

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, 27 SEPTEMBER 2006** at **3:30 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

**Please note change to time of meeting**

## **A G E N D A**

### **PRAYER**

The Venerable Hugh McCurdy, Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech will open the meeting with prayer.

### **APOLOGIES**

### **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**1. MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2006.

**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: SECTION 87 - CASUAL VACANCY**

To report that the by-election to be held in the Earith Ward as a result of the death of former Councillor J A P Eddy will be held on 12th October 2006.

**4. ANNUAL STATE OF THE DISTRICT ADDRESS**

To invite the Leader to address the Council on the State of the District.

**5. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEES**

(a) Cabinet (Pages 9 - 30)

(b) Standards Committee (Pages 31 - 34)

- (c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) (Pages 35 - 40)
- (d) Overview and Scrutiny (Service Support) (Pages 41 - 44)
- (e) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) (Pages 45 - 46)
- (f) Development Control Panel (Pages 47 - 50)
- (g) Employment Panel (Pages 51 - 54)
- (h) Elections Panel (Pages 55 - 56)
- (i) Corporate Governance Panel (Pages 57 - 58)
- (j) Licensing Committee (Pages 59 - 60)

## **6. 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

## **7. MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

- (a) Councillor D B Dew to move –

"that, in recognising –

- ◆ the continued retention of RAF Wyton on the shortlist for the possible relocation of Marshall's Aerospace;
- ◆ the importance of the Wyton site in the economic and social life of Huntingdonshire;
- ◆ the advantages offered by the site in terms of its existing facilities and excellent transport links, which may enhance the proposed guided bus service; and
- ◆ the potential for relocating to the District many highly skilled jobs involved in the key strategic activities of this important family-owned company

- the Council agrees that every avenue should be explored to assess the merits of RAF Wyton as a mutually beneficial site for Marshalls, the District and St Ives in particular".

- (b) Councillor P J Downes to move –

"in response to the Department of Health's Consultation on Under-Age Sale of Tobacco, this Council supports the Government's recommendation that the legal age for the purchase of tobacco be raised to 18 and that sanctions against offending retailers should take the form of 'negative licensing', as outlined in the

consultation document".

(c) Councillor P J Downes to move –

"in the light of the growing population of Huntingdonshire and of Huntingdon's pivotal position in a growing road network, this Council opposes any plans to close Hinchingsbrooke Hospital and calls on the Strategic Health Authority to maintain good levels of health care at the hospital, including an Accident and Emergency unit".

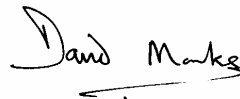
## **8. MEMBERSHIP OF CABINET, PANELS, COMMITTEE, ETC**

To review the membership of the Council's Panels and Committees.

## **9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 85**

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

Dated this 19th day of September 2006



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](mailto: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.**

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 کمال کوشش کریں گے

# 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 June 2006.

PRESENT: Councillor P A Swales – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, R W D Bailey, M G Baker, K M Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, I C Bates, J T Bell, Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell, E R Butler, K J Churchill, Mrs D E Collins, S J Criswell, J W Davies, D B Dew, P J Downes, J J Dutton, RWJ Eaton, J D Fell, J E Garner, A N Gilbert, D A Giles, J A Gray, Mrs K P Gregory, N J Guyatt, C R Hyams, Mrs S A Menczer, P G Mitchell, I R Muir, M F Newman, R Powell, D J Priestman, Mrs D C Reynolds, K Reynolds, T V Rogers, J M Sadler, T D Sanderson, L M Simpson, C J Stephens, G S E Thorpe, R G Tuplin, J S Watt, R J West and Ms M Wheeler.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs J Chandler, J A P Eddy, Mrs C A Godley, A Hansard, D Harty, Mrs P J Longford and J Taylor.

### 17. PRAYER

The Reverend A Milton, Team Rector for Huntingdon opened the meeting with Prayer.

### 18. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### (a) Former Councillor P W Meyer

The Chairman announced, with regret, the recent death of former Councillor P W Meyer who had served as Councillor for the Offords Ward on the District Council during the period 1990 – 1998. Councillor P J Downes, Leader of the Opposition paid tribute to the service rendered and contribution made by former Councillor Meyer as Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and as a Member of the former Planning and Housing Committees on the Council.

#### (b) Councillor J A P Eddy

The Chairman reported that he had sent, on behalf of the Council, best wishes to Councillor J A P Eddy following his recent operation and hospital stay.

#### (c) Councillors vs Officers Rounders Match

Members were encouraged by the Chairman to participate in the inaugural Councillors vs Officers rounders match to be

held on 12th July 2006 at the St. Ivo Outdoor Centre.

**19. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 17th May 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**20. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were none declared.

**21. CABINET PROCEDURE RULES - DELEGATION BY THE LEADER**

In accordance with the Cabinet Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution and having confirmed that the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy was responsible for issues relating to Children and Young People, the Council noted the allocation of Executive functions for the ensuing Municipal Year contained in a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book).

**22. IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT STATEMENT 6**

By way of a report by the Head of Information Management (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Executive Councillor for Headquarters and Information Technology, Councillor L M Simpson invited the Council to consider the content of the final IEG Statement which had been prepared annually over the past 5 years to monitor the Council's progress against e-Government targets.

Having been informed that the cost benefit and status of those priority outcomes coloured red would be reconsidered at a later date, the Council

RESOLVED

that the Implementing Electronic Government Return 2006 (IEG6) be approved for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

**23. FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2006/07**

Referring to a report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Councillor J M Sadler, Chairman of the Licensing and Protection Panel reminded the Council that the Food Standards Agency required the preparation, on an annual basis, of a Food Safety Service Plan (an executive summary of which also is appended in the Minute Book). A full copy of the Food Service Plan 2006/07 had been made available in the Members' Room.

Members were reminded of the objectives of the Service Plan in terms of identifying resources, establishing a work programme and providing a means by which to measure and manage performance. In drawing the Council's attention to the work programme for 2006/07, Councillor Sadler highlighted the intention to work in partnership with businesses in Huntingdonshire to assist their understanding of food

safety legislation introduced in January 2006 which had affected the way in which food business operators managed and controlled their businesses. Members were informed that an application had been submitted for grant funding from the Food Standards Agency to support the delivery of the Safer Food Better Business Food Safety Management System and to provide coaching and training for food business operators with the outcome to be announced in September.

In commending the efforts of the Food Service Team for inspecting 99.4% of premises on their programme and for delivering most of the initiatives outlined in the 2005/06 development plan, Councillor Sadler drew particular attention to the success of the Team in receiving a Food Link Annual Award in 2005 for achievements in the field of food safety and promotion of healthy eating.

Having noted the support for the plan on the part of the Licensing and Protection Panel, the Council

RESOLVED

that the Food Safety Service Plan 2006/07 be approved.

**24. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEES**

**(a) Cabinet**

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Councillor I C Bates, Leader and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 20th and 27th April, 18th May and 8th June 2006.

In connection with Item No. 1, it was noted that the recommendation previously had been considered under Minute No. 21 ante.

.....

In connection with Item No. 5 and in response to a question from Councillor D A Giles, the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor P L E Bucknell, replied that any suggestion that land in the ownership of the Town Council was to be used for car parking as part of an approved development brief for land in and around the Old Fire Station in St. Neots was incorrect as this proposal currently was subject to consultation with St. Neots Town Council.

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In connection with Item No. 8 and in response to a question from Councillor Mrs S A Menczer, the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy, Councillor A Hansard announced that training on child protection and children and young persons' issues would be offered to Councillors in the future.

.....

In connection with Item No. 11 and in response to questions from Councillors P J Downes and C R Hyams, the Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport, Councillor N J Guyatt clarified that the Cabinet had reiterated its support for the original CHUMMS option but that the Council still were awaiting a decision from the Secretary of State on the preferred route for the A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton and that public consultation on a proposal to remove the existing A14 viaduct at Huntingdon would commence shortly as part of the "Huntingdon Vision" initiative.

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In connection with Item No. 15 and in response to a question from Councillor D A Giles, the Leader, Councillor I C Bates confirmed that he was satisfied with the performance of the communications consultants employed to assist the Council with the new headquarters project.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the Cabinet held on 20th and 27th April, 18th May and 8th June 2006 be received and adopted.

**(b) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support)**

Councillor J A Gray presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) held on 11th April and Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) held on 13th June 2006.

.....

In connection with Item No. 3 and in response to questions from Councillors P J Downes and T D Sanderson, the Chairman of the Panel indicated that he was satisfied with the progress of ongoing work to identify savings to achieve the Council's target for expenditure reductions but that he was not yet aware of the nature of the savings to be considered. However, he was confident that the overall forecast of the Council's financial position would be available for presentation to the meeting of the Corporate and Strategic Framework Scrutiny Panel in September.

.....

In connection with Item No. 7 and in response to a question from Councillor T D Sanderson regarding the progress/success of arrangements for monitoring the receipt and expenditure of money negotiated under Section 106

Agreements, the Chairman of the Panel, having expressed his confidence in the monitoring process, undertook to forward a copy of the most recent monitoring report to the questioner after the meeting.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Reports of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) held on 11th April and Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) held on 13th June 2006 be received and adopted.

**(c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery)**

Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 6th June 2006.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 6th June 2006 be received and adopted.

**(d) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework)**

Councillor J A Gray presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) held on 6th June 2006.

.....

In connection with Item No. 1 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, the Chairman of the Panel reiterated that it was the intention for Members to consider and comment on prioritised potential savings at their meeting in November and that the Panel would continue to work hard to achieve the necessary reductions in expenditure required to comply with the Council's Financial Strategy.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and

Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) held on 6th June 2006 be received and adopted.

**(e) Development Control Panel**

Councillor P G Mitchell presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 24th April, 22nd May and 19th June 2006.

.....

In connection with Item No. 3 and having regard to the performance of the Development Control Section over the period 1st January – 31st March 2006, the Chairman of the Panel congratulated Officers in the Section for their achievement in meeting national performance targets, particularly in view of the number of vacant posts on the establishment of the Planning Division.

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In connection with Item No. 6 and in response to a question from Councillor D A Giles, the Chairman confirmed that the garage buildings at that location could be considered to be an inappropriate use in the area of land described as St. Mary's Urban Village, St. Neots.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 24th April, 22nd May and 19th June 2006 be received and adopted.

**(f) Employment Panel**

Councillor K Reynolds presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 7th June 2006.

.....

In connection with Item No. 4 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, the Chairman of the Panel undertook to arrange for a written reply to be sent to all Members of the Council indicating the number of vacant posts which the Panel had decided not to fill in light of the requirement for the Council to achieve budget savings in this and future years.

.....

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 7th June 2006 be received and adopted.

**(g) Licensing and Protection Panel**

Councillor J M Sadler presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 21st June 2006.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 21st June 2006 be received and adopted.

**(h) Appointments Panel**

Councillor L M Simpson presented the Report of the meeting of the Appointments Panel held on 20th April 2006.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Appointments Panel held on 20th April 2006 be received and adopted.

**25. ORAL QUESTIONS**

In accordance with the Council's 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 T D Sanderson to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor P L E Bucknell**

In response to a question regarding the potential to use Section 106 monies to improve pedestrian and cycle links in St. Peter's Road, Huntingdon, Councillor Bucknell replied that he had visited the site with District/County Officers recently, had discussed the feasibility of various options bearing in mind the number of HGV movements on St. Peter's Road and would keep the questioner informed of further progress.

**Question from Councillor C J Stephens to the Leader, Councillor I C Bates**

In response to a question regarding the approach the Council would adopt towards a possible Government policy on the acquisition of

properties left vacant for a period longer than six months, the Leader replied that although he had not read the government guidance in detail, he would not envisage that the Council would pursue implementation of the policy as a priority.

**Question from Councillor R G Tuplin to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor P L E Bucknell**

In response to a question regarding the process for the use of Section 106 receipts from development at Yaxley by Cambridgeshire County Council for educational purposes at Stanground, even though children from Yaxley were being educated at Sawtry Community College, Councillor Bucknell, undertook to pursue the matters raised with the County Council and to advise the questioner accordingly.

