council but those issues which emerged from the review in relation to overview and scrutiny were referred back by the Council to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for them to discuss.
- 1.2 The two principal issues relate to the capacity of the two Panels to deal with the volume of business on their agenda and the question as to whether a system of substitution should be introduced for Members who were unable to attend meetings. The relevant extracts from the report submitted to the Standards Committee are attached as Annex A to this report.
- 1.3 In rejecting any change to the role of the Panels in relation to the development of the budgetary and policy framework, the Council also asked that the Chairmen of the Panels be reminded of the opportunity provided by the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules to invite members of the public to speak at meetings under the existing constitutional arrangements.

2. CURRENT ISSUES

- 2.1 The proposals submitted by the Panels to the Standards Committee and the Council can be summarised as follows.

Capacity

- 2.2 It was the view of both Panels when commenting upon the constitution that the level of business on their agenda merited the establishment of a third panel. The lack of capacity was identified as a weakness in the CPA report which stated that scrutiny agenda are congested given the current volume of business. In part, the development of the Panels' business has reflected Members' growing interest and confidence in the overview and scrutiny process, one of the principles of scrutiny being that agenda are set by Members themselves who determine which matters they wish to scrutinise or review.
- 2.3 However there a number of contributory causes to the size of agenda and length of meetings, i.e.
- ◆ agenda sometimes lack clarity as to why an item has been tabled
 - ◆ subjects which are of a corporate nature can appear on the agenda of both Panels
 - ◆ studies can lack focus and direction

- ◆ there is a lack of appreciation of the actions that can be taken outside Panel meetings
- ◆ Members are not sufficiently familiar with the opportunities available under the Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

These are addressed later in this report.

Agenda Planning

- 2.4 Because, prior to the portfolio changes in July, the terms of reference of each Panel broadly reflected half of the executive powers of the Cabinet, there has been a tendency to refer any matters of a corporate or budgetary nature to both Panels which has lead to duplication. Examples are the Best Value Performance Plan, Corporate Plan, Comprehensive Performance Assessment and annual budget preparation. Although both Panels have an interest in the subject areas, it is doubtful whether comments are required from both, given the constraints upon their time.
- 2.5 In terms of agenda items themselves, it is apparent that, on occasion, there is some confusion as to why an item is appearing. This may have been the result of a Member raising a subject scheduled on the Forward Plan; it may form part of an ongoing study into a particular subject or it may be an item upon which the comments of the Panels are being sought as part of the budgetary or policy framework. Because of the wide variety of such reasons, it can appear confusing for Members and Officers alike and can curtail or hinder debate/questioning at the meeting. In future, a more explicit explanation of its origin will be given in the agenda item, unless this is apparent from an accompanying report.

Studies

- 2.6 This is arguably the most rewarding of the Panel's roles. However progress in its development has slowed recently which can be attributed to a number of factors -
- ◆ there have only been a few new suggestions coming forward from Members for investigation;
 - ◆ it can be difficult for Members to keep abreast of business and decision making across the Council;
 - ◆ studies can take too long to complete which means that they lose focus and Members have difficulty in recalling the evidence that they have heard;
 - ◆ the scope of a study can be too large to manage effectively;
 - ◆ there is a lack of understanding of the aims and purpose of a study;
 - ◆ studies have mostly been undertaken at Panel level with few working groups having been established;
 - ◆ it has sometimes proved difficult to obtain background information and reports from officers, given their conflicting priorities and workloads.

Knowledge Of Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules

- 2.7 In their CPA report, the Audit Commission suggested that the Panels were not as focused as they could be on strategic issues. They nevertheless found that there were examples of the scrutiny function working innovatively, for example taking on a broad range of issues put forward by parish councils, voluntary organisations and the public, having a dedicated budget to appoint specialist advisers, taking meetings out into the District and having specific training for scrutiny Members.
- 2.8 Although the Panels have a Development Plan which was established twelve months ago and a variety of training sessions have been arranged for members of the Panels and others, there appears to remain a lack of appreciation about the wide ranging nature of scrutiny and the options open to Members to pursue specific subjects.

3. POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Development Plan

- 3.1 Last autumn, the Panels approved an action plan for overview and scrutiny which is being progressively implemented, within the resources available to support the scrutiny process. The Panels have diverged somewhat on their implementation of the plan but most of the measures agreed have been implemented by one or other or both of the Panels. These are summarised in Annex B attached.

The Panels are invited to consider progress against the Action Plan and the extent to which this requires amendment.

Capacity

- 3.2 Both Panels felt that the business before them was too large, a fact reinforced by the Audit Commission in the CPA outcome. Nevertheless the Council has rejected the request for the creation of a third panel which was not supported by the Cabinet.
- 3.3 If the Panels wish to reduce the business at their meetings, there are a number of options open to them.

Size of Panels

- 3.4 The constitution makes provision for the membership of the Panels to be a maximum of 16. Currently only 12 Members are appointed to each Panel by the Council. If the size of the Panels were to increase, this would not necessarily reduce the scale of business for each Panel (indeed it may extend the length of meetings) but it would generate a larger pool of Members with experience of the scrutiny process and create a greater capacity for working groups to be established to investigate and report upon specific subjects or investigations.
- 3.5 It is becoming increasingly apparent that it is difficult to maintain studies involving the whole Panel. They can take too long to complete, changes in membership of the Panel leads to a lack of continuity, the

absence of meetings in May and August creates further problems of continuity, the gathering of evidence can be time consuming and may be rushed when there is a long agenda still to be dealt with at Panel meetings, formal Panel meetings may not be the most conducive setting to obtain evidence and not all Panel Members may have an interest in the subject being investigated.

