

A meeting of the **CABINET** will be held in **AQUARIUS ROOM, ST IVO LEISURE CENTRE, WESTWOOD ROAD, ST IVES** on **THURSDAY, 29 JANUARY 2009** at **11:30 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE IN VENUE

APOLOGIES


**Contact
(01480)**

1. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18th December 2008.

**Mrs H J Taylor
388008**

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. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - 2008/09 (Pages 7 - 10)

To consider a report by the Head of Financial Services on progress of the 2008/09 programme.

**S Couper
388103**

4. FINANCIAL MONITORING - REVENUE BUDGET (Pages 11 - 14)

To consider a report by the Head of Financial Services outlining spending variations.

**S Couper
338103**

5. FINANCIAL STRATEGY, MEDIUM TERM PLAN AND BUDGET (Pages 15 - 46)

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Financial Services to consider the 2009/10 Budget and Medium Term Plan.

**S Couper
388103**

6. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2009/10 (Pages 47 - 60)

To consider a report by the Head of Financial Services containing a proposed Treasury Management Strategy, which is required under the Council's Code of Financial Management.

**Mrs E Smith
388157**

- 7. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN** (Pages 61 - 70)
- To consider a report by the Head of Legal and Estates regarding the Council's Asset Management Plan.
- K Phillips
388260**
- 8. HOMELESSNESS AND THE HOUSING MARKET** (Pages 71 - 78)
- To consider a report by the Overview and Scrutiny (Service Delivery) Panel regarding the current national and local economic factors affecting the housing market and the associated level of demand for social rented housing.
- A Roberts
388004**
- 9. DISABILITY ACCESS STUDY** (Pages 79 - 88)
- To consider a report by the Overview and Scrutiny (Service Delivery) Panel.
- A Roberts
388004**
- 10. SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF ALCOHOL ABUSE** (Pages 89 - 108)
- To consider a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support).
- R Reeves
388003**
- 11. GRANT AID WORKING GROUP** (Pages 109 - 118)
- To consider a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery).
- Miss H Ali
388006**
- 12. ICT STRATEGY 2009-11** (Pages 119 - 136)
- To consider a report by the Head of Information Management seeking approval for the Council's ICT Strategy.
- A Howes
388190**
- 13. LAND AT THE WHADDONS, MAYFIELD DRIVE, HUNTINGDON** (Pages 137 - 150)
- To consider a report by the Head of Planning Services on consultation responses received in respect of the draft Urban Design Framework for the Whaddons, Mayfield Drive, Huntingdon and seeking approval of it as Interim Planning Guidance.
- R Probyn
388430**
- Copies of the Urban Design Framework will be despatched under separate cover.*
- 14. LAND SOUTH OF HIGH STREET RAMSEY** (Pages 151 - 158)
- To consider a report by the Head of Planning Services on consultation responses received in respect of the draft Urban
- R Probyn
388430**

Design Framework for land south of high street, Ramsey.

Copies of the Urban Design Framework will be despatched under separate cover.

15. LUMINUS GROUP - PROPOSED CHANGES TO MEMORANDUM AND ARTICLES (Pages 159 - 160)

To consider a report by the Head of Legal and Estates detailing proposed changes to the Memorandum and Articles of Luminus Homes and Oak Foundation to allow for the potential remuneration of Board Members.

**C Meadowcroft
388021**

16. PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE & METHOD OF OPERATIONS - COUNTRYSIDE GROUP (Pages 161 - 164)

To consider a report by the Head of Administration regarding a revision to the Countryside Group.

**Miss H Ali
388006**

17. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

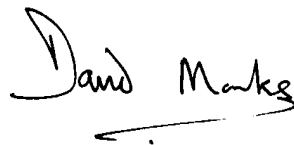
that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relation to the financial affairs of particular persons (including the authority holding that information).

18. NEW ACCOMMODATION - BUILDING A - OPTIONS REVIEW (Pages 165 - 176)

To consider a report by the New Accommodation Project Manager regarding options for Building A.

**R Preston
388340**

Dated this 21 day of January 2009



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, their family or any person with whom they had a close association;*

(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 £25,000; 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 Mrs H Taylor, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Tel No. 01480 388008/e-mail Helen.Taylor@huntsdc.gov.uk /e-mail: 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 Cabinet.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

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

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

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit and to make their way to the car park adjacent to the Methodist Church on the High Street (opposite Prima's Italian Restaurant).

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Corporate Training Suite, Eastfield House, Huntingdon on Thursday, 18 December 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor L M Simpson – Vice Chairman in the Chair.
Councillors P L E Bucknell, K J Churchill, D B Dew, A Hansard and T V Rogers

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors I C Bates, C R Hyams and Mrs D C Reynolds.

96. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20th November 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

97. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor A Hansard declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 99 by virtue of his appointment as Trustee to St Neots Museum and left the room for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon.

Councillor K J Churchill declared a personal interest in Minute No. 103 by virtue of his appointment as the District Council's representative on Luminus Homes.

98. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

By way of a report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet considered the Council's operational performance against 37 short, medium and long-term objectives presented in "Growing Success" – the Council's Corporate Plan. The views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels (Service Delivery) and (Service Support) also were submitted to the meeting (copies of which also are appended in the Minute Book).

In terms of those objectives where actual performance had not progressed as well as anticipated, Executive Members were assured that a system was now in place to ensure that applications for loft and cavity wall insulation were being processed within five working days and it was accepted that the current economic downturn had adversely affected the ability of the Council to achieve the target of affordable housing commitments on qualifying sites.

Referring to the comments by the Head of Housing Services on the objective "to achieve a low level of homelessness", it was confirmed that the data collated reflected the current position in the District only but that the Council was aware that homelessness and the need for

debt advice was increasing and that additional financial provision had been made available to the Citizens Advice Bureau and other voluntary organisations by the County Council to assist in this respect. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing comments, the performance achieved against priority objectives contained within "Growing Success" the Council's Corporate Plan be received and noted.

99. CUSTOMER SERVICE DEVELOPMENT IN ST. IVES AND ST. NEOTS

Further to Minute No. 157 of the meeting held on 22nd February 2007, the Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the outcome of a review of services delivered by the St Ives and St Neots Customer Services Centres. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) also had submitted their comments on the conclusions of the review (a copy of which also is appended in the Minute Book).

Whilst commending proposals to extend and improve the services offered to customers via local centres and particularly in St Neots and St Ives town centres, the Cabinet were of the view that such services should be delivered, if possible, from a High Street or central location. In this respect, the Cabinet felt unable to support, currently, any option to remodel existing offices. Arising from their detailed discussion, the Cabinet requested the Head of Customer Services to investigate the financial viability of acquiring shop units in St Ives and St Neots, to explore the possibility of sharing the properties with one or more partners and, on the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery), to consult local Councillors when considering the location of any alternative accommodation.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that, subject to the foregoing comments, the proposed increase in the range of services to be offered by local offices in St Ives and St Neots be noted;
- (b) that the relocation of the St Neots Tourist Information Centre be approved in principle with existing staff subsumed within the Customer Services Team; and
- (c) that the Head of Customer Services investigate the availability of alternative accommodation for Customer Services Centres in central locations in St Neots and St Ives town centres.

100. DEVELOPMENT OF OPTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT DPD

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Planning Services to which was attached a copy of the draft Development Plan Document (DPD) (copies of both documents are appended in the Minute Book). Members noted that the DPD formed part of the Local Development Framework, would support the Core Strategy and East of England Plan and would set out the Council's policies for managing development in Huntingdonshire including the assessment and determination of planning applications. The views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) on the document were received (copies of which also are appended in the Minute Book).

Executive Councillors were advised that the draft policy had evolved from the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement, 2007 and from those representations received during the Issues and Options Consultation and Initial Sustainability Appraisal and had been updated to reflect changes in national guidance. It was anticipated that public consultation would commence in mid January. Having regard to the comments submitted by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support), Members were assured that the Master Plan for the Great Fen Project would be considered separately by the Cabinet and therefore it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that, subject to an amendment to the ninth word in the first line of the draft policy on page 78, to replace the word "will" with "may", the content of the DPD, Development of Options and the Sustainability Appraisal be approved for the purposes of consultation; and
- (b) that the Head of Planning Services be authorised, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transportation to undertake any minor editing and updating of the text of the document considered to be necessary prior to publication.

101. LETTINGS POLICY

A report by the Head of Housing Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding a proposal to vary the Council's letting policy.

Executive Members were advised that the current policy, adopted in June 2007, provided for an assessment of the circumstances of each individual application to the Council's housing register and for applying a degree of priority to applications if considered necessary. However, it had become apparent that a delegation which had previously been used in exceptional circumstances had been omitted, in error, from the current policy. Therefore to prevent any disadvantage to a priority applicant, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Council's letting policy be varied and the Head of Housing Services be authorised, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health, to

award priorities to applicants with exceptional circumstances, where those circumstances are not adequately covered and, pending a further review of the policy, to correct unforeseen detrimental consequences which would disadvantage an individual's opportunity for being housed in comparison with the priority of other applicants.

102. WEB STRATEGY 2009 - 2011

By way of a report by the Head of Information Management (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet reviewed the content of a revised web strategy and the supporting action plan for a three year period 2009 -2011.

Having commended the style of the suggested new page layout for the Council's website as illustrated in Appendix 2 to the report now submitted, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Web Strategy 2009 – 11 be approved.

103. COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE CENTRE - SAPLEY EAST

Consideration was given to a joint report by the Directors of Environmental and Community Services and of Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding a proposal for the Council to act as a key partner in the establishment of a Community Interests Company (CIC) to deliver a community enterprise centre within the Sapley Square East Development Area in accordance with the emerging Master Plan.

Members were informed that the development of a community based enterprise centre was an accepted element of regeneration schemes providing small scale employment, skill and learning opportunities to match particular community needs. It was further noted that the proposed initiative accorded with the objectives of the Local Economy Strategy and the activities of the Council and its partners in these areas. In terms of funding, current and future funding opportunities would be maximised if the community enterprise centre was owned and controlled by a Community Interest Company. A further report on the Sapley East Master Plan would be submitted to the Cabinet in March 2009.

Having acknowledged the requirement to consider the governance arrangements for the new Community Interests Company, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that an application be submitted for grant support from the East of England Development Agencies Investing in Communities Programme for the construction of a community enterprise centre in the Sapley East area;
- (b) that a previous decision to reinvest the proceeds of the

disposal of land in this regeneration scheme to produce future community benefits be reaffirmed;

- (c) that the principle of establishing a Community Interest Company which owns and manages the proposed community enterprise centre and other assets if opportunities arise be supported;
- (d) that the Director of Environmental and Community Services be authorised to obtain an agreement, in principle, from appropriate organisations to form a community interest company and to work with those organisations to prepare a robust business plan to demonstrate the viability of the community enterprise centre; and
- (e) that consideration be given to a Master Plan for the regeneration of the Sapley East area and a Business Plan for the community enterprise centre before a final decision is made by the Cabinet in March/April 2009.

Chairman

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CABINET

29 JANUARY 2009

CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2008/09 BUDGET (Report by the Head of Financial Services)

1. PURPOSE

1.1 This report highlights the variations from the 2008/09 Capital Programme approved in February 2008 including any member or officer decisions already taken in accordance with the Code of Financial Management.

2 MONITORING INFORMATION

2.1 The Budget approved in February 2008 and subsequent adjustments are shown below:-

Capital Programme	2008/09 Capital Expenditure		
	Gross Budget	External Contributions	Net Budget
	£000	£000	£000
Approved Budget (February 2008)	16,955	1,483	15,472
Deferrals from 2007/08	4,649	3,580	1,069
	21,604	5,063	16,541
New MTP Bids (para 2.2)	1,425	1,295	130
Cost Variations (Annex A)	-152	-128	-24
Timing Changes to 2009/10 (Annex B)	-2,694	-1,027	-1,667
Capital / Revenue Variations			
VOIP Data Switches (reported last time)	90	0	90
Recycling Bins (reported last time)	83	0	83
Commutation (reported last time)	43	0	43
Community Facilities Grant (reported last time)	-46	0	-46
Revenue Staff recharged to Capital	197	0	197
Current Forecast	20,550	5,203	15,347

2.2 This year's MTP process has identified the following new proposals that would impact on the current year but would not be formally approved until the end of the process in February 2009.

MTP BIDS	2008/09		
	Gross Budget	External Contributions	Net Budget
	£000	£000	£000
St Ivo L C – Football Improvements	250	500	-250
Huntingdon West Development (HGF)	700	700	0
St Neots Green Corridor (HGF)	95	95	0
Sustainable Homes Retrofit (cost of purchase)	380	0	380
TOTAL FORECAST VARIATION	1,425	1,295	130

- 2.3 Annex B provides details of the timing changes currently identified. The original budget also included provision for a net deferral to later years of £700k. This has not been removed as past experience has shown that further deferrals emerge in the latter part of the year.

3. REVENUE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The impact of the variations to the original budget approved in February 2008 is to reduce the net revenue expenditure by £424k in 2008/09 with further adjustments in future years, as shown below.

Revenue Impact	2008/ 2009 £000	2009/ 2010 £000	2010/ 2011 £000	2011/ 2012 £000	2012/ 2013 £000
Timing Changes 2007/08 to 2008/09	-27				
New MTP Bids	4	31	40	11	-3
Cost Variations	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
Timing Changes 2008/09 to 2009/10	-42	-42			
Revenue/Capital Transfers	-358	18	18	18	18
TOTAL FORECAST VARIATION	-424	6	57	28	14

Note - Revenue impact is based on 5% loss of interest for this table

4. CAPITAL RESERVES

- 4.1 Just £1.3m of Capital Reserves are forecast to remain in April 2009 and these will be fully used in the following few months. Subsequent capital expenditure will therefore need to be funded from borrowing. The higher resulting cost of interest plus a depreciation charge to repay borrowing is included in the Budget/MTP report elsewhere on this agenda.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet note the variations within this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Capital programme and monitoring working papers.
Previous Cabinet reports on capital expenditure.

Contact Officer – Steve Couper ☎ 01480 388103

ANNEX A

Expected Cost Variations	2008/09 Capital Expenditure		
	Gross Budget	External Contributions	Net Budget
	£000	£000	£000
Electronic Document Imaging in Planning	-20	0	-20
Small Scale Environmental Improvements District Wide	-10	-10	0
Disabled Facilities Grants - Extra	264	113	151
Repairs Assistance Grants - Saving	-50	0	-50
Social Housing Grant	1,034	1,034	0
Decent Homes Insulation Grant - Adjustment	-78	-78	0
Headquarters Improvements - Adjustment	-345	-345	0
St Ivo L C – Football Improvements - Adjustment	-902	-902	0
Huntingdon L C – Energy Saving	15	0	15
St Neots – Bar/Kitchen/Creche Extension	-10	0	-10
Creative Enterprise Centre, St Neots – Extra cost partly off-set by extra Grant	119	60	59
Health Centre Sapley Square	15	0	15
VAT Partial Exemption	-184	0	-184
	-152	-128	-24

ANNEX B

Timing Changes to 2009/10	2008/09 Capital Expenditure		
	Gross Budget	External Contributions	Net Budget
	£000	£000	£000
New Public Conveniences	-213	0	-213
Stray Dogs Kennels	-15	0	-15
Mobile Home Park	0	-168	168
Social Housing Grant	-1,271	0	-1,271
Decent Homes Insulation Grants	-266	-266	0
Ramsey Community Information Centre - Refurbishment	-11	0	-11
Leisure Centres Future Maintenance	-1,214	-143	-1,071
Leisure Centre – CCTV Improvements	-15	0	-15
St Ivo L C – Football Improvements	44	0	44
Sawtry L C - Impressions	-12	0	-12
St Neots L C – Development	-11	0	-11
Huntingdon LC - Development	285	0	285
Huntingdon Riverside Improvements	-142	0	-142
Headquarters Improvements	2,293	0	2,293
Printing Equipment	-308	0	-308
Corporate EDM	-129	0	-129
Voice and Data Infrastructure	62	0	62
Building Control Public Access System	-30	0	-30
ICT for New Accommodation	144	0	144
Business Systems	-94	0	-94
Customer First/Working Smarter	-147	0	-147
Ramsey Rural Renewal	-51	0	-51
New Industrial Units	-490	0	-490
Industrial Estates Repairs	-30	0	-30
Huntingdon Marina Improvements	-54	0	-54
Huntingdon Town Centre Developments	7	0	7
Heart Of Oxmoor	0	-300	300
Huntingdon Bus Station	-444	-150	-294
St Neots Pedestrian Bridges	-535	0	-535
Ramsey Transport Strategy	-44	0	-44
Other Minor Adjustments	-3	0	-3
Forecast Adjustment to Programme for Deferrals	-2,694	-1,027	-1,667

CABINET

29 January 2009

FINANCIAL MONITORING – REVENUE BUDGET (Report by the Head of Financial Services)

1. 2008/09 Budget – As at December 2008

- 1.1 Cabinet received a report on the forecast outturn of the 2008/09 revenue budget at its meeting on 6 November 2008 which identified a net saving of £214k due to £424k of **reduced expenditure and additional income** offset by £210k of timing changes relating to schemes brought forward from last year and expected to be carried forward to next year. This report provides the latest forecast.
- 1.2 It is now expected that there will be additional variations of £242k of **extra spending or reduced income** giving an overall forecast that the budget will be marginally overspent by £28k. The main variations are summarised in Annex A and the following paragraphs highlights the larger items.
- 1.3 The significant increases include:
- Additional loss of income from development control, building control fees, car parking charges and rents of £265k
 - The deferral of the Huntingdon Leisure Centre Impressions expansion scheme resulting in a net cost of £143k
 - Reduced investment income of £124k
 - An expectation that the turnover allowance will not be met by £100k
- 1.4 These are partly offset by the opportunity to charge further spending to capital relating to the VOIP telephony system (-£90k) and employee costs (-£133k) together with a number of smaller spending reductions and additional income.

2. Risks and opportunities

- 2.1 There is potential for further increases in spending both next year and in the current year as a result of the recession. Service managers are particularly monitoring levels of income.

3. Amounts collected and debts written off

- 3.1 The position as at 31 December 2008 is shown in Annex B

4 Recommendation

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet note the forecast spending variations and position on debts collected and written off.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT 1985

Source Documents:

1. Cabinet and Council Reports
2. Budgetary control files.

Contact Officers: Eleanor Smith, Accountancy Manager (01480 388157)
Steve Couper, Head of Financial Services (01480 388103)

ANNEX A

	Expenditure	Income	Recharge to capital	Net expenditure
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Approved budget	68,142	-46,848	-874	20,420
Less benefits reimbursed by Government	-29,085	29,085		0
Adjusted total	39,057	-17,763	-874	20,420
Variations reported in November 2008				
Timing	210			210
Spending	-149	-70	-205	-424
Total	61	-70	-205	-214
Additional Variations				
Timing	50			50
Recharge to capital			-133	-133
VOIP Data Switches - transfer to capital	-90			-90
Local Plan Replacement	-57			-57
Ramsey Rural Renewal	-25			-25
ICT for new accommodation	-30			-30
Huntingdon LC Impressions expansion - deferred scheme	143			143
Fitness equipment at leisure centres	28			28
Leisure centre savings	-35			-35
Empty Property Rates	30			30
A14 Inquiry	50			50
Pathfinder House NNDR	-80			-80
Housing benefits rent allowance	-35			-35
Industrial properties rent		54		54
Building control fee income and staff costs	-24	61		37
Development control income		50		50
Car parking income		100		100
Home improvement agency fees		-40		-40
Review of investment interest		124		124
Review of turnover allowance	100			100
Other variations	1			1
Total	26	349	-133	242
Accumulated variations	87	279	-338	28
% variations	+0.2%	+1.6%	-38.7%	+0.1%
Forecast net spending in year	39,395	-17,735	-1,212	20,448

	Original budget £000	Forecast outturn £000
Forecast net spending	20,420	20,300
Funded from		
Government support	-12,158	-12,158
Collection fund adjustment	28	28
Council tax	-6,668	-6,668
Reserves		
Contribution from delayed projects reserve	-25	-335
Contribution to delayed projects reserve	200	250
General reserves	-1,797	-1,565
Total reserves	-1,622	-1,650
Total	-20,420	-20,448

CONTINGENCIES INCLUDED IN THE BUDGET

	Budget	Estimated outturn	Variation	
	£000	£000	£000	
Turnover	-611	-511	100	The estimated outturn is that not all of the contingency will be met from staff savings
Additional planning and housing grant	-250	-251	-1	
Employee costs recharged to capital	-160	-338	-178	The transfer of costs to capital is forecast to be exceeded
	-1,021	-1,090	-79	

AMOUNTS COLLECTED AND DEBTS WRITTEN OFF**Collected**

The total amount of payments received, less customer refunds and transfers to other debts:

	April to Sept 2008	Oct to Dec 2008	Total
	£000	£000	£000
Type of Debt			
Council Tax	43,476	21,579	65,055
NNDR	32,978	14,622	47,600
Sundry Debtors	4,069	1,179	5,248
Excess Charges	73	38	111

Amounts written off

Whilst the amounts below have been written-off in this financial year, much of the original debt would have been raised in previous financial years.

	Up to £4k			Over £4k			TOTAL
	April to Sept 2008	Oct to Dec 2008	Total	April to Sept 2008	Oct to Dec 2008	Total	Total
Type of Debt	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Council Tax	76.7	7.5	84.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	84.2
NNDR	14.1	5.0	19.1	18.1	0.0	18.1	37.2
Sundry Debtors	13.0	9.6	22.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.6
Excess Charges	7.3	2.0	9.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.3

Authority to write off debts

The Head of Customer Services is authorised to write-off debts of up to £4,000, or more after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance, if she is satisfied that the debts are irrecoverable or cannot be recovered without incurring disproportionate costs. The Head of Financial Services deputises in her absence.

CABINET

29 JANUARY 2009

FINANCIAL STRATEGY, MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2010 to 2014 AND THE 2009/10 BUDGET

(Report by the Head of Financial Services)

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to allow the Cabinet to determine its recommendations to Council on 18 February in relation to the Council's Budget and Council Tax for 2009/10, Medium Term Plan for 2010/14 and associated matters.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This year's process started with consideration of a financial strategy by Overview & Scrutiny, Cabinet and Council in September. The second stage was the draft MTP and Budget report, discussed by Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet, before being considered by Council on the 3 December. Both reports highlighted the difficulty of assessing how deeply and how long the expected recession would last.

3 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DRAFT PLAN

- 3.1 A number of adjustments have been necessary since the December report. A number relate to forecast higher net spending due to economic factors. These include lower interest rates in the shorter term but higher rates in the longer term, the increase in the NI rate from April 2011 and increased vacancies on industrial properties.
- 3.2 The first two months income, since the car park tariffs were changed in October, implies that the forecast patronage was too optimistic. Allowance has therefore been made for gradual recovery of these sums over the Plan period.
- 3.3 HM Revenues and Customs **had** signalled a permanent end of the Council's loss of some VAT each year but they now do not consider their intended approach will comply with the regulations. Allowance must be made for the loss recommencing next year pending an alternative solution being found.
- 3.4 Additional spending on statutory Disabled Facilities Grants has been included to reflect the "catch up" anticipated now that the PCT has increased Occupational Therapist resources.
- 3.5 Detailed work has been ongoing in order to revise the bid for IT systems replacements. An increased sum has been included that better reflects the unavoidable demand for upgrades and occasional replacement systems.

3.6 Inflation provisions have been revised to reinstate the allowance for some areas of unavoidable inflation but this is more than off-set by the impact of recent falls in the level of petrol prices.

3.7 The full summary is shown below:

PROPOSED CHANGES	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
	<i>£000</i>	<i>£000</i>	<i>£000</i>	<i>£000</i>	<i>£000</i>
Capital					
Reintroduction of provision for loss of VAT (Partial Exemption)	212	44	25	22	35
IMD Systems Replacement Bid	98	326	100	13	93
Disabled Facilities Grants	250				
St Neots Footbridge (rephasing)	-537	537			
Inflation on above items		23	6	3	13
	23	930	131	38	141
Revenue (- = less cost)					
Fuel inflation allowance reduced from previous assumptions	-136	-136	-136	-136	-136
Increase in NI rate from April 2011			98	103	109
Other inflation	45	45	45	30	-164
Provision for loss of VAT (Partial Exemption)	140	140	140	140	140
Car Parking charges and penalties	140	126	102	68	34
NNDR Relief on small industrial properties in 2009/10	-30				
IMD Systems Replacement Bid	8	6	20	20	20
Temporary saving on toilet maintenance	-30				
Increased vacancies on Industrial properties	80				
Variation in Cost of Borrowing	-35	-27	6	-26	-48
Interest	12	198	57	-22	-23
Other	-11	-8	-11	-9	-11
	183	344	321	168	-79
Funding					
Extra Spending adjustments required				95	1,066
Council Tax - Tax base adjustments	21	22	0	-24	0
Use of Reserves	162	322	321	97	-1,145
	183	344	321	168	-79

3.8 As can be seen from the funding lines in the table above, reserves will have to be used sooner and thus spending adjustments will also have to be identified and introduced earlier than previously forecast. The table below shows the acceleration in the use of reserves:

USE OF RESERVES	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
	<i>£000</i>	<i>£000</i>	<i>£000</i>	<i>£000</i>	<i>£000</i>
Approved Budget/MTP (February 2008)	2,599	3,874	3,741	2,944	1,358
Draft (November 2008)	3,596	4,631	4,063	2,902	1,145
Proposed in this report	3,758	4,952	4,385	2,999	0

3.9 No allowance has been included for the £150k per year cost of ongoing remediation for a contaminated land site that may be an "orphan" site. If this is the case the costs will fall on the Council unless a government grant can be obtained for a capital solution.

4 STRATEGY

- 4.1 The table below (extended to 2023/24 in Annex C) shows the overall position together with the level of the, as yet unidentified, spending adjustments that are required assuming that Council Tax continues to rise at 4.99% per year.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY	BUDGET	MTP			
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
FORECAST SPENDING (net of spending adjustments **)	23,378	25,286	25,687	25,306	23,149
FUNDING					
Use of revenue reserves	-3,758	-4,952	-4,385	-2,999	0
Remaining revenue reserves EOY	15,336	10,384	5,999	3,000	3,000
Government Support	-12,572	-12,939	-13,491	-14,034	-14,384
Collection Fund Deficit	-27	0	0	0	0
Council Tax	-7,022	-7,395	-7,810	-8,274	-8,765
COUNCIL TAX LEVEL	£121.15	£127.20	£133.55	£140.21	£147.21
Annual increase (£)	£5.76	£6.05	£6.35	£6.66	£7.00

** Unidentified Spending Adjustments 0 -500 -1,500 -3,238 -6,501

- 4.2 Every effort will be made to obtain, as much as possible, of the spending adjustments from, firstly, increased efficiency, secondly, from increased fees and charges and, only finally, from service reductions.
- 4.3 Obviously there is a balance to be made between Council Tax increases and ultimately service reductions i.e. the lower the Council Tax increase the greater the service reductions.
- 4.4 Huntingdonshire's Council Tax is one of the lowest in England (19th lowest out of 238) and public surveys have indicated that many local people consider that increases in Council Tax are preferable to service reductions. This is why the balance between these two aspects is as shown in this report.
- 4.5 Obviously the proposed plan is dependent upon external constraints such as the Government's approach to limiting, or "capping", Council Tax increases. When this year's grant settlement was announced in December, John Healey, the Minister for Local Government said:

"Last year, I made clear that the Government expected the average council tax increase in 2008/09 to be substantially below 5%. The actual increase was 3.9% – the lowest increase for 14 years and the second lowest ever.

We also kept our promise to deal with excessive increases by taking capping action against eight authorities. In continuing this, we are today designating the police authorities of Cheshire,

Leicestershire and Warwickshire - and proposing maximum budget requirements which limit their council tax increases to around 3% in 2009/10.

For 2009/10 the Government again expects the average council tax increase in England to be substantially below 5%. And again, we will not hesitate to use our capping power as necessary to protect council tax payers from excessive increases.”