**Question from Councillor J J Dutton to the Executive Councillor for Headquarters and Information Technology, Councillor L M Simpson**

In response to a request for support in resolving the problem of car parking in the Whaddons, Thongsley, Sycamore and Maple Drives, Huntingdon following the opening recently of the Oak Tree Centre, Councillor Simpson undertook to establish what parking provision had been made for employees of the Centre and to consider whether the imposition of no waiting restrictions would improve the situation.

**Question from Councillor D B Dew to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor P L E Bucknell**

In response to a question regarding the proposed relocation of the Defence Logistics Organisation from RAF Wyton to the Bath/Bristol area and the effect that this might have on the local economy, Councillor Bucknell advised the Council that he was to attend a Ministry of Defence briefing on the following day after which he would be better able to advise the Councillor of the situation locally.

**Question from Councillor D A Giles to the Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport, Councillor N J Guyatt**

In response to a question in respect of the sewerage systems on former Council estates, particularly in Dukes, Kings and Regents Roads, Eaton Socon which appeared not to have been adopted by Anglian Water Authority, Councillor Guyatt undertook to establish which agency had responsibility for the function and to advise the Councillor accordingly.

**26. 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.

The meeting concluded at 3.25 pm.

Chairman

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## Cabinet

Report of the meetings held on the 29th June,  
20th July and 7 September 2006

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### Matters for Decision

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#### 19. HOUSING STRATEGY 2006 – 2011

Having considered the content of the Housing Strategy 2006 – 2011 Empty Homes Strategy 2006 – 2011 and Homeless Strategy 2006 – 2008 (copies of which have been circulated under separate cover to all Members) prior to their submission to Go-East, the Cabinet

#### RECOMMEND

**that the Housing Strategy 2006 – 2011, Empty Homes Strategy 2006 – 2011 and Homeless Strategy 2006 – 2008 be approved.**

#### 20. FINANCIAL STRATEGY

By way of a report by the Head of Financial Services (attached as an Appendix), the Cabinet has reviewed the Council's financial strategy for the period up to 2016/17.

In discussing the need to identify and implement savings to achieve a balanced Medium Term Plan, Members reiterated their disappointment that the Government continued to withhold some £547,000 in grant due to the Council by way of a safety net in light of future grant reductions. With regard to possible savings, and in addition to those listed in Annex A, Members' attention was drawn to a 'Reserve List' of suggestions made by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) described in Item No. 2 of their Report. In that respect, the Cabinet noted that Officers would be reviewing the suitability of the Panel's recommendations as part of the ongoing review of budgets and Medium Term Plan schemes. In noting references by the Executive Councillor for Finance as to the extensive range of grants made available by the Council in addition to those for community initiatives, the Cabinet

#### RECOMMEND

**(a) that the saving items set out in Annex A be supported;**

- (b) that the strategy for a steady profile of savings as represented by Annex B to the report now submitted be supported; and
- (c) that Officers be requested to review all budgets and Medium Term Plan schemes (revenue and capital) to identify any further opportunities for savings.

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### Matters for Information

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#### 21. CREATIVE ENTERPRISE

The Cabinet has approved the publication of the Creative Enterprise Strategy for Huntingdonshire as a supplement to the Local Economy Strategy. The document aims to increase the sustainability, growth and productivity of creative industries in the District while maximising their potential to contribute towards broader social, economic and cultural regeneration.

At the same time, the Cabinet has considered proposals to develop a creative enterprise centre on the campus of Longsands College in St Neots, in conjunction with the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the College itself, which will link opportunities for job and business creation and economic regeneration through the Cambridge sub region with economic benefits from other regional centres. The Cabinet has agreed to release the appropriate funding from the Medium Term Plan and has authorised the Director of Central Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy, to enter into a lease of land for the Centre at Longsands College and a funding agreement with the DCLG.

#### 22. MOBILE HOME SITE, EYNESBURY – CONTAMINATED LAND REMEDIATION STRATEGY

Further to Item No.107 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 22nd February 2006, the Cabinet has been acquainted with the findings of additional soil sampling of contaminated land at the Council's Mobile Home Park in Eynesbury, St Neots. In discussing a programme of work for the remediation of the land including the temporary re-housing of residents while the work is undertaken, Members were reminded that Government funding has been sought from the Contaminated Land Capital Projects Programme. Having received an assurance that the net cost to the Council for the whole of the project should not be significant, the Cabinet has approved a supplementary capital estimate of £437,000 and a supplementary revenue estimate of £10,000 to fund the works necessary to progress to the next stage of the project to enable tenders to be sought.

**23. AMENDMENTS TO THE HOUSING RENEWAL ASSISTANCE POLICY**

The Cabinet has approved amendments to the Council's Housing Renewal Assistance Policy which relate to disabled facilities top up grants, top up assistance for children's disabled facilities grants, disabled persons relocation grants and the awarding of grants to people in arrears with the Council. Details of the changes are available on request from the Democratic Services section.

**24. ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM THE REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD FOR DECENT HOMES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Having been advised that the Council has been awarded a capital grant of £327,925 from the Regional Housing Board, the Cabinet has agreed that this grant should be used to provide thermal efficiency improvements to private sector homes occupied by vulnerable people. In so doing, the Cabinet has expressed concern over the Government's constraints on spending the money, given the Council's priorities for affordable housing and homelessness and the need to introduce water efficiency measures in the Eastern Region.

**25. CAMBRIDGE SUB-REGION GYPSY/TRAVELLER NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2005**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the key findings of the Cambridge Sub-Region Gypsy/Traveller Needs Assessment undertaken by Anglia Ruskin University and Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. Officers will be drafting a Gypsy and Traveller Sites Development Plan Document in the near future, to meet the needs identified up to 2021 including, if necessary, allocating new sites as required by Government policies.

**26. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME REVISIONS – DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The Council has approved amendments to the Development Scheme for Huntingdonshire prior to their submission to the Secretary of State. The changes relate to the timing of the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document and the introduction of an Area Action Plan for West Huntingdon. At the same time, the Cabinet has approved for public consultation a draft Supplementary Planning Document on developer contributions towards affordable housing. The Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport has been authorised to make changes to the draft document to reflect specialist developments such as retirement homes and to approve a sustainability appraisal.

**27. HUNTINGDON TOWN CENTRE VISION**

The Cabinet has agreed to adopt as informal planning guidance a Centre Vision report on Huntingdon Town Centre produced by the

Civic Trust. The document describes the overall development potential of the town and identifies a number of opportunity sites and their individual planning and market potential. It will be used to inform the content of the forthcoming Planning Proposals Development Plan Document and will assist in day to day decisions that have to be made affecting the future viability and vitality of the town centre.

**28. POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS**

Further to Item No.5 of the Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) to the meeting of the Council held on the 28th June 2006, the Cabinet has agreed to withdraw the Council's funding for the employment of Police Community Support Officers in Huntingdonshire at the earliest opportunity, on the understanding that this will not reduce the number of officers deployed within the District. To enable all Members to be aware of the situation locally the Cabinet has also agreed that the Community Safety Partnership quarterly crime report for Huntingdonshire be made available in future to all Members of the Council.

**29. LOCAL JUSTICE AREA BOUNDARIES CONSULTATION PAPER**

The Cabinet has considered a proposal to make minor changes to the boundaries of the Peterborough, Huntingdonshire and Cambridge Local Justice Areas to realign their boundaries with the Cambridgeshire Police force divisions, the relevant local authorities and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. In so doing, the Cabinet has authorised the Head of Legal and Estates to respond to the Cambridgeshire Justices' Issues Group reflecting Members concerns over transport issues in certain parts of the District when the public travel to and from court.

**30. REVENUE OUTTURN 2005/06**

The Cabinet has noted the outturn of revenue expenditure in 2005/06 along with variations between the original and revised budget provision for that year.

**31. MONITORING OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2005/2006**

Consideration has been given by the Cabinet to a report detailing the outturn of Capital Expenditure for 2005 – 2006 and the implications for 2006/07.

**32. BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN PROCESS 2007 – 2011**

Further to Item No. 1 of the Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) to the meeting of the Council held on 28th June 2006, the Cabinet has approved the process and timetable for the review and approval of the Financial Strategy, the 2007/08 Budget and the 2008/12 Medium Term Plan. At the same time, the Cabinet has adopted a procedure for the identification of savings that will be required in the period to 2016/2017.

**33. MEDIUM TERM PLAN:  
REQUESTS FOR THE RELEASE OF FUNDS**

Following the discontinuation of Local Authority Social Housing Grant, the Cabinet has agreed to release appropriate funding from the Medium Term Plan for the development of new affordable housing in the District. These resources will be used to meet the cost of development on those sites not funded by the Housing Corporation or other sources.

**34. QUARTERLY SUMMARY OF DEBTS WRITTEN-OFF**

The Cabinet has been advised of those debts which have been written-off as irrecoverable during the period April to June 2006.

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

**35. RACE EQUALITY SCHEME**

The Cabinet has approved the Council's Race Equality Scheme and associated action plan and timetable showing how and when the proposed work identified in the scheme will be completed.

**36. QUALITY OF LIFE STRATEGIES, ARTS CULTURE,  
MAJOR SPORTS FACILITIES AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Cabinet has considered three quality of life documents on arts culture, major sports facilities and the green infrastructure commissioned by Cambridgeshire Horizons to help shape and guide growth across the Cambridge Sub-Region. In so doing, the Cabinet has agreed to adopt the Green Infrastructure Strategy as technical guidance to guide the preparation of any open space/recreation/leisure strategies and as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and appeals. The projects within the strategy will be considered for incorporation in the forthcoming Planning Obligation Supplementary Planning Document.

At the same time and having noted the contents of the Culture and Arts Strategy and the Major Sports Facilities Strategy, the Cabinet has agreed to consider their status at a later date when discussions with Cambridgeshire Horizons and adjoining authorities on the issues and financial implications of the proposals within the documents have taken place.

**37. EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN:  
REPORT OF EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC**

The Cabinet has considered the Independent Panel's report of the Public Examination of the draft East of England Plan. The plan outlines the strategic planning approach for the East of England until 2021 and sets out a strategic planning framework to guide future development. Having endorsed the proposed content of the Council's

initial response to the draft Panel report and highlighted a preference for four sub-regions within the Eastern Region and the need for appropriate steps to ensure the availability of adequate water resources, the Cabinet has authorised the Head of Planning Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, to reflect these sentiments in the Council's response to the East of England Regional Assembly.

**38. GREAT FEN PROJECT – MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT**

Further to Item No. 19 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 17th July 2002, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Operational Services to sign a memorandum of agreement between the Wildlife Trust, English Nature, Environment Agency and the District Council in relation to the project to restore over 3,000 hectares of wetland in and around the Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen Nature Reserves. The agreement is designed to replace and strengthen the existing memorandum of understanding for the project.

**39. ST. NEOTS CONSERVATION AREA:  
LAND REVIEW, CHARACTER STATEMENT AND  
MANAGEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS**

The Cabinet has approved for public consultation a draft Boundary Review, Character Statement and Management Plan for the St. Neots Conservation Area. The boundary review has been produced with a view to amalgamating the existing conservation areas in St. Neots, Eynesbury and Eaton Socon in line with English Heritage's general guidance on the management of conservation areas.

**40. CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

Arising from the possible relocation of Marshall Cambridge Aerospace Ltd and the commercial nature of the business plan available for discussion among local authorities and other organisations, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Central Services to enter into a Confidentiality Agreement with Marshall Cambridge Aerospace Ltd on behalf of the District Council and has appointed the Director of Operational Services as the designated officer under the agreement.

**41. CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU**

Following a request from the Huntingdonshire Citizens Advice Bureau, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Central Services to approve arrangements for the District Council to act as a guarantor for the lease of premises in All Saints Passage, Huntingdon occupied by the organisation.

**42. PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

The Cabinet has reviewed the Council's performance against targets within the Corporate Plan – "Growing Success" during the period 1st April to 30th June 2006.

**43. SANCTUARY PROJECT**

Having been acquainted with proposals to provide home security measures for victims of domestic violence by way of a county wide sanctuary scheme administered by the Luminus Group, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Central Services to sign and seal the joint agreement with Luminus, East Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council.

