

A meeting of the **CABINET** will be held in **THE WREN ROOM, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK, HUNTINGDON** on **THURSDAY, 12 MARCH 2009** at **11:30 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

**Contact
(01480)**

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th February 2009.

**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. PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Pages 5 - 20)

To consider a report by the Acting Head of People, Performance & Partnerships containing details of the Council's performance against its priority objectives.

**C Garbett
388459**

4. LOCAL INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK (Pages 21 - 24)

To consider a report by the Head of Planning Services on the Local Investment Framework.

**R Probyn
388430**

(A copy of the Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework Final Report is enclosed for Members of the Cabinet only). Copies of appendices are available on request or at:-

<http://teams.huntsdc.gov.uk/Planning/planning%20policy/Local%20Investment%20Framework/09-01-23%20HDC%20LIF%20Final%20Report%20Appendices.pdf>

5. ST. NEOTS MARKET TOWN STRATEGY (Pages 25 - 46)

To consider a report by the Head of Planning Services seeking approval for the St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy, which forms part of the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2006-11.

**R Probyn
388430**

6. **PROPOSED SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS - THE TRANSFORMATION FROM DEVELOPMENT CONTROL TO DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT** (Pages 47 - 52)

To consider a report by the Development Control Manager.

**A Moffat
388402**

7. **REVIEW OF S106 AGREEMENTS** (Pages 53 - 74)

To consider a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support)

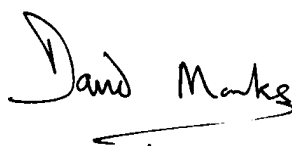
**Mrs C Bulman
388234**

8. **CONSULTATION ON CODE OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY PUBLICITY.** (Pages 75 - 80)

With the assistance of a report by the Communications and Marketing Manager to consider a response to the Communities and Local Government consultation on the code of recommended practice on local authority publicity.

**Mrs H Gilling
388033**

Dated this 4 day of March 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 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 Executive.

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.

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Agenda Item 1

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Corporate Training Suite, Eastfield House, Huntingdon on Thursday, 19 February 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor I C Bates – Chairman.

Councillors P L E Bucknell, K J Churchill,
D B Dew, A Hansard, C R Hyams,
Mrs D C Reynolds, T V Rogers and
L M Simpson.

122. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 29th January 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

123. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors I C Bates, K J Churchill, D B Dew and C R Hyams declared a personal interest in Minute No 124 all by virtue of their membership of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillor L M Simpson declared a personal interest in Minute No 124 by virtue of his membership of Huntingdon Leisure Centre Management Committee.

124. LEISURE CENTRES MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

A joint report by the Head of Administration and the General Manager, Leisure Centres (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) was submitted detailing proposals to change the way in which the District's five joint provision leisure centres are managed and funded in the future. The report had been submitted to the Leisure Centre Management Committees.

It was reported that the proposals would bring to an end the existing joint provision arrangements for the leisure centres in Huntingdonshire which have been in existence for many years. Executive Councillors were advised that proposed changes to the governance and funding arrangements for schools and the increasing specialisation and co-ordination of service delivery to avoid duplication and secure efficiencies at the centres had resulted in the present funding and governance arrangements becoming outdated. With effect from the September 2009 schools would be charged directly for their use of the Centres, the cost of maintenance and repairs would continue to be shared by the County Council based on the percentage of educational usage of the facilities.

In future, responsibility for the day to day management of the Centres

would become the responsibility of the District Council's Cabinet, but in order to ensure continued dialogue between the district, the county council and the school governing bodies, a new body, the Active Leisure Forum, was being proposed. As part of the proposals, a Councillor within the notional catchment area of each centre would become the "advocate" for that centre, representing community interests and becoming the person to whom the manager and his staff would turn in the first instance for member support. With regard to membership of the forum, Members' attention was drawn to the contents of the lease between the District Council and the Town for the occupation of the sports hall at Huntingdon which contained provision for a management committee on which the Town is entitled to two voting representatives. Having considered the views of the Town Council on the matter, Executive Councillors felt that a place on the new forum should be made available to them.

With regard to the cost implications of the proposals, Executive Councillors were advised that the changes would achieve financial savings, as separate accounts and audit would no longer be required for each centre and resources employed in servicing the Committees could be redirected to support other priorities. In considering the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) on the proposals, Members felt it would be appropriate to award forum meetings a notice period of 14 days. Having discussed reporting arrangements for the forum, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the proposals contained in the report now submitted for the future management and funding arrangements for the leisure centres at St. Ivo, Huntingdon, St. Neots, Ramsey and Sawtry be endorsed;
- (b) that responsibility for the leisure centres be undertaken by the District Council with effect from the new financial year;
- (c) that the existing five management committees be wound up with effect from the end of the current financial year;
- (d) that an active leisure forum be established in accordance with the terms of reference set out in the Annex to the report now submitted and Huntingdon Town Council be awarded one representative on that forum;
- (e) that the existing management agreements be substituted by new agreements to be agreed by the County Council and the individual secondary school governing bodies, plus an amendment to the lease of Huntingdon Sports Hall and that the Head of Administration be authorised to determine the final content of the agreement, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Leisure and the General Manager, Leisure; and
- (f) that future levels of performance for the Centres be reported to Cabinet on a 6 monthly basis.

125. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to individual employees of the District Council.

126. REVIEW OF CENTRAL SERVICES

The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Annex to the Minute Book) outlining proposed changes to the staffing structure and working procedures of the Central Services Directorate.

Having noted the scope for financial savings and the decisions of the Employment Panel, on the proposals, at its meeting on 3rd February 2009, it was

RESOLVED

that approval by the Employment Panel of the new staffing structure for the Central Services Directorate be noted and the associated financial implications as outlined in paragraph 7.1 of the report now submitted approved.

Chairman

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PERFORMANCE MONITORING
(Report by the acting Head of People, Performance & Partnerships)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Members performance management information on "Growing Success" – the Council's Corporate Plan, to Cabinet.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In September 2008 the Council adopted an updated Plan which includes 37 short, medium and long term objectives to help achieve aims and ambitions for Huntingdonshire's communities and the Council itself. In addition the Council have identified a smaller number (8) of objectives which were considered to be a priority for the immediate future.

3. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- 3.1 Progress against all 37 objectives are reported to Chief Officer Management Team quarterly on a service basis. A progress report from each Division includes performance data in the form of achievement against a target for each of the objectives that those services contribute towards. This is supported by narrative on achievements, other issues or risks and budgeting information. In addition, a working group jointly appointed by the Panels continues to meet quarterly to monitor progress in the achievement of the Plan and to consider development issues.
- 3.2 Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Panels have an important role in the Council's Performance Management Framework and the process of regular review of performance data has been established. In adopting the updated version of Growing Success, and in particular in prioritising objectives, it was intended that Members should concentrate their monitoring on a small number of objectives to enable them to adopt a strategic overview while building confidence that the Council priorities are being achieved.
- 3.3 Executive members requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's deliberations were summarised and appended to this report. However, due to the timing of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's meeting and the distribution of the Cabinet agenda the Panels comments will now be circulated separately

4. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 4.1 The following performance data is appended for consideration:

Annex A - a summary of achievements, issues and risks relating to the objectives identified by the Heads of Service

Annex B - Performance data from services which contribute to the Council objectives. For each measure there is a target, actual performance against target, forecast performance for the next period and a comments field. The data is colour coded as follows:

- green – achieving target or above;
- amber – between target and an “intervention level (the level at which performance is considered to be unacceptable and action is required);
- red – the intervention level or below; and
- grey - data not available

Annex C – Council Improvement Plan – a rolling plan of actions identified following internal or external reviews such as the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, Use of Resources Assessment and the Annual Governance Statement.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 It is recommended that Cabinet consider the results of performance for priority objectives.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Performance Management reports produced from the Council’s CPMF software system

Growing Success: Corporate Plan

**Contact
Officer:**

Howard Thackray, Policy & Research Manager



01480 388035

Objective		Comments from appropriate Head of Service
To help mitigate and adapt to climate change	Achievements:	<p>Environment Management are working in partnership with the County and other Districts to produce a <u>Local Climate Impact Profile</u>. This document will <i>highlight climatic threats to the District including floods and warmer weather events that can impact on service delivery</i>. It should then be used to provide a platform for costing the impact of such events for the Council.</p> <p><u>Private housing retrofit project on track</u> The project aims to <i>encourage the installation of energy efficiency measures and renewable technologies in private properties</i> in the District. The first property on St Audrey's Lane St Ives has been purchased (modest detached for £190k in a high profile position opposite Toyota Garage and Crossways church at Junction of Ramsey Rd). An offer for the second property, a modest detached off Cambridge Rd, St Neots has been accepted, £134k. <i>The measures to be put in place for the properties to address energy measures to contribute to mitigating and adapting to climate change are being undertaken in partnership with the Building Research Establishment at Watford (nationally/internationally acknowledged lead in this field).</i></p> <p><u>HDC Carbon Management Programme</u> to identify big hits for carbon reduction well established: <i>have identified 22 projects across the Council which can deliver a 16% reduction in carbon emissions</i></p> <p><u>Active campaign/promotion/event programme</u> being established by Environment Team etc to highlight measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change. This includes monthly features in Hunts Post, features in District Wide etc as well as other features/events locally.</p>
	Issues:	<p><u>Local Climate Impact Profile</u> may reveal significant costs for the Council or that we are actually well placed in tackling /addressing issues in this area.</p> <p><u>Private housing retrofit project on track</u> Tight timetable from April to December to undertake programme and refurbish the properties: St Audreys Lane property proposed to have a modest 1 bed low carbon extension that will require us to apply for planning permission.</p> <p><u>HDC Carbon Management Programme</u> Overall long term aspirational target of 30% and may be difficult to achieve.</p>
	Risks:	<p><u>Local Climate Impact Profile</u> led by County so may not have sufficient HDC focus.</p> <p><u>Private housing retrofit project on track</u> a risk that the property fails to get planning permission.</p> <p><u>HDC Carbon Management Programme</u> Whilst many projects are/will be spend to save they will still require approval/ funding. Carbon Trust only provide support for year 1 of programme and this could lead to difficulties in identifying the further 14% of emission reductions. Only a modest number of the 22 projects currently identified are funded, however this should not be a major issue as it is a 5 year</p>

		programme. Biggest single hit will be the installation of CHP (combined heat and power) boilers at leisure centres as undertaken already at Huntingdon.
To promote active lifestyles	Achievements:	<p>Specific provision for leisure activities for <17years: 4080 people attended sessions to end-December. Target to date = 2513 (annual target already exceeded).</p> <p>Specific provision for vulnerable people: 16056 throughput to end-December. (annual target already exceeded).</p> <p>Leisure Centres - visits total 1.29 m (56k more than 07-08).</p> <p>Over 18,000 current card holders.</p> <p>Over 3,000 children's swim lessons per week.</p> <p>Over 12,000 Impressions Members.</p> <p>193,000 Fitness studio users.</p> <p>4,000 visitors to HLC Fun Zone in first 6 weeks.</p> <p>Investment in facilities reaping rewards (SNLC Pool, HLC internal development).</p>
	Issues:	<p>Leisure Centres - Staffing Re-structure completed.</p> <p>County Agreements being re-negotiated.</p> <p>Free swims for Over 60's from April.</p> <p>Free swims for Under 17's not proceeding.</p>
	Risks:	<p>Community Sports Network funded by Sport England Lottery Fund until summer 09; changes to national funding policy will mean it is more difficult to extend funding beyond this.</p> <p>Leisure Centres - Credit crunch affects centre income.</p>
To achieve a low level of homelessness	Achievements:	<p>82 households were prevented from becoming homeless in Q3 of the year, compared to 41 in the same period last year (total of 211 households where homeless prevented in Q1-Q3 compared to 109 for the same period the previous year).</p> <p>Whilst not an achievement, an important indicator is that 35 households were accepted as homelessness in Q3 compared to 30 in the same period last year (total of 126 households accepted as homeless in Q1-Q3 compared to 105 from the same period the previous year).</p> <p>A reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation, from 77 households at the start of the quarter to 68 at the end.</p>
	Issues:	<p>Axiom HA has identified a property to be attached to Paines Mill Foyer in St Neots as move on accommodation to free up 2 units in the scheme to be used as 'crash pad' emergency beds. This is to mitigate young people being placed in otherwise inappropriate forms of temporary accommodation. Property being purchased through LAA Reward Grant funding and to be in use by April/May 2009.</p> <p>Conclusion of the review of the Register's new priority 'banding' system to ensure that it does not have an impact on the prevention of homelessness or restrict homeless households from moving on from temporary accommodation. To feed into a full review of Home-Link that will be carried out within 12 months of it being launched. This review will be carried out sub regionally with a report going to</p>

		Management Board in Feb/March 2009.
	Risks:	National and/or local economic factors have increased demand for our services but demand may increase further.
To enable the provision of affordable housing	Achievements:	129 affordable homes were completed during the quarter bringing the cumulative total to 191. This is a beneficial step change in provision.
	Issues:	Prepare for Local Development Framework examination. Respond to affordable housing market opportunities from developers and RSLs.
	Risks:	Lack of funding available from the Homes and Communities Agency for new affordable housing via the bidding process (all schemes compete for a limited budget).

SERVICE DELIVERY (up to 31st December 2008)

ANNEX B

Community/Council Aim: A Clean, Green and Attractive place						
Objective: To help mitigate and adapt to climate change						
Division: Planning						
Divisional Objective: To encourage sustainable forms of development						
Key activity(s) only to deliver service objective	Key Measure	Target:	Actual	Fore cast		Comments:
Include sustainable policies within LDF (to set a sustainable policy framework)	Core Strategy – Adherence to LDF timetable, on target to be adopted by August 2009 (1=Yes, 0=No)	1	1	1	↔	Examination in public expected March 09 Qrt
Division: Environmental Management						
Divisional Objective: To Lower Carbon Emissions						
Key Activity(s) only to deliver service objective:	Key Measure:	Target:	Actual	Fore cast		Comments:
Complete an annual review & update of Growing Awareness a plan for our environment & ensure that the MTP funding is committed by the Council to deliver on going carbon dioxide reduction	Year 1 actions identified in Environment Strategy on target (1=Yes, 0=No)	1	1	1	↔	Qrt
Identify areas of joint working with stakeholders to help deliver aims of Growing Awareness.	HSP Environment Forum to meet at least twice annually (1=Yes, 0 = No)	1	1	1	↔	Environment Forum to be reconvened with next meeting on 27.01.09. Further dates agreed for the coming financial year, 09.06.09, 22.09.09 & 01.12.09 Qrt
Identify opportunities to reduce CO2 emissions from the Council's own operations	Production of HDC Carbon Management Plan by 31st March 2009 (on target 1=Yes, 0 = No)	1	1	1	↔	Draft Carbon Management Plan prepared by 1st December 2008. Finalised plan to be presented to Cabinet in March 09 before presentation to the Carbon Trust. Qrt
	On target (1=Yes, 0=No) to achieve a 6% carbon saving from council estate.(cumulative quarterly measure)	1	1	1	↔	Baseline CO2 production for 2007 has been established, Carbon Management Plan to be in place by 31st March 2009, will include a target for reducing the Council's Carbon emissions by 30% over five years, with year on year reductions identified Qrt
Oversee the implementation of the Environment Strategy projects	% of Environment Strategy Year 1 projects on target	75	78	75	↑	Year one funded Environment Strategy Projects seven out of nine on Track Qrt
Promote energy efficiency and use of renewable energy to householders	Number of tonnes of CO2 saved through installation of energy efficiency measures and renewables in domestic properties (cumulative quarterly measure)	50	198		↑	Contributing schemes include: Warmer Homes for Life, British Gas Rebate scheme, Solar Hot Water Scheme Free insulation for Pensioners Cumulative figures to date for the first three quarters of the financial year 49 homes with Cavity wall Insulation Qrt

						99 Homes with loft insulation 7 Homes with Solar Hot Water and a total of 125 homes in the district were improved by these insulation measures This saved 198.6 Tonnes of CO2	
Promote Energy Efficiency to householders through the Warmer Homes For Life Scheme	% of applications for loft and Cavity Wall Insulation received under the scheme replied to within 5 working days	95	100	95	↑	All 158 enquiries received for the Warmer Homes for Life scheme between 01/10/08 and 31/12/08 were responded to within 5 working days.	Qrt
Retro fit project - procurement of Housing stock	Retro fit project - procurement of Housing stock by March 09 (on target 1 = Yes, 0 = No)	1	1	1	↔	First property (3 Bedroom 1970s Detached) is in the process of being purchased. Second property still to be agreed and purchased.	Qrt
Undertake risk-based assessment of current vulnerabilities to weather and climate changes and identify adaptation responses	Local risk based assessment complete by Sept 09 to achieve level 1 of NI188 on target (1=Yes, 0 = No)	1	1	1	↔	Local Climate Impacts Profile(LCLIP) being undertaken in February - March 09 as part of County wide approach to assessing the impact on services on severe weather events. This study will then inform the preparation of a local risk assessment in association partners.	Qrt
Update existing and extend Travel Plans to all of the Council's employment sites and implement to achieve a modal shift away from single occupant car use	% of council employees travelling alone to work by car (previously 65%)	65				Annual measure data to follow	Yrl