4.6 It should be remembered that although the Government constantly refers to Council Tax increases, the legislation requires any capping decision to be framed around increases in budget requirement. The Council’s proposed increase in budget requirement will be 4.4% for 2009/10.

4.7 The past figures used for capping were as follows:

	Increase in budget requirement of	AND	Increase in Council Tax of
2005/06	6%		5.5%
2006/07	6%		5%
2007/08	No Authorities capped		
2008/09	5%		5%

4.8 In 2004/05 14 Councils were capped, in 2005/06 this fell to 9 Councils and in 2006/07 two Councils (York and Medway) were **designated** (i.e. they were not actually capped but were told that for 2007/08 any capping decision would be based on the figures for 2006/07 as if they had been capped). In 2008/09 one Police Authority was capped whilst 6 Police Authorities and one local authority (Portsmouth Unitary) had criteria set such that they would have to limit increases for the next one or two years.

4.9 The Chief Officers’ Management Team considers that the proposals contained in this report give the best balance between minimising the level of spending adjustments required and avoiding capping next year.

4.10 If any subsequent Government statements on capping are made they will be reported at the meeting.

5. SPENDING ADJUSTMENTS

5.1 The table below shows the position on Spending adjustments over the MTP period with the period up to 2023/24 being shown in Annex D.

SPENDING ADJUSTMENTS	BUDGET	MTP			
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
UNIDENTIFIED					
2009/10 BUDGET/MTP	0	-500	-1,500	-3,238	-6,501
ALREADY IDENTIFIED BUT NOT YET GUARANTEED					
Leisure Centres' target	-750	-900	-900	-900	-900
Additional Grants	-250	-250	-250	-250	-250
Provision for staff savings	-25	-50	-50	-50	-50

5.2 It will always be technically possible to make major savings but the challenge is to make them in a way that has least impact on service provision. There is still time to plan these in a way to have lower impact but this task needs to gain momentum in case further adverse changes bring the date forward. The plan shows revenue reserves falling to the minimum level of £3M during 2012/13 and once this happens there will be no flexibility for further deferral.

5.3 It is therefore important to identify a schedule of items that can be implemented if no lower impact opportunities emerge. Work has started on this through a series of Meetings have been held between each Head of Service, the relevant Executive Councillor and the Executive Councillor for Finance.

6. 2009/10 BUDGET

6.1 As far as next year's budget is concerned the tables below show the breakdown and funding of the revenue and capital budgets for which approval is required. Annex B gives further details of next years revenue budget whilst Annex C gives the summary over the Forecast period and Annex A shows the consolidated MTP.

REVENUE BUDGET	2008/09	2008/09	2009/10
	Original Budget ❶	Forecast	Budget
Service Spending	£000	£000	£000
Environmental Services	9,074	8,704	9,244
Planning	2,342	2,344	2,652
Community Services	7,546	7,862	7,807
Community Safety	1,014	1,065	1,058
Housing Services	5,749	4,767	4,839
Highways & Transportation	1,690	1,494	2,008
Corporate Services	5,084	5,053	5,418
Other Expenditure			
Contingencies	-1,061	-100	-677
Other items (mainly reversal of Capital Charges)	-8,854	-8,426	-8,436
Investment Interest and Borrowing Costs	-2,162	-2,315	-535
Council Total	20,420	20,448	23,378
Funding			
Government Support (RSG & NNDR)	-12,157	-12,157	-12,572
Collection Fund Deficit	28	28	-27
Council Tax	-6,668	-6,668	-7,022
Deficit – from Reserves	-1,622	-1,652	-3,758
	-20,420	-20,448	-23,378

The variations shown in this table and in Annex B include the allocation of MTP variations (Annex A), including inflation, to services together with capital charges, management and administration and pension adjustments that are net nil.

❶ During the course of the year some budgets have been re-categorised so individual lines do not all reconcile with last year's report.

CAPITAL BUDGET	2008/09 Forecast			2009/10 Budget		
	Net £000	Con't❶ £000	Gross £000	Net £000	Con't❶ £000	Gross £000
Refuse and Recycling	83		83			
Public Conveniences	130		130	217		217
Environmental Health				15		15
Economic Development ❷	737	1,262	1,999	1,303	2,485	3,788
Community Initiatives				11		11
Parks and Open Spaces	384	95	479	646		646
Joint Leisure Centres ❸	2,214	726	2,940	3,916	1,446	5,362
Community Facilities	89		89	105		105
Community Safety	237	60	297	104		104
Housing Services				-168	168	0
Private Housing Support	2,298	1,500	3,798	2,241	982	3,223
Homelessness	7		7			
Housing Benefits	72		72			
Transportation Strategy	774		774	518		518
Public Transport ❹	155		155	970		970
Car Parks	441		441	89		89
Environmental Improvements	-442	1,560	1,118	460	310	770
Operations Division	299		299	654		654
Offices	6,504		6,504	5,002		5,002
IT related	1,358		1,358	1,009		1,009
Other	254		254	374		374
Technical	-247		-247	330		330
Proposed Plan	15,347	5,203	20,550	17,796	5,391	23,187

Notes

- ❶ contributions and grants from other organisations
- ❷ main increases relate to new industrial units and Housing Growth Fund for Huntingdon West development
- ❸ main increases relate to developments at St. Neots, football improvements, energy generation and the rifle range conversion at the St Ivo and the routine replacement of fitness equipment.
- ❹ main increase is Huntingdon Bus Station

7 CONSULTATION AND COMMENTS

- 7.1 This report will be considered at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny (Corporate and Strategic Framework) Panel on the 27 January and a consultation meeting with members of the business community is taking place on 26 January. Comments from both meetings will be reported to Cabinet.

8 PRUDENTIAL CODE

- 8.1 The Prudential Code sets various limits relating to the budget and this has been included as an annex to the Treasury Management Strategy elsewhere on the Cabinet's agenda.

9 RISKS AND SENSITIVITY

9.1 Risks

There are an increasing number of risks to the successful achievement of the proposed MTP which reflect the tighter financial constraints. The main risks are:

- The impact of services not being able cope with revenue inflation not being included on certain budgets in 2009/10
- The uncertainty in achieving the spending adjustments relating to Additional Grants, Leisure Centre savings and the new small general provision for staffing reductions.
- The level of unidentified spending adjustments that can be found without cutting services.
- The continued uncertainty on Concessionary Fares together with the question of whether it will, in due course, become a County function and the potential impact of the guided bus on this budget and the car parking budget for St Ives.
- Uncertainties on how long the recession will last.
- Government Grant levels after the next Comprehensive Spending Review (20011/12 and after).
- Potential Grant formula changes, particularly from changes to the area cost adjustment (20011/12 and after).
- The potential significant impact of lower equity prices on the employers' pension rate following the next pension revaluation.
- The potential cost of remediation of orphan contaminated land sites.
- Potential significant increases in gate fees at recycling centres due to lower resale values for recyclates.

9.2 Reserves and the Robustness of the 2009/10 Budget

The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Director of Commerce and Technology (as the Council's Chief Financial Officer) to report to the Council on the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of reserves when it considers its budget and the consequent Council Tax. His comments are contained in Annex E and confirm that the budget is adequately robust and that the level of revenue reserves is currently significantly above the minimum level required.

9.3 Financial Plan – Sensitivity and Risks

Annex G considers the sensitivity of the plan in the longer term to variations in inflation, pay awards and interest rates and highlights other significant risks to the Council's financial position. Some of these issues are clearly outside the Council's control and there is little alternative to simply keeping them under review and reacting appropriately if they occur. Others, particularly the identification of spending adjustments, are clearly within the Council's own control and so can be programmed and dealt with. This annex also explains the need for revenue reserves to be retained at a minimum of £3M in the short term.

10 CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1** The Council approved the draft Budget, MTP and Financial Strategy figures in December but concern was highlighted in relation to the impact of the ongoing economic situation.
- 10.2** The December figures have been amended for the items highlighted in section 3 of this report.
- 10.3** RSG for next year and indicative figures for 2010/11 have been announced at the same levels as previously proposed. The Government is withholding £589k next year, the equivalent of an 8.8% Council Tax increase, so that Councils who have too much grant only have to give it up slowly.
- 10.4** The Government have, as usual, signalled their intention to use capping to keep Council Tax levels down for 2009/10 and have again referred to an expectation that average increases should be substantially below 5%. There can be no guarantee of the actual level at which capping will apply because the Government refuse to give this figure as a matter of principle.
- 10.5** Given the significant levels of spending adjustments required in future years, public reluctance to support service reductions, the Council's current low level of Council Tax and the Government comments on capping the Chief Officers' Management Team considers that these proposals achieve the appropriate balance.
- 10.6** The challenge for the future is to identify £6.5M of further taxation or spending adjustments by 2013/14. Those required for 2009/10 have been identified and work is underway to identify specific proposals for subsequent years. It will obviously be necessary for any new additional spending pressures to be matched corporately by corresponding savings.
- 10.7** The resulting proposed Council Tax increase of £5.76 for 2009/10 is 11p per week for a band D property.
- 10.8** The combination of sound budget practices, the success so far in identifying savings and significant revenue reserves means that the proposed 2009/10 budget is robust and that the Council is well-placed, for the moment, to deal with any unforeseen expenditure.

11. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to recommend to February Council:

- Approval of the proposed MTP, budget and Financial Plan (Annexs A, B and C)
- Approval of a Council Tax (Band D) increase of £5.76 for 2009/10.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT 1985

Grant Settlement Information – Files in Financial Services

Working Papers - Files in Financial Services

Project Appraisals

2008/09 Revenue Budget and the 2009/013 MTP

Contact Officer:

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ANNEXES

- A** Consolidated MTP (2008/09 to 2013/14) with Schemes requiring approval before commencement highlighted.
- B** 2009/10 Revenue Budget by Service
- C** Overall Financial Summary to 2023/24
- D** Spending Adjustments required to 2023/24
- E** Reserves and the Robustness of the 2009/10 Budget
- F** Financial Plan - Sensitivity and Risks & Future level of Reserves

CONSOLIDATED MTP 2008/09 TO 2013/14

The following sheets have been colour coded as explained below to signify any schemes requiring approval before commencement.

The coding is based on:

- Routine items that just happen to be Capital should be treated the same as base revenue budget i.e. no further approval required.
- Small or unavoidable items do not require approval though some replacements of assets and Invest to Save schemes require COMT approval.
- Significant schemes require approval from Cabinet.
- Items reliant on ensuring the “trading” position is robust (e.g. leisure and industrial estate) would require Director plus Executive Councillor agreement.

The colour coding show this as follows:

Approval by:
COMT and then Cabinet
Service Director following consultation with Director of C&T and Executive Councillor
COMT
Head of Service

ANNEX A

PROPOSED MTP		REVENUE						NET CAPITAL						GRANTS & CONTRIBUTIONS					
		2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014
Bid	Scheme	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
	BASE	23,116	23,116	23,116	23,116	23,116	23,116	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Refuse and Recycling																		
	Recycling Gate Fees	9	17	26	35	35	35												
650	Recycling Credits	-19	-38	-55	-72	-72	-72												
800	BREW Funding	24																	
	Recycling T/F Revenue to Capital	-83						83											
	Public Conveniences																		
302	New Public Conveniences							130	217										
504	Removal of APCs	-121	-153	-153	-153	-153	-153												
	Maintenance of Toilets		-30																
	Environmental Health																		
307	Stray Dog Kennels	-5	-5	-5	-5	-5	-5		15										
	Planning Policy and Conservation																		
765	Local development framework inquiry	40	116	-5	-5	-5	-5												
739	Proposed use of Planning Delivery Grant	339	242	72	31														
655	Electronic Document Imaging				17	21	21												
656	Planning Enforcement Monitoring Officer				23	27	27												
901	Planning Fees - reduced income	75	50																
	Planning Conditions income		-25	-25	-25	-25	-25												
	Savings in costs		-10	-10	-10	-10	-10												
	Economic Development																		
401	Huntingdon Town Centre Development							13	0	311	321	334							
224	Town Centre Developments							21	0	0	210	64							
239	New Industrial Units			-37	-65	-65	-65	100	935						285				
	Earmarked Capital Receipt already received								285										
657	Creative Industries Centre, St Neots						-30	557						562					
358	Ramsey Rural Renewal		12	5	5	3		10	52										
509	Industrial Estate Repairs							20	31										
643	Health Centre Sapley Square	-643	-643	-643	-643	-643	-643	16											
850	Huntingdon West Development (Housing Growth Fund)													700	2,200	2,800			

		REVENUE						NET CAPITAL						GRANTS & CONTRIBUTIONS					
		2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014
Bid	Scheme	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
	Transportation Strategy																		
870	Local Transport Plan							122	93	83	91	91	90						
871	Safe Cycle Routes							374	93	93	93	93	95						
872	St Neots Transport Strategy Phase 2								90	90	90	90							
873	Accessibility Improvement /Signs in footpaths and car parks							63	35	35	35	35	35						
351	St Neots Pedestrian Bridges									537									
874	Huntingdon Transport Strategy							75	80	80									
362	St Ives Transport Strategy							140	82										
363	Ramsey Transport Strategy								45	45	45								
875	A14 Inquiry	50	200																
	Public Transport																		
818	Railway Stations - Improvements									29	26								
899	Bus Shelters - extra provision	15	18	25	28	28	28	105	41	41	41	42	42						
825	Huntingdon Bus Station							50	900	-150	-150				150	150			
	Highways Services																		
844	Street naming and numbering	15	10	5	5														
	Car Parks																		
166	St Neots - Cambridge Road Car Park		4	4	4	4	4		89										
461	Car Park Repairs							56											
480	Implementation of car park strategy	-348	-441	-456	-480	-514	-548	385				512	1,333						
	Environmental Improvements																		
49	Huntingdon Town Centre 2 - High St etc	2	2	2	2	2	2	12											
51	Ramsey Great Whyte Phase 2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0										
52	St Ives Town Centre 2 - Completion							32	425	642									
876	Small Scale - District Wide Partnership							76	79	79	79	79	80	10	10	10	10	10	10
877	AJC Small scale improvements							84	86	86	86	86	90	0	0				
878	Village Residential Areas							55		57	57	60	60					10	10
703	Heart of Oxmoor	-30	-30	-30	-30	-30	-30	-1,383	-300					1,550	300				
489	St Neots and Eynesbury							102											
879	Environment Strategy Funding	50	55	55	55	55		50	50	50	55	55							
880	Sustainable Homes Retrofit		15	15				530	120			-550							

		REVENUE						NET CAPITAL						GRANTS & CONTRIBUTIONS					
		2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014
Bid	Scheme	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
	Temporary Spending Adjustment (Contingency)		22	28	28	28	28												
	Temporary Spending Adjustment (Recharges)		74	64	67	67	67												
	Pension Increase Savings (Corporate Management)				-18	-18	-18												
	Roundings	2	-5		-3	-4	-2												
	PROPOSED TOTAL	20,448	23,378	25,286	25,687	25,306	23,149	15,347	17,796	6,056	4,957	6,666	6,374	5,203	5,391	3,564	685	563	563

Note: The Council's £75k contribution to the funding of the A141 improvements is funded from two schemes included above (Local Transport Plan £30k and Safe Cycle Routes £20k) together with £25k from the LPSA Reward Grant.

GRANT FUNDING AWARDED	Capital			Revenue			
	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
LPSA REWARD GRANT	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Positive activities - engaging young people		0			27	27	27
Holiday scheme for St Ives, Yaxley Ramsey and Sawtry		0			19	19	19
Homelessness and skills - Huntingdon		300			0		
Homelessness and skills - St Neots		180			30		
Fusion / Proud to be Loud		0			67	67	67
Priority road safety		25			0		
Active at 50		0			3	3	3
Active lifestyles (community sports network)		0			14		
Exercise referral scheme - health walks and cardiac rehab		0			50		
Energy efficiency - homes		50	50		0		
Energy efficiency - businesses		25	25		0		
Improvement to wildlife site - engineering and equipment		60			0		
Supporting low carbon communities		40			0		
Skills - 19-25's getting into work		0			50		
Business support / marketing of business opportunities		0			30		
Design costs of economic development initiatives		30			0		
Total	0	710	75	0	290	116	116
BIG LOTTERY GRANT							
Stukely Skatepark (see also MTP815)	60						
Stilton Skatepark	50						
Proud to be Loud (see also LPSA)				20	20	20	
Fusion (see also LPSA)				17	17	17	
Play Outreach				16	16	16	
Project Management				8	9	9	9
Total	110	0	0	61	62	62	9

All items are to fund additional expenditure not included in the proposed budget/MTP except for Stukely Skatepark where the grant is set against the scheme cost.

BUDGET SUMMARY	2008/09		2009/10
	Original	Forecast	Budget
	£000	£000	£000
Environmental Services			
Refuse Collection	3,674	3,464	3,576
Recycling	642	796	837
Drainage & Sewers	584	547	580
Public Conveniences	293	216	251
Environmental Health	2,393	2,297	2,575
Closed Churchyards	17	11	18
Street Cleaning & Litter	1,471	1,373	1,407
	9,074	8,704	9,244
Planning			
Development Control	1,358	1,504	1,391
Building Control	212	278	259
Planning Policy & Conservation	1,336	1,365	1,592
Economic Development	-629	-552	-660
Planning Delivery Grant	65	-251	70
	2,342	2,344	2,652
Community Services			
Countryside	594	653	672
Tourism	151	135	150
Community Initiatives	799	852	908
Parks	1,708	1,768	1,871
Leisure Policy	458	479	482
Leisure Centres	3,622	3,811	3,530
Community Facilities	214	164	194
	7,546	7,862	7,807
Community Safety			
Community Safety	1,014	1,065	1,058
	1,014	1,065	1,058
Housing Services			
Housing Services	680	851	897
Private Housing Support	3,538	2,595	2,526
Homelessness	625	586	574
Housing Benefits	905	735	842
	5,749	4,767	4,839
Highways & Transportation			
Transportation Strategy	997	451	1,152
Public Transport	709	790	760
Highways Services	102	100	101
Car Parks	-525	-274	-447
Environmental Improvements	406	427	442
	1,690	1,494	2,008
Corporate Services			
Local Taxation & Benefits	1,435	1,340	1,484
Corporate Management	1,812	1,739	1,848
Democratic Services	1,261	1,242	1,364
Central Services	320	490	466
Non Distributed Costs	255	242	256
	5,084	5,053	5,418
Other Expenditure			
Contingency	-1,061	-100	-677
Other Expenditure	-8,854	-8,426	-8,436
Investment Interest and Borrowing Costs	-2,162	-2,315	-535
	-12,077	-10,841	-9,648
Council Total	20,420	20,448	23,378

SERVICE BUDGET		2008/09		2009/10
		Original	Forecast	Budget
		£000	£000	£000
Environmental Services				
Refuse Collection	Abandoned Vehicles	66	74	82
	Brew Project	26	42	26
	Domestic Refuse	3,582	3,356	3,460
	Trade Refuse	0	-7	8
		3,674	3,465	3,576
Recycling	Recycling	645	794	879
	Recycling Sites	-3	2	-41
		642	796	838
Drainage & Sewers	Internal Drainage Boards	339	335	354
	Nightsoil Collection	10	10	10
	Watercourses	234	201	216
		584	546	580
Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	293	216	251
		293	216	251
Environmental Health	Air Quality	124	107	109
	Animal Welfare	162	155	165
	Caravans And Camping	6	6	6
	Contaminated Land	183	185	181
	Health & Safety	252	281	274
	Energy Efficiency	252	227	338
	General	7	12	12
	Food Safety	489	470	502
	Health Promotion	43	45	46
	Licences	169	126	195
	Nuisances	324	311	346
	Pest Control	153	152	152
	Private Sector Housing	215	205	232
	Travellers	14	15	16
		2,393	2,297	2,574
Closed Churchyards	Closed Churchyards	17	11	18
		17	11	18
Street Cleaning & Litter	Littering	141	164	171
	Street Cleaning	1,330	1,209	1,236
		1,471	1,373	1,407
Environmental Services		9,074	8,704	9,244
Planning				
Development Control	Advice	509	467	467
	Application Processing	567	761	650
	Enforcement	282	276	274
		1,358	1,504	1,391
Building Control	Promotion & Enforcement	329	262	272
	Building Regulations Applications	-153	20	-10
	Defence Estates	36	-4	-2
		212	278	260

SERVICE BUDGET		2008/09		2009/10
		Original	Forecast	Budget
		£000	£000	£000
Planning (continued)				
Planning Policy & Conservation	A14 Inquiry	0	50	200
	Biodiversity Action Plan	6	7	6
	Conservation & Listed Build	269	197	205
	Local Plan	564	543	634
	Planning Projects/Implement	244	271	251
	Strategic & Regional Planning	67	92	94
	Suppl Planning Guidance	18	11	12
	Trees	167	194	189
		1,336	1,365	1,591
Economic Development	Business & Enterprise Support	289	243	254
	Markets	-64	-23	-37
	NNDR Discretionary Relief	42	27	28
	Property Development and Management	-1,097	-984	-1,102
	Town Centre Management	201	185	198
		-629	-552	-659
Planning Delivery Grant	Planning Grant Unallocated	65	-251	70
		65	-251	70
Planning		2,342	2,344	2,653
Community Services				
Countryside	Barford Road Pocket Park	8	9	10
	Coneygear Park	5	7	7
	Countryside Management	164	212	216
	Hinchingbrooke Country Park	271	276	283
	Holt Island	2	2	2
	Ouse Valley Way	2	2	2
	Paxton Pits	112	115	119
	Spring Common	30	30	32
		594	653	671
Tourism	Tourism	151	135	150
		151	135	150
Community Initiatives	Community Projects	138	161	208
	Customer Service	216	216	222
	Equal Opportunities	50	42	39
	Local Agenda 21	47	62	65
	Miscellaneous Grants	348	372	374
	Oxmoor Action Plan	0	-1	0
		799	852	908
Parks	Parks & Open Spaces	1,644	1,712	1,814
	Pavilions	58	50	51
	Unallocated Land Survey	6	6	6
		1,708	1,768	1,871
Leisure Policy	Arts Development	199	196	178
	Leisure Development	253	265	284
	Policy And Strategic Management	5	18	20
		458	479	482
Leisure Centres	Huntingdon Leisure Centre	672	834	785
	Leisure Centres Overall	44	34	-529
	Ramsey Leisure Centre	570	562	644
	Sawtry Leisure Centre	541	566	580
	St Ivo Leisure Centre	958	972	1,148
	St Neots Leisure Centre	837	843	903
		3,622	3,811	3,531

SERVICE BUDGET		2008/09		2009/10
		Original	Forecast	Budget
		£000	£000	£000
Community Services (cont.)				
Community Facilities	Leisure Grants	194	141	171
	Priory Centre	20	24	23
		214	165	194
Community Services		7,546	7,863	7,807
Community Safety				
Community Safety	C C T V	776	787	765
	Community Safety	238	277	293
		1,014	1,065	1,058
Community Safety		1,014	1,065	1,058
Housing Services				
Housing Services	Choice Based Lettings	44	60	62
	Contributions To HRA	20	16	17
	Housing Advances	12	14	10
	Housing Advice	209	324	350
	Housing Developments	9	4	4
	Housing Strategy	108	134	145
	Mobile Home Park	-2	-12	-10
	Publicising Housing Services	6	6	6
	Waiting List	274	305	313
		680	851	897
Private Housing Support	Home Improvement Agency	91	30	98
	Housing Associations	2,112	1,238	1,235
	Housing Surveys	23	22	23
	Renovation/Improvement Grants	1,313	1,305	1,169
	3,538	2,595	2,525	
Homelessness	Homelessness Management	316	277	279
	Hostel Support	99	99	99
	Prevention Schemes	10	7	7
	Priority Needs Scheme	28	28	26
	Rental Deposit Scheme	94	85	86
	Temporary Accommodation - B&B	78	90	78
	625	586	575	
Housing Benefits	Housing Benefits Admin	640	826	953
	Rent Allowance Local Scheme	22	22	23
	Rent Allowance National Scheme	124	-237	-262
	Temporary Accommodation Support	119	124	127
	905	735	841	
Housing Services		5,749	4,767	4,838
Highways & Transportation				
Transportation Strategy	Cycling	34	27	33
	Transportation Management	147	81	113
	Transport Schemes	817	343	1,006
	997	451	1,152	
Public Transport	Bus Shelters	49	65	72
	Bus Stations	106	118	102
	Concessionary Fares	554	607	586
	709	790	760	
Highways Services	Street naming	101	100	101
	101	100	101	

SERVICE BUDGET		2008/09		2009/10
		Original	Forecast	Budget
		£000	£000	£000
Highways & Transport' (cont)				
Car Parks	Car Park Assets	90	92	108
	Car Park Management	-351	-461	-679
	Car Park Policy	-264	95	124
		-525	-274	-447
Environmental Improvements	Management	91	117	105
	Schemes	315	310	337
		406	427	442
Highways & Transportation		1,690	1,494	2,008
Corporate Services				
Local Taxation & Benefits	Council Tax	1,189	1,112	1,186
	Council Tax Benefits	192	203	259
	N N D R Administration	54	24	39
		1,435	1,339	1,484
Corporate Management	Chief Executive & Management Team	771	722	809
	External Audit	123	122	126
	Public Accountability	807	789	807
	Treasury Management	112	106	106
		1,812	1,739	1,848
Democratic Services	Corporate Committees	377	398	446
	Member Allowances & Support	884	844	918
		1,261	1,242	1,364
Central Services	Elections	426	428	379
	Emergency Planning	78	64	67
	Land Charges	-184	-1	20
		320	491	466
Non Distributed Costs	Pensions	255	242	256
		255	242	256
Corporate Services		5,084	5,053	5,418
Other Expenditure				
Contingency	Spending Adjustments Contingency	-277	0	-242
	Other Contingencies	-785	-100	-435
		-1,061	-100	-677
Other Expenditure	Capital Charges Reversed	-8,352	-6,947	-7,137
	Commutation Transfer	-59	-59	-18
	Pensions Liabilities Reversed	-547	-1,421	-1,421
	V A T Partial Exemption	105	0	140
		-8,854	-8,427	-8,436
Investment Interest	Interest Paid	84	84	76
	Interest Received	-2,246	-2,399	-1,229
	Borrowing Costs			618
		-2,162	-2,315	-535
Other Expenditure		-12,077	-10,842	-9,648
COUNCIL TOTAL		20,420	20,448	23,378

RESERVES AND THE ROBUSTNESS OF THE 2009/10 BUDGET

The Local Government Act 2003 requires me, as the Council's Chief Financial Officer, to report on the robustness of the 2009/10 budget and the adequacy of reserves when you consider it and the consequent Council Tax.

Robustness

The Council has tended in recent years to underspend its budget. This demonstrates that it has budgeted prudently and that managers have taken a mature approach to budgetary control rather than simply spending any spare sums on low priority items. This may not recur due to the ongoing identification of required budget savings and the uncertain size and duration of the current recession.

The Internal Audit and Risk Manager considers that that our internal financial controls are working adequately. There is also a sound system of financial monitoring and identification of any necessary budget variations that feeds into the budget/MTP process.

The 2009/10 budget has been prepared using the budget for 2008/09 as a base, and amending it for known changes, particularly:

- Certain unavoidable inflation but no allowance for general inflation on general expenditure items.
- Potential pay rises
- The impact of MTP schemes
- Forecast interest rates, which have a significant impact on our investment income

There will always be some items that emerge after the budget has been prepared. These are normally met by compensating savings elsewhere in the budget or, if necessary, the use of revenue reserves.

The most significant potential risks to the budget are:

- reduced income due to recession
- non-achievement of planned savings (leisure centres and grants)
- failure of a borrower
- an emergency (e.g. flooding)
- higher inflation than anticipated
- increases in gate fees at recycling centres due to lower resale values for recyclates.

Reduced Income

A 1% loss of income from fees, rents and charges would amount to around £160k but adjustments to the 2009/10 budget to reflect lower expectations already include Planning Fees (£50k), Car Parking (£140k), Land Charges (£260k) and Industrial Rents (£80k). Building Control Fees are also expected to be lower but there is an earmarked reserve to finance this.

Planned Savings

Planned savings for 2009/10 include £750k on Leisure Centres (an increase from £160k in 2008/09), £250k of grant income and £25k from employees. None of these are certain.

