

Date: 29 November 2007

TO: All Members of the Executive
FOR ATTENDANCE

TO: All Other Members of the Council
FOR INFORMATION

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** to be held in the **GUILDHALL, ABINGDON** on **FRIDAY, 7TH DECEMBER, 2007** at **2.30 pm**.

Yours faithfully

Terry Stock
Chief Executive

Members are reminded of the provisions contained in the Code of Conduct adopted on 30 September 2007 and Standing Order 34 regarding the declaration of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

A G E N D A

Open to the Public including the Press

A large print version of this agenda is available. Any background papers referred to may be inspected by prior arrangement. Contact Steve Culliford, Democratic Services Officer on telephone number (01235) 540307; e-mail: steve.culliford@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Please note that this meeting will be held in a wheelchair accessible venue. If you would like to attend and have any special access requirements, please let the Democratic Officer know beforehand and he will do his very best to meet your requirements.

Map and Vision

(Page 15)

A map showing the location of the venue for this meeting, together with a copy the Council Vision is attached.

STANDING ITEMS

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Minutes

To adopt and sign as a correct record the public minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 5 October 2007, (previously circulated).

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive any declarations of Personal or Personal and Prejudicial Interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

Any Member with a personal interest or a personal and prejudicial interest in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct, in any matter to be considered at a meeting, must declare the existence and nature of that interest as soon as the interest becomes apparent in accordance with the provisions of the Code.

When a Member declares a personal and prejudicial interest he shall also state if he has a dispensation from the Standards Committee entitling him/her to speak, or speak and vote on the matter concerned.

Where any Member has declared a personal and prejudicial interest he shall withdraw from the room while the matter is under consideration unless

- (a) his/her disability to speak, or speak and vote on the matter has been removed by a dispensation granted by the Standards Committee, or
- (b) members of the public are allowed to make representations, give evidence or answer questions about the matter by statutory right or otherwise. If that is the case, the Member can also attend the meeting for that purpose. However, the Member must immediately leave the room once he/she has finished; or when the meeting decides he/she has finished whichever is the earlier and in any event the Member must leave the room for the duration of the debate on the item in which he/she has a personal and prejudicial interest.

4. Urgent Business and Chair's Announcements

To receive notification of any matters which the Chair determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the Chair.

5. Statements and Petitions from the Public Under Standing Order 32

Any statements and/or petitions from the public under Standing Order 32 will be made or presented at the meeting.

6. **Questions from the Public Under Standing Order 32**

Any questions from members of the public under Standing Order 32 will be asked at the meeting.

7. **Referral under the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules or the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules**

8. **Referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Other Committees**

Personnel, Regulatory and Appeals Committee - 22 November 2007

At its meeting on 22 November 2007, the Personnel, Regulatory and Appeals Committee approved an increase in the establishment of the Building Control Service within Commercial Services by the creation of a Trainee Building Control Surveyor post and an Access Officer post, both of which were permanent posts. The cost to the Council would be in the region of £2,000 to £3,000 which would be found within existing budgets in the current year. However, Members asked that the issue of future funding would need to be flagged up to the Executive as part of the budget deliberations.

Recommendation

that the Executive be advised of the need for future funding to be taken into account as part of the budget deliberations.

9. **Financial Monitoring**

(Pages 16 - 20)

Members are requested to consider any significant budget variances and any requests for virement or permanent budget adjustment.

KEY DECISIONS

10. **Forward Plan**

(Pages 21 - 23)

To receive the Forward Plan containing Executive decisions to be taken from December 2007 to March 2008.

Recommendation

that the Forward Plan be received.

11. **Old Gaol, Abingdon**

(Pages 24 - 31)

To receive and consider report 110/07 of the Chief Executive.

Introduction and Report Summary

At its meeting on 13th July 2007 the Executive short listed a number of companies to proceed to stage 2 of the selection process for a development partner for the Old Gaol. The deadline for submissions was 22nd October 2007 and this report sets out the context for the Executive to select a preferred development partner and to determine its position in respect of the other submissions.

The contact officer for this report is Terry Stock, Chief Executive, telephone (01235 540303.

Email address: terry.stock@whitehorsedc.co.uk.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (a) To select a preferred development partner and state the reasons for that selection. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (b) To formulate any guidance it wishes to give to the Chief Executive on any particular aspects it would wish to see explored in the discussions on the Development Agreement. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (c) To select a reserve development partner and state the reasons for that selection. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (d) To determine its position on the remaining schemes, together with its reasons. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (e) To determine its position in respect of Harcourt Way. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (f) To consider the financial consequences of its decision on a preferred developer. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (g) To determine what, if anything, further to put into the public domain. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (h) To determine what, if any, consultation it wishes to take with Abingdon Town Council, Community in the Old Gaol, other groups and individuals. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (i) To delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Leader of the Opposition, the authority to negotiate and conclude any agreements needed to proceed to contract with the preferred developer.*

OTHER MATTERS

12. Corporate Governance Report - Second Quarter 2007/08

(Pages 32 - 43)

To receive and consider report 111/07 of the Senior Management Team.

Introduction and Report Summary

The Corporate Governance Report looks at the key areas of:

- Corporate Priorities
- Best Value Performance Indicators
- Progress against Service Prioritisation Plans
- Key staffing data (sickness levels and turnover)
- Financial commentary

At its meeting on 19th November the Senior Management Team (SMT) considered the second quarter 2007/08 Business Performance Report. This is an exception report which covers all of the aspects of corporate governance contained within this report. SMT agreed the exceptions (where performance / actions are not on target) to be reported to the Executive and agreed the comments / actions which have been included in this report. The full versions of the individual reports will be still available on the Council's website. They can be accessed through the performance section of the Council and Democracy area of the website.

The contact officer for this report is Tim Sadler, Strategic Director, telephone (01235 540360).

Email address: tim.sadler@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Recommendation

That the Senior Management Team's Corporate Governance exception report and proposals be noted.

13. Climate Change

(Pages 44 - 84)

To receive and consider report 112/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

The Executive will be aware that the production of a Climate Change Strategy and associated action plan was a Service priority for the Council this year.

This report introduces the Climate Change Strategy for the Council and discusses two important decision points, these being:

- The scope of the Council's approach to climate change
- The methodology that the Council could use to deliver the Strategy

The Strategy is attached at appendix A of this report.

The contact officers for this report are Paul Staines, Deputy Director (Housing and Community Safety), telephone 01235 547621.

E-mail address paul.staines@whitehorsedc.co.uk and Mark Saunders, Principal Energy Officer, telephone 01235 547603, e-mail address mark.saunders@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Recommendations

- (j) The Executive approve the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan attached as an appendix to this report;*
- (k) The Executive approve the adoption of a Council-wide approach to addressing the issue of climate change; and*
- (l) The Executive agree, as part of its budget considerations for 2008-9, to consider the resource implications of the Action Plan.*

14. Payments Strategy

(Pages 85 - 99)

To receive and consider report 113/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

This report proposes the adoption of a Payments Strategy for the Vale.

The 2007/08 agreed budget proposals (service prioritisation plan number 52X) requests the provision of better payment alternatives for cash payment facilities. The attached Payments Strategy shows there are opportunities for the Vale to use alternative payment solutions that have the potential to increase customer access and in some cases bring immediate cost benefits. The strategy compliments the Council's Access to Services Strategy and is based on extensive research and examination of the options.

A number of milestones are set out that can move the Vale to this position, and it is recommended that each be implemented on its merits only where the business case for each milestone can prove that customer access will increase and costs be reduced.

It is your officers' view that the opportunity for immediate cost reduction is limited, and that encouraging customers to use electronic payment methods will likely have to be implemented in parallel before users migrate in sufficient numbers to enable reduced transaction costs to be secured.

The Contact Officer for this report is Helen Bishop, Deputy Director Organisational Development & Support, 01235 540372.

Recommendations

- (m) that the Executive approve in principle that the draft strategy to implement the payments policy be recommended to Council;*
- (n) that the following policy which underpins the payments strategy is recommended for adoption by Council:*

“The Council will adopt and implement a Payments Strategy which will deliver the following policy:

- Cost effective channels will be developed and marketed to encourage as many customers as possible to self-serve or use our call centre services*
- Customer service will be, as far as is practicable, coordinated and process managed to ensure a quality consistent service*
- Opportunities will be taken through process and workflow re-design to create cashable and non-cashable efficiencies*
- The Council will continue to develop access channels which reflect the changing preferences of our customers”*

15. Approval of Procurement Strategy

(Pages 100 - 131)

To receive and consider report 114/07 of the Strategic Director and Chief Finance Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

The Council needs a clear and concise Procurement Strategy to provide guidance to staff involved in the procurement process as to how to buy effectively on behalf of the Council and to demonstrate to tax payers and other stakeholders that the Council is compliant with the law and best practice in carrying out its procurement activities, as well as delivering value for money. It has been developed from a procurement framework that was submitted to Strategic Review Committee for review in January 2007. The Strategy takes full account of Government recommendations (including the National Procurement Strategy 2003) and takes account of current priorities such as environmental, economic and social sustainability and equalities and diversity. Acknowledgment is made to staff in South Oxfordshire District Council who provided the Deputy Director (Contracts and Procurement) with assistance in drafting the Strategy .

It is accompanied by a Plan which details 15 key activities which need to be carried out in order to develop procurement excellence in the Vale.

The contact officer for this report is Mike Mackay, Deputy Director (Contracts and Procurement), Tel: 01235 540337.

Email: michael.mackay@whitehorsedc.co.uk

Recommendation

That the Executive approves the Procurement Strategy.

16. Consultation Strategy

(Pages 132- 150)

To receive and consider report 115/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

This report proposes the adoption of the consultation strategy for the Vale as part of the Corporate Priority "Improving internal and external communications". The strategy needs to be adopted to move the priority forward.

The strategy is based on information from the Strategic Management Team and their service areas, the staff and Member survey and the public general satisfaction survey completed last financial year by polling company Ipsos MORI as part of the Best Value Performance Indicator requirement.

The strategy is built from the position of where we are now and what we aim to achieve over the next two years.

The contact officer for this report is Nikki Malin, Head of Communications, telephone (01235 540376). Email address nikki.malin@whitehorsedc.co.uk

Recommendations

that the Executive agrees the strategy.

17. Cumnor Hill Conservation Area – Proposal by Cumnor Parish Council

(Pages 151 - 162)

(Wards Affected: Appleton and Cumnor)

To receive and consider report 116/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

Cumnor Parish Council have requested the District Council to consider designating part of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise, Cumnor a conservation area.

The contact officer for this report is Grant Audley Miller, Section Head (Environmental Planning & Conservation), telephone (01235 540343). Email address: grant.audley-miller@whitehorsedc.co.uk

Recommendations

- (a) *That a conservation area be not designated on the lower slopes of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise for the reasons set out in paragraphs 5.5-5.7.*
- (b) *That instead, efforts be concentrated on the proposed design guide supplementary planning document as the appropriate means of protecting areas of low density housing in the Vale such as Cumnor Hill.*
- (c) *That the Executive be asked to look into the possibility of the production of some earlier document to provide guidance across the whole of the District for similar areas prior to the production of the Local Development Framework.*

18. **Service Area Half Year Reports 2007/08**

Copies of Service Area Half Year Reports, covering the period 1st April 2007 to 30th September 2007, have already been circulated to members of the Executive and all members of Scrutiny Committee. Members of the Executive are asked to report back to this meeting (a template has been provided) on any significant issues for the service areas for which they are responsible.

All Members of the Executive are asked to bring their copies of the reports to the meeting.

19. **Efficiency Reviews – Streamlining Current Processes**

(Pages 163 - 166)

To receive and consider report 117/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

There are currently a number of different processes for carrying out reviews of our services. Best Value Reviews have been carried out since 2000 when the statutory requirement to deliver 'Best Value' was introduced by the Government. A Best Value Review programme has previously been agreed by the Executive and the current position with these reviews is included in section 6.0. The statutory requirement to carry out Best Value Reviews was removed by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act October 2007. However, there is a continuing need for services areas to prove that they are delivering efficient, effective, customer orientated services which ensure overall value for money. This report recommends that Best Value Reviews should be superseded by an over-arching Organisational Development approach. This emphasises continual and sustainable improvement and uses a variety of methods to ensure service areas focus on providing value for money. The Organisational Development framework has previously been agreed by the Executive and is being delivered as part of the Access to Services priority.

The contact officer for this report is Jeremy Beach, Organisational Change Manager, telephone (01235 540449); Email: jeremy.beach@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Recommendations

- (o) *that the current position with the Housing Services, White Horse Leisure & Tennis Centre and Partnership Effectiveness reviews be noted and that these Best Value Reviews be formally closed down;*
- (p) *that the following Best Value Reviews do not take place: Human Resources, Environmental Health and Building Control; and*
- (q) *that the Best Value Review approach is replaced with a continuing programme of service reviews under the over-arching Organisational Development framework, and that these should use appropriate methods to determine value for money and implement action plans for improvement and development.*

20. **Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11**

(Pages 167 - 235)

To receive and consider report 118/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

The Council is committed to the principle of equal opportunities and aims to deliver accessible services and employment opportunities which meet the needs of all residents and employees.

To help it achieve this, it has just put together a list of key things that it will do over the next three years to make its services more accessible for residents and its employees.

These areas for action are set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11. In accordance with legislation, the Scheme pays particular attention to the needs of disabled people, people from ethnic minorities¹ and women as they may find it more difficult to access local services.

The areas for action have been identified via internal and external consultation and the analysis of Council performance data. They also take into account our relevant statutory duties.

This report summarises the purpose, structure, development and future management of the Equality and Diversity Scheme. It also makes a recommendation for its adoption by the Council's Executive.

The contact officers for this report are Katharine Doherty (Equalities Officer, 01235 520202) and Tim Sadler (Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer, 01235 520202).

Recommendations

That the Executive adopts the Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11.

21. **Treasury Management - Report of meeting with Fund Manager**

At its meeting on 13 July the Executive received a report (32/07) on Treasury Management performance in 2006/07. The bulk of the Council's cash reserves are invested by an external fund manager, Investec Asset Management. The Council's Accountancy section also invests day-to-day cash holdings, such as council tax and business rates receipts, for cash flow purposes. During 2006/07 Investec held in the region of £16 million and the in-house team an average of £11.8 million. Investec had had a difficult year and achieved a return of only 4.15% while the in-house team had returned 4.89%. The 7 day LIBID (London interbank bid rate – the rate at which banks borrow from each other), which is used as a benchmark, averaged 4.97%.

The Executive were disappointed with Investec's performance and asked that a meeting be held with Investec and Butlers, the Council's independent investment advisers, to seek an explanation and assurances about future performance.

A meeting was held at 2pm on Thursday 1 November 2007 in the Abbey Room, Guildhall, Abingdon with Members. Paul Cammies from Investec explained their approach and how this had fallen short in 2006/07. He felt that they had given too much weighting to UK economic indicators and not enough to global ones. As a result, when gilt-edged stock (gilts) prices had fallen in the final quarter, Investec had been too slow to sell their holdings and had incurred losses. He acknowledged that Investec had under-performed and as a result offered to refund the Council the management fee that had been paid for the last quarter of 2006/07.

Investec had now revised its strategy by altering the weight it gave to various factors and had also introduced an automatic process so that when gilts were purchased a level would be set so that if the price fell below a trigger point then selling would be considered. This level would adjust in the event of price rises in order to “lock in” any gains. He went on to outline how he saw the economy developing and the prospects for interest rates and gilt yields. He was confident that Investec were well placed for better returns as rates peaked, with the current yield on the portfolio being 5.99%.

Mr Cammies had answered questions throughout his presentation. He took some final questions and then left the meeting.

Chris Anthony of Butlers then addressed the meeting. He outlined the constraints which limited the opportunities for local authority investment with official guidance acknowledging that yield was important but must be subordinate to security and liquidity. These same constraints applied to funds managed by outside agents. He briefly covered the relative performance of the Council’s Fund Manager, both recently and since commencement. He then went on to outline the advantages of using a Fund Manager in that they had access to a wider range of instruments and also better quality borrowers. It was unfortunate that recent performance had been poor but Investec’s unusual offer to refund a quarter’s management fee was recognition of exceptional poor performance which should not be repeated.

Recommendation

that the Council accept Investec’s offer to refund the management fee for the 4th quarter of 2006/07 and closely monitor ongoing performance for the remainder of the Treasury Management contract.

22. Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund

(Pages 236 - 239)

(Wards Affected: Abingdon Abbey and Barton; Abingdon Northcourt; Abingdon Peachcroft;)

To receive and consider report 119/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to update members of the Executive on the project to refurbish and extend the facilities at the North East Abingdon Community Association (NEACA); to draw the attention of Members to the criteria of the Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund and to seek confirmation that a portion of the funding awarded in

2004 from this Fund can still be made available to NEACA for the revised project.

The contact officer for this report is Lorna Edwards, Community Strategy Officer (Tel: 01235 547626).

Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

This report supports the Council's Vision and Priorities. It also supports the Vale Community Strategy. It does not conflict with any Council strategy or any Council policy.

Recommendations

- (a) *that Members note NEACA's revised project resulting from its unsuccessful lottery bid;*
- (b) *that Members agree that NEACA should receive funding from the Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund to obtain WREN funding for the revised project, the precise amount being dependent on the amount of grant awarded by WREN; and*
- (c) *that the Council's Community Funding Advice Service, provided by Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA), be requested to work with NEACA to identify funding that may be needed to make up any shortfall for the project.*

23. Health and Safety Training

At a recent meeting of the Health and Safety Review Board, training for Members on health and safety matters was discussed. It was considered that as Executive Members had a health and safety responsibility for the Council, then they should receive appropriate training in their roles and responsibilities. Similarly, the Scrutiny Committee had a responsibility to scrutinise the Executive and therefore its Members should also be trained. It was considered that this training should be open to all Members of the Council but it should be mandatory for Executive and Scrutiny Committee Members to be accredited to the IOSH (Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) 'Safety for Senior Executives' training standard. This training has already been given to Directors and Deputy Directors. The Executive is requested to support this view and make a recommendation to the Council.

The Health and Safety Review Board considers that an evening session would best suit Members.

Recommendation

that the Council be recommended to make it a mandatory requirement for all Members of the Executive and the Scrutiny Committee to be accredited to the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health 'Safety for Senior Executives' training standard and request the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer to arrange an evening training session to which other Members of the Council are to be invited also.

24. Flood Recovery Grant Advisory Group

(Pages 240 - 249)

To receive the minutes of the meetings of the Flood Recovery Grant Advisory Group held on 4 October 2007 (attached) and 7 November 2007 (to be circulated separately).

25. Exclusion of the Public, including the Press

The Chair to move that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the remainder of the meeting to prevent the disclosure to them of exempt information, as defined in Section 100(I) and Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, to the Act when the following items are considered:

Item 26 Minutes

(Category 1 - Information relating to any individual.)

(Category 2 - Information which is likely to reveal the identity of any individual.)

(Category 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information.)

Item 27 Old Gaol, Abingdon

(Category 3)

Item 28 Re-tendering the Bank Contract

(Category 3)

Item 29 Property Matters

(Category 3)

Item 30 Referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Other Committees

(Category 1)

(Category 2)

(Category 3)

EXEMPT INFORMATION UNDER SECTION 100A(4) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

STANDING ITEMS

26. Minutes

To adopt and sign as a correct record the exempt minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 5 October 2007, (previously circulated).

KEY DECISIONS

27. **Old Gaol, Abingdon**

(Wards Affected: Abingdon Abbey and Barton)

To receive and consider report 120/07 of the Chief Executive.

THIS REPORT WILL BE CIRCULATED SEPARATELY.

OTHER MATTERS

28. **Re-tendering the Bank Contract**

(Pages 250 - 255)

To receive and consider report 121/07 of the Strategic Director and Chief Finance Officer.

29. **Property Matters**

To consider any property matters.

30. **Referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Other Committees**

(Page 256)

To consider the attached note.



OUR VISION AND AIMS

Our Vision is to build and safeguard a fair, open and compassionate community

The Vale of White Horse District Council aims to:

Strengthen local democracy and public involvement through access to information, consultation, and devolution of power so that everyone can take part in our community and contribute to the decisions which affect our lives

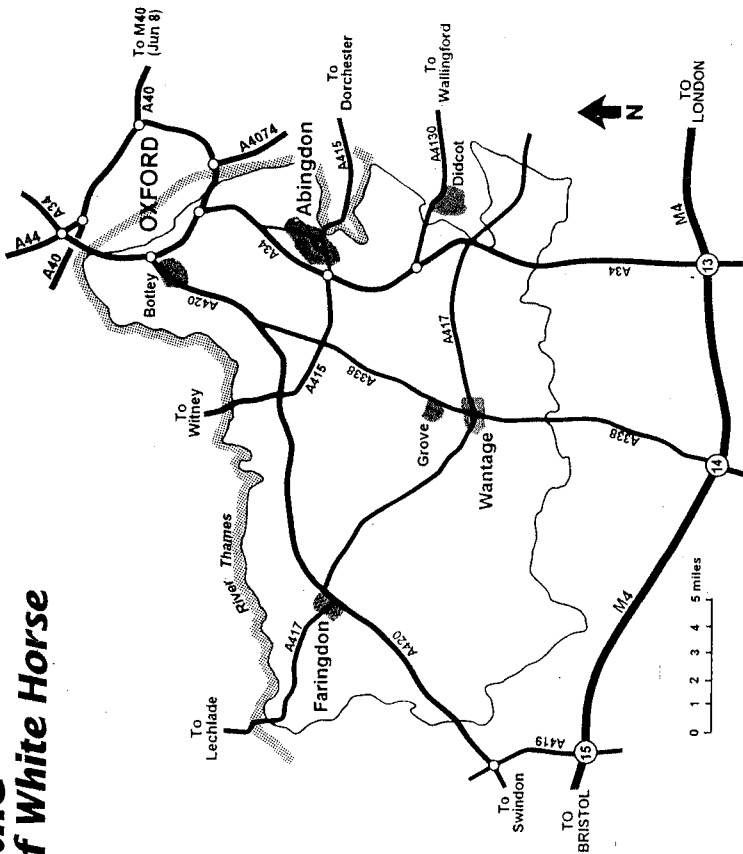
Create a safer community and improve the quality of life among Vale residents

Encourage a strong and sustainable economy which benefits all who live in, work in or visit the Vale

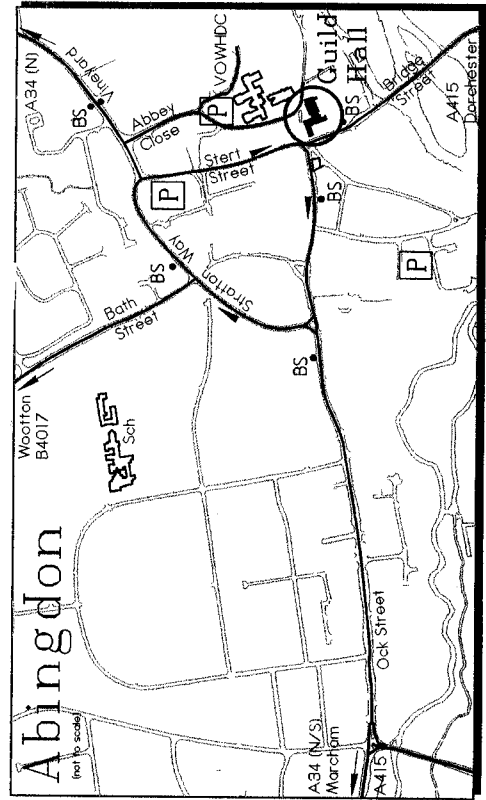
Help disadvantaged groups and individuals within the Vale to realise their full potential

Provide and support high quality public services which are effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of people within the Vale

Protect and improve our built and natural environment



Abingdon, Guildhall, Abingdon



KEY : BS = Bus Stop

LOCATION MAP



Note to Executive

Supplementary estimates approved by Strategic Director in consultation with the Leader of the Council

at 21 November 2007

No.	Date received	Account From	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Account To	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Supplementary Estimate Total	Description
1	04/10/2007	4999	SB31	Contingency	1001	EP11	Env Health Admin	£29,000	S7 - Allocation of the smoking ban grant for staff and other costs. Surplus grant of £11,000 returned to Contingency
					1003			£900	
					1005			£2,100	
					4007			£4,400	
					9027			-£47,400	
2	02/11/2007	4999	SB31	Contingency	1001	HR71	Policy Development	£11,900	S8 - Reinstate budget for Access Officer which was deleted in error
					1003			£700	
					1005			£2,300	
3	02/11/2007	4999	SB31	Contingency	1001	CN11	Corporate Admin	£15,330	S9 - Correction of salary budget where the saving for a deleted post was taken twice
					1003			£980	
					1005			£2,670	
4	02/11/2007	4999	SB31	Contingency	1001	CG11	Community Grants	£15,700	S10 - Correction of salary budget where the saving for a deleted post was taken twice
					1003			£1,000	
					1005			£2,900	
5	02/11/2007	4999	SB31	Contingency	1001	CH11	Organisational Change	£2,000	S11 - Market Premia approved by Exec on 5 October 2007
6	02/11/2007	4999	SB31	Contingency	1001	CC11	Wantage Civic Hall	£11,960	
					1003			620	S12 - Correction of salary budgets for Civic Hall and Guildhall. Salary buffer to cover essential posts in cases of sickness etc. omitted form original budget
					1005			2170	
					1001		Guildhall	£1,000	
					1003			£620	
					1005			£1,860	
7	02/11/2007	4999	SB31	Contingency	4431	SB11	Corporate Core	£4,400	S13 - to provide budget for unavoidable ex gratia payments

No.	Date received	Account From	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Account To	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Supplementary Estimate Total	Description
8	02/11/2007	4999	SB31	Contingency	1301	SB21	Unapportioned Overheads	£40,000	S14 - to provide budget for unavoidable supplementary pension costs
9	02/11/2007	4999	SB31	Contingency	4402	SB11	Corporate Core	£15,000	S15 - to provide budget for bank charges as no provision currently exists
10	02/11/2007	4999	SB31	Contingency	4400	RS73	R & B Client	£14,900	S16 - to provide budget for pension advice costs incurred on formation of Shared Service Partnership
Total Supplementary Estimates								£137,010	

Note to Executive

Permanent Budget Adjustment Requests

at 21 November 2007

Key to Type

- 1 Within a subjective within a cost centre
- 2 Within a Cost Centre but across subjective headings
- 3 Within the cost centres of a service area
- 4 Across service areas
- 5 Over £10,000

No.	Date	Account From	Code Centre	Cost Centre Name	Account to	Code Centre	Cost Centre Name	Adjustment total £	Reason	Type
1	08/10/2007	4102	CS21	Community Safety Strategy	2201	CS21	Community Safety Strategy	100	Budget for refreshments should be included in Room Hire	2
2	08/10/2007	2000	CS11	CCTV	4003	CS11	CCTV	100	Budget for Equipment	2
	08/10/2007	4102	CS11	CCTV	4003	CS11	CCTV	250	Maintenance is inadequate but savings can be made on other supplies & service budgets to compensate	1
	08/10/2007	4400	CS11	CCTV	4003	CS11	CCTV	400		1
	08/10/2007	4609	CS11	CCTV	4003	CS11	CCTV	150		1
	08/10/2007	4610	CS11	CCTV	4003	CS11	CCTV	800		1
3	11/10/2007	1001/1003/1005	SB11	Corporate Core	1001/1003/1005	CM31	Communications	42,930	Move reinstated salary budget (SBCF 229) from Corporate Core to Communications	5
4	16/10/2007	5005	RS73	R & B Client	5005	RS31	Council Tax	337,500		5
	16/10/2007	5005	RS73	R & B Client	5005	RS32	Business Rates	78,220		5
	16/10/2007	5005	RS73	R & B Client	5005	RS41	Benefits Admin	579,340		5
	16/10/2007	5005	RS73	R & B Client	5005	RS23	Sundry Debtors	23,480		5
	16/10/2007	5005	RS73	R & B Client	5005	RS22	Accounts Payable	60,630		5
	16/10/2007	5005	RS73	R & B Client	5005	HR41	Payroll (Vale)	24,300		5
	16/10/2007	5005	RS73	R & B Client	5005	RS71	Accountancy	50,240		5
	16/10/2007	5005	RS73	R & B Client	5005	RS61	Assisted Transport	15,790		5
	16/10/2007	5005	RS73	R & B Client	9102	PS21	Facilities Management	(47,000)		5
5	17/10/2007	4065	RS41	Benefits Admin	4065	RS42	Payment of Housing Benefit	30,000	Move bad debt contribution to correct cost centre	5
	17/10/2007	4065	RS51	Benefit Fraud	4065	RS42	Payment of Housing Benefit	30,000		5
6	17/10/2007	9110	RS51	Benefit Fraud	6002	RS42	Payment of Housing Benefit	79,450	Move budget for rent allowance overpayment to correct account and cost centre	5
	17/10/2007	9110	RS41	Benefits Admin	6002	RS42	Payment of Housing Benefit	80,000		5

No.	Date	Account From	Code Centre	Cost Centre Name	Account to	Code Centre	Cost Centre Name	Adjustment total £	Reason	Type
7	05/11/2007	1212	CM21	Corporate Contact	1012	CN51	Duty Officers	160	Insufficient budget for the Duty Officer service to be met from savings in Corporate Contact Management cost centre	3
	05/11/2007	4302	CM21	Corporate Contact	1012	CN51	Duty Officers	240		3
	05/11/2007	4303	CM21	Corporate Contact	1012	CN51	Duty Officers	480		3
	05/11/2007	4307	CM21	Corporate Contact	1012	CN51	Duty Officers	890		3
	05/11/2007	4432	CM21	Corporate Contact	1012	CN51	Duty Officers	490		3
	05/11/2007	4503	CM21	Corporate Contact	1012	CN51	Duty Officers	90		3
	05/11/2007	4504	CM21	Corporate Contact	1012	CN51	Duty Officers	1,910		3
	05/11/2007	4508	CM21	Corporate Contact	1012	CN51	Duty Officers	300		3
	05/11/2007	4512	CM21	Corporate Contact	1012	CN51	Duty Officers	4,080		3
	05/11/2007	4609	CM21	Corporate Contact	1012	CN51	Duty Officers	150		3
8	05/11/2007	4704	CM21	Corporate Contact	1012	CN51	Duty Officers	1,020	To move these budgets to more appropriate accounts	3
	08/11/2007	6006	RS42	Payment of Housing Benefit	6000	RS42	Payment of Housing Benefit	14,446,000		5
	08/11/2007	6008	RS42	Payment of Housing Benefit	6003	RS42	Payment of Housing Benefit	726,000		5
	08/11/2007	6008	RS43	Payment of Council Tax Benefit	6005	RS43	Payment of Council Tax Benefit	4,252,050		5
								20,820,540		
Summary										
							Total Type 1	1,600		
							Total Type 2	200		
							Total Type 3	9,810		
							Total Type 4	-		
							Total Type 5	20,808,930		
							Total	20,820,540		

Note for Executive

Key to Type

- 1 Within a subjective within a cost centre
- 2 Within a Cost Centre but across subjective headings
- 3 Within the cost centres of a service area
- 4 Across service areas
- 5 Over £10,000

Virement requests received at 21 November 2007

No.	Date	Account From	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Account To	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Virement Total £	Virement Percentage	Reason	Preventative Action	Type	Authorised by Director/Deputy Director	Requires Executive Approval		
1	03/10/2007	4303	RS73	R & B Client	4508	RS73	R & B Client	470	1.9%	Budget for purchase of computer hardware needed, to be met from saving on publications	One-off	1	Y	N		
2	15/10/2007	5000	RS71	Accountancy SSP	1100	RS11	Accountancy	14,840	4.2%	To provide budget for temporary Chief Accountant for July to September 2007	None	5	Y	Y		
3	31/10/2007	1001	EP31	Animal Control Management	4400	EP31	Animal Control Management	3,500	4.4%	Payment for interim contractor to cover Pest Control Officer vacancy	None	2	Y	N		
4	02/11/2007	1001	RS13	Audit	1701	RS13	Audit	500	0.3%	Provision of Occupational Personality Questionnaires for vacant Auditor positions	One-off	1	Y	N		
5	06/11/2007	1001	LG11	Legal Services	1001	CT11	Committee Management	2,000	1.1%	To resolve the shortfall resulting from the restructuring of Legal and Democratic Services	None	3	Y	N		
6	08/11/2007	1001	HE21	Enabling	1001	HM21	Homelessness	4,120	6.7%		None					
	08/11/2007	1001	HE31	Regulation	1001	HM21	Homelessness	3,140	4.2%	Use of vacant post to meet the cost of temporary staff for maternity cover		3	Y	Y		
	08/11/2007	1001	HP01	Housing Strategy/Policy	1001	HM11	Housing Register	4,120	13.0%							
7	08/11/2007	1001/1003/1005	RS11	Accountancy	5000	RS71	Accountancy SSP	1,840	3.0%	To adjust virement dated 2 August as temporary Accountant was on half pay in September (full cost previously vired)	None	3	Y	N		
8	08/11/2007	5000	RS71	Accountancy SSP	1001/1003/1005	RS11	Accountancy	12,010	3.0%	To provide budget for temporary Accountant October to December 2007	None	3	Y	Y		
9	20/11/2007	1001	CL41	Recycling	4400	SR11	Leisure & Arts Admin	4,700	4.5%	To fund consultancy costs from vacant Principal Waste Officer post	None	3	Y	Y		
	20/11/2007	1001	CL51	Refuse Collection	4400	SR11	Leisure & Arts Admin	4,700	5.7%							
	20/11/2007	1001	CL61	Street Cleansing	4400	SR11	Leisure & Arts Admin	6,280	11.0%							
10	20/11/2007	1003/1005	PS21	Facilities Management	1001	PS21	Facilities Management	1,460	2.1%	SPP 38 saving taken from salary account but should have been split over National Insurance and Superannuation also	None	1	Y	N		
Total Virements								63,680								
Summary																
Total Type 1								2,430								
Total Type 2								3,500								
Total Type 3								42,910								
Total Type 4								-								
Total Type 5								14,840								
Total								63,680								

VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCIL

FORWARD PLAN

CONTAINING EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN FROM 1 DECEMBER 2007 - 31 MARCH 2008

This Forward Plan sets out a schedule of Key Decisions likely to be taken over the four-month period shown above. It is a rolling plan, subject to change monthly. A Key Decision is a decision of the Executive which is likely to result in: the Council incurring significant expenditure or making significant savings; a high proportion of the community being affected; or an impact on two or more agendas or services. Executive decisions can be taken by the Executive as a whole, a committee of the Executive, an individual Member of the Executive, an Officer of the Council, an Area Committee, or through joint arrangements with other bodies or another Council.