Community/Council Aim: Healthy Living

Objective: To Promote healthy lifestyle choices

Division: Leisure

Divisional Objective: To Increase participation in healthy physical activities

Key Activity(s) only to deliver service objective:	Key Measure:	Target:	Actual	Fore cast		Comments:	
Maintain and improve standard of facilities and match facility provision with usage demand.	Number of admissions/participants in activities provided or promoted by the Council (1.75m per annum) cumulative quarterly target)	1,277,500	1,290,000		↑	Previous qrt 872,809 (less than target)	Qrt
Promotion and marketing of available activities	Number of active card holders by March 09	18,400	18,341		↔	Previous qrt 18455 (less than target)	Qrt

Division: Lifestyles

Divisional Objective: To promote healthy lifestyle choices

Key Activity(s) only to deliver service objective:	Key Measure:	Target:	Actual	Fore cast		Comments:	
Provide a range of accessible leisure opportunities such as: a Holiday Activity Programme for <17 yrs (SCS measure)	Total throughput of school, outreach and holiday activity Programmes (cumulative quarterly target)	2513	4080		↑		Qrt
Provide and facilitate arts activities directly and in partnership	Throughput of people (target 8500 per ann) experiencing arts interventions as a result of Arts Service and Partner activities during 2008/09 (cumulative quarterly target)	8250	8973		↑		Qrt
Provide targeted schemes to enable vulnerable people to participate in physical leisure activities (inc	Throughput on identified schemes (cumulative quarterly target)	11625	16056		↑		Qrt

Exercise Referral, Community Sports and Recreation Project, Community Sports Network and Active Life scheme.) (SCS measure 2.1.5)						
Provide under-represented groups with the opportunity to participate in sport and active recreation (SCS measure)	Total throughput of activity programme for disabled participants and under-represented groups (cumulative quarterly target)	1050	1436		↑	Qrt
Support vulnerable people to be more active, Cardiac Rehabilitation programme and Health walks	Total throughput of the Cardiac Rehabilitation programme and Health walks in Huntingdonshire (cumulative quarterly target)	5400	6792		↑	Qrt
Community/Council Aim: Housing that meets the local need						
Objective: To achieve a low level of homelessness						
Division: Housing						
Divisional Objective: To achieve a low level of homelessness						
Key Activity(s) only to deliver service objective:	Key Measure:	Target:	Actual	Fore cast		Comments:
By helping to prevent people from becoming homeless by housing homeless people where appropriate	Numbers of households (135) prevented from becoming homeless each year to 2009 (cumulative quarterly target)	135	211		↑	Achieving this target will be heavily influenced by external factors such as the 'credit crunch' and mortgage
	(NI 156) No. of households living in temporary accommodation	64	68	64	↑	Achieving this target will be heavily influenced by external factors such as the 'credit crunch' and mortgage repossessions.
Community/Council Aim: Developing communities sustainably						
Objective: To enable the provision of affordable housing						
Division: Housing						
Divisional Objective: To enable the provision of affordable housing						
Key Activity(s) only to deliver service objective:	Key Measure:	Target:	Actual	Fore cast		Comments:
By maximising the land available for new affordable housing. By working in partnership with Housing Associations to bid for external funding. By making a financial contribution to pay for affordable homes to be built	(NI 155) Number of new affordable homes built by March 2009 (cumulative quarterly target)	191	191	286	↑	The great majority of the completions are scheduled for the final 2 quarters. The "credit crunch" has affected some of the delivery of the socially rented units, but we remain on track to deliver to target in Q4.
Division: Planning						
Divisional Objective: Maximise provision of affordable housing on relevant development sites						
Key Activity(s) only to deliver service objective:	Key Measure:	Target:	Actual	Fore cast		Comments:
Develop Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD (to set policy framework)/Adopt Planning Obligations SPD (to set specific targets and thresholds)/Negotiate S106 Agreements (to deliver required amounts of affordable housing)	% of housing completions on qualifying sites that are affordable in market towns and key settlements	40				Annual measure data to follow Previously qrt 29%
	% of housing completions on qualifying sites that are affordable in smaller settlements	29				Annual measure data to follow Previously qrt 29%
	% of affordable housing (commitments) on qualifying sites	35	67		↑	

Objective		
To promote development opportunities in and around the market towns	Achievements:	<p>Promoting Local Procurement: 'Buyer meet supplier' event held to encourage local procurement and promote opportunities available within the Public Sector. 70 businesses attended and 13 key public sector Procurement Mangers each provided one-to-one meetings alongside a Master Class on "How to win public sector contracts". Business Support partners are keen to roll out this format across the county now.</p> <p>Visit (Enjoy) Huntingdonshire: Launch to councillors and officers of Visit Huntingdonshire website. This is part of a suite of 'visit Britain' websites which cascade to regional, county and district levels. The project fed into a wider EEDA funded partner initiative involving all five local District Councils and Peterborough in setting up a new Cambridgeshire-wide website 'Visit Cambridgeshire'. The public launch of 'Visit Huntingdonshire' took place on the 24th February.</p> <p>District Promotion: A new combined visitor and accommodation guide has been produced, which consolidates information from a number of other publications and streamlines the number of documents required. A PDF version is also available on the Council's website.</p>
	Issues:	
	Risks:	
Effective Partnership	Achievements:	<p>Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA: Significant progress has been made in developing a performance management system for the SCS and integrating it into wider performance management systems. Scrutiny and accountability arrangements are also being considered for the HSP as well as linkages with the countywide partnerships to deliver the LAA.</p>
	Issues:	
To be an employer people want to work for	Achievements:	<p>Training Advisor and Training Support Officer commenced employment in January. The HR team are now fully staffed and plans are in place to address backlog, roll out policy reviews and update processes to ensure the Council's interests are protected.</p>
	Issues:	<p>While a significant number of audit actions have been completed in the last quarter there are still a number outstanding across the HR and Payroll Division. An analysis of these outstanding issues has been undertaken, together with a plan of implementation and review.</p>
	Risks:	
Maximise business and income opportunities including external funding	Achievements:	<p>External Funding: External Funding officer has met with all Heads of Service and identified future funding projects. This will be reported to DMT's in due course.</p>
	Issues:	<p>External Funding strategy: due to External Funding officers time being spent on funding bids</p>

and grants		the External Funding strategy has been delayed, this work is expected to be complete by April.
	Risks:	S106 agreements: there has been a slowdown in collecting contributions due to the economic downturn and the slowdown in the housing market. Several developers have requested variations to S106 agreements to payment terms.

Community/Council Aim: Developing communities sustainably							
Objective: To promote development opportunities in and around the market towns							
Division: Planning							
Divisional Objective: To promote development opportunities in and around the market towns							
Key Activity(s) only to deliver service objective:	Key Measure:	Target:	Actual	Forecast	Trend	Comments:	
Develop strategic policy to promote well being of our market towns	Adoption of Core Strategy on target to be adopted by August 2009 (1=Yes, 0=No)	1	1	1	↔	Examination in public expected March 09	QRT
Division: Policy and Strategic Services							
Divisional Objective: To promote development opportunities in and around the market towns							
Key Activity(s) only to deliver service objective:	Key Measure:	Target:	Actual	Forecast	Trend	Comments:	
Implementation of the projects (that contribute market town development) in the Local Economy strategy	% of LES actions/milestones on track	90	100	100	↔	Local economy strategy has been adopted. Action plans have been developed and are on target.	QRT
Community/Council Aim: To improve our systems and practices							
Objective: Effective Partnerships							
Division: Policy and Strategic Services							
Divisional Objective: Develop and adopt a sustainable community strategy							
Key Activity(s) only to deliver service objective:	Key Measure:	Target:	Actual	Forecast	Trend	Comments:	
Develop and refine SCS action plans by March 09	on target (1=Yes, =No)	1	1	1	↔		QRT
Deliver and measure performance against action plans for 09/10	% of SCS themed group action plans on target to be delivered in 2009/10	70				Data available in spring 2009	QRT
Divisional Objective: Effective Partnership framework							
Key Activity(s) only to deliver service objective:	Key Measure:	Target:	Actual	Forecast	Trend	Comments:	
Develop, implement and monitor strategic/operational partnership review programme	Partnership review programme on target (1=yes, 0=No)	1	1	1	↔		QRT
Community/Council Aim: To learn and develop							
Objective: To be and Employer People Wish to Work For							

Division: HR							
Divisional Objective: To attract and retain staff							
Key Activity(s) only to deliver service objective:	Key Measure:	Target:	Actual	Forecast	Trend	Comments:	
Policies and procedures that keep up to date with modern working patterns	Review programme on target for adoption by Dec 2008 (1 = Yes, 0 = No)	1	1		↔	Adopted Dec 2008	YRL
Recruitment package	% of posts filled within one round of recruitment	90	100		↔	All posts advertised in last quarter have been filled in the first round of recruitment.	QRT
	% of filled posts (for permanent staff) at anyone time	97	98.9			7 posts were vacant at the end of December out of a total of 717 permanent posts.	QRT
To ensure a culture in which staff are able to work to their full potential	Biennial staff survey – % level of satisfaction	80				Staff survey due summer 2009	YRL
Community/Council Aim: To maintain sound finances							
Objective: Maximise business and income opportunities including external funding and grants							
Division: Leisure							
Divisional Objective: Maximise leisure centre income							
Key Activity(s) only to deliver service objective:	Key Measure:	Target:	Actual	Forecast	Trend	Comments:	
Maximise leisure centre income	Actual income received compared to budget (cumulative quarterly target)	£3,492,000	£3,410,000		↑		QRT
Maintain expenditure within budget	Actual expenditure compared to budget cumulative quarterly target	£5,002,000	£4,300,000	4.83m	↑		QRT
Division: Policy and Strategic Services							
Divisional Objective: To be aware of appropriate funding opportunities and communicate to the appropriate service							
Key Activity(s) only to deliver service objective:	Key Measure:	Target:	Actual	Forecast	Trend	Comments:	
Co ordinate and maintain a system of internal control via funding Database, liaise with appropriate officers, provide funding advice and assistance in compilation of bids, as required	% of bids which attract funding,(year to date)	70	92.%			12 out of 12 bids = (£13,471,268)	QRT
	External Funding strategy on target to be completed by March 2009 (1=Yes, 0=No)	1	0.5		↓	This work could be delayed until April 09	QRT

Improvement Plan

Annex C

(Note: the Council's Improvement Plan is updated and monitored frequently to reflect the development areas adopted through external inspection and compliance with statutory guidance.)

In progress

Completed

Subject	Area of Focus	Reference	Proposed Action	Outcome	Lead Members and Officer	Progress February 2009
Learning & Knowledge	Learning across the Council and making the most of learning opportunities to use research, consultation and knowledge to plan services.	CPA	Adopt systematic approaches to learning and sharing knowledge via the Council's intranet.	Council uses learning and knowledge and research effectively across the organisation to improve the delivery of services and achievement of priorities.	Member: Mike Simpson Officer: Dir Commerce & Technology support Head of IMD	All SharePoint sites have been set-up/migrated to latest version of SharePoint and search facility re-instated. Encouraging the use of WIKIs to aid the sharing of knowledge & experience within teams. A good example is in use at the Call Centre.
Capacity and Resources	Sustainability of spending plans, employee capacity, staff turnover.	CPA	Delivery of People Strategy	The Council has the right number of employees with the right skills to meet its priorities and objectives.	Member: Andrew Hansard Officer: Dir Central Services Support: Head of Personnel	A new People Strategy being developed. This will go to Employment Panel in Sept 2009 and thereafter an action plan will be implemented to deliver the strategy
Financial Management - The Council manages performance against budgets	The Council should continue to develop its budget monitoring processes to ensure that it is appropriate for the Council and it meets the requirements of the UoR	Use of Resources 2007/08	Significant progress has been made but a formal risk assessment will be carried out to focus further developments. (by 31 March 08)			This action has already been completed, and will be removed from the report.

Subject	Area of Focus	Reference	Proposed Action	Outcome	Lead Members and Officer	Progress February 2009
	criteria which include the need to ensure monitoring is informed by a risk assessment.					
Internal Control - Risk Management	Risk management training should be delivered to appropriate officers and members prior to 31 March 2008.	Use of Resources 2007/08	All Heads of Service have received training. Further Member training provided in December 2007. Any Members who missed both training sessions will be briefed individually. (by 31 March 08)	Raise awareness of risk and risk management		This action has already been completed and will be removed from the report. JDH 24/02/09
Systems of Internal Control	The Council should develop and implement an assurance framework. Once implemented, processes need to be put in place to ensure that this a fluid living document that is updated constantly for any changes in objectives, risks and assurances.	Use of Resources 2007/08	An assurance framework will be developed and agreed by the Corporate Governance Panel on 26 March 2008. (by 31 March 08)	Agreed systems/process in place to provide assurance that the council undertakes it's functions and responsibilities with integrity, openness and accountability.		The report to Governance Panel on 25 th March 2009 addresses this item. Reports dealing with Risk Assurance will be sent to the Panel on a six monthly basis
	Internal Audit Managers opinion on the internal control environment.	Governance Assurance framework	Actions identified in the internal audit action plan are implemented as per the agreed audit timetable.	Improve the overall assurance opinion on the system of Internal control.		See above. Also Monitored via Performance Management Framework and reported Quarterly to COMT
Governance	Equalities.	Governance Assurance framework	Implement and monitor Corporate Equality Action Plan.	Facilitate progress in relation to the Local Government Standard for Equalities.		Level 2 of the standard achieved. Progress to level 3 (by 2010) on target. CEP action plan, 7 out of 9 action are on target.

Subject	Area of Focus	Reference	Proposed Action	Outcome	Lead Members and Officer	Progress February 2009
	Consultation.	Governance Assurance framework	Adopt and implement consultation and engagement strategy.	Developing consultation and engagement with local communities.		Strategy adopted in Spring 08 Progress being made to deliver the action plan
	Complaints System.	Governance Assurance framework	Review existing mechanisms for responding to harassment e.g. Open Out, corporate complaints procedure, grievance procedure and Dignity at Work Policy.	A corporate complaints system that will enable transparent non-discriminatory reporting.		The corporate complaints system has been recast as part of a wider Feedback system, which has been approved by Management Team and endorsed by the Corporate Governance Panel.
	Sustainable Community Strategy.	Governance Assurance framework	Working to develop a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS).	Delivery of the outcomes identified in the SCS via the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership.		SCS adopted by Council in Sept 08. Work underway to develop and monitor partner actions
Data Quality	Data Quality	Use of Resources/VFM	Action identified in the Data Quality action plan are implemented as per the agreed timetable	To provide reliable, accurate and timely performance information with which to manage services, inform users and account for our performance		Data measure templates, in part updated by services to reflect changes to corporate plan.

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CABINET

12TH MARCH 2009

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

10TH FEBRUARY 2009

THE LOCAL INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

(Report by Head of Planning Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members on the importance of the work in Developing a Local Investment Framework for Huntingdonshire and to briefly explain what it contains and how it will be used to deliver growth in the district.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A Local Investment Framework (LIF) is now a requirement of 'PPS12: Local Spatial Planning' where it states that Core strategies should be about delivery whereas in the past too much emphasis has been put on process of doing a plan. The purpose of a LIF is to determine the level of local and strategic infrastructure required to support the level of new development coming forward in Huntingdonshire up to 2026. Huntingdonshire's Core strategy will be the subject of an Examination In Public by an independent inspector and the LIF will be part of the evidence to identify how and when the infrastructure will be delivered.
- 2.2 EDAW were employed as the lead consultants with related transport, engineering specialists and property advisers to carry out the task of producing a LIF. Following continued partnership engagement between March and October 2008 including two workshops and culminating with discussions at the various LSPs, HSP Executive and the Board, the finalised version of the Local Investment Framework is attached (Appendix A).
- 2.3 EDAW started the process by carrying out population projections for the new development where they noted that over the next 20 years the population will grow by around 13,900, the district will accommodate between 12,000 – 13,000 new homes between 2006 – 2026, and that there will need to be between 10,000 and 20,000 new jobs created. During this process EDAW:
- Engaged with providers to understand their plans and implications for growth with the advantage that it brings together all stakeholders and suggests processes that will be needed in future to coordinate delivery at a local, subregional and regional scale
 - Arrived at infrastructure needs of new communities in the future and identified any blockages in delivery identifying who provides funding – utilities, pct ,local authority, grants, developers, when they should provide it and the phasing gaps in provision

- Analysed the market and what developers can contribute as planning obligation
- Set up a projects database model which is key to the process and programming for delivering the required infrastructure for growth and can be updated with changing circumstances.

3. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- 3.1 Linked to the delivery of the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy will be the development of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Planning obligations using evidence from the market analysis chapter of LIF to arrive at a total figure for obligations expressed as a tariff per house. This will be an interim measure before the possible transition to a proposed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) that is part of the new Planning act 2008.
- 3.2 Whilst the regulations relating to how CIL will operate will not be introduced before September 2009 it is clear that the LIF will be essential evidence to produce a charging schedule (term used in the draft consultation paper on CIL) for developers – that justifies the type and costs of infrastructure and the ability of developers to pay towards some of that infrastructure.
- 3.3 The Council is working currently with Cambridgeshire Horizons and the other Cambridgeshire Councils to produce a potential scheme for a subregional infrastructure tariff. Then it will be possible, if considered appropriate at the time, to merge the two tariffs into one single tariff.
- 3.4 Within the council arrangements have already been set up to recognize the pivotal role of the Growth and Infrastructure LSP to implement the Core strategy with the use of the model to monitor progress. To aid this the developing Growth and Infrastructure Action Plan will now be merged into this model to formulate the overall plan for delivery of growth and infrastructure.
- 3.5 It is recognised that there is a need to continue to ensure that there is 'buy in' from all the Council services and our Partners in other services. There is already a need to populate parts of the model and to keep it up to date and this may involve additional resources for this important task.
- 3.6 Finally the LIF recognises the need for a St Neots Delivery Board similar to the Boards set up to deliver growth in the Cambridge area to enable the delivery of the amount of growth envisaged in the Core Strategy for St Neots. This needs to be set up and the relationship with Cambridgeshire Horizons formalised.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
note the information provided in this report and support the future work programme illustrated in section 3. above.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Core Strategy: Submission Document HDC
Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework Draft September 2008
Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework Draft November 2008
EEDA Board Regional Infrastructure Report September 2008
EEDA Integrated Development Programmes
GCP Long Term Delivery Plan

Contact Officer: Richard Probyn
☎ 01480 388430

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CABINET

12TH MARCH 2009

**ST. NEOTS MARKET TOWN TRANSPORT STRATEGY
(Report by Head of Planning Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the new St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy which forms part of the County Council Local Transport Plan (LTP). The Strategy contains a number of schemes for implementation within the town over the next five years as and when funding becomes available. The schemes are aimed both at improving transport within the town now and to provide a basis for dealing with increased pressure on the network from development in the future.
- 1.2 Market Town Transport Strategies are an integral part of the LTP. Within the District the first strategy was produced for St. Neots during 2000, Huntingdon and Godmanchester in 2003 with St. Ives following in 2007. A first strategy for Ramsey is now being developed with adoption planned for early 2010. Given the time that has now elapsed, a review for St. Neots has been undertaken
- 1.3 This report sets out the issues tackled by the strategy and the schemes designed to address them. It also summarises the public consultation exercise carried out during 2007 and the results of the questionnaire survey undertaken at that time.
- 1.4 The strategy was endorsed by the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee (Hunts AJC) at its meeting of 10th March 2008 and approved by the County Council Cabinet on 9th September 2008.

2. THE NEW STRATEGY

- 2.1 The new strategy is the result of work to review progress in delivering the first strategy, and to look again at the key transport issues facing the town in the light of progress. As with the first strategy, it identifies transport schemes to address the needs of the town.
- 2.2 The programme has been prioritised to give an indication of the possible timescale for delivery of individual measures. The schemes included and their priority order reflects the views obtained through the public consultation exercise, an assessment of deliverability and the views of local Members through both a Member steering group and the Hunts Area Joint Committee (AJC).

- 2.3 The strategy and programme of schemes included are consistent with the aims and objectives of the County Council's LTP 2006-11 and the delivery of the strategy is aimed to contribute towards the economic vitality, viability and well-being of the town.
- 2.4 The delivery of measures in the strategy will contribute towards achieving national and local transport targets including road traffic accident statistics and casualties, local bus passenger journeys, children travelling to school, cycling trips, air quality and travel trends. Improved transport provision and measures to manage traffic should also assist in addressing wider objectives such as reducing social exclusion, community development and promoting health.

3. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 3.1 A comprehensive consultation exercise was carried out in June/July 2007. Leaflets and questionnaires were distributed to all households and businesses in St Neots as well as surrounding villages. The consultation exercise also included a public exhibition, stakeholder consultation and use of the Internet and local press to publicise the strategy review.
- 3.2 387 questionnaires were returned. All of the strategy proposals received generally high levels of support from the respondents. Table 1 below shows the schemes in order of support shown.

Rank	Scheme	Percentage of respondents who Strongly support or Support
1	Bus route and map information	92
2	Road Safety and Traffic management measures	88
3	Pedestrian/cycle network	84
4	Real Time Passenger information (RTPI)	81
5	Cycle Racks	79
6	Southern Cycle Bridge	79
7	Integration of RTPI with train timetable information	79

- 3.3 Respondents were also asked to prioritise the schemes for funding. Analysis of the results of this question revealed that most respondents prioritised the road safety and traffic management schemes over other areas of the strategy.
- 3.4 In addition, many who responded identified the lack of bus layover space in the Market Square as a significant problem in terms of both congestion and air quality. While the strategy does not include detailed proposals to address this issue it acknowledges that a further study to

look at potential solutions is needed. It also suggests that this should be led by consideration of what measures are needed to deal with the air quality issues in the town centre as part of the Air Quality Action Plan.

- 3.5 The Member steering group considered the results of the consultation together with officers from the County and District Council's. As a result, an addition was made to the strategy to include the provision of new format bus timetable information for display at bus stops in the town.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Following approval of the strategy by the County Council, it was adopted as policy as part of the Local Transport Plan 2006-11. Schemes within the strategy are being considered for inclusion in the Capital Programme for 2009/10 onwards as part of the Market Towns Transport Strategy programme. This will include partnership funding from the District Council's Medium Term Plan and the use of emerging S.106 funding, particularly from Love's Farm. Based on the expected level of funding, the Huntingdonshire AJC will be presented with an annual programme of works for their approval.
- 4.2 The new strategy looks at transport issues facing the town now and runs until 2011. However, it will be reviewed and will evolve as necessary in the intervening period to take account of emerging pressures, such as the likelihood of significant additional development in the period of the new Huntingdonshire Local Development framework.
- 4.3 Transport modelling has been commissioned by the District and County Council's, with support from the Highways Agency, to quantify the impact of traffic growth and possible development scenarios around St Neots on the transport network in the town, and on the A1 and A428. This work will assist in informing the recommendations that the District Council will need to make on the location of future development in Huntingdonshire, and will aid the assessment of what new transport infrastructure will be needed to provide for the transport demand arising from development. It will also aid the County Council and the Highways Agency, as highway authorities for the local and trunk road networks respectively, in their planning of transport infrastructure and services on the wider network.
- 4.4 Faber Maunsell are undertaking this work under the umbrella of the District Council's contract with EDAW for consultancy advice on the Local Development Framework.
- 4.5 The package of measures within the strategy including the town centre signalling improvements and cycle and pedestrian network would potentially, if implemented, result in a reduction in Greenhouse Gas emissions from road transport in the St Neots area. This would be in

line with Local Transport Plan targets and national objectives, and those of the District Council's own Environment Strategy.

4.6 A copy of the Strategy and Action Plan is attached at Annex A.

5. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended;

i) That Cabinet approve and adopt the strategy as part of the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan 2006-11.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Local Transport Plan 2006-11

St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy – 2001 to 2006

Hunts Traffic Management Area Joint Committee Report - 10 March 2008

County Council Cabinet Report – 9 September 2008

Contact Officer: **Stuart Bell – Transport Team Leader**

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St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy

9th September 2008

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Introduction

This is second St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy. It has been driven, through public consultation, by the residents of St Neots along with local stakeholders and interest groups. Public consultation has also been used to ensure that the schemes contained in the strategy are appropriate for the town and to inform a priority order for their implementation.

Aims of the strategy

This new St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy forms part of the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan 2006-11 (LTP). The aims of the LTP are therefore taken forward as aims of this strategy. These are:

- To create a transport system that is accessible to all.
- To protect and enhance the built and natural environment.
- To develop integrated transport and to promote public transport, walking, cycling and other sustainable forms of transport.
- To make travel safer.
- To maintain and operate efficient transport networks.
- To provide a transport system that supports the economy and the growing population of the County.

In pursuing these aims, the strategy should contribute towards the economic growth and prosperity of the town and its surroundings. Improving accessibility to key services, such as schools, and town centre activities, such as shopping will also help to reduce social exclusion and the problems

associated with it. Providing increased opportunities for walking and cycling will also contribute to the health of the people within the town.

The strategy provides a programme of schemes to be implemented up to 2011 from LTP funding and other funding sources. The programme has been formulated to support the objectives of the LTP and complement the works already carried out and contribute to the well-being and prosperity of the town.

Background

St Neots is situated in Huntingdonshire district at the western edge of Cambridgeshire, close to the border with Bedfordshire. It is the largest of Cambridgeshire's market towns with a population of 28,000, a figure that could rise to significantly in the next twenty years.



The number of dwellings in the town has been rising year on year for over 20 years, and this pattern is likely to increase as land is allocated for development under the Local Development Framework (LDF). Currently most development (including the current Love's Farm site) has taken place close to the existing urban area, with most dwellings continuing to be within 4km of the town centre.

Further development could occur in the area south of Love's Farm and north of the A428, and at Little Paxton, placing greater demand on the transport network. Developer funding via Section 106 agreements may become available during the life of the strategy through these developments for use in the provision of transport infrastructure to mitigate the effects of increased pressure on the network.

St Neots is an important shopping centre for the area attracting visitors from the surrounding villages, particularly on market days (Thursdays). There is also a strong industrial economy with two main industrial parks and gravel extraction at Little Paxton, and an increasingly prosperous tourist trade.

Many people who work in the town also live in the town or in one of the radial villages. The topography of the town and surrounding area is ideal for walking and cycling.

Travel to, from and within St Neots

St Neots is well connected to the national rail network. The railway station is on the East Coast Mainline, with links to Huntingdon and Peterborough (inter alia), and a direct half-hourly service to London. The railway station is only 1.5km from the town centre. The link to London has made St Neots a popular place for rail commuters, including those accessing the station in St Neots from Cambourne and the surrounding rural areas. This has resulted in St Neots becoming a significant railhead for the local area.

Bus services are frequent between St Neots and Cambridge, with regular links also to Bedford and Huntingdon. Services within the town have seen improvement in recent years, with a new route being implemented as part of the first St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy. This provides a fast and frequent (every 20 minutes) service from Eaton Socon and Eaton Ford to the town centre. However the more rural villages are less well served by public transport with some smaller villages such as Diddington receiving only one bus a week on market days. These rural accessibility issues were brought up frequently during the public consultation.

St Neots has good links to the strategic road network, with the A1 providing a western bypass and the A428 a southern bypass. Despite this, traffic movement through the town can still be problematic, with 14,000 car journeys along the high street on a daily basis. This results in the town centre becoming congested, with associated air quality and road safety problems. There is an Air Quality Management Area on the High Street and three accident cluster sites in the central area. The location of the car parks contributes to the need to travel along the High Street, as there is no parking to the south of the town centre. The consultation process suggested that there are high levels of public concern over pollution levels and traffic on the High Street.

Due to the town's flat topography and compact nature, it is in many ways ideal for walking and cycling; however the respective modal shares of these methods of transport are still low. On average only 2% of journeys within the town are made by bike and 4% on foot (although this rises in the town centre). Under the first strategy there has been considerable investment in cycle / pedestrian facilities, and while some routes and facilities are very well used, others have attracted less use than was hoped for.

The River Great Ouse and the railway line both present significant barriers to east – west travel in the town. This discourages the use of sustainable transport modes due to the need to travel to a bridge lengthening many journeys, particularly for those living in the south of the town.

Though considerable investment has been made under the first strategy with a number of schemes being carried out, there is still much that can potentially be done to improve transport in St Neots. This second strategy aims to build on the work already carried out by continuing to address the key transport problems in the town at the present time.



Transport issues in St Neots

To support the growth of St Neots, encourage economic vitality and enhance the environment in and around the town, it is important that transport infrastructure and services meet the needs of the population and keeps pace with development.

There are a number of key transport issues that the strategy will seek to address by delivering specific schemes and measures for implementation. These issues have been identified through consultation with County, District and Town Council Members and officers, surrounding Parish Councils, key stakeholders including local businesses and the public. The main issues identified in the development of this revised strategy are:

- Congestion in the town centre resulting in air quality problems on the High Street.
- Road safety in the town centre, particularly with reference to the three accident cluster sites and the high proportion of accidents involving vulnerable road users.
- Low modal share of cycling and walking despite the compact nature of the town, its relatively flat topography, and the relatively porous layout of the residential areas.
- Limited opportunity for cycle / pedestrian river crossing to the south of the town centre. There is a pedestrian/cycle bridge at Coneygeare but the facility does not provide a significant advantage to cyclists or pedestrians from the southern areas of the town.
- Single road crossing of the Great Ouse within the town.
- Lack of easily available bus route and timetable information. This is partly due to the absence of a bus station and much of the information available at the bus stops is out of date or difficult to read.
- Poor public transport services to and from many of the outlying villages.

- Poor timing of services, particularly for morning commuters and leisure trips in the evening.
- Problems with goods vehicles accessing the High Street and a lack of freight signage.
- Parking in the town on market days is at capacity, and parking at the station on weekdays is beyond capacity.

The strategy seeks to address these issues where it can. It is important to note that it will not be able to provide a solution to every problem, but it can seek to identify the transport infrastructure the town will need if major development comes forward. This in turn will allow a robust policy basis for the achievement of transport improvements and funding as part of the planning process for new development.

Links with other policies and programmes

The strategy is planned to link in with a number of schemes and studies currently being carried out in the area, these include:

- The Huntingdonshire Market Towns Parking Strategy that aims to provide possible solutions to the parking problems in the market towns.
- The Accident Remedial Scheme that has been implemented in the town centre, aimed at reducing the quantity of accidents occurring in the area, particularly at the cluster sites.
- Development such as Loves Farm and the future allocation of land under the LDF, as well as the proposed Priory area development.
- The County Council's Home to School Transport Strategy
- The County Council's Freight Management Strategy

The strategy

The following sections outline the programme areas and schemes that form the revised St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy. These schemes are prioritised within their sections and an indicative cost (as of 2007) is given. Some have been brought forward from the last strategy, whilst others are recent innovations arising from current need and consultation with the District and Town Councils, local stakeholders and the community.

Road safety and traffic

Road safety and accident reduction are important aims in themselves, but safer roads also encourage cycling and walking. Public perception that the roads are unsafe for vulnerable users is a known barrier to cycle use and came up frequently during public consultation. Pedestrians often cite safety as a major area of concern.

These concerns are reflected in the fact that a significant proportion of accidents in the town centre involve pedestrians and cyclists. This is particularly true of the accident cluster sites on the High Street, the High Street / Huntingdon Street / Church Street / Cambridge Road junction and Huntingdon Street. Both pedestrians and cyclists suffer from high accident rates in comparison with their modal share, in the period 2003 – 2005 cyclists were involved in 16% of accidents in the town centre, whilst making up only 1% of the traffic.

Under the first strategy a small number of safety schemes were implemented, most notable among which were the improvements to the B1046 Potton Road / Cromwell Road junction. However, these schemes concentrated on four very specific areas, all of which were to the east of the town, and were limited in their scope. All the areas now suffer from a lower density of accidents than the town centre in general and the cluster sites in particular (2003 – 2005 data). Accident rates in the rest of the town (outside the centre) are not high, with most being slight or no-injury incidents.