Treasury Management

There is a separate report on the January 2009 Cabinet Agenda concerning the approach to mitigating Treasury Management risks. The maximum permitted with one counterparty is £11M but this is only possible where £5M of the sum is held in a liquidity account with that body. Liquidity Accounts allow recovery of investments on the same working day which substantially reduces the risk. Thus the practical limit is probably £6M which is limited to bodies with the highest credit rating or Building Societies with more than £2billion in assets.

Emergencies

Certain types of eventuality are mitigated in other ways. Many significant risks are insured against, so losses are limited to the excesses payable. The Government's Bellwin Scheme meets a large proportion, over a threshold, of the costs of any significant peacetime emergencies (e.g. severe flooding).

Inflation

A ½% increase in general and pay inflation, assuming no compensating increase in fees and charges was possible, would result in a net cost of approximately £130k. It is also possible that inflation could be lower than assumed next year – a 1% lower pay award would save £210k.

Interest Rates

A ½% reduction in interest rates would result in lost income of approximately £120k but, as we have a number of investments with agreed rates for all or part of next year, the real impact would be significantly less.

Revenue Reserves

These are estimated to be £19.1m at April 2009 and reduce to £15.3m by March 2010 in order to support revenue spending. This is still very significantly above what would be considered a safe minimum level, which would be around £3m.

Therefore, even if a number of unexpected additional costs emerged there would still be sufficient funding to cover the deficit for 2009/10.

Annex F deals with the position over the rest of the medium term financial plan period.

Conclusion

Considering all these factors, I believe that the combination of a robust budget process and significant reserves should give Members no concerns over the Council's financial position for 2009/10 but significant work is required to identify future years' spending or taxation adjustments so that future budgets can be considered robust in the light of significant reductions in the level of reserves.

Terry Parker
Director of Commerce and Technology

FINANCIAL PLAN - SENSITIVITY AND RISKS

The financial forecast model has been used to demonstrate the impact that variations in investment rates, borrowing rates and increases in pay will have in specific years.

SPENDING ADJUSTMENTS REQUIRED IN YEAR	2013/14	2023/24
	£000	£000
	£M	£M
Already required by MTP/Financial Plan	+6.5	+10.7
Implications of other changes		
0.5% extra pay award cumulative from 2010/11	+0.5	+3.0
0.5% increase in staff efficiency cumulative from 2010/11 assuming this can be achieved and translated into reduced staffing levels.	-0.5	-3.0
1% higher investment returns in year	-0.1	-0.1
1% higher borrowing costs in year	+0.1	+0.1
1% extra employers pension contributions cumulative from 2011/12 for 5 years.	+0.5	+1.4

Inflation, other than pay, is fairly neutral as long as fees and charges are increased in line with it. If pay awards increase by more than forecast then further efficiency improvements would be needed to meet the impact.

The impact of investment rates is significantly diminished by 2013/14 as reserves will have been significantly reduced to meet revenue deficits and to fund capital projects. If long term borrowing rates and short term investment rates vary similarly there is a fairly neutral impact.

The next triennial revaluation of the Pension Fund is due in December 2010. Significant increases in contribution rates may be necessary from April 2011 even if the stock market has recovered by that date.

Other Risks

The Plan assumes that the extra specific grant awarded for Concessionary Fares for the three years starting in April 2008 will, together with the base budget provision be sufficient to meet the Council's costs. This is still not clear though any variation will probably not now be significant. It is also possible that responsibility for the scheme may become a County responsibility in April 2011. Resulting Grant adjustments, because they will be formula based, may not be neutral.

The Government's next Comprehensive Spending Review will be published in the summer of 2010 (and every three years thereafter) and will create significant uncertainty and potential volatility. This could have a significant impact, particularly if the area cost adjustment formula is varied.

It has been assumed that capping will continue to allow 4.99% increases in Council Tax. If this limit were to be reduced significant additional spending adjustments would be required. Relaxation of capping would provide potential to reduce the level of spending adjustments required by increasing Council Tax levels.

Inflation on Capital Schemes of 2.5% per year has been included in total within the plan. There have been examples of high tender prices on specific schemes but there is little objective data on which to base a higher inflation allocation or even to estimate a suitable contingency sum so no additional provision has been included. The Pathfinder House figures are predominantly fixed prices.

There is no provision for any demographic growth in services. Pressures will emerge due to additional housing and increased longevity over the plan period.

There may be significant increases in gate fees at recycling centres due to lower resale values for recyclates. The gate fees should fall again as the recession ends and demand increases.

Most budgets are based on 97.5% of salary due to the expectation of savings from staff turnover. If turnover falls financial pressures will emerge and vice versa.

Leisure Centre income is approaching £5M per year and certain facilities are in direct competition with the private sector. If income was lost it would be difficult to reduce expenditure by an equivalent sum in the short term. In addition the financial plan incorporates a substantial challenge for leisure centres to reduce their net cost by £1M per year. This may not be achieved.

Revenue reserves may not be sufficient but the plan is based on them reducing to £3M but then gradually increasing to £4M by 2023/24. This is dealt with in more detail below.

Conclusion

Spending Adjustments of a further £6.5M by 2013/14 and £10.7M by 2023/24 are required by the financial plan and there is potential for this to increase, particularly if the imminent recession is more significant than assumed, existing savings are unachievable or if pension contributions rise significantly. Prompt action is therefore necessary to take maximum advantage of the remaining time to identify optimum adjustments which should have less impact on service levels. Achievement of the MTP will become increasingly uncertain in the future without an established list of achievable adjustments that can be implemented as the need is confirmed.

FINANCIAL PLAN - FUTURE LEVEL OF RESERVES

The Plan is based on net spending rising to £28.7M by 2019/20 (circa £90M gross spending) with revenue reserves of £3M. The plan is therefore based on raising reserves to £4M by the end of 2023/24.

Adequate reserves are critical for various reasons:

Inflation

If pay awards and inflation were 1% more than expected in 2019/20, and fees and charges were not increased to mitigate it, the cost would be about £580k

Cash Flow

Changes to the profile of when the Government pays the Council its Government Grant and other payments (e.g. housing and Council Tax benefit)

Major failure of the computer systems for billing and recovering Council Tax, NNDR or other income. Impact is exaggerated because this Council takes the risk of late collection for the whole sum on Council Tax and NNDR for the area which amounts to £110M at present and would grow to, say, £170M by 2019/20. One month's loss of interest on £170M is around £700k.

Non achievement of Spending Adjustments

Spending adjustments of £10.7M are still to be identified.

Emergency/Disasters

The impact of a disaster to the public (e.g. flooding or a plane crash) is restricted by the Government paying 85% of any cost in excess of £36k but the Council would still need to fund the total cost pending reimbursement.

A Council disaster (e.g. the Council's computers or offices catching fire), would not receive government funding but certain aspects are insured such as alternative accommodation and lost income at Leisure Centres. There would still be a need to fund the costs "up front" and there is no cover for the cost of lost cash flow.

Unplanned Spending loss of income

This would include items like planning inquiries. Whilst unlikely to recur the cost of the Alconbury Inquiry was in excess of £2M.

Loss of income

Changes in economic activity can have a significant impact on development control fees, building control fees and land charges.

Leisure Centre income could suffer if a new private Fitness Centre aggressively entered the market.

Invest to Save

In order to meet the spending adjustments and to manage the authority effectively there will be a number of opportunities that require investment in order to increase service provision for no additional long term cost or to maintain provision but at a lower long term cost. Reserves are therefore required to allow this to happen.

Capping

If capping continues there is a need for higher reserves to allow any mitigating action to be undertaken in a planned and controlled way so that the service

impact on the public is minimised whilst replenishing reserves to an adequate level. Thus it should be assumed that any significant financial shortfall may take 3 to 4 years to resolve.

Conclusion

It is difficult to arrive at a scientific calculation of a minimum figure for reserves. Whilst the unexpected items are unlikely to all occur in the same year and may be reduced by compensating favourable changes the remaining level of unidentified spending adjustments and the manner in which capping tends to force immediate rather than best solutions means there is a need to hold significant reserves to cover the period until compensating adjustments are achieved or capping relaxed.

Our current reserves (£19M) are clearly well above the necessary levels to cover these risks but it is considered that £3M is the minimum that should be retained and as expenditure increases this should be gradually increased.

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CABINET

29 January 2009

2009/10 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (Report by the Head of Financial Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** A Treasury Management Strategy ensures that the Authority has clear objectives for the management of its borrowing and investments. It is also needed to comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) Code of Practice, which is required by the Council's Code of Financial Management. The Government has also published Guidance which recommends that an Annual Investment Strategy is produced each year and approved by the full Council.
- 1.2** The Guidance emphasises that priority must be given to the security and liquidity of investments whilst the Code covers the same point by requiring the effective management and control of risk. This Strategy is intended to meet the requirements of the Code and the Guidance.
- 1.3** The Strategy takes account of the increased profile that treasury management has had in the last few months due to the collapse of Icelandic Banks in which many Local Authorities had investments.
- 1.4** When the Government removed its limits on capital expenditure levels some years ago it introduced the concept of a Prudential Code which pulled together a number of indicators relating to capital expenditure, external debt and treasury management. Its purpose was to demonstrate that the Council's capital expenditure plans were affordable and to provide a set of limits, to be complied with, and indicators to be monitored during the forthcoming year. These indicators are shown as appendix B to the strategy.
- 1.5** The proposed strategy is attached as Annex A.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1** Cabinet is requested to recommend to Council that it approves the attached Treasury Management Strategy.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Background files in Accountancy Section: Treasury Management Reports
Reports on the 2009/10 Budget and Medium Term Plan to Cabinet and Council
CIPFA's Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice 2002
ODPM Guidance on Local Government Investments March 2004

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TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2009/10

Treasury Management is the process by which the Council:

- ensures it has sufficient cash to meet its day-to-day obligations
- borrows when necessary to fund capital expenditure, including borrowing in advance when rates are considered to be low
- invests any surplus funds in a manner that balances low risk of default by the borrower with a fair rate of interest.

This Strategy explains how this will be carried out and meets the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) Code of Practice and the Government's Guidance on Local Government Investments.

NEW FACTORS IN 2008/09

Over the period of its 5 year Medium Term Plan (MTP) the Council will need to start borrowing to fund capital expenditure once its existing Capital Reserves have been used. Agreement was reached with External Auditors that if the Council considered that long term borrowing rates were low it would be reasonable to borrow, in advance, up to the sum needed in the MTP. This was included in the 2008/09 Strategy.

During 2008/09, long term borrowing rates were volatile and when rates fell to around 3.90% in December the Council took out its first tranche of £10M long-term borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB).

In October 2008 three Icelandic Banks collapsed that Councils, including this one, had on their approved list of counterparties. This raised the public profile of treasury management in Local Government and caused Councils to review their appetite for risk in managing their investments. It also highlighted the weaknesses of relying on credit ratings, the method used by most authorities to decide where to invest funds.

THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The extract below from the Council's Financial Strategy shows:

- how revenue reserves will fall to the basic level needed as a contingency against unexpected events,
- how capital reserves have already been nearly fully used to fund capital expenditure,
- how borrowing will be required to meet further planned capital expenditure. When this is carried out will depend on how low interest rates are perceived at any point in time. Hence "must" borrow levels reflect using other funds to delay until the last moment whilst "may" borrow levels show maximum borrowing in advance.

FORECAST	2008/09 £M	2009/10 £M	2010/11 £M	2011/12 £M	2012/13 £M	2013/14 £M
Revenue Reserves	19.1	15.3	10.4	6.0	3.0	3.0
Capital Reserves	1.3					
Earmarked Reserves	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4
Total Reserves** (EOY)	23.8	18.7	13.8	9.4	6.4	6.4
Planned Capital Expenditure		17.8	6.1	5.0	6.7	6.4
Funded from:						
new capital receipts		1.1	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.7
capital reserves		1.3				
borrowing		15.4	5.2	4.3	6.0	5.7
Borrowing (accumulated)						
To be funded from borrowing		15.4	20.6	24.9	30.9	36.6
"Must" borrow	0	3.7	6.8	15.5	24.5	30.2
"May" borrow	26.3	36.5	41.0	45.7	50.6	55.5
Already borrowed	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0

** excludes any cash flow surpluses and specific earmarked reserves (e.g. S106 and R&R Funds)

The amount and period of capital borrowing up until March 2010 will be dependent upon the actual levels of interest rates and how high or low they are perceived to be in a long term sense. For example, if long term rates fell to 3.5% we would be likely to move to our "may" borrow limits as soon as possible as, even if that meant an acceptable level of short term cost because temporary investment rates were lower than borrowing rates, the long term benefit would be significant. Conversely, if long term rates were 5% and it were perceived that future rates would be lower, only the "must" borrow limits would be followed and, even then, the sums would be borrowed for a short period rather than locked into a long term arrangement.

Authorities are only allowed to borrow short term for revenue purposes to cover cash flow.

CASH FLOW

In addition to the fundamental movements described above there are day-to-day impacts due to the flow of funds into and out of the Council. For instance, the dates on which the County Council is paid its portion of the council tax will be different to the days the money is received from those living in the District. These cash flows will sometimes leave the Council with several million pounds to borrow or invest overnight or for a few weeks.

LONG TERM BORROWING

Although borrowing is not required until 2009/10 to fund the Capital Programme, effective treasury management involves borrowing when interest rates are judged to be at the optimum level, even if the funds have then to be invested until the money is required; borrowing in this way is allowed if it is for planned capital expenditure. The definition of planned expenditure is not precise and has therefore been discussed with our external auditor who is comfortable with the interpretation of it being included in our approved MTP. Hence, once Council has approved the MTP in February the figure will be £36.5 M. The Council borrowed £10m in December 2008 for 49 to 50 years, when PWLB long-term interest rates were around 3.90% and the

funds borrowed have been temporarily invested for 4 to 5 years at rates over 4%.

When the Council borrows the repayment profile of the debt must be considered if it is for a shorter period than the life of the asset being financed i.e. if the debt needed to be replaced rather than repaid then the replacement dates need to be spread over a sensible period to avoid peaks when interest rates may be high. Our borrowing from the PWLB is likely to be for sufficient period that the required depreciation charges will be enough to repay the debt rather than replace it.

Borrowing will tend to be from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) which is a Government Agency providing funds to government bodies at wholesale market rates. They provide a range of options including fixed rate loans for up to 50 years. Commercial bodies have become more involved in this market though their products are generally of the type where the lender retains an option to increase the interest rate after a number of years and the borrower has the right to repay if the new rate is not acceptable.

CATEGORIES OF INVESTMENT

The guidance on Local Authority Investments categorises investments as 'specified' and 'non-specified'.

Specified investments are:

- in sterling
- due to be repaid within 12 months
- not defined as capital expenditure in the capital finance regulations 2003
- with a body that has a high credit rating or it is made with the UK Government (gilts or CDs), or a local Authority.

Non-specified investments include all other types of investment, for example corporate bonds.

The only non-specified investments that will be used will be time deposits of greater than 12 months with a body that has a high credit rating, is one of the larger building societies or has a legal position that guarantees repayment (e.g. a local authority). Time deposits are for specified periods and are returned in full after that period – they are not subject to value fluctuations as with Gilts and Corporate Bonds.

IN-HOUSE MANAGEMENT AND CDCM

CDCM currently manages £20M of investments and the remaining investments and borrowing are managed in-house. The bulk of CDCM's fund will need to be returned in the next 2 years unless further advance borrowing is carried out. Now that there is not a longer-term nature to this fund it would be appropriate to regularly review the need for it and close it when appropriate.

Appendix A outlines the mandate for the in-house and CDCM investments and lists the approved counter-parties though it should be noted that these will change during the course of any year as credit ratings or the size of building societies change.

The Council will need to approve a prudential indicator for the 'authorised limit for external debt'; which combines temporary borrowing for cash flow purposes and long-term borrowing to fund capital expenditure. A maximum of £56.5 is being recommended (£20m temporary plus £36.5 long term).

Although the MTP shows that the Authority will need to borrow to fund its capital

programme it does not necessarily have to borrow from PWLB or the market because it can use its in-house investments to finance capital until the investments are used.

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH INVESTMENTS

The collapse of the Icelandic Banks in October 2008 resulted in the Capital Receipts Advisory Group (CRAG) reviewing its appetite for risk as regards counterparties that the Council would be willing to invest with. Whilst investments could be made with the Government's Debt Management Office which are theoretically risk-free, as they are backed by the Government, there is a significant downside to this level of safety in that the rates offered have been up to 2% below the market rate – a major issue when base rate itself is only 2%.

Following detailed discussion, CRAG recommended that the, then current, counterparty list of banks and building societies should continue to be used. They felt that Building societies are such key financial institutions within the UK that if one got into financial difficulties it would either be taken over by another building society or supported by the Government. They also have a significant proportion of their funds covered by retail savings so are less at the risk of market volatility.

Whilst we have a reasonable number of institutions to invest with, the list reduces every time a bank or building society is taken over by another institution. It is possible that the level of advance borrowing could become limited by the availability of acceptable counterparties. This will be monitored closely.

Although many organisations rely on credit ratings to determine suitable counterparties and the Government advice refers to bodies with a “high” credit rating, recent events have shown that ratings are not totally reliable. Annex B shows the definition of the various credit ratings. The following changes have been made to mitigate this risk but they still only reduce it rather than remove it:

- The Council's Treasury Management advisors (Sterling) provide notice of institutions where the credit rating agencies have indicated a 'rating watch' which indicates that there may be a concern over the long-term stability of the bank or building society. These will often result in the counterparty being immediately removed from our list.
- Country limits have been set of £6M for non-EU countries, £10M for individual EU countries and £20M for EU in total. The EU limits exclude the UK.
- For shorter term investments the short-term credit rating is the most relevant, however as we may be investing in the medium-term when we have borrowed in advance it is prudent to take long-term credit ratings into account for any investment longer than 1 year. These should be A- or higher (FITCH) or the equivalent with other rating agencies

ADVISORS

The Council appointed Sterling Consultancy Services as Treasury Management Advisors in January 2008.

The Advisor carries out the following role:

- provides up-to-date information on credit ratings
- advises on borrowing, borrowing rates and opportunities to borrow early
- provides economic data and interest rate forecasts

KEY POINTS

Definition of 'high credit rating' for specified investments

The Council's mandates require all investments to have a short-term rating of a minimum of F1, as defined by the credit rating agency FITCH (or the equivalent for other rating agencies), except for any body that has a legal position that guarantees repayment or is a building society that is in the top 25 by value. Any investment for more than 1 year must also have a long term rating of at least A-

The frequency that credit ratings are monitored

Sterling monitors the credit ratings of banks and building societies daily and notifies the Council of any changes immediately. Where the rating is downgraded that bank or building society will immediately be removed from the counterparty list if its new rating is outside of the defined limits.

Sterling also notifies the Authority of counterparties where the credit rating is on negative rating watch. If the negative watch applies to long-term ratings a judgement will be made as to whether or not the counterparty should be removed from the list.

The categories of non-specified investments that can prudently be used during 2009/10

Time deposits over 12 months.

Liquidity of investments.

The time deposits managed In-house and by CDCM are non-liquid investments (i.e. they will only be available at the end of the agreed period). CDCM's mandate specifies the dates by which sums need to be available for return. These sums will be regularly reviewed and CDCM advised of any necessary changes as the year progresses.

In addition to time deposits the Authority uses a liquidity funds with the NatWest Bank and Alliance Leicester, both of these allow repayment the same day.

Limiting Counterparty Risk

CDCM advise the Council of all proposed investments in advance. This allows the Council to ensure that the combined CDCM and In-house investment with a Counterparty does not exceed the specified limits. For example: Both lists would allow £6M with Barclays Bank but the Council will limit its investment with Barclays to £6M in total.

MANAGEMENT

The Head of Financial Services and his staff, supported by the Council's professional advisor, will manage and monitor investments and borrowing. The Capital Receipts Advisory Group will be kept informed of relevant issues and consulted on any significant changes to the Strategy.

The Cabinet will receive a six month report on the performance of the funds and an annual report on the performance for the year.

CHANGES TO THE STRATEGY

The strategy is not intended to be a strait-jacket but a definition of the upper limit of the level of risk that it is prudent for the Council to take in maximising the return on its net investments. Any changes that are broadly consistent with this Strategy and either reduce or only minimally increase the level of risk, are delegated to the Head of Financial Services, after consultation with the Capital Receipts Advisory Group, where significant.

Any other proposal to change this strategy will be referred back to the Council.

PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

The Council's Prudential Indicators are attached at Appendix C. They are based on data included in the budget report and this Strategy. They set various limits that allow officers to monitor its achievement. These indicators must be approved by the Council and can only be amended by the Council.

Definition of Credit Ratings

Short term (FITC)	F1	Shares rated in this category have the most solid solvency levels and the highest stock liquidity and enterprise value in the market.
	F2	Shares rated in this category have very good solvency levels and stock liquidity and enterprise value in the market.
	F3	Shares rated in this category have a combination of good or adequate solvency levels and stock liquidity and enterprise value in the market.
Long-term (FITC)	AAA	Highest credit quality. 'AAA' ratings denote the lowest expectation of credit risk . They are assigned only in case of exceptionally strong capacity for payment of financial commitments. This capacity is highly unlikely to be adversely affected by foreseeable events.
	AA	Very high credit quality. 'AA' ratings denote expectations of very low credit risk . They indicate very strong capacity for payment of financial commitments. This capacity is not significantly vulnerable to foreseeable events.
	A	High credit quality. 'A' ratings denote expectations of low credit risk . The capacity for payment of financial commitments is considered strong. This capacity may, nevertheless, be more vulnerable to changes in circumstances or in economic conditions than is the case for higher ratings.

IN-HOUSE FUND MANAGEMENT

Duration of investments	No investment shall be longer than 5 years.														
Types of investments	Fixed Deposits Deposits at call, two or seven day notice														
Credit Ratings	Short term rating F1 by FITCH IBCA or equivalent Long-term rating of A- by FITCH IBCA or equivalent if the investment is longer than 1year														
Maximum limits per body or group	<table> <tr> <td>F1+ or have a legal position that guarantees repayment for the period of the investment</td> <td>£6M</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F1</td> <td>£5M</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Building Society with assets over £2bn in top 25 (Currently 16)</td> <td>£6M</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Building Society with assets over £1bn if in top 25 (Currently 3)</td> <td>£5M</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Building Society with assets under £1bn in top 25</td> <td>£3M</td> </tr> <tr> <td>In addition to the above:</td> <td>£5M</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Liquidity (Call) Account with a credit rating of F1+ or with a legal position that guarantees repayment.</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>Other Country limits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £6M in a country outside the EU - £10M in a country within the EU (excluding UK) - £20M in EU countries combined (excluding UK) <p>These totals apply to investments made up until 31 March 2010 but lower limits may be introduced for later years to avoid too high a proportion of the Council's funds being with any one counterparty.</p>	F1+ or have a legal position that guarantees repayment for the period of the investment	£6M	F1	£5M	Building Society with assets over £2bn in top 25 (Currently 16)	£6M	Building Society with assets over £1bn if in top 25 (Currently 3)	£5M	Building Society with assets under £1bn in top 25	£3M	In addition to the above:	£5M	Liquidity (Call) Account with a credit rating of F1+ or with a legal position that guarantees repayment.	
F1+ or have a legal position that guarantees repayment for the period of the investment	£6M														
F1	£5M														
Building Society with assets over £2bn in top 25 (Currently 16)	£6M														
Building Society with assets over £1bn if in top 25 (Currently 3)	£5M														
Building Society with assets under £1bn in top 25	£3M														
In addition to the above:	£5M														
Liquidity (Call) Account with a credit rating of F1+ or with a legal position that guarantees repayment.															
Benchmark	LGC 7 day rate														

CDCM MANDATE

Duration of investments	No investment shall be longer than 2 years. The following funds must be available for return by the dates listed below: £13M by 31 March 2010 £7M by 31 March 2011										
Types of investments	Fixed Deposits Deposits at call, two or seven day notice										
Credit Ratings	Short term rating F1 by FITCH IBCA or equivalent Long-term rating of A- by FITCH IBCA or equivalent if the investment is longer than 1 year										
Maximum limits	<table> <tr> <td>F1+ or have a legal position that guarantees repayment for the period of the investment</td> <td>£6M</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F1</td> <td>£5M</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Building Society with assets over £2bn in top 25 (Currently 16)</td> <td>£6M</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Building Society with assets over £1bn if in top 25 (Currently 3)</td> <td>£5M</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Building Society with assets under £1bn in top 25</td> <td>£3M</td> </tr> </table> <p>Other Country limits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £6M in a country outside the EU - £10M in a country within the EU (excluding UK) - £20M in EU countries combined (excluding UK) <p>These totals apply to investments made up until 31 March 2010 but lower limits may be introduced for later years to avoid too high a proportion of the Council's funds being with any one counterparty.</p>	F1+ or have a legal position that guarantees repayment for the period of the investment	£6M	F1	£5M	Building Society with assets over £2bn in top 25 (Currently 16)	£6M	Building Society with assets over £1bn if in top 25 (Currently 3)	£5M	Building Society with assets under £1bn in top 25	£3M
F1+ or have a legal position that guarantees repayment for the period of the investment	£6M										
F1	£5M										
Building Society with assets over £2bn in top 25 (Currently 16)	£6M										
Building Society with assets over £1bn if in top 25 (Currently 3)	£5M										
Building Society with assets under £1bn in top 25	£3M										
Benchmark	3 month LIBID										

**CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities
Prudential Indicators for 2009/10**

Capital expenditure

1. Actual and Estimated Capital Expenditure

	2007/8 Actual £000	2008/9 Forecast £000	2009/10 Estimate £000	2010/11 Estimate £000	2011/12 Estimate £000
Gross	16,518	20,550	23,187	9,620	5,562
Net	13,833	15,347	17,796	6,056	4,957

2. The proportion of the budget financed from government grants and council tax that is spent on interest.

The negative figures until 2009/10 reflect that the Authority is a net investor and so the interest earned is used to help fund the budget. In 2011/12 the borrowing costs exceed interest earned on investments

2007/8 Actual £000	2008/9 Forecast £000	2009/10 Estimate £000	2010/11 Estimate £000	2011/12 Estimate £000
-16%	-11%	-4%	0%	1%

3. The impact of schemes with capital expenditure on the level of council tax
This calculation highlights the hypothetical impact on the level of Council Tax from new capital schemes that the Council has approved in the budget/MTP. It must ignore changes already approved, slippage, inflation and savings.

The actual planned change in Council Tax is different because of the impact of other variations and the use of revenue reserves.

	2009/10 Estimate	2010/11 Estimate	2011/12 Estimate
Increase	£8.34	-£2.21	£0.44
Cumulative	£8.34	£6.14	£6.58

4. The capital financing requirement.

This represents the need for the Authority to borrow to finance capital expenditure. Whilst the Authority has capital reserves it will not have to borrow for capital purposes but may choose to do so:

31/3/08 Actual £000	2008/9 Forecast £000	2009/10 Estimate £000	2010/11 Estimate £000	2011/12 Estimate £000	2012/13 Estimate £000	2013/14 Estimate £000
0	0	15,420	5,156	4,257	5,966	5,674

It totals £36.5m over the MTP period.

5. Net borrowing and the capital financing requirement.
Borrowing must not be used to finance revenue spending except in the short term. In the short term it is legitimately used to cover cash flow e.g. funding salaries pending receipt of council tax income or return of investments.

The forecast shows that capital reserves are expected to run out in 2009/10 and the Authority will then need to fund most of its capital expenditure from long-term borrowing. However it is permitted to borrow a certain amount in advance of the need to fund capital expenditure (see paragraph 7 below).

External debt

6. The actual external borrowing at 31 March 2008
There was no borrowing.
7. The authorised limit for external debt.
This is the maximum limit for borrowing and is based on a worst-case scenario. It reflects the Treasury Management Strategy which allows the Authority to borrow up to £26.3m in 2008/09 and up to an aggregate of £36.5m in 2009/10 to finance capital expenditure shown to be financed from borrowing in the Medium Term Plan period if it appears that long term rates are attractive. The remainder of the limit relates to temporary debt for Cash Flow Purposes.