**44. PAXTON PITS NATURE RESERVE**

The Cabinet has considered proposals to extend Little Paxton Pits Nature Reserve from 240 to over 700 acres by the District Council leasing additional land adjacent to the reserve following the termination of further gravel extraction operations. Having acknowledged the ecological and leisure benefits associated with the proposals and in noting that the cost of managing the additional land should be covered by the provision of a Section 106 Agreement and from income generated from activities on the site, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Central Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy, to approve detailed terms for the leases. It is envisaged that, once completed, the nature reserve and adjoining land will provide a complex of lakes and public open space with a network of footpaths, bridlepaths and cycling ways.

**45. GAMBLING ACT 2005 – STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

The Cabinet has approved for consultation purposes the Council's Gambling Act 2005 draft Statement of Principles. The Act requires all licensing authorities to publish a statement on how they intend to approach their responsibilities under the Act. The District Council will consult widely on the draft statement prior to its approval by full Council on 6th December 2006.

**46. PROMOTING BETTER HEALTH IN OLDER PEOPLE THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

The Cabinet's attention has been drawn by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) to the findings of a study by the Older Persons' Working Group regarding the needs of older people and the services available. In discussing the Panel's individual recommendations, described in Item No. 9 of their Report, the Cabinet were informed that the District Council was represented on the Out and About Steering Group by the Leisure Centres' Co-ordinator. With regard to the possible extension of the Council's current range of leisure services for older people, Members acknowledged the importance of promoting better health, particularly through physical activity. However, they were concerned over the possible cost implications of the proposals given the financial restraints faced by the authority. In the absence of any operational and financial details within the Panel's report, the Cabinet has requested that a further report be produced by Officers for consideration at a future meeting.

**47. CONSERVATION AREAS**

The Cabinet has approved the public consultation draft management plans for Post Street and Earning Street in Godmanchester and for Keyston. The plans outline a series of proposals aimed at conserving and enhancing the character and appeal of these areas.

The Cabinet also has approved a draft Management Plan for the Stonely Conservation Area which will be used to guide planning decisions and as a basis for further consultation. The Plan has been produced to clearly identify, co-ordinate and programme a series of specific projects aimed at enhancing the character and appeal of the village.

**48. ST. MARY'S VILLAGE URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK**

Further to Item No. 4 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 28th June 2006 and having been acquainted with responses received from the consultation exercise on the Urban Design Framework for the redevelopment of land to the west of St. Mary's Church, St. Neots, the Cabinet has adopted the Framework as Interim Planning Guidance.

**49. DISTRICT COUNCIL'S HEADQUARTERS AND OTHER ACCOMMODATION**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the most recent developments in the procurement of a new headquarters and other accommodation for the District Council.

The Cabinet also has been acquainted with the recommendations of the District Council's Customer First and Accommodation Advisory Group, as a result of their meeting held on 26th July 2006, and in that respect has agreed to continue the use of call queuing arrangements at the call centre. This adjustment gives the caller the option to queue or leave a message. Having also discussed the need to clearly identify the Operations Centre's address for mailing purposes, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Operational Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for the new Headquarters and Information Technology, to determine an appropriate name for the Centre.

I C Bates  
Chairman

**FINANCIAL STRATEGY**  
**(Report by the Head of Financial Services)**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 This report updates the Financial Forecast so that any necessary changes to the Council's Financial Strategy and the approach to this year's review of the MTP can be assessed. It also seeks Member approval of a list of proposed savings.
- 1.2 This report will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) on 5 September and Cabinet will then have the opportunity to consider their comments on 7 September prior to making their own recommendations to Council (27 September).

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council's existing financial strategy and Medium Term Plan (MTP) recognise the challenge facing the Council if it is to balance the increased costs of higher than RPI inflation and increasing public expectations for services (whether from local people or via the Government) with constraints on resources, due to Government Grants not rising proportionally and wishing to minimise Council Tax increases.
- 2.2 Previously, the Council planned to increase the Band D Council Tax by £12 per year but, as a result of being capped, limited future increases in Council Tax to the higher of 5% and that resulting from a 5% increase in Budget Requirement to minimise the risk of further capping and this has become a key element of the future strategy. It significantly reduces the options available despite the Council Tax level (£104.69) being very low. It is in the lowest 8% of the 238 English District Councils which range from £59 to £275 with an average of £145.
- 2.3 The table below summarises the plan agreed last year which was based on identifying significant savings over the coming years.

| APPROVED PLAN               | Budget         | MTP            |                |                |                |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                             | 2006/07        | 2007/08        | 2008/09        | 2009/10        | 2010/11        |
| Revenue Spending            | £M             | £M             | £M             | £M             | £M             |
| Net Spending before savings | 19.3           | 20.7           | 22.6           | 25.0           | 26.9           |
| Savings Target              | -1.0           | -1.6           | -2.2           | -2.8           | -3.3           |
| Net Spending                | 18.3           | 19.1           | 20.5           | 22.2           | 23.5           |
| Funding                     | -16.8          | -18.0          | -18.9          | -19.8          | -20.8          |
| DEFICIT – Met from Reserves | -1.5           | -1.2           | -1.6           | -2.4           | -2.7           |
| <b>Council Tax</b>          | <b>£104.69</b> | <b>£109.91</b> | <b>£116.50</b> | <b>£123.60</b> | <b>£134.33</b> |
| <b>Increase %</b>           | <b>5.0%</b>    | <b>5.0%</b>    | <b>6.0%</b>    | <b>6.1%</b>    | <b>8.7%</b>    |
| Capital Spending            | £000           | £000           | £000           | £000           | £000           |
| Met from Reserves           | 14.5           | 18.0           | 11.9           | 1.1            | 1.1            |
| Borrowing                   | 0              | 0              | 0.8            | 6.1            | 3.9            |
| Total                       | 14.5           | 18.0           | 12.7           | 7.2            | 5.0            |

- 2.4 The Council is debt-free and has high levels of revenue and capital reserves (£18M and £42M respectively at April 2006) which currently provide significant financial flexibility and provide the lead time to bring efficiency savings on line. Maximising efficiency savings will limit the need for reductions in services but inevitably there will need to be some in due course.
- 2.5 The Council has continued to spend carefully and this, together with a number of events outside of its control, has resulted in last year's outturn being £2m less than budgeted. This can be retained in Revenue Reserves to increase future flexibility. £145k of revenue spending and £3M of capital spending have been brought forward to the current year. Cabinet received a report on the outturn at its July meeting and approved a number of measures to improve the accuracy of budget monitoring.
- 2.6 Much of last year's lower than expected outturn was due to temporary circumstances but a thorough review is underway and opportunities to reduce budgets will be taken and added into the savings exercise in due course.
- 2.7 Although additional revenue reserves provide more flexibility the Council faces unavoidable significant increases in its costs over the coming years such as inflation in excess of RPI (particularly on fuel, pensions and pay) and the loss of substantial interest on reserves as they are used to fund capital expenditure (in the next few years) and revenue expenditure (more gradually). Thus the identification and delivery of savings remains an unavoidable element in the Council's financial strategy.

### 3. SAVINGS

- 3.1 Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet received a report in June/July that stated that the aim should be for the Council to reach the position where the savings for the following year are identified by the preceding December. It was envisaged that this might not be achievable for the 2007/08 savings due to the time needed to deal with the 2006/7 target.
- 3.2 The Chief Officers' Management Team, following discussions with Executive Councillors, has identified a list of proposed savings for member consideration. The table below summarises the results which are shown in detail in Annex A.

|                                                                       |     | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                                                                       |     | £000    | £000    | £000    | £000    | £000    |
| Total of savings proposals                                            | Min | -539    | -1,149  | -1,375  | -1,375  | -1,321  |
|                                                                       | Max | -539    | -1,271  | -1,525  | -1,525  | -1,471  |
| Other net variations identified to date (temporary and permanent)     |     | -42     | +1      | -184    | -184    | -184    |
| Combined Position                                                     | Min | -581    | -1,148  | -1,559  | -1,559  | -1,505  |
|                                                                       | Max | -581    | -1,270  | -1,709  | -1,709  | -1,655  |
| Savings Targeted for this exercise                                    |     | -574    | -1,123  | -1,700  | -1,800  | -1,800  |
| Savings Target Per 2006 Budget (net of savings previously identified) |     | -574    | -1,123  | -1,709  | -2,346  | -2,898  |

- 3.3 Given that the targets for 2006/07, 2007/08 and potentially 2008/09 can be achieved it has been assumed **for the purpose of this forecast** that savings targets are achievable. This will be reviewed in the next cycle of meetings, to take account of Member decisions on the specific items, and each year when the forecast is revised.

#### **4. PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS**

- 4.1 The following items need to be considered in order to update the forecast -

- ◆ Inflation: General inflation, pay inflation and assumed increases in fees and charges
- ◆ Interest Rates
- ◆ 2005/06 outturn (revenue and capital)
- ◆ Growth in the Council Tax base
- ◆ Growth in Government Support
- ◆ Minimum level of revenue reserves
- ◆ Service Changes 2006 to March 2011
- ◆ Service Variations post April 2011
- ◆ Other significant items.

#### **4.2 Inflation**

General inflation continues to be based on 2.5%. Pay inflation has been retained at 3% (the 2006 award was 3%), additional allowance has been included for fuel prices which continue to escalate and pension costs are based on the actuary's requirements up to 2010/11. It will be important to regularly review these figures each year, as Huntingdonshire's position on the edge of the buoyant Cambridge sub-region and national shortages of staff in key professions result in additional upwards pressures on pay levels and contract prices.

#### **4.3 Interest Rates**

Forecasting future interest rates is problematic at the best of times. It has been assumed that we will earn 5% on our investments this year, 5.25% in 2007/08 and 5% thereafter. This will be reviewed at later stages of the budget process. An extra 0.25% would produce an extra £100k next year but as reserves fall in later years the impact becomes insignificant.

The Interest rate for borrowing has been assumed at 4.35% when required.

#### **4.4 2005/06 outturn (revenue and capital)**

Reserves have been adjusted for the actual position at April 2006 and allowance made for the revenue and capital spending brought forward from 2005/06.

#### **4.5 Growth in the Council Tax base**

Historically it has been assumed that new properties being built will result in a 1% increase in the Council Tax that would be collected each

year. Recent experience is showing that this is too high because changes in society are resulting in an increased demand for smaller houses (with lower levels of Council Tax) and more houses are being occupied by single people who are eligible for a 25% discount. The growth factor has therefore been reduced to 0.5% from 2007/08 onwards.

#### **4.6 Growth in Government Support**

Members will recall that the Government are still withholding £547k of grant that the Council is due to receive in order to provide safety nets to Councils who are due to have their grant reduced. The speed with which we will get this is problematical but the new 2 year grant announcement gives us some expectation that we will get a further £180k next year.

Historically it has been assumed that grant will rise by a little less than inflation but there is a reasonable logic to assuming there will be some growth due to population increases as this is the main driver for the distribution of grant to District Councils. However this was not previously allowed for because the Grant System used to assume that all Councils levied their Council Tax at a standard rate which was higher than our low level, thus removing much of the benefit. Therefore whilst this assumption has apparently disappeared in the new grant system it would be sensible to be rather cautious in any allowance we make for any growth. The 2.25% annual increase has therefore been increased to 2.75%.

#### **4.7 Minimum level of Revenue Reserves**

The Forecast is currently based on allowing Revenue Reserves to fall to £2m and then to be retained at that level. The Council must have sufficient reserves to meet any unexpected difficulties without having to temporarily cut services until it can increase the following year's Council Tax or make alternative service cuts. The actual level is a matter for detailed analysis as they fall towards that level. In the meantime it should be noted that £2M will represent less than 4.5% of gross revenue expenditure by that time.

#### **4.8 Service Variations 2006 to March 2011**

The approved MTP contains many service developments both revenue and capital. The capital schemes amount to £66M gross, £57M net of grants and contributions from other bodies.

#### **4.9 Service Variations post March 2011**

It is necessary to consider what general provision for service variations should be made beyond the level to March 2011 agreed in the MTP. It has been assumed that, given the financial position the Council will be facing in the coming years, there should be no additional provision for revenue developments but £3.7M per year for capital investment (at current prices). This would be sufficient **for example** to fund:

|                                                                                     | <b>£000</b>  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Social Housing Grant                                                                | 1,000        |
| Leisure Centre Maintenance (300) and regular replacement of fitness equipment (200) | 500          |
| Disabled Facilities Grants                                                          | 900          |
| Vehicle Replacements                                                                | 600          |
| Other items                                                                         | 700          |
|                                                                                     | <b>3,700</b> |

No allowance has been made for unavoidable additional costs other than the Contingency Reserve (£132k). It has been assumed that any additional items that do not meet the criteria for the reserve would need to be funded from savings.