- 3.6 One alternative is to create more working groups with specific time limited objectives. If the size of the Panels were to increase, this would create a larger pool of membership from which the working groups are drawn. Co-option on to the working groups also could be considered either from other Members or from members of the public. Provided that a working group does not involve a member of the Cabinet, its membership can be open to any Member of the Council. The added advantage of appointing non-Panel Members is that there may be councillors with a particular interest or expertise in a subject who can make valuable contributions to the investigation to be undertaken. It also helps to broaden the scope of scrutiny and create a more inclusive process.
- 3.7 In order to improve their records, the Democratic Services Section will shortly be carrying out a survey of Members to ascertain particular expertise, experience and interests which will be of benefit both in meeting training requirements and identifying those who may be interested in participating in working groups.
- 3.8 A further option is to co-opt members of the public on to working groups. The Local Government Act 2000 makes specific provision for the co-option of members of the public to overview and scrutiny panels. Persons co-opted are unable to vote but provision is made in the Local Government Act 2003 for the introduction of voting rights for co-opted members under regulations to be made by the Secretary of State. The introduction of co-option of members of the public may help to increase awareness of the role of overview and scrutiny and to encourage interest in the democratic process.

The Panels are invited to consider –

- (i) whether to recommend an increase in the membership of each Panel to the maximum permissible in the constitution of 16;*
- (ii) whether to make greater use of working groups to undertake studies or investigations;*
- (iii) whether to consider co-option either to the Panels or working groups of other Members or members of the public.*

Substitution

- 3.9 The Council have asked the Panels to consider the feasibility of named substitutes at Panel meetings. This was considered and rejected by the Council during the review of the constitution in 2003 and a copy of a potential substitution scheme that was submitted at that time is attached for information as Annex C. During the most recent review, the Service Delivery and Resources Panel and Councillor P J Downes

suggested that substitution be introduced for all committees of the Council. If this was unacceptable for all committees, Councillor Downes suggested that this be introduced for the overview and scrutiny panels.

- 3.10 There are conflicting arguments about the merits of substitution and indeed about its legality. However it has been adopted by many local authorities, often where no one party has overall political control. In the case of overview and scrutiny, the introduction of substitution could broaden the experience and expertise of other Members of the Council and it should ensure that a full complement of 12 Members attends each Panel meeting. As substitution is dealt with on a party political basis, it would ensure that attendance at Panel meetings would always reflect the political balance of the Council.
- 3.11 Conversely, the political balance of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels should not be a significant cause for concern since political considerations should rarely feature in Panel debates. The nature of Overview and Scrutiny with ongoing studies and attendances by executive councillors and officers means that continuity is important and there is a potential difficulty for substitutes to make an effective contribution to debate. Repetition and duplication also can occur if substitutes raise issues that have already been dealt with. Moreover if the Panel are minded to recommend an increase in the size of their membership, to create more working groups to undertake studies or to co-opt other Members or members of the public, the absence of Members from a monthly Panel meeting becomes less significant.

The Panels are required to report to the Council on the feasibility of the introduction of substitution at their meetings.

Studies

- 3.12 Since their inception, the Panels have undertaken a series of studies or investigations. Mostly these have been dealt with by the Panel as a whole but paragraph 2.6 above illustrates some of the problems that can occur. The creation of working groups to undertake a study offers considerably greater flexibility. For example smaller groups would find it easier to undertake visits, to concentrate their investigation into a shorter timescale, to meet at times convenient to witnesses, to involve Members with a particular interest in a subject and to co-opt other Members or members of the public.
- 3.13 At times, the studies have tended to lack focus or direction which largely stems from the investigation not having been scoped satisfactorily at its commencement. A smaller group may enable this to be handled more effectively. More importantly however, the Panels have sometimes failed to appreciate the opportunities available to them to gather evidence, commission advice or support, question witnesses, undertake visits etc. Although a template has been produced previously in helping to scope studies, this is somewhat out of date and a new template is attached as Annex D for consideration by the Panels. If used as the basis for any study or investigation, this should help identify the aims of a study and shape its direction at the outset.

The Panels are invited to consider the use of the template in Annex D to assist in undertaking studies and investigations.

4. OTHER ISSUES

- 4.1 A number of other issues were raised in the review of the constitution that were referred to the Panels for their further attention.

Public Speaking at Panel Meetings

- 4.2 A suggestion was made by Councillor Downes during the course of the review that Paragraph 13 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules be extended to permit a Chairman to invite a member of the public in the public gallery at a meeting to address a Panel for up to 2 minutes where it is considered that the person might have a valuable contribution to make to the debate. The Cabinet were of the opinion that there was no need for further amendment to the Rules and the Council accepted a recommendation from the Standards Committee that the Panel Chairmen be reminded of the opportunities available within the existing Rules for members of the public to be permitted to address meetings of the Panels.
- 4.3 Paragraph 13 permits a Panel to invite residents, stakeholders and members and officers from other parts of the public sector to attend and address a meeting. The wording of the paragraph is broad and does not require prior notice to be given by a person who wishes to speak. Its interpretation is therefore open to the Chairmen and they may, if they wish at the outset of a meeting or at the start of a discussion, ask any member of the public who is present whether they wish to address the Panel on the subject to be debated.

The Panels are invited to consider whether they wish to adopt a procedure of inviting members of the public who are present at a meeting whether they wish to speak on a subject to be discussed.

Budget and Policy Framework

- 4.4 In the course of the review of the constitution, the Service Delivery and Resources Panel suggested that proposals for any change to an existing policy and for the implementation of new policy should be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels as a matter of course and that where Panels have made recommendations to the Cabinet, the latter should respond formally to the Panels with their own recommendations.
- 4.5 The Cabinet, Standards Committee and Council all felt that this was provided for adequately by the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules which require the inclusion of policy changes in the Forward Plan and enable the Panels to discuss such subjects either before they are considered by Cabinet or to call in decisions if they are concerned about their implications. Moreover if there are concerns currently about congestion of the meeting agenda, this could be exacerbated if all policy matters were submitted routinely to the Panels. In addition Cabinet Members and senior officers can be

requested to attend Panel meetings at any time to answer questions on such matters.