	2008/9 Limit £000	2009/10 Limit £000	2010/11 Estimate £000	2011/12 Estimate £000
Short term	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Long Term	26,300	36,500	41,000	45,700
Total	46,300	56,500	61,000	65,700

8. The operational boundary for external debt.
This reflects a less extreme position. Although the figure can be exceeded without further approval it represents an early warning monitoring device to ensure that the authorised limit (above) is not exceeded; it allows the management of the Council's day to day cashflow. The short term and long term elements of the operational boundary will be monitored separately.

	2009/10 Limit £000	2010/11 Estimate £000	2011/12 Estimate £000
Short term	15,000	15,000	15,000
Long term	36,500	41,000	45,700
Total	51,500	56,000	60,700

Treasury management

9. Adoption of the CIPFA Code
The Prudential Code requires the Authority to have adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services. This has been adopted.

10. Exposure to investments with fixed interest and variable interest as a percentage of total investments.

The mandates could result in a significant amount of the funds being at variable rates as CDCM has some deals where the rate is revised every quarter. In practice the exposure to variable rates is likely to be less and is effectively of a temporary nature due to the lender having an option to request repayment when rates fall.

	2009/10 Limit £000	2010/11 Estimate £000	2011/12 Estimate £000
Upper limit on fixed rate exposure	100%	100%	100%
Upper limit on variable rate exposure	50%	50%	50%

11. Borrowing Repayment Profile

The proportion of 2009/10 borrowing that will mature in successive periods.

The first table refers to temporary borrowing for cash flow purposes; 100% will mature in less than 12 months. Whilst long-term borrowing will often be for more than 10 years there are interest rate scenarios that might require shorter term borrowing on a temporary basis.

Cash flow borrowing	Upper limit	Lower limit
Under 12 months	100%	100%
12 months and within 24 months	0%	0%
24 months and within 5 years	0%	0%
5 years and within 10 years	0%	0%
10 years and above	0%	0%

Funding capital schemes	Upper limit	Lower limit
Under 12 months	25%	0%
12 months and within 24 months	25%	0%
24 months and within 5 years	25%	0%
5 years and within 10 years	50%	0%
10 years and above	100%	0%

12. Investment Repayment Profile

Limit on the value of investments that cannot be redeemed within 364 days i.e. by the end of each financial year.

	2009/10 Estimate £M	2010/11 Estimate £M	2011/12 Estimate £M
Limit on investments over 364 days as at 1 April each year.	36,000	17,000	10,000

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CABINET MEETING

29th January 2009

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

(Report by the Head of Legal and Estates)

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the National Performance Indicators in respect of the Council's property portfolio for 2006/07 and 2007/08. In addition related asset management issues are also drawn to the attention of Cabinet.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Information on property performance indicators, now called Performance Management Indicators (PMIs), has been produced on a regular basis after they were first introduced in 2002. Since the last report the number of indicators has increased and these are summarised in Appendix A together with a brief commentary including, where appropriate, comparison with other authorities using information from the IPF Asset Management Network (IPF). Section 3 highlights the main elements of these indicators.

2.2 Asset Management is now considered a key area of the use of resources assessment undertaken by the Audit Commission. This is referred to in Section 4.

2.3 The report on the community ownership of assets is considered in Section 5.

3. OUTCOMES

3.1 The main changes between 2006 and 2008 and principal highlights are set out below. More detailed comments on the indicators are contained in appendix A.

- There has been a 10% increase in the number of operational properties in category A – good (PMI 1A)
- There has been an improvement in the overall condition of property as outstanding maintenance has been reduced by 27% (PMI 1B)
- The percentage of urgent repairs increased to 2% but this still compares favourably with the national average of 12% (PMI 1B)
- Planned repairs average 40% of all repairs over the last two years (PMI 1D) which is below the IPF average of 56%
- Energy and water costs are above the IPF averages (PMI 2)
- The suitability of operational property has increased from 16% to 43% in the top category (good)

- The number of accessibility surveys has risen to 23% of all operational properties but is still below the national average
- Capital schemes are generally managed well in terms of time and costs compared to national averages.
- PMIs 5 and 6 are new indicators which will be used in future analyses.

4. CPA – USE OF RESOURCES

- 4.1 Performance indicators are an important element of the comprehensive performance assessment and contribute to the overall score for Section 2.3 of the use of resources key line of enquiry i.e how the Council manages its assets.
- 4.2 In 2007 Level 3 assessment was maintained with the following comments from the external auditors:
 “To move to level 4, the Council needs to show evidence of the use of performance measurement and bench marking in its asset management. However the Council will need to consider the costs and benefits of addressing these issues”. In 2008 due to a temporary shortage of resources the assessment slipped to level 2; however the issues raised are now being addressed during 2008/09 so that the higher assessment can again be achieved.

5. COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP OF ASSETS

- 5.1 A Government sponsored report (the Quirk Report) was published in 2007 which considered issues relating to the transfer of local authority assets to community based organisations. A more detailed summary of the report and the implications for the Council are contained in Appendix B. The Council already has a number of existing arrangements with community groups with leases granted at nominal or low rents such as the Maple Centre on Oxmoor.
- 5.2 At the present time there are limited opportunities for further asset transfers to the community but any applications that are received will be brought forward for consideration.

6. ASSET MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENTS

- 6.1 Achievements during 2007/08 have included:
- Opening of Eastfield House
 - Relocation of Godmanchester Depot and other Depots
 - Commencement of construction of new offices at Pathfinder House
 - Start on site for the new Enterprise Centre in St Neots
 - New reception, changing rooms and pool refurbishment at St Neots Leisure Centre
 - New tennis facilities, St Neots Leisure Centre
 - Refurbishment at Huntingdon Leisure Centre
 - Completion of new sports pavilion at Priory Park, St Neots
 - Refurbishment of public conveniences at Hartford Road, Huntingdon and St Ives bus station

6.2 Progress on updating the Council's land ownership records is continuing. Registration of all land and property with the Land Registry is now virtually complete. A new computerised database has been acquired and this is being developed to incorporate all information relating to property ownership and asset management.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Progress over the last year clearly demonstrates the Council's commitment to provide and maintain buildings in a fit and proper manner for the effective delivery of services.

7.2 It is important that repair and maintenance budgets are kept at the appropriate level to ensure that assets are maintained to a high standard and to avoid a backlog of repairs building up, which would require major expenditure in future years. In this respect it is important to increase the percentage of planned maintenance.

7.3 The community ownership of assets should be considered as part of the strategic approach to asset management and any developments will be included in the next annual report.

8. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the report be received and the information in Appendix A be approved.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Legal and Estates Asset Management files. Report to Cabinet 21st December 2006

Contact Officer: K Phillips, Estates and Property Manager ☎ (01480) 388260

APPENDIX A

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PROPERTY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2007 AND 2008

PMI 1 CONDITION AND REQUIRED MAINTENANCE

1A. % of gross internal floor space in condition categories A-D

	Operational		Non-Operational	
	31.3.07	31.3.08	31.3.07	31.3.08
A. Good	5	15	26	22
B. Satisfactory.	90	81	74	77
C. Poor	5	4	-	-
D. Bad	0	0		1

	2007	2008
Operational Gross Internal Area (sq metres)	27,220	27,770
Non-Operational Gross Internal Area (sq metres)	14,839	14,839

1B. Required maintenance by cost

(i) Total cost in priority levels 1-3: £4,789,000 (31.3.07)
£3,988,000 (31.3.08)

(ii) As a % in priority Levels 1-3:

	Operational		Non-Operational	
	31.3.07	31.3.08	31.3.07	31.3.08
1. Urgent	0	2	2	5
2. Essential (2 years)	58	54	33	37
3. Desirable (3-5 years)	42	44	65	58
	100	100	100	100

2006/07 2007/08

(iii) Overall costs per square metre £114 £94

1C. Annual % change to total maintenance: -20% +36%

		2006/07	2007/08
1D.	(i) Total spend on maintenance:	£305,000	£415,000
	(ii) Total spend on maintenance per sq metre:	£7.25	£9.73
	(iii) Percentage of total maintenance: planned	42%	38%
	responsive	58%	62%

Comments on PMI 1 - Condition and Required Maintenance

1. The purpose of this indicator is to measure the condition of assets, changes in condition and the spend on maintenance. It applies to all property where the Council has a repairing obligation.
2. In PMI 1A there has been a marked improvement in operational properties since 2006 with an increase in category A (good) property to 15% while B is at 81%. These compare favourably with IPF averages of 13.9% (A) and 63% (B). The changes reflect the refurbishment of public conveniences and also the move to Eastfield House.
3. The total cost of required maintenance PMI 1B (i) has declined from £5.49 million in 2006 to £3.98 million in 2008. The overall cost per sq.m has reduced from £114.00 in 2007 to £94.00 in 2008 compared to an IPF average of £111.00.
4. With regard to PMI 1B (ii) the percentage for urgent repairs is well below the IPF average (2% compared to 12%) but is higher for essential work (54% compared to IPF average of 41%). Most of the costs relate to leisure buildings.
5. Information in PMI 1D relates to the total expenditure on maintenance and the split between planned and responsive repairs. The planned percentage is below the IPF average of 56%. Under best practice the aim is to move towards a higher percentage spend on planned repairs. It is proposed to consider a repair and maintenance strategy to try to improve on this.

PMI 2 ENVIRONMENTAL PROPERTY ISSUES

		2007	2008
2A	Energy costs per square metre	£19.46	£18.38
	Energy consumption kwh per square metre	395	353
2B	Water costs per square metre	£2.80	£3.20
	Water consumption by volume m3 per square m	*	*
2C	CO2 emissions in tonnes per square metre	0.12	0.097

* information has been collected on individual properties

Comments on PMI 2 A, B and C – Environmental Property Issues

- 1 These figures apply to all operational buildings which includes 7 leisure buildings with 5 swimming pools. Not surprisingly, therefore, energy costs are above the IPF average of £9.60 and water costs are above the IPF average of £1.52 per square metre. CO₂ emissions have declined but are still above the IPF average of 0.058.
- 2 The purpose of these indicators is to encourage the efficient use of assets and to measure year on year improvements in energy efficiency. With the refurbishment of buildings generally and the move to new offices it is expected that energy usage will fall.

PMI 3 SUITABILITY SURVEYS –OPERATIONAL PROPERTY

		2007	2008
3A	% of the portfolio by GIA :	100	100
3B	Number of properties :	37	39

Comments on PMI 3 A and B – Suitability Surveys

- 1 These surveys are required for all operational properties in order to determine whether buildings are fit for purpose. The assessments are based on systems adopted by other local authorities and include the following criteria – location, accessibility, environment, health and safety, fixtures and fittings and image. The outcome of the annual review is summarised below:

Score out of 30	2006	2007	2008
1-6 Unsuitable	0	0	0
7-12 Poor	2	3	2
13-20 Satisfactory	29	24	20
21-30 Good	6	10	17
Total	37	37	39

- 2 Assessments have been carried out for all Council operational properties and compare favourably with the IPF average of 60% of buildings. The two buildings rated poor are the public conveniences in South Street, St Neots and the Octagon storage depot in St Ives. Surveys will be carried out annually in order to reflect improvements undertaken during the year.

PMI 4 BUILDING ACCESSIBILITY SURVEYS –OPERATIONAL PROPERTY

		2007	2008
Access audit undertaken:			
4A	% of the portfolio by GIA :	0.27%	15%

4B	Number of properties	:	2	9
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Accessibility plan in place

4C	% of portfolio	:	0.27%	15%
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4D	Number of properties	:	2	9
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Comments on PMI 4 A, B, C and D – Building Accessibility Surveys

- 1 These are required for all operational properties and the surveys have to be carried out by a competent person. An access audit is defined as “an examination of a building, its facilities or services reported on against predetermined criteria to assess its ease of use by disabled people”. After the audit an accessibility plan is drawn up to identify the actions necessary.
- 2 It will be noted that progress has been made over the last 2 years with the audits. However the percentage of properties covered is below the IPF average of 88%. The Facilities Manager will be undertaking further assessments during the current year.

PM1 5 SUFFICIENCY (CAPACITY AND UTILISATION) –OFFICES

		31/3/07	31/3/08
5A.1 (a)	Operational office property as a percentage of the total portfolio	28%	29%
(b)	Office space per head of population (per square metre)	0.045	0.048
5A.2	Office space as a % of office space (estimated)	80%	80%
5A.3 (a)	Number of offices shared with other public agencies	1	1
(b)	Percentage of office buildings shared	10%	11%
5B .1	Average floor space per office staff	Not assessed	
5B.2	Average floor space per workstation	Not assessed	
5B.3	Annual property cost per workstation	Not assessed	

Comments on PMI 5 A and B – Sufficiency (capacity and utilisation) Office Portfolio

- 1 The purpose of this new indicator is to measure the capacity and utilisation of the office portfolio. Information has been provided for PMI 5A but not yet for PMI 5B in view of the continuing changes in office accommodation. It is intended to refine these in due course so that more accurate information will be available once the new office project is completed.

PM1 6 SPEND ON PROPERTY

6A	Gross property costs of operational estate as a percentage of the gross revenue budget	3%	3.5%
6B	Gross property costs per square metre for operational property	£68	£83

Comments on PMI 6 A and B – Spend and Property

- 1 This new indicator aims to measure the overall property costs and changes in costs over time. Figures have been provided for the last two years and these will also be compared with other authorities in due course. As with PMI 5B, a more accurate assessment will be possible when the office moves have been completed.

PM1 7 TIME AND COST PREDICTABILITY

7A	Time predictability, design	100%	72%
7B	Time predictability, post contract	75%	86%
7C	Cost predictability, design	100%	100%
7D	Cost predictability, post contract	100%	100%

Comments on PMI 7 A, B, C and D – Time and Cost Predictability

1. There were 4 applicable schemes in 2007 and 7 schemes in 2008.
2. This indicator has been reinstated and relates to all projects over £50k. The Council's performance compares favourably with the IPF averages of 60% (7A), 50% (7B), 58% (7C) and 60% (7D). This confirms that building contracts are generally managed within acceptable time and cost limits. Although there has been some slippage in time with a few schemes, this has not adversely affected the costs.

**COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT AND
OWNERSHIP OF PUBLIC ASSETS –QUIRK REPORT**

1 BACKGROUND

The Local Government white paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' set out a new relationship between Local Government and its communities based on trust and devolving power. The Quirk Report, published in May 2007, is part of this initiative to give communities a greater say over services etc. It considered options for the transfer of asset ownership and management to community groups.

2 CONTENT

2.1 The report reviewed existing powers including disposals of property at less than market price, the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders, Treasury Guidance on claw back, and PROD (Public Request to Order Disposal). The latter is the power for citizens to press for disposal of unused or underused Local Authority assets. It also examined the barriers to community transfer and the risks involved. The latter could include transferring an asset in serious disrepair and imposing an unreasonable liability on community groups, the lack of funding to bring buildings up to a satisfactory condition and the general complexity of managing assets.

2.2 The conclusions of the report are as follows:

- * asset transfers should take place where they can realise social and community benefits without risking wider public interest concerns
- * the benefits of community management and ownership of assets can outweigh the risks and often the opportunity cost in appropriate circumstances. If there is a rational and prior consideration of these, there are no substantive impediments to the transfer of public assets to communities
- * there are risks but they can be minimised and managed. There are examples in the report and a table of risks with ways to manage them

2.3 Rather than legislation or new powers, guidance and support is required. The recommendations within the report are as follows:

- 1 Publication of up to date guidance on asset management, including specific reference to the transfer of assets to community management and ownership
- 2 Publication of a tool kit on risk management in asset transfers to communities
- 3 Provision of much greater access to expert advice and organisational development support for Local Authorities and

community organisations, particularly to the transfer and management by communities of land and buildings

- 4 Smarter investment of public funds designated for community lead asset based developments, where permissible, through the involvement of specialist financial intermediaries with expertise in the field and the ability to achieve high leverage ratios
- 5 A major campaign to spread the word through the media etc.

2.4 The Government has set up a community assets fund with about £30m to support partnerships between Local Authorities and third sector organisations such as community groups. The fund will offer capital to refurbish assets.

3 IMPLICATIONS FOR HDC

3.1 The Government has already confirmed its support to the Quirk Report and it is expected that community groups will become more proactive.

3.2 Initially it is considered that the assets most likely to attract interest from the community are those which are surplus to requirements particularly if unused. The Council has only one such building which is earmarked for development in conjunction with adjoining land when it becomes vacant. Charities and community groups have from time to time occupied vacant industrial premises on a short term basis for specific fund raising schemes.

3.3 In theory community groups could express an interest in a wide range of Local Authority assets such as parks, Leisure Centres etc. Disposal could be by way of a lease which is often preferred by both parties.

3.4 The Council already supports many community groups, sporting clubs and voluntary organisations by leasing land (eg scouts, bowls clubs, football clubs, Mencap etc) and at least one building, the Maple Centre on Oxmoor, at nominal or low rents. Furthermore several areas of open space/amenity land and play areas are leased to parish councils and there is a proposal to transfer the open space in Kimbolton to the parish council.

3.5 If assets are managed well and the community is involved where appropriate then the impact could be small at least in the short term.

HOMELESSNESS AND THE HOUSING MARKET (Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery))

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 During its deliberations on the last quarterly monitoring report on the Corporate Plan, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) discussed the current national and local economic factors affecting the housing market and the associated level of demand for social rented housing. As a result the Panel requested a report on this and another housing matter. This was considered by the Panel on 6th January 2009. The report is attached as an Appendix hereto.

2. THE PANEL'S DELIBERATIONS

- 2.1 In the course of the deliberations it emerged that, although Huntingdonshire has not to date experienced the same increases in home repossessions that others have, there has been a significant rise in the number of customers presenting themselves to the Council for housing related assistance. This has necessitated the redeployment of resources to meet the level of demand. The Panel was impressed at the range and level of the initiatives being provided by Housing Services to help ameliorate the effects of the economic downturn in terms of preventing home repossessions and homelessness. These are summarised in paragraph 2.8 of the attached report.
- 2.2 The Panel also was informed that it is crucial for anyone experiencing financial difficulties to seek advice and take action at the earliest possible time. Members suggested that the Council should ensure that it is effectively informing the District's residents of the assistance the Council and its partner organisations is able to provide.
- 2.2 In addition, it became clear that the housing rental market is adversely affected by extreme economic conditions, be they positive or negative and, therefore, future level of demand could not be accurately predicted. The professional view is that a further increase in demand for housing services is likely. Given this situation, Members decided to draw this to the Cabinet's attention and request that Executive Councillors look sympathetically on future requests for additional resources to meet any further increase in demand for the Housing Department's services should it materialise.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The effects of the economic downturn are well known. The Scrutiny Panel has examined the local situation and has

concluded that the District Council has an extensive range of initiatives already in place designed to help those experiencing financial difficulties. Members are aware that the Executive Councillor for Housing and Health, together with officers, is monitoring the situation and they wish to ensure the Council is in a position to act if it worsens.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Report and Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery)
2nd December 2008 and 4th January 2009.

Contact **A Roberts**
Officer: **☎ 01480 388004**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
(SERVICE DELIVERY)**

6TH JANUARY 2009

**HOMELESSNESS AND THE HOUSING MARKET
(Report by the Head of Housing Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Corporate Plan Working Group recently considered a quarterly monitoring report on service delivery which identified achievements, issues and risks. When considering the report the Working Group raised two questions with regard to Housing Services. These were:

a) Given the current national and local economic factors affecting the housing market was the increase in demand for social rented housing a potential issue rather than an identified risk that the Council would have to manage to continue to achieve a low level of homelessness?

b) Is there anything the Council can do to help facilitate the remodelling of Coneygear Court if Granta Housing Society is unsuccessful in bidding for government funding to carry out these works?

1.2 It was requested by the Working Group that a report be submitted to the Service Delivery Scrutiny Panel, given that these areas fall within its remit.

1.3 As the demand for social rented housing is influenced by economic factors and these also have a direct relationship with the rates of homelessness in the district, this report also covers the initiatives and measures that have been put in place to try and prevent homelessness and so reduce demand.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Economic Factors

2.1 The demand for social rented housing is significantly affected by economic factors, both when the economy is booming and when there is an economic downturn. We have had a period of economic growth and increases in property prices that have priced many first time buyers out of the market. In these circumstances many people see social rented housing as their only realistic option and so demand increases.

- 2.2 We are now faced with an economic downturn and although property prices are reducing, the fact that unemployment is rising and the availability of mortgage products decreasing, many people still see social rented housing as their only realistic option. Added to this increasing unemployment can lead to more households falling into arrears with their mortgages, leading to higher repossession rates, and an increase in households coming to the Council as a result.
- 2.3 The Council has been successful over the last four years with reducing homelessness in the district by changing the way we deliver our housing advice service. This has involved restructuring to deliver a more proactive advice service that helps customers prevent their homelessness in the first place or helps them find alternative housing before they actually become homeless. This has been achieved by introducing a range of measures to highlight where there is the threat of homelessness at the earliest stage possible and then taking the most appropriate action to prevent it happening.
- 2.4 As a result households accepted as homelessness has reduced from 254 in 2004/05 to 146 in 2007/08. Unfortunately, the first 6 months of 2008/09 has seen 91 households accepted as homeless compared to 76 in the same period of the previous year, so if rates continue we are expecting an overall increase in homelessness this year.
- 2.5 The number of households where homelessness was prevented increased from 98 in 2005/06 to 138 in 2007/08, with the majority of these households helped to find private sector tenancies via the Rent Deposit/Rent In Advance scheme. We have already helped 129 households avoid homelessness in the first six months of this year compared to 52 in the same period of the previous year and so we can see the positive outcomes our prevention and options services are achieving.
- 2.6 Much of this has been achieved in a period of economic growth where there has been a buoyant private rented sector, and where we have managed to develop good relationships with private landlords and agents who have provided us with solutions to resolve some households' needs.
- 2.7 We now face a range of different problems that may affect households within the district and possibly lead to them seeking help from the Council. These primarily revolve around:
- owner occupiers facing repossession where they are struggling to pay their mortgage, perhaps because of unemployment or the end of more affordable fixed term mortgage deals, and
 - private sector tenants facing eviction as a result of their landlord choosing to sell the property due to their financial

situation or facing repossession if they have defaulted on the mortgage.

2.8 Where a private sector tenant is faced with eviction we try to assist with finding another tenancy in the private sector as this is often the most realistic way of preventing the household from becoming homeless. Where an owner occupier faces possible repossession there are a number of options that we explore with them to see if we can resolve their problems. Where we are not able to assist ourselves we refer to other agencies who can act on behalf of the household. Possible prevention options in these situations include:

- a) Negotiation with the mortgage lender – where someone approaches their lender and explains they are having difficulty paying their mortgage the lender has a range of hardship options they should consider. These include extending the term of the mortgage to make the monthly payments cheaper; moving the mortgage to an interest only deal; repayment ‘holidays’ and checking whether the customer has the best available mortgage deal for them. Where the customer has not made contact to discuss these options we advise that they should, assist them with this if necessary or direct them to CAB or Huntingdon Law Centre to assist them.
- b) Ensuring the lender has followed the pre-court possession protocol – the government has launched a protocol, agreed with the Council of Mortgage Lenders, that possession proceedings should only be taken as a last resort and then only when this protocol has been followed. Where a lender has not followed the protocol before applying for a Possession Hearing at the Court, this may be used as a ground for having the case adjourned. The purpose of the protocol is to prevent inappropriate possession action by lenders when there may still be legitimate ways in which possession may be prevented.
- c) Court desk service – the Council has commissioned Huntingdon Law Centre (HLC) to provide a Court Desk Service on Possession Hearing days at the County Court. This service commenced in November and its purpose is to ensure that households have representation at Possession Hearings and HLC liaises between the Court, lender and householder where there are still options to be explored that may prevent a Possession Order being granted. This is a pilot initiative for 18 months to see whether it provides positive outcomes.
- d) Mortgage rescue scheme – the government will introduce a national mortgage rescue scheme from January 2009. £200m has been pledged nationally to support up to 6,000 vulnerable owner-occupiers facing repossession, to remain in their home. This funding will be distributed through the Homes and Communities Agency with match funding (supported by rent or

equity loan charges) from provider Housing Associations. Further details of this scheme are awaited.

- e) Money and debt advice services – where a person has several debts and requires help managing these we refer them to CAB or Huntingdon Law Centre (HLC) who have specialist advisors to help. The advisors will help negotiate with lenders and prioritise debts with the aim of preventing the person losing their home. A debt advice service is an integral part of the mortgage rescue process and so it is essential that we ensure these services have the capacity to react quickly where mortgage rescue may be an option. The Council currently funds the CAB to provide these services but not HLC.
- f) Changes to the benefit system – the government has changed the rules for Income Support on mortgage interest payments. From January 2009, this benefit is available 13 weeks after making a claim, whereas previously it was only available after 39 weeks. Homeowners will be eligible for help on the first £200,000 of their loan, which is up from the previous limit of £100,000.

- 2.9 A further initiative announced by government at the beginning of December is the Homeowner Mortgage Support Scheme. Under this scheme households that experience a significant and temporary loss of income as a result of the economic downturn will be able to defer a proportion of the interest payments on their mortgage for up to two years. The government is working with lenders to encourage their participation in the scheme on the basis that the government offers a guarantee against the deferred payments. Further details of the final scheme are anticipated in the New Year and will be another option we can advise customers on to prevent them losing their home.

Re-modelling of Coneygear Court

- 2.10 Granta Housing Society owns and manages Coneygear Court, the main source of temporary accommodation available to the Council. This scheme has 21 units, with the main block having cluster flats around shared kitchens and bathrooms. This is an out-dated model of temporary accommodation and contributes to the Council's poor performance measured against the placement of families in shared hostel accommodation (a previous Best Value Performance Indicator). Plans have been drawn up with options to either refurbish this scheme, or demolish and re-build, which would provide self contained units. Granta has advised that to demolish and re-build this scheme would be the most cost effective option, at an estimated cost of £2.75m

3. IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 It is anticipated that the range of measures available to homeowners mentioned in paragraph 2.8 above will help prevent mortgage arrears becoming a significant cause of homelessness during this period of economic downturn. There are, however, likely to be circumstances where these options are not successful and at present we are not aware how many households this may apply to. The concern is that if there are large numbers of households where these options are not successful we may see an increase in the number of households approaching the Council for assistance under the terms of the homelessness legislation. If this were to happen it would have implications on the number of households we have to place into temporary accommodation, with the associated cost to the welfare of the household and financial cost to the Council.
- 3.2 The Council has previously been criticised for its performance against the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) measuring the average length of stay of families in hostel accommodation with shared facilities. The calculation of this BVPI is based on the Council's placement of families into Coneygear Court. Although this BVPI does not appear in the new set of National Indicators it will continue to be recorded as a local indicator and appear in the returns that are made to government on our homelessness work. It is therefore likely to remain a high profile area of our work.
- 3.3 The Council's performance in this area will only improve when Coneygear Court is remodelled to provide self contained units. The issue is identifying the capital funding for this work, by supporting a bid to the Homes and Communities Agency, by supporting this through the Council's own capital funding, or a combination of the two. A bid for funding via the Homes and Communities Agency is expected in the near future.

4. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Scrutiny Panel note:

- a) the initiatives in place to help prevent a rise in mortgage repossessions in the district, and
- b) the issues around identifying the capital funding to re-model Coneygear Court.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Service Delivery Plan (up to 30th September 2008)

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DISABILITY ACCESS STUDY (Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery))

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report sets out the origins, process and conclusions reached in the course of a study by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) on Disability Access.

1.2 To put the study into context, it has been estimated that approximately 12.5% of people nationally have some form of disability. These disabilities take a variety of forms. The recommendations at the end of this report have been designed to take this fact into account.

1.3 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 aims to end the discrimination that many disabled people face. This Act has been significantly extended. In order to enhance inclusiveness, it now gives disabled people rights in the areas of:

- employment;
- education;
- access to goods, facilities and services, including larger private clubs and transport services;
- buying or renting land or property, including making it easier for disabled people to rent property and for tenants to make disability-related adaptations, and
- functions of public bodies, for example issuing of licences.