Where the decision is to be taken by the Executive, this comprises the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jerry Patterson, and the following elected Members: Councillors Mary de Vere, Tony de Vere, Richard Farrell, Jenny Hannaby, Bob Johnston and Angela Lawrence.

Representations can be made on any of the following issues before a decision is taken. Representations must be made to the relevant contact officer shown below by 5pm on the working day preceding the date of the decision.

Decision	Key decision?	Decision maker	Date first published on Forward Plan	Consultees	Consultation method	Contact Officer	Documents used
Financial Monitoring	No	Executive 7 Dec 2007	This item will appear on the Executive agendas each month	Executive Portfolio Holders	Consultation with budget holders	Steve Bishop, Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer Tel. (01235) 540332 steve.bishop@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	2006/07 Budget
Payments Strategy	No	Executive 7 Dec 2007	October 2007	Councillor Tony de Vere	Consulted Scrutiny Committee	Helen Bishop tel. 01235 540372 E-mail: helen.bishop@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	None.
Award of Banking Contract	No	Executive 7 Dec 2007	October 2007	Councillor Tony de Vere	Executive Portfolio Holder	William Jacobs Tel. 01235 540455 E-mail: william.jacobs@ridgeway.ssp.gov.uk	None.

Decision	Key decision?	Decision maker	Date first published	Consultees	Consultation method	Contact	Documents used
Procurement Strategy	No	Executive 7 Dec 2007	July 2007	Councillor Jenny Hannaby	Consult Strategic Review Committee and South Oxfordshire District Council	Michael Mackay Tel. 01235 540337 E-mail: michael.mackay@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	National Procurement Strategy for Local Government
Cumnor Hill Conservation Area – Proposal by Cumnor Parish Council	No	Executive 7 Dec 2007	November 2007	Local residents Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group Councillor Richard Farrell	Request received from Cumnor Parish Council. Consultation carried out with Cumnor residents Matter considered by Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group	Grant Audley-Miller Tel. 01235 540343 E-mail: grant.audley-miller@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	None.
Consultation Strategy	No	Executive 7 Dec 2007	December 2007	Councillor Jerry Patterson	Consult the Executive	Nikki Malin Tel. 01235 540376 E-mail: nikki.malin@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	None.
Review of National Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief	No	Executive 7 Dec 2007	July 2007	Councillors Richard Farrell and Tony de Vere	Consult Executive Portfolio Holder then Executive to make recommendations for any policy changes to Council	Toby Warren Tel. 01235 547695 E-mail: toby.warren@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	None.

Decision	Key decision?	Decision maker	Date first published	Consultees	Consultation method	Contact	Documents used
Old Gaol, Abingdon - Consideration of Bids from Short-listed Development Partners (Exempt Information)	Yes	Executive 7 Dec 2007	August 2007	Old Gaol Advisory Group and Councillor Jerry Patterson	Bids submitted by Development Partners considered by Old Gaol Advisory Group	Terry Stock, Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service Tel. 01235 540301 E-mail: terry.stock@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	None.
Commitment to Decriminalise and Parking Enforcement	No	Executive 1 Feb 2008	February 2007	Councillor Richard Farrell	Consult Executive Members	Rodger Hood Tel. 01235 540340 E-mail: rodger.hood@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	None.
Budget Proposals 2008/09	Yes	Executive 1 Feb 2008	February 2007	Councillor Tony de Vere	Consult Strategic Review Committee and Business Ratepayers	William Jacobs Tel. 01235 540455 E-mail: william.jacobs@ridgewayssp.gov.uk	None.
Review of Flooding in the Vale July 2007 - following publication of Environment Agency report	Yes	Executive 1 Feb 2008	October 2007	Flood Recovery Grant Advisory Group Councillor Jerry Patterson	Review to be undertaken following publication of the Environment Agency's forthcoming report.	Tim Sadler, Strategic Director Tel. 01235 540360 E-mail: tim.sadler@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	None.

[Handwritten signature]
16. Nov 2007

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
TO THE EXECUTIVE
7 DECEMBER 2007

The Old Gaol, Abingdon.

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

1.1 At its meeting on 13th July 2007 the Executive short listed a number of companies to proceed to stage 2 of the selection process for a development partner for the Old Gaol. The deadline for submissions was 22nd October 2007 and this report sets out the context for the Executive to select a preferred development partner and to determine its position in respect of the other submissions.

1.2 The contact officer for this report is Terry Stock, Chief Executive, telephone (01235 540303. **Email address: terry.stock@whitehorsedc.co.uk.**

2.0 Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (a) *To select a preferred development partner and state the reasons for that selection. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (b) *To formulate any guidance it wishes to give to the Chief Executive on any particular aspects it would wish to see explored in the discussions on the Development Agreement. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (c) *To select a reserve development partner and state the reasons for that selection. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (d) *To determine its position on the remaining schemes, together with its reasons. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (e) *To determine its position in respect of Harcourt Way. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (f) *To consider the financial consequences of its decision on a preferred developer. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (g) *To determine what, if anything, further to put into the public domain. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (h) *To determine what, if any, consultation it wishes to take with Abingdon Town Council, Community in the Old Gaol, other groups and individuals. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*

- (i) *To delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Leader of the Opposition, the authority to negotiate and conclude any agreements needed to proceed to contract with the preferred developer.*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

This report relates to the Council's Vision in that it supports all objectives and strategies.

4.0 Background

4.1 The Old Gaol was transferred from the former Borough of Abingdon to the newly created Vale of White Horse District Council at its vesting day of 1st April 1974. The former Borough had acquired the site and let contracts to develop it as a leisure centre. It opened as a leisure centre in 1974 and was seen at the time as a pioneering and innovative use for the historic building. It was, however, always a difficult building to maintain as a fit for purpose leisure centre, especially given its difficult access for people with disabilities. Over the course of its 28 years as a leisure centre (from 1974 – 2002) this Council subsidised its operation every year. This subsidy in the final year of operation of the Old Gaol was around £100,000 and would have totalled several million pounds over this period. This Council therefore sought partners and built a new and significantly larger leisure centre in Abingdon at a capital cost to the Council of some £6 million and with an annual revenue subsidy of less than £500. The Old Gaol closed as a leisure centre in April 2002 after the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre was opened in Audlett Drive. It is currently unoccupied.

A history of Old Gaol Consultation

4.2 Consideration of the potential future of the Old Gaol began in the late 1990s. A major report by Sykes Leisure was considered by the Leisure and Tourism Committee in November 1997. A Working Party was set up by the Council in 1998 and consideration was given to the Old Gaol's future by the Abingdon Town Centre Working Party in 1999. The Council also undertook informal consultation with community groups. Three possible options with indicative uses and costs were put into the public domain and comments invited. These options were:

- Option 1: To maximise cultural use of the building, recognising that this would involve both a capital cost to create and a permanent revenue subsidy from the Council.
- Option 2: To balance cultural and commercial use of the building, recognising that this would involve a capital cost and then generate an annual income to the Council.
- Option 3: To maximise commercial use with no community facilities, recognising that this would generate either a capital receipt or an annual income to the Council.

4.3 A public meeting was held in Abingdon Guildhall and a questionnaire containing these three options was distributed with Vale Views. Almost 2,000 responses were received and a clear majority (60%) indicated a preference for option 1.

4.4 The Council had in the meantime acquired the Old Police Station which gave it the ownership of the greater Old Gaol site, the future of which is now under consideration.

- 4.5 Although the earlier consultation, including Vale Views, was not a stratified sample, the Council resolved to explore the feasibility in more detail of retaining the Old Gaol site in community and cultural use. In 2001 the Council appointed FSP Architects and Planning Consultants to produce an options study. In 2003, the Council's long standing property consultants, Angermann Goddard & Loyd, were asked to give commercial advice on aspects of the Old Gaol site.
- 4.6 In November 2004 the Vale and Oxfordshire County Council jointly commissioned research from acknowledged market leading experts in this work, ABL Cultural Consulting Ltd. (ABL) into the feasibility of the Old Gaol site being used for community use, including space for a cinema, theatre, museum and library, as well as commercial space.
- 4.7 The project was overseen by a steering group of District, County and Abingdon Town Council representatives as well as members of Abingdon Performing Arts Groups Executive (APAGE), an umbrella organisation for local arts groups. Members of relevant Abingdon societies were also consulted by ABL including Friends of Abingdon, the Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon Film Society, and Abingdon Artists.
- 4.8 ABL concluded that the scheme would have cost around £20 million in capital and would have required up to £500,000 a year revenue subsidy. The consultants predicted there would be no grant funding available for such a scheme and that the demand would be limited, due to other facilities available both within Abingdon and in the surrounding area. The ABL report is available on the Vale's website.
- 4.9 Both the District and Oxfordshire County Council agreed that the costs were prohibitive and Abingdon Town Council, which considered moving the town museum into the Old Gaol complex, also accepted that the scheme was not feasible and could not proceed.
- 4.10 In December 2005 the Executive agreed to sell the site for development with the stipulation that the site would retain some degree of public access.

Structured Consultation – 2005/06 Budget

- 4.11 In 2004, as part of its preparation for the 2005/06 financial year's budget, Research for Today, was commissioned to identify Vale residents' priorities for Council services in the light of mounting budget pressures. This company is nationally recognised for undertaking such work with groups representative of the demography of the area, working in detail with those representatives to enable them to provide an informed view of the issues.
- 4.12 309 people, including 106 from Abingdon, were taken through a detailed range of service options. Although this sample size attracted some criticism as being too small, the sampling basis and the technique used by this company are acknowledged as statistically valid. This type of consultation is known as a Simalto modelling exercise.
- 4.13 The Council selected 25 service options ranging from household rubbish and public toilets, through to arts promotion and the Old Gaol. Within each option there were choices which would have led to increasing, cutting or maintaining current spend. In the case of the Old Gaol the choices were:

- Sell for development for best commercial use (eg restaurant/bars).
- Leave empty with minimal maintenance.
- Redevelop for mixed commercial and cultural/heritage use.
- Redevelop as a cultural/heritage centre.

4.14 People were given a number of “credit units” which they could distribute according to their spending priorities, so if they chose to increase spending in one area, they would have to reduce spending in others.

4.15 They were also given options about raising or cutting Council Tax charges. The overall preference was to increase Council Tax by £25. Subsequently the Government was approached on this issue but responded that it would not allow this level of increase. Assuming this increased level of funding had been possible, the responses to the Old Gaol from the survey respondents were as follows:

- 73 per cent wanted the Old Gaol sold for development
- 15 per cent wanted the site redeveloped for mixed commercial and cultural/heritage use
- 4 per cent wanted the site redeveloped as a cultural/heritage centre

4.16 This was a response based on residents from the whole of the Vale. The response from the 106 Abingdon residents was:

- 58 per cent wanted the Old Gaol sold for development
- 28 per cent wanted the site redeveloped for mixed use
- 4 per cent wanted the site redeveloped as a cultural/heritage centre.

Structured consultation – 2006/07 Budget

4.16 In late 2005 another budget consultation was conducted. Four focus groups were held in Wantage, Abingdon (two) and Faringdon, recruited from the Vale Voice Citizens’ Panel, a demographically representative group of around 1,000 Vale residents. The Council was again facing financial pressures and needed to consider its options.

4.17 The focus groups were given a list of 13 options for service cuts or income generation, again including a range from litter picking and closing cash offices to selling the Old Gaol. The option relating to the Old Gaol was to sell it to obtain the highest capital receipt, and generate an income of £175,000 per annum.

4.18 Selling the Old Gaol was one of the four most widely acceptable options for reducing the Council’s budget. There was less support for this option in the Abingdon groups.

4.19 During 2006 the Council prepared detailed Planning and Marketing and Development Briefs and determined its approach to seeking a development partner. It was decided to issue very detailed Briefs in order to encourage potential developers to come forward with imaginative and viable proposals. It was also decided to make these documents freely available.

4.20 The Council advertised for a development partner in January 2007 and more than a hundred sets of documents were issued. These documents are still available on the Council’s website. Initial proposals were required by May 2007 from which a limited number of companies were invited to work up detailed schemes. These detailed schemes have been evaluated for consideration at this Executive meeting.

5.0 **Proposals**

5.1 Details of the proposals received, Officers' evaluation of those proposals against the published criteria and recommendations on each proposal are set out in the confidential part of this report. The Council set out its vision for the site and the criteria to be used for the evaluation in the Marketing and Development Brief which has been in the public domain from the outset of the process. This document is available on the Council's website. The evaluation criteria are summarised in paragraph 6.4 below.

6.0 **Confidentiality**

6.1 The Executive will be aware that there has been considerable public comment on the confidentiality of the proposals. Abingdon Town Council has requested and received briefings, although not of the confidential material. The Community in the Old Gaol (COG) has also received briefings, again without confidential information. COG has sought to be allowed direct meetings with all of the companies which have submitted proposals. This has not been permitted although correspondence from both the Town Council and COG has been passed to those companies and any company responses passed back (anonymously) to COG. Requests for the disclosure of names and or schemes have been received under the Freedom of Information Act and these have been refused.

6.2 Many members of the public are understandably interested in the submissions. However, it remains firmly the view of your Officers (including the three Statutory Officers) that disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of the Council and of bidders. The officers have conducted a balancing exercise and concluded that any public interest in disclosure is outweighed by the public interest in maintaining the integrity of the tender process, at least until a legally binding agreement is reached with a preferred developer. Given the clear strength of view of some outside bodies and individuals, the Council's position has been tested with the Council's long standing property consultants (Angermann Goddard and Loyd of London (AGL)) who agree with the position taken by the statutory officers.

6.3 The Council's Standing Orders, which are based on the national model, require all tenders to be submitted in confidence and for each tenderer to confirm that the tender has been disclosed to no other party. This standard practice ensures that a public body such as the Council receives the best possible offer by would-be suppliers (or in this case developers) by encouraging competition and preventing collusion.

6.4 In this particular case, the Council's Marketing and Development Brief (publicly available on the Council's website) sets out the criteria by which schemes will be evaluated. In summary, these criteria are:

- A Make a positive contribution to the visual amenity of the area
- B Make a major contribution to the vibrancy of the town centre both for local people and for visitors.
- C Encourage controlled (commercial) access by the general public through the courtyard and ground floor of the Old Gaol to the riverside garden.
- D Make the best use of its waterside location and the historic buildings on the site.
- E Demonstrate good value for money in terms of the capital receipt receivable, general use of a prime riverside location and, should housing be provided on the

Old Gaol site, affordable housing provision in accordance with the requirements of the Local Plan.

6.5 The Council recognised in publishing the criteria at the outset that some of these criteria potentially conflict with others. For example, it might not be the case that a scheme which maximises the beneficial impact on the conservation area would also maximise the beneficial impact on the viability of the town or perhaps the capital receipt. The Council therefore indicated that it would attach a weighting of 50% to each of the financial and non-financial criteria.

6.6 It follows from the above, in the views of your Officers, that it is not possible to evaluate or comment on any of the schemes in a balanced way without all of the information. Putting all of the information into the public domain could enable all potential developers to revise their negotiating positions significantly to their advantage to the undoubted detriment of the Council. This detriment could manifest itself in respect of any or all parts of the evaluation criteria. Disclosure could also make negotiations more protracted and significantly more complex. For these reasons, requests for disclosure (including partial disclosure) have been refused.

7.0 **Evaluation**

7.1 Decisions relating to the future of the Old Gaol are Executive functions as defined by the Local Government Act 2000. This means that the Executive alone may and must take the decisions – it cannot be referred to another member body or to the full Council for decision. All decisions to date have been taken by the full Executive. The selection of a preferred developer is being put to this meeting of the full Executive.

7.2 The process of selection is inevitably complex. The Leader of the Council is the Executive Member leading on the Old Gaol project and he has had in place a cross-party Old Gaol Advisory Group which has met informally throughout this process to give advice both to him and the Officers.

7.3 Each developer in stage 2 has taken the opportunity to give a private briefing on its individual scheme which was open for attendance by all members of the Council.

7.4 Officers have liaised with each developer to seek clarification on a series of detailed questions and have evaluated the schemes based on the criteria set out in the detailed Planning and Marketing and Development Briefs and summarised above. The Officers' evaluation for each scheme against each criterion is contained in the confidential section of this report. The Officers have also assessed the risks associated with each scheme and their assessment of these risks is also contained in the confidential section of the report.

7.5 There is a Council meeting between the publication of this report and the meeting of the Executive at which Council might, but is not required to, offer its advice to the Executive.

7.6 As part of the tender process developers were required to consult statutory bodies which would be asked for an opinion in the event that their scheme were submitted as a planning application. These bodies are the Environment Agency (principally flooding issues), English Heritage (conservation issues) and Oxfordshire County Council (highways issues). Officers have also sought the views of these agencies on each scheme and these views are summarised in the confidential section of this report.

7.7 The Council's property consultants of 27 years are Angermann Goddard and Loyd based in London (AGL). Roger Serginson is the Director responsible for business with this Council and his assessment of the schemes, and his advice on the issue of confidentiality, are also in the confidential section of this report.

8.0 **Decisions required of the Executive**

8.1 There are a number of decisions now required of the Executive.

8.2 The Executive must first satisfy itself that it has sufficient and clear information on which to take its decisions. On that basis it is recommended to select a preferred development partner and to authorise the Chief Executive to negotiate a Development Agreement with that company based on the scheme submitted to the Council. The Executive will need to record the reasons for its selection.

8.3 All of the subsequent decisions assume that a preferred developer has been selected.

8.4 The Executive may wish to give guidance to the Chief Executive on any particular aspects it would wish to see explored in the discussions on the Development Agreement. The Agreement itself is a technical and legal document on which expert advice will be obtained but it is possible to explore a limited number of minor variations to the preferred scheme within those discussions. In formulating any such requests to the Officers, the Executive should bear in mind that any such variation could impact on one or more of the evaluation criteria. Such variations must not in aggregate have the effect of changing the scheme significantly or the overall result and justification for the selection.

8.5 The Executive is recommended to select a reserve scheme, together with reasons. This developer would be informed that it was in second place and that, should negotiations with the preferred developer founder, the Council may seek to open negotiations with that company on the basis of that company's scheme. The Executive should acknowledge that there would be no obligation on that company to enter any such negotiations should the request be made.

8.6 The Executive is recommended to determine its position on the remaining schemes. These could be held in reserve in which case an order of preference should be determined, together with reasons. Alternatively, they could be eliminated in which case the Executive would need to record its reasons. Any reserve schemes would be treated in the same way as set out in the paragraph above. Any companies eliminated at this stage would be entitled to receive an explanation either or both in writing and in a meeting.

8.7 The Executive is recommended to determine its position in respect of Harcourt Way. This site is available to developers for the construction of 14 affordable housing units to the Council's specification. Any scheme on the Old Gaol site which contains 15 or more residential units is required to provide 40% of the total units as affordable housing. This is in accordance with the adopted Local Plan. To enable comparison on a like for like basis, each scheme was required to make a financial offer that included the provision of these affordable units, regardless of whether they were needed within that company's scheme. Officer advice on this aspect of the development brief is contained within the confidential part of this report.

8.8 The Executive will need to consider the financial consequences of its decision in respect of a preferred developer. The Executive is entitled to select any compliant scheme as

the preferred option and it is not obliged necessarily to accept the best financial offer. The Executive will, however, need to consider the financial consequences of its decision in recommending a budget to the Council in February 2008.

- 8.9 The Executive will need to determine what, if anything, to put into the public domain in respect of the decisions it makes. In so doing, the Officers would advise that it should not disclose information that may give commercial advantage to any of the companies remaining in the process.
- 8.10 The Executive will need to determine what, if any, consultation it wishes to undertake with Abingdon Town Council, COG, other groups and individuals. In making this decision the Executive may wish to bear in mind both the history of previous consultations and the merit of new consultation, especially if some information remains confidential to the Council.
- 8.11 The Executive will be recommended to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Leader of the Opposition, to negotiate and conclude any agreements needed to proceed to unconditional contract with the preferred developer.

TERRY STOCK
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Background Papers:

Correspondence with Abingdon Town Council
Correspondence with COG

REPORT OF THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM
TO THE EXECUTIVE
7 DECEMBER 2007

Corporate Governance Report: Second Quarter 2007/08 (to 30 September 2007)

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

1.1 The Corporate Governance Report looks at the key areas of:

- Corporate Priorities
- Best Value Performance Indicators
- Progress against Service Prioritisation Plans
- Key staffing data (sickness levels and turnover)
- Financial commentary

At its meeting on 19th November the Senior Management Team (SMT) considered the second quarter 2007/08 Business Performance Report. This is an exception report which covers all of the aspects of corporate governance contained within this report. SMT agreed the exceptions (where performance / actions are not on target) to be reported to the Executive and agreed the comments / actions which have been included in this report. The full versions of the individual reports will be still available on the Council's website. They can be accessed through the performance section of the Council and Democracy area of the website.

1.2 The contact officer for this report is Tim Sadler, Strategic Director, telephone (01235 540360). **Email address: tim.sadler@whitehorsedc.gov.uk**

2.0 Recommendation

That the Senior Management Team's Corporate Governance exception report and proposals be noted.

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

This report relates to the Council's Vision in that it supports all of its objectives and does not conflict with any Council Strategies. It supports all of the strands of the Vale Community Strategy.

4.0 Exception Reports

4.1 Corporate Priorities Report.

SMT decided that 8 actions needed to be highlighted from this report. Full details of these actions for improvement and progress against the milestones are included in Appendix A.

4.2 Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) Report.

SMT agreed that there are 11 BVPIs which should be reported to the Executive as exceptions. These are:

- Benefits: BVPIs 78a, 76d, 78b, 79a, 79bi & bii
- Waste and recycling: BVPIs 82ai & aii, 84a & b
- % invoices paid on time: BVPI 8

Full details of the performance of these indicators during the second quarter and the appropriate comments are included in Appendix B.

4.3 **Service Prioritisation Plan (SPP) Progress Report**

This enables SMT to track progress against all of the 24 SPPs included in the 2007/8 budget. Work on all of the SPPs was either ontrack or complete. There are no specific issues which need to be considered by the Executive. Worked up saving targets for the longer term SPPs included in the 2007/8 Budget will be included in the 2008/9 Budget in February 2008.

4.4 **Summary of Sickness and Turnover Report**

Sickness: Sickness is down this quarter compared to the same quarter last year and also down on the first quarter of this year.

Turnover: Turnover is lower this quarter compared to the same quarter last year and also lower than the first quarter of this year.

4.5 **Financial Commentary to the end of September 2007**

The budget monitoring table attached (Appendix C) supports the reported position to Executive on 5th October that the budget is close to target with a few budget pressures which have arisen during the first six months. In the first instance, officers will be looking to see if the small over spend identified can be offset by budget virements. Where appropriate all variations to the budget have informed the budget setting process for 2008/09.

Commercial Services – projected net over spend £88,163

The apparently high projected outturn overspend in the Commercial Services budgets reflects the transfer of a current projected surplus of £63,000 from the Building Regulations Trading service to the balance sheet. Proposals have been put forward to increase the establishment and spend on projects within the Building Regulations service to reduce the surplus in future budgets.

Another key pressure area is the Mobile Homes Park. This is as a consequence of the income from the commission earned on the sale of mobile homes being significantly below target. Low numbers of mobile homes sold in the year to date has resulted in a projected underachievement of income of £60,000 in 2007/08. Under spends elsewhere in the budget have resulted in a net budget pressure of £20,000 in the current year.

A further budget pressure of £24,000 has resulted from flooding costs which fall outside the Bellwyn funding scheme.

Contracts and Procurement – projected net over spend £33,466

The projected over spend is comprised of a number of budget over and under spends.

	£'000
Guildhall - loss of income as reduced use of meeting rooms by the Council not replaced from other sources.	25
Recycling – less than anticipated income from brown bins	35
Abandoned vehicles - reduced numbers resulting in a net saving	(15)
Bulky items - reduced collections resulting in a net saving	(21)
Horticultural services - savings from yellow pages have been re-profiled into 2008/09 budget.	16
Other over and under spends	(7)

The majority of budgets in this service are targeted to breakeven at year end.

Democratic Services – projected under spend (£24,562)

The projected year end under spend is as a consequence of small under spends in salaries on committee management and electoral registration and the members' services and allowances budgets.

Environmental Services – projected over spend £5,000

A small over spend against salaries in the licensing service has been offset by an increase in income. A small overspend in the Air Environment service of £5,000 has arisen as a consequence of a reduction in budgeted income following a reduction in fees implemented by DEFRA.

The Pest Control Service has been required to break even and is likely to make a small surplus in 2007/08. Because of the variability of demand for this service, it is currently seeking to break even over a three year period and consequently the surplus it makes in the current year is to be transferred to a balance sheet reserve to provide for the impact of reduced demand in future years.

Housing and Community Safety – projected over spend £20,892

The service is currently reporting a likely overspend of £21,000. This is all in the CCTV service. This is as a consequence of an under-recovery of income since a share of the under spend in 2006/07 is being refunded to South Oxfordshire in 2007/08.

Organisational Development and Support – projected over spend £7,890

This service is currently reporting a projected over spend against Payroll and Health & Safety budgets. Payroll salaries budget has been under pressure as a consequence of staff sickness and agency cover required. Health and Safety have made some purchases of essential equipment. No compensating under spends are currently forecast.

Planning and Community Services – projected under spend (£53,136)

The Car Parks are forecasting an over spend of £111,000 as a consequence of a reduction in income from the continuing decline in car park customer numbers at Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon. In contrast, Development Control are forecasting an over-recovery of fee income of £145,000 as a consequence of increased activity. The increased costs associated with this activity are currently funded from grant.

Ridgeway Financial Services – projected over spend £11,000

Most of the current budgets are now contract payments. There is a slight over spend forecast on Revenues and Benefits client budgets as a consequence of the staffing being at full establishment for the whole year. With regard to the Benefits payments to clients and income from Government it is unreliable to predict the remaining six months of the year on the spend data for the first six months. Information is currently being sought from Capita to provide the most up-to-date client information on which an estimate of outturn can be made.

Strategy – projected under spend (£14,690)

An under spend of £34,000 has arisen as a consequence of a long term vacancy in the post of support to the Chair of the Council.

Other budget pressures have arisen as a consequence of the transfer of staff to Capita with retained pension costs. The additional currently unfunded sum required for 2007/08 is £19,000.

Conclusion

Across all service budgets against net estimate outturn expenditure of £17.5m, the current year end variation is estimated at £53.5k. Officers will be looking to see where virements can be used to fund areas of overspending. If it appears that a year end overspend is unavoidable, the Executive will be asked to approve a supplementary estimate.