#### 4.10 Other significant items

Various items have emerged from last year's outturn and/or the current years monitoring that are significant enough to be included in the forecast at this time. They include -

- ◆ £1.5M of capital spending will be delayed from 2006/07 to 2007/08
- ◆ £170k permanent reduction in land charges income.
- ◆ A forecast additional cost of concessionary fares of £155k in 2006/07 and £185k in 2007/08. The Council should receive extra grant in 2008/09 to fund the new Government scheme from April 2008.
- ◆ Additional salary costs being properly rechargeable to capital.
- ◆ Extra interest on investments.

#### 4.11 Items not taken account of

There are also some items that it is not possible to take account of at this stage but which may need to be brought into the MTP before it is approved next February if additional information becomes available in time. These include -

- ◆ The VAT position on off-street car parking which is the subject of continuing judgements and appeals. If it is finally resolved in favour of local authorities there will be a benefit of £150k per year.
- ◆ Increases in pension contributions post 2010/11 as the Government is consulting on changes to the benefits from the scheme and the level of contributions from employees. Any changes that emerge are likely to have some financial impact by 2012/13.
- ◆ The Government's planned White Paper on Local Government and the Lyon's Report on Local Government Funding.

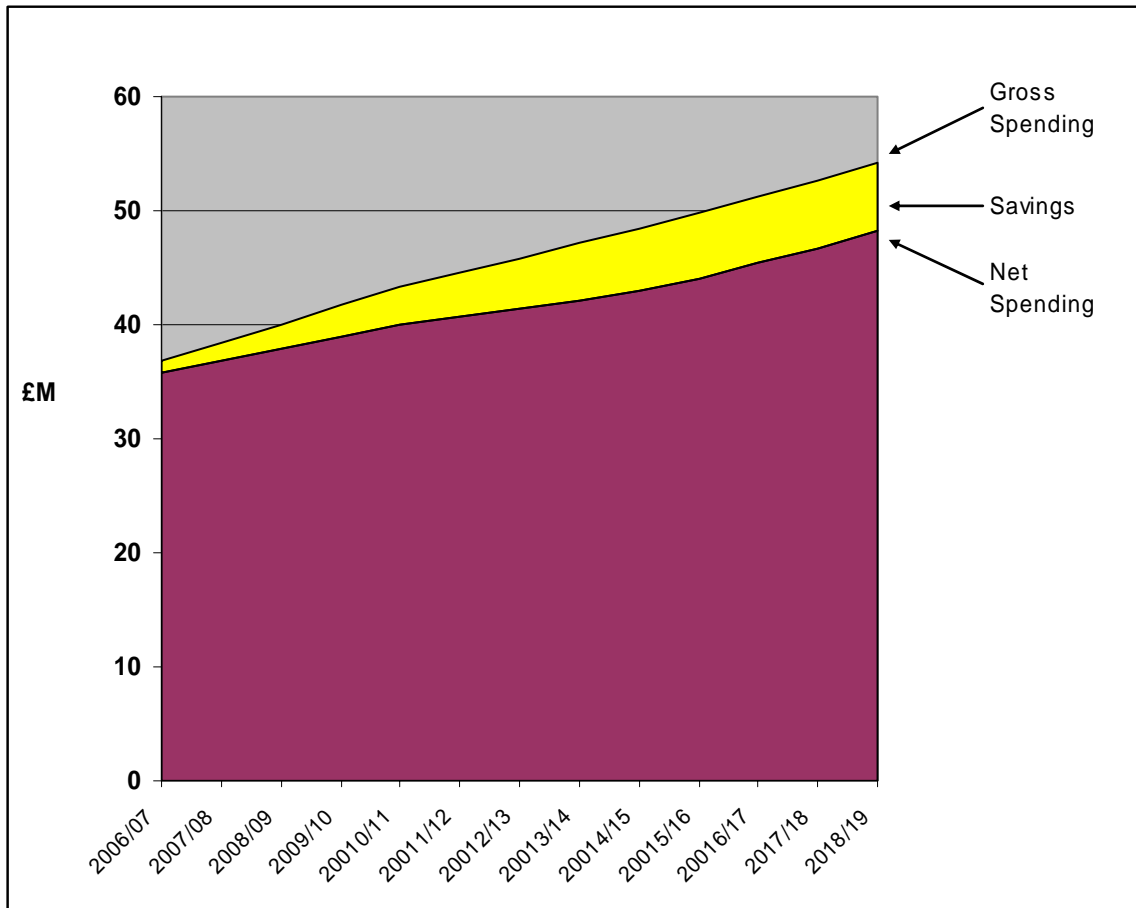
#### 4.12 Sensitivity

The Financial Forecast takes a longer-term view and, within that time frame, many of its assumptions will turn out to be inaccurate and for this reason section 6 below considers how sensitive it is to variations in the

main assumptions. Local government exists in a dynamic environment of political change, both local and national, and increasing customer expectations. Because of these uncertainties the existence of a strategy becomes more important as, each time there is a significant change, the impact on the Council's plan can be identified and addressed

## 5. THE UPDATED FORECAST

5.1 The result of the updating described above is quite neutral in its affect. The overall total of the savings required has risen from £5.8M by 2016/17 (as reported to February Council) to £6.0M in 2017/18 before then falling slightly to £5.9M in 2018/19. In future reviews the profile can be fine-tuned to smooth this but, in the meantime, only minor variations to the use of reserves or to the Council Tax increases in particular years allows the planned programme of savings to be retained thus continuing the strategy agreed by the Council last year. The chart below illustrates this and the actual figures are shown in Annex B.



5.2 However the savings identified for consideration in Annex A are only the starting point of the process and so officers will be reviewing the current approved MTP schemes and any other unavoidable adjustments to the budget during September ready for the next phase of the Budget/MTP process which will be the subject of reports to Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet during November. Whilst revenue schemes make the most immediate contribution to savings there is also an impact from capital

expenditure. In the short term each £1m of capital that can be saved reduces revenue spending by the interest that can be earned on that money, say £50k per year, but this eventually means less borrowing is needed which would save a further £40k per year in loan repayments.

## 6. SENSITIVITY AND RISKS

- 6.1 The figures in the Forecast have been adjusted for changes in some factors, to see if they have a significant impact. The table below shows the factor that has been adjusted and the resulting change in the level of savings that would be required:

|                                                           | Variation in annual permanent savings required by 2018/19                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interest rates investment<br>0.25% variation from 2007/08 | Negligible due to drop in investments already assumed                                              |
| Interest Rates Borrowing<br>0.25% variation from 2007/08  | £0.1M                                                                                              |
| General Inflation<br>0.25% variation from 2007/08         | Negligible as long as fees and charges follow same trend                                           |
| Pay Inflation<br>0.25% variation from 2007/08             | £0.9M                                                                                              |
| Government Grant<br>0.25% variation from 2007/08          | £0.4M<br>Logically some chance that if pay inflation rises there is less chance of grant decreases |
| Capital Spend<br>Extra £1M per year from 2011/12          | £0.7M                                                                                              |

- 6.2 The above table specifically considers the long term impact. For example a 0.25% reduction in investment rate would cost the Council around £100k next year and if nothing could be done to counteract this extra cost then revenue reserves would need to be used more quickly resulting in the targeted savings needing to be found sooner than planned. It would not have a permanent impact though as the forecast is already based on reserves falling to just £2m by 2017/18.
- 6.3 This Forecast is based on the Government maintaining the dual element to its capping regime that it has to date. This has a reasonable likelihood of continuing because the legislation requires capping to be primarily based on increases in a Council's Budget Requirement (i.e. net spending reduced by any funding from revenue reserves). At the same time every Government has been keen to headline capping in terms of the increase in Council Tax. Therefore capping criteria have been based on an Authority failing two tests i.e. the Council Tax increase has exceeded the Government's target **AND** the budget requirement has exceeded the Government's target. These two targets do not have to be the same percentage but the forecast is based on the Council being safe from capping as long as the Council Tax increase does not exceed 5% **AND** the budget requirement does not exceed 5%.
- 6.4 Government pronouncements will have to be reviewed each year before the Council Tax is formally set but it should be appreciated that, even then, the risk cannot be removed because the Government refuses to

actually announce the capping level in advance of Council Tax levels being set.

- 6.5 Fortunately, the Council's reserves still allow flexibility if the Council were to be capped again.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 Opportunities to increase funding from fees and charges are limited in some services due to statutory or commercial limitations. Council Tax increases are restricted due to potential capping by the Government.
- 7.2 Capital reserves will be used by 2008/09 and revenue reserves will be gradually reduced to leave a minimum level of £2M.
- 7.3 Borrowing will be used to fund capital spending once reserves have been used. This will be more expensive than simply losing interest on reserves.
- 7.4 Therefore continued savings must be found to achieve a balanced plan.
- 7.5 Annex A lists the savings for member consideration. If approved, these exceed the target for 2006/07 and 2007/08 and thus highlight that, at least for the time being, the updated Forecast, highlighted in the chart in paragraph 5.1 and detailed in Annex B, is realistic.
- 7.6 The changes to the forecast have been quite neutral allowing the previously agreed savings profile to be maintained with just an extra £100k being needed by 2018/19.
- 7.7 Significant savings are still required in later years and so the budget and MTP schemes, both revenue and capital, will be reviewed ready for the Budget/MTP report in November.
- 7.8 Cabinet will have the comments from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee available when they consider this report.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **8.1 Cabinet is recommended to recommend to Council:**

- ◆ **That the strategy of a steady profile of savings as shown in the chart in Paragraph 5.1 and detailed in Annex B be retained.**
- ◆ **The savings items in Annex A that they support.**
- ◆ **That they note that Officers will review all budgets and MTP schemes (revenue and capital) to identify any further opportunities for savings.**

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Working papers in Financial Services
2. 2005/06 Outturn, 2006/07 Revenue Budget and the 2007/2011 MTP

**Contact Officer:** Steve Couper, Head of Financial Services  
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| Proposed Saving                                                                   | Expected Revenue Saving |                 |                 |                 |                 | Comments                                                                                                                                                                                                | Risk                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                   | 2006/07<br>£000         | 2007/08<br>£000 | 2008/09<br>£000 | 2009/10<br>£000 | 2010/11<br>£000 |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                         |
| Increase Court fees                                                               | 45                      | 45              | 45              | 45              | 45              | Higher costs being recovered from debtors.                                                                                                                                                              | Already implemented.                                                    |
| Revenues and Benefits Finance                                                     | 12                      | 12              | 12              | 12              | 12              | Minor reductions                                                                                                                                                                                        | Little                                                                  |
| ICT Infrastructure                                                                | 23                      | 23              | 23              | 23              | 23              | Minor reductions                                                                                                                                                                                        | Little                                                                  |
| Call Centre                                                                       | 40                      | 40              | 40              | 40              | 40              | No expansion in Cams direct & CCN contracts for call centre.                                                                                                                                            | Little                                                                  |
| Recruit fewer Call Centre Advisors                                                | 17                      | 17              | 17              | 17              | 17              | Minor reductions                                                                                                                                                                                        | Little                                                                  |
|                                                                                   | 38                      | 38              | 38              | 38              | 38              | Recruit only 4 not 6 new advisors. The reduced capacity to transfer services will mean that for those services that are not transferred there will be no corresponding improvement in customer service. | We may obtain a lower level of cost reduction in back office functions. |
| Change District elections to all out every 4 years starting in 2010/11            |                         |                 |                 |                 | -54             | Subsequent savings of £87k per year in non-election years                                                                                                                                               |                                                                         |
| Reduce Cabinet membership by one                                                  | 3                       | 7               | 7               | 7               | 7               |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                         |
| Review Conference attendances for Members and Officers                            | 0                       | 10              | 10              | 10              | 10              |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                         |
| Delete Admin support post                                                         | 20                      | 20              | 20              | 20              | 20              |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                         |
| Savings from share of Community Services admin costs relating to Leisure          | 0                       | 10              | 10              | 10              | 10              |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                         |
| Reduction in Leisure Centre Trainees (2)                                          | 10                      | 20              | 20              | 20              | 20              |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                         |
| Increase income from direct debit swimming lessons                                | 30                      | 30              | 30              | 30              | 30              |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                         |
| Replace St Ivo Shooting Range with extended Fitness Suite or similar              | 0                       | 25              | 75              | 75              | 75              | Net of lost interest on £500k capital investment required                                                                                                                                               |                                                                         |
| Increase Leisure Centre income through Advantage prices for all member categories | 0                       | 25              | 25              | 25              | 25              |                                                                                                                                                                                                         | adverse public reaction possible loss of custom                         |