Almost all road accidents in the St Neots area that resulted in fatalities in the period 2003 – 2005 occurred on the A1, which is managed by the Highways Agency.¹

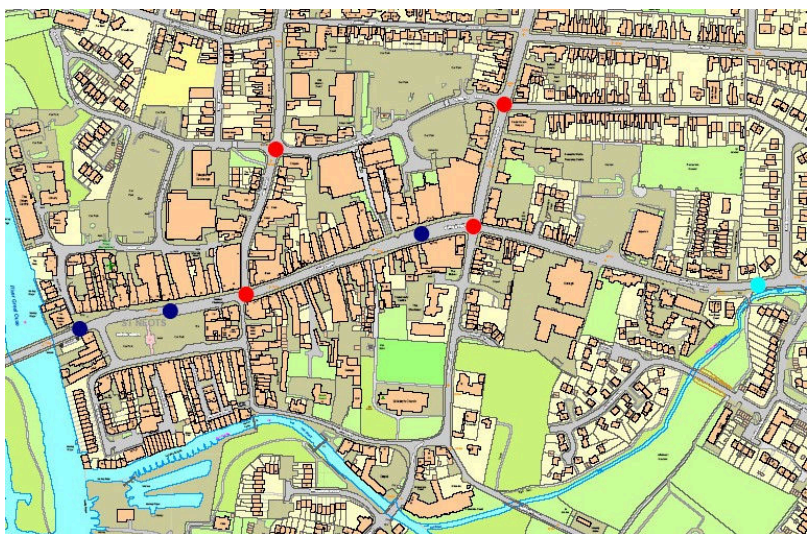
It is important for the economic vitality of the town that workers, shoppers and visitors can access the town centre easily and safely. It is also important for them to be able to do this in a sustainable way, in order to move away from the current high traffic flows (14,000 vehicles a day travel along the High Street) with associated congestion and pollution problems.

In order to improve the safety record of the town centre, the strategy will seek to build on the existing Accident Remedial Scheme (ARS) that has already been implemented in the area. The ARS concentrates on the stretch of road between the Cambridge Road / Huntingdon Road / High Street junction to the far end of Market Square. It introduced a 20mph speed limit, and crossing upgrades and junction improvements along Market Square, High Street and Huntingdon Road.




Proposed improvements

The new strategy will extend the ARS by upgrading the existing Urban Traffic Control (UTC) system within St Neots to include the four main town centre junctions that are the most significant barriers to traffic flow. These junctions would be linked both to each other and to crossings already on the UTC system, providing a coherent traffic movement system through the town. Map 1 shows the area that would be covered by the scheme, and Table 1 summarises the proposals

Map 1 Town centre junctions and crossings included in the Town Centre traffic control scheme



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	Junctions connected using SCOOT software to provide a coordinated loop through the town allowing traffic to pass through more efficiently and reducing build up of traffic.
	Crossings included in the SCOOT network to provide a clear run through the town centre.
	Crossing upgraded and connected to the UTC system and SCOOT to provide better facilities for pedestrians and allow traffic to leave the town centre easily.

This system would control the traffic passing through the town centre, facilitating flow and reducing congestion particularly around junctions. Traffic would be allowed through the town in convoys, with queues being stored just outside the central area. The coordination of the lights would mean that once a convoy was moving through the town centre, it would not be stopped frequently by traffic signals.

The reduction of start-stop and stationary traffic on town centre roads would bring with it a number of benefits, including:

- Reduced need for pedestrians to cross between cars
- Reduced temptation for motorists to stop on pedestrian crossings
- Reduced need for cyclists to weave between vehicles to make progress

¹ A serious accident is one resulting in injuries that require treatment at hospital. It is a slight accident if the parties can be treated at the road-side or later by their GP.

- Making junctions easier to negotiate for vulnerable road users as they are less likely to become blocked
- Reduced frustration among motorists as they would not be stopped as often
- Less frustration means motorists are less likely to jump red lights and so come into conflict with pedestrians and other road users.

Table 1 Town Centre Traffic Control / Safety improvements

Priority	Scheme	Cost
1	Upgrade of four junctions in town centre: These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Place/ New Street/High Street • Tebbuts Road/Tan Yard/New Street, • Tebutts Road/Huntingdon Road • Huntingdon Road/High Street/Cambridge Street These will be connected to the existing Urban Traffic Control System (UTC) using SCOOT to increase coordination between the sites and so reduce congestion. This would require replacement of the street furniture and new controllers.	£640K
2	Connect three crossings to UTC system: These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Square near the River Bridge • Market Square near Market Place • High Street Near Church Walk Once the junctions mentioned above have been refurbished these crossings could be added to the UTC using SCOOT. There is little value in this if the four junctions are not upgraded and also connected to the UTC	£30K
3	Refurbish crossing on Cambridge Street near Cambridge Gardens: This would result in a better crossing point for pedestrians and could be added onto the UTC using SCOOT at little extra cost. There is little value without the junctions being connected to the UTC.	£80K
4	Upgrade of Crossing facilities at four sites: These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Neots Road (Eaton Ford) • Great North Road near Bushmead Road (Eaton Socon) • Great North Road near St Mary's Church (Eaton Socon) • Cromwell Road near Henbrook Road These require refurbishment and could be upgraded to Puffin or Toucan crossings. They do not all need to be done at the same time and will cost between £50K and £70K each.	£280K

Being able to store stationary traffic outside the town centre could also significantly reduce air quality problems on the High Street. Currently the canyon effect created by buildings along the High Street preventing pollution from dispersing can result in severe build-ups of pollutants, particularly in summer.

During stakeholder and public consultation this scheme saw high levels of support from both motorists and pedestrians, with 88% of consultees expressing support. Benefits to the town centre from the implementation of this scheme would be significant. Table 1 sets out the elements of the scheme along with costs.

Safer Routes to School

Many schools in St Neots have taken part in the safer routes to school scheme and have adopted travel plans. This work will continue under the new strategy, with particular reference to the recent Home to School Transport strategy.

Through local consultation and research, and from analysis of existing accessibility data, we know that that some wards in the strategy area suffer from poor access to schools, particularly secondary education establishments. As can be seen in maps 2 and 3, the area most affected by poor accessibility is the ward of Gransden and the Offords.

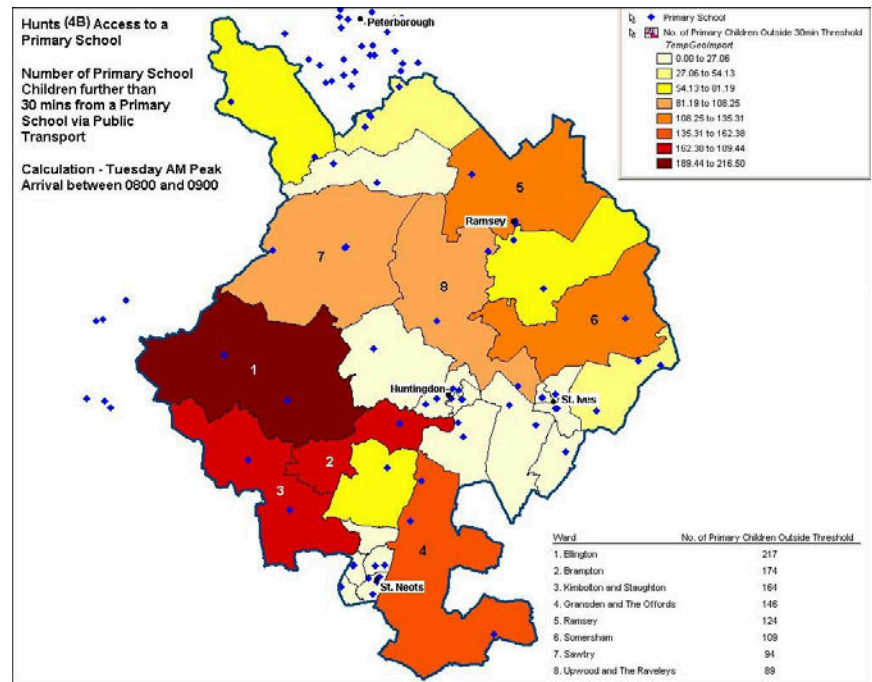
With the implementation of the Home to School Transport Strategy it is thought that this situation will improve. The MTTs will aim to contribute as and when appropriate to the implementation of the Home to School Transport Strategy.

Cycling and Walking

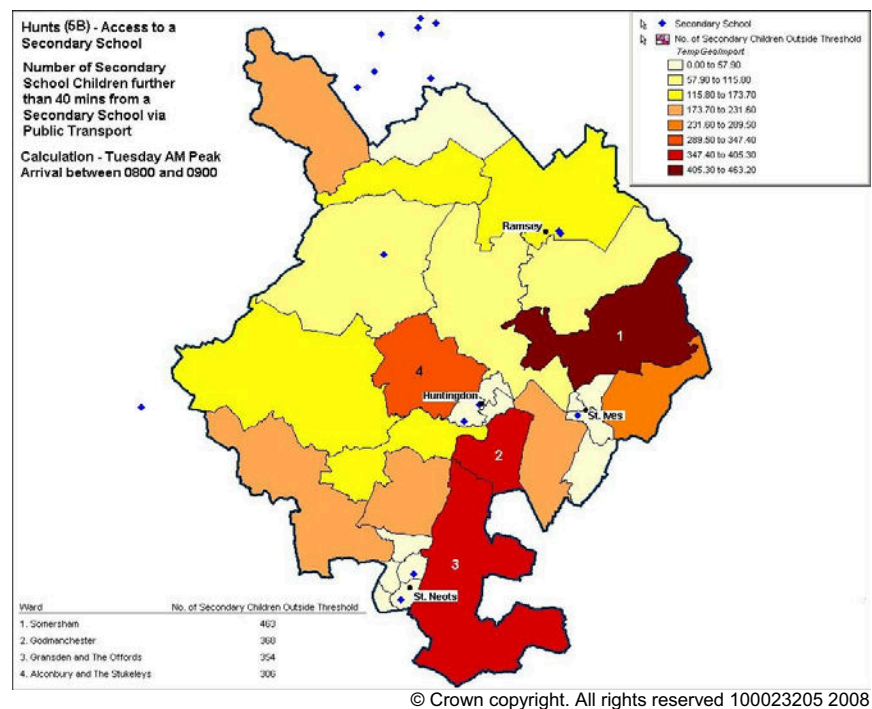
Cycling and walking represent a key part of the LTP strategy for sustainable travel and thus form an important part of the Market Town Transport Strategies. They also link into the health agenda in that they contribute to the reduction of obesity and the risk of heart disease. They have the benefit of being non-income dependent methods of travel whilst also being environmentally friendly.

However, they are both also subject to considerations of personal safety, being susceptible both to injury on the roads and to crime. It has been found during the formulation of this strategy that even though St Neots has a low level of crime, there is a perception that pedestrians are vulnerable and this is contributing to the general preference for car use. During stakeholder and public

Map 2 Accessibility to primary schools in Huntingdonshire



Map 3 Accessibility to secondary schools in Huntingdonshire



consultation it also became apparent that cycling is considered to be dangerous, with people feeling safer in their cars. This is actively hindering the up-take of cycling as a means of travel.

Cycle measures proposed under the last strategy have been reviewed and it has become apparent in consultation with the District and Town Councils and Sustrans that the paths suggested did not form a wholly coherent network through the town.

We have therefore developed a revised network, in partnership with Sustrans, which aims to provide a cohesive, interlinked web of facilities throughout the town and nearest villages. This network is shown in Map 4.

Some of the paths, including the route from Little Paxton to the town centre, have been brought forward from the last strategy. The proposed network can be seen in map 4 below.

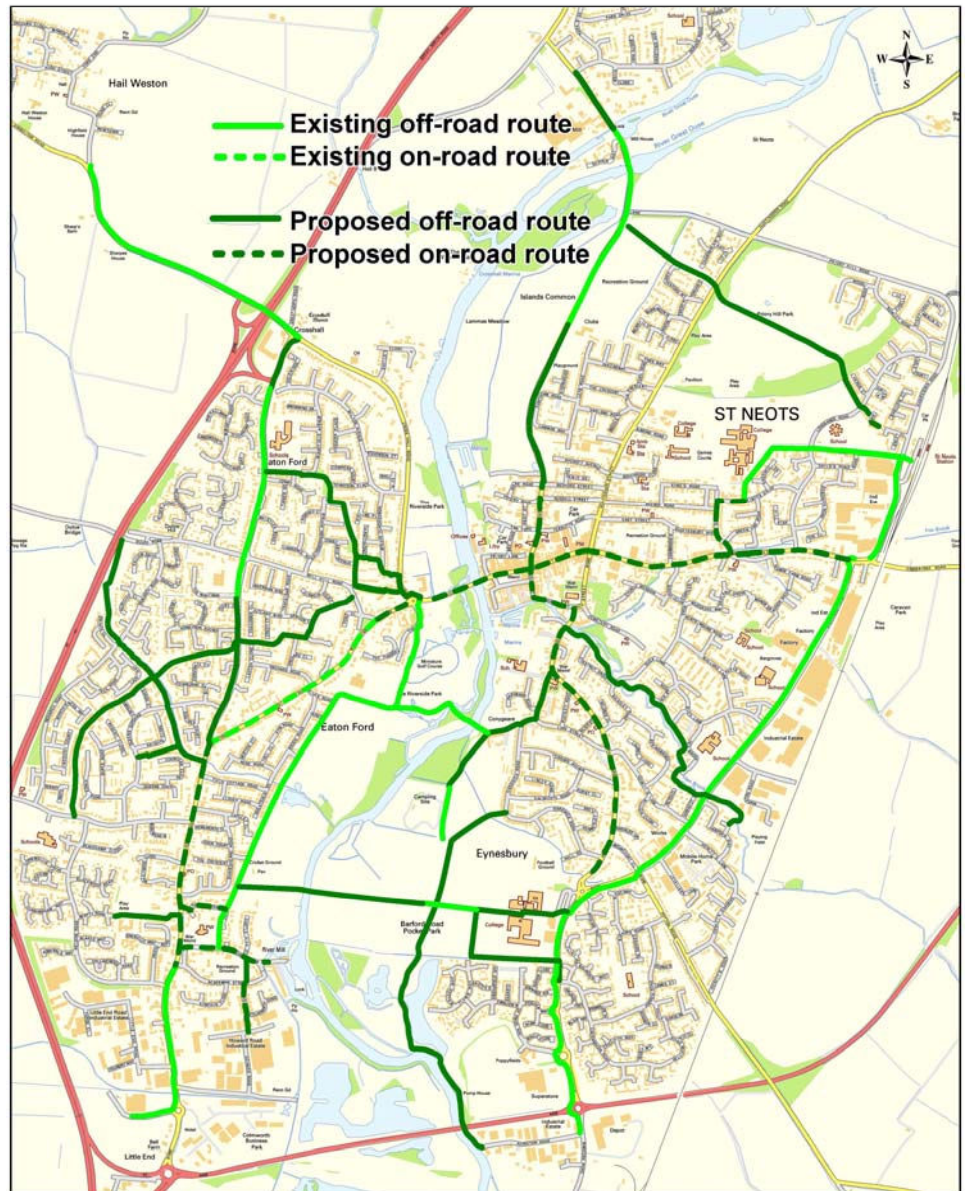
Map 5 shows the individual routes, and Table 2 describes these routes. The map and table also indicate which routes will require limited work such as signing and road markings, and those where more major work will be required.

This tiered approach will aid in the prioritisation of schemes and the achievement of a

greater benefit from available funding. The public consultation indicated that 84% of consultees supported the installation of the cycle network.

It is not expected that all the facilities indicated will be funded from LTP funding. The network may be used as a basis for securing developer contributions as opportunities arise, with particular reference to the Huntingdonshire LDF. With the expected increase in population this network of cycle and pedestrian facilities will contribute significantly to mitigating the effects of increased demand on the transport network by providing people with the opportunity not to use the car as their primary mode of travel.

Map 4 Existing and proposed Cycle Routes in St Neots



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Table 2 Pedestrian / Cycle schemes and costs

Map Ref	Location	Description of Work	Cost	Priority
1	Eaton Socon / Eynesbury	Incorporating the construction of the new cycle / footbridge and approaches and linking Eaton Socon with the college on the opposite bank of the Ouse. It will link with the Sustrans route running north to south and with the existing route along Cromwell Road	£3.5M	1
2	Town Bridge to Huntingdon Road	On road advisory cycle lanes on the town bridge and along Market Square and the high Street, joining with route 5 out along Cambridge Road.	£37.5K	1
3	St Neots Road	Alterations to existing traffic calming to encourage use by cycles from the roundabout to Ford Close, providing a link between route 2 and the existing off road route further along St Neots road.	£150k	5
4	Great North Road	Continuing of the on and off road routes from Mill Hill Road and extending to Akerman Street. This will link in with existing routes on the Great North Road and with route 1, providing safe access to the cycle bridge.	£500K	4
5	Cambridge Road	Cambridge Road to Huntingdon Street on road route, from the junction with Cromwell Road to the junction with Huntingdon Street. This links in with the existing route on Cromwell Road and to route 2. It also links up with the existing path by the college.	£100K	3
6	Crosshall to Town Bridge Route	Link Crosshall Road with the existing path on the Great North Road and provide an off road route from North of Lowry Road to the roundabout with St Neots Road, via one of the two routes indicated on the map, linking in with route 2.	£500K	2
7	Little Paxton to railway station	Either via Priory Hill Road or Priory Hill Park, linking in the existing scheme on Mill Lane	£500k	2
8	Berkley Street, Duck Lane area	On and off road route providing access from the High Street (linked to route 2) down via Brook Street and St Mary's Street onto Berkley Street. This route also incorporates some minor improvements to existing Hen Brook path.	£150K	3
9	Little Paxton to town centre	This is a continuation of the existing path along Mill Lane towards the town centre, stretching from where the existing facilities end to the High Street, linking in with routes 3 and 8.	£350k	3
10	Priory to Station Route	Complete existing project via Pipers Path, providing a complete link to the station.	£70k	2
12	Cycle racks	Placed at sites where most demand is likely to occur. Locations can be seen in table 3.	£35k	2
Total			£5.892m	

An adaptation of the maps in this strategy could be published in Priorities magazine at no cost. This would result in every household in St Neots and the surrounding villages having a copy of the cycle and pedestrian map and hence go a long way to raising awareness of the network. The map will also be published on the Town Council web site and be made available at the Tourist Information Centre.