TIM SADLER
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

Background Papers:

All of the background reports detailed below can be viewed on the council's website as explained in section 1.1 of the report:

- Corporate Priorities Report
- Best Value Performance Indicator Report
- Service Prioritisation Plan Progress Report
- Summary of Sickness and Turnover Report
- Financial Commentary

Appendix A - Senior Management Team Exceptions Report

Corporate Priorities Report

2. Creating a cleaner, greener, safer and healthier community and environment

	Action for Improvement	Milestones	Timescale	Comments / Progress	Officer
2.5	GREENER Lead by example and ensure that all computers and all such non-essential electrical equipment is switched off when not in use	Initial floor assessment of all Council computers to ascertain extent of the problem Council wide campaign by ICT and Energy Team. Aim to eliminate all non essential energy use by monitors and computers	July 2007 September 2007	Completed Campaign delayed to coincide with the launch of the Climate Change Strategy in January 2008	Mark Saunders
	HEALTHIER				
2.15	Implement an Air Quality Action plan for central Abingdon and any other parts of the Vale needing special measures to secure good air quality	Further Assessment Report (incl. source apportionment) for Abingdon Consultation on draft Air Quality Action plan (AQAP) for Abingdon Finalise AQAP for Abingdon	Summer 2007 Autumn 2007 March 2008	Delayed until December 2007 due to the need to take account of County traffic data and Vale air monitoring Data post Abingdon Integrated Transport Strategy Ditto. Now expected to commence January Ditto. Now expected July 2008	David Stevens

Local Performance Indicators relevant to these priority areas

Indicator	Target 2007/08	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Comments / Progress
SAFER						
LPI EH7 % of Health Act service requests responded to in 48 hours	99%	100%	95%			Results are based on a small number (less than 10) of service request a quarter

3. Improving and modernising access to our services

	Action for Improvement	Milestones	Timescale	Comments / Progress	Officer
3.1	<p>Continue to reduce customer contact costs in accordance with Customer Contact Strategy (Source: Budget 2007/08 SPP No 20)</p> <p>Provide modern, reliable and relevant access to information and services</p> <p>Provide more local points and varied points of access through the use of technology and premises not run by the Council</p>	<p>e. Conduct a Customer Survey in Abingdon and Wantage Local Service points to establish the challenges to be overcome in successfully transferring customers, to least cost access channels.</p> <p>f. Examine future role for Faringdon Area Office and alternative methods of community access.</p> <p>g. Review success of business case for Customer Contact Strategy</p>	<p>30.07.07</p> <p>30.09.07</p> <p>30.10.07</p> <p>30.10.07</p>	<p>Survey completed</p> <p>Data has been evaluated and will be fed into the Service Standards Review being undertaken by Organisational Change Manager</p> <p>Draft Payment strategy written and to go to the Executive on 7th December 2007.</p> <p>The take up of customers onto other access channels is recorded and monitored monthly. The findings of the face-to-face survey above will form part of this review. Formal review not yet undertaken, but scheduled for April post the Accountancy review.</p>	Helen Bishop
3.2	<p>Provide better alternatives for customer payments</p> <p>Provide more local points and varied points of access through the use of technology and premises not run by the Council</p>	<p>a) Draft and get approval for Vale Payment Strategy.</p>	<p>From April 2007 until Executive 05.10.07</p>	<p>Payments Strategy written in draft and presently subject to officer consultation. To go to the Executive on 7th December 2007.</p>	Helen Bishop

Local Performance Indicators

Indicator	Target 2007/8	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Comments / Progress
<p>CS2 Number of enquiries at the Local Services Point Abingdon: Face to Face 35,000 Contact centre 17,000 Visitors 4,600 Web / self serve 2,200 payments made on the web Electronic Payments 4,500 taken by Contact Centre</p>	63,300	13242 8255 3527 1450 268 952	29126 17812 8814 2500 490 2406			<p>Less enquiries in 07/08 1st Q for Assisted Travel than in 06/07 when free bus passes introduced. In 07/08 Q2 there should be a similar peak as a result of the national bus pass scheme being introduced in 08/09 i.e. should even out</p> <p>Contact Centre showing an increase in enquiries of 38%. Since July the Contact Centre has been capturing more data for Waste Management.</p>
<p>CS11 % of calls to be answered within 20 seconds</p>	90%	82%	81%			<p>Staff shortage due to sickness & holiday coupled with server problems have affected Contact Centre response</p> <p>Call Volume considerably increased during July & August (44303 calls compared with 36271 during the same period in 2006 representing a 22% increase), this in part is due to the flooding impact and coincided with a period of high annual leave and long term sickness.</p>
<p>CS12 % of calls unanswered</p>	2%	3%	3%			<p>Staff shortage due to sickness & holiday coupled with server problems have affected Contact Centre statistics</p> <p>Call Volume considerably increased during July & August (44303 calls compared with 36271 during the same period in 2006 representing a 22% increase), this in part is due to the flooding impact and coincided with a period of high annual leave and long term sickness.</p>

4. Building our capacity through managerial & organisational development

	Action for Improvement	Milestones	Timescale	Comments / Progress	Officer
4.2	Transform HR Service into Strategic Business Partner	Review People Strategy, develop and implement action plan	August 2007	In view of the actions to develop the Strategic Partner role of HR, agreement to be obtained to review the People Strategy by 31.03.08	Tim Barnett
4.5	Administration Review	Raise corporate awareness of Central Administration and Processing Unit, particularly the position regarding filling new / vacant administration posts	August 2007	We are consolidating the operation of the new team including setting service and performance standards in consultation with service users. This is in preparation for the next stage of the administration review. All identified savings have been made.	Nikki Malin

Actions 4.6 to 4.10 have been incorporated from the CPA Improvement Plan

	Action for Improvement	Milestones	Timescale	Comment / Progress	Responsible Officer
4.9	Approach to Value for Money	Review Housing Value For Money Best Value Review and apply lessons learnt to other service users	Summer 2007	The review has been used to develop an approach to delivering and demonstrating VFM. This is now being rolled out to other service areas. It includes the use of facilitated workshops which work through a checklist to identify evidence of VFM and identify where further work and information is required.	Robert Woodside
4.10		Review in detail Economic Development and Leisure Service Areas	October 2007	Facilitated service area workshops on VFM (see 4.9) have taken place for Housing Services, Environmental Health and Economic Development. Senior Management Team will review the further roll out of VFM workshops and the Council's approach to VFM in December.	Toby Warren/ Mike Mackay

Appendix B - Best Value Performance Indicators (see section 4.2)

Key: N/a = Not Applicable

Top and Bottom quartile data is against all England Authorities

Trend arrows: compares first quarter performance 2007-8 with the second quarter (not possible for all BVPIs)

Quartile 06/07 column: actual 06/07

against 05/06 quartile performance data

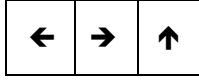
T = top; B = bottom; M = middle quartile



Red - worse than target

Yellow - on target

Green - better than target



BVPI	Indicator Description	Tgt / Ind	TQ 05/06	BQ 05/06	Actual 06/07	Quartile 06/07	Target 07/08	Actual Q1	Actual Q2	Q3	Q4	on/off Tgt	Comments	Trend
Affordable Housing Priority														
78a	Average time for processing new claims	T	26.4	39.1	29.77	M	28	43.26	38.74	0	0		The "annual" target will not be achieved. Capita has issued a plan showing expected rate of improvement and "in month" performance should be at top quartile by January 08.	↑
Cleaner, Greener, Healthier and Safer Priority														
82ai	% of household waste recycled	T	20.87	14.22	22.81	T	25.00	22.47	22.55	0	0		This needs to be read in conjunction with 82bii as the County Local Area Agreement target is the total of both, which puts us into green. Target for 2008/09 will be combined	↑
82aii	Total tonnage of waste recycled	T	15126	6086	9689	M	10750	2494	4935	0	0		Slightly below target due to 8% unexplained reduction in Sept	↓
82bi	% of household waste composted	T	13.05	3.54	6.3	M	6.00	10.17	10.44	0	0		Continued expansion of Brown Bin service has produced higher tonnages. Combined with a reduction in waste arising this has also produced a higher percentage composted.	↑

BVPI	Indicator Description	Tgt / Ind	TQ 05/06	BQ 05/06	Actual 06/07	Quarter 06/07	Target 07/08	Actual Q1	Actual Q2	Q3	Q4	on/off Tgt	Comments	Trend
82bii	Total tonnage of waste composted	T	8770	1802	2665	M	3750	1128	2285	0	0		See 82bi	↑
84a	Household waste collected (Kg per head of population)	I	393	478	366	T	369	94.9	187	0	0		Worse than target due to high growth in green waste. Unlikely to achieve target but still low in comparison with other Oxon authorities	↑
84b	% change (from previous year) in the waste collected (KG per head per annum)	T	-3.74	1.31	4.2	B	1.20	3.04	1.47	0	0		See 84a	↑
8	% Invoices paid on time	T	96.71	89.24	94.76	M	95.94	84.08	68.08	0	0		Poor performance is linked to the Agresso implementation. The Council and Capita are working to resolve the problems but the annual target will not be achieved. Current outturn prediction is 80%.	↓
76d	Benefit security - no of prosecutions per 1000 cases	T	0	0	11		12	2.42	4.53	0	0		Currently below target. However, as there are a number of sanctions and prosecutions pending it is felt the year end target (12) will still be achieved.	↓
78b	Average time for processing changes of circumstances	T	9.1	18.8	6.45	T	6.8	21.32	18.23	0	0		The "annual" target will not be achieved. Capita has issued a plan showing expected rate of improvement and "in month" performance should be at top quartile by February 08.	↑

BVPI	Indicator Description	Tgt / Ind	TQ 05/06	BQ 05/06	Actual 06/07	Quarter 06/07	Target 07/08	Actual Q1	Actual Q2	Q3	Q4	on/off Tgt	Comments	Trend
79a	% of cases where calculation was correct	T	99	96.6	88	B	99	91	91.1	0	0		Whilst accuracy remains a key focus and, Capita has appointed a supervisor to identify key trends for improvement, the annual target will not be achieved. Current outturn prediction is 92%.	↑
79b(i)	% of overpayments recovered as a % of Housing Benefit deemed recoverable	T	79.39	58.98	81.2	T	87	94.92	56.03	0	0		It is unlikely that the target will be achieved. Capita's working practices for recovering overpayments is going through change and an outturn prediction will be given in the Q3 report.	↑
79b(ii)	% overpayments recovered during the period including overpayments identified during the period	I	39.69	27.35	37.63	M	42	9.75	18.25	0	0		Performance to date is 18.25% and it is unlikely that the target will be achieved. Capita's working practices for recovering overpayments is going through change and an outturn prediction will be given in the Q3 report.	↑

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2007/08 - September 2007

	1	2	3	4	2007/08	2007/08	2007/08	2007/08	2007/08	2007/08	2007/08
	Original Budget	OB Full Year (inc Budget Changes)	Working Budget Full Year	Profiled Working Budget to Month 6	Actuals to Month 6	Commitments	Variance £ From Profiled Working Budget	Estimated Outturn	Outturn Variance from Working Budget	2007/08	2007/08
Service Costs											
Commercial Services	1,044,520	1,048,940	934,830	418,003	313,778	97,246	(6,979)	1,022,993	88,163		
Contracts & Procurement	6,631,070	6,497,120	6,477,120	2,329,325	2,181,398	45,213	(102,714)	6,510,586	33,466		
Democratic Services			1,245,880	424,290	468,539		44,249	1,221,318	(24,562)		
Environmental Health	1,155,670	1,163,510	1,153,040	391,140	338,168	4,709	(48,263)	1,158,040	5,000		
Housing & Community Safety	1,556,720	1,712,050	1,709,590	6,995	184,913	10,495	188,413	1,730,482	20,892		
Legal Services	964,780	1,043,640	(208,260)	11,805	(11,263)	201	(22,867)	(208,260)	0		
Organisational Development & Support	116,330	438,470	493,330	1,453,025	1,182,637	33,845	(236,543)	501,220	7,890		
Planning & Community Strategy	2,285,430	2,028,770	2,031,610	511,361	364,898	20,003	(126,460)	1,978,474	(53,136)		
Highway - financial services	2,092,630	2,331,160	2,351,400	1,194,560	677,335	1,249	(515,976)	2,362,400	11,000		
Strategy (Chief Executive)	55,970	55,670	55,670	22,250	1,352	0	(20,898)	21,980	(33,690)		
Strategy (SB)	1,155,100	981,920	945,610	310,221	162,237	0	(147,984)	964,610	19,000		
Strategy (TS)	8,230	7,380	7,250	6,945	4,109	0	(2,836)	7,250	0		
Contingency	274,300	177,300	288,860	0	0	0	0	288,860	0		
Service investment & other budget changes	511,980	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
2007 Service Prioritisation Plans	(366,800)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Total service costs	17,485,930	17,485,930	17,485,930	7,079,920	5,868,101	212,961	(998,858)	17,559,953	74,023		
Investment Income	(1,482,300)	(1,482,300)	(1,482,300)	(741,150)	(169,426)	0	571,724	(1,502,800)	(20,500)		
Property Income	(1,990,700)	(1,990,700)	(1,990,700)	(995,350)	(838,400)	0	156,950	(1,990,700)	0		
Total service costs and funding income	14,012,930	14,012,930	14,012,930	5,343,420	4,860,275	212,961	(270,184)	14,066,453	53,523		

Notes

- 1 Original Budget as approved by Council 22 February 2007
- 2 Original Budget after allocation of Budget changes and Service Prioritisation Plans
- 3 Budget showing effects of Virements
- 4 Working Budget profiled to reflect expected pattern of expenditure

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY)
TO THE EXECUTIVE
7 DECEMBER 2007

Climate Change Strategy

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 The Executive will be aware that the production of a Climate Change Strategy and associated action plan was a Service priority for the Council this year.
- 1.2 This report introduces the Climate Change Strategy for the Council and discusses two important decision points, these being:
- The scope of the Council's approach to climate change
 - The methodology that the Council could use to deliver the Strategy
- 1.3 The Strategy is attached at appendix A of this report.
- 1.4 The contact officers for this report are Paul Staines, Deputy Director (Housing and Community Safety), telephone 01235 547621, e-mail address paul.staines@whitehorsedc.co.uk and Mark Saunders, Principal Energy Officer, telephone 01235 547603, e-mail address mark.saunders@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

2.0 Recommendations

- (a) *The Executive approve the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan attached as an appendix to this report*
- (b) *The Executive approve the adoption of a Council-wide approach to addressing the issue of climate change*
- (c) *The Executive agree, as part of its budget considerations for 2008-9, to consider the resource implications of the Action Plan*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

- 3.1 This report relates to the Council's Vision in that it supports objectives A, D, E, F and G.
- 3.2 The report proposes the adoption of a new strategy for the Council to address climate change.
- 3.3 The issues raised in this report are also relevant to the following strands of the Vale Community Strategy:
- Environment
 - Housing
 - Recreation, Culture and Leisure
 - Transport
 - Community

4.0 The Climate Change Strategy

- 4.1 The Executive will be aware that recent developments in national and regional policy are placing increasing significance on climate change.
- 4.2 The Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006 (section 3) includes a duty on Councils to “have regard” to Government guidance on sustainable energy, called Energy Measures Reports when “exercising their functions”. This came into effect in August 2006.
- 4.3 In addition, the new Local Authority Performance Framework includes climate change indicators. These relate to measuring reductions in carbon emissions, both from the local authority estate and the wider local community as well as indicators on climate change adaptation. Although not mandatory, these could be included in the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement.
- 4.4 In addition, from a Council perspective, the issue of climate change is a clear manifesto commitment of the ruling group and a service priority for the Council.
- 4.5 To date, the Council has focused its climate change efforts on energy saving in the domestic sector under the obligations of the Home Energy Conservation Act 1996.
- 4.6 In May of 2007, however, the Council signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. In signing the Declaration, the Council acknowledges that it needs to address this issue in two ways, these being:
- How its own operations contribute towards carbon emissions.
 - How it can, in its capacity as community leader and place shaper, address the issue within the wider community of the Vale.
- 4.7 Officers believe that a sensible approach to this issue would be to focus on the Council’s own operations in the first instance before leading on a District-wide effort to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. As a consequence, the Climate Change Strategy, at this stage, relates only to Council operations that are either affected by climate change or contribute to it.
- 4.8 The process of developing the Strategy began in May, after the Council signed the Nottingham Declaration. The Council used the services of the Thames Valley Energy Centre to do a scoping review of what the Council could include in its Climate Change Strategy. This involved interviews with Members, senior managers and other key staff.
- 4.9 Their report made a number of service specific recommendations but also included key corporate recommendations.
- 4.10 Following its completion, the review report was presented to the Strategic Review Committee. The Committee also considered and endorsed a corporate approach to tackling climate change and made two specific resolutions, these are;
1. That the contract specification for all Council services, including those to be outsourced, be drafted so that climate change issues are given due consideration in the delivery of those services.

2. That in respect of the key corporate recommendations of the review report, a further recommendation be added, as follows:- The Council will have regard to best practice through discussions with its benchmarking partners and Beacon Councils in developing a Climate Change Strategy.

4.11 Subsequent to this resolution, officers have refined the Strategy to take account of Member's views and the findings of the scoping study.

4.12 The Strategy now focuses upon the carbon footprint of the Council's own operations and functions.

4.13 The corporate approach of the Strategy, however, means that its impact will be material and every service area will be affected in some way by the Council's efforts to reduce CO² emissions and adapt to climate change.

5.0 The Implementation of the Strategy

5.1 Having formed a view on the scope of the Council's Climate Change Strategy, it is necessary to consider its implementation and the resource implications of this.

5.2 Officers consider that the Council has a choice of two methodologies that the implementation of the Strategy could take, they are;

- Adopt an ad hoc approach built around a few key actions
- Adopt a strategic Council-wide approach

5.3 Option 1 would see the Council hone in on a few key actions designed to maximise impact.

5.4 Option 2 would require the Council to follow a much wider approach that would need to be planned and appropriately resourced.

5.5 Officers have reflected upon these methodologies and recommend to the Executive that option 2 would be the most appropriate, this is because;

- a) Such an approach will result in a higher profile for the Council in an area of public concern, in contrast an ad hoc approach makes it difficult to position climate change as a corporate priority and demonstrate community leadership on addressing this issue.
- b) It will ensure better environmental performance across many areas of the Council such as the Green Travel Plan, planning policy and sustainable procurement.
- c) It will, in the longer term, deliver greater emissions reductions and cost savings.

5.6 Officers are also minded that the higher profile of climate change will result in, for example, it being a likely LAA target in the new Oxfordshire Community Strategy; central to achievement of our contribution to this will be the implementation of a Council-wide carbon management programme that would be difficult to implement in the option 1 approach.

5.7 Officers, therefore, recommend the Executive choose option 2.

6.0 Resource implications

6.1 If members are minded to accept this approach then it will be necessary to consider the resource implications.

6.2 For reasons discussed earlier, the actions detailed in the Strategy focus on areas where the Council has complete control over its own operation or can influence the actions of others. Most of the actions can be implemented within existing budgets. However, two actions require additional staff posts equivalent to 1.5 full time equivalent posts, this is due to both a lack of expertise and capacity. The posts are as follows.

- One full time post to manage the Council's carbon reduction programme – this would be responsible for developing and implementing a range of measures for all Council buildings and facilities including leisure centres. In addition to reducing carbon emissions, these measures would also reduce energy consumption and associated costs. Evidence suggests that carbon reduction 'invest to save' measures normally operate on a pay back period of 5 years.
- One ½ time post to develop, implement, and subsequently check compliance with Council planning policy related to reducing CO² emissions.

6.3 Officers consider these two posts to be critical to the Council, both reducing its own carbon emissions and using its powers effectively to influence the actions of others. External consultancy has been considered but, the cost allied with the requirement for client officer time and expertise makes this problematic.

6.4 Officers consider that to not establish the posts would result in a strategy that would only tackle reducing emissions at the margins rather than across the organisation.

6.5 Accordingly, the Executive is asked to acknowledge the resource implications and agree to their consideration as part of the 2008-9 budget process.

7.0 **Options**

7.1 The Executive will have noted that the Council's duties towards climate change are limited, at present, to:

- Home Energy Conservation Act: to achieve a 2% reduction in CO₂ emissions annually
- Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006: A general duty to have regard to climate change issues in the exercise of its functions.

And, at present, the Council is not required to address climate change any further.

7.2 The Council could therefore opt to not adopt the Strategy, instead asking officers to exercise regard to climate change issues within existing service priorities and budgets.

7.3 Alternatively, the Council can adopt the Strategy, appropriately resourced, as a response to the issue of climate change.

7.4 Officers consider the draft Strategy to be an appropriate and proportionate response to the issue of climate change that meets the Council's service commitments and would ensure that the issue, should it be enshrined as a target in the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement, is a commitment that the Council could meet.

8.0 **Risk assessment**

8.1 The risks to the Council of adopting the Strategy are;
Financial - the Strategy will require appropriate resourcing to be effectively implemented.

8.2 The risks to the Council of not adopting the Strategy are;

Reputational

- The Council has signed the Nottingham Declaration on climate change and has therefore made a public declaration of its commitment to the issue. The Strategy is an appropriate enunciation of this commitment.
- The issue of climate Change is an emerging priority in the evolving local government performance framework and in the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement and the Council would be wise to recognise this in its service planning.

8.3 The strategy itself is an ambitious documents that sets a high bar for the council in terms of delivery of the key actions. However the Council is also aware that it first needs to establish the ability to measure its carbon footprint before moving to reduce it.

8.4 For this reason the adoption of the strategy contains a risk that the Council may not be able to deliver to such a challenging agenda, either because it is unable to commit the required resources or because it discovers that the benchmark for carbon emission reduction it establishes in year one of the strategy is a more challenging target than first thought.

9.0 Equality and Diversity

9.1 The implementation of the Strategy will affect all staff. At this stage it is not possible to know whether some staff or groups of staff will suffer a negative impact that cannot be justified. A key aspect of the Strategy will be to ensure staff are not alienated by the actions required and are, on the contrary, supportive of Council attempts to reduce its environmental impact.

9.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment for the Climate Change Strategy has not yet been carried out. This will be done prior to implementation in April 2008.

10.0 Conclusions

10.1 This report introduces the Council's Climate Change Strategy and discusses how the Strategy might be implemented.

10.2 Officers recommend that the Council adopt a corporate approach to climate change and this report sets out the resource implications of this approach.

10.3 Officers also recommend that the Council's approach be centred upon its own activities in the first instance, and seek to build on this success by developing the Council's role as community leader for climate change issues in future years.

PAUL STAINES
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY)

TIM SADLER
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR



Vale of White Horse District Council Climate Change Strategy 2008 – 2010 and beyond

Vale of White Horse District Council Draft Climate Change Strategy

Foreword by Councillor Mary De Vere

Climate Change is one of the most important influences facing society. Events similar to the 2007 floods in the district are expected to occur more frequently in the future.

Knowing what we do now about our effect on the climate, it is no longer possible to just hope that everything will be all right. The effects of climate change are already being felt, we need to act now not only to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases but also to adapt to the climate as it changes.

To this end I am pleased that the Council has produced its first Climate Change Strategy. The Council will focus its efforts initially on its own operations and on those areas where it has powers that can be used to influence the actions of others. Leading by example is a key aspect of the Council's future climate change plans.

The Council will establish a series of indicators which can be used to monitor progress. These will be reported annually to ensure the Council's policies are making a difference.

Vale of White Horse District Council Draft Climate Change Strategy

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Introduction

This Climate Change Strategy sets out a framework for action by the Council over the next three years to tackle the causes and effects of climate change. The Council plans to implement a range of measures over the coming years which will reduce the amount of greenhouse gas it produces directly and indirectly from its operations. The plan also contains actions to ensure Council services and infrastructure are resilient to future weather related events and that Council services are responsive to change. Through the powers the Council has it can also influence other organisations and individuals to reduce emissions and plan for the effects of climate change. This strategy is the beginning of a long term plan to drastically reduce emissions by 2050, as such these early years focus on developing the Council's capacity to deliver in the longer term.

The strategy focuses on those areas where the Council has either direct control via its operations and activities on greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation responses or has the ability to influence others through the services it provides. The Council acknowledges that there is a higher cost to saving carbon dioxide (CO₂) via our own operations than through using our influence and enforcement powers to save CO₂ in the wider community. This strategy aims to strike a balance between community leadership and cost effective internal CO₂ savings.

The Council aims to "get its own house in order" before tackling areas where it has limited influence. We will also be working with the Vale Partnership to ensure that the Community Strategy addresses climate change and that members of the partnership also have similar plans in place.

In March 2007 the Council signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. In signing the declaration the Council;

- acknowledged that climate change is happening and will have profound impacts,
- has made a commitment to addressing climate change at a local level via the implementation of this strategy which it will publicly declare and regularly monitor,
- will encourage all sectors of the local community to follow the Council's example, and
- will work with our partners and local communities to develop plans to address the causes and effects of climate change according to local priorities.

The strategy addresses each of the Council's main functions and sets out an agreed programme of action which will be reviewed and updated annually as part of the Council's performance management process.

Aims and Objectives of the Strategy

Aims

Tackle the Causes of Climate Change

Reduce the amount of greenhouse gases arising either directly or indirectly from the Council's operations and to use our local authority powers where possible to influence the actions of others.

Deal With the Effects of Climate Change

Adopt an approach to service delivery and Council operations which takes account of the predicted changes in climate and to use our local authority powers where possible to influence others to adapt to climate change.

Objectives

1. To reduce greenhouse gas emissions which are a direct result of Council operations. Targets – long-term target to reduce emissions by 60% of baseline position by 2050. A short-term interim target to reduce emissions by 2010 / 2012 can only be calculated once a baseline assessment has been carried out. The baseline assessment will be part of the Council's carbon management programme.
2. To adapt Council services and operations to climate change. Target – measures implemented by the Council to adapt to climate change should ensure that the Council is in the top 25% of local authorities for this indicator.
3. To use the Council's powers and influence get residents and other organisations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. Target – to deliver through the Vale Partnership district wide emissions reductions of 60% by 2050. Short term target to be set after further assessment.
4. To monitor, review and communicate the Climate Change Action Plan.

How Will The Climate Change Strategy Be Implemented?

This strategy is supported by a list of actions, the implementation of which will be the responsibility of key officers across the authority with overall co-ordination being led by the Council's Principal Energy Officer. The actions that flow from this strategy will be built into the organisation's development programme, individual plans for each service and into the Council's performance management / corporate governance structure. Where appropriate the review of Council strategies and policies should take account of policies and actions in this strategy.

The strategy is dependent upon robust monitoring procedures being put in place to capture data on resource use and resultant CO₂ emissions. It is only with such data that informed decisions can be made about the best approach to take to reduce emissions in the most economic way. There are therefore some areas in the strategy which cannot be progressed without prior monitoring data being collected. To ensure all actions are progressed the Council will establish a cross departmental Climate Change Team which will be responsible to delivery of the action plan across the Council. A Climate Change Project Board will also be established to challenge the Climate Change Team to ensure the strategy delivers its stated objectives.

The Council has prioritised actions on the following basis. Each action in the plan below is colour coded indicating its relative priority.

	Council has full control	Council has high level of influence	Council has some influence
Can be progressed quickly or already in place or ongoing			
Can be progressed quickly but requires prior investigation			
Not urgent or requires considerable investigation prior to implementation.			

	within 1 year
	within 2 years
	within 3 years

The table below shows how many parts of the Council are affected by climate change.

	<p>Council as Corporate Manager</p> <p>Council can control activity</p> <p>Objectives 1, 2 and 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property and Estates - Council's energy, waste and water use including contracted services • Contracts and Procurement • Transport (Green Travel Plan) • Organisational Development • Finance 	<p>Council as Service Provider and Community Leader</p> <p>Council can influence activity</p> <p>Objectives 3 and 4</p>
<p>Mitigation</p> <p>Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Strategy and Development Control • Community Strategy – Vale Partnership • Building Control • Housing Services • Environmental Health • Waste Management 	
<p>Adaptation</p> <p>Manage the impact / risks of climate change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency planning and Business Continuity • Parks and Landscape Services • Property and Estates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Strategy and Development Control • Building Control • Vale Partnership • Parks and Landscape Services.

What the Council Plans to Do

Key Actions and Targets

The successful implementation of this strategy is dependent on the key actions set out below.

- All Council policies and strategies to take account of mitigation and adaptation responses when they are being reviewed. This will require an appraisal to be made of these strategies and policies.
- The Council will establish a cross cutting climate change team to help deliver the strategy and ensure it is integrated in to the day to day operations of the Council. A project board will also be established to ensure the strategy delivers on its stated objectives.
- Deputy Director Housing and Community Safety will have overall responsibility for the delivery of this strategy. Operational coordination will be handled by the Principal Energy Officer.
- Key elements of the Action Plan will be integrated into the Council's performance management framework. Accurate monitoring and the establishment of a baseline carbon footprint are critical to the Council being able to know if its actions are effective in meeting agreed targets. It is intended that targets for emissions reductions will be in line with those set out in the UK Climate Change Strategy i.e. 60% below 1990 baseline (or as best as can be calculated) levels by 2050 . A short-term interim target to reduce emissions by 2010 / 2012 can only be calculated once a baseline assessment has been carried out. The baseline assessment will be part of the Council's carbon management programme.
- Develop a Carbon Management Plan for the Council and aim to implement by 2009. **This will be the main mechanism by which the Council will reduce its own CO₂ emissions. Monitored via new performance framework indicator NI185.**
- The Council's Communications Team will work with the Climate Change Team to involve staff and properly communicate what the Climate Change Strategy means in a way that is engaging and provokes positive action by staff.
- Carry out a Local Climate Impacts Profile to assess climate change impacts in the Council. **This will identify and prioritise those operations and services most at risk from climate change. Monitored via new performance framework NI188.**
- Implement and enforce new standards for sustainability in new housing.

What the Council Plans to Do

Objective 1 To reduce greenhouse gas emissions which are a direct result of the council's operations and where the Council has complete control. Procurement

When purchasing goods and services the procurement decisions taken by the Council can have an impact on greenhouse gas emissions. By using its considerable purchasing power the Council can purchase goods and services that have minimal impact on the environment. The Council can also ensure its suppliers adopt practices which do not run counter to our own efforts to cut emissions.

Action	Timescale Priority	Comments	Costs	Responsibility
Adopt a new Procurement Strategy for the Council ensuring it follows best practice in reducing CO ₂ .	2008	Procurement strategy operational early 2008.	Already budgeted	Contracts & Procurement
Provide appropriate staff training to ensure climate change policies derived from the new procurement strategy are followed.	Throughout 2008	As per Procurement Strategy training already budgeted for.	Already budgeted	Contracts & Procurement
Implement a programme to ensure impacts on the Council's carbon footprint are considered for major purchases. This will apply in the following order of priority over three years. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> All large service contracts (initially in improvement plans and then in new contracts) Major commodity procurement decisions such as ICT equipment. All remaining procurement decisions. 	2009 and ongoing	Research and negotiate changes to contracts or improvement plans. This can be done as part of the contract preparation process. Possible additional contract costs associated with additional requirements are unknown.	5 days per year for 2009 and 2010 £1,000 per year	Contracts & Procurement
Utilise the Contracts and Procurement Forum to develop workable solutions to sustainable procurement.	2008 and ongoing	Contracts and Procurement Forum will be made up of relevant Council officers.	No additional cost	Contracts & Procurement

Transport

Transport within the district is a major source of CO₂ emissions. This strategy acknowledges that the only way this can be tackled is through partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and through working with the local community. Other than through car parking in the district's town centres the Council has only limited opportunities to directly influence travel choice in the wider community. Reducing road transport emissions from its own operations is something the Council has some control over.

In 2006 the Council introduced its own Green Travel Plan for Council staff. Measures such as car sharing, encouraging cycling and home working are designed to reduce the commuting mileage of Council staff. The Green Travel Plan is an integral part of the Council's Climate Change Strategy as such it will be reviewed so that it can more effectively facilitate a reduction in Council's travel based emissions.

Action	Timescale Priority	Comments	Costs	Responsibility
Establish monitoring procedures for all road transport relating to the Council's operations (including contracted out services and business mileage), to include fuel consumption data where applicable.	By April 2008	½ day per month staff time required to collate this information if this cannot be done electronically. This requirement needs to go into contract improvement plans and new contracts.	No additional cost or up to £1,600.	Organisational Development (HR for business mileage) Client officers for contractor mileage
In a future review of the Green Travel Plan it will be assessed for how effectively it contributes to climate change objectives including addressing the impact of business mileage on behalf of the Council, staff car park allocations to avoid Council travel contributing to traffic congestion in Abingdon and how the revised plan can be communicated to staff.	2008	Review of Green Travel Plan in 07/08 Identified measures may have some cost associated. Travel Plan budget may require some further funds to cover car share scheme administration.	£1,000	Planning Services / Climate Change Team

<p>Car Parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate how parking charges in Council operated car parks can be structured to encourage more effective use of cars and more use of public transport. Linked to review of fees and charges. 	<p>By end 2009</p>	<p>Some staff time to research best practice from other authorities and if appropriate prepare new policies and procedures.</p>	<p>£600</p>	<p>Planning Services (Car Parks)</p>
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Council Energy, Water and Waste

The Council considers it important that it tries to reduce energy use associated with its own buildings and activities as a demonstration of its commitment to tackling climate change. The new National Performance Framework will now expect Local Authorities to reduce CO₂ from their own operations, this is likely to include contracted out services such as leisure and waste collection as well as local authority buildings. Cutting energy use will enable the Council to reduce its carbon footprint. This can only be done with proper monitoring of energy consumption and a programme of energy saving investments and behavioural change amongst staff. Currently, due to a lack of staff resource, the Council only has very limited programme of energy monitoring in place. The strategy seeks to make energy monitoring a high and properly resourced priority. As part of the legislation to comply with the European Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, Communities and Local Government (CLG) have recently announced that all public buildings over 1,000m² will need to prominently display a Display Energy Certificate (DEC) by 1 October 2008.

Climate change is likely to increase pressure on water resources. It is often overlooked that water use also results in CO₂ emissions due the energy used to pump and purify water. The Council will attempt to reduce water usage through the implementation of a water management plan this will apply to leisure centres even though they are not under the direct management of the Council.

The Council generates a substantial amount of waste from its own activities and could reduce both waste and associated costs by following the waste hierarchy - reduce, reuse recycle. Currently the Council has a limited programme of recycling in its buildings with plans to roll out a more comprehensive programme in 2008.

To tackle energy, water and waste from Council operations will require the Council to implement a Carbon Management Programme and set up a fund to pay for any capital investment required under the programme.

Action	Timescale Priority	Comments	Costs	Responsibility
Collect energy, water and waste data for all facilities and ensure monitoring mechanisms are in place and that the Council has access to information. Audits may be required in some cases.	Early 2008	As soon as possible for those facilities where energy, water and waste is not monitored. Some staff time required to do this where it is currently not done – 8 days per year.	£1,600	Property & Estates, client officers and Waste Team
Using available data develop and a carbon management plan for the Council. Plan to be in place by end 2008. Implementation will follow once the plan is complete and budget is in place to fund identified measures. Targets to be set for the reduction in CO ₂ emissions associated with the Council's resource use. Work with sports / civic centre managers to implement site specific energy, water and waste management plans.	By end 2008 Implement Beginning 2009	There is currently no capacity in the Council to develop or implement a carbon management plan. This is critical to the Council reducing emissions which will be monitored via NI185 of the New Performance Framework. Recycling pilot in west wing to be complete by end of 2007. To be rolled out to whole Council. Initial work already carried out by SOL in conjunction with client officer and Vale Energy Team.	Cost to develop Carbon Mgmt plan assumed to be about £8,000 consultants fees New Carbon Mgmt post costed at £40,000 py for three years initially.	Property & Estates / Contracts & Procurement / Housing & Community Safety Positioning of the Carbon Mgmt role is undecided
Establish a revolving fund to be used to invest in CO ₂ saving technology. The savings made to be reinvested into the fund.	For April 2009	The carbon management plan will identify the level of capital investment required. It is envisaged that the value of savings will make any	Unknown until end 2008 This may be as high	Positioning of the Carbon Mgmt role is undecided

			investment cost neutral within 5 years.	as £450,000 over 4 years	
Once baseline consumption data has been established initiate an energy efficiency and climate change awareness programme for all staff to include the following elements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switch off campaign for monitors etc • Lighting and heating • Business Travel and Commuting • Council waste minimisation and recycling Include Council climate change work in induction programme for staff.	End 2008	ICT already monitors the number of computer monitors left on. Staff time to run campaign + promotional costs.	£5,000 for all PR associated with the strategy.	Organisational Development and Support (HR and Communications Team)	
Purchase electricity on a renewable energy tariff which will fund the development of more renewable energy capacity. This will need to be progressed via the Council's Procurement Strategy.	2008	This could be done a rolling basis as contracts are renewed. This should be possible for no additional cost through the Office of Government Contracts.	No additional cost		Property and Estates / Contracts & Procurement
Where the Council is the land owner or developer it will strive to meet exemplary standards against the Code for Sustainable Homes. Up until 2010 this will mean building to code level 4 or above.	2009	This may require the Council to make a formal decision to set a threshold for reduced land values as a result of increased costs associated with developing to higher environmental standards.	Unknown and will depend on individual cases.		Property & Estates

What the Council Plans to Do

Objective 2 To adapt Council services and operations to climate change where the Council has complete control.