The Act requires public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

1.4 A number of individuals have assisted the Panel in the course of the study. They are as follows:

Mr G Morris – consultant
Representatives of the Cambridgeshire Parliament
Town and Parish Councils
Gerald Riley, Access Officer for Cambridgeshire County Council
Gerri Bird, Forum Manager for Disability Cambridgeshire (Directions Plus)
Mrs J Farrow - The Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations.

The Panel is grateful to everyone who has contributed to the study.

2. ORIGIN OF THE STUDY

2.1 The Panel originally discussed the scope of a study on access for those with disabilities to premises, facilities and other sites in the District, excluding those provided by the District Council. Members looked at parking on pavements, the installation of dropped kerbs and access to buses as potential areas of investigation. It was decided initially to review the Council's existing policies in relation to disability equality and access and existing research carried out in this area before the precise remit of the study was decided upon. Following

this the Council's Disability Equality Scheme was endorsed by the Panel.

- 2.2 The research findings on which the Disability Equality Scheme was based were examined with the assistance of Mr G Morris, the consultant who undertook research for the Scheme. The aim was to identify possible avenues of study. In Mr Morris' view the principal challenges were improving public understanding of and attitudes towards those with disabilities. He also outlined the duties of facilities and service providers under the DDA.
- 2.3 Having discussed the prevalence of disability in the District and the Council's provisions in terms of facilities and of advice, the Panel highlighted improving enforcement of disabled parking bays, extending the hours bus passes could be used by the disabled, the Council's paperwork and advocacy services at Council offices as potential study areas. The Panel also referred to the benefits of introducing, for Council decisions, a dedicated group of consultees, representing those with learning, physical and sensory impairments, possible opportunities to promote the needs of those with disabilities through the Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Agreement and the County Council's role in this area.

3. CAMBRIDGESHIRE PARLIAMENT

- 3.1 The Panel received a presentation by a number of representatives of the Cambridgeshire Parliament on the work of Speaking Up, a Cambridge based provider of advocacy services for those with learning difficulties, mental ill health and other disabilities. In the course of the presentation reference was made to the experiences of those with disabilities concerning the accessibility of places and services and how improvements might be made in these respects, which included the provision of toilet facilities for those with high support needs, improvements to leisure, transport and employment opportunities and enforcement of parking in spaces allocated for Blue Badge holders.
- 3.2 The Panel discussed with the Parliament the Council's consultation procedure, the location and cost of disabled toilets, the Council's communications, including the benefits of producing Council information in a larger size print, and the possible introduction of advocacy services located in Huntingdonshire.
- 3.3 As has been said the provision of High Dependency Toilets was discussed. These are distinct from those provided for the disabled in that the latter are designed for lone wheelchair users, while the former are for assisted use. Such publicly available facilities are rare and indeed it is understood that, in England, they are found only in Bradford. It has been suggested to the Cabinet that the Papworth Trust might be approached on the question of demand for such a facility and whether the facility at Saxongate, Huntingdon might be made available for public use. The Cabinet endorsed the suggestion and the Papworth Trust have been formally approached. A reply has not yet been received. Progress will be reported in due course.

4. CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS AND TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

4.1 The Panel consulted Town and Parish Councils along with all District Council Members on a range of matters arising from the study. A questionnaire was circulated and 33 responses were received from Town and Parish Councils. This amounts to a 39% response rate, which generally should be regarded as a high rate of return.

4.2 Analysis now is given to those issues raised. The main concerns highlighted are as follows:

Buses

4.3 Many authorities reported on the infrequency and irregularity of public transport. It was observed that the type of bus provided was ill-equipped to cater for the needs of disabled passengers. The lack of transport generally and access to suitable vehicles such as buses were mentioned by most respondents, reflecting in particular the needs of the rural parishes. It was concluded that more low liner buses should be provided and that the need for appropriate dropped kerbs/pathways leading to buses should be addressed as currently they limit an individual's mobility.

4.4 Concerns have been registered regarding the hours in which holders of disabled bus passes can use their passes. It was also recorded that there should be a form of carer's bus pass for those who are required to travel with disabled individuals. Recommendations on bus passes appear in Section 10 of this report.

Information

4.5 It was reported that the majority of information surrounding the needs and requirements of disabled people was sought directly from disabled people themselves and members of the community in relation to friends or family with a disability. The District Council featured as a useful site for obtaining information; however, some authorities requested access to further information with regard to representation, service planning and the availability of funding. The need for education and training to improve awareness of disability access also was raised.

Funding

4.6 Funding and financial support was a common theme. It often appeared to be an issue that seemed to arise from a lack of information and confusion regarding claims. The need for better communication on available funding was a common finding. Although direct provision of grant aid is not exclusively the Council's responsibility, the Panel is of the view that more could be done to provide information and assistance with completing applications for funding. This has been taken up in a separate study by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) on grant aid.

Parking

4.7 Dedicated parking, greater penalties for anti-social parking in disabled (accessible) bays and adjustments to roads and paving

were highlighted as key solutions to many outstanding issues. The majority of authorities reported on the inconvenience of illegal parking, in particular, outside schools at peak times and local shops and the effect on members of the public in those areas. (See Sections 7 and 12).

5. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

5.1 The Panel received evidence from Gerald Riley, Access Officer for Cambridgeshire County Council, on the County Council's responsibilities under the DDA and on his role in ensuring the County Council complies with them. The County Council has three duties through its policies and practices as an employer, through the design and delivery of services and through the discharge of its public functions. In each of these areas the County Council has to demonstrate that they have been informed by the Act. With regard to accessibility in the built environment, the County Council has to ensure that those with a disability have been consulted as part of the design process. Every Head of Service has individual arrangements for involving disabled users in the development and monitoring of service plans.

5.2 Mr Riley stated that dropped kerbs are designed to accommodate wheelchairs of a certain size but that problems now arise as larger chairs are being manufactured. Problem areas can be reported either to the County Council or to the Environment and Transport Area Joint Committee. Mr Riley confirmed that maintenance standards take into account the DDA.

5.3 The Panel decided that the precise location of defective dropped kerbs and areas where dropped kerbs should be installed and their priority should be obtained from those who had responded to the survey of Town and Parish Councils and of Members. This information has been forwarded to the County Council either for action or identification of those areas that did not fall within its remit. In the case of the latter, Town and Parish Councils have been informed accordingly. Members also decided that a similar exercise should be carried out on parking practices within the District, with the findings being forwarded to the Police for comment. This has been done and feedback has been received from the police on action taken.

5.4 Councillor R W J Eaton has carried out consultations within his Ward on disability access and the findings have been taken into account during the study. He has suggested that the County Council should liaise with disabled groups to identify the best location of dropped kerbs and problems with pavements together with measures to alleviate them. This suggestion has been referred to the Transport and Access Sub-Group of the Growth and Infrastructure Thematic Group established under the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership.

6. DIRECTIONS PLUS

6.1 Gerri Bird, Forum Manager for Disability Cambridgeshire (Directions Plus), attended a Panel meeting to discuss the study. Disability Cambridgeshire's purpose is to provide information and advice to disabled people and / or older people and carers in Cambridgeshire. It offers short courses in disability awareness in accessible locations

around Cambridgeshire. It is also funded to undertake developmental work with voluntary and community organisations in Cambridgeshire and across the Eastern Region. Staff from Disability Cambridgeshire provide representation / liaison to a number of committees and working groups from local to Regional Assembly levels.

- 6.2 Mrs Bird outlined the problems she has experienced with incorrectly installed dropped kerbs and her perception of the causes of abuse of Blue Badge parking permits. The main points are summarised in the sections below.

7. BLUE BADGES

- 7.1 The Panel has obtained information from Cambridgeshire County Council on the application process and measures currently in place to identify abuses of Blue Badge permits and the enforcement that is undertaken. Mrs Bird stated that there is a need to introduce separate permits, which distinguish between those with temporary and permanent disabilities.

- 7.2 Having discussed the problems experienced by legitimate Blue Badge holders as a result of the abuses of the system, Members have noted the current position on the decriminalisation of parking. Although this is some way off yet, Members are of the view that now is the time to make representations that enforcement of Blue Badge parking should be formally recognised in any new arrangements. On a related matter Members recommend that the District Council should make clear that it undertakes enforcement of parking in disabled bays in the car parks it manages.

8. BLUE ROUTES

- 8.1 Councillor P K Ursell has suggested that there might be benefit in resurrecting Blue Routes, which assist those with disabilities in navigating their way round the District's towns. It was argued that they might have the benefit of influencing the County Council's pavement maintenance programme.

- 8.2 Despite extensive investigation, no trace of these routes has been found. As an alternative the Papworth Trust has been consulted on whether there are routes that exist which are regularly used by the disabled. However, the Trust has advised that it does not have such routes in the District. Even if blue routes had been found to have existed, it appears they are no longer in use. In addition, given that such guides would need to be regularly updated and that the need for them will be obviated if the recommendations of this study are implemented, it has been concluded that this suggestion should not be pursued.

9. ADVOCACY SERVICES

- 9.1 The Panel has discussed the provision of advocacy services around the District.

- 9.2 Mrs Bird confirmed that Disability Cambridgeshire already provides an advocacy service. The Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations provides a similar service.

- 9.3 The provision of advocacy services around the District was discussed with the Cambridgeshire Parliament. The Parliament has indicated that it would be prepared to make available representatives to provide an advocacy / advice service at Council premises.
- 9.4 It has been concluded that such services might also help address demand for information and for details of available funding from other organisations. It is suggested that the Council should initiate discussions on the provision of comprehensive joint advocacy / advice services and act as a catalyst to identify other opportunities for joint working between these organisations.

10. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- 10.1 With regard to public transport services, comments from Town and Parish Councils concerning the need for more low level buses and issues surrounding training for public transport employees on the needs of those with disabilities have been forwarded to bus operators. Disappointingly, despite an initial enquiry on their policies in these respects and a subsequent reminder, no replies have been received. It has been suggested to the County Council that these points should be included in future contracts for bus services. These consultation findings also have been sent to bus companies operating in the District. Representations on these lines have also been made to the Local Government Association. Alternatively, the District Council's Licensing section is in the process of carrying out consultations on the needs of the disabled from the point of view of the taxi industry. Given the reluctance of bus companies to respond to the need that has been demonstrated, this need might be addressed via the Council's taxi licensing service.
- 10.2 In addition, a suggestion that those who care for individuals with disabilities should be provided with free bus travel has been referred to the County Council. Carers UK, which is running a national campaign on this issue, has been informed of the support that exists in Huntingdonshire for this initiative.
- 10.3 A suggestion by the Cambridgeshire Parliament that bus timetables near bus sheltered should be lowered to enable those in wheelchairs to read them has been passed to the County Council.

11. CONSULTATION ON COUNCIL POLICIES

- 11.1 The Panel previously has suggested that the Council should introduce a list of organisations and individuals representing those with learning, physical and sensory impairments who would be involved as a matter of course in all consultations on policies. To reinforce this Mrs Bird has stressed that the Council should incorporate the views of those with disabilities into its policy making. There would be no obligation on consultees to respond but they would be given the opportunity to do so if they thought it necessary. Potential consultees have been approached. The Cambridgeshire Parliament has indicated that it would like to be included in the list of consultees as have the Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations and the Papworth Trust. A full list of consultees has been passed to the Council's Policy and Research Department for use in future consultations.

12. OTHER MATTERS

- 12.1 The Panel has given consideration to a government initiative to introduce a countywide coalition of disabled people which has been discussed with the Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations. Similar functions were performed by the Huntingdonshire Coalition of Disabled People who used to offer a range of local advocacy services to its stakeholders. It also organised networking events for members and carers of disabled people, training sessions for local retailers and consultation with members. Furthermore, it acted as a general point of contact for the community. The Coalition has now disbanded and some of its work has been taken on by Shopmobility. The Panel welcomes the extension of this initiative to Huntingdonshire but has asked the County Council to incorporate existing organisations already working in this area into its activities in complying with this duty.
- 12.2 During the initial stages of the study the Panel recognised the importance of the Council's documents being produced in larger size print. This idea, together with a number of other recommendations, has already been incorporated into the Council's new corporate identity.
- 12.3 Another idea that emerged at an early stage concerned the opportunities available to promote the needs of those with disabilities through the Strategic Partnership. This has been referred to the Growth and Infrastructure and Health and Wellbeing Thematic Groups of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership.

14. CONCLUSION

This has been an extensive study, which has taken a wide range of evidence. As a study that predominantly focussed on the external environment, much of the interest and many of the actions identified concern other organisations and these have already been implemented by way of recommendations to those organisations. As a result the Cabinet is requested to note:

- a) progress in respect of High Dependency Toilets (para. 3.3);
- b) the action taken to address defective or absent kerbs and unhelpful parking identified by Town and Parish Councils (para. 5.3);
- c) that the suggestion that consultation should be held with disabled groups on the location of dropped kerbs and problems with pavements has been referred to the Growth and Infrastructure Thematic Group of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership (para. 5.4);
- d) the suggestion has been made on the need for more low level buses and for training for public transport employees on the needs of those with disabilities (para. 10.1);
- e) that bus companies operating in the District and the Local Government Association have been informed of the study's findings on low level buses and on training for public transport employees on the needs of those with disabilities and that the

Council's licensing service is investigating ways in which local taxi services might meet these needs (para. 10.1);

- f) the action taken to draw attention to and support the case for carers to be provided with free bus travel (para. 10.2);
- g) the action to request lower bus timetables are installed near bus shelters (para. 10.3);
- h) that a list of consultees with an interest in disability matters has been compiled (para. 11.1);
- i) the action to promote the involvement of local organisations in work on meeting the needs of those with disabilities (para. 12.1);
- j) that the Growth and Infrastructure and Health and Wellbeing Thematic Groups of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership have been formally requested to promote the needs of those with disabilities in the District (para. 12.3); and
- k) the Scrutiny Panel's intention to inform Town and Parish Councils of the outcome of the study.

In addition, the Scrutiny Panel has identified a small number of actions that it would be more appropriate for the Cabinet to pursue. In this case, the Panel also

RECOMMEND

the Cabinet to

- a) make representations to the County Council that enforcement of Blue Badge parking should be formally recognised in any new arrangements for decriminalised parking (para. 7.2);
- b) make clear that the Council undertakes enforcement of parking in disabled bays in the car parks it manages (para. 7.2); and
- c) initiate discussions on the provision of comprehensive joint advocacy / advice services and act as a catalyst to identify other opportunities for joint working between these organisations (para. 9.4).

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Disability Equality Duty Research Findings

Disability study file held in the office of the Director of Central Services.

Reports and Minutes of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery)

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CABINET

29th JANUARY 2009

SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF ALCOHOL ABUSE (Report of the Overview and Scrutiny (Service Support))

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 9th September 2008, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) considered a briefing paper prepared by the Head of Administration on the night time economy in Huntingdonshire in the context of the Licensing Act 2003. The issue had been raised at a previous meeting as a possible area for the Panel to undertake a detailed investigation and the paper provided details of the provisions of the Act, together with information on its impact at both a national and local level.
- 1.2 From the information provided, the Panel concluded that the majority of establishments within the District in the main appeared to be well managed and there was little that could be achieved in undertaking a review of the implications of the Act and its practical application by the Council. However Members felt that there were sufficient issues in relation to the social consequences of alcohol abuse to merit an investigation. In particular, the Panel was aware of concerns in some quarters over the number of people congregating in St Ives town centre on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. With this in mind Councillors J T Bell, P M D Godfrey and Ms S L Kemp were appointed to a working group to address the situation.
- 1.3 At the request of Councillor L W McGuire, the Working Group was also asked to explore the Council's position with regard to the adoption and implementation of the Countywide Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2008 -2011.

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 At the outset of the review, the Working Group agreed that the specific purpose of their study should be to investigate the impact of excessive alcohol consumption on levels of anti-social behaviour and alcohol related crime within the District. Councillor Ms S L Kemp was appointed as the Group's rapporteur and to assist Members in their review, the following background information was obtained:-

- Cambridgeshire Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2008 – 11;

- Details of a presentation to all Members on 21st October 2008 by the Cambridgeshire Drug and Alcohol Advisory Team Co-ordinator;
 - Huntingdonshire Community Safety Plan 2008 – 2011;
 - Bassetlaw District Council: Review of Alcohol Related Anti Social Behaviour;
 - Hospital admissions for alcohol related harm;
 - the Local Authority Profile of Alcohol Related Harm; and
 - the Alcohol Harm Reduction Newsletter – East of England
- 2.2 As part of its investigations, the Working Group met the District Council's Community Safety Team Leader and received information on several ongoing initiatives being undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership to address the negative impact that behaviour related to alcohol consumption can have on the community. Details are attached at Appendix A.
- 2.3 In doing so, the Working Group has noted the inclusion of targets within the Community Safety Plan 2008 – 11 to address alcohol related anti-social behaviour and that the Partnership's contribution towards the Countywide Alcohol Strategy will enable actions to be put in place to address the consequences of alcohol misuse. The Working Group has particularly commended the work which the Partnership is undertaking with young people and has welcomed the introduction of a "Nightwatch" initiative in St Ives which is designed to tackle the issues of crime and disorder associated with the district based night time economy in the town centre to ensure a co-ordinated response is taken when dealing with the problem individuals.
- 2.4 Members also heard evidence from representatives of Cambridgeshire Constabulary and received detailed statistical information on alcohol related anti-social behaviour and crime in Huntingdonshire during 2007/08. Details of the way in which the Constabulary seeks to deal with these problems in both the town centres and villages was also provided. These included the use of additional patrols, changes in shift patterns, meetings with appropriate agencies and the use of Designated Public Place Orders to prevent the congregation of young people drinking alcohol. The Working Group has noted the Police's opinion that there is no particular problem in Huntingdonshire which is not reflected elsewhere in the country.
- 2.5 The Group was advised of the extensive range of powers available to enforcement agencies, which included the District Council's Licensing Section and the County Council's Trading Standards Service as well as the Police, to deal with alcohol related crime and disorder. Recent legislation also provides a new power for a police constable to direct a person aged 16 or above to leave a locality for up to 48 hours which

should provide an additional measure for the Constabulary to tackle the problems on the ground.

3. DELIBERATIONS

3.1 The Working Group received information on the number of instances of alcohol-related anti- social behaviour in Huntingdonshire which had been obtained from the County Council's Research Group. These are reproduced below:-

	St Ives		Huntingdon		St Neots		Huntingdonshire	
	No. of incidents	% of all ASB incs	No.of incidents	% of all ASB incs	No.of incidents	% of all ASB incs	No.of incidents	% of all ASB incs
Q1 (April – June 2007/8	122	19.5%	153	14.9%	103	14.7%	378	16.1%
Q2 (July – Sept 2007/08	156	21.1%	183	16.3%	129	14.1%	468	16.8%
Q3 (Oct – Dec 2007/08	135	22.4%	115	13.4%	94	12.8%	344	15.7%
Q4 (Jan – Mar 2007/08	92	16.5%	169	19.2%	82	12.2%	343	16.3%
Q1 (Apr – June 2008/09	139	18.6%	201	17.2%	106	15.3%	446	17.1%

3.2 It was clear to the Group that there are problems being experienced within the District in terms of alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour and that these are primarily concentrated in the 3 main town centres of Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots. What is less clear however is the extent to which this is a national phenomenon and how Huntingdonshire compares with the picture nationally.

3.3 The information supplied by the Police suggests that, while there are particular problem areas in Huntingdonshire, the situation is better than elsewhere in the country. This is further demonstrated by health statistics relating to hospital admissions:-

2002-2004, Deaths and Months of Life Lost from Alcohol Related Conditions

Male:	UK Average 9.55	Hunts 6.85
Female:	UK Average 5.14	Hunts 4.90

2004 – 05 Hospital Admissions for Alcohol Specific Conditions, per 100,000

Male: Uk Average 305.81 Hunts 169.25

Female: UK Average 144.62 Hunts 78.07

Hospital Admissions for alcohol specific conditions (aged under 18) 2002 -2005 per 100,000

Male: UK Average 48.97 Hunts 37.02

Female: UK Average:58.51 Hunts 41.5

- 3.4 No information is available for emergency admissions as Hinchingsbrooke Hospital does not currently record alcohol related Accident and Emergency treatment but the hospital is hoping to start a recording scheme similar to that adopted by Addenbrookes Hospital where a lead officer has been identified for this purpose.
- 3.5 While each of the market towns has its own characteristics in terms of the night time economy, St Ives is currently the busiest in terms of the number of people attracted to the town. Although this has meant that there are flourishing pub and club based entertainments in the town, it is apparent that this has also presented some adverse effects. The Police are sufficiently concerned to seek to obtain additional funding to direct two additional officers specifically to deal with the town centre at weekends and both the Community Safety Team and the Police objected to a planning application for a night club expansion earlier in the year on the grounds of the impact on crime and disorder and the capacity of the town centre to cope with additional late night outlets. Moreover the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) has recommended Cabinet to review the street cleansing regimes to overcome the problems of litter on Sundays caused by Saturday evening entertainment.
- 3.6 Notwithstanding those concerns, the Group has been informed that the Council has not been asked to review its Statement of Licensing Policy which states that there is no problems in terms of the cumulative impact of licensed premises in the District, nor has any responsible authorities or interested persons in the form of residents and businesses asked the Council to review an existing premises licence on the grounds of crime and disorder or public nuisance in the town centres, or indeed elsewhere in the District.
- 3.7 The Working Group noted that the other primary aspect of concern in relation to anti-social behaviour is under-age drinking in public places which is not restricted to the towns and is an unfortunate practice in many of Huntingdonshire's villages. Clearly this is not restricted to the

District alone and is common throughout the country. The Trading Standards service has recently completed an exercise to target sales to under 18s in St Neots and the District Council's own Licensing Section issues guidance and advice, especially to small retailers concerning alcohol sales to the under 18s.

3.8 To address these issues, the Working Group has been informed that a Countywide Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy was approved by Cambridgeshire Together in September 2008. The Strategy is designed to bring together relevant organisations in a multi-agency approach to reduce the harm caused by alcohol to individuals, families and communities. Supporting action plans set out a number of key tasks for the next three years to tackle the problems which include community safety, crime and anti-social behaviour and children and young people. The details of which are set out in Appendix B with several specifically targeting the control of violence and anti-social behaviour, i.e

- the implementation and support of neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood level working;
- appropriate use of enforcement measures such as Dispersal Orders and Designated Public Place Orders;
- Effectively dealing with alcohol related anti-social behaviour; and
- Developing and implementing targeted local action plans.

There are also proposals for diversionary and educational work with young people.

3.9 The Group welcomed the preparation of the Strategy as a way of reducing the harm that alcohol currently causes across Cambridgeshire. There is a plethora of organisations currently engaged in this field and Members acknowledged the potential problems of effective co-ordination. The actions are wide ranging and the Working Group was unable to suggest any proposals that had not already been identified and included. The action plans do contain performance indicators and milestones and the Working Group felt that it would be helpful for information on achievements against the targets to be made available more widely as they develop.

3.10 The Group considered the District Council's position with regard to the adoption and implementation of the Countywide Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy in the light of the remarks in paragraph 1.3 above. In doing so, the Group has noted that both the District Council and the Local Strategic Partnership are supportive of the Strategy. However the latter decided not to support funding of the strategy implementations as an investment proposal for reward monies from the Local Public

Service Agreement given the high demand for this funding and concerns as to whether this would produce any added value in Huntingdonshire over and above the practical initiatives clearly being implemented by the Police, District Council and other partners.

- 3.11 The Group has received information on the wide range of enforcement powers available to the Police and other responsible authorities to deal with crime, disorder and public nuisance associated with alcohol consumption. Details are available at <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/publication-search/drug-strategy/alcoholguide?view=Binary>. Parliament has added to those powers recently in further legislation in a reaction to the perception that longer opening hours have led to greater violence and anti-social behaviour in town centres and other communities. This has included the designation of alcohol disorder zones, the use of which has been considered recently by the Licensing Committee and Cabinet and discounted.
- 3.12 One of the more helpful powers available to the Council is the use of Designated Public Place Orders which prevents alcohol consumption in a public place. Only one Order has been made to date by the Council which has designated an area in St Ives where problems were occurring but it is open to local communities to ask for other areas to be designated if documentary evidence of problems can be provided. The Police also can seize alcohol from a person under 18 years of age under the Confiscation of Alcohol (Young Persons) Act 1997. It appeared to the Group that there were adequate powers available to the Police and other agencies but there was some doubt as to whether a sufficiently proactive approach was being taken by enforcement agencies, possibly as a result of limited resources.
- 3.13 With regard to the impact of licensed premises in town centres and elsewhere, the Group has noted that the Licensing Act 2003 provides an opportunity for members of the public and responsible authorities to initiate a review of a premises licence or club premises certificate if they have concerns that one or more of the licensing objectives such as the prevention of crime and disorder and public nuisance are not being met. Unless a review is triggered a licence or certificate will continue in perpetuity unless amended or surrendered by the licence or certificate holder and the Licensing Authority has no discretion to act itself under the legislation other than to enforce the provisions of the Act and ensure compliance with licence conditions. However since implementation of the Licensing Act 2003 in November 2005, only 2 applications for reviews have been received, both of which were made

by the Police because of the evidence of drug dealing in licensed premises.

- 3.14 As no reviews have been initiated by the public, the Group has emphasised a need to ensure that members of the public are aware of their ability to challenge existing licences and the mechanism by which they can do so. Huntingdonshire is not unique in this respect as research has shown that the freedoms introduced by the Act are being well used but that the powers to tackle problems are not sufficiently well known and taken advantage of.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Working Group has acknowledged that problems with alcohol related anti-social behaviour and criminal activity are evident within the District. However from the evidence available, the Group is satisfied that the situation in Huntingdonshire is less problematic than in many parts of the country.
- 4.2 The powers available to the Police and other enforcement agencies are wider ranging and there is a plethora of organisations involved in tackling the impact and implications of excessive alcohol consumption. The Group has commended the initiatives which are being undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership and is interested in the results of the "Nightwatch" initiative in St Ives if the Police can obtain the funding for the additional resources. The Group has also welcomed the development of the Countywide Alcohol Strategy and the associated action plan for tackling a host of specific issues. However the sheer scale of the action plan with its multitude of actions and targets is ambitious and the Working Group is concerned that there is sufficient co-ordination among the various enforcement and voluntary agencies. To that extent the Working Group shared the reservations of the Huntingdonshire Local Strategic Partnership about the use of LPSA reward grant in implementation of the Strategy.
- 4.3 The Group recognise that there is little in the way of additional initiatives that they can identify to add to those that are already in place. Nevertheless there is some concern as to whether effective use is being made of the full extent of the enforcement available and whether enforcement agencies should adopt a more proactive approach by using those powers to tackle the effects of alcohol misuse and public disorder. This is coupled with a need to ensure that members of the public are aware of their ability to initiate a review of an existing licence if they have concerns that the licensing objectives are not being met.

- 4.4 Having considered the Working Group's report, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel concurred with the outcome of their deliberations. However, the Panel suggested that the original recommendation c) should be strengthened to emphasise the importance of enforcement agencies making full use of the powers available to them to tackle the effects of alcohol misuse and resultant public disorder. This has been incorporated into the recommendations below.
- 4.5 During the Panel's discussions, Councillor L W McGuire, outlined his continuing concerns at the Local Strategic Partnership's decision not to support funding of the implementation of the countywide strategy as an investment proposal for reward monies from the Local Public Service Agreement (see paragraph 3.10). He expressed the view that supporting the initiative would help the various enforcement and voluntary agencies in developing a co-ordinated approach to tackling the problems associated with alcohol assumption.
- 4.6 The Panel has agreed to revisit the study towards the end of the year to review progress made towards the achievement of the Countywide action plan, the Nightwatch project and the availability of statistics from Hinchingsbrooke Hospital on alcohol related accident and emergency treatment.
- 4.7 The Panel therefore agreed that the Cabinet be

RECOMMENDED

- a) to welcome and encourage the actions being taken by the various agencies in an attempt to reduce the impact of excessive alcohol consumption on levels of anti-social behaviour and alcohol related crime within the District;**
- b) to endorse the Cambridgeshire Alcohol Strategy 2008 – 2011 and request that Cambridgeshire Together be commissioned to prepare regular reports on progress towards achievements of the action plan;**
- c) to instruct the Head of Administration to liaise formally with enforcement agencies to encourage them to make full use of the powers available to them to tackle the effects of alcohol misuse and resultant public and to carry out this work in a more co-ordinated way; and**
- d) to request that the District Council's Licensing Section ensure that local residents are aware of the opportunities available to them under the Licensing Act 2003 to initiate reviews of premises licences and club**

premises certificates where they are experiencing problems caused by public disorder emanating from these premises.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) on 9th September 2008 and 13th January 2009.