- 4.6 Questions have been raised previously by both Panels about the inadequacy of the information contained in the Forward Plan and although this has improved significantly, Plans would benefit from a more accurate description of the subject to be discussed. Members are reminded that a procedure has been introduced to address the advance consideration of Forward Plan items and a copy is attached as Annex E
- 4.7 Nevertheless there are sometimes concerns that the Cabinet have considered a subject before a Panel has had an opportunity to comment. Members are reminded that the Leader is required to publish the Forward Plan not less than 14 days before the beginning of the period to which it applies. The Forward Plan is published on the intranet and internet and is available for inspection from that time. If Members observe any item which they wish to bring to the attention of a Panel, they may ask for items to be included on the ensuing agenda. If they think that it would be appropriate for a Cabinet Member or senior officer to attend the meeting to answer questions on the subject, they can also ask the relevant Panel Chairman to arrange for an invitation to be issued.

The Panels are invited to consider whether there is anything further that could be introduced to make consideration of the Forward Plan more effective.

Budget

- 4.8 The Panels are reminded that they have a small budget available of £5,000 each to support them in their function and activities. To date this has been used sparingly. The budget is at the disposal of the Panels and can be used for a variety of purposes such as commissioning research, commissioning specialist support, site visits, room hire and training, although additional resources are also available for the latter.

The Panels are reminded of the availability of the budget to assist in their deliberations and in the scoping their studies and investigations.

Terms of Reference

- 4.9 The terms of reference of the two Panels are defined in the constitution. Each reflects the terms of half of the 6 portfolios established by the Leader in 2002 when the constitution was first adopted. Since that time there have been some changes to the terms of reference of individual portfolios but significant alterations both to the number of portfolios (now 8 in total) and their terms of reference were implemented after the Annual Meeting in June of this year.
- 4.10 A change in the Panels' terms of reference will involve a change to the constitution which will require a report to the Corporate Governance Panel and approval by the Council. Inevitably some time will elapse between any change in portfolio responsibilities introduced by the

Leader and its reflection in the terms of reference of the Panels. The Panels have the option of responding to changes and the inevitable time delay caused by the need to obtain Council approval or retaining their terms of reference as originally established in the acknowledgement that some portfolios will cross Panel boundaries.

- 4.11 In order to ease the criticism of agenda congestion, the Panels also need to resolve the duplication that currently occurs when some corporate issues are submitted to both Panels for comment. There are some items such as BVPI reports that clearly are of interest to both Panels but it is arguable whether other corporate issues such as the Community Strategy, budget preparation, Customer First, office accommodation and Waste PFI need to be discussed by both Panels. This creates duplication, leads to executive councillors and senior officers attending separate Panel meetings in successive weeks and can send conflicting messages to Cabinet if the Panels formulate differing comments on a subject.

The Panels are invited to consider –

- (i) retaining their terms of reference unchanged when portfolio responsibilities are altered by the Leader; and*
- (ii) refraining from both considering reports on corporate issues.*

Training and Information

- 4.12 Various training sessions have been arranged for Members on overview and scrutiny and the range undertaken was commented upon favourably in the CPA report. A survey is to be undertaken of Members' needs which may assist in identifying further courses in which Members are interested. However, it would be helpful if the Panels could suggest areas where they would like further training and how best this could be delivered.
- 4.13 Information is increasingly becoming available on the role of scrutiny and the Centre for Public Scrutiny (www.cfps.org) offers support, advice and practical examples of how scrutiny has been developed elsewhere.

Members are invited to suggest subjects and the format of future training sessions.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have made significant progress in their development since the inception of the new constitutional arrangements. The implementation of the current development plan has largely been achieved but there is scope for the further broadening of the Panels' role and the more effective implementation of their programmes of activities. In particular the Panels will be required to demonstrate how they propose to address the weakness identified in the CPA report about the congestion of their agenda.

5.2 The Panels are therefore invited to consider the issues raised in this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Documents attached as annexes to the report.
Audit Commission Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the District Council.

Contact Officer: Roy Reeves, Head of Administration
☎ (01480) 388003

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**8. PART IV –
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES (p199-205)**

Creation of a Third Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Review of the Terms of Reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels

- 8.1 The operation of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels has prompted most comments during the review, primarily from the Panels themselves and from the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Downes.
- 8.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Panels are responsible for setting their own programme and also have a critical role in relation to policy review and development. Although the Panels meet monthly, meetings often continue until after 10 pm. Studies commissioned by the Panels may involve presentations by Officers or external organisations and guest speakers are invited to attend meetings to widen the Panel's understanding of the subject matters under review. In addition, there may be policy items to scrutinise together with the items placed regularly on the Panel agenda to monitor the Forward Plan, Decision Digest and Best Value Reviews. Special meetings of both Panels occurred in the Autumn to consider the Council's budget to give Members the time to consider the issue in the depth required. Both Panels requested the establishment of a third Panel to assist with the workload which has developed and should this proposal be acceptable a corresponding review of the Terms of Reference of the existing Panels would be required.
- 8.3 Having considered the suggestions put forward by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, the Cabinet neither recognised the need for nor support the creation of an additional Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- 8.4 **The Committee is invited to consider the issue.**

Policy Framework

- 8.5 The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels in relation to the development of the Council's budget and policy framework is set out in detail in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules. This provides for the publication, in advance, of a Forward Plan of Key Decisions which details a programme of policy, strategy or budget items to be considered by the Cabinet over a four-month period. It is open to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to investigate, research or report on these issues in further detail by requesting the submission of items appearing on the Forward Plan to one of their meetings. Recommendations by the Panels are submitted to the Cabinet to consider together with the policy issue under discussion. The decisions of the Cabinet are required to be published and the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel is entitled to call-in a decision for scrutiny.
- 8.6 One of the Panels has commented that proposals for change to existing policy and new Council policy should be submitted to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panels as a matter of course and has requested that on those occasions when the Overview and Scrutiny Panel make recommendations to the Cabinet on the conclusion of major studies which they have commissioned the Cabinet should formally respond with recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

8.7 Given the arrangements for the publication of the Forward Plan, the Cabinet does not recognise the need to make additional provision in the Constitution requiring all policy changes to be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels prior to their consideration by the Cabinet.

8.8 **The Committee is invited to consider the issue.**

Attendance by Others

8.9 Paragraph 13 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules provides for the Panels to invite individuals other than Councillors or Members to address them. Councillor Downes, has requested that this rule be extended to enable the Chairman of a Panel to invite individuals in the public gallery to speak for up to two minutes where it is considered that the person might have a valuable contribution to make to the debate. These individuals would not have been formally invited to attend the meeting.