The inclusion of signing in the network will result in better integration of the existing cycle paths into the transport network as a whole and help raise awareness of cycling and walking as viable, practical means of travel. Signing was proposed under the first strategy but was never installed.



Table 3 Cycle Rack locations and maps

Location	Cost
Riverside Car Park	£5,000
Market square	£7,500
Rail station	£7,500
Tesco	£5,000
LIDL	£5,000
Priory Park	£5,000
Total	£35,000

During stakeholder and public consultation the lack of cycle racks in the town was considered to be a barrier to cycle use, therefore the provision of cycle racks is included in this strategy. The locations are those that were most often suggested during the public consultation.

Table 4 Maps and signing

Location	Cost
Promotional Map	£20,000
Signing	£50,000

Table 3 indicates the locations and costs for installation of cycle racks, and Table 4 the costs for promotion and signing.

Pedestrian / Cycle bridges across the Great Ouse

The southern cycle/pedestrian bridge is a priority for funding under this revised strategy. It is apparent through accessibility work that this is the one scheme that would make the most difference to cycling and walking in the town and be most effective at inducing a culture change. It is vital to the inter-linking of any cycle/pedestrian network. During the public consultation it was a popular scheme with a number of consultees writing in purely to support it.

At the present time the County Council is preparing the planning application for the bridge and associated route between the two communities of Eynesbury and Eaton Socon.



The application not only presents the technical design of the bridge but also takes into consideration environmental matters, such as minimising visual impacts and reducing effects on areas of archaeological interest. Before the application is submitted the public will be given the opportunity to have their say on the details of the bridge design. The Council intends to submit the planning application in 2008.

Assuming the planning application is successful, the County Council will proceed with delivering the bridge and route. This requires land to be acquired by the Council, potentially through use of

statutory powers. The ease with which the necessary land can be acquired will play an important role in setting the timetable for constructing and opening the bridge.

It is anticipated that construction work will start between autumn 2008 and autumn 2009, with the bridge and routes opening between mid 2009 and mid 2010. All dates given are indicative only and may be subject to change.

In the first strategy a northern cycle bridge was also proposed. This has not as yet been taken forward as the southern bridge is likely to be more beneficial at the present time. However, with increased levels of development and the possibility of developer funding it is important to investigate this scheme further. Accession will be used to measure the benefits this bridge would generate with a view to possible implementation at a later date. There were a number of comments during the public consultation in support of this scheme, however due to limited funding available to this strategy it cannot presently be included.

Public Transport

Increasing the patronage of buses is a key aim of the LTP. In many areas buses provide an essential service for those on low incomes or those who are unable to drive. In this respect they are necessary for improving accessibility. They also play an important role in reducing congestion.

Under the first strategy there were a number of improvements to the public transport network. Bus stop facilities were improved throughout the town including Little Paxton, with all stops now indicated at least by a post. A number of bus shelters were installed, such as the one on Market Square. The extension to the route of the 462 service is well used, and has improved the coverage of the network.



There is a continuing problem with the provision of rural bus services, with some villages receiving only one bus a week on market days. Some of these villages have a small but relatively affluent population, and so lack sufficient demand for a bus service to be maintained. However, the larger communities of Kimbolton and Great Staughton also suffer from very poor bus services.

The Market Town Strategy cannot on its own address these rural accessibility issues. The County and District Councils are working with partners through the Huntingdonshire Local Strategic Partnership to find and implement solutions to these specific accessibility problems. However, it is also possible that the Strategy may be able to facilitate improvements in the future as development comes forward and opportunities present themselves.

The lack of a bus station in the town creates a problem with disseminating bus route maps and timetable information. This issue has been carried forward from the last strategy as lack of easily available information is still preventing people from using the buses, particularly in the town where services are frequent and fairly comprehensive. Journey times from the Eatons and Eynesbury to the town centre are under 20 minutes.

It is therefore a priority for this strategy to solve the problems with distributing information to the public. At the moment bus maps can be found either in the Priory Centre or the Tourist Information Centre. Neither of these is on the Market Square, which is where most buses stop. Maps and timetables will therefore be placed in shops and other public buildings adjacent to the square

where they are easily seen and picked up. The County Council already prints the maps, so the additional cost would be minimal.

During public consultation it also became apparent that timetables in the bus stop cases are often out of date and difficult to read. The strategy will therefore support the countywide scheme to install new format, easily interpreted, bus timetables at all stops in the town in order to raise awareness of the services available and hence increase patronage. As this is part of an existing programme it will not need to be funded purely through the Market Town Transport Strategy. Improved information schemes saw the highest levels of support during the consultation, with 92% of consultees indicating they were in favour.

In addition to this the introduction of Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) to the town centre and a number of stops on popular routes would give people immediate information as to which bus stops at that stand, where it goes and when it will arrive. This has proved very successful in a number of locations, including London, and will be installed over the next few years in many Cambridgeshire towns. As the system is installed in collaboration with Bedfordshire County Council, all the buses serving St Neots will already have the technology installed to allow them to show up on the signs. At this time the installation of RTPI would present extremely good value for money.



These schemes are set out in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Proposed public transport improvements

Priority	Scheme	Cost
1	Bus map and timetable provision: Actions taken under last strategy have not been sufficient so this has been brought forward. We will provide bus maps in a central location such as in leaflet racks in main town centre shops such as Woolworths and the rail station.	£5,000
2	New format bus timetables: These are easier to read and will be up to date with current service provision.	Other funding sources
3	Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI): To increase ease of use and make services more predictable, RTPI has been popular in areas where it has already been installed. We will be working in partnership with Bedfordshire county Council to achieve this. 4 Shelters in Market Square will be done with existing stock, and ten other signs a possible.	£35,000
4	Integration of RTPI with train info on Platform: This would enable commuters to know when the next bus will arrive when they arrive at the station rather than having to wait at the bus stop. This was not possible under the last strategy as RTPI was not included in it. Funding is available for this.	£3,500

Lorry management

The whole of the road network in St Neots is now subject to a weight restriction. However Heavy Commercial Vehicles (HCVs) still need to access the town to make deliveries. It is vital to the economy of the town that businesses on the High Street can receive goods.

In 2005 HCVs made up 2% of traffic in the central area of St Neots. This suggests that the contribution of freight to congestion is not significant. It is more likely that the quantity of private vehicles accessing the High Street to find parking is the root cause of the problem.

However, in order to help HCV drivers avoid the central area when not delivering the strategy will support where possible the creation of a HCV route map, designed to allow drivers to access the areas they need whilst staying on suitable routes. These maps are being formulated for all the market towns and will eventually be available on satellite navigation devices.

The strategy will also contribute where possible to a county-wide initiative to improve freight signage.

Car Parks

The Huntingdonshire Market Towns Car Parking Strategy was due for final approval by the District Council in January 2008.

A key rationale in the development of the Strategy and Action Plan has been to recognise the need to provide continued accessibility to the town centres within Huntingdonshire, in order to encourage shoppers, to provide parking for those working in town centres and to provide that parking in appropriate locations within each town to support overall economic activity. It has been recognised that parking provision impacts on different people in different ways across a broad spectrum of the population. Therefore the challenge of the Action Plan has been to recommend a programme that recognises those variations in each town and to ensure a degree of equality relating to overall accessibility.

The District Council has recommended a 'Balanced Approach' as the broad strategic approach that should be taken whereby pricing will be used to keep demand at current levels balanced with minor provision of additional parking, improved signage to improve parking distribution and encouraging different travel choices in the future



In St. Neots, investigation works have revealed that parking is already beyond capacity on Thursdays (Market Day) though currently on other days, parking is below overall capacity. However, demand is predicted to rise in line with population, economic growth and car ownership and while other forms of travel will continue to be promoted, such as public transport and cycling and walking, studies show that theoretical capacity could be reached in future years. This is likely to result in the current number of spaces becoming inadequate.

There are currently no viable options for significantly expanding town centre car parks due to the nature of the town and the lack of suitable land on which to make such provision. Though it has become evident that more car parking would be popular across the town, particularly with retailers, this lack of land and its value means that the District Council would need to explore additional car parking proposals as part of wider development options. Some small-scale extension of existing car parking will be investigated.

In terms of the proposed Action Plan, measures are broken down into Short, Medium & Long-Term Options as follows;

Table 6 Parking Action Plan measures

Timescale	Scheme
Short term	Tan Yard to become all short-stay
	Introduce new 3-year pricing policy and amend charges to keep demand at 2007 baseline
	Review Off-Street Parking Places Order to reflect pricing and regime changes including removal of employment-based Season ticket use in Tan Yard and The Priory Car Park
	Introduce low emission vehicle rate within Season Ticket regime for employees working in town centre or residents living within the town
Medium term	Investigate; a) expansion of Cambridge Road long-stay to replace parking lost at Tan Yard, b) improved pedestrian access to Huntingdon Street following any relocation of HWRC and c) consider appropriately targeted charges for long-stay car parking at Cambridge Road
	Investigate ticket machine upgrading including incorporating alternative payment methods i.e. credit/debit cards
	Work with CCC to consider revised one-hour on-street parking charges outstanding from 2004 review following completion of St. Ives trial
	Monitor effect of new ticket machine trial and investigate roll-out to other car parks including hand-held data capture technology
	To continue to work with partners to secure additional parking in association with new development
	Begin scaling long-stay charging levels upwards to reflect local bus journey fare levels
Long term	Continue to evaluate whether the introduction of targeted long-stay parking charges at Cambridge Road would be appropriate
	Work with partners to explore the possibility of additional car parking on the south side of the town centre
	Continue to work with partners to explore the issues arising from decriminalisation
	Explore the possibility of Park & Ride but only when a business case can justify such provision

The MTTs will contribute to the Parking Strategy and Action Plan as and when appropriate.

Implementing the Strategy

The process of public consultation has informed the strategy and a priority order for funding has been drawn up in reference to the results. This has been organised in phases in order to most closely interpret the results of the consultation. This is as follows:

Table 7 Implementation phases

Phase	Programme	Schemes	Cost
1	Road Safety	Connection and upgrade of four main town centre junctions	
	Cycling and Walking	Route 1 – Eaton Socon to Eynesbury incorporating the Southern cycle bridge	
		Route 2 – Town Bridge to Huntingdon Street	
	Public Transport	Bus map and timetable provision	
Total phase 1			£4.183M
2	Road Safety	Connect the 3 crossings to the UTC system	
	Cycling and Walking	Route 6 – Crosshall Road to Town Bridge	
		Route 7 Little Paxton to railway station	
		Route 10 – Priory to Station	
	Public transport	New format bus timetables	
Total phase 2			£1.135M
3	Road Safety	Refurbish crossing on Cambridge Street near Cambridge Gardens	
	Cycling and Walking	Route 5 – Cambridge Road	
		Route 8 - Berkley Street and Duck Lane area	
	Public transport	Real Time Passenger Information	
Total phase 3			£1.115M
4	Road Safety	Upgrade of Crossing facilities at four sites	
	Cycling and Walking	Route 4 – Great North Road	
		Signing	
	Public transport	Integrate the Real Time Passenger Information system with the rail station platform info	
Total phase 4			£833.5K
5	Walking and Cycling	Route 3 – St Neots Road	
		Cycle and pedestrian map	
Total phase 5			£170K
Strategy Total			£7.436M

Funding

The funding for this programme included in the strategy will come from a variety of sources. These include the Local Transport Plan, developer contributions and from other sources arising during the course of the strategy. The pace at which the strategy can be delivered will depend on the availability of funding. By providing a clear statement of the schemes for which there is public support in the town, this strategy aims to provide a sound policy basis for securing a wide range of funding sources.

Targets

The schemes within this strategy will contribute towards Local Transport Plan targets to reduce congestion, improve air quality, reduce transport emissions and increase bus patronage and levels of walking and cycling.

Future development of the St Neots Transport Strategy

This second St Neots Market Town Strategy looks at transport issues facing the town at the current time, and runs until 2011. However, it will be reviewed and will evolve as necessary in the intervening period to take account of emerging pressures, such as the likelihood of significant additional development in the period of the new Huntingdonshire Local Development framework.

Transport modelling will take place to quantify the impact of possible development scenarios on the transport network in the town, and on the A1 and A428 Trunk Roads. This modelling will inform the decision of the District Council on the location of future development in Huntingdonshire, and will aid the assessment of what new transport infrastructure will be needed to provide for that developments transport demand.

It will also aid the County Council and the Highways Agency, as highway authorities for the local and trunk road networks respectively, in their planning of transport infrastructure and services on the wider network.

Conclusions

The Market Town Transport Strategy will provide a range of benefits for St Neots, including:

- A clear programme of transport enhancements to 2011
- Increase the opportunities for and safety of walking and cycling in the town
- Reduce congestion
- Improve air quality
- Improve access to bus services

The strategy reflects the consultation process and gives a clear indication of the transport measures that need to be introduced to St Neots up to 2011 and provides some indication of needs beyond this time. The measures in the strategy should help to ensure that St Neots remains a pleasant place to live, work and visit.

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AGENDA ITEM NO.

COMT
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PANEL
CABINET

3rd FEBRUARY 2009
23rd FEBRUARY 2009
12th MARCH 2009

PROPOSED SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS – THE TRANSFORMATION FROM DEVELOPMENT CONTROL TO DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT (Report by Head of Planning Services)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 As Members will be aware, the operational structure of Planning Services is currently divided into planning policy and implementation (including the specialist conservation, urban design, trees and landscape teams) and development control. Simplistically, the planning policy team is involved in the preparation of the Council's planning policy documents and the development control team (receiving appropriate expert advice from the conservation, urban design, trees and landscape teams) provides appropriate pre-application advice, considers and determines planning and related applications, deals with all subsequent appeals and is responsible for ensuring compliance with planning control (enforcement).

1.2 The recent shift in the national agenda for planning towards 'Place Shaping', which the Lyons Inquiry into Local Government (March 2007) defined as "the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general wellbeing of the community and its citizens", has highlighted a need for a review of the role and, in particular, the remit and 'emphasis' of development control work within all local planning authorities. Traditionally, the development control function was often seen as 'negative and reactive' and it typically had a reputation for preventing rather than enabling the delivery of development. As part of the move towards delivering a 'Spatial Planning System', the nature of the local policy framework, in the form of the Local Development Framework, has already fundamentally shifted with much more emphasis now being placed on the creation of a sustainable and deliverable vision for development in the District. To support this change in the local policy framework and to ensure that the planning service can deliver the Council's corporate vision and community objectives for the future, it is proposed that the Development Control (DC) function also needs to be formally transformed into Development Management (DM).

2.0 THE TRANSFORMATION TO DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

2.1 The Planning Advisory Service (which is supported and funded by Government) in its document 'a benchmark for the spatial planning function' highlights what it considers to be the 5 principles of development management:

1. DM is an integral part of the spatial planning process; it puts spatial plans into action.
2. DM is the end-to-end management of the delivery chain for sustainable

development (from policy formation through pre-application discussions and the determination of applications to monitoring).

3. The DM approach signals a culture change, underlining the role of the local authority as a place shaper in partnership with others.
4. The processes for considering proposals need to be proportionate and appropriate to the impact of the individual development.
5. The DM approach will necessitate changes in the structure and allocation of resources within the local authority with the traditional boundaries between development control and policy teams changing to allow a freer interplay between roles.

2.2 Some of the main cultural and operational differences between development control and development management are set out in Appendix A. This shift will not happen overnight - it requires a culture change and a wider range of skills and the transformation process has been described as a journey rather than an overnight event. For some years, many local authority development control teams, including HDC's, have been moving away from the traditional, limited development control function of scrutinising and determining applications and now have a positive input into policy formulation, engage in pre-application discussions and monitor outcomes. Now is considered to be the time to formalise the shift from development control to development management (including changing the job titles of officers as may be appropriate and renaming the Development Control Panel the Development Management Panel) as PAS has recently issued more specific guidance on what is meant by and how to embrace Development Management and, perhaps more importantly, the Council's Vision for the future of Huntingdonshire, as set out in the Core Strategy, has been submitted and is moving towards adoption. Lessons will be learnt both from experiences in Huntingdonshire and from best practice from elsewhere but Appendix B sets out the elements of DM that the service is already taking forward and the additional actions already identified to make further steps towards DM.