Notes of the meetings of the Working Group held on 14th October, 3rd November and 24th November 2008.

Cambridgeshire Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2008-11

Presentation to Council Members by Cambridgeshire DAAT Co-ordinator

Alcohol Related Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime in Huntingdonshire January 2007 to January 2008.

Briefing Paper by the Community Safety Team Leader

Huntingdonshire Community Safety Plan 2008 -2011

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Appendix A

The following alcohol related projects have been put in place by the Community Safety Partnership over the period 2008-09:-

- Project to work with young people at risk of using or under the influence of alcohol and those young people that are committing acts of anti-social behaviour whilst under the influence of alcohol. Focused in identified hotspots, these being Yaxley, St Neots and Ramsey. The project will also receive referrals for young people living anywhere in Huntingdonshire. This project will focus on offering education, advice and support to young people using or at risk of using.
- Commissioned from **DrinkSense** at a cost of £11k funded by the Safer Stronger Communities Fund (SSCF) and a contribution in kind of officer time – **total £11k invested + Drinksense Officer Time** in 2008/9.
- Targeting young people using both drugs and alcohol. Also targets young people at risk, e.g. family members with a history of alcohol usage and associated offending. Targeted hotspots are Yaxley, St Neots (including Eynesbury) and St Ives. This project will enable experienced staff to carry out detached projects in the identified areas in partnership with the Locality Teams as well as providing training for those working with young people to enable them to recognise the signs of drug/ alcohol use. This project welcomes referrals for young people living anywhere in Huntingdonshire. This project will focus on offering education, advice and support to young people using or at risk of using.
- Commissioned from **DIAL DRUG LINK** at a cost of £18k match funded by the Safer Stronger Communities Fund (SSCF) – **total £36k invested** in 2008/9.
- A pilot scheme that pubs and clubs in St Ives can sign up to, that will enable them to work together with key agencies to address incidents of alcohol related crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. As part of the scheme an exclusion policy will be introduced, this will involve issuing 'yellow cards' to offenders; two yellow cards will result in a ban from licensed premises throughout St Ives. Members of the scheme will be issued with radios so that they have direct contact to each other as well as the Police and the District Council CCTV Control Room.
- Commissioned from **HBAC (Nightwatch)** - £11,760 Safer Stronger Communities Fund (SSCF) and £10k the Basic Command Unit (BCU) Fund (Cambridgeshire Constabulary) – **total £21,670 invested** in 2008/9.

- Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO) are also being used to minimise the impact of nuisance street (alcohol) drinkers.
- The HDC CCTV vehicle is being used on a weekly basis to patrol identified urban and rural hotspots within the District where young people are known to be congregating and consuming alcohol, this work is carried out in partnership with the police to enable the confiscation of alcohol to take place. At this time, where appropriate Guardian Awareness Programme (GAP) letters are issued and on some occasions, young people are escorted home to their parents.
- Targeted policing operation known as Operation Kyllachy that will fund additional police officer hours to enable them to patrol specific/ identified areas/ licensed premises at key times to tackle alcohol related anti-social behaviour and violent crime.
- Identified by Central Division and supported by the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership and funded by the Basic Command Unit (BCU) Fund - £5k – **total £5k invested** in 2008/ 09.
- A number of divisionary activity schemes to be held at times when young people may be susceptible to trying / using alcohol. Fusion holiday scheme - £10k – Basic Command Unit (BCU) Fund – Street Sports Project in Yaxley - £2,800 – Basic Command Unit (BCU) Fund – The Buzz Project - £2k – Basic Command Unit (BCU) Fund – **total £14,800 invested** in 2008/ 09.

APPENDIX B

No	County Action	Performance Indicator/ Milestone	Lead	Date by
2.1	<p>Community Safety, Crime and Anti Social Behaviour</p> <p>Target irresponsible promotion and sales</p>	<p>Work with OfCOM and the Advertising Standards Authority; industry self-regulation bodies such as the Portman Group; and the alcohol industry itself through a range of codes and standards</p> <p>Develop intelligence by working in partnership with local agencies</p> <p>Work with businesses to provide education and training in the area of underage sales</p> <p>Following educational work, undertake test purchasing activities and prosecute persistent offenders</p> <p>Evaluate and improve the effectiveness of these bodies and take action and tackle the irresponsible sale and promotion of alcohol. Where appropriate, action can be taken at a local level by Licensing Authorities on a case by case basis where there is evidence of a causal link between irresponsible retailing in an individual premises and threats to licensing objectives such as crime and disorder</p> <p>Reduce the number of premises illegally selling alcohol to young people under 18 to 25% by 2009/10 (Benchmark 40%, 35% - 07/08, 30% - 08/09)</p> <p>Maintain sales of alcohol to minors at randomly sampled premises below 15%</p>	<p>All District CDRPs</p> <p>Trading Standards</p> <p>Police</p> <p>CDAAT</p> <p>On going</p>	<p>Sept 2010</p> <p>Sept 2010</p> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> <p>Sept 2010</p> <p>"</p>
2.2	<p>Monitor and assess the performance in policing and community safety and the services delivered by the police working on their own or in partnership, as part of overall performance management arrangements being developed by other</p>	<p>Align local frameworks (e.g. criminal justice, local authorities and transport) to Home Office frameworks</p> <p>Develop a data capture system (i.e. Cardiff Model) to establish accurate linked picture of victim (age/gender), date/time, location, weapon, injury, assailant (age/gender), ?repeat offender, relationship between victim/assailant and police report</p> <p>Integrate APACS vision with policy, delivery and support functions plus</p>	<p>Police</p>	<p>April 2010</p> <p>"</p> <p>Sept 2010</p>

	partners	<p>associated regimes related to good practice, inspection and audit</p> <p>Support a balanced regime of accountability, building on the roles – including any collaborative arrangements – of partners locally, regionally and nationally</p> <p>Cover policing and community safety issues in a balanced way which reflects relative seriousness and which minimises data demands on partners</p> <p>Make best use of performance data, diagnostic data and professional judgements in producing analysis and assessments which:</p> <p>(a) show whether services are effective, equitable and provide value-for-money and whether they are perceived as such</p> <p>(b) reflect relevant Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and other strategic priorities, standards and targets as well as performance against priorities for improvement selected locally</p> <p>(c) use data focused on results (outcomes) but with the capability to use data on inputs, processes or outputs and</p> <p>(d) can monitor implementation of key operational strategies such as neighbourhood policing, alcohol misuse enforcement</p> <p>Communicate data and assessments in a timely manner and in a way which:</p> <p>(a) demonstrate service delivery to citizens, communities and opinion-formers so as to promote visibility, accountability and responsiveness and</p> <p>(b) describe performance to service providers so as to support day-to-day management.</p>	<p>On going</p> <p>“</p> <p>“</p> <p>April 2011</p>
2.3	<p>Reduce the percentage of the public who perceive alcohol use or drunk and rowdy behaviour to be a problem in their area</p> <p>Make communities safer</p>	<p>Develop questionnaire/crime audits/Placed Survey relating to public perception of alcohol related crime and disorder</p>	<p>Sept 2010</p> <p>CDRP Police</p>
2.4	<p>Make communities safer</p>	<p>Tackle crime and the key drivers of offending, reducing the disorder and anti-social behaviour associated with alcohol</p> <p>Tackle the irresponsible sale or promotion of alcohol</p>	<p>On going</p> <p>“</p>
2.5	<p>Reducing the harms caused to the community as a result of associated crime, disorder and</p>	<p>Focus prevention, information and support, and where appropriate the criminal justice system at the minority of drinkers who cause or experience the most harm to themselves, their communities and their families. These are: 18–24</p>	<p>On going</p> <p>Police Probation CJS</p>

	anti-social behaviour	year-old binge drinkers; young people under 18 who drink alcohol; and harmful drinkers Measurably reduce violence against the person offences committed in the town/city centres, recognised and identified 'hop spots' relating to the consumption of alcohol at night, particularly on Friday and Saturdays Develop a combination of penalties and health and education interventions to drive home messages about risks associated with alcohol and to promote behavioural change Measure the indicators for reducing violent crime and disorder, especially assault with injury Measure the indicator for reducing the percentage of the public who perceive drunk and rowdy behaviour to be a problem in their area Joint work with police to ensure relevant indicators are embedded within their plans Develop systems for data collection and analysis from a range of multi-agency sources within the criminal justice system	A+E	Annually
2.6	Sharpen criminal justice for crime and anti-social behaviour	Pilot screening and brief interventions in criminal justice settings Reduce alcohol consumption for all those given brief advice in custody, at 3-month follow-up Measurably reduce offending rate	Police Probation CJS A+E CDAAT	Sept 2010 “ “ “ “ April 2010
2.7	Implement routine identification when people are arrested and in custody, or in other criminal justice settings, and provide brief advice to those identified	Liaise with the relevant local authority Community Safety Officer/ASB Officer to monitor cautions and ensure relevant information for consideration Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) for individuals. Agree protocols between police, Crown Prosecution Service and treatment provider	Police Probation CJS A+E CDAAT	Sept 2011 Annually
2.8	Implement conditional cautioning for low-level and persistent alcohol related offences	Develop a systematic and criteria based approach to increase the number of conditional cautions given and Alcohol Treatment Requirements (ATR)	Police Probation CJS A+E CDAAT	April 2010 “

		Reduce offences		
2.9	Agree and implement a multi-agency approach to tackling street drinking	Implement multi-agency tailored approach to tackling street drinking to the needs of the area in which it occurs.	CDRP ALL	April 2011

	Local Action	Performance Indicator/ Milestone	Lead	Date by
Children, Young People and Families				
3.1	All young people to have access to appropriate alcohol misuse interventions across Cambridgeshire	<p>Ensure a countywide joined-up approach to alcohol services for young people</p> <p>Implement robust care planning and co-ordination of care pathways across the treatment systems agencies to improve client transfers between agencies and reduce unplanned discharges from the treatment/intervention system</p> <p>Increase the capacity of Alcohol Outreach Workers for young people ensuring equity and parity across the county</p>	<p>YOUS CAMHS Drinksens e PCT Primary Care Acute Trusts</p> <p>ALL</p>	<p>Sept 2010</p> <p>“</p> <p>Sept 2011</p> <p>On going</p>
3.2	Young people actively engaged in the planning and commissioning of alcohol services	Actively engage with specialist and non- specialist providers/agencies who come into contact with children and young people	ALL	On going
	Tackle underage alcohol consumption town/city centres and reduce those negative effects of underage drinking such as harm to young people and society (including anti-social behaviour and crime and disorder)	Support and develop the network: Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) Increase joint working, partnership membership and liaison with key agencies to ensure comprehensive sign up and sustainability (particularly around re Build on and take 'lessons learnt' from the Huntingdonshire Pilot to roll programme out across the county. Use this joint approach to work within its three core themes addressing; Education, Enforcement and Public Perception	ALL	On going
3.3	Improve the health and safety of children and young people in relation to alcohol misuse	<p>Year on year measurable percentage increase of schools achieving 'Healthy Schools' status (50% at 2006/07)</p> <p>All schools to be 'working towards' the standards' by 2009</p> <p>Reduce the number of young people who have had an alcoholic drink in past</p>	ALL	<p>Annually</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>“</p>

		week to 35% by 2009 (38% at 2006/07)			“
3.4	Specialist alcohol services to support delivery of the PSHE curriculum in schools and other educational settings	<p>Reduce the number of young people whose intake of units in past week was over 14 to 4% by 2009 (5% at 2006/07)</p> <p>Support the on going delivery and development of the Cambridgeshire Community Drug and Alcohol Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parents and community drug and alcohol awareness evenings • The PSHE Schemes of Work for PSHE (Primary Schools) • Personal Development (Secondary Schools, Special; Schools and PRUs) • The Life Education programme in primary schools <p>Each district to measurably increase the number of schools receiving PSHE sessions, including delivery of STAY campaign and links to wider risk taking e.g. sexual health</p> <p>Each district to measurably increase the year on year number of PSHE sessions delivered in schools</p> <p>Each district to measurably increase the number of Pupil Referral Units receiving PSHE/ number of sessions delivered</p>	ALL	On going	“
3.5	Improve provision of Young Users and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to vulnerable children, particularly in vulnerable circumstances and for those placed out of county	<p>All stakeholders to work with YOUS and CAMHS to continue work through service transformation to improve waiting times to assessment and treatment for children with mental health problems, so that the national target for referral to treatment of 18 weeks is fully achieved for all children</p> <p>All partner agencies to consider how they can contribute through their mainstream activity and resources towards sustaining and developing preventive work with young people over a longer time scale</p> <p>Training programme for frontline workers to be amalgamated with a wider OCYPS programme for young people's workers. This will be a staged process that should eventually be mapped against job descriptions.</p>	ALL	Sept 2010 April 2010 April 2011	“
3.6	Provide a consistent, high quality universal entitlement programme of alcohol education for all young people aged 4-18 years	<p>Identify those young people most at risk of failing to reach their potential because of alcohol misuse and provide tailored support for them</p> <p>Focus prevention, information and support, and where appropriate the criminal justice system at the minority of drinkers who cause or experience the most</p>	ALL	On going	“

		harm to themselves, their communities and their families. These are: 18–24 year-old binge drinkers; young people under 18 who drink alcohol; and harmful drinkers			“
		Deliver information on alcohol at an appropriate level to ensure a consistent, county-wide approach to delivering messages on substance misuse, in particular cannabis and alcohol		ALL	On going
3.7	Young travellers not in mainstream school to have access to alcohol education	Sustain and deliver targeted PSHE sessions with young travellers where required Achieve 25 young travellers engaged in project work by 2009 Proactive encouragement of parents to attend to ensure opportunities for family based learning		ALL	April 2009 On going
3.8	Follow guidance for social care staff on appropriate information resources	All staff responsible for ‘Looked After’ children to be offered information and support on alcohol as part of screening for substance misuse		ALL	April 2010
3.9	Reduce by 45% (by 2009) the teenage conception rate (under 18 year olds) per 1,000 population aged 15-17 years	Address risk-taking behaviour related to alcohol use through sexual health programme		ALL	April 2010
3.10	Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success	Establish referral baseline to treatment services for under 18s based upon current definitions and guidance Support and train Tier 1 services in the identification of levels of alcohol use in children and adolescents who are presenting overtly for help		ALL	“ April 2011
3.11	Reduce the harms caused to the development, achievement and well-being of young people and families	Address alcohol misuse amongst young people through early intervention with those we know to be most vulnerable Identify and support the most at risk families who are experiencing multiple problems, where parental alcohol misuse is often a key factor		ALL	On going “
3.12	Reduce harms to children of alcohol misusing parents	Increase annually number of schools offering alcohol awareness sessions for parents and carers		ALL	Annually
3.13	Children and young people are supported to make healthier choices	Measurably increase number of parents receiving information about the effects of substance misuse and where they can get help, support and advice Alcohol and sexual health services to measurably reduce the link between alcohol and unprotected sex leading to teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases		ALL	“ Annually

		<p>Intensive Assertive Outreach worker to work with young people to explore options around pregnancy and where appropriate prevent second pregnancies</p> <p>Alcohol Young People Service to promote awareness of the risks associated with alcohol use to allow young people and their parents to make informed choices</p>		On going
3.14	Children and Young People have the Best Possible Emotional Health	<p>Intensive Assertive Outreach project to work with young people to measurably improve emotional health. Accessible specialist services recognising the diverse needs of those presenting are delivered and address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting times for referral and treatment • Crisis assessment for those who self harm • Services for those with learning disabilities • Services for those in care • Specialist services for 16-17 year olds 	ALL	On going
3.15	Vulnerable Children and Young People and their parents are supported to achieve the best possible outcomes	<p>Education, Prevention and Engagement Workers to work in Children's Homes and develop links with the Travelling Communities to measurably increase the numbers of engaged hard to reach groups.</p> <p>Targeted groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looked after children • Children with disabilities • LGBT young people • Children from Gypsy and Travelling Communities • Young Carers <p>Ensure outreach is adequately resourced; making best use of the preventive role of youth services; strengthening support for young carers, young people referred to PRUs, care leavers and children of substance misusing parents</p>	ALL	Annually
3.16	Improve the Education and Information on Drug and Alcohol Issues for Young People aged 11-18	<p>Adopt the recommendations of the Cambridgeshire County Council Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee: December 2007</p>	All	Annually
				2011

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CABINET

29TH JANUARY 2009

GRANT AID (Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery))

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery), 3rd April 2007, decided to undertake a study on capital and revenue grant aid schemes operating across the Council. The suggestion for the study emerged from the Panel's previous investigations into the Small Scale Environmental Improvements Schemes, where the recommendations arising from the study had been endorsed by the Cabinet and implemented by the Council.
- 1.2 Members of the Small Scale Environmental Improvements Working Group were therefore re-appointed to undertake the study on grant aid; that is Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, P G Mitchell and J S Watt. In addition, former District Councillor D A Giles was appointed on to the Working Group and assisted with the investigations until April 2008. Councillor P G Mitchell was nominated *rapporteur* for the Working Group.
- 1.3 Discussions have been held with a number of relevant District Council Officers and the Working Group is grateful to them for the support provided during the course of their investigations.

2. AIMS OF THE WORKING GROUP

- 2.1 The Working Group was tasked with examining the following:-
 - the purpose of the scheme having regard to the Council's priorities contained in Growing Success;
 - the criteria for assessing applicants' eligibility under each scheme;
 - the methods adopted to publicise the availability of grant funding;
 - the application process; and
 - Officer / Member involvement during the approval process.
- 2.2 In addition to the above, the Working Group decided to investigate external sources of funding, specifically, the level of funding attracted by the Council and the application procedure. Further information on this is included within the Appendix.
- 2.3 One of the main objectives of the study at the outset was to develop a single website area for all grant applications offered by the Council. At present the different grant application schemes are listed on separate sections of the Council's website.

3. WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

- 3.1 The Working Group met on a number of occasions over the ensuing months and interviewed the following District Council Officers:-

Mr Steve Plant – Head of Housing Services
Mr Frank Mastrandrea - Policy and Enabling Officer
Mr Keith Tayler – Private Sector Housing Officer
Mr Steve Ingram – Head of Planning Services
Mr Richard Probyn – Planning Policy Manager
Mr I Leatherbarrow – Head of Policy and Strategic Services
Dr Sue Lammin – Head of Environmental and Community Health Services
Mr Dan Smith – Community Team Manager
Mrs Kathy Shaw – External Funding Officer

- 3.2 The Working Group based their deliberations on the evidence gathered from their investigations. The section below summarises the Working Group's findings.

4. WORKING GROUP FINDINGS

- 4.1 The District Council operates a number of capital and revenue grant aid initiatives, which are available to a wide range of stakeholders across the District. These include small voluntary community groups / organisations right through to large organisations who employ their own staff. Additionally, under some schemes individuals seeking support and assistance have the opportunity to apply for grant aid.

- 4.2 Further details of the types of capital and revenue grant aid schemes offered by the Council are attached as an Appendix hereto. The Appendix indicates the budget for the 2008/09 financial year, the objectives of each scheme, how each scheme is funded and the application and approval process.

- 4.3 The following sections identify a number of issues that arose in the course of the study.

(a) The Council's Corporate Priorities

The Working Group is satisfied that each of the schemes referred to within the Appendix has clear links to one or more of the Council's priorities identified in Growing Success. Members have, therefore, concluded that all grant aid schemes contribute towards the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan.

(b) The Criteria for Each Scheme

- 4.4 The Working Group has reviewed all the schemes' criteria. Members have concluded that in general terms, the specified criteria for each of the schemes available is clear for the type of grant that is available. The Working Group is, therefore, satisfied with the criteria specified for each scheme.

- 4.5 In addition, Members of the Working Group have noted the statutory obligations placed upon the Council to offer Disabled Facilities Grants / Loans to residents within Huntingdonshire.

(c) Methods Adopted to Publicise the Availability of Grant Funding

4.6 On the whole, the Working Group is satisfied that all grant aid schemes are appropriately publicised via a number of means, including:-

- District Council's Website
- Local Press
- District Wide Publication
- Council Tax Leaflet
- Mailings to Town and Parish Councils and Community Groups / Organisations
- General Advice from District Council Officers

4.7 The Working Group has identified a need to generate more awareness on the availability of the grants, particularly, amongst Ward Members. It was felt that this knowledge would help Members in their role as Ward Councillors. As highlighted previously within the report, this may be achieved through the designation of a single area on the Council's website where details of all grant schemes are made available.

4.8 The Working Group has discussed the range of services offered by the Voluntary Sector. Whilst not directly related to the Working Group's studies, a consensus amongst the Working Group was that Members are unaware of the range of work being undertaken by the Voluntary Sector. As a result a suggestion has been made that this information should be circulated to all Members.

(d) The Application Process

4.9 The Working Group has been advised that three processes exist by which funding is allocated to other organisations. It is by application, commissioning or automatically rolled over by the Council. Each of these now is discussed.

4.10 The Working Group has been provided with details of the recent introduction by the Cabinet of Voluntary Sector Commissioning (Minute No. 07/59 refers). This dispensed with much of the traditional discretionary grant aid schemes (revenue) and replaced them with five year commissioning agreements with the following organisations :-

- Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations
- Hunts Federation of Volunteer Bureaux
- Huntingdonshire Citizens Advice Bureaux
- Huntingdon Shopmobility
- Bedford Pilgrims Housing Association

A Service Level Agreement between the District Council and each of the above currently is in place. A traditional grant scheme still exists for capital projects.

4.11 The Working Group has examined the effects of the decision to terminate discretionary revenue grants in the form of the Leisure Grants and Other Community Grants, which previously were available to the local community. While the budget provision still exists, it is now used to commission organisations to carry out activities that meet the Council's objectives via

service level agreements. Members are of the view that there needs to be greater transparency in the way these service level agreements operate. This could be achieved if Members are able to review the returns submitted by the organisations covered by the service level agreements. The Working Group is willing to undertake this work as part of its follow up work on this study. Members also have registered concern that discretionary revenue funding is no longer available to local organisations (including parish councils) operating in parishes but they would like to review the position in light of evidence on the way the service level agreements have worked.

- 4.12 Having regard to the capital grant aid that is available for Local Leisure Projects, the Working Group has concluded that the time period of two months is not sufficient for applicants to submit their proposals to the District Council. A suggestion has, therefore, been made to extend this time period to three months.
- 4.13 In terms of the grants that are automatically rolled over (with inflation), the Working Group has revealed that, for example, applications for new transportation schemes are made in writing to the Head of Planning Services, who is responsible overall for determining their outcome. These schemes have an historical basis and, to date, have not been subject to review. It is suggested that the Working Group should extend its work and carry out a thorough review of these. The Head of Planning Services has concurred with this suggestion in respect of transportation grants, as there is currently no formal application process or scoring criteria. The Working Group is of the view that these should form parts of any grant scheme.
- 4.14 A study on Town Centre Partnerships was completed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) in March 2008. As a result of their investigations, the District Council has now entered into a three year funding arrangement with each of the Partnerships. Prior to the study, funding towards the Partnerships had been agreed on an annual basis.

(e) Officer / Member Involvement in the Approval Process

- 4.15 With the exception of Local Leisure Project Grants, which are determined by the relevant Executive Councillors, all other application based schemes are predominantly approved by Officers, often after consultation with the relevant Executive Councillor. The Working Group has been advised that, dependant on the scheme in question, applications are either assessed against selection criteria or through a points scoring system. Applicants for housing grants may undergo a means tested assessment and / or an Occupational Therapy assessment as part of the approval process.

(f) External Funding

- 4.16 In terms of external funding, the Working Group has examined the level of funding attracted into the District, which has been achieved through the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership and the District Council's External Funding Officer. Having regard to the former, it has been stressed that the funding attracted has been used for a variety of District-wide and County-wide projects. Recent local examples include funding for the St Neots Creative Enterprise Centre and the Saxongate Community Learning Centre.

- 4.17 In terms of external funding generated by the External Funding Officer, the Working Group has noted the extensive work undertaken with a number of community groups and outside organisations to target sources of funding for small local leisure based projects. Members are of the view that this work should be fully recognised. It has further been noted that responsibility for assisting outside groups / organisations currently is divided between the District Council's Service Development and Community Development Teams. The Working Group suggests that these areas of activity should be co-ordinated under a single Head of Service. While Members would wish to publicise the Council's success in obtaining significant levels of funding both for the Council and for outside groups / organisations, they are mindful that the External Funding Officer is operating at maximum capacity and that such an action is likely to create extra demand for her assistance. Moreover, under the Financial Strategy, her role in obtaining external income for the Council will become increasingly important. The Working Group is conscious of the Council's current financial position and so cannot make a definite recommendation on this point but, should future circumstances permit, it would be of considerable benefit to the District if the Council could dedicate more resources to assisting outside groups / organisations to obtain external funding.
- 4.18 The Working Group has been made aware that there are other opportunities to obtain funding to support the Council's current activities. Two are referred to in the table attached to this report. Funding is available from the East of England Regional Assembly to help the Council meet the cost of its Housing Repairs Assistance grants. A separate fund is available from the East of England Regional Assembly to contribute towards the cost of setting up and refurbishing gypsy and traveller sites in the District. Members are of the view that these opportunities should be investigated.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The Working Group has undertaken a thorough review of all grant aid schemes operating within the Council and has concluded that overall, the process is working well, with some areas requiring further investigation. A number of recommendations have been made to improve the current processes. The recommendations have been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) and they are set out in the section below.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is

RECOMMENDED

- (a) that the availability of all grants be publicised more extensively, particularly to all District Councillors (para. 4.8);
- (b) that all grants be listed on a single section of the Council's website and regularly updated (para. 4.8);
- (c) that information on the services offered by the Voluntary Sector be circulated to Members and made available on the

Council's website together with links to the Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations' website (para. 4.9);

- (d) that the Working Group be requested to review the returns submitted by organisations covered by service level agreements as a way of achieving greater transparency in the service level agreement process (para. 4.12);
- (e) that the time period for submitting applications for Local Leisure Projects be extended to three months (para. 4.13);
- (f) that a further review be undertaken on the grants that the District Council automatically rolls over (para. 4.14);
- (g) that work with community groups / organisations to obtain funding and community development work be co-ordinated under a single Head of Service (para. 4.18);
- (h) that consideration be given in the future to providing greater assistance for local communities in applying for grant aid for local projects (para. 4.18);
- (i) that investigations be carried out into the availability of funding from the East of England Regional Assembly to meet the cost of the Council's Decent Homes Grants (para. 4.19);
- (j) that investigations be carried out into the availability of funding from the East of England Regional Assembly to contribute towards the cost of setting up and refurbishing gypsy and traveller sites in the District (para. 4.19); and
- (k) that the Council's grant schemes be reviewed again in a year's time.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Notes of Meetings of the Grant Aid Working Group

Report and Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) on 4th November 2008.