8.10 It is the view of the Cabinet that the facility for members of the public to be invited to speak at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels is covered adequately by paragraph 13 of the Constitution.

8.11 **The Committee is invited to consider the issue.**

Scheme of Substitution

8.12 A proposal to appoint substitute Members to Committees, Panels and Advisory Groups was considered but not supported by the Committee during the review of the Constitution in 2003. Both the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) and Councillor Downes have raised the issue again. A copy of a potential scheme that was submitted to Members during the review in 2003 is reproduced at Appendix A. Should it be decided not to adopt a scheme for the appointment of substitute Members across all Panels and Groups, Councillor Downes has requested that consideration be given to the appointment of permanent and named substitutes to assist attendance at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels given the regularity of their meetings and the heavy workload which they entail.

8.13 Reviewing the question of substitution arrangements generally, the Cabinet has commented that if recommended, substitute Members should be named and nominated prior to the meeting, absences should continue to be recorded and a proportionate approach adopted.

8.14 **The Committee is invited to consider the issue.**

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
DECISIONS APPROVED OCTOBER 2003**

- (i) Sufficient resources are available to carry out overview and scrutiny work within the Council, given that the allocated budget for support is currently unspent.

Budget remains largely unspent

- (ii) “Cultural” change within the Council is required to maximise the effectiveness of overview and scrutiny by recognising its importance and independence.

Ongoing

- (iii) Chief Officers and others who are not specifically supporting the scrutiny process should not attend meetings of the Panel unless specifically invited to do so.

Implemented

- (iv) A number of measures can be introduced to encourage Panel Members to contribute more effectively to the scrutiny process including –

- ◆ induction arrangements for new Members of the Panel after the Annual Meeting of the Council.

Implemented

- ◆ briefing sessions with the Chairman/Vice-Chairman; and

Implemented

- ◆ quarterly discussions on potential areas for studies and specific issues relating to the scrutiny process.

Yet to be implemented

- (v) Support for overview and scrutiny should be provided via the existing staffing resources within the Democratic Services Section of the Central Services Directorate in 2004/05, subject to review thereafter.

Ongoing

- (vi) Subject to the outcome of the review referred to in (v) above, an MTP bid be made for additional funding for the scrutiny process in 2005/06.

MTP bid unsuccessful

- (vii) For a six months trial period, pre and post meeting briefings with Members of each Panel be held supported only by Democratic Services Section staff but within the time constraints of 7pm and 9.30pm.

Implemented only by Planning & Finance Panel and continued after trial period

- (viii) Democratic Services Section staff draft questions on a confidential basis for Panel Members to be addressed to persons invited to Panel meetings.

Implemented

- (ix) A facility should be provided on the Council's website inviting members of the public to raise specific topics for consideration by the Panel

Implemented

- (x) Town and Parish Councils be invited to attend Panel meetings to learn of work of the Panels and to generate ideas for studies.

Ongoing

- (xi) Consideration be given to publicising overview and scrutiny more widely in the press, including the submission of suggested topics for study.

Implemented as part of annual report

- (xii) Voluntary organisations be encouraged to submit suggestions for studies.

Yet to be implemented

- (xiii) A forum for all Members should be held twice each year at which views on overview and scrutiny can be exchanged.

Yet to be implemented

- (xiv) Arrangements be made to brief non-Cabinet Members about current issues affecting the Council. Relevant issues should be identified at the six monthly briefing/training sessions.

Ongoing

- (xv) Meeting/training events should be held for Members who do not sit on either Panel to explain the overview and scrutiny process and how other Members can contribute.

Ongoing

- (xvi) Local authority practitioners, rather than academics in future be invited to assist in overview and scrutiny training sessions and arrangements should be made for Panel representatives to visit other authorities with a view to researching the effectiveness of their overview and scrutiny processes.

Ongoing

- (xvii) Executive Members should be accompanied by relevant officers at Panel meetings where appropriate.

Implemented

- (xviii) A summary be compiled outlining successful outcomes from studies to demonstrate the effectiveness of overview and scrutiny within the Council.

Annual report produced and distributed

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DRAFT PROCEDURE

APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS TO COMMITTEES, PANELS AND ADVISORY GROUPS

1. ALLOCATION OF SUBSTITUTES

The Council at its Annual Meeting shall appoint named substitute Members from each political group, equivalent to one-third of the representation to which the group is entitled to attend Committees, Panels and Advisory Groups of the Council in the absence of ordinary Members.

For the purposes of determining a group's entitlement to substitute members –

- ◆ in rounding fractional calculations, one-third shall be rounded down and two-thirds shall be rounded up, provided that
- ◆ each group which is represented on a Committee, Panel or Advisory Group shall be entitled to nominate a minimum of one substitute member.

A Member of the Council who is not aligned to a political group ("independent Member") shall be entitled to appoint one other named "independent Member" to take his/her place in the event of his/her absence at meetings of any Committee, Panel or Advisory Group to which s/he is appointed.

The Leader, Deputy Leader and any Member of the Cabinet shall not be appointed as a substitute Member to an Overview and Scrutiny Panel and neither shall a Member of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel be appointed as a substitute Member to the Cabinet. The Leader shall not be appointed as a substitute Member to the Standards Committee.

As the Constitution of the Development Control, Employment and Licensing and Protection Panels provides for the appointment of only one Member of the Cabinet with Portfolio responsibility at each Panel, Portfolio holders other than the one with appropriate responsibility for those non executive functions within the terms of reference of each Panel may be appointed as substitute Members to the Development Control, Employment and Licensing and Protection Panels but may only attend in the absence of the appropriate Portfolio holder.

2. POWERS AND DUTIES

Other than the Standards Committee which shall not be Chaired by a Member of the Cabinet, substitute Members, when substituting for an ordinary Member of the Committee, Panel or Advisory Group shall have the powers and duties of any ordinary Member of the Committee, Panel or Advisory Group but shall not be able to exercise any special powers or duties exercisable by the person for whom they are substituting.