2.3 The Development Management approach, because of its proactive emphasis, typically requires more 'resources' than traditional development control. To help counter this and to ensure that Councils could concentrate on guiding those developments that have the largest impacts, the Government made revisions to the permitted development rights for householders in October 2008. The intention was that greater permitted development rights for householders would result in fewer householder applications and thereby enable Councils to dedicate more of their limited resources to the more significant larger projects. Early indications are that these revisions may not lead to a significant reduction in householder application numbers and the experience of some authorities indicates that they may in fact result in an increase in applications. The resource implications of the transformation to DM will need to be carefully monitored but the recent fall-off in application numbers also provides an opportunity and a further reason to implement the change to DM now. Budget cycles may also need to be monitored in the medium-term as the DM emphasis on more pre-application involvement for the largest projects (South of

Cambridge Road, St Neots for example) would be some time in advance of any planning application fee.

- 2.4 To provide additional targeted funding, some authorities have begun charging for pre-application discussions. At present, there are no plans to charge for pre-application discussions as they are considered central to the objective of shaping and improving the quality of submissions and should not in any way be discouraged, and we will look to support the Development Management initiative through flexible budget management.
- 2.5 It will be important to ensure that all stakeholders understand and sign-up to this change in approach. Accordingly, we will be holding workshop sessions with Members, interested stakeholders and, most particularly, with agents. Corporate Governance Panel and Council will be asked to agree the change of name of the Development Control Panel to the Development Management Panel at their meetings in March and April respectively.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the proposed transformation from Development Control to Development Management is noted and endorsed by COMT and Cabinet; noted, endorsed and embraced by the Development Control Panel; and that the Head of Planning Services is authorised to implement all the necessary administrative and procedural changes.

Background Papers:

PAS 'a benchmark for the spatial planning function' document version 3.0

PAS 'development management - guidance and discussion document' June 2008

CONTACT OFFICER - enquiries about this report to Steve Ingram, Head of Planning Services, on 01480 388400.

Appendix A - A summary of some of the main differences between development control and development management

Traditional Development Control	Development Management
Was perceived by some as negative and reactive	More positive and proactive in terms of allowing the 'right schemes' in the 'right places' at the 'right times' – directing the place shaping agenda
Was focused on the scrutiny and determination of applications	Whilst the effective scrutiny and determination of applications remains important, DM expands upon traditional DC and encompasses the end-to-end development process including positive inputting into policy formation, pre-application discussions and monitoring of outcomes
Had a reputation for preventing delivery	Central to the enabling and delivery of the Council's and community's objectives
Involved limited partnership working	Greater emphasis on partnership working to achieve positive outcomes
Processes and resources not always proportionate to the impacts of a development. Tendency for too much time and resources to be spent on small projects and not enough on the larger projects that have the greatest impacts.	Processes and resources allocation is more proportionate to the impacts of a development. More reliance on Planning Documents (SPDs) as method of providing positive and constructive guidance on smaller projects.
Required the decision-maker to consider proposals against the many detailed criteria based policies set out in the Local Plan.	With much fewer prescriptive development control policies in the LDF, there is a greater emphasis on assessment of impacts and professional judgements with decision-makers having to have a greater understanding of, and more reliance on, delivering the vision for the District set out in the Core Strategy and other strategies and national policy guidance.
Tendency for an 'Us' and 'Them' attitude to development.	For schemes that help fulfil corporate objectives, more collaborative working with all parties involved in and affected by the development process, but remembering that the regulatory function remains an essential part of DM.
A case officer would consult internal and external consultees after the receipt of an application.	A Development Team approach – corporately and including external consultees – prior to the submission of large proposals in order to inform and shape proposals.

Appendix B

Elements of Development Management we are already doing

- 1 DC officers have had more input than ever before into the formulation of the Core Strategy and drafting of the DM policies documents
- 2 We have produced SPDs and other document that will guide, shape and improve the quality of submissions e.g. Design Guide, Landscape and Townscape Assessment, Urban Design Frameworks and Conservation Area Character Assessments
- 3 We are considering applications and proposals in the light of the Vision for the District set out in the Core Strategy
- 4 We have positively promoted development that will help fulfill our Corporate Vision e.g. Huntingdonshire Regional College's move to Hinchingsbrooke and the Affordable Housing Scheme at Mayfield Road
- 5 We are learning some positive lessons from past decision e.g. using CABE's scoring system for officers and Members to assess and evaluate completed schemes
- 6 The Conditions Monitoring Officer is actively monitoring compliance with conditions and some outcomes are monitored through the Annual Monitoring Report

Elements of Development Management we plan to put into place

- 1 Effective change of mindset of all stakeholders!
- 2 Increase emphasis on, and establish a charter for, pre-application discussions in order to positively shape development prior to submission and use limited resources effectively
- 3 Improve knowledge of National Government initiatives and guidance and Corporate Visions and Objectives which will increase in importance under the new policy framework
- 4 Learn more practical lessons from past decisions including obtaining the views of consultees on developments (e.g Police Architectural Liaison Officer)
- 5 Continue to monitor advice and guidance in relation to if and how (with probity issues in mind) Members could become more effectively involved at the early stages of large proposals, particularly in respect of any large windfall proposals or large scale regeneration schemes
- 6 Use planning enforcement powers to support Corporate objectives in appropriate circumstances (e.g. consider using S.215 Amenity Notice powers in appropriate instances as part of Corporate Empty Homes Strategy)

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CABINET

12TH MARCH 2009

REVIEW OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS (Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support))

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning obligations and agreements have become increasingly important in providing public services including highways, recreational facilities, education, health and affordable housing. Agreements can involve significant sums of money and in the light of Members' concerns about the need to ensure that money is allocated and spent in a timely fashion, the Overview and Scrutiny (Service Support) has been considering quarterly monitoring reports on the receipt of S106 money and its allocation and expenditure on specific schemes.
- 1.2 At its meeting held on 12th February 2008, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) decided to establish a Working Group to investigate the current Section 106 Agreement mechanism from the negotiation of agreements to the expenditure of money received. The Panel's interest in the subject was prompted by the scale of income received from this source and the time taken, in some cases, to secure its expenditure. As sums are negotiated for other public sector infrastructure providers, the Panel also was interested in ensuring that a transparent audit trail existed to ensure that receipts were being used locally. This had previously been highlighted by the Panel's Cycling Working Group which had been unable to establish a clear link from Section 106 contributions for transportation to its expenditure on individual cycleway schemes in the District.

2. MEMBERSHIP AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 The Working Group comprised Councillors P J Downes, D Harty, M F Newman and R J Tuplin with Councillor Harty as its rapporteur. Councillor T D Sanderson was co-opted to the group as a result of his interest in the subject matter.
- 2.2 Councillors P J Downes and D Harty declared personal interests in the subject matter as Members of Cambridgeshire County Council.

3. WHAT IS A SECTION 106 AGREEMENT?

- 3.1 Planning obligations, known as Section 106 agreements, are agreements between local authorities and developers negotiated in the context of the granting of a planning consent. They enable a proposed development to contribute to the needs of a local

community associated with the development by securing developer contributions towards the provision of infrastructure and services.

- 3.2 The legislative framework for planning obligations is contained in Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. It permits local authorities and developers to make agreements over the use of land, including those which require sums to be paid to the local authority.
- 3.3 Through planning obligations, developers contribute towards sustainable communities and help ensure the success of new developments. They can make cash or in-kind contributions towards a range of infrastructure and services including local roads and public transport schemes, education, public spaces, community facilities and affordable housing.
- 3.4 Current Government policy contained in circular 05/2005 requires fair, open and reasonable negotiation of planning obligations, so that obligations enhance a development and enable proposals to go ahead which might otherwise be refused.
- 3.5 A local authority should not seek a contribution through a planning obligation unless it is:-
 - Necessary,
 - relevant to planning,
 - directly related to the proposed development,
 - fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development, and
 - reasonable in all other aspects.
- 3.6 The income received by the District Council from Section 106 agreements in Huntingdonshire during 2006 and 2007 was £447,055 and £401,273 respectively. Much larger sums are paid by the developers direct to Cambridgeshire County Council.

4. WHAT CONTROLS DO WE CURRENTLY HAVE IN PLACE

- 4.1 Currently the Section 106 process is regulated by a number of mechanisms, some of which involve Members.
- 4.2 At Member level, a Section 106 Advisory Group has been established for some time to consider the terms of any proposed agreements which are likely to involve the provision of a financial contribution towards local infrastructure, community facilities or affordable housing where the total contribution from an individual planning application is likely to be in excess of £100,000. The Advisory Group's current terms of reference are listed in Appendix A.

- 4.3 The Advisory Group, currently chaired by Councillor R G Tuplin, normally meets in advance of meetings of the Development Control Panel on an ad hoc basis to formulate recommendations for consideration by the Panel when determining a relevant planning application. Ward Members are invited to relevant meetings of the Advisory Group to comment upon proposals.
- 4.4 Financial monitoring is currently undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support). The Panel receives a quarterly report detailing the receipt and expenditure of money negotiated under Section 106 Agreements by the Council.
- 4.5 The Council has established a Section 106 database which records monetary and non-monetary benefits generated by agreements and their expenditure which is maintained and updated by an officer with specific responsibility for this work in the Policy and Strategic Services Division.

5. FUTURE PROPOSALS

- 5.1 As part of its deliberations, the Working Group has noted the potential impact of the forthcoming Community Infrastructure Levy which is expected to be implemented from September 2009. The Levy will be a new charge which local authorities in England and Wales will be empowered, but not required, to place upon most types of new development in their area. Charges will be based upon simple formulae which relate the size of the charge to the scale and character of the development to which it relates. The proceeds of the levy will be spent on local and sub regional infrastructure to offset the impact of the development on a local area.
- 5.2 It is anticipated that the Levy will improve predictability and certainty for developers as to what they will be asked to contribute; will increase fairness by broadening the range of developments asked to contribute; will allow the cumulative impact of small developments to be better addressed; and will enable important sub-regional infrastructure to be funded. Whilst it is anticipated that local planning authorities will retain the power to enter into Section 106 Agreements for affordable housing contributions, the Working Group has noted that there are a number of uncertainties associated with the introduction of the Levy which are yet to be addressed.
- 5.3 The District Council is also in the process of preparing a new Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Section 106 Agreements across the District under the existing legislation to apply a tariff per household to cover the cost of local infrastructure. This is proposed as an interim measure pending the transition to the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy and is expected to be in a draft format by March 2009, subject to staff resources. The tariff

based SPD will be linked with the evolving Cambridgeshire Horizons Variable Tariff Rate for strategic infrastructure. It is hoped that the SPD will bring consistency, transparency and clarity, whilst producing an efficient and effective delivery system.

- 5.4 New legislation from April 2008 also enables the Local Planning Authority to require draft Heads of Terms for a S106 Agreement to be submitted as part of the application validation process, usually for larger developments.

6. THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS

- 6.1 In Huntingdonshire the majority of section 106 obligations are a product of negotiation with respective developers, following consultation with various service providers. The latter include the Council's Operations, Leisure and Housing Divisions, together with the County Council and National Health Service for education, highways, transportation and health care requirements. The negotiation process is undertaken by District Council officers.
- 6.2 Those proposals involving agreements of less than £100,000 can be dealt with under the Council's scheme of delegation. Applications involving more than £100,000, affordable housing and some other benefits, must be referred firstly to the S106 Advisory Group which will submit recommendations to the Development Control Panel when the relevant planning application is being determined.
- 6.3 Once planning permission has been granted subject to a Section 106 agreement, the Head of Legal and Estates drafts and formalises the benefits, together with relevant trigger points in a formal document. Upon the agreement being sealed, the planning permission is issued. Where the benefits involve an external organisation such as the County Council that body generally becomes a party to the agreement.
- 6.4 The agreement will specify the appropriate trigger points when a payment must be made or a benefit delivered. Generally these relate to the commencement or conclusion of a development or the point at which a specific percentage of the development has been completed. The recovery arrangements are instigated by the recipient authority with the District Council not collecting and remitting payments for others. In the case of benefits to the District Council, recovery is pursued by the Division responsible for the service to which the benefit relates. The situation is also monitored by the officer in the Policy and Strategic Services Division to ensure that recovery arrangements are pursued and that payments are not overlooked.

7. METHODOLOGY

7.1 At the outset of the review, the Group met with the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates, and the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services, Councillor C R Hyams, to ensure that the review did not duplicate similar inquiries being initiated by the Executive. As a result of those discussions, it was agreed that the study on this matter should be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Working Group's remit was

“to investigate the Section 106 process adopted by the Council including the relationship with other infrastructure partners and make recommendations if improvements are thought to be necessary”.

7.2 The Working Group has subsequently met on a number of occasions over the ensuing months and has received information on the current process and its operation from:-

- the Head of Planning Services and Development Control Manager
- the Head of Operations
- the Head of Housing Services and Housing Policy Enabling Officer
- the Policy & Strategic Services Manager and Policy Officer; and
- the Head of Legal and Estates.

7.3 This has included details of the way in which Section 106 Agreements are negotiated, the role of the Section 106 Advisory Group, expenditure of Section 106 receipts, the provision of affordable housing, the role of the Legal Division in the preparation and enforcement of agreements and the compilation and monitoring of the Council's Section 106 database which records monetary and non monetary benefits generated by agreements and their expenditure.

7.4 Information was obtained from similar scrutiny reviews carried out by other local authorities. Of those available, details of the studies undertaken by Bradford, Stoke on Trent City Council and Cardiff County Council were provided to members of the Working Group. In considering the reviews and recommendations, the Working Group was pleased that a significant number of the concerns and issues raised in those reports had already been addressed and appropriate measures implemented in Huntingdonshire.

7.5 Having regard to the role of partners in the negotiation and delivery of agreements, the Working Group also met with representatives of NHS Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire Constabulary and Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service. Representatives of

Cambridgeshire County Council declined to attend one of the Working Group's meetings but a paper outlining the Section 106 process adopted by the County Council and how their requirements were determined was provided for the Group's attention. Subsequently, in their capacity as County Councillors, Councillors Harty and Downes met relevant County Council Officers to discuss the County Council's role in the process and its treatment and expenditure of Section 106 receipts.

- 7.7 From the discussions it emerged that NHS Cambridgeshire has only become involved in the Section 106 negotiation process in recent years and is being encouraged to develop funding formulae to provide evidence of infrastructure deficits to assist in Section 106 negotiations. Although Cambridgeshire Constabulary and Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service are consulted on planning applications, they are not involved in the negotiation of Section 106 agreements. It is anticipated that the emerging Supplementary Planning Document on Planning Obligations will help define who should be consulted formally.

8. DELIBERATIONS

- 8.1 The Working Group raised a series of questions with the Head of Planning Services and the Development Control Manager arising from their initial investigations. A copy of the answers provided by the Head of Planning Services is available on request from the Democratic Services Section. The Working Group's investigations can be divided into a number of distinct areas:-

- negotiation of Agreements,
- Section 106 Advisory Group / information provided to District Council Members,
- local involvement,
- monitoring and accountability,
- expenditure of receipts, and
- enforcement action.

Negotiation of Agreements

- 8.2 As part of its deliberations, the Working Group discussed the present arrangements for the negotiation of agreements with developers.
- 8.3 The current negotiations are undertaken by the Development Control Officer responsible for the relevant planning application. Officers have to make a judgement against what is reasonable for a particular application to deliver in terms of infrastructure funding. The Working Group was told that this can vary depending upon the economic climate and any particular characteristic of the site which can affect its development value. In so doing, the Working Group

debated whether Members should be more actively involved in the negotiation process, having regard to their local knowledge. In particular, Members were aware that by the time that a report is submitted to the Members Section 106 Advisory Group, the negotiations with applicants and other infrastructure providers have been completed and there is little opportunity for the Advisory Group to make changes at such a late stage in the process.