| Proposed Saving                                                                       |    | Expected Revenue Saving |         |         |         |         | Comments                                                                                                                         | Risk                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                       |    | 2006/07                 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 |                                                                                                                                  |                                                                |
| Increase other leisure activity prices above general rate of inflation                | RR | £000                    | £000    | £000    | £000    | £000    |                                                                                                                                  |                                                                |
| Reduce business support publications: transfer to District Wide, enhanced Web-service | IL | 10                      | 10      | 10      | 10      | 10      | Further consideration to be given also to reducing volume of other publications by way of more intensive use of "District Wide". |                                                                |
| More advertising in "District Wide"                                                   | IL | 10                      | 10      | 10      | 10      | 10      |                                                                                                                                  |                                                                |
| Cease employing Modern Apprentices                                                    | PD | 10                      | 40      | 40      | 40      | 40      |                                                                                                                                  |                                                                |
| Delete Offices Renewals Fund annual contribution                                      | RP | 57                      | 57      | 57      | 57      | 57      |                                                                                                                                  |                                                                |
| Cover vacant Architectural Technician Post with modern apprentice.                    | RP | 4                       | 7       | 7       | 7       | 7       | A less experienced Officer in post. Some loss of capacity.                                                                       | None                                                           |
| Rescheduling of Refuse/Recycling collection arrangements                              | RW | 0                       | 78      | 100     | 100     | 100     | Efficiency Improvement                                                                                                           | Dependant on results of consultants report                     |
| Reduced refuse tipping costs                                                          | RW | 0                       | 200     | 250     | 250     | 250     |                                                                                                                                  | None                                                           |
| PCSO contribution                                                                     | SL | 46                      | 46      | 46      | 46      | 46      | Already Agreed                                                                                                                   | None                                                           |
| Reduce Emergency Planning training                                                    | SL | 110                     | 325     | 325     | 325     | 325     | Transfer of costs to Police.                                                                                                     | Nil                                                            |
| Delete contribution to PCT for Director of Public Health                              | SL | 5                       | 10      | 10      | 10      | 10      | May be funded by County                                                                                                          |                                                                |
| Reduction in Grants – Community Initiatives                                           | SL | 0                       | 9       | 9       | 9       | 9       | PCT restructuring, HDC not committed to contributing to new Countywide DPH)                                                      |                                                                |
| Review of Car Parking Strategy                                                        | SI | 0                       | 50      | 50      | 50      | 50      | Loss of service to charitable groups. No new grants above existing commitments.                                                  |                                                                |
| Reduction in Planning Conservation Grants                                             | SI | Nil                     | 50      | 200     | 200     | 200     | Anticipated extra income following Strategy Review                                                                               | This would require charging for some long stay.                |
| Efficiency improvements in planning                                                   | SI | 35                      | 35      | 35      | 35      | 35      | Less grant aid to buildings at risk and a reduction in the pro-active conservation work undertaken.                              | None                                                           |
| Consultancy costs in Planning                                                         | SI | 10                      | 30      | 30      | 30      | 30      | Efficiencies resulting in cost savings.                                                                                          | Increases in applications could require further spending       |
|                                                                                       | SI | 0                       | 18      | 18      | 18      | 18      | Certain costs have already been committed for this year.                                                                         | Changing circumstances could generate new consultancy demands. |

| Proposed Saving                                                       |    | Expected Revenue Saving |                 |                 |                 |                 | Comments                                                                                                          | Risk                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                       |    | 2006/07<br>£000         | 2007/08<br>£000 | 2008/09<br>£000 | 2009/10<br>£000 | 2010/11<br>£000 |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
| Deletion of part time housing post                                    | SP | 0                       | 10              | 10              | 10              | 10              | Already agreed by Employment Panel                                                                                | Minimum impact (long term sick)                                                      |
| DFGs - £320k reduction in Capital budget for two years                | SP | 4                       | 12              | 16              | 16              | 16              | Demand less than budgeted. Needs reviewing annually.                                                              | 06/07 & 07/08 ok, but future years will depend on changes in demand and Govt support |
| Deletion of part-time Housing Needs Assistant                         | SP | 0                       | 10              | 10              | 10              | 10              | Some loss of service - registering applications in peak periods (funding summer student 06/07 for specific tasks) | Minimal impact (current vacancy)                                                     |
| <b>Savings Proposals</b>                                              |    | 539                     | 1,149           | 1,375           | 1,375           | 1,321           |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
|                                                                       |    | 539                     | 1,271           | 1,525           | 1,525           | 1,471           |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
| <b>Other variations identified to date (- figures are extra cost)</b> |    |                         |                 |                 |                 |                 |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
| Sapley Square lost rent                                               |    | -126                    |                 |                 |                 |                 |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
| Reduced land Charges income                                           |    | -170                    | -170            | -170            | -170            | -170            |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
| Increased fuel costs                                                  |    | -70                     | -70             | -70             | -70             | -70             |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
| Increased NNDR costs for HDC properties                               |    | -46                     | -46             | -46             | -46             | -46             |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
| Revenue staff charged to capital                                      |    | 219                     | 200             | 200             | 200             | 200             |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
| Interest                                                              |    | 290                     | 200             | 200             | 200             | 200             |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
| Turnover savings                                                      |    | 100                     | 70              | 70              | 70              | 70              |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
| Concessionary Fares                                                   |    | -155                    | -185            |                 |                 |                 | subject to Head of Community Services Post not being filled                                                       |                                                                                      |
|                                                                       |    |                         |                 |                 |                 |                 | Assumed extra grant may remove/mitigate cost from 2008/09                                                         |                                                                                      |
| <b>COMBINED POSITION</b>                                              |    | 581                     | 1,148           | 1,559           | 1,559           | 1,505           |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
|                                                                       |    | 581                     | 1,270           | 1,709           | 1,709           | 1,655           |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
| <b>Savings Targeted for this exercise</b>                             |    | 574                     | 1,123           | 1,700           | 1,800           | 1,800           |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |
| <b>Savings Target Per 2006/07 Budget/MTP</b>                          |    | 574                     | 1,123           | 1,709           | 2,346           | 2,898           | Net of savings already identified in the 2006/07 budget/MTP                                                       |                                                                                      |

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| SEPTEMBER 2006 FORECAST                     | BUDGET          |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 | MTP             |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 | FORECAST        |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                             | 2006/07<br>£000 | 2007/08<br>£000 | 2008/09<br>£000 | 2009/10<br>£000 | 2010/11<br>£000 | 2011/12<br>£000 | 2012/13<br>£000 | 2013/14<br>£000 | 2014/15<br>£000 | 2015/16<br>£000 | 2016/17<br>£000 | 2017/18<br>£000 | 2018/19<br>£000 | 2006/07<br>£000 | 2007/08<br>£000 | 2008/09<br>£000 | 2009/10<br>£000 | 2010/11<br>£000 | 2011/12<br>£000 | 2012/13<br>£000 | 2013/14<br>£000 | 2014/15<br>£000 | 2015/16<br>£000 | 2016/17<br>£000 | 2017/18<br>£000 | 2018/19<br>£000 |
| <b>2006/07 BUDGET/MTP before savings</b>    | 19,331          | 20,706          | 22,610          | 24,999          | 26,858          | 27,820          | 28,999          | 30,160          | 31,324          | 32,539          | 33,727          | 35,085          | 36,446          |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Interest and Borrowing Variations           | -325            | -393            | -237            | -211            | -146            | -135            | -100            | -86             | -71             | -57             | -40             | -32             | -36             |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Inflation Variations                        | 112             | 125             | 164             | 208             | 78              | 59              | 85              | 155             | 141             | 174             | 256             | 89              | 52              |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Other Variations                            | 178             | 131             | -54             | -54             | -54             | 146             | 146             | 146             | 146             | 146             | 146             | 146             | 146             |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| <b>Forecast Total before savings</b>        | <b>19,296</b>   | <b>20,569</b>   | <b>22,483</b>   | <b>24,942</b>   | <b>26,736</b>   | <b>27,890</b>   | <b>29,130</b>   | <b>30,375</b>   | <b>31,540</b>   | <b>32,802</b>   | <b>34,089</b>   | <b>35,288</b>   | <b>36,608</b>   |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| <b>2006/07 Total Savings Required</b>       | -1,026          | -1,573          | -2,157          | -2,792          | -3,342          | -3,892          | -4,442          | -4,992          | -5,492          | -5,776          | -5,826          | -5,764          | -5,696          |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Extra Savings Now Required                  | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| <b>Revised Savings Total</b>                | <b>-1,026</b>   | <b>-1,573</b>   | <b>-2,157</b>   | <b>-2,792</b>   | <b>-3,342</b>   | <b>-3,892</b>   | <b>-4,442</b>   | <b>-4,992</b>   | <b>-5,492</b>   | <b>-5,776</b>   | <b>-5,826</b>   | <b>-5,989</b>   | <b>-5,925</b>   |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| <b>NEW FORECAST</b>                         | <b>18,270</b>   | <b>18,996</b>   | <b>20,326</b>   | <b>22,150</b>   | <b>23,394</b>   | <b>23,998</b>   | <b>24,688</b>   | <b>25,383</b>   | <b>26,048</b>   | <b>27,026</b>   | <b>28,263</b>   | <b>29,299</b>   | <b>30,683</b>   |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| % increase                                  | 17.8%           | 4.0%            | 7.0%            | 9.0%            | 5.6%            | 2.6%            | 2.9%            | 2.8%            | 2.6%            | 3.8%            | 4.6%            | 3.7%            | 4.7%            |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| <b>Deficit Funded from Revenue reserves</b> | <b>1,491</b>    | <b>1,057</b>    | <b>1,489</b>    | <b>2,372</b>    | <b>2,627</b>    | <b>2,193</b>    | <b>1,792</b>    | <b>1,343</b>    | <b>805</b>      | <b>521</b>      | <b>433</b>      | <b>77</b>       | <b>0</b>        |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| <b>Budget Requirement</b>                   | <b>16,779</b>   | <b>17,939</b>   | <b>18,837</b>   | <b>19,778</b>   | <b>20,767</b>   | <b>21,805</b>   | <b>22,896</b>   | <b>24,040</b>   | <b>25,243</b>   | <b>26,505</b>   | <b>27,830</b>   | <b>29,222</b>   | <b>30,683</b>   |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| % increase                                  | 9.8%            | 6.9%            | 5.0%            | 5.0%            | 5.0%            | 5.0%            | 5.0%            | 5.0%            | 5.0%            | 5.0%            | 5.0%            | 5.0%            | 5.0%            |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| <b>FUNDING</b>                              |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Government Support                          | -10,892         | -11,650         | -12,162         | -12,684         | -13,033         | -13,391         | -13,759         | -14,138         | -14,526         | -14,926         | -15,336         | -15,758         | -16,192         |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Collection Fund Deficit                     | 74              | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Council Tax                                 | -5,961          | -6,289          | -6,674          | -7,095          | -7,734          | -8,414          | -9,136          | -9,903          | -10,717         | -11,579         | -12,494         | -13,463         | -14,491         |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| <b>COUNCIL TAX LEVEL</b>                    | <b>£104.69</b>  | <b>£109.91</b>  | <b>£116.05</b>  | <b>£122.75</b>  | <b>£133.15</b>  | <b>£144.13</b>  | <b>£155.73</b>  | <b>£167.95</b>  | <b>£180.85</b>  | <b>£194.43</b>  | <b>£208.75</b>  | <b>£223.83</b>  | <b>£239.72</b>  |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| % increase                                  | 5.0%            | 5.0%            | 5.6%            | 5.8%            | 8.5%            | 8.2%            | 8.0%            | 7.8%            | 7.7%            | 7.5%            | 7.4%            | 7.2%            | 7.1%            |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Remaining revenue reserves EOY              | 16,709          | 15,652          | 14,163          | 11,791          | 9,164           | 6,971           | 5,179           | 3,836           | 3,031           | 2,510           | 2,077           | 2,000           | 2,000           |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Remaining capital reserves EOY              | 28,688          | 11,591          | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Interest included in net budget             | -3,110          | -2,433          | -1,483          | -968            | -851            | -732            | -632            | -553            | -499            | -468            | -449            | -441            | -446            |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |

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## Standards Committee

Report of the meetings held on 6th & 24th July and  
14th September 2006

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### Matters for Information

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**1. THE STUKELEYS PARISH COUNCIL –  
ALLEGED BREACH OF CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Committee has accepted the findings of an Investigating Officer in respect of allegations made against two Councillors serving on The Stukeleys Parish Council.