Emergency Planning and Business Continuity

The Council has duty to coordinate civil defence in the case of certain emergencies. Many emergencies that require an emergency plan to be enacted are weather related. The UK Climate Impacts Programme predicts that extreme weather events of the type that would require the Council to enact emergency plan procedures will be more frequent in the future. The Council therefore recognises the need to be prepared for a range of weather related emergencies.

Action	Timescale Priority	Comments	Costs	Responsibility
Undertake a Local Climate Impacts Assessment (LCLIP) to determine future weather related risks to the Council. Ensure results are considered in future decisions.	By end 2008	Some work already ongoing with July flood review which could feed into LCLIP. Officer time (20 days) key component of this work. <i>This is central to informing Council of required adaptation measures.</i>	£3,000	Climate Change Team
Review emergency planning procedures. Ensure the Council has adequate flood, heat wave and drought plans in place.	2008/09	Re-write of emergency plan currently taking place. Future revisions may be required as better risk data becomes available.	£3,000	Commercial Services (Emergency Planning)
Ensure that at the next review of the Business Continuity Plan that climate change impacts are recognised i.e. flooding and failed transport infrastructure will have an impact on the successful enactment of the plan.	Next review?		No additional costs	Commercial Services

Biodiversity and Open Space Management

Leisure facilities and open space management at the Vale are carried out under contract. The Council in its client role will be ensuring that the management of leisure facilities and open space takes account of the need to adapt to climate change. The type of recreational provision the Council provides in the future will also be influenced by climate change. The Council is also responsible for the protection of species under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. On sites it owns or operates the Council has a duty to monitor and protect biodiversity.

Actions	Timescale Priority	Comments	Costs	Responsibility
<p>Carry out a review of Council owned/controlled local sites and their management with information from UKCIP on specific adaptation measures. When contracts are being renewed (or via improvement plan) the procurement of plants and landscape services should take account of adaptation measures identified in the review. Outcomes of the review will need to ensure biodiversity and ecology are safeguarded under the NERC Act 2006.</p>	<p>End 2008</p>	<p>There is no capacity to carryout this assessment in-house. This Information is required to inform negotiations over new contracts.</p> <p>Biodiversity on actively managed sites will be monitored through indicator NI197 of the National Performance Framework</p> <p>Any additional contract costs are unknown, but it is hoped that any climate change requirements can be cost neutral within new contracts.</p>	<p>£3,000</p>	<p>Contract and Procurement (Parks)</p>
<p>The Council's Green Space, Sport and Recreational Provision Strategy to ensure climate impacts are considered and appropriate targets set.</p>	<p>2008 and ongoing</p>	<p>As identified by this work.</p>	<p>Unknown</p>	<p>Contracts and Procurement</p>

Building Management

Abbey House is the main office building used by the Council although the Council is responsible for various sports, civic centres and depots some of which are managed under contract. It is important that these buildings are able to perform within acceptable limits under predicted adverse conditions. Energy management plans will also need to take account of climate change and visa versa, i.e. installing air conditioning to cope with increased building temperatures will have a negative effect on CO₂ emissions.

Actions	Timescale Priority.	Comments	Costs	Responsibility
Using information from UKCIP, review how well buildings within the Council estate will cope with climate change and in particular adverse conditions. Costs associated with adaptation measures will be identified by the review.	2010	Use previous thermal comfort surveys for summer and winter building use by Oxford Brookes University as a first step in identifying problems. Part of carbon management role.	Unknown until end 2009	Property and Estates / Housing & Community Safety

What the Council Plans to Do

Objective 3 To use the Council's powers to influence residents and organisations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change.

Planning and Building Control

The planning and building control systems are the most important ways in which the Council can influence development in the Vale so that it minimises emissions of greenhouse gases and is also resilient to the effect of climate change. A key aspect of the development of future Council planning policy and the climate change strategy is the concept of sustainable development. The Council will promote sustainability as an integral part of its emerging Local Development Framework. Whilst this is in development a specific Planning Advice Note will be produced to give developers some guidance in the interim period.

Action	Timescale Priority	Comments	Costs	Responsibly
<p>Produce guidance and Council Policy on Sustainable Construction and resources conservation via a Planning Advice Note (PAN) initially and then an SPD to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. • An escalating scale of on-site renewable energy deployed to offset operational CO₂ emissions for all developments over 10 houses – The Merton Rule • An escalating scale of compliance with the Code for Sustainable Homes. 	Approved by early 2008	<p>PAN prepared by Vale Energy Team is in draft from due for completion in early 2008</p> <p>This will subsequently be incorporated into the 'Vale Design Guide' a Supplementary Planning Document programmed for completion 2008/09. The Design Guide will be produced as part of the LDF process.</p>	£2,000 2 weeks officer time	Planning Services / Housing & Community Safety
Put in place a system whereby significant planning applications can be assessed for their compliance with requirements of the above Planning Advice Note and subsequent 'Design Guide'.	In place once PAN has approved.	Operational once PAN is approved. There is currently no capacity to cover this work	£20,000.	Planning Services / Housing & Community Safety / Building

<p>This will involve a closer working relationship between building control and planning as way of ensuring proper compliance with the PAN.</p>		<p>once the PAN is in force. Initially a ½ FTE post will be required to promote and check compliance with new policy.</p>		Control
<p>Ensure relevant staff and committee members receive proper training on the content of the PAN and specifically mitigation and adaptation measures via specialist seminars.</p>	Early 2008	<p>In house training provided by Vale Energy Team and external partners.</p>	£1,000	Planning Services / Building Control /Housing & Community Safety
<p>Promote the PAN to house builders, building control officers and developers via Planning Agents Forum,</p>	To launch PAN in early 2008	<p>Produce appropriate literature.</p>	No additional cost	Planning Services and Communications
<p>All planning and building control applicants will be provided with information on climate change resilience/sustainable energy advice or signposting to such advice via partner agencies.</p>	By end 2008.	<p>In conjunction with the PAN launch and associated training. Partner services already provided via SLAs</p>	No additional costs	Planning / Building Control Services / Housing & Community Safety
<p>Strengthen the Affordable Housing SPD to include consideration of affordability in use through low energy and water consumption design features consistent with the Code for Sustainable Homes. Also ensure developers meet the requirements of the Sustainable Resource Use Planning Advice Note and or Housing Corporation Standards.</p>	As and when this SPD is reviewed.		No additional costs	Planning Services / Housing & Community Safety
<p>Review planning policies that set out the Council's requirements for local distributed generation of renewable energy and related supply chains to ensure they are consistent with latest Government guidance.</p>	In conjunction with LDF	<p>Costs associated with researching best opportunities for distributed generation. Engage services of TV Energy</p>	No additional cost	Planning Services

Housing

The Council currently has in place well established energy efficiency and affordable warmth programme for the owner occupied and private rented sectors under the Home Energy Conservation Act. These schemes will be further developed and targeted so as to maximise CO₂ reductions and provide affordable warmth. Housing Services also provide discretionary funding to support and encourage the take up of energy efficiency measures as well as provide access to discount schemes for insulation and energy saving products. CO₂ reduction will now be the primary focus of the Vale Energy Team; this will be progressed directly by the Council and through future work with the Vale Partnership to develop the community and business aspect to this strategy. The Council will now be required to report on per capita CO₂ emissions in the local area as part of the New Performance Framework for Local Authorities. The development of a strong commitment to tackle district wide emissions through the Vale Partnership will be critical in successfully reducing local CO₂ emissions.

The Vale Energy Team within Housing Services will be the main hub for the co-ordination of all of the Council's CO₂ reduction and adaptation activity.

Actions	Timescale Priority	Comments	Costs	Responsibility
Analyse District-wide residential CO ₂ emissions and set a target to reduce per capita CO ₂ emissions from domestic energy consumption as part of a performance indicator.	Early 2008	Baseline assessment can be determined as part of HECA work. This will be via a standard nationally applied method still to be supplied by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Monitored via new performance framework indicator NI186 – PSA 27	No additional cost	Housing & Community Safety (Vale Energy Team)
Review the work of the Vale Energy Team to ensure its work properly reflects the Council's climate change priority, maximises the	End 2008	Grants Policy Review may result in additional discretionary grant to fund CO ₂ reduction	Potential impact on capital	Housing & Community Safety (Vale)

effectiveness of levered funds and grants, addresses adaptation measures in the housing stock and is consistent with the Home Energy Conservation Act including fuel poverty.		measures and house specific climate change adaptation measures.	grants budget for 2009. e£50,000	Energy Team)
Work with partners to identify opportunities to develop targeted CO ₂ saving projects such as those for solid wall properties, park homes and homes not on the gas network.	Scheme in place by 2009	Scheme will rely on levered funds through CERT programme. The Council discretionary grant funding may be required to provide match funding.	Potential impact on capital grants budget for 2009	Housing & Community Safety (Vale Energy Team)
Work with private sector landlords to introduce a scheme for insulation in properties used by the Council in its homelessness prevention work.	End 2008	Utilise housing discretionary grants.	Within existing grants budgets	Housing & Community Safety
Investigate the feasibility of the Council operating an Energy Services Company (via a joint venture) as an investment opportunity. Energy Services Companies (ESCOs) should be promoted as a management solution to securing distributed generation schemes in the Vale.	2010	A development opportunity may present itself for this to be addressed earlier than indicated. The Council may wish to acquaint itself with the ESC concept next year.	No additional cost to research position.	Housing & Community Safety (Vale Energy Team) in conjunction with Financial Services

Environmental Health

The Council has responsibility to monitor air quality in the air quality management zones in the district. Many of the gases and small particles that affect air quality are greenhouse gases and are often produced when burning fossil fuels. Climate change will also have an impact on local air quality for example high temperatures and low winds produce a marked increase in low level ozone concentrations. Measures to improve air quality through reducing emissions of primary air pollutants therefore have direct links with other measures to control greenhouse gas emissions. Road transport emissions are the major cause of poor air quality. The Council therefore works with the County Council and other partners to put in place measures to improve air quality. Improving air quality is an objective of the Abingdon Integrated Transport Strategy. As major employer based in Abingdon the Council is a significant traffic generator. Air quality therefore has links with the Council's Green Travel Plan.

Climate change may affect processes related to food preparation, hygiene and pest control. Many of these changes will be gradual but will still need to be monitored and Council inspection / control regimes changed accordingly.

Action	Timescale Priority	Comments	Cost	Responsibility
Air quality to be considered in any future review of the Green Travel Plan.	By early 2008		No additional cost	Planning & Community Strategy / Environmental Health
Evaluate and put in place plans to reduce NOx and PM10 emissions resulting from Council operations including contracted out services. In line with the performance indicator on air quality.	2008	Addressed via Air Quality Management Plan Review This will be monitored via new performance framework NI194	Already budgeted.	Environmental Health
Utilise information from the UKCIP to inform decisions relating to climate change impacts of food safety and pest control procedures.	2010	Initial meetings in 2008 with procedural changes identified.	Unknown at this point, but probably no cost.	Environmental Health

Waste

Waste is a growing problem, both in terms of its collection and disposal. The Council has a duty to collect waste but is also an active partner in the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership. The Council has a strong emphasis on waste minimisation. The Waste Strategy of the Council is an important step in reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with waste. Social market research has however discovered that many people consider recycling to be one of the best things they can do on a personal level to tackle climate change. This creates a barrier to people doing other things that are more effective. The Council will want to ensure that recycling continues at its high rate but that it does not become a block to other more effective climate change actions.

Action	Timescale Priority	Comments	Cost	Responsibility
Work with the Waste Team and Communications Team to ensure the waste hierarchy message is seen as part of a larger picture of resource conservation and climate change action.	2008	To be pursued in conjunction with the Communications Team environment campaign in 2008.	£5,000 as mentioned above.	Organisational Development (Communications Team)
Ensure that any future review of the Waste Strategy takes account of CO ₂ emissions associated with waste and recycling collections.	2010	This may involve a switch to low CO ₂ vehicles. Capital investment may be required at point of new contract.	Possible additional costs in 2010	Contracts & Procurement (Waste Team)
Consider in future contracts adaptation measures required to waste collections to take account of predicted climatic changes.	By 2009	Run adaptation workshops with key staff – (UKCIP)	No additional cost.	Contracts & Procurement (Waste Team)

Corporate Level Measures

The changing climate will affect people's daily lives and the functions and services provided by organisations like the Council. More work will be done to understand how climate change will impact on our local area. The UK Climate Impacts Programme will be providing information to the Council from their most recent climate modelling work. This will help the Council put a risk value on certain types of weather event and correspondingly help the Council prioritise how well prepared it can afford to be for different categories of event. This information will help the Council maximise potential benefits and costs savings.

The 2007 summer floods in the Vale demonstrated that more can be done to ensure that people and organisations living in flood risk areas are better prepared for the type of flooding that is predicted to become more frequent with future climate change. The Council along with the Environment Agency has an important role ensuring proper measures are in place to cope with future flooding.

The Council provides a range of services and licenses certain services for which it charges fees. There maybe some areas where fees could be set to encourage certain activities which support efforts to reduce emissions and discourage other activities which run counter to the Council's climate change efforts.

Action	Timescale Priority	Comments	Costs	Responsibility
<p>Carry out a climate change risk assessment (Local Climate Impacts Profile) in partnership with the UK Climate Impacts Programme. This will identify and prioritise those operations and services most at risk from climate change.</p>	2008	<p>10 – 20 days to complete assessment with assistance from UKCIP</p> <p>The process followed will be monitored as part of indicator NI188 of the new performance framework.</p>	£3000 as mentioned above.	Climate Change Team.
<p>Review fees and charges and where possible make changes to encourage lower CO₂ emissions.</p>	2009 review or earlier if possible		5 days officer time £1,000	Environmental Services / Climate Change Team
<p>Following the 2007 floods establish a task group including key partners to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to encourage / help residents in flood risk zones to make their properties more resilient to flooding. • Looking into the impact of future development on potential flood risk and advocating ways this impact can be reduced (through the planning system). • The current comprehensive flood risk assessment system. • Increasing awareness of flood risk and improving warning systems. • Improving coordination and management of water courses and flood defence measures. • Ensuring responsible organisations have robust plans in place to ensure service continuity in the event of severe weather. such as wide spread local flooding. 	2008	<p>Some of these areas are being addressed by the 2007 Flood Review</p> <p>Others will be covered via the Local Climate Impacts Profile.</p>		Various officers / Directors to take the lead on specific areas.

Biodiversity and Open Space Management

The local environment is an important amenity it is own right not withstanding the important services it provides to local residents. Biodiversity is already under enormous pressure as the district continues to face increasing development pressures. The effects of climate change will place additional burdens on species and habitats. The Council is responsible for the protection of species as set out in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. It carries out much of its biodiversity work through partnerships such as the Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum.

Open space management at the Vale is carried out under contract. The Council is already revising how this space is managed in light of the need to adapt to climate change.

Action	Timescale Priority	Comments	Costs	Responsibility
Continue to support the Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and related local projects.	Ongoing	Now monitored as part of the New Performance framework. Indicator NI197.	Already budgeted	Contracts & Procurement (Landscapes)
Investigate feasibility of setting up a Vale BAP.	End 2009	Initial officer time to investigate.	£1000	Contracts & Procurement (Landscapes)
Promote the Community Grant as the way the Council can support community biodiversity projects. Ensure outcomes of community nature conservation projects supported by the Council are consistent with Council adaptation plans for its own sites.	Beginning 2009	The grant may need to be increased to take account of additional areas it is expected to fund.	No additional cost initially	Contracts & Procurement (Landscapes) / Community Strategy.

<p>Use the planning system to protect local BAP sites including recognising the importance of adjoining land and connectivity of sites. Threats to and opportunities for biodiversity and habitat protection should be regularly assessed via monitoring of planning applications.</p> <p>Biodiversity on actively managed sites will be monitored through indicator NI197 of the National Performance Framework.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ecology expertise although not central to the implementation of climate change actions would provide a resource that would be useful for adaptation work and enable the Council to discharge its responsibilities under the NERC Act 2006. The strategy therefore supports the appointment of an Ecologist.</p> <p>Some training for planning officers will be required.</p>		<p>Planning / Contracts & Procurement (Landscapes)</p>
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Community

Within the community many opportunities to reduce CO₂emissions can be taken by individuals, businesses, schools, groups and public sector organisations. The Council has a central leadership role in the local community and is a key member of the Local Strategic Partnership. As the Council has very limited influence on any outcomes in this area, it will be more effective if the Council and other key organisation in the Vale act together to encourage local people to take action to reduce green house gas emissions. It is therefore proposed that the community aspect of climate change work in the Vale is advance through the Vale Partnership's Community Strategy.

Action	Timescale Priority	Comments	Costs	Responsibility
<p>The Council will encourage the Vale Partnership to ensure the revised Vale Community Strategy properly addresses climate change through the inclusion of relevant climate change policies and actions. This will need to have due regard to Local Area Agreement targets for the Climate Change priority of the Oxfordshire Partnership</p>	<p>Beginning in 2008</p>	<p>To be discussed with a view to making this a Partnership priority by 2009. The Council will in the first instance need to provide the partnership with information and sponsor the proposal.</p>	<p>No additional cost</p>	<p>Planning & Community Strategy.</p>

and with the emerging Local Development Framework.					
The Council will be alert to opportunities to support the local economy especially when making its own procurement decisions and helping local business (via the Oxfordshire Sustainable Business Partnership) to tackle climate change.	2008	Council already works with the Oxfordshire Sustainable Business Partnership on projects which align with our objectives.	No additional cost	Contracts and Procurement / Planning & Community Strategy	
Promote the Community Grants Scheme as a way for local groups to get funds for climate change / renewable energy projects or feasibility studies.	2008	Already in place, but will need to be amended to make applicability to climate change clearer.	No additional cost	Planning & Community Strategy	
Ensure the Youth Forum is properly involved in any Council decisions on climate change, the results of which are relevant to young people i.e. communicating climate change.	ongoing	Links with Youth Strategy already in place.	No additional cost	Planning & Community Strategy	

Finance

The Council has a range of investments, the return on which it uses to fund services. Some of these investments have a larger CO₂ impact than the Council itself. The Council therefore feels it would be prudent to ensure that the Council gives due consideration to the CO₂ implications of investments in the future.

Action	Timescale Priority	Comments	Costs	Responsibility
Future investment decisions made by the Council could be subject to an assessment of their climate change impact. The Council will need to put in place an assessment method to do this.	2010	Some research would be required	3 days staff time £750	Finance Team + Vale Energy team

What the Council Plans to Do

Objective 4 To deliver, monitor and review the Climate Change Strategy

The successful implementation of this strategy is dependent upon it being embedded into normal Council decision making processes. The most effective way to do this is to ensure relevant parts of the Action Plan appear in development plans for the different service areas of the Council and are monitored accordingly. Some actions identified in the strategy will be best dealt with using a team of people to draw on collective experience. The Council will establish a small team of people to take forward these aspects of the strategy.

Action	Timescale Priority	Comments	Costs	Responsibility
Progress on implementing key aspects of the Climate Change action plan will be monitored via the Council's performance management framework. Key actions will be part of the Council's Corporate Governance Report .	2008	Ensure Service Area Development Plans include key actions outlined in this strategy.	No additional cost	Organisational Development
Allocate responsibility for co-ordination of the delivery of this strategy.	April 2008	New duties allocated to Principal Energy Officer.	£8000	Housing & Community Safety
Appoint an officer to manage enforcement of climate change related planning policy.	April 2008	½ FTE post	£20,000 as mentioned above	Housing & Community Safety / Planning
Appoint an officer to run the Councils Carbon Management Programme, provide expert services to development control.	April 2008	This post will be essential to delivering the key elements of the strategy	£40,000 as mentioned above	Housing & Community Safety/ Property & Estates
A Climate Change Team will be set up with representatives from across the organisation. The team will be responsible for ensuring the Climate Change Action Plan is implemented.	April 2008	1 person per service area max 6 – 8	24 days officer time per year	

				£4,800	
Establish a Climate Change Project Board to ensure the strategy delivers its stated objectives.	2008			18 days officer time per years £3,600	
Post first year implementation review to be carried out by Climate Change Project Board.	End 2008			5 days officer time £1,000	Climate Change Project Board
Agree a communication plan to ensure the impact of the strategy is clearly communicated to staff and the community.	Late 2007			£400 to cover time to produce plan	Organisational Development (Communications Team)
Identify training needs that will arise as a result of this strategy and feed into the organisational development programme.	2008 and ongoing	Identify generic training that can be offered to staff and specific training needs through PDP process or proactive competency based training.		£5,000	Organisational Development (HR Team)

Financing the Strategy

Actions identified in this Strategy have been costed and shown in the action plan. The table below summarises all the actions and associated costs.

Climate Change Strategy Projected Costs 2008 - 2010

Action	Y1 revenue	Y1 capital	Y2 revenue	Y2 capital	Y3 revenue	Y3 capital	Notes
Procurement							
1							Already budgeted
2							Already budgeted
3			1,000		1,000		Staff time to review - 5 days per year
4							No additional cost
Travel							
5	1,600						Some additional staff time - 8 days unconfirmed
6	1,000						Already budgeted
7	600						Additional staff time - 3 days unconfirmed
Energy, Waste & Water Management							
8	1,600						Additional staff time - 8 days
9	48,000		40,000		40,000		Additional 1 fte carbon management post (scale 8) consultant fees
10				100,000		150,000	Potentially £450,000 over 4 years with savings put back into fund
11	5,000						Additional PR budget to cover specific events.
12							No additional cost if limited to OGC maximum of 30% renewables
13							Dependant on the Code for Sustainable Homes threshold set
Emergency Planning / Adaptation							
14	4,000						15 days staff time + allowance for fees £1000
15			4,000				15 days staff time + allowance for fees
16							No additional cost

	Action	Y1 revenue	Y1 capital	Y2 revenue	Y2 capital	Y3 revenue	Y3 capital	Notes
	Biodiversity / Adaptation							
17	Adaptation review of Council controlled local sites	2,000						Provisional fees
18	Green Space, Sport and Recreational Provision Strategy							Unknown
	Building Management / Adaptation							
19	Review Council building performance							Part of carbon management role
	Planning / Building Control							
20	Produce Sustainability Planning Advice Note							Already budgeted
21	Enforce Sustainability Planning Advice Note	20,000		20,000		20,000		Additional 1/2 fte post (Scale 8) 2 days staff time for internal training + training costs covered in 55
22	Provide Sustainability Planning Advice Note training			500		500		See additional PR budget covered in 11
23	Promote Sustainability Planning Advice Note							No additional cost
24	Establish planning / building control task group							See additional PR budget covered in 11
25	Promote sustainability and climate change issues							No additional cost
26	Review Affordable Housing SPD							No additional cost
27	Develop policies to support distributed generation							No additional cost
	Housing / HECA							
28	Analyse District wide CO2 emissions and set targets							No additional cost - part of HECA role
29	Review Vale Energy Team work in light of this strategy	600						3 days staff time
30	Develop carbon saving projects esp not on gas network				50,000		50,000	No additional staff costs, provisional discretionary grant in 2009
31	Private Sector Landlord scheme				5,000		5,000	No additional staff costs, within existing discretionary grant budget
32	Investigate feasibility of Council operating ESCO		5,000					No additional cost
	Environmental Services							
33	Review AQM re Green Travel Plan							As part of AQM work
34	Evaluate NOX and PM10 emissions							As part of AQM work
35	Adaptation measures for food safety and pest control							No additional cost at this point
	Waste							
36	Utilise CC within waste minimisation work							No additional cost - links with Environmental PR campaign
37	Reduce CO2 emissions of waste collection							As part of new waste contract preparation
38	Consider adaptation measures for waste collection							As part of new waste contract preparation

	Action	Y1 revenue	Y1 capital	Y2 revenue	Y2 capital	Y3 revenue	Y3 capital	Notes
	Corporate Level Measures							
see 14	Local Climate Impact Assessment							
39	Consider climate change impacts in fees and charges							
40	Flood Review							Already budgeted
	Biodiversity							
41	Continue to support Oxfordshire BAP	2,000		2,000		2,000		Already budgeted £2,000 py
42	Investigate feasibility of Vale BAP			1,000				Additional staff time in 2009
43	Promote biodiversity via community grant scheme							Unknown
44	Use planning system to protect BAPs							See training action number 55
	Community							
45	Work with Vale and Oxfordshire Partnerships							No additional cost
46	Support Local economy via OSBP							Ongoing - no additional cost at this point
47	Use Community Grants for climate change projects							No additional cost
48	Ongoing engagement with from Youth Forum							No additional cost
	Finance							
49	Analyse future investment decisions					600		Initial research costs
	Organisational Development							
51	Embed strategy in SDPs and CGR	8,000		8,000		8,000		No additional cost
52	Overall management of strategy implementation							Additional 1 day per week
see 21	Appoint climate change planning officer 1/2 fte							see action 21
see 9	Appoint carbon management programme officer							see action 9
53	Set up internal climate change project team	4,800		4,800		4,800		24 days staff time a year
54	Set up internal climate change project board	3,600		3,600		3,600		18 days staff time
55	Carry out post annual year review	1,000		1,000		1,000		5 days staff time
56	Develop climate change communication plan	400						2 day staff time
57	Identify climate change training needs	5,000						Additional training as identified through pdps and HR
	Totals	109,200	5,000	85,900	155,000	81,500	205,000	

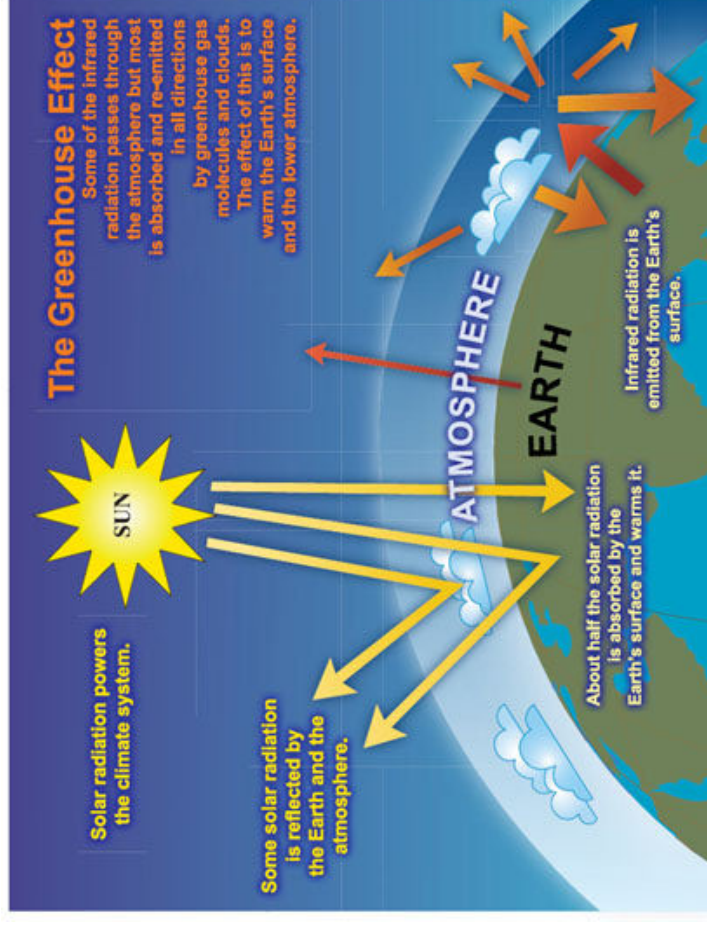
APPENDIX

1. What Is Climate Change And What Causes It?

The Sun's energy reaches the Earth and warms the planet's surface. The heat generated is radiated back to space. Some of this heat is trapped by the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This creates a habitable environment on the planet's surface. There are natural processes which create and absorb these gases, these processes have for millions of years been broadly in balance, giving the planet an environment capable of supporting the range of life we see around us. Past fluctuations in the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere have resulted in the changes to the earth's climate which in turn have had impacts on the earth's ecosystems, some severe such as ice ages.

The burning of fossil fuels via human activity is increasing the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, trapping more heat at the planet's surface and the atmosphere. This process has been termed global warming. More heat at earth's surface means more energy in the planet's weather systems resulting in changes in climate – climate change. 'Greenhouse gases' is the term given to those gases in the atmosphere that trap long wave radiation in the form of heat. Many of these gases are naturally occurring such as carbon dioxide CO₂ and methane CH₄ others are man made such as fluorocarbons. CO₂ dioxide accounts for over 60% of warming effect of all greenhouse gases. The main source of CO₂ is the burning of fossil fuels such as oil, gas and coal.

Emissions of CO₂ from Council operations are significant at a local level. Local action to tackle climate change therefore depends on leadership from the Council as well as effective use of Council powers and incentives to reduce emissions in the community.



2. The Effects of Climate Change for the Vale of White Horse

Predicting the effects of climate change is the subject of intense research efforts. There is consensus amongst the world's climate scientists that climate change is already occurring and will escalate as the level of CO₂ in the atmosphere increases.

The South East of the United Kingdom is likely to be affected by climate change more than other UK regions. Recent flooding in the Vale shows just how vulnerable the district is to severe weather which is predicted to be more prevalent in the future. In general the effects are likely to include:

- higher temperatures all year: more heat waves in summer; and milder winters;
- more extreme weather events including storms, flash floods, droughts and heat waves;
- less rain overall and in summer;
- more severe and frequent river and flash floods, caused by more violent and concentrated rainfall;
- more frequent disruption to transport and other infrastructure; increased risk of failure of infrastructure operating beyond the conditions it was

designed for (e.g. roads melting, rails buckling in extreme high temperatures; drains overwhelmed by the rate of rainfall);

- fewer winter deaths and illnesses as a result of cold, but more heat-related summer deaths and stresses;
- spread of diseases currently prevented by cold weather;
- and loss of wildlife, especially species near the southern end of their ranges.

If action is not taken and substantial progress made in reducing CO₂ emissions within the next thirty years, there could be an irreversible effect on the global climate. This will have major local impacts which will affect the district and the operations of the Council.

The Council may be subject to significant un-budgeted costs associated with responding to future severe weather events related to climate change. The proximity of the Thames and the low lying nature of much of the Vale make it especially vulnerable to repeated major flood events.

3. Policy Context

The Council's response to climate change is part of a larger national and international effort. The Kyoto Protocol places legally binding targets on emissions reduction for the UK. The UK Climate Change Programme is the mechanism by which the Government plans to reduce emissions and adapt to future climate change. This programme places a central role on the efforts of local authorities to both reduce emissions and lead by example.

The Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006 requires the Secretary of State to produce an energy measures report on the measures that would help local authorities tackle climate change and fuel poverty. The report must contain information on measures that local authorities can use to: improve energy efficiency; increase the levels of micro-generation or low carbon technologies; reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and reduce the number of people living in fuel poverty. Local authorities must have regard to the report when exercising their functions.

The Climate Change Bill currently before Parliament proposes legally binding targets for CO₂ emissions reductions and will provide the legal framework for a carbon trading scheme which will include local authorities. The bill also paves the way for local authorities to use financial incentives to encourage waste reduction and recycling measures.

The new performance framework for local government includes a range of new climate change indicators by which the performance of local government in reducing CO₂ emissions and adapting to climate change will be assessed.

National, regional and local planning policy is heavily predicated upon climate change impacts and the need to take action. Future planned changes to the Building Regulations aim to move towards all homes built by 2016 to be zero carbon with similar targets for commercial buildings. The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive now requires the Council to display in a public place an energy certificate for Abbey House.

In summary there are many factors that together are contributing to and acceleration in the pace of change in this area. It is widely acknowledged that there is a limited window of opportunity within which to get CO₂ emissions within acceptable limits thereby avoiding the worst case effects of climate change.