A substitute Member shall be entitled to be elected Chairman or appointed Vice-Chairman of the meeting of the Committee, Panel or Advisory Group at which s/he is in attendance but s/he shall be so elected or appointed for the duration of that meeting only.

The named Members appointed as substitute Members to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels shall not be entitled to participate in the Call-In procedure.

3. PROCESS FOR ATTENDANCE

Substitute Members may attend meetings in that capacity only -

- (i) to take the place of an ordinary Member of the Committee, Panel or Advisory Group for which s/he is the designated substitute;
- (ii) after notifying the Head of Administration or the relevant Democratic Services Officer of the intended substitution by 10am on the day of the meeting; and
- (iii) in the event of the ordinary Member not being present at the start of the meeting.

Attendance at a meeting of the Committee, Panel or Advisory Group for the purposes of substitution shall be determined at the start of the meeting and substitution or further substitution shall not be permitted during the course of the meeting.

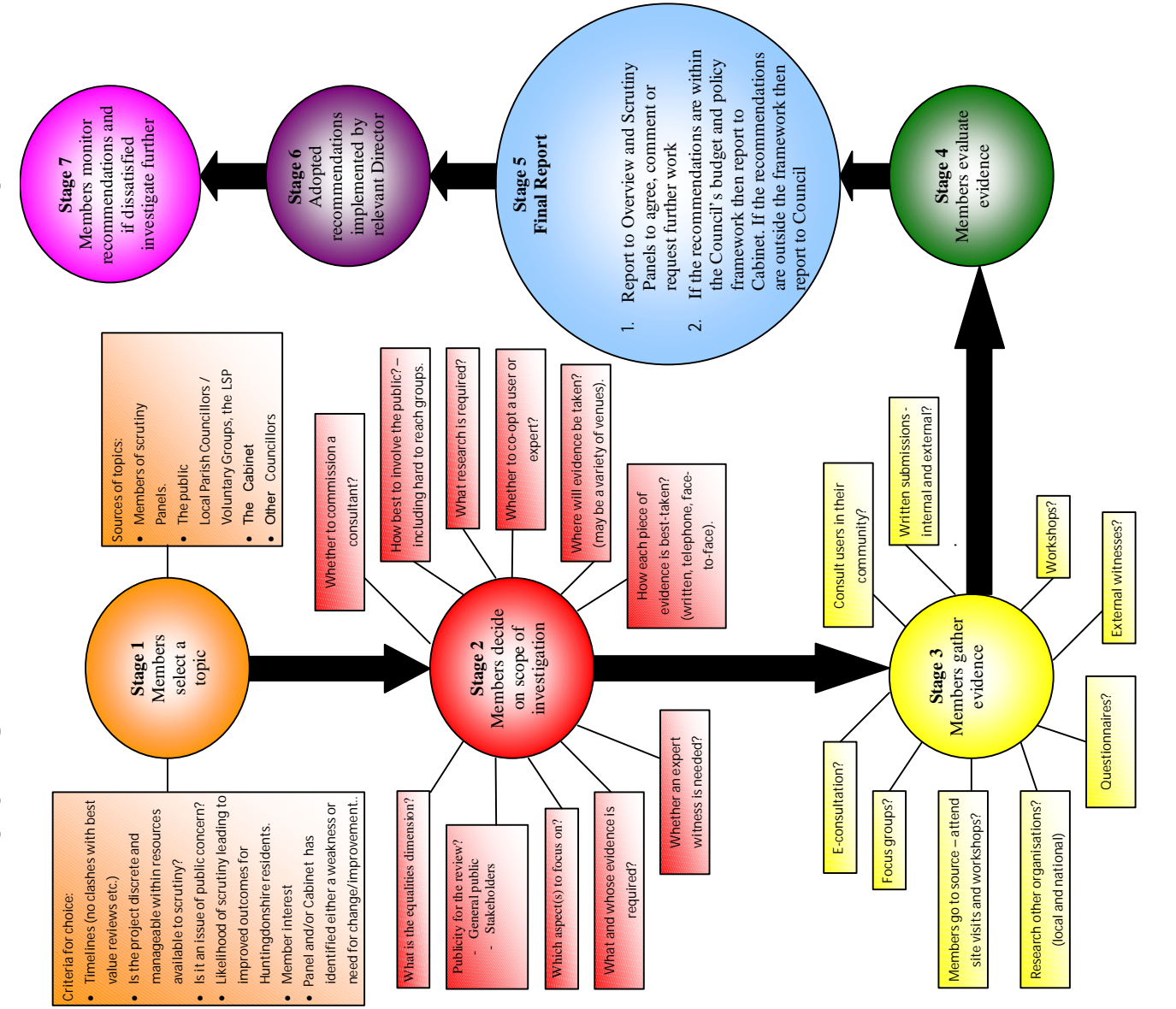
4. GENERAL

- (i) A Member tendering an apology for absence at a meeting shall have that absence recorded irrespective of a substitute Member attending in his/her place to enable an accurate record of attendance to be published at the ensuing Annual Council meeting.
- (ii) Substitute Members shall be eligible for travelling, subsistence and carer's allowances as if they were appointed Members of the Committee, Panel or Advisory Group.
- (iii) Substitute Members attending meetings of the Development Control Panel shall not be eligible to receive the Special Responsibility Allowance payable to ordinary Members of the Panel but shall be entitled to claim reimbursement for the travelling and subsistence costs incurred when undertaking site visits in connection with the meetings.
- (iv) Those appointed as named substitute Members shall be invited to undertake appropriate training necessary to enable full participation in the business of the Committee, Panel or Advisory Group to which they are appointed, eg the Development Control or Licensing and Protection Panels.
- (v) Named substitute Members shall receive agenda issued for all meetings of the relevant Committee, Panel or Advisory Group to which they are appointed to assist in continuity and knowledge of issues under consideration.