Contact Officer: Miss Habbiba Ali, Democratic Services Officer - (01480) 388006

Depart ment	Description	2008/09 Budget	Actual to Date	Objectives / Type	Status / Funded by	Application	Selection	Approval
CAPITAL								
SP	Disabled Facilities Grants/Loans	1,284,000	0	Statutory - to help disabled people in their own home.	Annual. £335k Gov't funded (around 30%) with the remainder funded through HDC sources. Annual bid system.	All applicants are means tested and require an Occupational Therapy Assessment.	Selection criteria and means tested.	By Officers – HDC's Home Improvement Agency Team.
SP	Housing Repairs Assistance Grants/Loans	200,000	0	Not a statutory requirement. Made available to improve the standard of the District's housing.	Annual 100% HDC. Funds available from EERA via a bid scheme.	Via application to HDC. Anyone over 18, in social or market housing that meets the selection criteria.	Selection criteria and means tested.	By Officers – HDC's Home Improvement Agency Team.
SP	Social Housing Grant	1,834,000	0	Not a statutory requirement. The District Council has an obligation to meet the needs of the District.	Annual 100% HDC.	Schemes that have been agreed in the past. Rolled over automatically until funding has been used.	Varies from scheme to scheme.	By Officers and Portfolio Holders – Cllrs Mrs Reynolds and Rogers.
SI	Rural Renewal - Pump Priming	27,000	0	Ramsey Renewal	Finished this year. Now administered by Neighbourhood Management Groups.			
SI	Ramsey Shop Fronts	0	0		2 year project which has now been completed.	Via application to HDC.	Local businesses who wish to improve their shop fronts in accordance with the Conservation Policy for the Town Centre.	HDC's Conservation Team.
SL	Local Leisure Project Grants	162,000	0	Capital Grant to community Groups who's aim is to provide leisure facilities	Annual 100% HDC	March each year	Dan Smith	Portfolio Holders – Cllrs Mrs Reynolds and Rogers
SL	Shop Mobility	0	0	To improve disabled persons mobility	Capital Finished			
TOTAL		3,507,000	0					
Depart ment	Description	2008/09 Budget	Actual	Objectives / Type	Status / Funded by	Application	Selection	Approval
REVENUE								
SI	Planning Listed Buildings Grants	54,243	0	Survival of Listed buildings at risk	Annual 100% HDC	Rolling, reviewed quarterly, grants in the range of £5k to £10k	Points system, administered by the Conservation Team	By Officers after consultation with the Portfolio Holder- Cllr Bucknell.

SI	Ramsey Rural Renewal	0	0	Ramsey Renewal	Finished this year. Now administered by Neighbourhood Management Groups.			
SI	Community Transport Grants	89,709	0	Contributes to a range of community transport schemes/organisations.	Annual 100% HDC.	Historical – automatically rolled over.		
SI	Rural Transport Grants	0	0	To assist rural transport schemes.	Now finished. No longer in existence.			
SI	Cambs ACRE	0	0	To support the Rural Transport Officer post.	Now finished. Post is no longer in existence.			
Department	Description	2008/09 Budget	Actual	Objectives / Type	Status / Funded by	Application	Selection	Approval
IL	Town Centre Partnership Grants	79,032	0	Contribution to the Council's Local Economy Strategy	100% HDC. 3 year funding agreement to be introduced.	Historical – automatically rolled over.		
IL	Economic Development Grants	41,081	0	Contributes to the Huntingdonshire Enterprise Agency, East of England International and Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership.	Annual 100% HDC.	Historical – automatically rolled over.		
RW	Contribution to Waste PFI Team	9,583	0	Contribution to County to develop a County wide waste scheme	Annual 100% HDC	Historical – automatically rolled over.		
SL	Citizens Advice Bureau	145,580	0	Contribution to CAB to maintain the CAB	Annual 100% HDC	Historical – automatically rolled over.		
SL	Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations	39,989	0	Contribution to Hunts Forum To help all Volunteer organizations	Annual 100% HDC	Historical – automatically rolled over.		
SL	Hunts Federation of Volunteer Bureau	36,053	0	Contribution to Hunts Fed'n to help all Volunteer Groups.	Annual 100% HDC	Historical – automatically rolled over.		
SL	Shop Mobility	20,992	0	Contribution to Shop Mobility	Annual 100% HDC	Historical		
SL	Other Community Grants (See report para. 4.12)	29,674	0	Now amalgamated with Leisure Grants	Rolled up into the above 4 grants.			
SL	Leisure Grants (See report para. 4.12)	29,998	0	Community and charity projects such as Natural High, Moor Community Group & Cambridgeshire ACRE. Now amalgamated with Other Community Grants.	Rolled up into the above 4 grants.	Revenue funding – commissioning basis for 5 years. Capital funding – by application every year.	By Environmental and Community Health Services Division.	
TOTAL		575,934	0					

EXTERNAL FUNDING SOURCES								
Department	Description	Budget Set?	Actual Attracted	Objectives/Type	Status/Funded By	Application	Selection	Approval
IL	Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership (See report para. 4.18)	No Budget Set	Since the P'ship's existence £2,532m	The GCP is the sub-regional economic partnership covering a 25-mile radius around Cambridge. Enables access to funding streams that the District Council would otherwise not have access to. Funding used for a variety of both District-wide and County-wide projects.	The relevant external grant funder.	Via application – joint application with relevant parties.	Selection criteria – varies from project to project.	By the relevant grant funder.
IL	External Funding Officer (See report para. 4.18)	No Budget Set	Over 2007/08 year £3.5m	To assist community groups and external organisations with help in attracting external funding in to the District. Predominantly used for local projects. Service often used internally within the organisation.	The relevant external grant funder.	Via application – joint application with relevant parties.	Selection criteria – varies from project to project.	By the relevant grant funder.
SP	Regional Assembly fund to assist councils to establish locations for gypsy and traveler sites. (See report para. 4.19)				£9m grant money available via a bid system.			

RW Robert Ward
 IL Ian Leatherbarrow
 SP Steve Plant
 SI Steve Ingram

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29TH JANUARY 2009

ICT Strategy 2009-11

(Report by the Head of Information Management)

1. BACKGROUND

The Council relies on ICT both to enable the delivery of many of its services and also to support Officers and Members in their everyday work. ICT has enabled many of the “step changes” that have occurred in the delivery of customer service in recent years. For example, the introduction of the Call Centre, the web site and the Customer Service Centres.

2. PURPOSE

The ICT Strategy sets out a vision which supports specific elements of Growing Success (largely within the Council Aim “to improve our systems and practices”). However, the all pervasive use of ICT throughout the Council supports or enables a much greater number of aims and objectives within the corporate plan.

The strategy has a planning horizon of three years. However, due to the rapid development of both technology and applications it is important that the strategy is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it is properly aligned to both Growing Success and to services’ operational needs.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet approve the ICT Strategy 2009-11.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

ICT Strategy 2009-11

Contact Officer:

Chris Hall, Head of Information Management (01480) 388116

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Huntingdonshire District Council ICT Strategy 2009-11

Andrew Howes
IMD Operations Manager

John Taylor
IMD Development Manager

Chris Hall
Head of Information Management

Version 2.3
Last Modified: 21st January 2009

ICT Strategy 2009-11

1 Foreword

- 1.1 There can be few activities that the Council undertakes that are not enabled or supported in some way by the use of ICT. In order to deliver information and transactions on behalf of our customers and constituents, ICT is key tool. Whether it be self-service by customers using our web site, frontline employees using corporate systems to provide a mediated service, or back office employees using systems to provide support services, the “glue” which holds a service organisation, such as HDC, together is its ICT.
- 1.2 No longer is ICT delivered to a limited number of geographical locations; with the implementation of the Council’s Flexible Working Strategy we expect our ICT to be available from our homes, on the move via mobile devices, via any internet connected PC, as well as from any workstation that we choose to use within the Council’s office network.
- 1.3 However, we also want the ICT to be as “transparent” as possible. We want to be able to access and manipulate information freely to serve our customers - be they internal or external – but with the necessary controls to ensure information security. We want systems to be easy to use with the right level of training. In short we want the ICT to support & enhance our work, not to get in the way. We also want to be assured that information is secure and is accessible only by those who have authority to read it.
- 1.4 We want our ICT services to be delivered in an economical manner – not necessarily “cutting edge” but using reliable, “industry” standard products which will grow (or contract) with the ICT needs of the Council.
- 1.5 This 3 year strategy sets out the Council’s approach to delivering the vision outlined above. It assesses where we are in terms of our ICT strengths & weaknesses, identifies the ICT objectives that are necessary to support our corporate plan **Growing Success** and sets out the steps that are required in order to achieve those objectives.
- 1.6 The *purpose* of the **ICT Strategy** is to:
- Focus ICT activity on achieving & supporting the objectives of the Council;
 - Ensure information security;
 - Provide high quality, appropriate ICT training to all employees - according to need;
 - Steer the acquisition of new technologies, manage obsolescence, and provide for technology refresh;
 - Set out IMD’s work programme to provide and maintain the Council’s ICT infrastructure.
- 1.7 The Council has much to be proud of in its provision of ICT. However, there is room for improvement and this strategy is designed to close that gap. There are also opportunities to build on our expertise such as in the provision of our LLPG and web services. The investigation into shared service provision for these areas – potentially others – is a clear objective for this strategy.
- 1.8 This strategy does not detail every project but identifies the key ones which have the potential to provide step changes in ICT service provision.

ICT Strategy 2009-11

- 1.9 IMD seeks a partnership with Council Services, suppliers and, potentially, other organisations to deliver this strategy on behalf of the Council - in a manner which offers good value for money to the local taxpayer.
- 1.10 This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis (the next review is scheduled for November/December 2009) with a view to maintaining 3 year planning horizon for ICT. It should be considered in the context of the following Council strategies/policies:
- Growing Success (2008 revision)
 - Flexible Working Strategy
 - Customer Service Strategy (July 2008)
 - Web Strategy 2009-11 (considered by Cabinet on 18/12/08)
 - Information Security Policy (agreed by COMT in March 2008)
- 1.11 Overall accountability for delivering the strategy lies with the Head of Information Management, with the IMD Operations Manager responsible for the delivery of projects within the ICT Programme. The IMD Development Manager has the responsibility for delivering complementary development projects which will support this strategy.

2 Where are we now?

- 2.1 Appendix 1 provides a [SWOT analysis](#) (as of October 2008) of ICT service provision at HDC.
- 2.2 This strategy seeks to maintain and build on the strengths and opportunities identified and to address the following key weaknesses and risks.:
- 2.2.1 **Corporate ICT Issues:**
- a. Telephony system requires updating to digital-based technologies;
 - b. Business Continuity plans are underdeveloped;
 - c. Server room at Pathfinder is at capacity & subject to air conditioning failures;
 - d. Large number of individual servers (c 80) requires substantial maintenance & represents multiple points of failure;
 - e. Little service input into the governance of the ICT Programme;
 - f. Multiple Access & Excel-based databases with no overall control leading to data duplication & use of (largely) unsupported databases in service-critical processes;
 - g. No encryption of portable media devices (eg USB sticks) leading to increased risk of data loss;
 - h. Adoption of "green IT" could be improved;

These Corporate ICT issues are addressed through the projects outlined in section 4.

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2.2.2 IMD Specific Issues:

- i. Specific ICT skills/knowledge reside with relatively few members of IMD;
- j. Resolution of operational problems sometimes require Development team resources to resolve thus reducing development capacity.

These IMD specific issues are being addressed through a), a re-structure of IMD which took place during May 2008 and b), the introduction of the ITIL (a service delivery framework).

3 Where do we want to be?

3.1 Vision

ICT's role in underpinning and delivering effective, efficient and cost effective services is clear – at an operational level the Council could not operate for any length of time without it. However, ICT has evolved over the last few years to become a key tool in enabling, and promoting, change and service transformation. For example, ICT is crucial to transforming where and how employees actually carry out their jobs, and ultimately where and how the Council delivers its services. ICT is also increasingly being used to provide a single, unified view of customer requirements (eg through the CRM – the Customer Relationship Management system) so that services can be “joined-up” and unnecessary contact with customers avoided – saving both customer time and Council money.

3.2 A number of the key principles that underpin the vision are listed below:

Note: some of the many linkages to Growing Success aims and objectives are showing in brackets.

- a. ICT should be customer focussed (for both internal and external customers); [to make it as easy as possible for customers to access our services and get appropriate information]
- b. ICT should help drive standardisation in order to reduce costs; [to use Council resources efficiently]
- c. ICT should add value by increasing efficiency (after underlying processes have been improved through re-engineering) or by delivering additional benefits that would not be possible without ICT; [to use Council resources efficiently]
- d. ICT should enable the integration of services and partnership working - both within the Council and with external organisations; [supporting effective partnerships]
- e. ICT should enable the smarter use of accommodation (through flexible working); [to use Council resources efficiently]
- f. Information – which should be stored only once – should be (appropriately) accessible 24x7 (ideally) by Services and by customers; in a variety of different formats - including spatially (eg via GIS); [to support the provision of high quality customer services]

ICT Strategy 2009-11

- g. Information security must be a key priority for both information users and IMD;
- h. Procurement of new ICT should be undertaken to allow a convergence of systems with partnering organisations (thus facilitating shared services should this be appropriate in the future);
- i. ICT should be used to codify knowledge and use this to enhance service delivery; [to learn and develop]
- j. ICT service delivery should contribute to the Council's need to reduce overall capital & revenue spending year on year; [to use Council resources efficiently]
- k. The ICT service should aspire to be in the top quartile when assessed against national public sector benchmarks.

4 How do we get there?

This section outlines the main projects that, when taken together, will address the areas requiring improvement, build on strengths and help move the Council towards the vision outlined above.

4.1 Enhanced Customer Services

ICT will continue to support the delivery of high quality customer services. This will be achieved by a number of programmes, projects and activities, including:

Note: Action Plan references – see Appendix 2 - are shown in brackets.

4.1.1 **Review cost-effectiveness of CRM and Call Centre Telephony infrastructure [1].** Currently the Call Centre shares technology – the CRM and telephony – with the County which provides these services for the Council. The managed service contract will be due for renewal, or replacement, in 2012. The assessment of alternative models, and possible introduction of a new model, will be a significant undertaking for the Council. One of many possible models would be to share services (including the ICT infrastructure) with one or more district Councils. The relocation of the Call Centre from Speke House will require a re-assessment of the networking requirements.

4.1.2 **Develop Web-based Facilities [2].** This is addressed in more detail within the Web Strategy. However, the move to a MyCouncil web model with its greater customer focus – eg allowing personalised content - will require a significant investment of web and development team resource. Again the cost could be offset by collaborative work with other Councils and/or the provision of a hosted service by HDC.

4.2 Working Smarter Projects

The **IMD Working Smarter** programme is an emerging set of projects which, when taken together, will deliver a wide range of benefits. However, the main focus will be on delivering improvements in efficiency and effectiveness. This will be achieved through the application of business process improvement techniques and the appropriate application of technology to those improved processes and information systems. The programme will be fully defined in a document to be considered by COMT in Q1 of 2009 but the key ICT-specific projects are listed below.

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- 4.2.1 **Improve the reliability and interoperability of the voice and data systems [3].** By the end of 08/09 the new HQ campus and Eastfield House will have a single network which will carry both voice and data traffic. This will allow much greater flexibility & interchange in the handling of voice and data information. This solution will be considered for other “satellite” offices – specifically the Leisure Centres - of the Council. It is essential that any adoption of Voice over IP (VoIP) technologies at satellite offices uses the same system otherwise support costs will rise and system incompatibilities may be introduced which could impact service delivery.
- 4.2.2 **Reduce risk to the Council through enhanced ICT Business Continuity (BC) & Disaster Recovery (DR) planning [4].** With ever greater reliance on voice and data systems it is essential that the availability of systems is maintained in the event of system disruptions - either from internal or external sources. Therefore, there is a need to extend the existing BC plan (providing the resilience) and DR plans (robust and tested recovery procedures).
- 4.2.3 **Make better use of accommodation and reducing unnecessary travel [5].** We will continue the roll-out of technologies which support remote & mobile working. Additionally, subject to available funding, it is proposed that a centrally managed wireless network will be installed in the new HQ campus alongside conventional wired networking to provide additional functionality (for example, to support “hot desking”).
- 4.2.4 **Improve the efficient & effective management of servers [6].** The market for server virtualisation is reaching maturity. It is therefore appropriate to explore the options available to virtualise and consolidate our servers. This technology opens up opportunities to deliver BCP “in-house” or in collaboration with other organisations (specifically other Councils) reduce costs as well as providing more flexible approaches to server management.
- 4.2.5 **Reduce the overhead of supporting desktop systems [7].** An extension of “thin client” computing - currently working well for Leisure Services – is proposed for other areas of the Council. Primarily Citrix will be the main delivery mechanism for Flexible Working but it will also be trialled as a possible replacement for the standard desktop. This will complement and follow the server virtualisation project.
- 4.2.6 **Improve ICT Service Delivery Standards [8]** through the introduction of the ITIL service standard framework. This will help address a number of identified weaknesses, for example, improve hand-over between development and operational teams within IMD also the improved sharing of knowledge & experience.
- 4.2.7 **Make a greater contribution to environmental improvement [9].** Continue working with the Environmental Management Service and the Carbon Trust to develop an action plan which will enable the Council to embrace “green” computing.
- 4.2.8 **Enhance information security, sharing and collaboration [10].** Develop our existing SharePoint technology and support with a view to enhancing functionality, thus allowing employees to share documents more effectively via the Intranet. Introduce data encryption and link to Government Connect in order to protect the security of personal and sensitive information. Re-investigate the large volume of small system databases and data sets which exist within the Council. Consider dropping MS Access from the desktop within the life of this strategy and replace this with more sustainable database facilities.

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- 4.2.9 **Share data between applications more effectively [11].** The value of many applications can be substantially enhanced if data can be readily exchanged between applications – this avoids duplication and mistakes introduced by “dual-keying”. The Council already uses the Microsoft product Biztalk to integrated LLPG data with the CRM (Customer Relationship Management system) held at Speke House. However, other products merit further investigation (eg improved functionality, lower development costs) and this will be undertaken during the lifetime of this strategy.
- 4.2.10 **Investigate opportunities for Shared ICT Service Delivery [12].** Where there is a clear business case to do so we will look at different shared service models - subject to the overall guidance provided by Cabinet. Due to the investments made in the Eastfield and new Pathfinder ICT infrastructure, and the anticipated move to virtualised servers, HDC will have the capability to scale up this infrastructure should it be appropriate for HDC to host shared ICT services at a future date. The strategy will include activities to examine the exploitation of this new capability.

5 Governance of the ICT Programme

- 5.1 A recent internal Audit report identified the need engage more with services in the implementation of the ICT Strategy so as to generate greater corporate ownership. It is therefore proposed that a number of service heads should be invited to sit on the Programme Board for the ICT Programme [13].
- 5.2 The rolling programme of Service Insight Meetings (SIMs) between services and IMD provides valuable two-way communication. Firstly, they give IMD a better understanding of the longer term objectives and aspirations of services (hence enabling the ICT required to support these objectives to be more readily identified). Secondly, there is an opportunity for services to provide direct feedback on the implementation of ICT service developments and plans.

6 Resources Required

- 6.1 It is anticipated that the 2008/09 levels of capital & revenue (including those bid for in the 2008 MTP round) will be sufficient to deliver the programme of work outlined in this strategy. However, there are particular areas of uncertainty (specifically scope & cost) around the virtualisation and MyCouncil projects. More detailed business cases will be prepared before proceeding with these projects.
- 6.2 As ICT is used more and more to drive efficiencies in other parts of the Council there will be, necessarily, more ICT to support. However, IMD will continue to seek its own internal service efficiencies as a means of offsetting this additional ICT workload.
- 6.3 Additionally work is underway to reduce telephony costs for both landlines and mobile devices.

7 Risks

- 7.1 The following main generic risks associated with this strategy have been identified:
- a. The Council adopts technologies which prove to be immature, difficult to maintain or otherwise not “fit for purpose”. Mitigation: we use an industry standard project management methodology. This encourages thorough

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investigation into proposed solutions as well as incorporating best practice to help ensure project benefits are identified and realised. It is an ICT policy not to be early adopters so that others identify the risks associated with new technologies before HDC.

- b. Technology projects tend to be complex, this increases the risk that they fail. Mitigation: We build multi-disciplinary project teams including technologists, business analysts and service representatives – this helps to ensure a wide range of skills are available to the project manager to mitigate this risk. We also research similar projects to try to learn from others who have carried out similar projects.
- c. The ICT Strategy may not be properly aligned with Growing Success and/or may not fit the business need. Mitigation: we have adopted a proactive approach to consultation with services – the SIMs. The use of business analysis skills within project teams helps to maintain a focus on the aims & objectives of the Council. Participation by other heads of service on project boards helps to broaden the perspective of the project teams.
- d. The ICT Strategy may not be deliverable within available resources. Mitigation: we will seek to collaborate with others to minimise costs and will investigate different models (eg shared services) to defray costs.

There are many more risks associated with individual projects and these will be managed through project risk logs.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 ICT continues to be a key function, both for the smooth running of day-to-day service provision, and also as an enabler to effect step changes in the way the Council provides services.
- 8.2 ICT provision at HDC is sound and improving. The main areas of weakness will be addressed by the projects outlined in this document [Action Plan ref. 6, 7 & 8]. In particular the introduction of virtualisation to the server environment and, possibly, to the desktop environment have the potential for radically improving the capability & management of these areas. The introduction of ITIL will improve IMD's overall performance and thus the quality of ICT service delivery.
- 8.3 There are significant additional developments within this strategy which present particular challenges. For example, the development of the MyCouncil web site and the (potential) replacement of the Call Centre technical infrastructure [Action Plan ref. 1]
- 8.4 "Green computing" is an increasingly important area of interest both within the industry and also it clearly contributes to the Council's Growing Success objective "to help mitigate and adapt to climate change". This strategy's action plan contains activities [Action Plan ref. 9] designed to improve the Council's ICT performance in this area.
- 8.5 Shared Service delivery is a potentially important area for achieving savings and /or defraying development costs for the Council. Also the choices that the Council makes in procuring its ICT can lower the barriers to effective shared working with other organisations [Action Plan ref. 12].

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- 8.6 The Flexible Working project has delivered early successes and through the implementation of this strategy it will continue to develop further opportunities for efficient working practices [Action Plan ref. 5].

SWOT Analysis of ICT Service Provision at HDC (as of October 2008)

Appendix 1

STRENGTHS

1. **Highly rated Help Desk** (evidenced by annual & ongoing surveys)
2. **ICT Training** (evidenced by high take-up of courses offered)
3. **Very high availability of data network** (in excess of 99.9%)
4. **Very broad ICT skill base across IMD** (reduces need for bought-in consultancy)
5. **Motivated IMD employees** (low staff turnover)
6. **Improving communication of future service ICT needs** (via regular Service Insight Meetings)
7. **Good exchange of ICT management knowledge within Cambridgeshire** (via regular ICT Managers' meetings)
8. **Good use made of work done by other Councils** (eg through membership of SOCITM and networking)
9. **Collaborative development of ICT infrastructure** (eg CRM, LLPG, call centre telephony, shared web site A-Z, Cambridgeshire portal)
10. **Technologies (eg Citrix, BlackBerrys) to support the Flexible Working Strategy** are having early successes
11. **Corporate solutions eg GIS, CRM, EDM, VoIP provide opportunities for information sharing and efficient infrastructure provision**
12. **Centrally provided ICT minimises risk of incompatible systems**
13. **Remote support of desktop systems reduces need to attend in person**
14. **Good communication of ICT issues** (Team News, IMD Newsletter, use of intranet & email system, training)
15. **Use of industry standard software** eg Microsoft provides compatibility with other organisations aiding information exchange and supplier software based on Microsoft products
16. **Relatively up-to-date Desktops** (ie PCs, Operating Systems & Office suite)
17. **Introduction of SharePoint has provided many benefits** (eg much improved file structuring, enhanced searching and the ability to develop information applications rapidly)

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

1. **Telephony** - Issues with VoIP telephony at Eastfield & analogue telephony at Pathfinder (new VoIP system should resolve issues but satellite offices – including Leisure - currently outside VoIP roll-out plans (MTP bid pending))
2. **Server room at Pathfinder at capacity (& subject to air conditioning failures) slowing deployment of new systems** (new server room at Eastfield and in Building D will remove this constraint)
3. **Limited commonality of systems between HDC and partners, or potential partners, acts as a barrier to shared service**
4. **No encryption of portable media devices (eg USB sticks) leading to increased risk of data loss** (Information Security project underway, awareness raising undertaken since November 07)
5. **Large number of individual servers c 80 requires substantial maintenance & represents multiple points of failure** (server virtualisation project – if approved – will mitigate)
6. **IMD Operations' priorities currently dictated by needs of the Accommodation Project preventing progress on key projects eg virtualisation**
7. **Multiple Access & Excel-based databases with no overall control -> data duplication** (CRIMP project is helping to resolve but a significant undertaking)
8. **Adoption of "green IT" is a largely undeveloped area** (but server virtualisation & the introduction of "blade servers" will contribute; also need user support eg turn off screens overnight)
9. **Current lack of flexible BCP and virtualised servers do not allow HDC to compete effectively for the hosting of shared services**
10. **Large number of software packages to support (c 200)** - IMD support is very limited in certain application areas, PC re-builds can be complex
11. **Unable to roll-out software to desktops remotely** (desktop virtualisation would address this)

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT (cont.)