4. Links to Other Council Strategies

Climate change is a corporate priority for the Council. The nature of climate change, and the actions outlined in this strategy make it consistent with the Council's vision and objectives. The Council's Climate Change Strategy will impact upon almost every part of the Council's operations, but in particular it will affect the following Council strategies

- Procurement Strategy
- Waste Strategy
- Youth Development Strategy
- Green Space, Sport and Recreational Provision Strategy
- Housing Strategy – HECA Strategy and Fuel Poverty Strategy
- Local Development Framework and Planning Policy
- Community Strategy and Oxfordshire Partnership Local Area Agreements.
- Air Quality Management Plan
- Green Travel Plan
- Economic Development Strategy
- Asset Management Plan
- Equalities and Diversity
- Enforcement Policy

5. Acknowledgements

The Council would like to thank the Thames Valley Energy Centre for the work carried out by Jan Deacon in reviewing the Council's position and providing guidance on how the Council should progress its climate change work.

The Council would also like to acknowledge the guidance provided by the Beacon Council Programme's Sustainable Energy Toolkit and Benchmark for Local Authorities which were used in the preparation of this strategy.

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR
TO THE EXECUTIVE
7 DECEMBER 2007

Payments Strategy

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 This report proposes the adoption of a Payments Strategy for the Vale.
- 1.2 The 2007/08 agreed budget proposals, (service prioritisation plan number 52X) requests the provision of better payment alternatives for cash payment facilities. The attached Payments Strategy shows there are opportunities for the Vale to use alternative payment solutions that have the potential to increase customer access and in some cases bring immediate cost benefits. The strategy compliments the Council's Access to Services Strategy and is based on extensive research and examination of the options.
- 1.3 A number of milestones are set out that can move the Vale to this position, and it is recommended that each be implemented on its merits only where the business case for each milestone can prove that customer access will increase and costs be reduced.
- 1.4 It is your officers' view that the opportunity for immediate cost reduction is limited, and that encouraging customers to use electronic payment methods will likely have to be implemented in parallel before users migrate in sufficient numbers to enable reduced transaction costs to be secured.
- 1.5 The Contact Officer for this report is Helen Bishop, Deputy Director Organisational Development & Support, 01235 540372.

2.0 Recommendations

- (a) *that the Executive approve in principle that the draft strategy to implement the payments policy be recommended to Council;*
- (b) *that the following policy which underpins the payments strategy is recommended for adoption by Council:*

"The Council will adopt and implement a Payments Strategy which will deliver the following policy:-

- Cost effective channels will be developed and marketed to encourage as many customers as possible to self-serve or use our call centre services*
- Customer service will be, as far as is practicable, coordinated and process managed to ensure a quality consistent service*
- Opportunities will be taken through process and workflow re-design to create cashable and non-cashable efficiencies.*
- The Council will continue to develop access channels which reflect the changing preferences of our customers"*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

The report supports the Council's Vision Statement objectives C and E.

This report relates to the Customer Contact Strategy.

This report complies with existing policy.

4.0 **Background and Supporting Information**

4.1 The draft Payments Strategy is attached to this report.

5.0 **Equality and Diversity Considerations**

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this strategy. It concluded that its aims and objectives are not likely to have a significant or negative impact on local residents because of their disability, ethnicity, gender or age. This is because of the following:

- The payment channels proposed in this strategy are varied and include telephone, internet and face-to-face (encouraging debit and credit card payments in the Local Services Points, and payment by cash and cheque in banks and payment network outlets including Post Offices). They expand on the current payment channels available to service users and provide people with opportunities to pay for Council services both from their home and in their local community.
- The payment methods proposed in this strategy are varied and include cash, cheque, debit/credit card, direct debit and standing order.

5.2 Furthermore, this strategy will promote equality of access to the payments service by doing the following:

- Any leaflets produced for the public about payment channels and methods will be offered in alternative formats as required, for example in another language or in larger print;
- In order to monitor how the payment channels are working, they will be reviewed at various stages as part of the implementation of this strategy. Equalities information will be collected and analysed according to disability, ethnicity and gender;
- Wherever possible, external pay-points will be accessible for disabled people, and these will be highlighted in relevant publicity material.

6.0 **Consultation**

6.1 Consultation with staff likely to be affected has taken place over the last 3 weeks, and a verbal report will be given at the meeting.

HELEN BISHOP
DEPUTY DIRECTOR ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT

TIM SADLER
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR



PAYMENTS STRATEGY

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Introduction

The Vale of White Horse District Council (Vale) has a clear vision as detailed in its Corporate Plan (2006 – 2008), “to provide and support high quality public services which are effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of people within the Vale”.

There are six corporate priorities emanating from this vision, one of which is to improve and modernise access to services.

The Vale’s Customer Contact Strategy translates this aspiration into a very clear set of objectives by:

- Developing and promoting cost effective customer contact channels, through the use of a contact centre and through self-service;
- Ensuring a quality repeatable service embracing pre-determined service standards;
- Securing efficiencies from re-designing and automating processes;
- Continually developing access channels in accordance with customer preferences based on feedback and consultation; and
- Developing diversity and equalities within the organisation, to extend accessibility for the hard to reach groups within the community.

This strategy builds on the Customer Contact Strategy and takes forward our Corporate Priority of improving and modernising access to our services. It provides a clear vision of how the Council wants to develop and manage the payment transactions utilising both new technologies and different ways of working.

External Environment

Opportunities to improve the value for money from our own services are being driven by the competition from the private sector and the increasing culture of shared service organisations.

This has been promoted by both the Transformational Change agenda which advocates the use of technology to alter the way services are delivered to improve front line service delivery, and by central government's spending review which requires local authorities to make 2.5% efficiency savings year on year. The transactional cost savings from handling payments more efficiently, and in a way that may encourage customers to make payments more quickly and at less cost is therefore very attractive to the Council.

There is a high take up of broadband Internet in the area, indicating there are sufficient consumers who would be able to transact in this way. PC ownership in Western Europe is around 70%¹. 99% of all premises in the UK can technically be connected to broadband Internet² and take-up of broadband services is expected to settle at around 60% by 2008.³ The last survey of online take-up in the Vale was undertaken in 2002, when 59% of citizens had access to the Internet from home. This figure is certain to have risen significantly since then. In addition, all libraries in Oxfordshire provide free access to the Internet, as do the Vale's two Local Service Points.

In addition, the geography of the Vale, being made up of three market towns and 65 rural parishes, further lends itself to a review of the way payments are made to the Council.

Demographically, the Vale is an affluent area with a well-educated population. Only 1.6% of the Vale's working age population is unemployed, as compared with a rate of 3.4% for England and Wales. In the Vale, 28.2% of people of working age are educated to degree level or higher, which is well above the national average.

(England and Wales average 19.8%). (Source: Census 2001)

¹ ZDnet news, 25 November 2005

² BT.com

³ ZDnet news, 25 November 2005

However, the ageing population and more vulnerable members of the community may rely on traditional face-to-face payment channels, and this may be an issue for consideration in the implementation of the strategy.

There is an abundance of new payments technology and solutions in the market place.

The widespread use and continual development of the internet with the opportunities it brings for customers to self serve is a significant driver forcing the review of payment channels in its own right, as it is both the least cost transaction channel and offers the opportunity to improve and widen accessibility to services.

Environmentally, the local authority is keen to progress telephone and web solutions reducing the need to travel, so conserving energy and assisting reduction of the climate change impacts.

The significant provision of equalities and diversity legislation seeks equal accessibility for all citizens to council services across all access channels. The greater use of the web and the telephone to make payments can help to satisfy some of these duties and improve the quality of council services for all.

Current Baseline Information

The Vale Council receives just under 500,000 payments from customers each year.

The channels for these contacts are set out in Table 1 below.

The Council fully expects the number of payments shown to grow reflecting both increasing demand and growth in the breadth of services but, most significantly, growth in 'new business' as contacting the Council is made easier and more convenient and more people utilize the services on offer.

Current Payment Transaction Numbers by Access Channel			
	2006/07	2007/08 at 30.06.07	2007/08 Projected
Vale Cash Offices (face-to-face)			
Cash	34410	8320	33280
Cheque	24533	6170	24680
Post to Vale			
Cash	24	7	28
Cheque	33899	8549	34196
Post Offices (Assumes 10 instalments)			
Cash	6000	1800	6000
Cheque	6000	1800	6000
Banks (Assumes 10 instalments)			
Cheque *	16284	4885	16284
Direct Debit *	345260	103578	345260
Standing Order *	10600	3180	10600
Telephone			
Debit/credit card	4773	1179	4716
Internet			
Debit/credit card	451	268	1072
Total	482,234	139,736	482,116

* Transaction numbers as at 13.08.07. Assumed 06/07 levels to be the same.

The Way Forward

The diagram in Appendix 1 on page 10 depicts the current position. Customers are funnelled through a number of access channels, with little opportunity for economies or efficiencies of scale to be realised.

Appendix 2 on page 11 shows what is ultimately feasible for the Vale. With this approach the benefits are likely to be in the more cost effective use of channels, through the rationalisation of our cash and post handling functions.

Appendix 3 on page 13 summarises the business case for this strategy. It shows that there are opportunities where an alternative provider has the potential to deliver increased customer access and bring immediate cost benefits. However, the Vale's experience in face-to-face customer service demonstrates that after these initial cost savings, encouraging customers to use electronic payment methods will most likely have to be implemented in parallel before users migrate substantially and the Vale can secure savings from reduced transaction costs.

This strategy moves the Vale towards aligning its payment channels as per Appendix 2, but only where the business case for each milestone can prove increased customer access and reduced costs.

Payment Strategy Aims and Principles

The aims of this Strategy are that:

- Cost effective channels will be developed and marketed to encourage as many customers as possible to self-serve or use our call centre services
- Customer service will be, as far as practicable, coordinated and process managed to ensure a quality consistent service
- Opportunities will be taken through process re-design and workflow to create cashable and non-cashable efficiencies.
- The Council will continue to develop access channels which reflect the changing preferences of our customers

These aims lead us to the following principles that underpin the Strategy:

- Promotion of direct debit within the banking sector
- Promotion of electronic payments using debit and credit cards as the Council's preferred channel of payments.

Milestones for the Implementation of the Payment Strategy

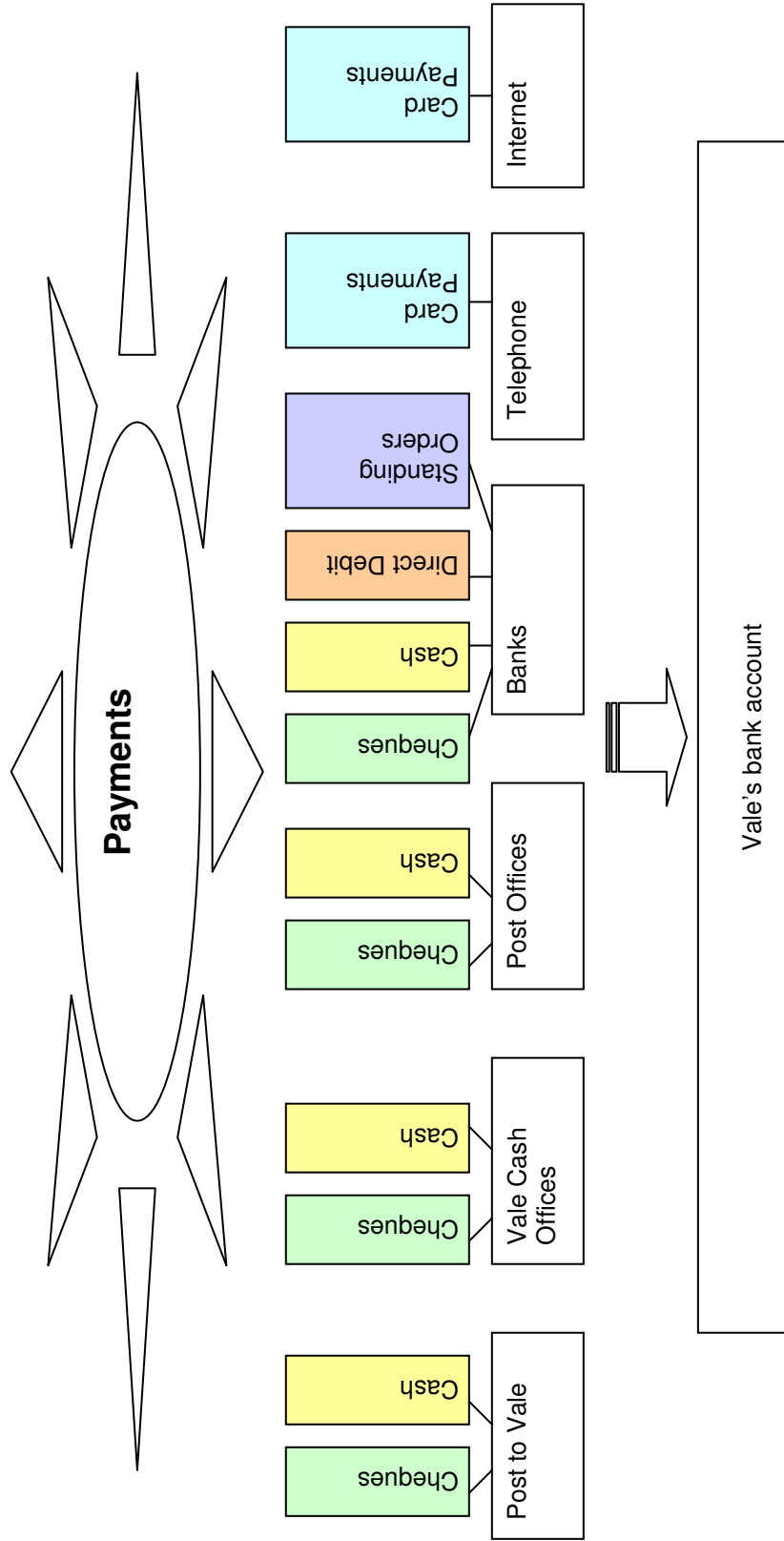
Milestone	When
Assess the viability of a cash receipting and distribution system that will facilitate the distribution of cash, cheques and card payments made in person, by telephone or via the web. Procure and implement if cost effective.	Q4 2007/08
Assess the viability of a payment network scheme for face-to-face payments.	Q4 2007/08
Implement payment network scheme if cost effective	Q1 2008/09
Develop and deploy on-line and telephone payment facilities for each of the Vale's service areas responsible for collection of payments on a needs basis. To include the payment of revenues and benefits via the Capita contact centre.	Q1 2008/09 onwards
Review how the face-to-face payment channels are working (including consultation via the Vale Voice Panel), and assess the viability of the Vale's cash counters or offices.	Q2 2008/09
Assess the viability of a face-to-face electronic payment system for Vale Local Services Points.	Q2 2008/09
Implement the actions from the face-to-face payment review, including the implementation of face-to-face electronic payments if appropriate.	Q3 2008/09
Review how the electronic payment channels are working (including consultation via the Vale Voice Panel), and assess the viability of postal payments into the Vale.	Q4 2008/09
Implement the actions from the electronic payment channels review if appropriate.	Q1 2009/10
Re-assess the viability of any remaining Vale cash counters or offices and streamline the service accordingly.	Q3 2009/10

Links to other Initiatives

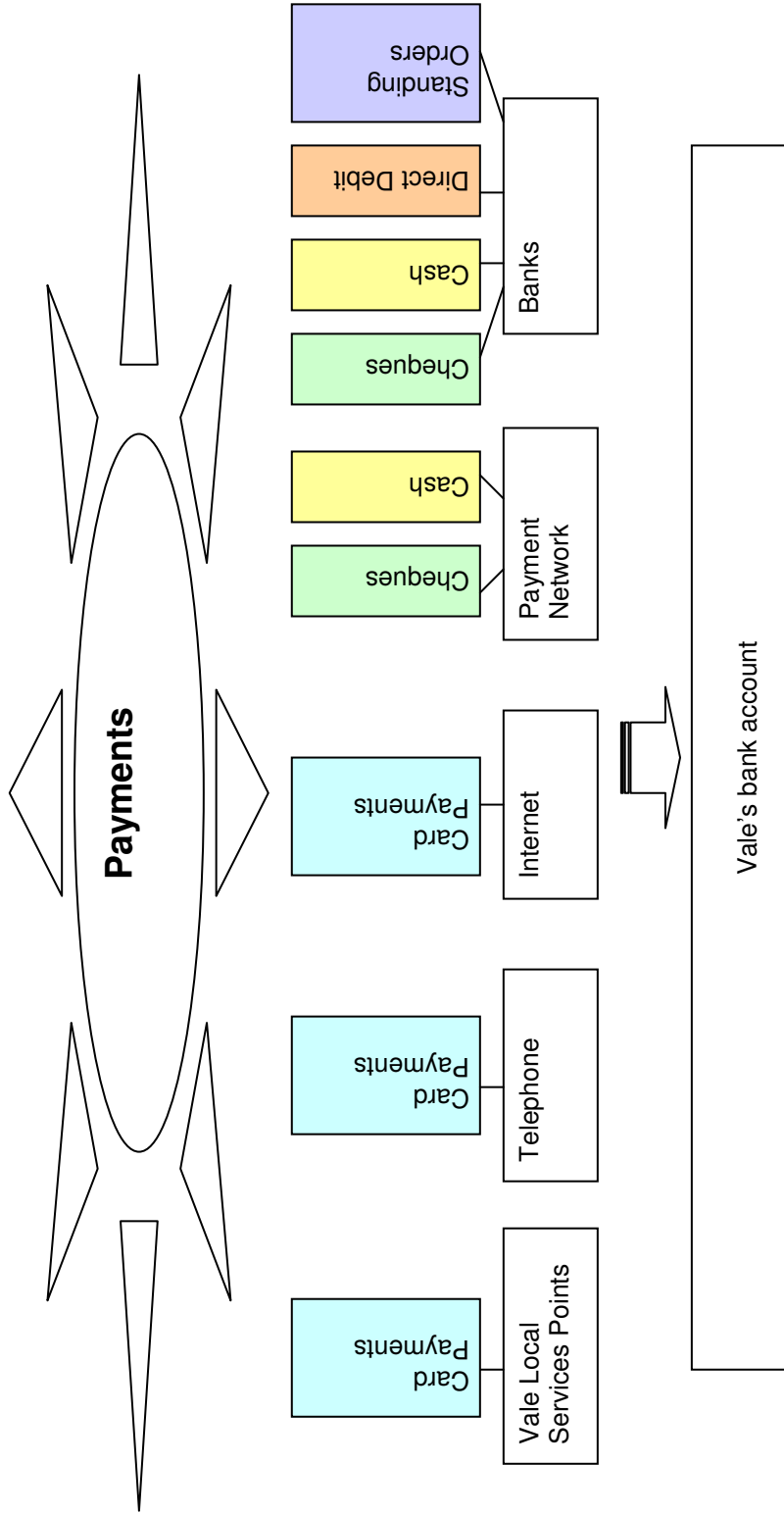
This strategy should be read in conjunction with other initiatives across the organisation.

- Building understanding of modern approaches to customer care
- Re-organisation of central administration functions
- Re-organisation of processing functions

Current Payment Channels



Potential Payment Channels



Payments Strategy Business Case

Current Average Payment Costs to Vale by Access Channel			
	2007/08 Projected Transaction Numbers	Average Transaction Costs £	2007/08 Average Cost of Payment to Vale by Access Channel
Vale Cash Offices (face-to-face) *			
Cash Abingdon	21028	0.69	14509
Cheque Abingdon	15160	0.69	10460
Cash Wantage	9504	1.62	15396
Cheque Wantage	7240	1.62	11728
Cash Faringdon	2748	7.38	20280
Cheque Faringdon	2280	7.38	16826
Post to Vale *			
Cash	28	1.01	28.28
Cheque	34196	1.01	34537
Post Offices (Assumes 10 instalments)			
Cash and Cheque	9178	0.8145	7476.92
Banks (Assumes 10 instalments)			
Cheque	16284	0.05	814.20
Direct Debit	345260	0.018	6214.68
Standing Order	10600	0.05	530
Telephone			
Debit/credit card	4716	0.28	1351.28
Internet			
Debit/credit card	1072	1.70	1818.04
Total	479,294		141,969.40
* These transaction costs are inclusive of recharges.			
Potential Average Payment Costs to Vale by Access Channel			
	2007/08	Average	Average Cost

	Projected	Transaction Costs	of Payment to Vale
		£	by Access
Vale Local Services			
Points			
Card Abingdon	4000	4.50	18000
Card Wantage	1887	4.75	8963.25
Payment Network			
Cash	37897	0.43	16295.71
Cheque	48746	0.43	20960.78
Banks			
Cheque	16284	0.05	814.20
Direct Debit	345260	0.018	6214.68
Standing Order	10600	0.05	530.00
Telephone			
Debit/credit card	10604	0.28	2969.12
Internet			
Debit/credit card	4016	1.70	6827.20
Total	479,294		81574.94

Potential Savings from the following:

NB: not all available immediately, and dependant on individual business cases

- Payment network scheme including reduced Post Office transaction costs. The difference in transaction costs between current and new costs for post office payers = £3,500;
- Closure of Faringdon Cash Office, net of recharges = £21,000;
- Loomis cash collection costs no longer required in Abingdon or Wantage Cash Offices, if these cash offices close and/or only offer electronic payments= £12,000;
- Removal of postal payments into the Vale = £13,000 – 0.5 FTE at grade 4 with 20% on costs. Achievable over a period of time as a process of providing alternatives for customers to pay reduces the practice of sending postal payments into the Vale.

Grand Total: 49,500

Points to note:

- Current average payments costs shown = £141,969 and potential average payment costs = £81,574, representing a potential saving of £60,395. Actual savings are shown as potentially £49,500.
- The reason for the difference between these two figures is:
 - if the Wantage and Abingdon cash offices were to close the overheads for the remaining Local Services Points would remain, leaving the savings to come from salary costs in Abingdon and Loomis cash collection costs in Abingdon and Wantage;
 - the potential costs shown also still include some costs for Abingdon and Wantage as these offices may be involved in taking payments face-to-face by debit and credit card. Finally, the current costs for the cash offices are calculated inclusive of recharges, but the actual saving shown for Faringdon is net of recharges.
- It should also be noted that as Wantage Local Services Point staffing is already at deminimus levels, although staff may be cashiering the associated staffing cost can not be removed from the business even if cashiering is ceased, as the business would not be able to operate;
- There are other services offered in the face-to-face environment for which payment is presently required, e.g. sale of local plans, photocopying of plans; taxi licences, etc. When determining the cash office viability, whether we continue to charge and if so how we collect these monies will need to be considered;
- When considering postal payments there are a number of processes that will be affected, e.g. planning and building control applications.
- There is potential to work with South Oxfordshire when investigating the viability of a payment network scheme.

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR (CONTRACTS & PROCUREMENT)
TO THE EXECUTIVE
7 DECEMBER 2007

Approval of Procurement Strategy

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 The Council needs a clear and concise Procurement Strategy to provide guidance to staff involved in the procurement process as to how to buy effectively on behalf of the Council and to demonstrate to tax payers and other stakeholders that the Council is compliant with the law and best practice in carrying out its procurement activities, as well as delivering value for money. It has been developed from a procurement framework that was submitted to Strategic Review Committee for review in January 2007. The Strategy takes full account of Government recommendations (including the National Procurement Strategy 2003) and takes account of current priorities such as environmental, economic and social sustainability and equalities and diversity. Acknowledgment is made to staff in South Oxfordshire District Council who provided the Deputy Director (Contracts and Procurement) with assistance in drafting the Strategy .
- 1.2 It is accompanied by a Plan which details 15 key activities which need to be carried out in order to develop procurement excellence in the Vale.
- 1.3 The contact officer for this report is Mike Mackay, Deputy Director (Contracts and Procurement), Tel: 01235 540337 Email:michael.mackay@whitehorsedc.co.uk

2.0 Recommendation

That the Executive approves the Procurement Strategy

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

This report relates to the Council's Vision in that it supports our aims, in particular to encourage a strong and sustainable economy and to provide and support high quality public services. It also supports our Corporate Priorities, in particular the medium term financial plan through cost effective procurement. The report does not conflict with any Council Strategies. Furthermore, the report complies with all relevant existing policies on Equality and Diversity.

4.0 Improving Procurement Effectiveness

- 4.1 The Council currently lacks a clear statement of how it goes about procuring goods and services. This strategy is designed to provide that clarity to all stakeholders, whether that be staff involved in the procurement process, Council Tax payers or local suppliers looking to do business with the Council. It will be accompanied by other related communications, such as a new guide to "Selling to the Council".

- 4.2 The plan attached to the strategy identifies some key areas which need to be addressed to improve purchasing effectiveness, including simplified and automated processes and procedures.
- 4.3 The Council does not have a dedicated purchasing team and lacks purchasing professionals, procurement is carried out by departments across the Council. The range of procurement skills varies. It is therefore particularly important that adequate support and training is provided to all staff to enable them to carry out their procurement responsibilities effectively. Additionally, a Contracts and Procurement Forum will be created to enable best practice to be shared.

5.0 Budget / Resource Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from approval of the strategy, but it is the intention to use the strategy and plan to drive down both the cost of bought in goods and services and the process costs associated with the procurement process. There may be some small incidental costs for the production of leaflets, staff training and so on but this will be covered within existing budgets.
- 5.2 A savings plan has been produced and fed into the medium term financial plan which targets an annual saving of £136,000 to be achieved during 2009/10. There will be a need to buy-in some expert resource on a temporary basis to assist in delivering this saving. The DD C&P is working with colleagues in County and Oxford City to establish the most cost-effective means of buying-in such resource and will produce a separate report for the January Executive.

MIKE MACKAY
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (CONTRACTS AND PROCUREMENT)

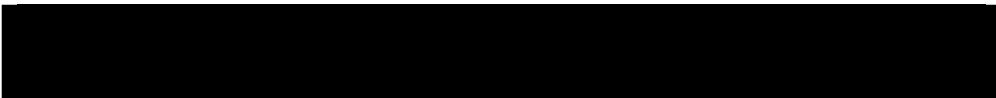
STEVE BISHOP
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR



people
 innovation
 potential
 saving money
 e-commerce
 leadership
 sustainability
 using multiple skills
 increasing capacity
 improving services
 stimulating markets and activating consumer benefits
 cost reduction
 recruitment benefits of being an innovative council
 better quality of life
 focusing on excellent services for citizens
 working in expert partnerships
 growth through trading on behalf of others
 meeting customer requirements
 building relationships that improve our services



national procurement strategy
 for local government



Procurement Strategy

2007 - 2011

DECEMBER 2007

Foreword

The Council is one of the major buyers in the District spending some £9m on bought in goods and services annually. The Council is dependent on a small number of key suppliers to deliver safe, value for money, quality services to our community, particularly with regards to the collection of domestic waste and recyclables, the operation of our leisure centres, the maintenance of parks and gardens and the delivery of financial services. Our suppliers are therefore key stakeholders and we aim to manage our supplier relationships professionally and ethically in order to ensure that both parties and, most importantly, our community derive value from the relationship.

Every pound saved through good purchasing benefits our tax payers and we will strive to obtain value for money in all our purchasing.

This strategy supports the Council's Corporate Plan 2006/08, the Council's Vision, Objectives and Aims.

Councillor Jerry Patterson Leader of the Council

Councillor Jenny Hannaby Executive Member for Contracts and Procurement

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Glossary

Abbreviation	In full
BACS	Formerly the Bankers Automated Clearing Service - automated banking clearing house for electronic transactions
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method
BVPI	Best Value Performance Indicator
Byatt	Sir Ian Byatt prepared a report in 2001 "Delivering better services for citizens – a review of local government procurement in England" which set out 39 specific recommendations on how councils should improve their procurement function
CIPS	Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply
CMT	Council Management Team
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment
CPG	Contracts and Procurement Group
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DETR	Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions – became DTLR then ODPM
DTLR	Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions – became ODPM
EO	Local Government Employers Organisation
EU	European Union
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
Gateway	OGC process for reviewing major procurement at key milestones
Gershon	Sir Peter Gershon, who recommended spending target of a 2.5 per cent year on year saving for the three years 2005/06 to 2007/08, as identified in the Council's annual efficiency statement
ICT	Information and Communications Technology (service)
IDeA	Improvement and Development Agency
IEG	Implementing e-government (strategy)
KPT	Key Performance Target
LGA	Local Government Association
LPT	Local Performance Target
NEPP	National E-Procurement Project
NPS	National Procurement Strategy 2003
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OGC	Office of Government Commerce

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>In full</i>
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RRA / RR(A)A	Race Relations Act 1976 as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
SECE	South East Centre of Excellence (hosted by Kent County Council)
SME	Small or Medium-sized Enterprise
SODC	South Oxfordshire District Council
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
SOPO	Society of (Local Government) Procurement Officers
SPPO	Strategic Procurement Partnership for Oxfordshire

1 – Introduction

1. This procurement strategy sets out the key objectives and plans for procurement for the Council. It also forms part of the arrangements the Council has made for best value and performance management .
2. The status and importance of procurement in the public sector is growing and there is increasing pressure on Councils to improve procurement performance for a number of reasons. Most importantly:
 - procurement has a critical role to play in delivering strategic objectives and improving the quality of services delivered to the public
 - savings realised through improved procurement can be channelled into priority services or reducing the Council's net capital and/or revenue expenditure
 - councils are open to legal challenge under public procurement regulations (based on EU directives) and are accountable for achieving best value
 - councils are expected to meet the expectations set out in the National Procurement Strategy 2003
 - Councils are required to submit an Annual Efficiency Statement
 - Implementation of e-procurement processes is a key element in improving procurement efficiency
 - Sustainability issues need to be embedded in procurement processes
 - Equalities and diversity needs to be embedded in procurement processes
3. The Council has outsourced many of its services. In common with many other district councils the Council's procurement function for the procurement of 'routine' assets, goods, works and services is decentralised, with no dedicated procurement function. The professional head of procurement is the Deputy Director Contracts and Procurement reporting to the Strategic Director and Chief Finance Officer. A Contracts and Procurement Forum (CPF) will be established by April 2008 with the objective of developing standardised guidance and procedures for contract management and effective procurement.
4. In addition, the Council will set up an improved procurement section on the intranet, which shares latest guidance documents and templates, identifies best practice in other Councils and elsewhere, and provides links to relevant government and other websites.

ANALYSIS OF SPEND

5. Appendix 1 shows a breakdown of the Council's revenue expenditure. This shows that the Council's highest expenditure is on employees and contracts.

DIRECTLY PROVIDED SERVICES

6. Expenditure on directly provided and contracted services is the most significant cost to the Council. The cost of directly provided services is under constant review by the Council's management team.

CONTRACTED SERVICES

7. By far the largest proportion of controllable spend lies in the major contracts between the Council and third parties for the provision of services. Many of the Council's services are currently outsourced including waste collection, financial services, leisure management, street cleansing, and grounds maintenance. These contracts currently cost the Council almost £5,000,000 per year. They should therefore be the focus for improving the Council's procurement and contract management methods.

COMMODITIES

8. The main opportunities to deliver savings on basic commodities (e.g. print, stationery) is through partnering with other public sector bodies such as the Strategic Procurement Partnership for Oxfordshire. In addition, the Council will explore savings opportunities through buying consortia accessible through Oxfordshire County Council (such as the Central Buying Consortium), Office of Government Commerce national contracts and the South East Centre of Excellence. However staff should always obtain comparison quotes.

PROCUREMENT PROCESS AND CHARACTERISTICS

9. Analysis of the Council's procurement (2006/07 figures) shows that:
 - the Council settles 7013 invoices per year (about 5,000 of these being paid electronically)
 - the average value of an invoice is £2275
 - the top 25 suppliers annual invoice total is £11.3 million
 - the highest number of invoices raised by a supplier in a year is 308.
 - 497 suppliers are paid electronically (and 442 by cheque)
10. The large number of invoices, the high non-electronically produced proportion, the low average invoice values; all provide an opportunity for the Council to improve its approach to procurement. The Council proposes to explore efficiencies through e-procurement measures with Capita.

2 – Council procurement strategy

DEFINITION & OBJECTIVE OF PROCUREMENT

11. The starting point for the procurement strategy is the definition of procurement.

Procurement is defined as:

The mechanism by which the Council acquires access to the assets, goods, works and services that enable it to fulfil its objectives.