SCRUTINY PANEL REVIEWS

MEMBER ROLES IN THE 7 STAGES

- Stage 1 - Select a topic**
 - Members decide on topics taking account of their knowledge of issues of local concern; suggestions and advice of officers; and agreed criteria.
- Stage 2 - The scope of the investigation**
 - Members will decide on the scope, witnesses, research, publicity, venues etc. taking account of officers' advice.
- Stage 3 - Gathering evidence**
 - Members will compile questions for witnesses, with support from officers if required.
 - Members will meet witnesses, go to community groups and venues to engage with users, use their local knowledge to help officers achieve maximum outreach to 'hard to reach' groups.
 - Members will consider written evidence.
- Stage 4 - Evaluate evidence**
 - Members will formulate findings and recommendations based on evidence received and collated by officers.
- Stage 5 - The final report**
 - Members will comment on, amend if appropriate and approve the report for onward referral.
- Stage 6 - Implementation**
 - Implementation is the responsibility of the Executive.
- Stage 7 - Monitoring**
 - Members will receive a report on progress made in implementing the adopted recommendations. If they are not satisfied, they may choose to revisit the subject or aspects of it.



OFFICER SUPPORT IN THE 7 STAGES

- Stage 1 - Select a topic**
 - Officers present Overview and Scrutiny Panel members with information on:
 - Previous and planned best value reviews
 - Internal audit reports
 - External audit reports
 - Inspection reports
 - External inspection reports
 - Topics suggested by officers
 - Topics suggested by community groups
 - Topics suggested by the Executive
 - Performance indicators
 - Budget
- Stage 2 - The scope of the investigation**
 - Officers will suggest how the points around stage 2 could best be addressed.
 - Once the scope is decided officers will produce a project plan for the conduct of the review, setting out timescales, budget and those to be involved.
- Stage 3 - Gather evidence**
 - Officers will make all arrangements for the gathering of evidence in consultation with the relevant chair, including research, focus groups, meetings and feedback.
 - Officers will liaise with witnesses and support members in compelling questions if required.
 - Officers will compile questionnaires for research purposes, with input from members.
- Stage 4 - Evaluate evidence**
 - Officers will draw together the threads of all the evidence for members to consider, and support them in formulating findings.
- Stage 5 - Final report**
 - Officers will draft a report based on members' findings for approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and finally the Cabinet or Council.
- Stage 6 - Implementation**
 - The relevant Chief Officer ensures that the recommendations are implemented.
- Stage 7 - Monitoring**
 - Officers will ensure that progress reports are submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel at the appropriate time.

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**SCRUTINY – HOLDING THE EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT
(Report by Head of Administration)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A fundamental element of the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels is the holding of the Executive to account for its decisions. In the context of the Council's constitution, the Executive includes the Cabinet, the Leader and individual Portfolio holders, together with officers when taking decisions delegated by the Cabinet.
- 1.2 To ensure that the necessary checks and balances are in place to offset the concentration of responsibility for decision making with the Executive, the Constitution makes provision for the Overview and Scrutiny Panels to scrutinise the activities of the Executive at various points in the decision making process. At recent meetings however, the Panels have queried the effectiveness of their scrutiny, particularly in their assessment of the content of the Council's Forward Plan. The purpose of this report is therefore to remind the Panels of the powers and opportunities available to them and to suggest a system for a more formalised consideration of the content of the Forward Plan.

2. INFORMATION

- 2.1 Information on subjects to be considered and decisions taken by the Executive are available to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and to the Members in a variety of ways –
- ◆ Forward Plan of key decisions to be taken by the Executive in the ensuing four months;
 - ◆ Agenda for meetings of Cabinet available five days prior to meeting;
 - ◆ Notice of all decisions to be made by individual Portfolio holders and key decisions to be taken by officers five days prior to decision;
 - ◆ Consent of relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairman required for consideration of any decision by Cabinet or Portfolio holder or key decision by officer if five days notice cannot be given;
 - ◆ Record of all decisions made by Cabinet and a Portfolio holder and key decisions by an officer sent to Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members;
 - ◆ Minutes of meetings of Cabinet;
 - ◆ Decision Digest of all decisions taken by Council, Panels etc produced monthly.

3. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The most significant document in this respect is the Forward Plan which must be produced monthly containing key decisions to be considered by the Executive in the ensuing four months. The plan

has to be produced 14 days before the commencement of the start of the plan period. Each plan is therefore available to Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members some 2-3 weeks before it appears on their monthly meeting agenda. The concern of Members over their effectiveness in scrutinising the plan's content can be summarised as follows –

- ◆ the title of the key decision sometimes is inadequate to identify the subject area with sufficient clarity;
- ◆ absence of reference to background reports;
- ◆ inclusion of items in the plan for the first time in month 1;
- ◆ insufficient time to discuss reports and/or invite Portfolio holder or senior officer to a Panel meeting before the Cabinet meets.

3.2 In the light of experience and Member comment, items now appearing for the first time in a Forward Plan are shown in bold type and the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel is shown for each key decision. In addition, officers have been asked to be more descriptive in the wording of each key decision and to refer to any background reports or information that are available at the time of the plan publication. With new software, it should also be possible to include hyperlinks from the Forward Plan to those background reports that are available.

3.3 In practice, if a Member is interested in an Overview and Scrutiny Panel discussing any particular decision that appears on the Forward Plan, he can, following receipt of the plan -

- ◆ seek further information from the relevant Portfolio holder or officer named in the plan;
- ◆ ask for copies of background documents where relevant;
- ◆ ask for an item to be included on the agenda for the next Panel meeting to enable a subject to be discussed prior to the Cabinet meeting.

3.4 In order to help formalise arrangements, the Panels may also wish to consider the adoption of the following procedure for their meetings in respect of individual key decisions appearing in the plan –

Month 1

The Panel identifies any key decision of interest to them in months 3 and 4 of the plan and allocates a lead Member to enquire about the availability of draft reports etc

Month 2

The nominated lead Member follows up those enquiries and reports the outcome to the ensuing Panel meeting. The Panel considers whether this is a matter which they wish to pursue further and decide whether to seek further information, ask others for comment, commission independent advice etc. This may or may not be undertaken by the Lead Member. The Panel also decides whether to

request the Portfolio holder and/or relevant senior officer to attend their next meeting and to review the report to be considered by the Executive if this is available.