12. **SharePoint development plan/road map is not visible** (work is in

progress to produce this)

13. **Handover from Development to Operations is not always as efficient and effective as it could be** (restructured teams and recently restructured IMD management will improve this, as will the introduction of ITIL)
14. **Resolution of Operational problems sometimes require Development team resources to resolve** (IMD re-structure and the introduction of ITIL methodology will help alleviate this)
15. **No comprehensive strategy for Business Systems exists** (will be developed partly through closer liaison with services eg SIMs)
16. **Better project management for ICT Projects would deliver more predictable delivery dates**

OPPORTUNITIES

1. **LLPG team have (multiple) award winning skills which could be deployed to other Councils and reduce costs/generate income for HDC**
2. **Development template for new Council web site (MyCouncil) could be shared with other Councils reducing costs/generating income**
3. **Improved working practices** such as the implementation of ITIL and Server Virtualisation would enhance ICT service provision, for example, improve resilience.
4. **Performance Management** is generally underdeveloped and the quality of ICT service is not benchmarked against national public sector organisations; development of this area will encourage knowledge sharing and greater insight into ICT service delivery;
5. **The end of the Call Centre Managed Service contract with County in 2012 offers an opportunity to improve the current model for providing the technical infrastructure for the Call Centre**
6. **Adoption of virtualised servers would greatly improve the opportunities for enhanced business continuity & allow HDC to compete more effectively to host shared services**
7. **IMD Development team has project management skills/experience which can be used to increase the likelihood of delivering successful ICT infrastructure projects**
8. **Freedom of Information and Data Protection are the responsibility of different divisions** (IMD and Legal& Estates respectively) – there may advantages in bringing these functions together
9. **The CCTV network is not managed by IMD** – there may be benefits to the CCTV team in bringing this under a single network management structure
10. **Improvements in the management of suppliers may lead to cost reductions/improved levels of support**
11. **Introduction of upgraded MS Office suite could result in productivity improvements**
12. **Better technology “horizon scanning” should improve our strategic choices**

RISKS

1. **Financial pressures may reduce capacity of IMD a) obliging services to find their own local solutions rather than benefitting from a corporate approach, and, b) delaying or removing the introduction of new systems which would provide efficiency savings**
2. **Stringent security arrangements required for the introduction of Government Connect (ie CoCo compliance) may be costly to implement and restrict HDC’s ICT flexibility**
3. **Need to service Accommodation Project reduces availability of support for other projects**
4. **Loss of skilled staff / scarce ICT skills/knowledge with relatively few members of IMD** (further skills transfer & better knowledge-bases required)
5. **Some service-developed systems have no centralised support from IMD or backup support within the service** (a business risk)
6. **Little Service input into ICT Programme governance** may lead to systems development which are not properly aligned to business needs (SIMs provide high level input)
7. **Dependency on Microsoft software** (reduced opportunities for competitive procurement but compatibility with suppliers’ applications increased)

Appendix 2

Action Plan 2009-2011

Objective	Actions	Measures	Target	By Whom
1. Review cost-effectiveness of CRM and Call Centre Telephony infrastructure (4.1.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish HDC's requirements eg potential for relocation of Call Centre from Speke House. Identify & cost alternative delivery models <p>If an change from the existing model is chosen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procure & implement replacement system 	To be defined	Sep 2012	IMD Development Manager
2. Develop Web-based Facilities	Please refer to web strategy action plan			
3. Improve the reliability and interoperability of the voice and data systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procurement & of new digital voice system Inclusion of Leisure services onto digital system (subject to MTP approval) Introduction of Outlook / telephony integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eastfield, Pathfinder, Castle Hill & Centenary to be on same digital system Leisure on digital system Introduction of "presence" information (knowing whether a user is logged into the network – and hence contactable – aids collaborative working) Further measures to be defined 	<p>Mar 2009</p> <p>Aug 2009</p> <p>Mar 2010</p>	IMD Operations Manager
4. Reduce risk to the Council through enhanced ICT Business Continuity (BC) & Disaster Recovery (DR) planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add additional application systems to system recovery contract & test Following server virtualisation project (subject to MTP approval) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successful "dummy" recovery of application system sample Successful recovery of systems as servers are virtualised Updated ICT Business Continuity Plan (ongoing throughout server virtualisation project) 	<p>Jun 2009</p> <p>Mar 2010</p> <p>Mar 2010</p>	IMD Operations Manager

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5. Make better use of accommodation and reducing unnecessary travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Flexible Working Strategy with experience of using Building D • Further develop mobile working solutions • Investigate need for enhanced wireless infrastructure to support host desking 	To be defined	2010/11	IMD Development Manager & IMD Operations Manager
6. Improve the efficient & effective management of servers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the virtualisation market • Procure & implement a virtualisation model (subject to MTP approval) 	To be defined	Mar 2010	IMD Operations Manager
7. Reduce the overhead of supporting desktop systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll-out Office 2003 • Investigate virtualisation of Desktop • If appropriate, procure & roll out desktop virtualisation solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office 2003 on every PC • To be defined 	Jul 2009 2010/11	IMD Operations Manager
8. Improve ICT Service Delivery Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train all IMD staff in ITIL standard (1st stage complete) • Introduce 10 elements of ITIL model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved service delivery – SMART measures to be defined 	Mar 2010	IMD Operations Manager
9. Make a greater contribution to environmental improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a green computing action plan • Implement action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plan supported by Environmental Management • Further measures to be defined 	Aug 2009 2009/11	IMD Operations Manager
10. Enhance information security, sharing and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop SharePoint “roadmap” • Implement Government Connect to provide a secure network for inter-government & inter-agency data transfer • Review future of MS-Access • Review & rationalisation databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for the development & support of SharePoint • Further measures to be defined • Operational Government Connect link • Policy for the future development of databases • Reduction in number of databases / duplication of information 	Mar 2009 Sep 2009 TBA TBA	IMD Development Manager & IMD Operations Manager

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11. Share data between applications more effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess effectiveness of new approach to data exchange • Develop further links between systems 	To be defined	Dec 2009	IMD Development Manager
12. Investigate opportunities for Shared ICT Service Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and advocate opportunities for shared service delivery with other organisations (eg web development with other Cambs. Districts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations for shared service developments • Further measures to be defined 	2009/11	IMD Development Manager
13. Increase participation of services in the development & implementation of the ICT Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite HoS / AMs to take part in governance of programme • Continue and develop the SIMs (Service Insight Meetings) approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Board established • Further measures to be defined 	Apr 2009 Dec 2009	IMD Operations Manager & IMD Development Manager

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CABINET

URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK LAND AROUND BUTTSGROVE WAY, THE WHADDONS AND SUFFOLK HOUSE, HUNTINGDON (Report by HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council has produced an urban design framework to help to set the standard for high quality housing re-development and environmental improvements in an area of Oxmoor, as well as providing much needed further affordable housing for the residents of Huntingdon.
- 1.2 Cabinet is asked to consider the responses made to the consultation on the draft document and approve any suggested amendments. The final approved document will be a material planning consideration when the Council, acting in respect of its role as the Local Planning Authority, is considering or determining development proposals.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The bungalows built for elderly people in Thongsley and the Whaddons, off Butts Grove Way, have reached the end of their economic life. Luminus, the Registered Social Landlord for these bungalows, has proposed to redevelop this area and replace these bungalows with new ones, as well as provide new apartments and houses.
- 2.2 The consultation document sets out the constraints and opportunities for the redevelopment of the bungalows in Thongsley and The Whaddons, as well as ideas to improve and enhance, in the longer-term, the area around Suffolk House and the Lord Protector.
- 2.3 This consultation exercise is part of the Council's on-going commitment to the regeneration and enhancement of the Oxmoor area – within a regeneration strategy for this area which will seek to deliver enhanced housing opportunities, new local infrastructure, including in this case, better car parking for existing residents and enhanced green spaces.

3.0 THE URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 The purpose of this document is to highlight the principal planning constraints within the study area, identify the important settlement characteristics, highlight important open spaces and settings, and indicate potential locations for appropriate development.

- 3.2 The document sets out the design parameters that will be required for the successful development of this area, ensuring that future proposals achieve imaginative and distinctive solutions. Indicative layouts are shown that illustrate what could be achieved.

4.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSE

- 4.1 Leaflets were posted to neighbours in November 2008. This informed them of the start of the consultation period for the contents of the document. Four public exhibitions were held at Trinity Free Church on 12th, 19th and 25th November and on 1st December. The expiry date for comments was 8th December 2008. A presentation was also made to the Town Council on 30th October, and invited comments as well as seeking the views of other consultees such as the Police Architectural Liaison Officer and the County Council highways department.
- 4.2 All comments made and the Council's responses to them are presented in Annex 1. A further précis of comments received at the exhibitions is listed in Annex 2.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Production of an Urban Design Framework is best practice and will help to secure the most appropriate form of development over this site.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 That the Cabinet notes the comments made on this document and agrees to the amendments as set out in Annex 1.
- 6.2 That the Cabinet delegates to the Head of Planning Services , after consultation with the Executive Member for Planning Strategy, the making of any minor consequential amendments.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD June 2007
Huntingdonshire Landscape & Townscape Assessment SPD June 2007
Oxmoor Action Plan 2003

Contact Officer: Mike Huntington
Team Leader – Urban Design, Trees and Landscape
 **01480 388404**

Annex 1
Land around Butts Grove Way, The Whaddons and Suffolk House, Huntingdon
 Summary of Written Comments

The table below details the comments received in general letters and from comments or attachments from the public questionnaires.

Action Code:

- 1 Action Taken
- 2 Not within remit of document
- 3 No action required

Comment by:	Respondent no.	Nature of Comment	Response	Action
Huntingdon Town Council	1	Additional pathways should be added on both sides of Butts Grove Way leading up to Thongsley for the safety of residents. Street lighting from Thongsley to Butts Grove Way should be improved. An additional pedestrian crossing should be located between the two bus stops on Butts Grove Way. Opposed to the proposed new entrance located on the bend of Butts Grove Way shown on plan 3.	Not within remit of document Not within remit of document Not within remit of document This will be removed from the document .	2 2 2 1

Comment by:	Respondent no.	Nature of Comment	Response	Action
CCC Highways	2	<p>Members would prefer to see a higher proportion of social housing than shared equity properties due to the number of people on the housing waiting list.</p> <p>Members feel that the overall concept is good, but that the options proposed will overdevelop the site and therefore provision for additional green open space and further car parking facilities are required.</p>	<p>This is for HDC Housing department to consider in negotiation with Luminus.</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>The document has been altered to address perceived car parking issues, and to take a more pragmatic approach to providing parking spaces where people will park. The quality of the open space will be improved, better designed and in locations that will be overlooked and provide a more useful role.</p>	
	2	<p>No formal comments in writing though accept principle of parking on Buttsgrove Way, as has happened on California Road. Would require Buttsgrove Way to be widened slightly where parking would be expected to take place.</p> <p>Visibility splays on junctions with California Road to be 2.4m x 90m.</p> <p>No problem with extending use of road from opposite Trinity Church to connect to The Whaddons.</p> <p>Does not support any proposals for double yellow lines on bend on Buttsgrove Way, as it</p>	<p>Make amendments to document to accord with these comments.</p> <p>1</p>	

Comment by:	Respondent no.	Nature of Comment	Response	Action
		raises issues of enforcement.		
Questionnaire 1	3	Suffolk House should be demolished. Green areas behind shops is a good idea New buildings must be better than the Buttsgrove Way new build Remove lorry parking behind shops Stop building on open space	There are no plans to demolish Suffolk House at present. Noted See annex 2 para 8 Although supported needs further investigation See annex 2 para 6	3 3 3 3
Questionnaire 2	4	Suffolk House should be demolished New dwellings must be in keeping, not like new buildings on Buttsgrove Way	There are no plans to demolish Suffolk House at present. Seen annex 2 para 8	3 3
Questionnaire 3	5	Don't want parking in front of Thongsley Houses Keep green areas for the children to play on Prefer to see bungalows replaced by bungalows	Revise plan to ensure that an area (not yet defined) of green space is retained in front of Thongsley houses that front onto Buttsgrove Way. See annex 2 para 6 Housing mix will be determined by HDC housing department, in accordance with housing need.	1 3 3

Comment by:	Respondent no.	Nature of Comment	Response	Action
		More parking on existing garage blocks	seen annex 2 para 1	1
Questionnaire 4	6	Must not lose the green – most important issue	Overall some green space will be lost to enable more much needed housing to be built. However new green space will be created within the site that will be better located and more useable .	3
Questionnaire 5	7	Lose green space, privacy, and play space, will cause parking problems.	See answer above. We are investigating alternative solutions to provide more car parking.	3
Questionnaire 6	8	More development means more problems pulling out of Prospero Way onto Buttsgrove Way	The LHA do not consider this to be an issue	3
Questionnaire 7	9	More traffic will make it more difficult to enter and exit Prospero Way	As above.	3
Questionnaire 8	10	Concern over amount of traffic and parking on Prospero Way	As above.	3
Questionnaire 9	11	Concern over cars parking in Buttsgrove Way. Dangerous at junction with Prospero Way	As above	3
Questionnaire 10	12	Traffic already bad. Blocking out light for existing homes	See above regarding traffic. Any new development will address any amenity issues for	3 3

Comment by:	Respondent no.	Nature of Comment	Response	Action
		<p>Loss of green space</p> <p>Speeding is a problem now, so will get worse</p>	<p>existing residents.</p> <p>See annex 2 para 6</p> <p>More parking on Buttsgrove Way may slow down the traffic.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>3</p>
Questionnaire 11	13	<p>Would like to see garages demolished, and area given over to more car parking</p> <p>Would prefer to see the area of Whaddons closest to Trinity Church as a cul de sac.</p> <p>Should not have an access road on the bend of Buttsgrove Way, it is dangerous.</p>	<p>See annex 2 para 1</p> <p>This issue is still be considered, as there is an either / or solution</p> <p>Not now considered to be an appropriate solution- deleted</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>
Questionnaire 12	14	<p>Concern that the green areas are too close to the main road.</p> <p>Perhaps fencing along the road would be a good idea.</p> <p>Suggest that garage courts are knocked down and land given over to adjoining properties for car parking and helping to alleviate parking problems. This has been successful along the 'Rivers' streets.</p>	<p>Amend the document to suggest fencing to some of the green spaces.</p> <p>ditto</p> <p>See annex 2 para 1</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>

Comment by:	Respondent no.	Nature of Comment	Response	Action
Questionnaire 13	15	More parking for residents of Prospero Way, people park on the grass verges at the moment	Not relevant to this study	2
Questionnaire 14	16	Outlook from Prospero Way	Any new development will be required to meet highest levels of design	3
Questionnaire 15	17	Needs an Occupational Therapist to help in the design of the bungalows	This will be something for HDC's housing department to look into.	2
Questionnaire 16	18	Does not want to see apartments	This is something that HDC's housing department will advise on dependant on the housing list.	2
Questionnaire 17	19	OK to have parking in front instead of in garages as garages are not used much, but would not want parking to be brought right up edge of pathway. Why not just replace bungalows.	Agree with change of emphasis from garage courts. Investigating opportunity to demolish garage courts, see annex 2 para 1.	1
Questionnaire 18	20	Would like to see access road into the green serving nos. 21-23 Thongsley, to provide parking. This green area is a problem, with teenagers and anti social behaviour.	This may be addressed by Luminus' assessment of whether the garage blocks should be retained, see annex 2 para 2.	1
Questionnaire	21	Would like to see car parking to be at right	This is a useful idea and will be looked at when detailed	1

Comment by:	Respondent no.	Nature of Comment	Response	Action
19		angles to the road, thereby giving more car parking spaces than if the cars were parked along kerbs.	car parking designs are produced.	
Questionnaire 20	22	Supports affordable housing at top of Thongsley and The Whaddons. Objects to any proposals to knock down any garages. Does not believe that knocking down garages will solve the need for more car parking spaces and will increase the vandalism that is already a big problem on Oxmoor.	Welcome the support. The selective removal of garage courts is being investigated as a potential solution to car parking in certain parts of the study area.	3 1

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Precis of general issues raised in public consultation exercise to discuss redevelopment in the area of The Whaddons and Thongsley

1. Car parking 1 - any re-development of the land currently occupied by the bungalows at 23-51 (odds) The Whaddons will generate a demand for extra car parking. A potential solution to help mitigate for this is to knock down the garage court behind 53-61 The Whaddons to create a more open landscaped car parking area that should provide a more efficient and attractive car parking area in this location.
2. Car parking 2 - the opportunity also exists to remove garage court areas elsewhere and replace with more attractive landscaped car parking areas to sort out existing parking issues elsewhere in Thongsley and Whaddons if this will help parking provision for any new development.
3. Car parking 3 - the preference has been expressed by the residents of those houses facing onto Buttsgrove Way is to keep the existing green spaces close to the front of these existing houses.
4. Buttsgrove Way - parking should be allowed along Buttsgrove Way. Cars will park here anyway (as double yellow lines will be impractical), so we must allow for this and design accordingly. The road may have to be widened a bit and the visibility splays will need to be safeguarded. Parking along Buttsgrove Way will also help to reduce the speed of traffic, and this doesn't seem to be an issue along California Road.
5. Existing properties - the bungalow at 2 Thongsley (closest to the school) is privately owned. It is appreciated that luckily the plot is at the edge of the site and would not prejudice any other proposals.
6. Open space - there is a general concern over the loss of open space, although the point was made to residents that some of the open space is not of a high standard and some of it, particularly to the front of the bungalows that face onto Buttsgrove Way, are very much examples of 'space left over'. Ideas to improve the quality of any new or retained open space could include improving the quality of the landscaping, planting trees, keeping the space close to residents, using estate railings to fence in space for small children to play in, and involving the residents in any designs.
7. Scale – there was no wish to see any 3 storeys, and a wish to see more bungalows, although the housing mix is an issue for HDC housing to discuss with Luminus in discussing the housing need. I think that there is the potential to have a single well designed slightly higher building close to the Lord Protector, and I think that there is an opportunity to have some 1 ½ storey instead of 2 storey houses, particularly where new houses are proposed close to existing houses. This will help to mitigate against any perceived loss of amenity for existing residents.
8. Character – a simple but modern character was generally accepted as the architectural style for redevelopment. Although people were overwhelmingly negative about the new houses across from the Lord Protector, I did state that on a mono architecture estate like Oxmoor, the introduction of a variety of architectural styles was a good thing and helped to diversify the area, helping to show how the area was growing and

changing. Extracts in the draft urban design framework showing what general architectural character could be applied were positively received.

9. There was support for the demolition of Suffolk House, although this is not on the agenda for action by Luminus at this time .
10. There was some support for improving the public realm and increasing the amount of green space in the area between Suffolk House, the Church and the rear of the shops and the Lord Protector, and removing the truck parking facility, although it was made clear that any improvements in this area would follow on later than the redevelopment in The Whaddons and Thongsley.

MH
23 December 2008

CABINET

29TH JANUARY 2009

**URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK
LAND SOUTH OF HIGH STREET, RAMSEY
(Report by HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Urban Design Framework examines the potential redevelopment and regeneration opportunities on land south of High Street, Ramsey. It presents the planning policy context for the consideration of this area and follows on from the adopted Conservation Area management plan for Ramsey.
- 1.2 Cabinet is asked to consider the responses made to the consultation on the draft document and approve any amendments. The final approved document will be a material planning consideration when the Council, acting in respect of its role as the Local Planning Authority, is considering or determining any planning or development proposals.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 High Street is one of the most historically significant parts of the town, lined with important buildings, and the land to the south marks the established boundary with the edge of the fen.
- 2.2 The established arrangement of plots, buildings, open spaces and trees reflects the historical development of this area and contributes to its special character.
- 2.3 Over recent years the quality of this area has been somewhat degraded, caused by neglect in some cases and by inappropriate development in others.
- 2.4 The Council's vision for the study area is to enable this part of the town to regenerate, maintaining a complementary range of land uses and allowing for the limited sympathetic re-development of specific appropriate sites.

3 THE URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 The purpose of this document is to highlight the principal planning constraints within the study area, identify the important settlement characteristics, highlight open spaces and settings, and indicate potential locations for appropriate development.
- 3.2 The document sets design parameters for the successful development of three small areas within the study area, ensuring that

future proposals achieve imaginative and distinctive solutions. Indicative layouts are shown that illustrate what could be achieved.

4 CONSULTATION RESPONSE

- 4.1 Leaflets were posted to neighbours in July and August 2008 as well as to agents acting on behalf of some of the landowners. This informed them of the start of the consultation period for the contents of the document. The expiry date for comments was 12th September 2008. I also made a presentation to the Town Council and invited comments as well as seeking the views of other consultees such as the Police Architectural Liaison Officer and the County Council highways department.
- 4.2 All comments made and the Council's responses to them are presented in Annex 1.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Production of an Urban Design Framework is considered to be best practice and will help to secure the most appropriate form of development over this part of Ramsey.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 That the Cabinet authorises the revisions to the document as presented in Annex 1.
- 6.2 That the Cabinet delegates to the Head of Planning Services , after consultation with the Executive Member for Planning Strategy, the making of any minor consequential amendments .

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ramsey Conservation Area Management Plan 2005
Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD 2007
Huntingdonshire Landscape & Townscape Assessment SPD 2007

Contact Officer: Mike Huntington
 **01480 388404**

Annex 1
 South of High Street, Ramsey
 Summary of Written Comments

The table below details the comments received in general letters and from comments or attachments from the public questionnaires.

Action Code:

- 1 Action Taken
- 2 Not within remit of document
- 3 No action required

Comment by:	Respondent no.	Nature of Comment	Response	Action
HDC Conservation	1	Just to add the presumption against demolition of any structure that contributes positively to the character of the Conservation Area	Agree	1
CCC Highways	2	No comments in writing though informally commented that they would <u>not</u> accept any development that added more vehicular traffic onto Abbey Rooms 'lane'. This would in effect remove the potential of site 3 for any further residential development as the only potential access is off Abbey Rooms. This has been confirmed by the Development Control manager, in other discussions relating to recent redevelopment behind the High Street that was accessed off Abbey Rooms.	Agree – clearly state that no further residential development will be allowed access off Abbey Rooms. In the short term potential expansion of the golf club's green keeping operations in this location would be preferable.	1

Comment by:	Respondent no.	Nature of Comment	Response	Action
HDC Transport Team	3	<p>Agrees with informal comments of CCC Highways that opportunities would be severely limited to access out onto High Street.</p> <p>Commencement of work on the Market Town Strategy for Ramsey has begun. Potential for a new east / west cycling / footpath route approximating with the existing public right of way to the south of the site, together with a new bridge to cross High Lode. Both CCC and HDC would be seeking an agreed level of financial contribution from any development towards the wider initiatives emerging from the Market Town Strategy.</p>	Agree	1
Environment Agency	4	No comments.	Flood risk assessment will be part of any planning application the landowner makes.	3
Police Architectural Liaison Officer	5	<p>Request that 'Safer Places – The Planning System and Crime Prevention' is added to the list of documents on page 39.</p> <p>Site 3 would be most problematical in terms of crime prevention.</p>	Add document to list on page 39.	1

Comment by:	Respondent no.	Nature of Comment	Response	Action
Portess Architects – (agents for site 2)	6	No comments.		3
Ramsey Golf Club (site 3)	7	Original objections to proposals, primarily due to access issues along Abbey Rooms. The golf club have worked with the Council to improve the parking arrangements at the club and have instigated a one way system for some visitors. After subsequent discussions, the club have been more amenable to the potential for redevelopment on site 3 as the land is mostly within their ownership, currently housing the green keepers and their equipment, and the club holds the key to any access solution. This is however only likely in the long term. In the short to medium term improvements and enlargements to the club's green keeping operations are likely to be the only redevelopment option for site 3.	Amendments to that effect.	3
Ramsey Town Council	8	Happy to support the document with the only issue being concerns over vehicle access to High Street.		3
Parkin	9	Comments relating to identifying opportunities	Welcome the comments. These 3 highlighted sites are the	3

Comment by:	Respondent no.	Nature of Comment	Response	Action
Planning Services		<p>for small scale development where this can reinforce the existing townscape pattern</p> <p>Concerned that other sites have not been considered.</p> <p>Concern that sites which cross over land ownership boundaries may not guarantee a successful outcome.</p> <p>Concern that proposals within the document are too prescriptive.</p>	<p>only ones that appear to have the potential to be redeveloped while still maintaining and enhancing the character of the conservation area in this part of the town.</p> <p>Sites which cross over land ownership boundaries often have the potential to create the best solution to solve a problem. Site 3 is the most obvious example here.</p> <p>The proposals presented within the document are not prescriptive and suggest built form that reflects and reinforces the character of the conservation area in this part of the town.</p>	

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CABINET MEETING

29 January 2009

LUMINUS GROUP – PROPOSED CHANGES TO MEMORANDUM AND ARTICLES

(Report by the Head of Legal and Estates)

1 INTRODUCTION

To consider a request from Luminus to amend the Memorandum and Articles of Luminus Homes and Oak Foundation, to allow for the potential remuneration of Board Members.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Solicitors who are currently undertaking a governance review for the Luminus Group have recently written in regarding what they consider to be inconsistencies between the different sets of Memorandum and Articles, specifically in relation to the remuneration of Board Members. At present, Luminus group has the power to remunerate Board Members, but there is not a similar provision within the Memorandum and Articles for either Luminus Homes or Oak Foundation.

2.2 The Council has been requested to consent to proposed amendments to allow for the possibility of Luminus Homes and Oak Foundation remunerating their Board Members.

2.3 Oak Foundation is a registered charity and any change to the Memorandum and Articles will also require the consent of the Charity Commissioners. Consequently Members may consider it an adequate safeguard to accept any proposed amendment, subject to the Charity Commission also agreeing.

2.4 With regard to Luminus Homes, as this is a change to the Memorandum and Articles proposed at the time of LSVT, it was suggested that some form of consultation with tenants should take place. The solicitors for Luminus have responded as follows :-

“my client has confirmed that tenants have been consulted regarding the introduction of payment to Board Members for all the companies in the group, including Luminus Homes and they were in agreement. The consultation that has taken place went deeper than publication in Luminus News; the Board Member Remuneration Proposal was also approved by the Tenant Services Consultative Forum”.

2.5 On the basis of the above, it would seem reasonable to agree to the proposed amendment.

2.6 Rather than bring matters such as these to Cabinet in future, it is proposed that delegated authority be given to deal with such requests,

after consultation with the Head of Housing and the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health.

3 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 It is recommended that:-

- ◆ Cabinet agrees to principle of the amendment to the Memorandum and Articles to permit the remuneration of Board Members, subject in the case of Oak Foundation to the consent of the Charity Commissioners also being obtained and in both instances to the precise wording being agreed by the Head of Legal and Estates; and
- ◆ The determination of any future proposed amendments to the Memorandum and Articles of companies within the Luminus Group be delegated to the Head of Legal and Estates, after consultation with the Head of Housing and the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health.

4 BACKGROUND

Legal & Estates file L/H/12
Contact Officer Colin Meadowcroft
Head of Legal and Estates Tel: 01480 388021

CABINET

PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHOD OF OPERATION – COUNTRYSIDE GROUP (Report by Head of Administration)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At their meeting on 10th October 2008, the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group considered a report which described the current position in relation to the terms of reference and method of operation for the Group. The report had been written in response to uncertainty expressed by Members as to the remit and status of the Group, since an earlier Cabinet decision to reconstitute the body from the Countryside Joint Group to the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group in May 2008.
- 1.2 As this issue has caused considerable debate over a number of meetings, the Group agreed to meet informally with the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services to seek to prepare a report to the Cabinet.
- 1.3 This informal meeting took place on 5th November 2008 and District Councillors M G Baker (Chairman of the Joint Group), Mrs M Banerjee and C R Hyams and County Councillor Mrs E V Kadic were present.

2. VIEWS OF THE GROUP

- 2.1 At the informal meeting, Members were reminded of the constitutional position and the provision, within the membership of the Hinchingsbrooke Group, of representation by a local County Councillor. With these issues in mind and having again discussed their role and function at great length and the programme of activity which had been proposed, the meeting was of the view that Members should be able to continue to monitor the performance of other Countryside Services as well as that of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. Therefore it was concluded that the former Countryside Group should be reinstated in addition to the existing Hinchingsbrooke Group, with a remit to monitor the performance of the other Countryside Services across the District.

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Bearing in mind the concept of the original Countryside Joint Group and having regard now to its method of operation, the meeting proposed that the new Group should meet on the rising of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group in March and October each year and should comprise the same membership as the Hinchingsbrooke Group with the exception of a County Council representative (currently – Cllrs M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, C R Hyams and Ms M J Thomas)
- 3.2 The formal meetings would continue in a similar way to that of the former Countryside Joint Group, with biannual reports to be submitted to Members by the Countryside Services and Service Development Managers of the District Council. Meetings would take place immediately after the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group on Fridays in March and October each year and would be administered by the Democratic Services Team. Reports to meetings would provide an overview of countryside, parks and open space matters allowing Members to monitor performance across the Council's countryside portfolio. These meetings would continue to take place in meeting rooms at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.
- 3.3 Informal meetings of the Countryside Group would be held twice a year in January and June. These would be delivered in the form of site visits across the District. The District Council's Countryside Services and Service Development Managers will be required to provide an itinerary for each visit. Arrangements for these events will be made centrally by the Democratic Services Team. It is proposed that visits would be offered in the first instance to Group Members, and thereafter to new and local Members for induction and training purposes. The first of these visits will take place on Tuesday 20th January 2009 and will take in Barford Road Pocket Park (Eynesbury), St Neots Riverside and Little Paxton Nature Reserve.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That the Cabinet constitute a Countryside Group with effect from the commencement of the 2009/10 Municipal Year and approve the terms of reference for the Group as set out in the Appendix attached.

Background Information

Previous reports and agendas of the Countryside Joint Liaison Group
Previous reports and agendas of the Countryside Joint Group

Contact Officer: Mrs J Walker, Democratic Services
01480 387049

**COUNTRYSIDE GROUP
PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHOD OF OPERATION**

1. The Group will consider all matters relating to countryside, riverside and other parks and open spaces in the ownership of or managed by Huntingdonshire District Council, with the exception of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.
2. The Group will not have any executive functions within the meaning of the Local Government Act 2000.
3. The Group will be constituted in accordance with the local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the District Council's Constitution with a membership comprising four members of Huntingdonshire District Council (appointed by the Cabinet).
4. The Group will meet formally on at least two occasions in each year, following the meeting of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group. The quorum for formal meetings shall be not less than three members and attendance will be open to Officers of the District Council.
5. The Group also will meet informally on at least two occasions per year. This will take the form of site visits to countryside facilities managed by the District Council, there will be no formal record taken at this meeting. Site visits will also be extended to other Council Members.
6. The Minutes of the formal meetings of the Group will be presented for confirmation to the ensuing formal meeting. Servicing of meetings will be undertaken by the Democratic Services Team.
7. The Group will liaise on behalf of the District Council, with users of the parks and countryside service and undertake periodic public consultation to which all users, officers and Members would be invited to discuss and plan future development. The Group will present their findings to the Cabinet.
8. The Group will consider annually and, report to Cabinet on, the wider role of the parks and countryside service in offering specialist advice to residents.
9. The Group will ensure, on behalf of the District Council that the parks and countryside service continue to offer support for the Care in the

Community Programme which provides work placements for handicapped adults.

- 10.** The Group will receive and monitor financial information and an annual budget for the parks and countryside services of the District Council as a whole.

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

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