After careful consideration of the facts set out in the report of the Investigating Officer and having regard to advice from the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer, the Committee has concluded that neither councillor had a case to answer and that there was no breach of the code of conduct adopted by The Stukeleys Parish Council.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination) (Amendment) Regulations 2004, a notice to this effect has been published in the Hunts Post.

**2. APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION**

Having regard to advice received from the Monitoring Officer, the Committee has approved applications for dispensation received from Alconbury and Buckden Parish Councils for the period ending 30th April 2010.

Six Members of Alconbury Parish Council who might otherwise have been prohibited from participating will now be able to speak and vote on matters relating to a flood alleviation scheme when it is considered by the Parish in the autumn. Having regard to the application from Buckden Parish Council, and in granting dispensation to fifteen Members of that Council to conduct business relating to the Village Hall and Recreation Ground Trust, the Committee has reiterated their concern at a position whereby all Members of a local council act as trustees to a community facility given the inevitable conflict of interests which may arise. The Parish Council has been urged to contact the Charity Commission for advice on reviewing their trustee arrangements to overcome such difficulties. Similar advice also will be offered by the Monitoring Officer to all Town and Parish Councils in the District.

### **3. CODE OF CONDUCT – STANDARDS BOARD NOTIFICATIONS**

In accordance with the procedure adopted by the Standards Board for England, the Committee has been informed that the Board has decided not to take any further action in relation to allegations made against three Members of the District Council and one councillor serving on Ramsey Town Council.

In the cases of two other Ramsey Town councillors, the Board has requested more information from the complainant which will determine whether further action needs to be taken.

### **4. THE ‘CASE ALERT’**

Further to Item No. 13 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 19th April 2006, the Committee has noted the launch, by the Standards Board for England, of a new facility entitled “Case Alert”. The “Case Alert” will provide regular in-depth analysis of significant cases and best practice guidance drawing upon decisions by Standards Committees, the Adjudication Panel for England and the High Court. The “Case Alert” will be submitted to future meetings of the Committee and the attention of town and parish councils will continue to be drawn to any issues highlighted in the cases selected.

### **5. STANDARDS AND CONDUCT WEBSITE**

Following an approach by a Vice-Chairman of a parish council regarding the composition of the standards and conduct pages on the District Council’s website and having reviewed the practices of other authorities locally, it has been agreed that the website be amended to indicate that correspondence for the Independent Members and Parish Council representatives on the Committee be sent care of the District Council’s offices at Pathfinder House.

### **6. TRAINING ROUND UP**

The Committee has noted the various activities undertaken by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer to fulfil its obligations in terms of training and advice to councillors on issues relating to the local ethical framework and code of conduct. Individual and group sessions have been held involving 10 parish councils and 5 new district councillors and the Monitoring Officer has led a session organised by the Cambridgeshire Association of Local Councils to which councillors from all Cambridgeshire parishes had been invited.

The Monitoring Officer also has been directed by the Standards Board for England, under Section 66(6) of the Local Government Act 2000 and associated Regulations to provide training and guidance to all members of Sawtry Parish Council on the Code of Conduct. Steps are being taken to enable the Monitoring Officer to comply with this direction.

## **7. A NEW APPROACH TO LOCAL INVESTIGATIONS**

The Standards Board for England is evolving into a strategic body which will investigate only those cases which set important precedents and those which, for various reasons, cannot be handled locally. This trend has been underway now for some 18 months and increasingly, cases are being referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation locally.

The Committee has noted that, as part of its new role as regulator, the Board has devised an approach to monitoring local investigations so they can ensure that any concerns that may emerge during the investigation, in terms of process/timescale/interpretation can be dealt with in a timely and appropriate way. The Committee also has noted the Board's recommendation in respect of the appointment of investigators and the need for Monitoring Officers to satisfy themselves that the person appointed has the necessary skills and resources needed to undertake the investigation thoroughly.

D H Bristow  
Chairman

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## Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery)

Report of the meetings held on the 4th July and  
5th September 2006

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### Matters for Information

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#### 6. **EMPLOYEE OPINION SURVEY ACTION PLAN**

The Panel has been acquainted with the Employee Liaison Advice Group (ELAG) Action Plan – Employee Opinion Survey 2005. By way of introduction Members have been informed that the Employee Opinion Survey is carried out every two years, the first having been in 2003. The Action Plan identifies areas for improvement and has been subject to consultation with ELAG representatives. Progress against various items in the Action Plan also has been reported.

The Panel has discussed work being undertaken to improve communication with employees and the difficulties that exist in reaching those based at the leisure centres and at the Operations Division as they do not have normal “office” work patterns and often tend not to have access to e-mail and the intranet.

#### 7. **PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

The Panel has received a presentation on parking enforcement. Such enforcement currently is the responsibility of the Police and will remain so unless it is decriminalised. The Government encourages the transfer of responsibility from the Police to local authorities, which at present is on a voluntary basis. Decriminalisation has taken place in Cambridge City and while it is intended to be self-financing, in practice, there are significant set-up costs and it is being subsidised by the County Council. With regard to the possible division of areas for parking enforcement purposes, the current legislation does not make provision for parish level enforcement but it would be possible to create an agency agreement. It also would be possible to designate the whole of the District as a “special parking area” but it is more likely that the County Council will appoint a contractor to undertake enforcement throughout the County. In discussing practical aspects of decriminalised parking enforcement, the Panel has noted the need for a county-wide body to process tickets and to administer the appeals mechanism.

The Panel has discussed local enforcement arrangements, funding of traffic wardens, off-street parking and using neighbourhood panels to influence Police priorities in favour of parking enforcement. Having

noted that discussion already is ongoing with the County Council on this subject, the Panel has requested a progress report in six months time on the decriminalisation of parking enforcement.

**8. HOUSING STRATEGY 2006 – 2011**

The Panel has reviewed the Housing Strategy 2006 – 2011 and various supporting strategies. Members have been informed that the District Council has a statutory duty to produce a housing strategy every five years. The Strategy is an umbrella document which sets out issues facing the District. The content has been informed by the Council's corporate priorities and contains an action plan detailing how the Council and its partners will balance need and supply, together with improving housing and community facilities. The documents have been the subject of consultation and will be submitted to Go-East for assessment as to whether it is "fit for purpose".

The Panel has discussed the money allocated under the Empty Homes Strategy, alternative ways of providing more houses in the District and the Council's nomination rights.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Panel has approved the documents for submission to the Cabinet.

**9. PROMOTING BETTER HEALTH IN OLDER PEOPLE THROUGH PHYSICAL EXERCISE**

The Panel has considered the final report by the Older Persons' Working Group. Members' attention has been drawn to the changing demographics in Huntingdonshire, the benefits of falls prevention through exercise in terms of enabling older people to live independently and the relatively low cost of the Working Group's proposals.

The Panel has been informed that there is an opportunity to spread capacity at the Leisure Centres to develop a pilot scheme referred to in the report and that discussions already have been held with a representative of Luminus on this subject. Having discussed the definition of "older" people, possible outreach work in villages and the involvement of general practitioners, the Panel has endorsed the Working Group's recommendations for submission to the Cabinet and requested that a progress report is submitted to a future meeting.

**10. SALE OF DISTRICT COUNCIL LAND FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Panel has concluded its study on adopting a policy for requiring a proportion of Council land sold for residential purposes to be devoted to affordable housing. The Panel has received details of the Council's landholdings and the financial implications of introducing such a policy. Members' attention has been drawn to the fact that the Council no longer has any substantial sites suitable for residential development and to a proposal to introduce a procedure to request

the Cabinet to attach a covenant to any site which has been declared surplus to requirements if the provision for social dwellings is insufficient for the site.

The Executive councillor for Resources and Policy has reminded the Panel that the Council has to balance the need for housing in the District with the value of the land involved. As most plots of land that might be sold for housing are small, he has endorsed the proposed new procedure.

The former Chairman of the Panel, who had been invited to the meeting as the originator of the study, has informed Members that in his opinion, as a housing authority, the Council should set an example in the provision of affordable housing, especially as others are expected to do likewise. He felt that the Council has a moral obligation to require affordable housing to be built on land in its ownership and sites were available, which would be suitable for this purpose. In that respect he proposed that a policy be introduced requiring that half of any land sold be used to provide affordable housing, with the Cabinet's agreement being required to remove or change this condition.

Having discussed different types of affordable housing and in noting the difficulties associated with funding, the Panel formally has noted –

- ◆ the established arrangements within the Council to facilitate the future use and release of surplus land;
- ◆ that if land use is determined as residential, it will be marketed with outline permission for that purpose;
- ◆ the intention to continue to sell Council land in accordance with planning policies appertaining at the time of disposal;
- ◆ the introduction of a procedure whereby the Head of Housing Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health and if he considers the provision of social housing is insufficient for the site declared surplus, will invite the Cabinet to consider whether a covenant should be proposed to secure a greater amount of affordable housing on the site; and
- ◆ the arrangements for the District Council's Housing Services Division to notify housing associations of the availability of opportunities for the development of sites with social housing.

## **11. CHOICE BASED LETTINGS**

The Panel has received a presentation on Choice Based Lettings. Members have been informed that the Government has placed a requirement on all Councils with housing responsibilities to introduce Choice Based Lettings by 2010 and of the success of a bid for funding for the introduction of a sub-regional scheme, which has realised £181,000. They also have noted the principles involved, how schemes will operate and the benefits of Choice Based Lettings for the Council and for vulnerable clients.

The Executive councillor for Housing and Public Health has informed the Panel that Choice Based Lettings will not obviate the need for the Council to use bed and breakfast accommodation and has expressed concern at residents from outside the District moving to Huntingdonshire for accommodation, over which the Council had no discretion.

The Panel has established that tenants tend to stay in the area in which they reside and that only 10% of accommodation will be subject to Choice Based Lettings. In fact, Housing Corporation rules suggest that there will be more scope for Huntingdonshire residents to move to other districts. The Panel also has been acquainted with arrangements for administering the system. More use will be made of technology and employees will tend to have a greater role in assisting clients. Members have concluded by expressing concern that Choice Based Lettings represents a step towards regional government.

**12. CONTINUATION WITH CHANGES TO CALL HANDLING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Panel has reviewed a report on the outcome of trials of improvements to the call handling arrangements at the call centre. Having been reminded of the background to the trial, the Panel has discussed its previous recommendation that measures should be put in place to enable the transfer of calls between the District and County Councils to be made. Members have been informed that there are, at present, technical difficulties preventing this from happening and that a solution is some way off. The Executive councillor for the Council Headquarters and Information Technology has stated that this facility had not been included in the original specification and that there was a need to rectify the situation as soon as possible, a view which the Panel has endorsed.

The Panel has discussed the call centre disaster recovery system. Two telephony servers are in place, and in an emergency, calls can be directed to the switchboard at Pathfinder House. The system recently has been called into use and a report is to be prepared on lessons learned.

A report seeking continuation of the improvements has been endorsed for submission to the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) will be requested to pursue the matters raised above, which now fall within its remit.

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**Matters of Interest**

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**13. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) – PROGRESS**

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies at each of its meetings.

**14. LOCAL GOVERNMENT – 200: FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the relevant Forward Plan of Key Decisions at its meetings.

**15. SCRUTINY**

The Panel has considered the latest editions of the Decision Digest and received answers to queries on matters contained therein.