Month 3

Where appropriate the Portfolio holder and/or relevant senior officer attend the Panel meeting and in the light of the information presented, the Panel decides whether to submit recommendations/observations to the Executive for consideration when the decision is to be made. The Panel may also consider whether it wishes to call-in the decision if the Executive does not concur with its recommendations. If so, the Panel may identify the requisite three members for that purpose.

4. POST-DECISION SCRUTINY

- 4.1 After any decision has been taken by the Cabinet or a Portfolio holder and any key decision has been taken by an officer, a record of the decision will be circulated by the Democratic Services Section to all Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members within three working days. The decision may not be implemented for a further five working days during which it may be called in by any three Members of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The process is undertaken electronically for all Members on line. When a decision has been called in, a meeting of the relevant Panel should be held within a further seven working days to decide whether to refer the matter back to the decision taker or onwards to full Council.

5. DECISION DIGEST

- 5.1 The purpose of the Decision Digest is both to keep all Members of the Council informed about decisions taken during the previous month and to provide an opportunity for the Overview and Scrutiny Panels to review decisions taken by the Executive. Albeit retrospectively, the Panels can agree to require a Portfolio holder or senior officer to attend a future meeting to explain why a particular decision has been taken, how it will be implemented and how its effects will be monitored and assessed.

6. OTHER MEMBERS

- 6.1 Scrutiny is not restricted solely to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Other non-Panel Members have access to the information referred to above (other than the records of decisions) and may
- ◆ ask for an item to be included on an Overview and Scrutiny Panel Agenda;
 - ◆ speak at that meeting with the Chairman's consent;
 - ◆ be appointed to sub-panels established by an Overview and Scrutiny Panel to assist them in their work.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES ARISING FROM VISIT TO MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

- ◆ Different environment – only one urban centre
- ◆ Different political environment - Hung Council
- ◆ All Members interested in having a system through which they could influence the Council, as there was always a danger that they might find themselves in opposition.
- ◆ Overview and Scrutiny is largely apolitical
- ◆ There is a healthy respect for the Scrutiny function.
- ◆ Overview and Scrutiny is totally independent – can be critical
- ◆ Most recommendations by Overview and Scrutiny are accepted by the Cabinet as they are well thought through and evidence based
- ◆ No attempt to fetter Overview and Scrutiny work
- ◆ Call in can be by any two Non Executive Councillors - There are approximately 6/9 call ins per year - Call in tends not to change decisions but can result in Councillors receiving more information on an item
- ◆ Purpose of Overview and Scrutiny is not to make savings for the Cabinet – though savings were made in the first years

SCRUTINY SET UP

- ◆ 48 Councillors on 5 Overview and Scrutiny Committees
- ◆ Scrutiny Committees match Portfolios – more strategic than service based:-
 - Strategic Leadership
 - Customer Services & External Affairs
 - Environment & Transportation
 - Recreation & Community Services
 - External Scrutiny
- ◆ Budget = £8,000 (was £15,000)
- ◆ A system of substitution exists
- ◆ There are no working parties – no need as committees more focused
- ◆ There has never been a declaration of whipping
- ◆ Meetings are recorded by tape recorder

SUPPORT FOR SCRUTINY

- ◆ Adequate officer support is essential
- ◆ Dedicated Scrutiny section comprises one Manager and two Officers who clerk the meetings, undertake research, follow up action etc etc
- ◆ Cost of staffing is high - £100,000 for Overview and Scrutiny – but savings in the Committee section – lost two posts and recently lost one Overview and Scrutiny post
- ◆ Training for middle managers on the expectations of scrutiny

COMPOSITION OF AGENDAS

- ◆ Tendency to have one item agendas focused and in depth
- ◆ Innovative items create press interest
- ◆ Referrals from Cabinet (albeit the Committees do not have to accept these)
- ◆ Only relevant items on the Forward Plan are submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Plan itself is considered every three months
- ◆ All policy documents appear on Overview and Scrutiny agenda (albeit there is a designated committee for the purpose of considering Council policies, plans and strategies)
- ◆ The Committees receive quarterly Performance Monitoring reports
- ◆ Best Value Review progress is reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committees
- ◆ Cabinet Members attend their respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees three times per year – at the start to explain aims – halfway through to report progress – at the end of the year to report on achievements
- ◆ Overview and Scrutiny work plans are determined at the start of each year
- ◆ The work plan takes account of development plans for each portfolio
- ◆ In planning the work programme committees take into account where they can have most impact

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

- ◆ COMT not involved in Overview and Scrutiny – have to be invited
- ◆ No attendance by right – only Overview and Scrutiny Officers
- ◆ Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee appoints their own Chairman

STUDIES UNDERTAKEN BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

- ◆ Each Committee aims to carry out one large review per year
- ◆ Topics are chosen that are of interest and that reflect the level of contact Councillors receive – most successful tend to be those of genuine concern to members of the public.
- ◆ Success generates commitment from other agencies
- ◆ It is endeavoured to reflect Councillors interests in study areas
- ◆ Much evidence is taken from academics – they are given a blank piece of paper and asked to design a system
- ◆ There is a facility to produce Minority Group reports
- ◆ Demonstrating results engages the public
- ◆ A study methodology has been adopted which is similar to that at Huntingdonshire
- ◆ Studies produce hefty weighty reports, and Overview and Scrutiny are invited to explain these when presenting them to the Cabinet.
- ◆ Contacts have been established with Groups/Organisations – to wait action
- ◆ Get out of the town Hall
- ◆ Think about how you can engage and consult stakeholders

FOLLOWING UP STUDIES

- ◆ Cabinet provide a written response to Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations
- ◆ Follow up is through a rapporteur system who regularly provides feedback to Committees
- ◆ There also are nominated Officers who take responsibility for monitoring recommendations
- ◆ An e-bulletin is produced after each Committee and also provides details of forthcoming scrutiny events
- ◆ Information on line

ROLE OF MEMBERS

- ◆ Emphasis on the need for members to be equipped with the necessary skills and training where appropriate
- ◆ A good chairman can make all the difference.

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**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
DECISIONS APPROVED OCTOBER 2003**

- (i) Sufficient resources are available to carry out overview and scrutiny work within the Council, given that the allocated budget for support is currently unspent.

