

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

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

**1 PURPOSE**

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

**2 BACKGROUND**

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

**3 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DRAFT PLAN**

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

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

**3.7** The full summary is shown below:

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

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

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

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

## 4 STRATEGY

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

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

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

4.2 Every effort will be made to obtain, as much as possible, of the spending adjustments from, firstly, increased efficiency, secondly, from increased fees and charges and, only finally, from service reductions.

4.3 Obviously there is a balance to be made between Council Tax increases and ultimately service reductions i.e. the lower the Council Tax increase the greater the service reductions.

4.4 Huntingdonshire's Council Tax is one of the lowest in England (19<sup>th</sup> lowest out of 238) and public surveys have indicated that many local people consider that increases in Council Tax are preferable to service reductions. This is why the balance between these two aspects is as shown in this report.

4.5 Obviously the proposed plan is dependent upon external constraints such as the Government's approach to limiting, or "capping", Council Tax increases. When this year's grant settlement was announced in December, John Healey, the Minister for Local Government said:

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

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

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

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

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

4.7 The past figures used for capping were as follows:

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

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

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

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

## 5. SPENDING ADJUSTMENTS

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

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

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

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

## 6. 2009/10 BUDGET

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

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

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

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

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

#### Notes

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

## **7 CONSULTATION AND COMMENTS**

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

## **8 PRUDENTIAL CODE**

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

## **9 RISKS AND SENSITIVITY**

### **9.1 Risks**

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

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

### **9.2 Reserves and the Robustness of the 2009/10 Budget**

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

### **9.3 Financial Plan – Sensitivity and Risks**

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

## **10 CONCLUSIONS**

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



## 11. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to recommend to February Council:

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

### **ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT 1985**

Grant Settlement Information – Files in Financial Services

Working Papers - Files in Financial Services

Project Appraisals

2008/09 Revenue Budget and the 2009/013 MTP

**Contact Officer:**

**Steve Couper**

Head of Financial Services    ☎ 01480 388103

### **ANNEXES**

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

## CONSOLIDATED MTP 2008/09 TO 2013/14

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

The coding is based on:

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

The colour coding show this as follows:

<b>Approval by:</b>
<b>COMT and then Cabinet</b>
<b>Service Director following consultation with Director of C&amp;T and Executive Councillor</b>
<b>COMT</b>
<b>Head of Service</b>

## ANNEX A

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





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







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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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







## RESERVES AND THE ROBUSTNESS OF THE 2009/10 BUDGET

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

### Robustness

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

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

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

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

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

The most significant potential risks to the budget are:

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

### Reduced Income

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

### Planned Savings

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

### **Treasury Management**

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

### **Emergencies**

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

### **Inflation**

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

### **Interest Rates**

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

### **Revenue Reserves**

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

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

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

### **Conclusion**

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

**Terry Parker**  
**Director of Commerce and Technology**

## FINANCIAL PLAN - SENSITIVITY AND RISKS

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

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

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

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

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

### Other Risks

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Conclusion**

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

## **FINANCIAL PLAN - FUTURE LEVEL OF RESERVES**

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

Adequate reserves are critical for various reasons:

### **Inflation**

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

### **Cash Flow**

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

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

### **Non achievement of Spending Adjustments**

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

### **Emergency/Disasters**

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

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

### **Unplanned Spending loss of income**

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

### **Loss of income**

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

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

### **Invest to Save**

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

### **Capping**

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

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

### **Conclusion**

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

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