OVERVIEW

12. Procurement is at the heart of everything that the Council does to achieve its objectives at every level. It covers the process of acquiring goods, services and works either from third parties or through in-house sources and covers the entire cycle from identifying needs through to the end of a contract. It is important that the Council sets clear rules for the procurement of these goods, services and works, this is to ensure that procurement is carried out with openness, integrity and accountability, that the probity and transparency of the process is evidenced and that the Council is fulfilling its fiduciary responsibilities.
13. The Council does not believe that it is necessary or appropriate for it to own all of the assets it uses, that it needs to directly purchase all of the goods that it uses or to directly provide all of the services for which it is responsible. The Council's focus is on securing access to the appropriate assets, goods, works and services that enable it to meet its objectives in the most cost effective way possible over the lifetime of those assets, goods, works and services.
14. The Council recognises that procurement is not the responsibility of one individual but requires an organisation wide approach. In the light of the Council's actual expenditure, it intends to concentrate on higher value procurement. In this way its approach to procurement will be proportionate and focus on areas of highest potential to improve performance. It will however also take reasonable measures to procure lower value goods or services more efficiently.

OBJECTIVES

- To ensure procurement plays a role in delivering the Council's objectives and contributes to the community strategy, workforce issues, diversity and equality and sustainability.
- To maximise whole life value for money from the procurement of assets, goods, works and services of the required quality.

PROCUREMENT PRINCIPLES

15. Procurement activity supports the Council's aims in several ways:
1. Where services are delivered via third parties, we will ensure that our suppliers provide **high quality public services** which meet the needs of people within the Vale and **improve the quality of life of the community.**

2. Wherever possible we will contribute towards **a strong and sustainable economy in the district** by providing opportunities to local suppliers to supply to the Council, without compromising the need to obtain best quality at optimum cost.
3. We will assist in controlling costs by cost effective procurement, through ensuring the best possible commercial deals with suppliers and the development of cost effective procurement processes.
4. We will endeavour to work only with suppliers with clear policies supporting equality and diversity and **opposing prejudice and discrimination**.
5. We will ensure that suppliers have appropriate health and safety policies, processes and procedures in place to ensure the safe delivery of products and services, thus contributing to a **safer community**.
6. We will endeavour to ensure that sustainability issues are fully taken into account in sourcing products and services to **protect and improve our environment**.

(Phrases in bold relate to the Council's Aims as set out in the Vision Statement).

PROCUREMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

16. To ensure that we carry out our procurement in accordance with these principles we will ensure appropriate policies and procedures are in place, utilised by appropriately qualified staff. The policies and procedures are explained in the Vale's procurement manual which will be available on the Intranet.
17. A summary of these follows:
 1. We will provide potential suppliers with **clear specifications of our requirements** at the earliest possible stage and ensure these are understood. Wherever possible these will be European or equivalent standards (e.g. BSI).
 2. Our purchasing procedures allow **competition for business** from suppliers, having due regard for the urgency of the requirement and it's value. In cases of low value and/or urgency we may not obtain multiple quotes.
 3. For high value purchases (over the EU procurement thresholds) we will publish our **contract adjudication criteria** at the tender stage to make clear to prospective suppliers how we intend to select the preferred supplier.
 4. We will **debrief** (on request and in writing) all parties to a tendering process as to why they were or were not successful.
 5. Contracts will only be placed on the Council's **standard terms and conditions** or appropriate industry standards (e.g. JCT / ICE for works contracts), except with the authority of the Deputy Director of Contracts and Procurement and the Head of Legal.

6. The Council will only contract with suppliers who are committed to **continuous improvement** and all contracts (other than for one off supply) will include agreed improvement programmes and performance indicators, which will be subject to regular review.
7. There will be clear **segregation of responsibilities** within the procurement process to eliminate the potential for fraud or favouritism and all staff placing contracts on behalf of the Council will be appropriately qualified to ensure the **highest ethical standards**.
8. Procurement processes are expensive to operate and it is the Council's policy to move to **paperless trading** wherever possible, through the use of electronic procurement techniques.
9. We recognise that our annual spend makes us a small buyer in the local authority arena. We will work closely with and partner with other appropriate organisations within and outside the local government arena in order to be able to deliver best value to the council taxpayer.

PROCUREMENT TARGETS

18. The Council has eight procurement targets:

- Reduce the number of suppliers to the Council and create more economic, efficient and effective relationships with key suppliers
- consolidate invoices, deliveries and payments to reduce processing costs
- institute an approved list of suppliers, gain access to buying consortia, increase e-purchasing and, where appropriate, set up framework agreements to achieve volume discounts
- ensure the Council's project management methodology is used for all significant procurement
- institute a best practice options appraisal process (see below)
- ensure equalities, diversity and sustainability issues are taken account of in the procurement process
- assess the training needs of officers and Councillors for procurement, contract management and project management, developing competency frameworks and implement appropriate training and development.
- reduce cost of bought in goods and services.

PROCUREMENT OPTION EVALUATION

19. In reviewing procurement options the Council will decide upon the best option having considered which of the following will deliver the best outcome:
 - deliver or make in-house

- buy or lease from outside
 - partner with other councils, voluntary sector or not-for-profit organisations to deliver jointly
 - a combination of the above
20. Appendix 2 lists the criteria the Council will use in order to reach this decision. The Council reserves the right to introduce further criteria.

DIRECTLY PROVIDED SERVICES

21. The Council recognises that direct service provision is one of the options available to meet the needs of the communities that it serves. Directly provided services will be tested periodically against the market where it is believed that the investment of time and money warrants such a test. The Council will review the option to provide in-house, even if it has previously been or is currently outsourced.
22. In seeking tenders for service provision the Council will consider the development of an in-house bid to act as a benchmark for the provision of services. In this way external service providers will have to illustrate that they can add more value / produce better value for money than an in-house service provider. It will also mean that if successful, the in-house service provider will have been tested against the market, and the Council can have confidence that direct service provision will deliver added value and improved value for money.

3 – Contracts

23. Procurement is governed by the Council's local code of corporate governance and the constitution including the contract procedure and financial rules. In order to assist major procurements, a protocol will be prepared giving guidance on the processes to be followed and where appropriate examples of good practice.

CONTRACT SPECIFICATION

24. In order to achieve maximum benefits from contracts with third parties, the Council will focus on improving the specification for contracts and the terms of the contracts. It will seek specialist advice on the drafting of specifications for its major contracts with a view to helping improve in-house staff drafting skills. Where appropriate it will consider innovative contractual arrangements which provide the flexibility to respond to changing needs over the term of the contract. Lessons learned from the preparation of contracts will be shared across the council, so that awareness and performance generally is improved.

EVALUATION OF TENDERS

25. In evaluating tenders prior to selection, the Council will consider appropriate evaluation criteria, Appendix 3 lists examples. The Council will also comply with any legal requirements for evaluation of tenders.
26. The use of evaluation criteria will be proportional to the size of the procurement. A simplified version will be used for small procurements.
27. Wherever possible the Council will seek to award contracts on a competitive basis. All contractors will be expected to participate in performance reviews. This will enable learning to facilitate on-going performance improvement.

SERVICES PROVIDED JOINTLY WITH OTHER COUNCILS

28. The Council recognises the potential opportunity of sharing service provision with other public sector bodies, especially other similar councils. The Council will always consider whether, when major contracts are due for renewal, a service should be provided jointly, either using in-house staff or contractors. It will also work with other councils to align contract end dates, thus making joint working feasible in the future. The Council will seek an external view on service provision to inform possible contract extensions.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

29. The Council is committed to active performance management which applies to all services whether provided internally or by a third party. Officers and councillors both consider reviews of performance.
30. An important element of this performance review will be an action plan to secure improved performance, with all major contractors being rated on an annual basis.
31. The Council's Executive and if appropriate Scrutiny Committee will consider the review including questioning of the contractor and officers if appropriate, thus providing an opportunity for direct involvement by councillors in monitoring key service delivery.

32. The Council seeks to develop a partnership approach with contractors working together to continuously improve performance. Where, however, a contractor consistently fails to perform to a satisfactory level, the Council will use all of the options available to it under the contract to achieve either an increase in performance from the contractor, or ultimately terminate the contract for failure to perform to meet the requirements of the contract.

CAPITAL ASSETS

33. The same principles apply to the procurement of capital assets. As with major revenue contracts, the Council recognises that it does not have the necessary in-house expertise to manage the procurement of major capital assets and will continue to appoint consultants to advise it on the procurement of specific capital assets. It learns from the involvement of the consultants and will build its corporate capacity / knowledge to ensure that it is an effective client and can ensure that it receives value for money from consultants and future procurements of capital assets.
34. The procurement of capital assets can be a long and expensive process with potentially major revenue implications. The Council has a project management methodology and will seek to review the procurement process for all significant capital asset procurements at key stages to ensure that it learns from experience and has the opportunity to improve its (and its partners') future performance. The Council recognises that procurement doesn't end with the provision of the capital asset but involves the whole life cost and use of the asset.
35. Recognising lack of capacity and skill in-house, the Council's preferred strategy is to outsource design, build and project management for major capital schemes.

COMMODITIES

36. The spend analysis has shown that the Council has limited opportunity for cost saving through purchase of common commodities such as utilities, administrative supplies, recruitment advertising, temporary agency staff, telephony etc. This arises partly from the relatively low levels of spend in these areas, but also from the economies and efficiencies which the Council has put in place over a number of years.
37. The Council will seek to achieve economies of scale through longer term contracts and/or seek partnerships with other organisations to aggregate purchasing power. It will also seek volume discounts through buying consortia, or through nationally-negotiated contracts such as those provided by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), or achieved through the activities of the Strategic Procurement Partnership for Oxfordshire. SPPO is a collaboration of the procurement functions of Oxfordshire councils. Its agreed purpose is to "facilitate the development of strategic and collaborative procurement for the benefit of the citizens in Oxfordshire." Its specific aims and objectives are included in its terms of reference (appendix 4). The Council will also follow this approach for non capital equipment.

SUSTAINABILITY

38. In its procurement processes the council will take into account appropriate sustainability factors, social, economic and environmental including climate change. Relevant considerations will depend on the nature of the procurement and advice will be sought as part of the preparation of the specification.

39. The Council will work with the South East Centre of Excellence who is the lead procurement organisation for sustainability, and our Principal Energy Officer to produce a sustainable procurement policy and action plan by 31st March 2008.

STIMULATING MARKETS

40. The Council is committed to encouraging a mixed range of suppliers including small firms, social enterprises, ethnic minority businesses and voluntary and community sector suppliers. This will help to stimulate a varied and competitive marketplace and support the local economy.
41. We will work to understand the supplier's perspective and market the council to suppliers. We are aiming for a diverse and competitive supply base to help improve value for money and to develop suppliers to meet new or emerging requirements. The Council will work with representatives of SMEs and other community organisations to ensure that they become aware of the opportunities for supplying the Council. The Council will sign up to the SME Friendly Concordat statement of principles by 31st March 2008.
42. The council will work with prime contractors – both at tender stage and during the life of a contract – to establish the contribution that small firms, ethnic minority businesses, social enterprises and voluntary and community sector suppliers can play in the supply chain. We will provide details of our prime contractors on our website.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

43. As a Council, we deliver services to customers and value our employees equally, irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, age, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation or any other irrelevant factor. We recognise and value difference and respect our staff and service users as individuals
44. To ensure that the Council procures goods, works and services in a way which promotes equality and diversity, we need to:
- have a fair and accessible procurement process
 - make sure that where contractors deliver services on our behalf, they do so in a way which meets the needs of all our residents and/or employees
45. By being pro-active in these two areas, the Council will help to achieve its vision of building and safeguarding a fair, open and compassionate community. We will also be meeting our statutory duties to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote disability, race and gender equality.
46. The Council will have a fair and accessible procurement process by:
- simplifying the guidance available to potential suppliers about how we procure goods, works and services

- making information about the Council's procurement opportunities more accessible ('meet the buyer' event, information on the website)
47. When we use contractors to deliver services on our behalf, we will make sure that they do so in a way which meets the needs of all our residents and/or employees by:
- Seeking information from tenderers about their equality and diversity policies and practices and using this to help shortlist suitable candidates
 - Prompting officers to consider any equality and diversity issues when they are procuring goods, works or services
 - Including standard equality and diversity clauses in major contracts to ensure contractors meet relevant statutory duties
 - Consulting our major contractors on any statutory equality and diversity policies/schemes we develop

BUSINESS CONTINUITY

48. Business continuity is the process of preparing for and responding to a disaster event or situation that could have a serious impact on the delivery of the Council's services. All procurement should consider and include provision for business continuity wherever appropriate.

4 – E-Procurement

49. The Council has automated a large part of the purchase to pay process, by removing paper documents from the purchasing process e.g. requisitions, orders, goods receipt notes and invoices. The Council fully recognises that e-procurement provides significant opportunities for substantial expenditure savings, reduced transaction costs and improved operational efficiency.

E-PROCUREMENT OF COMMON COMMODITIES

50. Many of the goods and services procured by the Council are common to other Councils. SPPO has become the main forum for jointly purchasing common commodities throughout Oxfordshire councils. In many of the cases, electronic reverse auctions are used to achieve the lowest price against a pre-defined basket of measures. Commodities amenable to e-auctions include paper, stationery and ICT consumables (already undertaken), telecoms, etc. The Council's strategy is to continue with this partnership with other Councils wherever sensible, and to this end maintains regular contact with SECE to identify when suitable opportunities arise.

E-MARKETPLACES

51. An e-marketplace is an online trading forum, often software based, designed to make it easier for organisations and suppliers to trade with each other. Some councils are now implementing e-marketplace solutions, which capture their existing suppliers in a database, allow suppliers to be shared between councils (with possible economies of scale), and permit electronic ordering. The Council is currently working with SPPO and SECE to identify the best options.

SELLING TO THE COUNCIL

52. The Council's website already includes a section called 'Selling to the Council' which is specifically designed to make it easier for SMEs and other potential suppliers to do business with the Council. It includes a list of currently advertised opportunities with downloadable information packs, an overview of the Council's procurement rules and contact information. A downloadable 'selling to the council' handbook will be made available. The Council will be adopting an e tendering solution to enable suppliers to submit bids and tender documents electronically.

5 – Implementation Responsibility

MANAGEMENT TEAM

53. Strategies are only as good as the people who implement them and the commitment of the leaders within organisations to the achievement of their objectives. Management team is responsible for owning, leading, driving and challenging services to implement the procurement strategy and to ensure its success. A strategic director has lead responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the strategy.

EXECUTIVE

54. To reflect the political commitment to this strategy the executive Councillor for Contracts and Procurement has assumed responsibility for procurement. This Councillor will ensure that procurement is recognised and proactively considered in the political processes of the Council and its partners and will also lead councillor engagement with the procurement strategy and will be involved in overseeing major procurement decisions and processes.

DEPUTY DIRECTORS AND TEAM LEADERS

55. Operational responsibility for procurement rests with individual managers throughout the Council. They will manage and undertake procurement activity in line with the Council's strategy and acting within the contracts and financial procedure rules specified in the constitution. They will be expected to learn from best practice elsewhere, from their own experience and to contribute to the dissemination of learning to improve the procurement performance of the Council. The Deputy Director Contracts and Procurement and the organisational change team will provide support to teams in implementing the strategy.

CONTRACTS AND PROCUREMENT FORUM

56. The CPF is responsible for overseeing the letting, management, monitoring and review of Council contracts, and for coordinating and advising on procurement initiatives designed to help the Council achieve best value. The terms of reference for CPF are included in Appendix 5.

KEY PROCUREMENT PERFORMANCE TARGETS

57. In order to monitor the performance of the Council's procurement, the corporate plan will include appropriate local performance targets. These will be based on the targets set out in this strategy or as required by BVPIs.
58. When adopted these local performance targets will form part of the Council's performance management system. In this way, progress against procurement targets will be monitored regularly and reported to management team, executive and the appropriate scrutiny committee.

PROCUREMENT PERFORMANCE REVIEW

59. The Council is fully committed to the review of all of its strategies to ensure that its performance continuously improves and that its strategies remain relevant and effective. This strategy will be subject to review both externally and internally.
60. Internal review will be by:
- quarterly review of local performance targets relating to procurement by Executive as part of the existing performance review process
 - annual review of procurement by Scrutiny Committee as part of their annual workplan

6 – Conclusion

61. This Council has long been committed to cost effective procurement and wants to build on the progress it has already made in relation to procurement and to continue to improve. This strategy focuses on those areas of greatest priority to the Council.
62. The Council has a number of large contracts which provide the greatest opportunities for more effective procurement improving value for money and/or reducing costs. This will be the focus of the Council's activities. It will however always take reasonable steps to ensure that it is obtaining value for money in its smaller contracts and commodities by continually testing the market and by working with others.
63. This strategy has been developed from the national procurement Strategy for Local Government . The successful implementation of this strategy will make a significant contribution to the on-going improvement of the Council's performance and the value it adds from the investment in assets, goods, works and services necessary to enable it to meet the needs of the communities it serves.

Appendix 1 – Spend analysis 2006/07

Spend by service

	Employees £	Utilities £	* Premises £	** Transport £	Equipment £	Supplies £	Contracts £	Capital expend £
Audit & Performance Management	180,027	231		5,169	742	4,445		
CE Strategy	27,207	127	2,361		110	10,755		
Commercial Services	897,109	13,631	63,408	115,089	8,387	141,751		
Contracts & Procurement	1,282,588	79,303	772,880	43,573	99,993	462,783	4,584,855	737,816
Environmental Health	865,001	4,239	3,703	51,173	125,243	104,716		137,534
Estates	318,063	123,496	1,077,240	12,008	11,972	152,064	27,977	598,042
Finance	1,052,723	2,670	256,457	16,396	30,948	1,231,477	1,069,328	324,296
Housing & Community Safety	965,662	34,071	58,295	28,910	59,302	821,467	30,000	1,234,738
Legal & Democratic Services	664,393	2,235	23,243	14,840	57,200	508,651		27,524
Organisational Development & Support	1,627,789	28,697	12,709	15,505	178,270	272,557	14,635	30,800
Planning & Community Strategy	1,524,954	37,107	172,645	65,324	43,277	710,592	64,951	55,643
SB Strategy	846,863	1,268	545	6,673	334	246,810		
TS Strategy		914	32		203	7,850		
Grand Total	10,252,379	327,988	2,443,518	374,661	615,980	4,675,917	5,791,746	3,146,394

Note: This expenditure analysis excludes expenditure on grants, parish precepts, housing benefits, and notional charges as these are outside the control of the Council's procurement process.

Premises include insurance, business rates and CT, contract cleaning, repairs and maintenance, leases, rent/hire of rooms, service charges and waste management

Transport includes: car allowances – lump sum and mileage, fuel, hire of plant, leased car costs, licences, repairs and maintenance or vehicles and insurance.

Spend by contract

VALE OUTSOURCED CONTRACTS

SERVICE	CONTRACTOR	COMMENCEMENT DATE	END DATE	ANNUAL COST 06/07
FINANCIAL (e.g. Revs/Bens)	Capita	2006	2013	1,143,612
SPORTS CENTRES	SOLL (Vale) DC Leisure	2004	2014	378,650.00
		2002	2012	£500 (Five hundred)
WASTE COLLECTION	Veolia (recently took over Cleanaway)	2003	2010	3,428,000
PARKS/GROUNDS MTCE	ISS Waterers (recently took over JV Strong)	2005	2009	462,317

Some of these services have been outsourced for many years (e.g. Waste), the detail above relates to there current contractor NOT the original date of outsourcing

Appendix 2 – Option evaluation

In order to decide whether to provide in-house, outsource or partner with other organisations, the Council will consider the following evaluation criteria:

1. the needs of the asset, goods or service user/stakeholders
2. the degree to which the asset, goods or service being procured is of a specialist nature
3. the quality of the asset, good or service required
4. the time pressures for provision
5. legal requirements
6. cost comparisons, including the adoption of the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) principle
7. the availability of a market of suppliers with good past performance and financial standing
8. the ability to aggregate and share purchasing power
9. the need to gain access to assets, goods, works, skills and services where investment could not be justified based on the Council's requirement acting in isolation
10. the Council's duty to promote sustainability and race equality and other social issues including how contractors can meet the Council's requirements
11. exploring the use of the voluntary sector in service provision
12. other criteria relevant to procurement.

Appendix 3 – Evaluation of suppliers

ASSETS

In evaluating suppliers for the provision of assets, the Council will consider:

1. compliance with the tender specification
2. evidence of innovation
3. project management performance
4. track record of performance in delivering to time, budget and specification
5. track record of working in partnership and client satisfaction
6. repair and maintenance performance to minimise whole life costs
7. the ability of suppliers to offer alternative options that meet the specification and deliver additional social and environmental benefits
8. compliance with health and safety, equality and other statutory requirements
9. financial standing
10. materials and employment sourcing policies and performance
11. payment requirements/methods.

GOODS

In evaluating suppliers for the provision of goods the Council will consider:

1. compliance with the specification
2. evidence of product and supply chain innovation
3. initial purchase unit costs
4. whole life costs
5. the ability of suppliers to offer alternative products that meet the specification and deliver additional social and environmental benefits
6. willingness to allow aggregation of purchasing power and sharing of economies of scale
7. flexibility of pricing based upon volume and value
8. flexibility of delivery in terms of timescales, volumes and locations
9. warranty and support services
10. track record of performance and customer satisfaction
11. financial standing
12. payment requirements/methods
13. compliance with health and safety, equality and other statutory requirements.

SERVICES

In evaluating suppliers for the provision of services the Council will consider:

1. compliance with the specification
2. evidence of, and scope for, innovation over time
3. the willingness to develop a partnership approach to service provision
4. initial purchase costs
5. whole life costs
6. the ability of suppliers to offer alternative services that meet the specification and deliver additional social and environmental benefits
7. track record of service provision performance and client satisfaction
8. access to the competencies and support services required for effective performance
9. flexibility of delivery in terms of timescales, volumes and locations
10. track record of investment in training and development
11. financial standing
12. payment requirements/methods
13. compliance with health and safety, equality and other statutory requirements
14. commitment to performance improvement and the willingness to invest in systems etc
15. willingness to share the financial benefits of increased economy, efficiency and effectiveness achieved through business process improvements.
16. Ability to retain staff in a competitive market place.

Appendix 4 – Strategic Procurement Partnership for Oxfordshire

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose

The purpose of the Strategic Procurement Partnership for Oxfordshire is to facilitate the development of strategic and collaborative procurement for the benefit of the citizens in Oxfordshire.

The practical working arrangements will also enable all of the partners to opt in or out of any joint project as best fits the needs of their organisation.

SPPO is not a legal partnership but an agreement of the authorities listed below and any other partners to work together for mutual benefit. Any contractual relationships will be specific to any joint procurement arrangements that councillors agree to be involved in.

Strategic aims

- make savings, and/or achieve better value for money, through the joint purchasing of common commodities
- make it easier for suppliers to do business with councils
- develop a common supplier base
- import and share good procurement practice
- support the delivery of National Procurement Strategy and South East Centre of Excellence objectives
- create capacity through delivering procurement projects jointly
- reduce the in-house processing costs of orders and invoices, through back office improvement and e-marketplace solutions
- work together in a flexible way that allows all councillors to opt in and out of any work plans as best meets the needs of their organisation
- make savings, and/or achieve better value for money, in shared services through alignment of contracts and tenders and sharing of risk

Specific objectives

- generate deliverable and measurable financial savings for all through the setting up of joint procurement contracts for common indirect purchases
- produce a joint guide for suppliers on “how to sell to Oxfordshire Councils”

- develop options for E commerce solutions in conjunction with the Countywide joint IEG group
- generate deliverable and measurable process savings through more efficient “procure to pay” processing
- align each authority’s procurement strategy with the strategic aims of the group
- ensure, the tasks and objectives of SPPO support the deliverables set by the South East Centre of Excellence at regional and sub-regional level

Membership

The members of the SPPO are:

- Cherwell District Council
- Oxford City Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- South Oxfordshire District Council
- Thames Valley Police
- Vale of White Horse District Council
- West Oxfordshire District Council.

Membership of the group and or opportunities to enter into joint procurement arrangements will also be offered to other public bodies both within the Oxfordshire and the neighbouring counties. This may include:

- Primary Care Trusts and other NHS bodies
- Universities
- Berkshire Unitary Authorities
- other members of the South East Centre of Excellence
- other public and voluntary sector organisations.

Appendix 5 – Contracts and Procurement Forum

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. oversee the letting, management, monitoring and review of Council contracts.
2. provide guidance on performance-related and other issues arising from contract monitoring.
3. share best practice on contracts and procurement issues.
4. lead on strategic procurement issues affecting the Council as a whole.
5. contribute to the operation and review of Contracts Procedure Rules.
6. co-ordinate the preparation of a Contracts Guidance Manual.

It is part of this strategy that these terms of reference will be expanded to include the following:

7. develop an action plan to ensure that the procurement strategy is implemented successfully.
8. co-ordinate the review of the Council's procurement performance.
9. promote and facilitate the most economic, efficient and effective procurement of assets, goods, works and services by and for the Council.
10. ensure that the procurement strategy and its implementation helps the Council to meet its strategic objectives, Best Value Performance Indicators and local performance targets.
11. be a focal point and conduit for procurement issues raised by the Council.
12. lead future reviews of the procurement strategy.
13. establish corporate guidelines, frameworks, documentation and evaluation systems to ensure a consistent approach to procurement across the Council that complements the corporate performance management system/Best Value review process and promotes continuous improvement.
14. provide Best Value Review teams with advice and guidance on competitive procurement and assist review teams during the service delivery option appraisal process.
15. ensure procurement practices and policies contribute to the Council's priorities on equality, sustainability, and regeneration.
16. advise councillors and senior managers on the implications of partnering arrangements, contractual frameworks, compliance with standing orders and EU procurement guidelines and processes.

The CPG is accountable to the management team and will produce regular progress reports to management team, Cabinet and Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee as appropriate.

DRAFT PROCUREMENT DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2007/09

Ref.	ACTIVITY	ACTION	BY	TARGET
1	Reduce cost of bought in goods and services	Produce Plan targeting specific commodities	Done	£136,000 annual saving by 31.03.10
2	Implement e-procurement across the procurement process	Identify scope and produce implementation plan	31.06.08	Fully automated by 31.03.09
4	Publish Guide to "Selling to the Council" targeted at local businesses	Produce as both leaflet and on the web	31.03.08	Update annually
5	Create Approved Supplier list	Work with Corporate Property and Estates team to develop their list into Council wide resource	31.03.08	Not applicable
6	Set up Contract and Procurement Forum	First meeting by 31.01.08 thereafter to meet at least quarterly	31.01.08	Quarterly meeting
7	Provide training for officers involved in procurement	Develop and deliver 1 day training to relevant staff	31.06.08	All staff involved in contracting
8	Deliver process and procedural guidance on procurement to officers via the Intranet	Implement South Oxfordshire intranet based process	31.12.07	Not applicable
9	Produce sustainable procurement policy	Work with South East Centre of Excellence and Vale Principal Energy Officer	31.03.08	Not applicable
10	Review of constitution, standing orders, contracts manual and other relevant documents relating to procurement	Update documentation to reflect new strategy	Timescale to be agreed with Legal	Not applicable
11	Improved Procurement Web site	Replicate South Oxfordshire structure	31.12.07	Update monthly
12	Reduce suppliers	Produce plan	31.06.08	Reduce by x%

Ref.	ACTIVITY	ACTION	BY	TARGET
13	Sign up to the SME Friendly Concordat	Sign Concordat	31.03.08	Not applicable
14	Review Council standard terms and conditions for commercial contracts	Update standard terms where necessary	Timescale to be agreed with Legal	Review annually
15	Create central contracts register	Pull together all existing registers into single central register	30.06.08	Not applicable

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR
TO THE EXECUTIVE
7 DECEMBER 2007

Consultation Strategy

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 This report proposes the adoption of the consultation strategy for the Vale as part of the Corporate Priority “Improving internal and external communications”. The strategy needs to be adopted to move the priority forward.
- 1.2 The strategy is based on information from the Strategic Management Team and their service areas, the staff and Member survey and the public general satisfaction survey completed last financial year by polling company Ipsos MORI as part of the Best Value Performance Indicator requirement.
- 1.3 The strategy is built from the position of where we are now and what we aim to achieve over the next two years.
- 1.4 The contact officer for this report is Nikki Malin, Head of Communications, telephone (01235 540376). **Email address nikki.malin@whitehorsedc.co.uk**

2.0 Recommendations

that the Executive agrees the strategy.

3.0 Relationship with the Council’s Vision, Strategies and Policies

This report is related to the Corporate Priority “Improving both internal and external communications”.

HELEN BISHOP
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT)

TIM SADLER
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

Background Paper: Copy of strategy

Getting The Message

A Consultation Strategy for the Vale of White Horse District Council

**“A process of dialogue that leads to a decision.”
(Audit Commission 1999, “Listen Up”)**

Why Should We Consult?

Effective consultation can be the difference between an organisation winning plaudits for its work or losing the respect of those who use its services. Any organisation which provides services to customers or communities cannot afford to ignore the people it serves and consultation is the best way of getting the message from them and getting the service right.

Members consult on a daily basis. Every time they listen to their constituents or to the Council's stakeholders they are monitoring reactions, opinions, desires and needs, and then using those feelings to shape their decisions. It is important to stress that consultation shapes decisions; it doesn't make them for you. Neither does consultation replace or depose strong leadership, it enhances it. Leadership and consultation are not mutually exclusive, as it is not a weakness to listen to what people are saying and thinking but a strength. Strong leadership requires rational decision-making based on the evidence of what is needed, not just on what is wanted.

As a Council we consult regularly. In some cases this is a statutory requirement, for instance on planning applications and the Local Development Framework, or the Best Value Performance Indicator General Satisfaction survey every three years. The way this is done is usually heavily prescribed. We also consult on the provision of our services but this is usually discretionary.

Consultation can challenge assumptions and lead to new ways of thinking. Sometimes this can be uncomfortable but it can protect an organisation from mistakes and misperceptions. In the Council's case, it can help ensure that we are delivering what the community needs or wants in the most effective way. This means that consultation can support the requirement to deliver best value from our limited resources.

In the White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" the Government sets out its vision for Local Government, based on best practice evidence from Councils across the country. The Government wants Local Authorities to be responsive and inclusive. This means making sure the people a council serves feel more in control, more involved in running services and more informed about the quality of service in their area, with a clear idea of what the Council will do if services fail to meet their needs. This in turn should give people a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for local services.

The White Paper says that the new "Community Call for Action" will require Councillors to demand answers if their local community feels an issue is not being addressed, placing increased emphasis on an individual Councillor's responsibilities and the need for constant dialogue with constituents.

If we do not consult effectively we miss opportunities to deliver higher levels of satisfaction, as the more involved and informed a community feels, the more satisfied they become. It has to be said that research by Ipsos MORI shows the

link with satisfaction is stronger with communication, but as Ipsos MORI says: "Given that good communications are an initial and valuable step towards securing higher levels of participation it can be argued that authorities with good scores are well placed to motivate and engage with the public." The communications strategy "You Heard It Here First" will work towards better informing our residents and this consultation strategy will complement that. The more we involve our communities the better informed they become, as consultation can at the very least inform citizens about the decisions we have to make and the context we have to work in.

Where are we now?

Consultation is a developing skill in the Vale of White Horse District Council and is not yet fully embedded as part of day-to-day running in some parts of the Council.

The Audit Commission has been critical of the Vale in the past because of its failure to demonstrate the part consultation plays in the decision-making process. This is not to say that the Council does not consult, or that when it does it is not done well, but we sometimes fail to demonstrate how consultation shapes what we do.

According to the 2006/07 Best Value Performance Indicator General User Survey, those who express satisfaction with the Council and feel well informed are more likely to think they can influence decision making. Seven in ten residents do not feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area but only two in ten residents say they would like to be involved in local decision making. The majority (60 per cent) say their involvement would depend on the issue. There may be some issues which are more important to some individuals than others and it is our task to ensure we are giving people the opportunity to comment on those that are important to them. Those that would like more involvement are most likely to be working full time and are aged between 25 and 64, which presents a challenge in itself as these are likely to be people with busy lives and family commitments, limiting the time they have available to attend workshops and events.

There is a lot of information within the Vale about our “customers” but it is kept in different ways by different service areas. As a result we do not have a cohesive idea of who they are and what they want. This means we are missing out on opportunities to gather vital information which can help shape our response. For instance, our comments, complaints and suggestions information is not circulated, apart from a brief report to the Executive once a year. The customer information collected by the LSP as part of their customer relationship management system stays in the LSP and is not analysed.

Consultation with our staff is limited and tends to focus on the mechanical (office moves) rather than the influential (vision and objectives). This was demonstrated by the Staff Survey, conducted in 2006, in which staff said they felt disengaged from the Council’s aims, objectives and future plans.