Budget remains largely unspent

- (ii) “Cultural” change within the Council is required to maximise the effectiveness of overview and scrutiny by recognising its importance and independence.

Ongoing

- (iii) Chief Officers and others who are not specifically supporting the scrutiny process should not attend meetings of the Panel unless specifically invited to do so.

Implemented

- (iv) A number of measures can be introduced to encourage Panel Members to contribute more effectively to the scrutiny process including –

- ◆ induction arrangements for new Members of the Panel after the Annual Meeting of the Council.

Implemented

- ◆ briefing sessions with the Chairman/Vice-Chairman; and

Implemented

- ◆ quarterly discussions on potential areas for studies and specific issues relating to the scrutiny process.

Yet to be implemented

- (v) Support for overview and scrutiny should be provided via the existing staffing resources within the Democratic Services Section of the Central Services Directorate in 2004/05, subject to review thereafter.

Ongoing

- (vi) Subject to the outcome of the review referred to in (v) above, an MTP bid be made for additional funding for the scrutiny process in 2005/06.

MTP bid unsuccessful

- (vii) For a six months trial period, pre and post meeting briefings with Members of each Panel be held supported only by Democratic Services Section staff but within the time constraints of 7pm and 9.30pm.

Implemented only by Planning & Finance Panel and continued after trial period

- (viii) Democratic Services Section staff draft questions on a confidential basis for Panel Members to be addressed to persons invited to Panel meetings.

Implemented

- (ix) A facility should be provided on the Council's website inviting members of the public to raise specific topics for consideration by the Panel

Implemented

- (x) Town and Parish Councils be invited to attend Panel meetings to learn of work of the Panels and to generate ideas for studies.

Ongoing

- (xi) Consideration be given to publicising overview and scrutiny more widely in the press, including the submission of suggested topics for study.

Implemented as part of annual report

- (xii) Voluntary organisations be encouraged to submit suggestions for studies.

Yet to be implemented

- (xiii) A forum for all Members should be held twice each year at which views on overview and scrutiny can be exchanged.

Yet to be implemented

- (xiv) Arrangements be made to brief non-Cabinet Members about current issues affecting the Council. Relevant issues should be identified at the six monthly briefing/training sessions.

Ongoing

- (xv) Meeting/training events should be held for Members who do not sit on either Panel to explain the overview and scrutiny process and how other Members can contribute.

Ongoing

- (xvi) Local authority practitioners, rather than academics in future be invited to assist in overview and scrutiny training sessions and

arrangements should be made for Panel representatives to visit other authorities with a view to researching the effectiveness of their overview and scrutiny processes.

Ongoing

- (xvii) Executive Members should be accompanied by relevant officers at Panel meetings where appropriate.

Implemented

- (xviii) A summary be compiled outlining successful outcomes from studies to demonstrate the effectiveness of overview and scrutiny within the Council.

Annual report produced and distributed

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ACTION PLAN

Ongoing

1. Pre and post meeting briefings with Panel Members be held supported only by scrutiny support staff.
2. Pre meeting briefings be convened at 7.00 p.m., prior to the commencement of Panel meetings at 7.30 p.m. with an anticipated conclusion of 9.30 p.m.
3. Chief Officers and others not directly supporting the scrutiny process should not attend Panel meetings unless invited to do so by a Panel.
4. Drafting of questions by scrutiny support staff on a confidential basis for Panel Members to be addressed to persons invited to attend meetings: Scrutiny support staff also to liaise with invitees on potential areas for questioning to facilitate research and responses.
5. The publication of an annual report on behalf of the Panels with a wide circulation.
6. Induction arrangements by scrutiny support staff for new members of the Panels.
7. Induction arrangements for new members of the Council to include information on overview & scrutiny.
8. Invitation to all members of the Council to participate in training organised for overview & scrutiny.
9. 'Cultural' change within the Council to maximise the effectiveness of overview and scrutiny by acknowledging its independence of the executive, its role, and its importance in terms of the Council's governance arrangements.

Short Term

(within 6 months)

10. Retention of two Overview & Scrutiny Panels but increase in membership to 15 per panel.
11. Renaming and reallocation of the terms of reference of Panels as follows -

Service Delivery

Cabinet portfolios of Environment & Transport, Leisure and Housing & Public Health and that part of the Operations and Information Technology portfolio relating to Operations.

Service Support

Cabinet portfolios of Finance, Planning Strategy and Resources & Policy and that part of the Operations and Information Technology portfolio relating to Information Technology.

12. The establishment of a new Overview & Scrutiny Panel with the name 'Corporate and Strategic Framework' and terms of reference to include matters of a corporate nature and the strategic and financial framework of the Council, together with issues of major significance (e.g. budget, community strategy, corporate plan, replacement office accommodation).
13. Membership of the new Panel be fixed at 15, including 5 Members appointed by each of the Panels to include their chairmen and vice-chairmen and any 5 additional Members from either Panel at their request, such permission to be at the discretion of the Head of Administration, after consultation with the chairmen of the two Panels.
14. Chairmanship of the new Panel be shared between the Chairmen of the Service Delivery and Service Support Overview & Scrutiny Panels, dependent on the subject area to be discussed.
15. Meetings of the new Panel be held on an ad hoc basis but, where practicable, these be held on the evening of meetings of either of the two other panels.
16. Meetings of the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the Service Delivery and Service Support Panels be held on 6 occasions per annum to review progress on the Action Plan and issues of mutual interest.
17. Written responses (where appropriate) from Cabinet to recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Panels with reasons if recommendations not accepted.
18. Training for Panel members on performance review.
19. Development of outcomes for overview & scrutiny and assessment of performance.

Medium Term

(within 18 months)

20. Review of practices and procedures for overview & scrutiny.
21. Implementation of training programme for Heads of Service and Activity Managers on the role and relevance of overview & scrutiny.
22. Identification of further steps to engage and consult appropriate stakeholders on overview & scrutiny.
23. Identification of specialist support to assist, as necessary, in overview & scrutiny work programmes.

Long Term
(over 18 months)

24. Submission and approval of MTP bid for dedicated officer to support overview & scrutiny process.

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