

**MEDIUM TERM PLAN
REQUESTS FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS**

(Report by the Head of Financial Services)

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to allow Cabinet to decide whether to release funds for the MTP schemes detailed in the attached annexes.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council considered the draft budget and MTP report at its December meeting and agreed *that, having regard to the implications for future spending and Council Tax levels, Directors review with appropriate Executive Councillors the need for schemes/projects included in the MTP but not yet started and that specific prior approval be sought and obtained from the Cabinet before such schemes/projects are implemented.*

- 2.2 Officers have considered which schemes have wholly or partly started with reference to the following definitions:

STARTED

- The staff have been appointed and/or a legally binding contract is in place for all aspects.
- Some of the staff have been appointed or a legally binding contract is in place for **part** of the scheme **and there is no sensible option to avoid or defer those elements that are not yet legally committed.**
- The scheme is based on a partnership and **all** constituent projects have been agreed with those partners and they have reserved funding for them in the current year.

PARTIAL START

- Some of the staff have been appointed or a legally binding contract is in place for part of the expenditure and there is a practical cost-effective option to not carry out the full scheme at this time.
- The scheme is based on a partnership and **some** individual projects have been agreed with those partners and they have reserved funding for them in the current year.

- 2.3 Officers have subsequently identified which schemes that they wish Cabinet to consider releasing further funding for and have discussed them with the relevant Executive Councillor.

- 2.4 Annex A summarises and Annexes B to D detail the schemes where release of funds is now requested. In certain cases subsidiary detailed approvals may be required or conditions met.

3. RECOMMENDATION

3.1 The Cabinet is recommended to release the funds shown in Annex A.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT 1985

None

Contact Officer:

Steve Couper

Head of Financial Services  **01480 388103**

ANNEX A

SUMMARY		Net Revenue Impact £000					Net Capital £000						
		2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009
Annex													
B	St Neots Skate Park		3	5	5	5	5		100				
C	External & Internal Communications and Student Placement		39	45	36	30	30						
D	Economic Development feasibility study		20										
Total amount for which release now requested			62	50	41	35	35		100				

467 St Neots Skate Park
Dan Smith & Steve Moller

Financial Impact

	Net Revenue Impact						Net Capital					
	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Approved Budget		3	5	5	5	5		100				
Already Committed												
Amount for which release now requested		3	5	5	5	5		100				

Justification

The release of the funds allocated by the authority will trigger the release of the £100,000 match funding from the Living Spaces Fund. No funds will be paid over until written confirmation that all external funds are in place, and all necessary permissions have been granted to enable demolition of the present equipment to commence and construction of the new facility to start. The current equipment is in a dilapidated condition and cannot continue to be maintained to the standards required. The Release of the funds will draw in £160,000 match funding. The necessary building works must be commenced and completed during the summer period. The release of the funds will also send a very positive message to the local community and especially the young people who have been actively involved in the project.

490 & 491 External & Internal Communications and Student Placement

Ian Leatherbarrow

Financial Impact

	Net Revenue Impact						Net Capital					
	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Approved Budget		39	45	45	45	45						
Already Committed												
Amount for which release now requested		39	45	36	30	30						

Justification

These schemes are designed to support the continuing development of the Council's corporate communications. They represent the funding for improvements which have already started and which it could not be sustained at the same level without additional funding, and a student placement from an accredited journalism college.

In 2003/04 the Council implemented a number of improvements in its corporate communications, principally associated with DistrictWide – our newsletter. The frequency of DistrictWide was increased from two editions to four editions each year. The size of each issue has been increasing steadily from, initially, four pages to, more recently, twelve pages. The newsletter is now published in full colour, rather than in highlight colour, and improvements have been made to its distribution to ensure that there is not “spillage” across District boundaries and that all homes and businesses receive a copy. In addition, the Council is now publishing a twice-yearly newsletter to businesses – BusinessWide – an initiative identified through our consultation with the business community as their preferred method for receiving business-related information from the Council. These improvements and developments have been implemented incrementally over the year, largely from within existing budgets, although there is likely to be an overspend on the Central Communications budget. In a full year these additional costs cannot be met from within existing budgets.

In addition, the Council has implemented improved arrangements for internal communication with and between Officers and Members. They were implemented in part as a response to the findings of the Employee Survey in 2003 and as a result of improvements identified by senior management in terms of communications across the organisation.

The Council's Communications & Consultation Strategy envisages an important role for the Communications & Information Manager in developing communication skills across the organisation and in dealing with a number of high-profile corporate activities. However, the need for day-to-day support for Directorates with regard to preparing news releases and dealing with routine activities still exists. It is proposed that this gap could be bridged by the employment of a "sandwich year" student from one of the accredited journalism colleges, who would be able to provide support for Directorates on more routine, albeit no less important, communications issues and to deal with a number of day-to-day activities such as monitoring of the local media. This would release the Communications & Information Manager to deal with a broader range of development issues with services across the Council. The student would be employed from September each year but to secure a candidate of suitable quality, early negotiations are required with the journalism colleges and the funding for this placement is required before those negotiations can be completed. It is intended that the placement should be for a limited – 2 year – period, starting in September 2004, which would provide an opportunity to review the effectiveness of the post and the revised arrangements and to consider the extent of support need to fulfil Council communications requirements.

466 Economic Development feasibility study

Ian Leatherbarrow

Financial Impact

	Net Revenue Impact						Net Capital					
	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Approved Budget		20										
Already Committed												
Amount for which release now requested		20										

Justification

The scheme is a one-off feasibility study to be undertaken in conjunction with the East of England Development Agency for the Ramsey Northern Gate development. The funding represents the Council's contribution towards the feasibility study. If successful the funding from EEDA will also meet the cost of support to help design and promote the project. Subject to the outcome of the study, in subsequent years the Council will be bidding to EEDA for substantial capital investment to match private investment.

This development will support the emerging Action Plan being prepared as part of the Ramsey Area Partnership and contribute to priorities both within the Community Strategy and the Council's Corporate Plan and Local Economy Strategy. The Northern Gate Development is predominantly an economic development initiative but will also address social and environmental issues and is aimed at –

- ◆ constructive use of brownfield land;
- ◆ the establishment of local quality employment;
- ◆ the development of an enterprise centre incorporating business support, training and skills development;
- ◆ the employment of environmentally friendly and sustainable technology and building methods;

- ◆ helping to realise the potential of the Great Fen Project;
- ◆ promotion of the use of waterways linking to the Great Fen Project; and
- ◆ promotion of integrated community facilities, including the potential for public meeting space, a new library, public service offices and community education facilities.

Encouraging negotiations are continuing with both EEDA and the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership and if the Council is to be able to take advantage of potential support for this development, it needs to be in a position to make an early start on the feasibility work.