S J Criswell  
Chairman

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## Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support)

Report of the meetings held on 11th July and  
12th September 2006

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### Matters for Information

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#### 11. LOCAL PROCUREMENT

The Panel has considered the question of local procurement by the Council and ways in which this potentially can promote the local economy within Huntingdonshire. The issue was raised initially by Councillor S J Criswell following approaches to him by members of the Huntingdonshire Business Network requesting that the Council do more to encourage business opportunities for local suppliers to tender for Council services and supplies.

To gain an appreciation of the issues involved, the Panel has received information from the Council's Economic Development and Procurement Managers and listened to the views of a representative of Huntingdonshire Business Network on the potential impact of Council expenditure in the local economy. It was suggested by the latter that practical difficulties were encountered by local businesses wishing to tender for Council services and supplies and that it would be helpful if more guidance was provided by the Council on the opportunities available.

The Panel's attention has been drawn to studies undertaken elsewhere which suggest that local purchasing by an authority is multiplied several fold in its impact on the local economy. Having been advised that a recent study calculated that approximately 9% of the Council's purchases were made in Huntingdonshire and 30% in Cambridgeshire, the Panel concluded that the subject was worthy of further, more detailed investigation. Councillors D B Dew, P J Downes and R J West therefore have been appointed to a Working Group for the purpose of undertaking a study, the precise terms of reference of which will be determined in discussion between the Chairman, the Working Group and Head of Administration.

#### 12. HUNTINGDON TOWN CENTRE VISION

The Panel has been acquainted with the content of the strategy and action plan for Huntingdon Town Centre which was considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 29th June 2006, (Item No. 27 of their Report refers). The Panel was particularly interested in the amount of

public consultation that the Cabinet was planning to undertake on the proposals and has been reassured that the Vision will be the subject of a public exhibition during September, with a series of meetings with stakeholders in the coming months. The outcome of the consultation exercise will contribute towards the formation of the Council's own policies and the emerging Local Development Framework.

### **13. THE GREAT FEN – MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT**

The Panel has considered the content of a draft memorandum of agreement for the implementation of the Great Fen Project by the Council and other partner organisations. The document subsequently has been endorsed by the Cabinet. (Item No. 38 of their Report refers).

The Panel was pleased to note the potential benefits offered by the Project, both in environmental terms and the promotion of the local economy through the attraction of tourists to the area. The Panel also has noted that Council expenditure on the project to date has been limited in comparison to the grants and donations that have been attracted, with the likelihood of growth area funding also becoming available.

### **14. TRAVEL PLAN**

The Panel has discussed a proposed Travel Plan for the Council, in advance of its consideration by the Employees' Liaison Advisory Group, the Employment Panel and finally the Cabinet.

The Panel has been informed that the Council needs to demonstrate good practice in promoting healthier means of travel and a shared vision between Members and employees to reduce both unnecessary and inefficient car usage and a need for travel through the use of technology. Although the Council had developed a Travel Plan some years previously, this had not been progressed effectively and the Panel was advised that the changes to the Council's accommodation arrangements had prompted a need to produce an updated and revised Plan that would address the specific issues arising from the accommodation changes, whilst also enabling the Council to act as a community leader in setting an example to other Huntingdonshire employers. The Plan therefore was corporate in its application to all of the Council's employment locations but with site specific plans containing objectives and targets for future years.

Although the Panel felt that the Plan had been comprehensively researched and well presented, some doubts were expressed as to whether the actions proposed will be sufficient to achieve the targets identified. The Panel has therefore submitted the following comments to the Employment Panel and the Cabinet for consideration as part of the latter's deliberations on the adoption of the Plan –

- ◆ the proposals could have been firmer if the targets are to be achieved;

- ◆ there should be more incentives for staff to discourage their use of private cars for travel to and from work;
- ◆ concessions should not be made available in town centre car parks for Members or staff who should be required to pay the same charge as members of the public;
- ◆ consideration should be given to providing concessions to staff for the use of alternative forms of transport (e.g. concessions on season tickets for bus travel);
- ◆ current mileage rates which favour the use of cars with larger engines should be reviewed for both employees and Members;
- ◆ there is a need for greater reference to Members in the Plan;
- ◆ the use of alternative forms of fuel for 'pool cars' should be investigated; and
- ◆ the Council should provide greater incentives for car sharing.
- ◆ that consideration be given to the medium-term use of the Bridge Place car park (Godmanchester depot) within the review of the car-parking strategy.

## **15. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PROCESSES**

The Panel has reported previously on its investigation of the way in which development control applications are dealt with by both the Development Control Panel and the Council. A working group was formed to consider Member involvement in the process while at the same time the Head of Planning Services was considering public speaking at meetings of the Development Control Panel. The two investigations consequently were combined and recommendations have been endorsed by the Panel which can be summarised as follows –

- ◆ the introduction of speaking by the public at meetings of the Development Control Panel;
- ◆ Members representing affected wards in neighbouring authorities and neighbouring parish councils to be permitted to speak at Development Control Panel meetings (in the hope that reciprocal arrangements will be made for Huntingdonshire Members);
- ◆ presentations by officers at Council meetings when planning applications are to be determined by the Council and the replication of the public speaking arrangements in such circumstances;
- ◆ training on planning matters to be extended to all Members;
- ◆ ward councillors (and neighbouring ward councillors, where appropriate) to be invited to attend formal site visits organised for members of the Development Control Panel;
- ◆ the circulation of draft Development Control Panel agenda to ward councillors; and
- ◆ a longer period (at the discretion of the Head of Planning Services) than the current 21 days after publication of the weekly planning list for Members to ask for applications to be determined by the Panel.

The changes proposed hopefully will encourage the public to attend and contribute towards the decision making process and generate interest in local democracy. It is proposed that they be reviewed after 12 months to ascertain their effectiveness and whether amendments are required after experience has been obtained of them working in practice.

The recommendations will be forwarded to the Development Control Panel for comment and, because they will involve changes to the constitution, they then will be considered by the Corporate Governance Panel prior to formal submission to the Council.

#### **16. MONITORING OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS**

The Panel has undertaken their quarterly monitoring of section 106 agreements entered into by the Council as planning obligations with developers. Disappointment has been expressed by Members that the amount unexpended has grown since the previous quarter and there is little evidence of progress having been achieved during that time in using the money received for individual projects. The Panel therefore has repeated its request for more detailed information in future reports, including a separate annex highlighting where progress has been achieved; asked for ward councillors to be informed when money is received from developers which it is intended to forward to a town or parish council in their ward, and for there to be clear responsibility at executive level for co-ordinating the expenditure of the sums received.

#### **17. WORK PLAN STUDIES**

The Panel has discussed its work plan and noted progress in ongoing study areas. Following an informal meeting in July, the Panel also has identified a number of potential new areas for investigation in the forthcoming year and ways in which they might be progressed. In that respect, an early report suggesting a requirement for Member authorisation of vacancies at grade 10 and below has not been supported by the Panel.

As part of those deliberations, Members also have expressed their continuing frustration at the lack of broadband links at home to enable them to access the Council's intranet and download information. As a result, the Panel has asked the Head of Administration in consultation with the Chairman, to give further consideration to the best means of taking this matter forward.

J A Gray  
Chairman

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## Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework)

Report of the meeting held on 5th September 2006

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### Matters for Information

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## 2. FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Panel has received an update on the financial forecast and on the approach to the current year's review of the Medium Term Plan. Members' attention has been drawn to the savings targets contained in the Financial Strategy and proposals, which have been identified by officers in conjunction with Executive Councillors.

Of the proposed savings for the period from 2006/07 to 2010/11, details of the budget for conference attendance have been requested and in terms of increased Leisure Centre Advantage membership charges, Members have discussed the risks associated with a potential loss of custom in a competitive market place and the need to review the County Council's financial contribution to the Centres.

The Panel also has discussed proposals to cease employing Modern Apprentices and to reduce grants to voluntary organisations, with regard to which some Members have expressed reservations. In discussing the deletion of the Offices Renewals Fund annual contribution, the Panel has been informed that the absence of risk is attributable to the new headquarters building becoming available in the short term. On the deletion of the contribution to Huntingdonshire Primary Care Trust for the Director of Health post, it has been established that this has been prompted by the re-organisation of primary care trusts and is in line with other District Councils in Cambridgeshire.

An additional list of possible savings, prepared by the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, has been considered. Having noted that some of the proposals would have a lengthy lead-in time, the Panel has endorsed a suggestion that charging for planning advice is introduced. A suggestion that charging for CCTV be investigated also has been supported.

The Panel has endorsed the report on the Financial Strategy for submission to the Cabinet and requested that its comments and the list of alternative suggested savings by the Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen together with any Liberal Democrats' proposals for savings be taken into account as the review process continues.

**3. “GROWING SUCCESS” – CORPORATE PLAN**

The Panel has considered the report of the Corporate Plan Working Group on the progress of the review of the Corporate Plan. The Panel has endorsed a suggested process and timetable for the review and, at the Chairman’s suggestion, Members have agreed that the Service Support and Service Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Panels should each review half of the Plan’s aims at their October meetings with a view to feeding into the review process.

J A Gray  
Chairman

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## Development Control Panel

Report of the meetings held on 17th July, 21st August  
and 18th September 2006

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### Matters for Information

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**8. SHOP FRONT AUDIT:  
RAMSEY CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Panel has considered the content of a shop front audit of premises in the Great Whyte and High Street, Ramsey undertaken as part of the emerging conservation area management plan for Ramsey. The audit will be used to identify premises which might benefit from support under the Shop Front Improvement Grant programme and also will inform planning decisions and highlight unauthorised signs or lighting arrangements prompting enforcement action where necessary.

Although endorsing the content of the document, the Panel has drawn attention to the absence of any reference to disabled access as an important criteria for shop front design, particularly given the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act and has received an undertaking that reference will be made to this effect in the final text of the document.

**9. CAMBRIDGE SUB REGION GYPSY/  
TRAVELLER NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

A summary of the key findings of a Needs Assessment relating to gypsies and travellers in the Cambridge Sub Region has been presented to the Panel. The Needs Assessment will inform a review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) in relation to the provision of gypsy and traveller caravan sites in the Eastern Region. Ultimately, the RSS will specify the number of pitches required within each planning authority area but not their locations. Work also has begun on the preparation of a gypsy and traveller site development plan document (DPD) which will contain site specific proposals for gypsies and travellers in the district for the period to 2021. The Panel has acknowledged that the Needs Assessment will form important evidence in this respect and will allow the DPD to proceed in advance of the outcome of the RSS policy review. Having discussed several issues arising from the Needs Assessment, it was acknowledged that training for the Panel should form an essential part of the programme for preparation and inclusion of the DPD in the Council's local development scheme.

**10. PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE SCHEME OF DELEGATED POWERS IN RESPECT OF ENFORCEMENT ISSUES**

Approval has been given to a series of proposed amendments to the powers delegated to Officers by the Development Control Panel in respect of enforcement action. The operational changes will enable the Head of Planning Services to respond more quickly to enforcement issues as they arise under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

**11. DCLG CIRCULAR 01/2006 – GUIDANCE ON CHANGES TO THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL SYSTEM**

The Panel has endorsed the content of a response by the Head of Planning Services to circular 01/2006 published by the Department for Communities and Local Government on changes to the operation of the development control system. The response makes reference to five specific issues which will have implications for the development control service relating to the use of local development orders, changes to the outline planning permission and reserved matters process, the requirement for design and access statements to accompany certain applications, increased powers to control internal floor space additions such as mezzanines and changes to the decision period for major planning applications.

**12. ST NEOTS CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY REVIEW CHARACTER ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

As part of the consultation process, the views of the Panel have been invited on the content of a draft boundary review, character assessment and management plan for the St Neots Conservation Area. The exercise has been undertaken in response to best practice guidance published by English Heritage and Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) criteria which requires a review and update of conservation area policies and documents on a five year programme. The boundary review will result in an amalgamation of the existing conservation areas in St Neots, Eynesbury and Eaton Socon and the character assessment will be used as a guide for planning matters in the maintenance of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Having endorsed the content of each document the Panel has recommended that they be adopted as Council policy by the Cabinet.