- 8.4 In addition, all requests for Section 106 contributions have to be supported by up to date policies and evidence. While Ward Members may be able to offer a local perspective on community needs, the Working Group recognised that without sufficient justification, some proposals could not be supported. Where a particular development is unable to finance all of the obligations being sought by infrastructure providers, a reasoned judgement has to be made as to which are the most important, initially by Officers and subsequently by the Advisory Group and Development Control Panel. Competing infrastructure requirements are therefore considered on a case by case basis taking account of evidence, need and applicable policies and having regard to any relevant corporate and local objectives. Any contentious or problematic discussions with other public bodies are referred for consideration by the Section 106 Advisory Group, after the relevant organisations have been asked to justify their requirements. Having regard for the need for the content of Agreements to be evidence based and in line with approved strategies and plans, the Working Group did not consider it appropriate for Members to be involved earlier in the negotiation process.
- 8.5 Members also discussed whether the District Council should be negotiating more generalised agreements as opposed to those that are site specific. However with the exception of developments that have been negotiated for transportation purposes, the Head of Planning Services has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Working Group that current S106 Agreements must be directly related to the proposed development and fairly and reasonably related in scale, although this is likely to change with the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy referred to earlier. This could introduce the possibility of the pooling of Section 106 receipts so that funding can be provided for key service centres and local settlements which are unlikely to generate Section 106 receipts of their own.

Section 106 Advisory Group / Information provided to District Council Members

- 8.6 As part of its deliberations, the Working Group considered the role of the Section 106 Advisory Group and its method of operation. Members were generally of the opinion that the current arrangements work well. A possibility that was discussed in a

similar vein to greater involvement by Ward Members, was for the Advisory Group to become involved earlier in the negotiation process for individual development proposals. The argument in its favour is that Members can provide a local dimension and the Advisory Group becomes involved too late in the process to effectively make any change. However this was discounted by the Working Group for the same reasons as more Ward Member involvement, i.e. the need for an evidential base and compliance with approved plans and strategies.

8.7 Nevertheless the Working Group recognised that Members inevitably will have an interest in what is being proposed in their wards and may have local knowledge of infrastructure deficits. It was felt that this is best dealt with by way of a clear explanation to all Members of the Section 106 process and a reminder that Members receive notification of all new planning applications via the weekly planning list. This serves to alert Members to the submission of proposals affecting their respective wards and gives them an opportunity to ask for an individual application to be determined by the Development Control Panel on material planning grounds. This also can be used to provide Members with an opportunity to notify the relevant Development Control Officer, whose names are listed in the weekly list, of any local issues that they think might be suitable for possible inclusion in a Section 106 agreement connected with that application. This will enable all developments, including those of less than the £100,000 threshold for consideration by the Advisory Group to be addressed and it is suggested that an indication should be made on the weekly list to demonstrate where Section 106 Agreements are likely to be proposed. The Working Group therefore **recommends that a guidance note be prepared and drawn to the attention of all Members to illustrate how they can comment on applications and the potential heads of terms for S106 Agreements by reference to the weekly planning list notification.**

8.8 It has been suggested also that Members should have access to completed agreements which will help them improve their knowledge of the infrastructure negotiated for their areas. This is feasible using the Public Access Software system and the Working Group has welcomed the fact during the course of its review, arrangements have been put in place for the content of completed Section 106 Agreements to be recorded and made available on the Council's website.

Local Involvement

8.9 The Working Group discussed the role and involvement of town and parish councils in the process, whether their views should be formally invited on the content of Section 106 Agreements and whether representatives should be invited to attend meetings of the

Advisory Group. Members concluded that the same considerations apply as in the case of ward members. Individual town and parish councils have an opportunity to comment on planning applications in their areas and to address the Development Control Panel if an application is to be determined in that forum. The Working Group has been advised that the new 1APP planning application format requires applications for major development to be accompanied by a document setting out the proposed Section 106 heads of terms which will provide a greater opportunity for town and parish councils and other interested parties to comment as part of the planning process.

- 8.10 It was suggested to the Working Group that some local councils might be reluctant to comment on Section 106 agreements if they were recommending refusal of an application. However commenting in this way does not weaken a town or parish council's recommendation on an application itself and is similar to the District Council's position at local inquiries when defending decisions to refuse applications. Nevertheless the Working Group acknowledges that local councils have a valuable role to play in the planning process and is aware that there has been a perception in the past on the part of local councils that insufficient weight is attached to their views. The Working Group therefore **recommends that clear guidance is given to town and parish councils on how to comment on the potential content of agreements for development in their areas as part of the normal consultation arrangements and speaking at Development Control Panel meetings.**
- 8.11 Part of that guidance should take the form of a flow chart showing the process for local member and town and parish council involvement and models agreed with the Development Control Manager are attached at Appendices B and C.
- 8.12 In a similar vein and having regard to its earlier recommendation concerning the use of an indicator on the weekly planning list to alert Members where it is likely that a Section 106 agreement will be required, the Working Group **recommends that town and parish councils be advised of the introduction of a marker on the weekly list and reminded to review these on a regular basis with a view to making comments on potential heads of terms for Section 106 Agreement in their areas.** It is hoped that the provision of an early indication in this way will improve parish/district liaison.
- 8.13 Town and parish councils can of course also demonstrate their infrastructure requirements through their own Parish Plans which can provide a useful evidence base of local need. The Working Group concluded that, where possible, town and parish councils should be encouraged to prepare Parish Plans in order to provide

the necessary evidence to support their requests for infrastructure improvements.

Monitoring and Accountability

- 8.14 The Working Group discussed the arrangements for monitoring the receipt of funds from Section 106 Agreements and their expenditure. The Group was aware that an extensive Section 106 database has been created in recent years, which contains details of Agreements, trigger points, funding and non monetary benefits. The monitoring of income and expenditure is currently undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) which receives quarterly monitoring reports, the format of which has become more extensive at the Panel' request. Overall, Members were content with the information contained in the reports submitted to Overview and Scrutiny although comments were made as to some of the terminology used, such as the phrase "schemes in place" which it was thought could be misleading as it incorporated schemes that had not yet started. With this in mind, the Working Group has suggested a number of changes to the monitoring report including the use of the terminology "schemes identified", together with the anticipated date when a scheme is expected to commence and a brief description of the proposals. Concern was also expressed that other Members of the Council may not be aware of the monitoring report's existence and the funding which is retained for expenditure in individual wards. As a result, the Policy and Strategic Services Division has been asked to ensure that copies of the report are circulated on a quarterly basis to all Members of the Council. **The Working Group recommends that copies of the quarterly report prepared by the Policy & Strategic Services Division detailing income and expenditure from Section 106 money be provided to all Members the suggested changes to the content of the report be implemented at the earliest opportunity.**
- 8.15 The Working Group was of the opinion that it would be logical to extend the remit of the Section 106 Advisory Group to include the monitoring role and for its terms of reference to be amended accordingly. However it was recognised that monitoring will need to be undertaken on a regular basis. Given the ad hoc basis upon which dates for meetings of the Advisory Group are currently arranged, it is suggested that dates for meetings of the Advisory Group should be reserved in the Council's calendar of meetings to enable monitoring to take place on a quarterly basis. To enable the Advisory Group to have a greater input into the development of agreements it was suggested also that meetings should be held one week prior to the Development Control Panel to provide an opportunity for investigations or clarifications to be provided, if requested by the Advisory Group, before the Panel meets to

determine the planning application and content of the Section 106 Agreement. The Working Group therefore **recommends that the remit and terms of reference of the Section 106 Advisory Group be expanded to include monitoring and meetings be convened on a more regular basis with dates reserved in the Council's calendar one week prior to each Development Control Panel as set out in the terms of reference appended at Appendix D.**

- 8.16 The Working Group has discussed the fact that meetings of the Section 106 Advisory Group, in line with other Council Advisory Groups, are not open to the public. Having regard to the fact that the monitoring report is currently submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) and given that it is desirable to maintain this level of transparency and openness, the Group has suggested that the monitoring report should be submitted to the Development Control Panel on a quarterly basis with any recommendations/comments from the Advisory Group. **The Working Group recommend accordingly.** The Working Group also wish to ensure that the Advisory Group has the ability to ensure that relevant officers are invited to attend meetings as and when Members raise concerns about progress with particular schemes and that the Policy Officer with responsibility for monitoring agreements is in regular attendance.
- 8.17 The Working Group has discussed whether there is a role for the District Council to monitor the receipt of funding and its expenditure by other infrastructure providers but has concluded that the Council does not have the necessary remit or responsibility to monitor or scrutinise the actions of other public bodies, especially as those providers are often signatories to the individual agreements themselves. The Working Group was aware of previous concerns expressed by another working group about the difficulty in establishing a clear link between Section 106 contributions and its expenditure on individual schemes in Huntingdonshire and has been pleased to note that the County Council recently has appointed a dedicated officer with responsibility for Section 106 monitoring which hopefully will improve communication and transparency. With regard to the expenditure of S106 receipts in Huntingdonshire where they relate to development in the District, the Working Group has acknowledged that the cost of individual education and highway schemes will often outweigh the contribution from an individual development. It is inevitable therefore that the County Council will need to pool funding to enable some projects to proceed and the Working Group accepts there is no further action that can be taken to improve the transparency of the process under the existing system. However the Working Group is of the view that it would be helpful if the Advisory Group was provided with regular updates on the progress of transportation projects funded with the assistance of Section 106 receipts in Huntingdonshire.

- 8.18 Currently responsibility for securing financial payments contained in Agreements rests with the Policy & Strategic Services Division, with officers pursuing recovery when the trigger points are reached. Non financial contributions are secured by the spending Divisions. The Working Group queried whether there were advantages to be derived from centralising all contributions, potentially by the Policy and Strategic Services Division which maintains the S106 database. However Members have been informed that there would be capacity and technical problems if this were to be pursued. Support is already provided by that Division which reminds others when trigger points have been reached and the Working Group is satisfied that the present arrangements are working well. In addition the Legal and Estates Services provide support to Divisions in the event that there are disputes with developers. Moreover the arrangements will need to be reviewed as part of the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 8.19 The Working Group is of the opinion that there is a need to improve executive accountability internally with the District Council for the receipt and expenditure of Section 106 money. Currently each executive councillor has responsibility for the recovery and expenditure of S106 receipts in his or her portfolio. There is no clear collective responsibility when problems arise, other than through Cabinet as a whole and the Working Group considers that it would be helpful if a single executive councillor is given a remit to ensure that the process is working effectively in terms of recovery of payments and expenditure of receipts. In the event of questions with regard to the quarterly monitoring report and any other others of a general as opposed to a specific nature, it will then be clear who is accountable. The Working Group considers that the logical choice in this case is the executive councillor for Finance and Environment. The Working Group therefore **recommends that the Executive Councillor for Finance and the Environment becomes responsible for ensuring that the mechanism for securing payments and expenditure of receipts under Section 106 Agreements is working effectively, with individual executive councillors remaining accountable for the delivery of benefits and projects contained in the Agreements relevant to their areas of responsibility.**

Expenditure of Receipts

- 8.20 The scale of the funding available from Section 106 Agreements is significant. As at November 2008, a total of £646,000 remains unspent from payments already received. The total payments due by all infrastructure providers from developments already commenced in the District is £12.5 million with a further £2 million due from developments yet to start. Much of the latter will be

collected by the County Council for education and highways expenditure direct from the developers.

- 8.21 The Working Group has queried the process for expenditure of the money received as this is not shown separately in the Council's budget and MTP. Members' attention was drawn to the Council's Code of Financial Management which makes provision for a head of service to spend money received from Section 106 Agreements on projects or services defined in the Agreement up to £30,000 revenue and £50,000 capital per annum on each project, after which consultation is required with the relevant Executive Councillor. In all cases the Head of Financial Services must be notified of the expenditure.
- 8.22 In such circumstances, the Working Group is satisfied that the necessary controls are in place to regulate the expenditure of money received.

Grampian Conditions

- 8.23 The Group was informed that, on occasion, Grampian conditions are used in planning permissions to secure payment for infrastructure provision as opposed to S106 Agreements. The expression derives from the decision in *Grampian Regional Council v City of Aberdeen (1984)* and in essence provides for a planning condition to be imposed that precludes the implementation of a development permitted by a permission until a required step is taken such as the payment of money for local infrastructure improvements. Grampian conditions offer certain advantages compared to Section 106 Agreements inasmuch as the Council has enforcement powers under planning legislation for breach of condition if a payment is not made. This compares with the more cumbersome recovery arrangements through the courts in the case of non-payment of a Section 106 payment.
- 8.24 The Working Group noted that the central register maintained for Section 106 Agreements extends to Grampian conditions. However, the Group has been informed that such conditions have been used infrequently by the Council in the past and that, as a result of recent advice by Government to the Planning Inspectorate, they are unlikely to be used in the future. The Working Group, therefore, concluded that, unless the use of Grampian conditions grows in the future, there is no need to change current arrangements.

(NB – Following their discussion on Grampian conditions, the Working Group has been informed that there is some uncertainty over the future use of these conditions. Members therefore suggest that their findings should be reviewed once the situation becomes clearer.

Enforcement Action

- 8.25 The Group discussed the current arrangements for undertaking enforcement action against developers for non-compliance with Agreements and acquainted with the courses of action available through the Courts. Where necessary, authorisation to pursue this course of action is required from the Development Control Panel.
- 8.26 Members noted that a new procedure recently has been adopted under which developers who have not complied with a Section 106 obligation are referred to the Legal and Estates Division after two requests for payments have not been met. Non-payment has rarely proved to be a problem in the past and the Working Group, therefore does not consider that any more stringent recovery arrangements are necessary.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Overall the Working Group was satisfied that the current system is working well and that the necessary controls are in place. In comparison to those planning authorities who have undertaken similar reviews, it seems clear that the Council has already addressed issues that were identified by those authorities. The Section 106 system will change with the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy in 2009/10 but, in the interim, there are a number of suggested improvements that the Working Group recommends to improve the present processes and procedures.
- 9.2 The Working Group's report has been discussed with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transportation and the Head of Planning Services at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support). Having regard to their comments, a number of minor amendments have been incorporated into the recommendations reproduced below.
- 9.3 During the Panel's discussion, comment was made as to whether it would be appropriate to share the outcome of the Working Group's investigations with the County Council and other local authorities. However it was concluded that this could best be dealt with on an informal basis by County Council members. The Panel has also welcomed an offer by the Head of Planning Services to include information in forthcoming training sessions to town and parish councils on how to best comment on the potential content of Agreements for developments in their areas.
- 9.4 The Panel therefore resolved to endorse the Working Group's report and recommendations and commend them to the Cabinet and Development Control Panel.

10. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) that a guidance note be prepared and drawn to the attention of Members to illustrate how they can comment on applications and the potential heads of terms for Section 106 Agreements by reference to the weekly planning list notification;**
- (b) that clear guidance is given to town and parish councils on how to comment on the potential content of agreements for development in their areas as part of the normal consultation arrangements and speaking at Development Control Panel meetings;**
- (c) that Parish Councils be advised of the introduction of a marker on the planning weekly list and reminded to review these on a regular basis with a view to making comments on the potential Heads of Terms of Section 106 agreements in their areas;**
- (d) that copies of the quarterly report prepared by the Policy & Strategic Services Division detailing income and expenditure from Section 106 money be provided to all Members and suggested changes to the content of the report implemented at the earliest opportunity;**
- (e) that the remit and terms of reference of the Section 106 Advisory Group be expanded to include monitoring and meetings be convened on a more regular basis with dates reserved in the Council's calendar one week prior to each Development Control Panel as set out in terms of reference appended at Appendix D;**
- (f) that copies of the monitoring report be submitted to the Section 106 Advisory Group on a quarterly basis and also to the Development Control Panel with any comments from the Advisory Group; and**
- (g) that the Executive Councillor for Finance and the Environment becomes responsible for ensuring that the mechanism for securing payments and expenditure of receipts under S106 Agreements is working effectively with individual executive councillors remaining accountable for the delivery of benefits and projects contained in the relevant Agreements.**

CONTACT OFFICER

**Claire Bulman, Democratic Services Officer
(01480) 388234**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Notes and agendas of working group meetings (20/05/08, 03/07/08, 21/07/08, 28/08/08, 07/10/08)

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council – Scrutiny of Section 106 Agreements

Section 106 Obligations: A report and recommendations from a task group: Stoke on Trent

Section 106 Agreements: A report of the Economic Scrutiny Committee (November 2005) County Council of the City of Cardiff

Questions and answers prepared by the Head of Planning Services

Presentations by / discussions with Head of Planning Services, Head of Housing Services, Policy Officer and Head of Operations