In terms of formal consultation we have a citizens’ panel, Vale Voice, which includes around 1,000 residents and aims to demographically represent the Vale in terms of location, gender, ethnicity and disability. We also have a Youth Forum, made up of two representatives from each secondary level school in the Vale (both state and private) but this is generally used to download information, rather than shape decisions. This may change with the introduction of a Youth Forum Executive but this opportunity to interact with people aged under 18 should be utilised more.

The four area forums are consulted on issues which affect their area directly. Housing also does consultation with its clients but was criticised by the Audit Commission for not demonstrating how this has shaped policy and decisions. Also, the data captured remains with housing, even though the information may be of use to other areas.

The Planning Service has a statutory responsibility to consult, both on planning applications and planning policy, in particular the Local Development Framework, which will replace the Local Plan and will bring forward new areas for work, housing and commercial developments, but again this information tends to stay in Development Control and is not shared though it could be valuable as it goes some way towards identifying what the community values about the area and what it desires in the future.

The LSP does quarterly surveys on customer satisfaction and our leisure contractors conduct regular customer surveys.

Perhaps most importantly our Members are daily gathering information about our communities and have a much greater understanding of the men, women and children who make up the Vale, but there is no formal mechanism for gathering this intelligence.

The Vale is represented on the Oxfordshire Countywide Consultation Officers Forum, which comprises Oxfordshire County Council and the five District Councils. The Forum has signed a consultation pact which provides for sharing information, co-ordination of activity and joint commissioning of consultation.

With regards to the Council's approach to providing inclusive and accessible consultation opportunities the Vale's Equality and Diversity Scheme (currently in draft, due to be adopted in December) sets out how we currently provide inclusive consultation opportunities and actions for improvement.

Where do we want to be?

Consultation needs to be much better co-ordinated and consistent. We need to be able to identify if all sections of the community have had a say. We need to be clear about why we are consulting, setting objectives and deciding what we will do with the results before opening dialogue. We need to strike a balance between resource limitations, statutory requirements, community demands and the Members' decision making role and we need to communicate the results and the outcomes, being clear about why decisions have been made, particularly if they contradict consultation results.

1. Any external consultation should aim to:
 - a. Inform Council direction on real issues
 - b. Improve customer services so we are delivering the right services to the right people in the right time and in the right way
 - c. Improve customer satisfaction
 - d. Improve Audit Commission inspections
 - e. Complement the communications strategy
 - f. Raise the Vale's profile in the community
 - g. Complement the Equality and Diversity Scheme
2. Any consultation with staff should aim to:
 - a. Make staff part of the decision making process
 - b. Improve satisfaction with the Senior Management Team
 - c. Influence the direction of travel of the Council

What should consultation in the Vale be like?

1. **Honest** about what information we want and what responders can influence – if we have already made a decision we should not consult, unless it is to help determine how best to deliver the service affected by that decision
2. **Involving and inclusive** giving everyone the opportunity to take part and giving enough information to help people make informed decisions.
3. **Active not passive** – any consultation should be actively promoted, not just hidden away on a website or a dusty corner of the LSP
4. **Improving** – it should be aimed at improving our service delivery or decision-making
5. **Accountable** – we should have a firm commitment to pass on results to participants and the wider public, as well as the outcomes, explaining why we have reached the decisions we have, to give the consultation process credibility
6. **Credible** – to encourage take-up people need to believe their opinions are being heard, even if we do not follow their choices we must explain why
7. **Coordinated** to make sure consultation by the Council is joined up and avoids duplication
8. **Done in partnership** where appropriate to reduce costs and consultation fatigue

How are we going to get there?

1. To achieve this we need to (in order of priority):
 - a) Structure and plan consultation from a central point to ensure consistency and co-ordination
 - b) Have effective tools to support the consultation process
 - c) Build consultation into the planning process of any project
 - d) Help officers and Members understand the value of consultation
 - e) Be clear about who is being consulted and why
 - f) Ensure any consultation is inclusive with particular regard to groups who are more likely to have difficulty accessing consultation opportunities and services (including people from ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, older and younger members of the community).

Aim one: Structure and plan consultation from a central point to ensure consistency and co-ordination

Action	Responsibility	Completion Date
Conduct an audit and review of existing consultation measures	Communications Team	May 2008
Produce an annual consultation plan with the support of Deputy Directors and their service area teams	Communications Team	April 2008
Ensure consultation requirements are built into service planning	Communications Team	Ongoing
Revise and re-launch the comment, complaints and suggestions procedure	Head of Communications	September 2008

Aim two: Have effective tools to support the consultation process

Action	Responsibility	Completion Date
Set up a database to include any consultation exercises and its outcomes and make it available online (though planning applications will be subject to a different process).	Communications Team/ICT	Initial scoping by September 2008
Purchase an online survey tool to help with the process and provide training to relevant members of staff.	Communications /ICT/Development Control	Initial scoping by September 2008
Expand the consultation section on the intranet and website to keep staff and the public informed about what we are doing.	Communications Team	December 2008
Conduct an audit of existing customer databases to understand who our audiences are	Communications /LSP	December 2008

Aim three: Build consultation into the planning process of any project

Action	Responsibility	Completion Date
Work with Service Areas and the Projects Team to ensure consultation requirements are built into the early stages of the planning process	Communications /Organisational Change	Ongoing
Work with Service Areas and Organisational Change to ensure consultation and communication are part of the Service Standards process	Communications /Organisational Change	Ongoing

Aim four: Help officers and Members understand the value of consultation:

Action	Responsibility	Completion Date
Produce a guide to consultation for Members and officers	Communications /Equalities Officer	April 2009
Offer Member and officer training	Communications /Equalities Officer	First training session with Members due in January 2008
Offer continuous guidance on consultation and engagement activity	Communications Team	Ongoing
Work with the Staff Action Planning Group and Senior Management Team to develop internal consultation standards and an SMT Charter for staff consultation.	Communications /Staff Action Planning Group	December 2008

Aim five: Be clear about who is being consulted and why

Action	Responsibility	Completion Date
Ensure any consultation has a properly documented plan including the target group or groups, outcomes and communication of results.	Communications Team/ Equalities Officer	Ongoing

Aim six: Ensure any consultation is inclusive with particular regard to groups who are more likely to have difficulty accessing consultation opportunities and services (including people from ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, older and younger members of the community).

Action	Responsibility	Completion Date
Work with the equalities officer to build up a database of groups more likely to face difficulties in accessing consultation and services. Identify relevant access channels and seek to address any gaps.	Communications /Equalities Officer	March 2008
Where appropriate include equalities data questions on surveys and analyse data accordingly.	Communications /Equalities Officer	Ongoing
Work with the Youth Forum to build in mechanisms for feedback on Council issues	Communications /Youth Development Officer	Ongoing
Work with the Youth Forum to build in youth representation on the Vale Voice Citizens Panel	Communications /Youth Development Officer	April 2009
Regularly monitor the response to Vale Voice surveys to ensure they are representative.	Communications Team	Ongoing
Include any relevant actions within this strategy from the Consultation Equality Impact Assessment currently being conducted (due to be complete by February 2008).	Head of Communications	March 2008
Produce a checklist for staff on how to run an accessible event (including consultation events).	Communications Team/Equalities Officer	March 2009
Review guidance for staff on how to consult with ethnic minority communities, disabled people and women.	Communications Team	March 2009
Develop the corporate complaints process in order to capture equalities data and flag any complaints which relate to equality and diversity.	Communications Team	July 2009

Getting The Message

A Consultation Strategy for the Vale of White Horse District Council

**“A process of dialogue that leads to a decision.”
(Audit Commission 1999, “Listen Up”)**

Why Should We Consult?

Effective consultation can be the difference between an organisation winning plaudits for its work or losing the respect of those who use its services. Any organisation which provides services to customers or communities cannot afford to ignore the people it serves and consultation is the best way of getting the message from them and getting the service right.

Members consult on a daily basis. Every time they listen to their constituents or to the Council's stakeholders they are monitoring reactions, opinions, desires and needs, and then using those feelings to shape their decisions. It is important to stress that consultation shapes decisions; it doesn't make them for you. Neither does consultation replace or depose strong leadership, it enhances it. Leadership and consultation are not mutually exclusive, as it is not a weakness to listen to what people are saying and thinking but a strength. Strong leadership requires rational decision-making based on the evidence of what is needed, not just on what is wanted.

As a Council we consult regularly. In some cases this is a statutory requirement, for instance on planning applications and the Local Development Framework, or the Best Value Performance Indicator General Satisfaction survey every three years. The way this is done is usually heavily prescribed. We also consult on the provision of our services but this is usually discretionary.

Consultation can challenge assumptions and lead to new ways of thinking. Sometimes this can be uncomfortable but it can protect an organisation from mistakes and misperceptions. In the Council's case, it can help ensure that we are delivering what the community needs or wants in the most effective way. This means that consultation can support the requirement to deliver best value from our limited resources.

In the White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" the Government sets out its vision for Local Government, based on best practice evidence from Councils across the country. The Government wants Local Authorities to be responsive and inclusive. This means making sure the people a council serves feel more in control, more involved in running services and more informed about the quality of service in their area, with a clear idea of what the Council will do if services fail to meet their needs. This in turn should give people a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for local services.

The White Paper says that the new "Community Call for Action" will require Councillors to demand answers if their local community feels an issue is not being addressed, placing increased emphasis on an individual Councillor's responsibilities and the need for constant dialogue with constituents.

If we do not consult effectively we miss opportunities to deliver higher levels of satisfaction, as the more involved and informed a community feels, the more satisfied they become. It has to be said that research by Ipsos MORI shows the

link with satisfaction is stronger with communication, but as Ipsos MORI says: "Given that good communications are an initial and valuable step towards securing higher levels of participation it can be argued that authorities with good scores are well placed to motivate and engage with the public." The communications strategy "You Heard It Here First" will work towards better informing our residents and this consultation strategy will complement that. The more we involve our communities the better informed they become, as consultation can at the very least inform citizens about the decisions we have to make and the context we have to work in.

Where are we now?

Consultation is a developing skill in the Vale of White Horse District Council and is not yet fully embedded as part of day-to-day running in some parts of the Council.

The Audit Commission has been critical of the Vale in the past because of its failure to demonstrate the part consultation plays in the decision-making process. This is not to say that the Council does not consult, or that when it does it is not done well, but we sometimes fail to demonstrate how consultation shapes what we do.

According to the 2006/07 Best Value Performance Indicator General User Survey, those who express satisfaction with the Council and feel well informed are more likely to think they can influence decision making. Seven in ten residents do not feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area but only two in ten residents say they would like to be involved in local decision making. The majority (60 per cent) say their involvement would depend on the issue. There may be some issues which are more important to some individuals than others and it is our task to ensure we are giving people the opportunity to comment on those that are important to them. Those that would like more involvement are most likely to be working full time and are aged between 25 and 64, which presents a challenge in itself as these are likely to be people with busy lives and family commitments, limiting the time they have available to attend workshops and events.

There is a lot of information within the Vale about our “customers” but it is kept in different ways by different service areas. As a result we do not have a cohesive idea of who they are and what they want. This means we are missing out on opportunities to gather vital information which can help shape our response. For instance, our comments, complaints and suggestions information is not circulated, apart from a brief report to the Executive once a year. The customer information collected by the LSP as part of their customer relationship management system stays in the LSP and is not analysed.

Consultation with our staff is limited and tends to focus on the mechanical (office moves) rather than the influential (vision and objectives). This was demonstrated by the Staff Survey, conducted in 2006, in which staff said they felt disengaged from the Council’s aims, objectives and future plans.

In terms of formal consultation we have a citizens’ panel, Vale Voice, which includes around 1,000 residents and aims to demographically represent the Vale in terms of location, gender, ethnicity and disability. We also have a Youth Forum, made up of two representatives from each secondary level school in the Vale (both state and private) but this is generally used to download information, rather than shape decisions. This may change with the introduction of a Youth Forum Executive but this opportunity to interact with people aged under 18 should be utilised more.

The four area forums are consulted on issues which affect their area directly. Housing also does consultation with its clients but was criticised by the Audit Commission for not demonstrating how this has shaped policy and decisions. Also, the data captured remains with housing, even though the information may be of use to other areas.

The Planning Service has a statutory responsibility to consult, both on planning applications and planning policy, in particular the Local Development Framework, which will replace the Local Plan and will bring forward new areas for work, housing and commercial developments, but again this information tends to stay in Development Control and is not shared though it could be valuable as it goes some way towards identifying what the community values about the area and what it desires in the future.

The LSP does quarterly surveys on customer satisfaction and our leisure contractors conduct regular customer surveys.

Perhaps most importantly our Members are daily gathering information about our communities and have a much greater understanding of the men, women and children who make up the Vale, but there is no formal mechanism for gathering this intelligence.

The Vale is represented on the Oxfordshire Countywide Consultation Officers Forum, which comprises Oxfordshire County Council and the five District Councils. The Forum has signed a consultation pact which provides for sharing information, co-ordination of activity and joint commissioning of consultation.

With regards to the Council's approach to providing inclusive and accessible consultation opportunities the Vale's Equality and Diversity Scheme (currently in draft, due to be adopted in December) sets out how we currently provide inclusive consultation opportunities and actions for improvement.

Where do we want to be?

Consultation needs to be much better co-ordinated and consistent. We need to be able to identify if all sections of the community have had a say. We need to be clear about why we are consulting, setting objectives and deciding what we will do with the results before opening dialogue. We need to strike a balance between resource limitations, statutory requirements, community demands and the Members' decision making role and we need to communicate the results and the outcomes, being clear about why decisions have been made, particularly if they contradict consultation results.

1. Any external consultation should aim to:
 - a. Inform Council direction on real issues
 - b. Improve customer services so we are delivering the right services to the right people in the right time and in the right way
 - c. Improve customer satisfaction
 - d. Improve Audit Commission inspections
 - e. Complement the communications strategy
 - f. Raise the Vale's profile in the community
 - g. Complement the Equality and Diversity Scheme
2. Any consultation with staff should aim to:
 - a. Make staff part of the decision making process
 - b. Improve satisfaction with the Senior Management Team
 - c. Influence the direction of travel of the Council

What should consultation in the Vale be like?

1. **Honest** about what information we want and what responders can influence – if we have already made a decision we should not consult, unless it is to help determine how best to deliver the service affected by that decision
2. **Involving and inclusive** giving everyone the opportunity to take part and giving enough information to help people make informed decisions.
3. **Active not passive** – any consultation should be actively promoted, not just hidden away on a website or a dusty corner of the LSP
4. **Improving** – it should be aimed at improving our service delivery or decision-making
5. **Accountable** – we should have a firm commitment to pass on results to participants and the wider public, as well as the outcomes, explaining why we have reached the decisions we have, to give the consultation process credibility
6. **Credible** – to encourage take-up people need to believe their opinions are being heard, even if we do not follow their choices we must explain why
7. **Coordinated** to make sure consultation by the Council is joined up and avoids duplication
8. **Done in partnership** where appropriate to reduce costs and consultation fatigue

How are we going to get there?

1. To achieve this we need to (in order of priority):
 - a) Structure and plan consultation from a central point to ensure consistency and co-ordination
 - b) Have effective tools to support the consultation process
 - c) Build consultation into the planning process of any project
 - d) Help officers and Members understand the value of consultation
 - e) Be clear about who is being consulted and why
 - f) Ensure any consultation is inclusive with particular regard to groups who are more likely to have difficulty accessing consultation opportunities and services (including people from ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, older and younger members of the community).

Aim one: Structure and plan consultation from a central point to ensure consistency and co-ordination

Action	Responsibility	Completion Date
Conduct an audit and review of existing consultation measures	Communications Team	May 2008
Produce an annual consultation plan with the support of Deputy Directors and their service area teams	Communications Team	April 2008
Ensure consultation requirements are built into service planning	Communications Team	Ongoing
Revise and re-launch the comment, complaints and suggestions procedure	Head of Communications	September 2008

Aim two: Have effective tools to support the consultation process

Action	Responsibility	Completion Date
Set up a database to include any consultation exercises and its outcomes and make it available online (though planning applications will be subject to a different process).	Communications Team/ICT	Initial scoping by September 2008
Purchase an online survey tool to help with the process and provide training to relevant members of staff.	Communications /ICT/Development Control	Initial scoping by September 2008
Expand the consultation section on the intranet and website to keep staff and the public informed about what we are doing.	Communications Team	December 2008
Conduct an audit of existing customer databases to understand who our audiences are	Communications /LSP	December 2008

Aim three: Build consultation into the planning process of any project

Action	Responsibility	Completion Date
Work with Service Areas and the Projects Team to ensure consultation requirements are built into the early stages of the planning process	Communications /Organisational Change	Ongoing
Work with Service Areas and Organisational Change to ensure consultation and communication are part of the Service Standards process	Communications /Organisational Change	Ongoing

Aim four: Help officers and Members understand the value of consultation:

Action	Responsibility	Completion Date
Produce a guide to consultation for Members and officers	Communications /Equalities Officer	April 2009
Offer Member and officer training	Communications /Equalities Officer	First training session with Members due in January 2008
Offer continuous guidance on consultation and engagement activity	Communications Team	Ongoing
Work with the Staff Action Planning Group and Senior Management Team to develop internal consultation standards and an SMT Charter for staff consultation.	Communications /Staff Action Planning Group	December 2008

Aim five: Be clear about who is being consulted and why

Action	Responsibility	Completion Date
Ensure any consultation has a properly documented plan including the target group or groups, outcomes and communication of results.	Communications Team/ Equalities Officer	Ongoing

Aim six: Ensure any consultation is inclusive with particular regard to groups who are more likely to have difficulty accessing consultation opportunities and services (including people from ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, older and younger members of the community).

Action	Responsibility	Completion Date
Work with the equalities officer to build up a database of groups more likely to face difficulties in accessing consultation and services. Identify relevant access channels and seek to address any gaps.	Communications /Equalities Officer	March 2008
Where appropriate include equalities data questions on surveys and analyse data accordingly.	Communications /Equalities Officer	Ongoing
Work with the Youth Forum to build in mechanisms for feedback on Council issues	Communications /Youth Development Officer	Ongoing
Work with the Youth Forum to build in youth representation on the Vale Voice Citizens Panel	Communications /Youth Development Officer	April 2009
Regularly monitor the response to Vale Voice surveys to ensure they are representative.	Communications Team	Ongoing
Include any relevant actions within this strategy from the Consultation Equality Impact Assessment currently being conducted (due to be complete by February 2008).	Head of Communications	March 2008
Produce a checklist for staff on how to run an accessible event (including consultation events).	Communications Team/Equalities Officer	March 2009
Review guidance for staff on how to consult with ethnic minority communities, disabled people and women.	Communications Team	March 2009
Develop the corporate complaints process in order to capture equalities data and flag any complaints which relate to equality and diversity.	Communications Team	July 2009

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR (PLANNING AND COMMUNITY STRATEGY)
TO THE EXECUTIVE
7 DECEMBER 2007

Cumnor Hill Conservation Area – Proposal by Cumnor Parish Council

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 Cumnor Parish Council have requested the District Council to consider designating part of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise, Cumnor a conservation area.
- 1.2 The contact officer for this report is Grant Audley Miller, Section Head (Environmental Planning & Conservation), telephone (01235 540343). Email address: **grant.audley-miller@whitehorsedc.co.uk**

2.0 Recommendations

- (a) *That a conservation area be not designated on the lower slopes of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise for the reasons set out in paragraphs 5.5-5.7.*
- (b) *That instead, efforts be concentrated on the proposed design guide supplementary planning document as the appropriate means of protecting areas of low density housing in the Vale such as Cumnor Hill.*
- (c) *That the Executive be asked to look into the possibility of the production of some earlier document to provide guidance across the whole of the District for similar areas prior to the production of the Local Development Framework.*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

- 3.1 This report supports the Council's Vision Statement objectives A&F.

4.0 Cumnor Parish Council's Proposal

- 4.1 Cumnor Parish Council have applied to the District Council to designate the lower slopes of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise a conservation area. The Parish are concerned 'that the area's qualities are not sufficiently recognised by the Planning Authority, and that the character of the area will be lost over the next few years unless immediate action is taken'.
- 4.2 The proposal is supported by a comprehensive statement (attached at Appendix 1), describing the spacious and sylvan character of this part of Cumnor Hill. It describes in considerable detail how the age, style and relative merits of the buildings and the topography and open spaces contribute to the character of the area.
- 4.3 A survey of residents, confined to those living in the proposed area, was carried out on behalf of the Parish Council in February 2007. Out of almost 70 properties in the proposed area, 44 survey forms were returned, 42 in support of the designation and 2 objecting.

5.0 Conservation Area Designation

- 5.1 Guidance contained in PPS1 sets out the Government's commitment to protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and historic environment and stresses that planning authorities should seek to enhance the environment as part of development proposals.
- 5.2 The Governments' detailed advice on conservation areas is set out in PPG 15 Planning and the Historic Environment. This clearly confirms that Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local planning authorities to designate conservation areas in any 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. In particular it notes that 'in considering further designations authorities should bear in mind that it is important that conservation areas are seen to justify their status and that the concept is not devalued by the designation of areas lacking any special interest'.
- 5.3 English Heritage's publication "Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals" stresses that 'for the designation of conservation areas to be effective, however, it is important that rational and consistent judgements are made in determining their special qualities and local distinctiveness, as well as their value to the local community. Such judgements should be based on a thorough understanding of the area in its wider context, reached through a detailed appraisal of its character'.
- 5.4 The central issue to be considered therefore, is, whether the lower slopes Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise as proposed by Cumnor Parish Council have a character of special architectural or historic interest.
- 5.5 Officers, including the Conservation Area Appraisals Project Officer who is undertaking appraisals of the existing conservation areas, have undertaken a review of the area put forward by Cumnor Parish Council, based on English Heritage's guidance. On the basis of the review officers consider that although the proposed area has a mature and spacious character it does not have special architectural or historic interest – the essential requirement for designating conservation areas. Unlike other conservation areas designated in the Vale, the suggested area at Cumnor Hill is not based around clearly defined groups of listed buildings or other acknowledged features of architectural or historic interest such as ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens. Furthermore, it is not considered that the proposed area or any of the surrounding streets have features or characteristics that give them interest that is special when compared to suburbs of similar age and style in and around Oxford and the main settlements of the Vale. To designate it as a conservation area would be likely to lead to pressure for this council to consider designating conservation areas in other similar low density suburbs in the Vale which in your officers opinion would be contrary to government advice in PPG 15 that the concept of conservation areas is not devalued by the designation of areas lacking any special interest.
- 5.6 In addition, the boundary of the proposed area appears to have been arbitrarily drawn. In the opinion of officers it would be difficult to justify this boundary as other parts of Cumnor Hill and parts of roads such as Arnolds Way, Hurst Rise Road, Stanville Road, Cumnor Rise Road have characters of comparable quality to the area put forward by the Parish Council.
- 5.7 English Heritage have produced advice entitled "Suburbs and the Historic Environment" which recognises that many suburbs are undergoing significant change and sets out how local authorities can best respond to the challenges they face. It

makes it clear that although most suburbs are not designated conservation areas, Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) have an important role to play in controlling some of the trends affecting them. Members should be aware that in the brief that has been prepared for consultants to tender for the production of the 'Design Guide for the Vale' it is a requirement to provide detailed guidance on design issues in areas of low density housing such as Cumnor Hill and Oxford Road, Abingdon. This design guide will become an SPD and in accordance with the Local Development Scheme the draft will be going out for consultation in June-July 2008 with adoption programmed for December 2008.

- 5.8 The Development Control Committee considered this matter at its meeting on 5 November 2007 and resolved to ask the Executive to look into the possibility of some earlier guidance being produced for similar areas across the Vale, before the production of the Local Development Framework (see the draft minutes of the Development Control Committee set out in appendix B).
- 5.9 In considering this recommendation the Executive needs to be aware of a number of key points. To prepare guidance of the type suggested at the Development Control Committee would require extensive analytical work to assess the character of similar, but not identical areas across the Vale and produce guidance properly reflecting and taking account of the detailed characteristics of these areas. In the light of the current commitments of the Local Development Scheme to produce the Preferred Options Report, carry out public participation for the Core Strategy and progress the Vale Design Guide SPD with consultants there are insufficient resources to undertake such an exercise. Secondly it is vital if such a document were to be used as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications public consultation would need to be carried out and taken into account in preparing the final draft. This would impose constraints on how quickly it could be produced and would mean that realistically it would not be produced much in advance of the Vale design guide SPD. But even if the resources were available to produce such a document and carry out consultation the end result would be an informal planning document that would carry some, but only limited weight on appeal.
- 5.10 In dismissing an appeal at Arnolds Way an inspector took into account the character of the most established housing in the area. This is just one example of recent appeal decisions where planning inspectors have taken account of the character of the area and supported the local plan housing and design policies that seek to ensure new development does not harm the character, appearance and local distinctiveness of an area. This support will enable the Council to apply these policies with more rigour.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 It is agreed that Cumnor Hill has a mature and spacious character but it is difficult to justify it having a character which is of special architectural or historic interest. The Vale design guide, as SPD is considered the more appropriate method for helping to control and guide development on Cumnor Hill and other suburbs in the Vale.

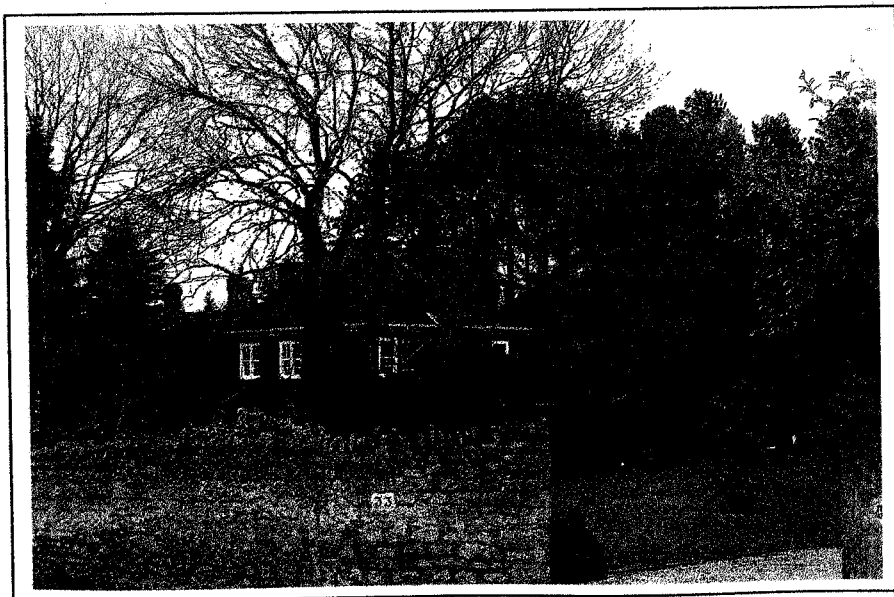
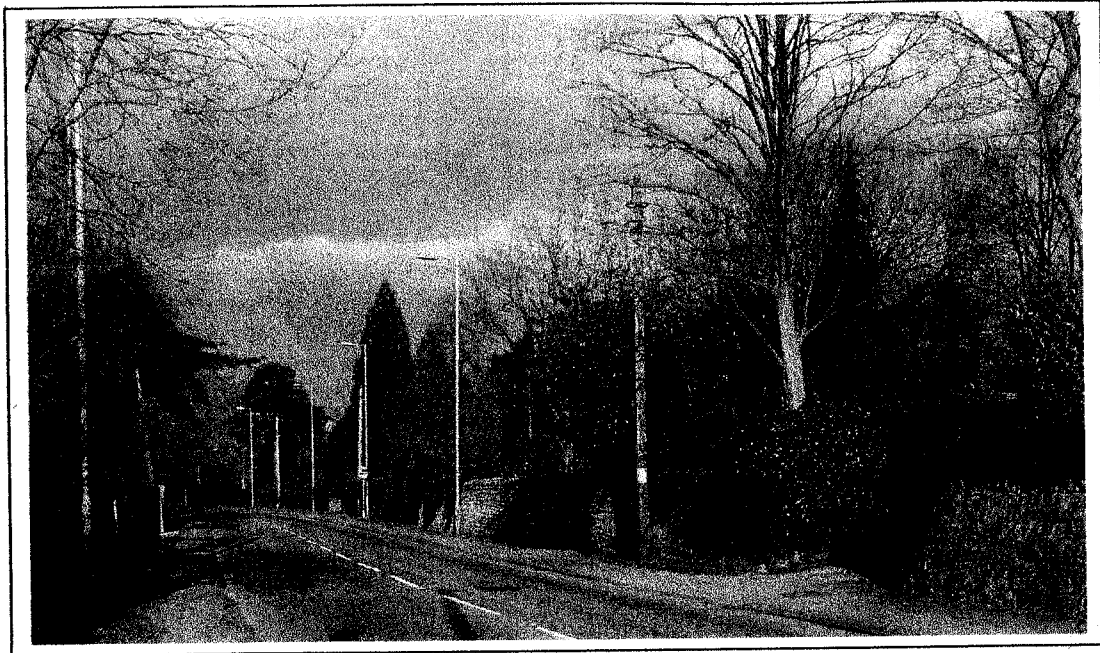
RODGER HOOD
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (PLANNING AND COMMUNITY STRATEGY)

TIM SADLER
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

Proposal for a Conservation Area

The lower slopes of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise

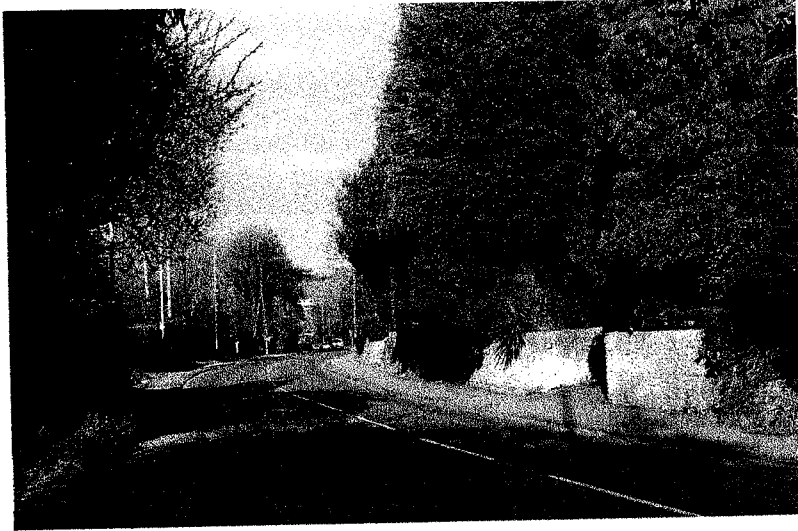
In the Parish of Cumnor



April 2007

Introduction

The proposed Conservation Area covers the lower part of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise as shown on the plan at pages 4 and 5. The area is predominantly one of large Edwardian, 1920s and 1930s housing, with a distinctive spacious character. The houses are generally sited in extensive gardens with many trees, often hidden from the road, and with the original layout undisturbed. On Cumnor Hill, the street scene is largely enclosed by high stone walls, hedges, or trees, and the houses set behind long front gardens. Third Acre Rise is a rare surviving 1930s development on plots of 1/3 acre. The whole area has, to date, managed to escape most of the damage caused by redevelopment and intensification and has a special character and appearance which it is desirable to protect, preserve and enhance.



History and types of buildings

Set at the foot of Matthew Arnold's "green-muffled hills", the proposed conservation area lies in an area of outstanding landscape value. Facing north, the sloping fields and ancient woodland were, for many centuries, given to mixed farming. Development did not begin until the early 20th century, when the

Earl of Abingdon and other landowners began to sell plots for building. "More new villas here", wrote Oxford photographer Henry Taunt, in 1912, in his Rambles with Matthew Arnold.

Cumnor Hill then began to acquire its distinctive sylvan character, as substantial Edwardian villas rose in large, wooded plots. Also distinctive was the homogenous community of middle-class businessmen and their families, as successful Oxford tradesmen and artisans sought an attractive environment here as an alternative to North Oxford.

In 1930, the Regional Survey of Oxfordshire (Earl of Mayo et al) expressed concern at Oxford's urban growth. "In the best residential areas", the Survey observed, "building should be restricted to one house to a minimum of three acres". Cumnor Hill was described as one of the best residential areas and it broadly met their criteria. The Survey regarded the southern slopes of Wytham/Seacourt Hill, facing Cumnor Hill, as "by far the most beautiful and dramatic site in the Oxford area". Development on Cumnor Hill should not detract from that landscape.