**13. DESIGN CODES DOCUMENT FOR LAND EAST OF THE RAILWAY, ST NEOTS**

For the first time, the Panel has had the opportunity to comment on a Design Codes Document which, in this instance, is for land east of the railway, St Neots. The document will provide guidance to prospective developers on how individual plots of land should be developed and will assist in the determination of reserved matters applications on the Loves Farm site. The Panel has endorsed the content of the Design Codes Document which will speed up the

negotiations between the District Council and developers when applications are submitted.

**14. DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PROGRESS REPORT –  
1ST APRIL – 30TH JUNE 2006**

The Panel has received a statistical report on the performance of the Development Control section over the period 1st April – 30th June 2006.

**15. PROPOSED ARTICLE 4 (1) DIRECTION TO REMOVE PERMITTED  
DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS – LAND WEST OF MIDDLEMARSH  
FARM, SAWTRY**

On the advice of the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister the Panel has agreed to take appropriate action to respond to a commercial proposal to sub divide 5.57 hectares of agricultural land into 159 plots on land west of Middlemarsh Farm, Sawtry. The fragmentation of land in this manner can lead to serious breaches of planning control and substantial deterioration in the character and appearance of the countryside. The sub division of the plots can take place as permitted development without the need for any formal consent. However, as the sub division of the land at this location could cause severe, demonstrable and potentially irreversible harm to the character, appearance and openness of this sensitive rural landscape, the Panel has agreed to make appropriate Orders under Article 4 (1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, the effect of which will be to withdraw certain development rights with immediate effect pending confirmation or cancellation by the Secretary of State. The order also will require an application to be made for planning permission for development proposals which can then be determined on their merits.

**16. DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS**

Over three meetings, the Panel has determined a total of 39 applications of which 19 were approved, 15 refused and 5 deferred.

D B Dew  
Vice Chairman

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## Employment Panel

Report of the meeting held on 20th September 2006

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### Matters for Information

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#### 6. TRAVEL PLAN

For all major employment sites, the Council as a planning authority requires the preparation of a travel plan which demonstrates a commitment to promoting sustainable travel.

In the light of the new headquarters and operations centre project, the views of the Panel have been invited on an overall Travel Plan for the District Council which proposes a range of measures to reduce, over time, the reliance of Members and employees on the need to travel by car. Specific plans will be prepared for each of the Council's sites in accordance with the overall vision and objectives.

Following a wide ranging discussion and having regard also to those representations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) (Item No. 14 refers) and the Employee Liaison Advisory Group, the Panel has suggested that the provisions of the approved Plan should apply equally to Members and Officers, that consideration should be given to the scheduling of Member meetings in the evening to allow use of the town centre car parks when they are least busy and that further research be undertaken to ascertain why the majority of employees appear to have a preference for travelling to work alone by private car. These views will be conveyed to the Cabinet for consideration at their meeting on 19th October 2006.

#### 7. EARLY RETIREMENT POLICY

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 come into force on 1st October 2006 and by virtue of these regulations local authority employers will have discretionary powers to award employees a one off lump sum of up to 2 years pay when their employment is terminated early. This replaces a Regulation which restricted compensation to a maximum of 66 weeks pay, using a formula based on the employee's age and length of service.

In the absence of a prescribed formula for calculating the amount of compensation payable, national employers recommend that local authorities adopt a policy to meet all relevant circumstances based on the draft regulations in advance of 1st October.

To maintain maximum flexibility in the event of any case of early retirement, and in advance of the total review of the pension scheme for implementation by April 2008, the Panel has adopted a policy, under the revised Local Government Discretionary Payments Regulations, which will allow the award of lump sum compensation based on the merits of each case and taking all costs into account.

As the draft regulations do not provide for the award of a credited period (commonly referred to as "added years") the Panel has varied the policy in respect of the discretion available in Regulation 52 (Augmentation) of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 1997 so that "the Council will consider granting additional membership, taking all costs into account".

#### **8. EQUAL PAY REVIEW**

Following a methodology produced by the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Panel has noted the outcome of a review of workforce pay undertaken periodically to safeguard the Council against claims for equal pay under the Equal Pay Act 1970. The review has involved a comparison of the pay received by women and men doing equal work and investigated the causes of any gender pay gaps that cannot satisfactorily be explained.

In considering the Review's findings, the Panel has noted that the use of the Council's analytical job evaluation scheme affords protection from equal pay claims and that in the determination of the starting salary of female employees there was not less than a 5% difference between the average salary points of male and female employees.

#### **9. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

For clarification purposes and to improve the efficiency of the process, the Panel has approved minor amendments to the Council's Disciplinary Procedure. In the event of an appeal in which Members would be involved, the Panel has requested that, in future, a pool of Members be appointed at the commencement of the municipal year from which the composition of an Appeals Sub Group could be drawn, when necessary, to determine appeals under the Council's disciplinary and appeals procedures. Such Members will receive appropriate training prior to their involvement in Sub Group hearings.

#### **10. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

Pursuant to Item No. 9, the Panel also has approved a new Grievance Procedure which, in the light of discussion requires a few minor amendments, and will be resubmitted to a future meeting.

#### **11. AGE DISCRIMINATION: ACTION PLAN**

The Panel has approved an Action Plan in order that the District Council, as an employer, meets the requirements of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 to be introduced with effect from 1st

October 2006. The Action Plan will continue to be reviewed as understanding of the legislation and case law develops.

## **12. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MONITORING**

The Panel has received and noted the outcomes of equal opportunities monitoring of employees over the period 1st July 2005 to 30th June 2006. Further details are available from the Head of HR and Payroll Services on request.

## **13. STAFFING ISSUES**

### **(a) Housing and Council Tax Benefits: Increase in staff**

The Panel has recommended the Cabinet to approve the creation of three new posts of Housing Benefit Assessment Officers to meet an increase in the complexity and volume of work in the Housing and Council Tax Benefits section. Whilst the proposals are estimated to cost £35,000 in 2005/6 and £69,000 in subsequent years, the employment of additional assessors will avoid loss of Government subsidy amounting to £70,000 in 2005/6 through the imposition of penalties for delay in handling claims.

### **(b) Recruitment of additional Call Centre Advisers and filling of the vacant Team Leader post**

To meet the increasing workload anticipated as a result of the transfer of additional services to the Call Centre early in 2007, the Panel has approved the appointment of two further FTE posts of Call Centre Advisers and the filling of an existing post of Team Leader. Further justification for the creation of an additional Adviser post will be submitted to the next meeting.

### **(c) Request to fill vacant post**

Having considered the circumstances applicable to a vacancy within the Central Services Directorate for a Centre Manager at St Neots Leisure Centre, the Panel has authorised the Head of HR and Payroll Services to commence recruitment to the post.

### **(d) Realignment of services: Environmental and Community Health Division**

Following the recent realignment of services across Directorates, the Panel has approved a minor re-organisation to improve the structure of the Environmental and Community Services Division. This proposal will encourage closer working across specialist teams, offer an improved service to the public and result in a modest financial saving.

**(e) IMD: Web Administrator**

The Panel has approved the establishment, on a permanent basis, of a post of Web Administrator within the IT Development Team. No additional funding is required to support the establishment of the post which has a key role to play in the implementation of the Customer First programme and other projects and departmental initiatives

**14. RETIREMENT OF PERSONNEL – ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The Panel has placed on record it's recognition of, and gratitude for, the excellent contribution made by Mr C Billingham during his employment as a Housing Adviser in the Operational Services Directorate and in the local government service over 16 years and conveys its best wishes to him for a long and happy retirement.

Mrs B E Boddington  
Vice Chairman

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## Elections Panel

Report of the meeting held on 22nd August 2006

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### Matter for Information

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#### 1. PARISH ELECTORAL REVIEW

The Panel has considered the results of an initial consultation exercise in connection with the parish electoral review of the District. Members have been acquainted with the background to the review and issues that may be considered as part of the process. The review will follow a four stage consultation process as recommended by the Boundary Committee for England.

The Panel has considered a schedule of responses received from interested parties to the preliminary consultation and has suggested that proposed changes be made to boundaries affecting the following parishes –

- ◆ Abbots Ripton;
- ◆ Abbotsley;
- ◆ Alconbury;
- ◆ Buckden;
- ◆ Bury;
- ◆ Ellington;
- ◆ Eynesbury Hardwicke;
- ◆ Fenstanton;
- ◆ Hail Weston;
- ◆ Hemingford Grey;
- ◆ Holywell-cum-Needingworth;
- ◆ Houghton and Wyton;
- ◆ Huntingdon;
- ◆ Little Paxton;
- ◆ Offord Cluny;
- ◆ Offord D'Arcy;
- ◆ Old Hurst;
- ◆ Pidley-cum-Fenton;
- ◆ Ramsey;
- ◆ Somersham;
- ◆ Spaldwick;
- ◆ St. Ives;
- ◆ St. Neots Rural;
- ◆ St. Neots;
- ◆ The Stukeleys;
- ◆ Warboys;

- ◆ Wistow; and
- ◆ Woodhurst.

A further report will be submitted to the Panel's next meeting on any consequential changes to the electoral arrangements in the parishes affected prior to the preparation of draft proposals for public consultation.

D Harty  
Chairman

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## Corporate Governance Panel

Report of the meeting held on 27th June 2006

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### Matters for Information

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#### 1. EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

The Corporate Governance Panel has been acquainted with the Council's use of resources judgement 2005/06 and the annual audit and inspection letter. With regard to the latter, the Council's Relationship Manager from the Audit Commission, has informed Members that the Council has made good progress against some of its Improvement Plan priorities but that progress against others has been slower than originally envisaged. The letter also reflects a varied performance against Best Value Performance Indicators. There has been positive direction of travel in respect of internal and external communication, performance management, risk management, learning and the Council's accommodation but issues of capacity which were raised in the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment, will continue to be addressed.

A representative of the Council's external auditors attended the meeting and informed Members that, as it has an excellent rating, the Council is assessed on its direction of travel against its improvement plan. The use of resources judgement will form a significant part of the revised arrangements for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

The Panel has discussed its role in approving the accounts, particularly in understanding the information presented to them and the willingness to question the Annual Statement. Members also have discussed the Council's aspirations regarding future assessments and have concluded that a judgement will need to be made to balance the benefits which will follow from higher ratings of performance and the investment of resources which will be required to achieve them.

A further report has been requested for the next meeting on progress against the action plan contained in the use of resources judgement.

#### 2. FINAL ACCOUNTS 2005/06

The Corporate Governance Panel has approved the draft Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2006 to enable the audit to commence. Members have been acquainted with issues arising from the accounts relating to the Council's investments, its debtors

and creditors, pensions, the treatment of capital and the collection fund.

The Panel has discussed the Council's sources of income, excluding the Leisure Centre accounts which are treated separately. With regard to pensions, the Panel has been informed of the procedure for determining the Council's employer contributions and likely future trends in that respect.

**3. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Corporate Governance Panel has approved a revised Risk Management Strategy following completion of an annual review.

**4. UPDATE ON RISK REGISTER AND AUDIT PLAN PROGRESS**

The Panel has received an update on the development of the Risk Register and of the Audit Plan. A further report on the Internal Audit Plan 2006/07 is to be submitted to the next meeting.

**5. CRIMINAL RECORD BUREAU:  
CHECKS FOR ELECTED MEMBERS**

The Panel has approved the principle of and process for Criminal Records Bureau checks for Members. The requirement to undertake checks also will apply to independent members of the Standards Committee and to all members of the Leisure Centre Management Committees.

**6. PERSISTENT AND/OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS POLICY**

The Panel has approved amendments to the Council's Persistent Complaints Policy in the light of experience gained since its introduction some two years previously.

**7. COMPLAINTS**

The Panel has received an analysis of the Council's internal complaints and a summary of complaints concerning the District Council which have been determined by the Local Government Ombudsman in 2005/06.

C J Stephens  
Chairman

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## Licensing Committee

Report of the meeting held on 24th August 2006

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### Matter for Information

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#### 1. **GAMBLING ACT 2005 – STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

The Gambling Act 2005 requires the Council to license premises where gambling takes place and to license certain other activities related to gambling.

As a first step, the Council is required to publish a Statement of Principles which outlines how it will implement the Act. The Committee, therefore, has considered a draft Statement for consultation. Having noted the timetable for its introduction and that all Members would be consulted on its contents, the Committee has approved the Statement for submission to the Cabinet.

J M Sadler  
Chairman

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