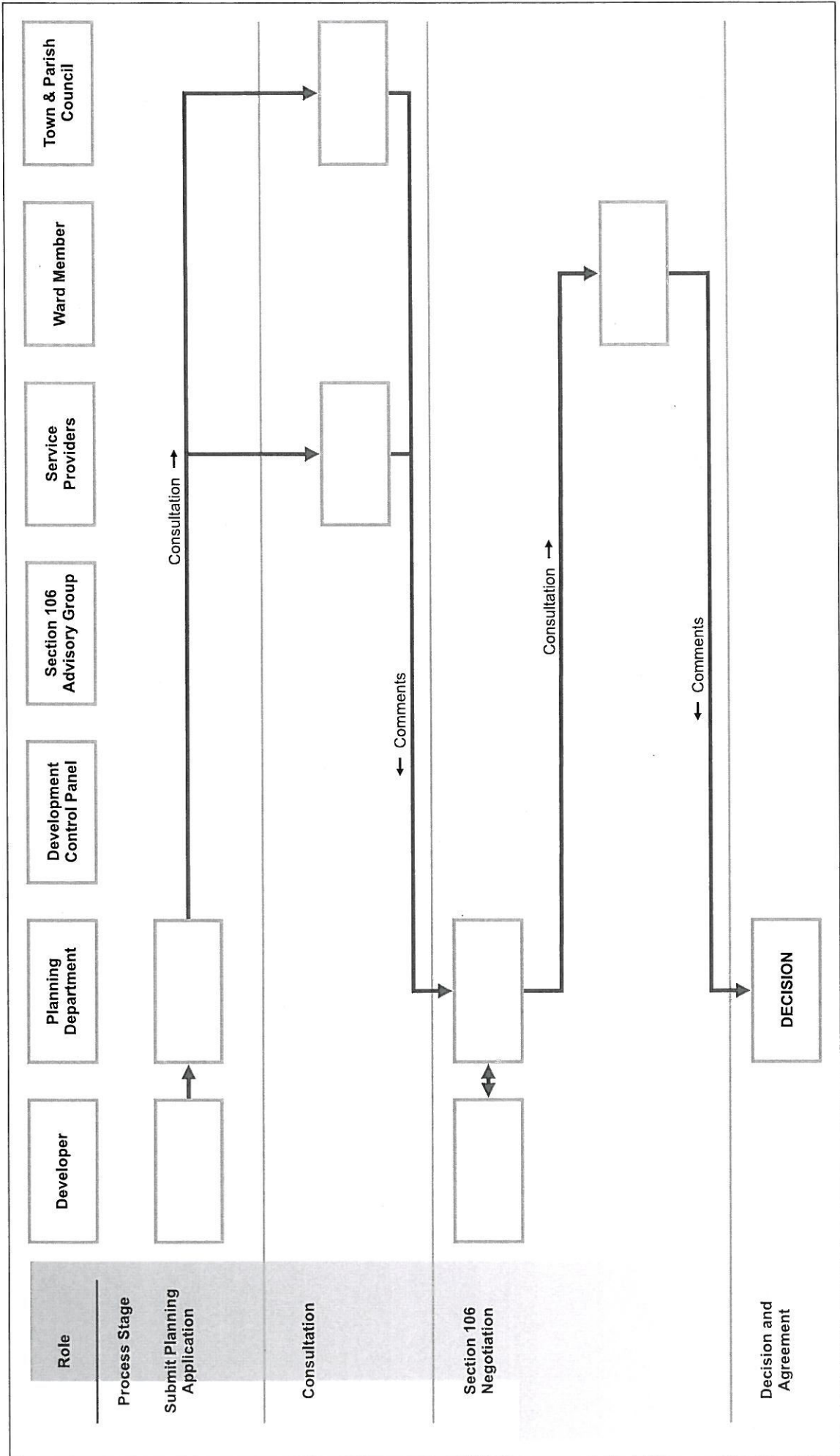
APPENDIX A

SECTION 106 AGREEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHOD OF OPERATION

1. The Advisory Group will consider recommendations from and formulate guidance for the Head of Planning Services on the content of Section 106 Agreements to be negotiated as part of the development control process.
2. The Advisory Group will consider the terms for any proposed Section 106 Agreements which are likely to involve the provision of or a financial contribution towards local infrastructure, community facilities or affordable housing and any variations thereto as a result of the process of negotiation with the applicant, where the contribution to be made totals more than £100,000 or its equivalent.
3. The Advisory Group's comments on an individual Section 106 Agreement will be incorporated in the report of the Head of Planning Services to the Development Control Panel meeting at which the relevant planning application will be considered for determination.
4. The Development Control Panel normally will delegate authority to determine the final content of a Section 106 Agreement to the Head of Planning Services subject to the reference back to the Advisory Group/Panel of any significant variation following negotiation with the applicant.
5. The Advisory Group will meet as and when required and the quorum for meetings shall be not less than 3 Members.
6. The Advisory Group will be deliberative and non-executive – it will not have delegated authority to determine the content of S106 Agreements and its meetings will not be open to the public.
7. An opportunity will be provided for Ward Members to address the Advisory Group on a particular Agreement or by way of written representations.
8. Notes of meetings of the Advisory Group will be compiled for submission to their ensuing meeting as a record of their discussions.

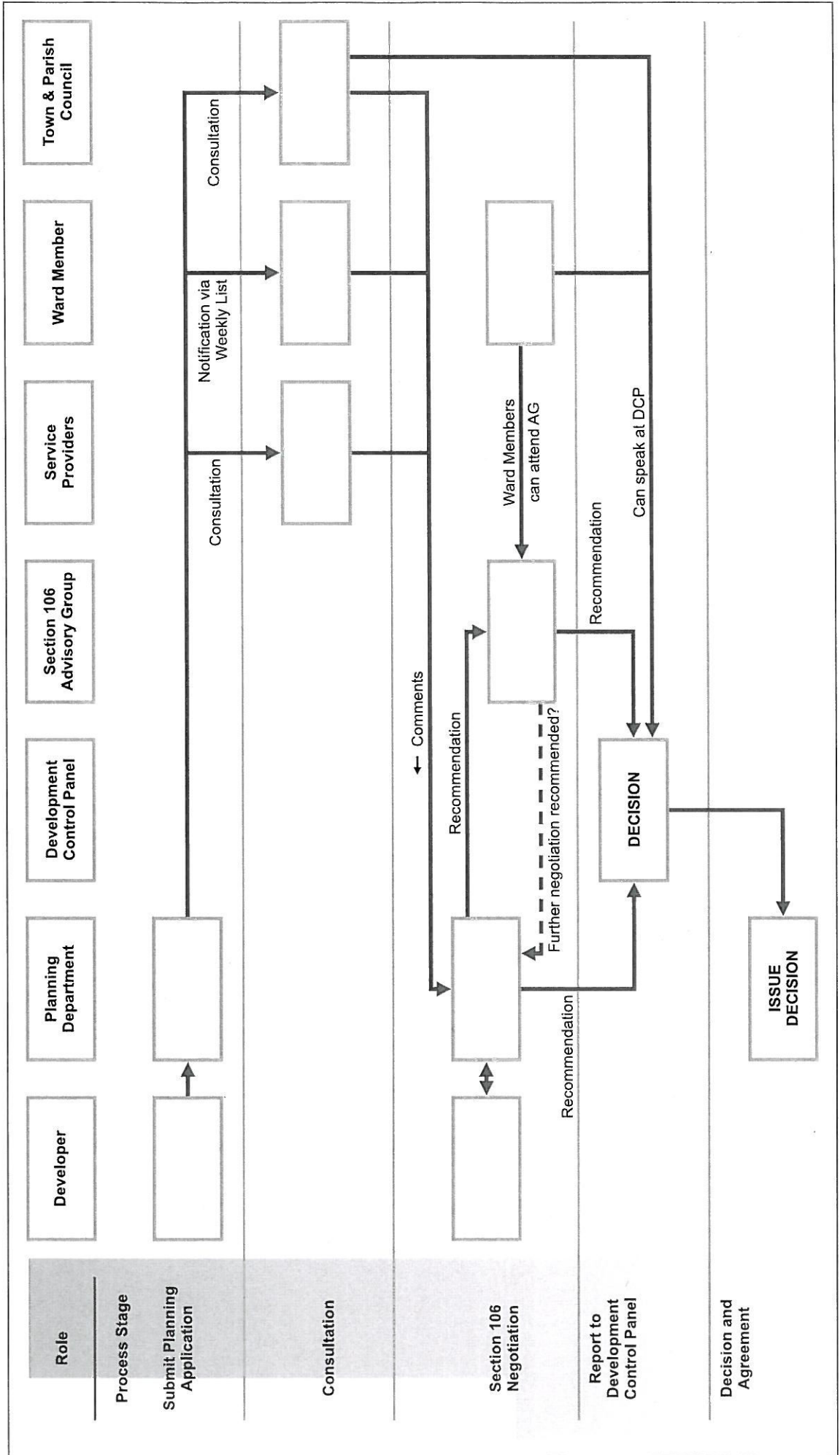
Delegated Route



Note: even though the S.106 element of these applications is delegated and won't therefore be referred to S.106 AG, the application may still be referred to DCP for another reason

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Advisory Group Route



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SECTION 106 AGREEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHOD OF OPERATION

1. The Advisory Group will consider recommendations from and formulate guidance for the Head of Planning Services on the content of Section 106 Agreements to be negotiated as part of the development control process.
2. The Advisory Group will consider the terms for any proposed Section 106 Agreements which are likely to involve the provision of or a financial contribution towards local infrastructure, community facilities or affordable housing and any variations thereto as a result of the process of negotiation with the applicant, where the contribution to be made totals more than £100,000 or its equivalent.
3. The Advisory Group's comments on an individual Section 106 Agreement will be incorporated in the report of the Head of Planning Services to the Development Control Panel meeting at which the relevant planning application will be considered for determination.
4. The Development Control Panel normally will delegate authority to determine the final content of a Section 106 Agreement to the Head of Planning Services subject to the reference back to the Advisory Group/Panel of any significant variation following negotiation with the applicant.
5. ***The Advisory Group will also monitor the receipt and expenditure of Section 106 money on a quarterly basis and have the ability to invite officers to attend meetings to respond to their concerns about the progress of a particular scheme.***
6. ***Scheduled meetings will be incorporated with the Council's Calendar of meetings one week prior to each meeting of the Development Control Panel*** and the quorum for meetings shall be not less than 3 Members.
7. The Advisory Group will be deliberative and non-executive – it will not have delegated authority to determine the content of S106 Agreements and its meetings will not be open to the public.
8. An opportunity will be provided for Ward Members to address the Advisory Group on a particular Agreement or by way of written representations.
9. Notes of meetings of the Advisory Group will be compiled for submission to their ensuing meeting as a record of their discussions.

political light, or in a way that could be interpreted as such, and that expenditure on publicity should be achieved with the greatest possible cost effectiveness.

- 2.2 Guidance on publicity about individual councillors embraces the greater emphasis the 2000 act placed on individual accountability and the role of overview and scrutiny committees. Guidance on the actions of local authorities in the run-up to an election and in connection with petitions and referenda conducted under the Local Government Act 2000 is also provided. The code states that publicity about individual councillors (eg executive councillors, chairmen of panels etc) may include the position they hold, and their responsibilities, and also information about their 'proposals, decisions and recommendations' but only where 'relevant to their position and responsibilities.' This publicity should avoid 'personalisation' and 'personal image making.'
- 2.3 This is particularly pertinent in the run-up to an election. During this time the code states that the period between the notice of an election and the election itself should preclude proactive publicity, in all its forms, of candidates and other politicians directly involved in the election. It further states that publicity should not deal with controversial issues at this time or report views, proposals or recommendations in such a way that identifies them with individual members or groups of members, although it states that it is acceptable for key members to comment in an emergency or where there is a genuine need for a member level response to an important event outside the authority's control. It states also that proactive events arranged during this period should not involve members likely to be standing for election.
- 2.4 The code includes a section dealing with recruitment advertising for political assistant posts. Huntingdonshire District Council does not have posts of this nature.

3. WHAT THE CODE DOES NOT COVER

- 3.1 The publicity code offers no specific guidance in relation to individual ward members who may not hold a particular responsibility with the council, but whose work with their constituents is of significant importance and value to their communities and such work is worthy of the raised awareness and greater understanding to be gained through publicity. Specific guidance in the publicity code should acknowledge the importance of their work.
- 3.2 A need to raise awareness of the work of Huntingdonshire District Council ward councillors was identified recently. A working group of members and officers has met and as a result a protocol has been drawn up and circulated by the Communications and Marketing Manager suggesting ways in which communications with individual ward members may be enhanced.
- 3.2 While the publicity code now embraces communications by electronic means, it does not specifically address websites and councillors increasingly have their own web pages, or the use of other electronic communications, for example blogs and podcasts which are becoming more frequently used.

4. THE CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Publicity in all its forms is an effective way of raising awareness and gaining greater understanding of the work of councils and their democratically elected councillors, particularly in the light of the continuing process of encouraging greater participation by communities, and a revision of the publicity code is to be welcomed. However if the publicity code becomes too prescriptive and unwieldy this could be counterproductive.
- 4.2 The consultation takes the form of 16 questions. These are listed below together with proposed responses:

Question 1: Is there other guidance (additional to the publicity code) that councils consider creates a barrier to the provision or support, or that needs clarifying?

Answer: It would be helpful if all guidance about publicity was in the same place. The publicity code should give details of all guidance on publicity.

Question 2: Is there a requirement for different codes to apply to different types of authority?

Answer: No. It is considered the principles of the code are equally applicable to all types of authority.

Question 3: Should the publicity code specifically address the presentation of publicity on an authority's website?

Answer: Yes. The publicity code in its present form does not sufficiently embrace the greater use of electronic communications, including council websites, blogs and podcasts.

Question 4: Does anything need to be added or removed from the list of matters an authority should consider in determining whether or not to issue publicity on a certain subject?

Answer: The current list appears to be adequate.

Question 5: Should the publicity code specify the different criteria local authorities should use to determine whether or not publicity can be judged to be cost effective?

Answer: Yes. Not all local authorities have officers who are able to offer expert advice on the cost-effectiveness of publicity. In many instances cheapest is not necessarily the most effective. An example may be the publicity/information required for major initiatives such as LSVT. Additional guidance may be appropriate on identifying the most appropriate medium for particular circumstances.

Question 6: Is there any aspect of the cost section that is not required or anything that should be added?

Answer: All aspects in this section should be retained, with greater clarity in regard to the point made in question 5 above.

Question 7: Should the publicity code contain advice about ethical standards, or should this be left to local authorities to judge for themselves?

Answer: The definition of 'ethical standards' appears in this instance to be moral standards generally as opposed to 'ethical standards' and the code of conduct relating to elected members.

Communications officers working for local authorities are likely to be members of professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Marketing or Chartered Institute of Public Relations which have their own ethical codes of conduct.

Question 8: *Is there any aspect of the content section that is not required or anything which should be added?*

Answer: No but greater clarity in spelling out what constitutes 'publicity' may be helpful. For example public meetings, or consultation events firmly fall into the category of 'publicity'.

Question 9: *Should the publicity code be modified to specifically address the issue of privacy and the dissemination of unsolicited material?*

Answer: The section in the publicity code issued in 1988 offers clearer guidance than the amended version.

Question 10: *Is there any aspect of the dissemination section that is not required or anything that should be added?*

Answer: See answer to question 9 above.

Question 11: *Is there any aspect of the advertising section that is not required or anything which should be added?*

Answer: More guidance on how cost-effectiveness is defined would be helpful. See answer to question 5.

Question 12: *Should adverts for local authority political assistants appear in political publications and websites?*

Answer: This authority does not employ political assistants.

Question 13: *Is there any aspect of the recruitment advertising section that is not required or anything which should be added?*

Answer: Not applicable to this authority.

Question 14: *Given the emphasis given to supporting and raising awareness of the role of the councillor in the White Paper, is there any aspect of the section on councillors that is not required, or anything which should be added?*

Answer: See paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 of this paper. Guidance specifically on the role of ward councillors should be added so that they may be supported in gaining appropriate publicity. This is particularly relevant in the context of the White Paper Communities in Control: Real people, real power.

Question 15: *Is there any aspect of the timing of publicity section that is not required, or anything which should be added?*

Answer: This section raises the most questions among communications officers and councillors in terms of how it should be interpreted. Clearer guidance than that in the current code is required in terms of:

- Politicians 'involved directly' in the elections. Does this not cover ALL councillors?
- It should be more specific in spelling out timescales between notice of election and the election itself
- It should be more specific in identifying what can and cannot be permitted during this period as 'emergencies' or 'genuine need'.

- How the code applies to councillors who are members of more than one authority.

Question 16: Is there any aspect of the assistance to others for publicity section that is not required, or anything which should be added?

Answer: This section appears to be adequate.

- 4.3 The closing date for the consultation is 12 March 2009. A summary of the responses will be posted on the Communities and Local Government's website www.communities.gov.uk, and will be used by the department to take decisions on possible changes to the publicity code.

5. RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet are invited to endorse the above as the Council's response to the Communities and Local Government consultation on the Code of recommended practice on local authority publicity.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Communities in Control: Real people, real power: Code of Recommended practice on local authority publicity: A consultation.

Code of recommended practice on local authority publicity 1988 and amendments of 2001.

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