33, Cumnor Hill

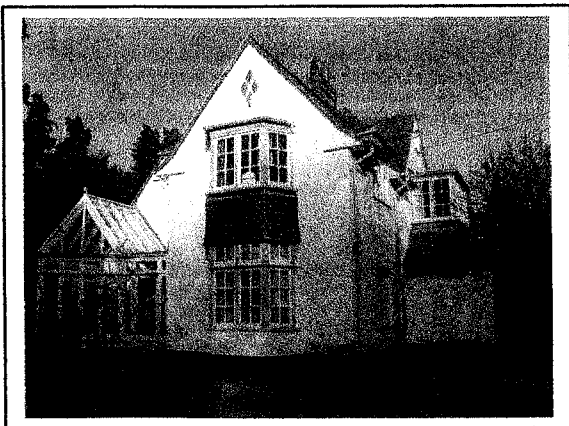
Proposal for a Conservation Area

Lower slopes of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise

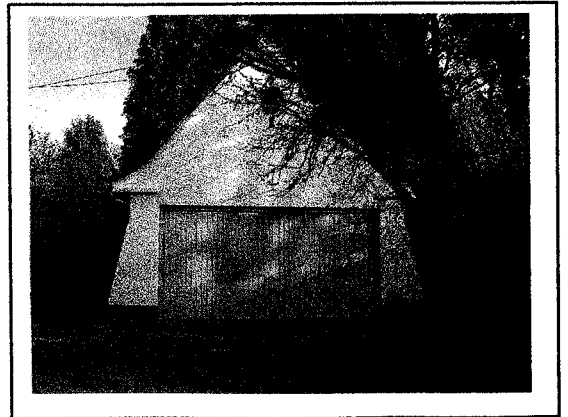
1900 -1914. The Earl of Abingdon, the main land-owner in the area, began to sell plots on lower Cumnor Hill for building in the first decade of the twentieth century. By this time the Victorian suburbs of north, south, and east Oxford had been largely completed, but there was pressure for further development. Cumnor Hill afforded an elevated location, in the favoured west of the City, with fresher air, countryside, and open views, yet close to the City Centre. The intention from the beginning was that the houses would be substantial and sited in large plots, and covenants were imposed to ensure this.

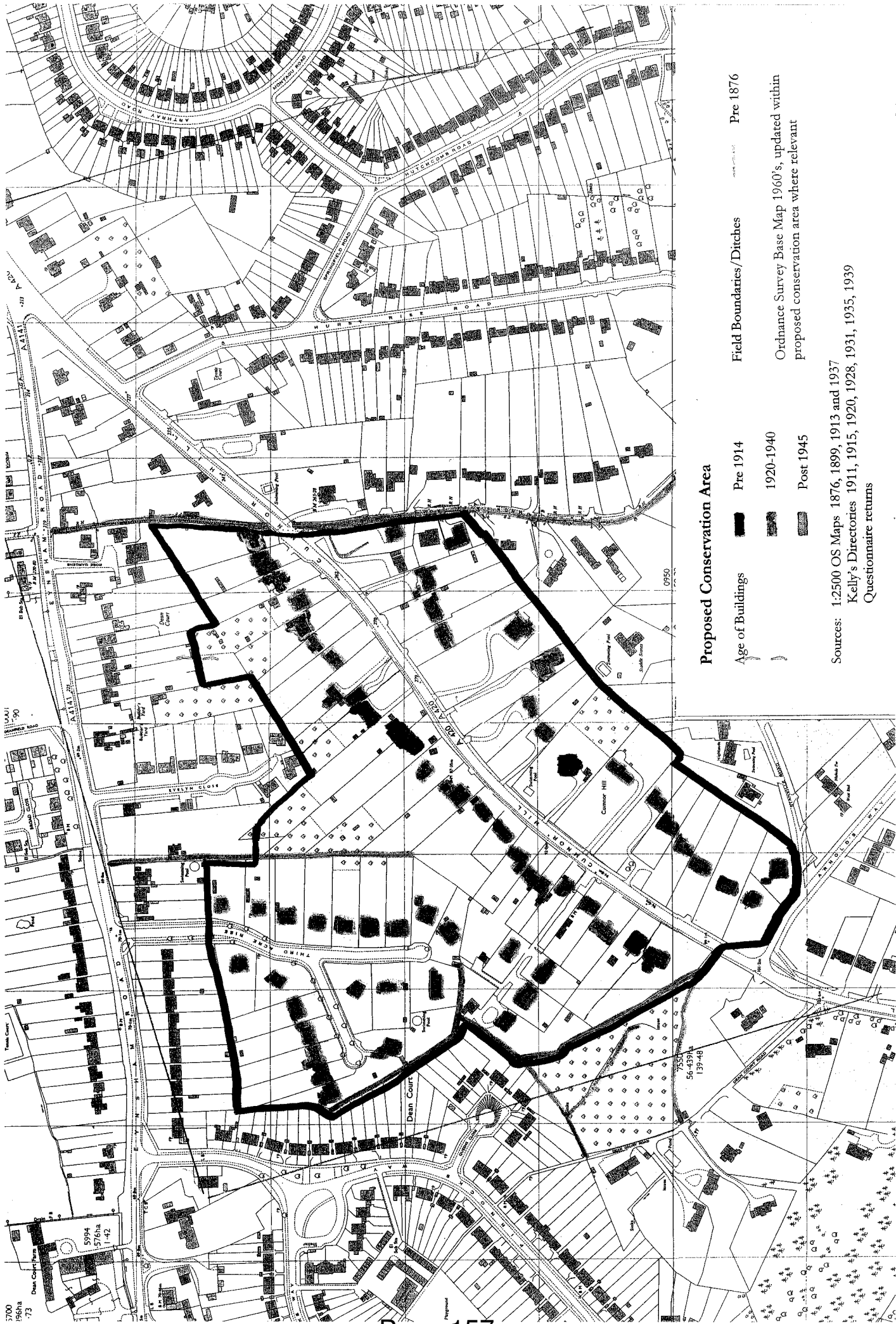
There are six houses within the proposed Conservation Area which date from before the First World War. These Edwardian houses were influenced either by the Victorian villa, such as no.64, or by the Arts and Crafts movement, such as no.32 dating from 1910. A nearby house of the same period, no. 28, (*see photograph on page 7*) is a distinctive and impressive design, thought to be by a Swiss architect. No.43, formerly called "Stanville", was built in 1913: designed by Harry Smith, it shows the distinct influence of CFA Voysey. Harry Smith's most well-known building is now the Oxford Crown and County Court in St. Aldates, Oxford.

32, Cumnor Hill



43, Cumnor Hill





Proposed Conservation Area

- Age of Buildings
 - Pre 1914
 - 1920-1940
 - Post 1945
- Field Boundaries/Ditches
 - Pre 1876
 - Ordinance Survey Base Map 1960's, updated within proposed conservation area where relevant

Sources: 1:2500 OS Maps 1876, 1899, 1913 and 1937
 Kelly's Directories 1911, 1915, 1920, 1928, 1931, 1935, 1939
 Questionnaire returns

Lower slopes of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise

1920s and 30s. After the First World War, development continued throughout the 1920s and 30s. The majority of the houses in the proposed area date from this inter-war period. On Cumnor Hill the architectural styles of these houses generally reflect the Vernacular Revival which was popular at the time, with brick or rough-rendered walls and clay-tiled roofs, but in Third Acre Rise a number of the houses were designed in the International or Modernist Style. Dating



from the late 1930s these houses, with flat roofs, horizontally-barred metal-framed windows, white-painted smooth-rendered walls, and with extensive use of concrete in their construction, contrast markedly with the more traditional housing of the inter-war period. Of these houses, No. 8 (*see below*) has not been extended and has retained its original plan form.



36, Cumnor Hill

Post-war. The proposed area also has a few later houses, from the 1950s and 60s, of varied styles generally typical of the period. These are also sited on large plots and do not detract from the overall attractive character of the area.

Topography and open spaces

The topography of the area plays a large part in its character. The land slopes markedly from the south east to the north west (i.e. across Cumnor Hill), and from the south west to the north east (i.e. down the Hill). Most of the houses on the upper, south-east, side of Cumnor Hill are sited well back on their plots in elevated positions enjoying distant views, with long and well-treed front gardens. A number of these houses (*the odd numbers*) have retaining banks or stone walls on their frontages to the road, with dense tree or hedge screening, and these form important elements in the street scene. On the north-west side of Cumnor Hill the houses (*with the even numbers*) are generally at a lower level than the



road, with long back gardens which fall away to the north west. Frontage screening with hedges and trees is also a feature, but open views towards Wytham Woods can be seen in places, adding to the road's attractive character. Third Acre Rise is at a lower level than the houses on Cumnor Hill, but also slopes from south to north and this contributes to its visual character. On both Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise the roads have sinuous curves which contain views and add interest and variety to the streetscape.

30, Cumnor Hill

Proposal for a Conservation Area

Lower slopes of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise

Throughout the area, the large gardens contain many trees, hedges, and other planting which gives a distinctive spacious and "green" setting for the houses and the suburb. The many trees in particular are a vital part of the area's character. The large gardens provide a rich habitat for wild-life, with badgers, foxes, deer, and many birds, and the long gardens on the north-west side of Cumnor Hill form an important wild-life corridor. A recent independent ornithological survey (2007) has shown that there is an above average population of threatened species of birds in the proposed conservation area.

English Heritage advice

The importance of twentieth-century architecture and suburbs is recognised by English Heritage in the documents it has produced on Conservation Area Appraisals, the Modern House and Housing Selection Guide, and the Suburban and Country Houses Selection Guide. The following are quotes from these documents.

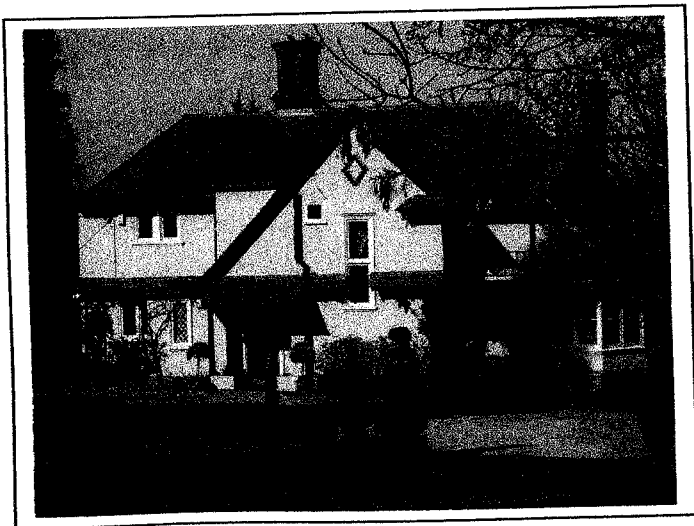
"The twentieth century is often the most under-valued and vulnerable period of building and it will be important.....to recognise the contribution made by twentieth-century buildings, regardless of their style (many of which are currently being reviewed)."

"Domestic architecture of the twentieth century can claim particular significance. Houses and housing developments of the period rank among the masterpieces of English architecture."

"In addition to the great names (of the Arts and Crafts movement) there were many local architects who designed exceptional buildings that make a distinctive contribution to Edwardian towns and suburbs."

"Given the redevelopment pressures on (twentieth-century) detached houses, this area of the built environment is particularly under threat. Their architectural quality was not always fully appreciated when many of the lists - especially in the south east - were prepared in the 1970s and early 1980s."

"Houses built outside of town centres share certain characteristics. They can take advantage of more spacious ground plots and be laid out with more freedom.....they can possess a repose and a detachment that makes for special architectural interest....."



28, Cumnor Hill



29, Cumnor Hill

"The Vernacular Revival could be used to good effect on smaller houses; the simple roughcast type was widely used in garden suburbs in the early twentieth century and the best preserved merit listing."

"Greater respect is now accorded to the suburban house."

“Suburban houses in particular are now subject to enormous pressures that include both conversion (into flats or offices), and that of new development in the gardens or grounds, sometimes calling for the demolition of the original house. The latter is particularly significant because, where they remain substantially intact, suburban houses show not only great architectural ingenuity and invention in terms of style, materials and plan form, they were often carefully designed in relation to their garden, street layout and neighbouring plots. Setting may be an important factor in assessing their special interest.”

“For enclaves of (twentieth century) housing, Conservation Area designation may sometimes be a more appropriate response than the listing of individual houses....”

Most recently (during the preparation of this document) English Heritage has issued two publications on the dangers facing suburbs in the face of increasing pressures for change. These documents - The Heritage of Historic Suburbs and Suburbs and the Historic Environment (March 2007) - emphasise the importance of many pre and inter-war suburban housing developments and the need for local authorities to protect their character. They say;

“A number of demographic trends, changes to national planning policies and housing market conditions have combined to mean that relatively spacious, low density suburban areas (the archetypal leafy suburbs) are coming under increasing development pressure. As a result, successive waves of new development, together with small-scale incremental change, is in places gradually putting local character and distinctiveness at risk. Failure to address specific suburban issues on the part of local planning authorities could mean that many suburbs soon reach a tipping point beyond which it will be extremely difficult to bring about a renaissance.”

“Given their relatively spacious nature and low density, certain suburbs have been identified by local authorities as being suitable for infill development. This is not a new phenomenon, but current levels of change against a background of higher acceptable densities increases the potential for local distinctiveness and historically significant features to be lost.”

“Where the assessment of the authority’s historic suburbs indicates that a neighbourhood is of significant historic or architectural interest, the local authority should give consideration to designation as a conservation area. This step will not prevent modernisation or updating of buildings within the conservation area, but will help ensure that new development or alterations respect and respond to their surroundings.”

Conclusion

The proposed Conservation Area has managed to retain its distinctive early and mid-twentieth century character as a low density suburb of Oxford, with large individual houses, a number of which are significant in their architecture and setting. **Pressures for conversion and intensification have so far been resisted, but there is concern that the area’s qualities are not sufficiently recognised by the planning authority, and that the character of the area will be lost over the next few years unless immediate action is taken.** Conservation Area status would give recognition to the importance of protecting and enhancing the area’s unique history, architecture and visual quality and we would urge the Vale of White Horse Council to designate the area.

Acknowledgements

District Councillors Harry Dickinson and Derek Rawson have initiated this proposal in response to concerns expressed by their constituents about recent development proposals in the proposed conservation area. They formed a working group with the support of, and including representatives from, Cumnor Parish Council and the information included in this proposal was obtained from a questionnaire sent to 71 households in the proposed area in February 2007, 46 of which were returned (with all but 3 in favour of the proposal). A wider consultation has also taken place through an article in the February edition of Cumnor Parish News. The working group considered this information along with its own research and special thanks are due to Richard Whitlock and John Hanson for writing the text and to Peter Bowell, Janet Craven and Dr Philip Hawtin for their interest and support.

Extract of Development Control Committee Draft Minutes from 5 November 2007

Cumnor Hill Conservation Area – Proposal by Cumnor Parish Council

Councillors Matthew Barber, Roger Cox, Terry Cox, Richard Farrell, Richard Gibson, Jenny Hannaby, Angela Lawrence, Sue Marchant, Zoe Patrick, Terry Quinlan, Jerry Patterson, Margaret Turner and John Woodford had each declared a personal interest in this item and in accordance with Standing Order 34 they remained in the meeting during its consideration.

The Committee received and considered report 95/07 of the Section Head (Environmental Planning and Conservation) which advised that Cumnor Parish Council had requested this Council to consider designating part of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise, Cumnor a Conservation Area. In considering the report the Committee had regard to the statements made earlier in the meeting by the members of the public.

The Committees' attention was drawn to the conclusions in the report which stated that it was agreed that whilst Cumnor Hill had a mature and spacious character, it was difficult to justify that it had a character which was of special architectural or historic interest. It was noted that the Officers considered that Vale Design Guide, as a Supplementary Planning Document was considered the more appropriate method for helping to control and guide development on Cumnor Hill and other suburbs in the Vale.

Further to the report the Officer highlighted that the key point for Members to consider was whether this was an area of special character or appearance. It was explained that a survey had been undertaken of the whole area and the surrounding street and using a check list based on the advice in "Conservation Area Appraisals" by English Heritage, the Officers had concluded that having regard to many considerations such as building; materials and their qualities; archaeology; styles; contributions; street-scape; heritage aspects; street materials etc there was nothing to say that this area was special compared to surrounding areas and other suburbs of Oxford.

The Officer reported that he had had regard to the comments of the Parish Council and commented that there was modern paraphernalia street furniture, concrete and kerbing and whilst they were pleasant they were not special. Reference was made to the proposed designated area and Members were shown photographs looking into and out of the area. The Officer reported that he had had difficulty in identifying any difference between the proposed area and the surrounding streets and that when compared to suburbs of similar age and style in and around Oxford and the main settlements of the Vale, these areas did not have features or characteristics that gave them special interest.

One of the local Members commented that he agreed with the Officer's conclusions but welcomed looking into the possibility of producing earlier informal advice which could be used in the interim for this area pending the Local Development Framework.

In response to a question raised the Committee was advised that the Conservation Officer had been the Vale's Conservation Officer for at least 25 years and had been involved in the creation of about 10 of the current conservation areas.

One Member expressed concern at the length of time it was going to take to produce some planning guidance in this area and suggested that whilst the recommendations set out in the report were acceptable, an additional recommendation should be considered, namely to have some supplementary planning guidance produced in the interim.

Another Member suggested that any interim guidance should be for the benefit of all areas of the Vale, not just Cumnor Hill.

In response to a question raised as to the weight of such a document, the Committee was advised that this would depend on the level of consultation which had been carried out. The Committee was advised that the preparation of such a document would require a significant time and resources.

One Member commented that he was not convinced that the Cumnor Area was significantly special although he had no objection to interim advice being drafted. However, he commented that in doing so residents could be restricted as to what they could do with their land and he asked whether this was reasonable and fair.

One Member asked the Committee whether it would be beneficial to ask the Executive to look into the possibility of some earlier guidance document being produced in the interim, before the production of the Local Development Framework.

By 15 votes to nil it was

RESOLVED

- (a) *that the Developmental Control Committee recommends the Executive to advise Cumnor Parish Council that a Conservation Area be not designated on the lower slopes of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise;*
- (b) *that instead, efforts be concentrated on the Proposed Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document as the appropriate means of protecting areas of low density housing in the Vale such as Cumnor Hill; and*
- (c) *that the Executive be asked to look into the possibility of the production of some earlier document to provide guidance across the whole of the District for similar areas prior to the production of the Local Development Framework.*

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR (ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)
TO THE EXECUTIVE
7 DECEMBER 2007

Efficiency Reviews – Streamlining Current Processes

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 There are currently a number of different processes for carrying out reviews of our services. Best Value Reviews have been carried out since 2000 when the statutory requirement to deliver 'Best Value' was introduced by the Government. A Best Value Review programme has previously been agreed by the Executive and the current position with these reviews is included in section 6.0. The statutory requirement to carry out Best Value Reviews was removed by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act October 2007. However, there is a continuing need for services areas to prove that they are delivering efficient, effective, customer orientated services which ensure overall value for money. This report recommends that Best Value Reviews should be superseded by an over-arching Organisational Development approach. This emphasises continual and sustainable improvement and uses a variety of methods to ensure service areas focus on providing value for money. The Organisational Development framework has previously been agreed by the Executive and is being delivered as part of the Access to Services priority.
- 1.2 The contact officer for this report is Jeremy Beach, Organisational Change Manager, telephone (01235 540449); Email: jeremy.beach@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

2.0 Recommendations

- (a) *that the current position with the Housing Services, White Horse Leisure & Tennis Centre and Partnership Effectiveness reviews be noted and that these Best Value Reviews be formally closed down;*
- (b) *that the following Best Value Reviews do not take place: Human Resources, Environmental Health and Building Control;*
- (c) *that the Best Value Review approach is replaced with a continuing programme of service reviews under the over-arching Organisational Development framework, and that these should use appropriate methods to determine value for money and implement action plans for improvement and development.*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

- 3.1 This report relates to the Council's Vision in that it supports all of its objectives and does not conflict with any Council Strategies.
- 3.2 This report has particular relevance to the Council's corporate priorities of "Maintaining our medium term financial plan", "Building our capacity through managerial and organisational development" and "Improving and modernising access to services".

4.0 **Service Review Methodologies**

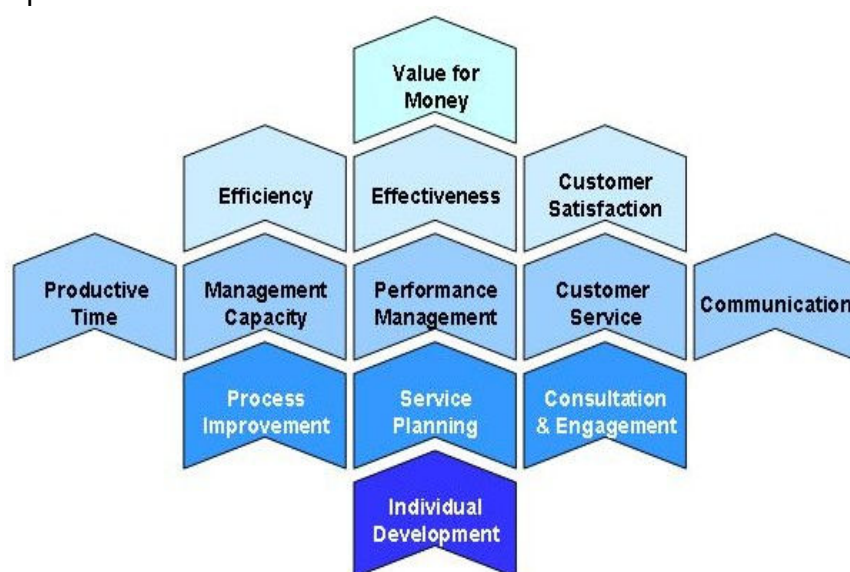
There are currently a number of different processes for carrying out reviews of our services.

- 4.1 **Best Value Reviews (BVR):** These have been carried out since 2000 when the statutory requirement to deliver 'Best Value' was introduced by the Government. The original reviews were carried out by large teams and generally took about a year to complete. Recent review work has been more streamlined, often carried out by just one officer taking just a few months to complete. However service improvements / efficiencies resulting from these reviews have been limited.
- 4.2 **Business Process Mapping (BPM):** Used extensively throughout the organisation, this method concentrates on improving workflow processes to reduce inefficiencies and identify more modern and effective ways of working. BPM exercises are facilitated by officers from the Organisational Change team and are normally supplemented by external consultancy. Completion of these reviews are a key action in the Access to Services Priority (3.1.a – continue to migrate processes to the contact centre where tangible / non tangible efficiency savings can be made) and progress is reported through the quarterly Corporate Governance Report. Examples of service areas where work has been completed or is in progress include Waste Management, Housing (Choice Based Letting), Local Land Charges, Human Resources, Licensing and Building Control.
- 4.3 **Organisational Development Workshops:** Helping staff to review their services and identify key challenges can be a powerful way to ensure ownership of change and improvement. Areas where work of this nature has started in 2007 are Building Control, Licensing and Leisure Services. Progress is reported through the quarterly Corporate Governance Report against item 3.1.a of the Corporate Priorities Report.
- 4.4 **Value for Money (VFM) Service Reviews:** These are being rolled out during 2007-8 and take the form of a workshop which goes through a detailed checklist tailored to individual service areas. The checklist details existing evidence of Value or Money and identifies what additional work is required, culminating in the production of an action plan. Areas where work of this nature has started in 2007 are Housing, Environmental Health and Economic Development. Progress will be reported through the quarterly Corporate Governance Report against item 4.9 and 4.10 of the Corporate Priorities Report .
- 4.5 **Strategic Service Review (SSR):** The Strategic Service Review is an annual exercise which is a key part of the budget setting process. Executive Members will use the SSR to inform the development of the budget for 2008/09. The purpose of the SSR is to highlight and prioritise the pressure for improvement / relative importance of service areas.

5.0 **Replacing Best Value Reviews**

- 5.1 Officers and Members are aware of the capacity issues facing the Council so it is essential that we try and streamline our processes as much as possible. With this in mind, it is proposed that officers no longer carry out Best Value Reviews. The statutory duty to carry out Best Value Reviews was introduced in 2000. A Best Value Review programme has previously been agreed by the Executive and the current position with these reviews is set out below at section 6.0. However the 'Strong and Prosperous Communities White Paper (October 2006) stated that "we will remove the requirements to prepare annual Best Value Performance Plans and conduct Best Value Reviews". This was subsequently confirmed in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (October 2007).

- 5.2 Though Best Value Reviews will be removed, there is a continuing need for service areas to prove that they are delivering efficient, effective, customer orientated services which ensure overall value for money. Moreover, this must be on the basis of continual improvement rather than static one-off exercises which quickly lose their relevance.
- 5.3 It is therefore recommended that Best Value Reviews will be superseded by activities delivered under the over-arching Organisational Development framework. This will require service areas to evaluate how well they deliver 'value for money' and to sign up to improvement action plans where appropriate. Services will be able to use one or more of the alternative methodologies listed at 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 and to show return on the investment through measurement and monitoring of outcomes. This process will be led and facilitated by the Organisational Change team. The model below illustrates that the Organisational Development approach is clearly a way in which we can improve and demonstrate value for money, as long as improvement plan proposals are acted upon.



- 5.4 Reporting of progress for Organisational Development activities and service improvement plans will be through the Senior Management Team (Quarterly Business Performance Report) and the Quarterly Corporate Governance Report.

6.0 Current Status of Best Value Reviews

A number of Best Value Reviews are already in progress or were due to take place during 2007/8. The current position on all of these reviews is detailed below. It is proposed that no further Best Value Review work be carried out as detailed in recommendation (a).

- 6.1 **Housing Services** (Choice Based Letting with a focus on Value for Money). This review has been used to develop the Council's approach to delivering Value for Money. Specific work has included the completion of a Business Process Mapping / Re-engineering exercise by external consultants. This work concluded that there was little opportunity to drive out any cashable savings from within this part of the service area, but good opportunities to improve capacity if a number of key actions take place.

As part of the work of this Best Value Review, a detailed Value for Money checklist for Housing Services was developed. A workshop of senior housing managers was held

which went through the checklist and identified existing evidence of Value for Money and what further work was required. An action plan has been agreed to progress this area of work.

- 6.2 **White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre.** DC Leisure are contracted to operate the centre on behalf of the Council. This work has been sub-contracted to CLS (with the agreement of the Council) who manage the centre as a registered charity in order to gain a number of financial benefits related to VAT and the payment of Business Rates. The evidence obtained, and research carried out, during the review has been used as part of ongoing negotiations with DC Leisure and CLS to improve Value for Money in the provision of these services.
- 6.3 **Partnership Effectiveness.** A report has been presented to the Strategic Review Committee. In many cases the Council is commissioning a service from an organisation rather than working in partnership. The service has to be provided to agreed standards as set in the service level agreement but the Council has no direct influence over the governance, policy, strategy and management of the organisation that is providing the service. Where shared objectives demonstrate a clear alignment to the strategic or service priorities of the Council there should be a formal service level agreement, a constitution or terms of reference which not only stipulate what each partner will deliver, but how the partnership will be managed. A 'partnership improvement tool' has been devised to test the effectiveness of partnership working. Officers are running a pilot partnership improvement programme and reporting the results to a working group of the Strategic Review Committee.
- 6.4 **Human Resources.** This review has not yet started but was scheduled to take place during 2007/8. This Best Value Review has been superseded by a Business Process Mapping exercise which has been agreed and will take place during 2007-8. Progress is being reported through the Corporate Priorities report (action 4.2)
- 6.5 **Environmental Health.** A limited amount of preparatory work has taken place towards this review. Most of this service area went through a Business Process Mapping exercise in 2005/6 which culminated in a number of customer contact functions and members of staff being transferred to the Abingdon Local Service Point. Furthermore, Environmental Health service managers have completed a Value for Money workshop and are currently developing an action plan to improve Value for Money. The Licensing Unit is also working through an Organisational Development action plan which includes a process mapping exercise.
- 6.6 **Building Control.** Some preliminary work has been completed and a number of service improvements have already taken place as a result. The Organisational Change Team has been working with Building Control since February 2007 and a Business Process Mapping exercise has been completed. This work is now at the action delivery phase. In addition, Building control have had a number of workshops, facilitated by Organisational Change, as part of the Organisational Development Programme which is being rolled out to all service areas.

HELEN BISHOP
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT)

TIM SADLER
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

Background Papers: None.

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR AND EQUALITIES OFFICER TO THE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
7 DECEMBER 2007

Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- a) The Council is committed to the principle of equal opportunities and aims to deliver accessible services and employment opportunities which meet the needs of all residents and employees.
- b) To help it achieve this, it has just put together a list of key things that it will do over the next three years to make its services more accessible for residents and its employees.
- c) These areas for action are set out in the Council's **Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11**. In accordance with legislation, the Scheme pays particular attention to the needs of disabled people, people from ethnic minorities¹ and women as they may find it more difficult to access local services.
- d) The areas for action have been identified via internal and external consultation and the analysis of Council performance data. They also take into account our relevant statutory duties.
- e) This report summarises the purpose, structure, development and future management of the Equality and Diversity Scheme. It also makes a recommendation for its adoption by the Council's Executive.
- f) The contact officers for this report are Katharine Doherty (Equalities Officer, 01235 520202) and Tim Sadler (Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer, 01235 520202).

2.0 Recommendations

That the Executive adopts the Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11.

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

- a) This report relates to the objectives of the Council's vision.
- b) This report relates to the Council's corporate priorities to "improve and modernise access to services" and to "build our capacity through managerial and organisational development."
- c) This report relates to the Council's Equality in Employment policy as well as to any policy that determines the delivery of services on the basis of need.

¹ The race equality section of this Scheme consists of the Council's Race Equality Scheme which was adopted by the Council in March 2007 (prior to the development of this Scheme).

4.0 Background and Supporting Information

- a) The Council is committed to the principle of equal opportunities and aims to deliver accessible services and employment opportunities which meet the needs of all residents and employees.
- b) We have produced our Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11 to:
 - help us achieve this commitment and deliver our vision
 - meet our statutory duties (in particular, those arising from the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2006)
 - help us provide excellent customer service for everybody and an accessible and fair working environment for our employees and councillors. These outcomes will contribute towards the council achieving good value for money and high levels of customer and staff satisfaction
- c) Building on what we've already achieved, this Scheme states our overall commitment and approach to equal opportunities. It also sets out the things we will be doing to specifically promote disability, race² and gender equality (meeting our statutory duties to produce race, disability and gender equality schemes) A detailed three year corporate action plan outlines the timescales, responsibilities and other details for these areas for action.
- d) The scheme covers all of our service and employment functions as well as the partnerships we are involved in and the contractors who work on our behalf. All staff and councillors are responsible for delivering the commitments and actions in this document which will be met within existing resources and budgets.
- e) The beneficiaries of this Scheme will be Council staff, councillors and service users.
- f) To help us develop this Scheme, we have sought feedback from representative organisations, service users and Council employees³. We have also looked at performance data and the results of a corporate equalities audit we carried out in spring 2007.
- g) The draft Scheme was subject to a four week public consultation during October and November 2007 and any feedback received was taken into account as the document was finalised.
- h) The adopted Scheme will be published on the Council's website and intranet (hard copies will be available upon request). We will inform key stakeholders about its adoption and copies will be sent to all major contractors and strategic partners.
- i) In order for this Scheme to be effective, it needs to be managed as a working document. Therefore, the Equalities Officer will review this Scheme annually and report to councillors and senior managers on the progress we make against the action plan. It will be fully revised in three years time.

² The race equality section of this Scheme consists of the Council's Race Equality Scheme which was adopted by the Council in March 2007 (prior to the development of this Scheme).

³ Consultation on our Equality and Diversity Scheme did not include the section on Race Equality (it was subject to its own consultation prior to the development of this Scheme)

HELEN BISHOP
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

TIM SADLER
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

Background Papers

Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11, attached.



www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Vale of White Horse District Council

Equality and Diversity Scheme

2008/09 – 2010/11

Version control

Version number	Date	Author	Notes
1	12/09/07	Katharine Doherty	Awaiting Jeremy Beach's comments
2	02/10/07	Katharine Doherty	Updated following staff survey results
3	03/10/07	Katharine Doherty	Awaiting Tim Sadler's comments
4	09/10/07	Katharine Doherty	Consultation draft
5	08/11/07	Katharine Doherty	Post consultation draft
6	12/11/07	Katharine Doherty	Updated following JB's feedback
7	22/11/07	Katharine Doherty	Final (Executive)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Vale is a remarkable area in which to live work or visit. It enjoys high levels of employment, prosperity and a good quality of life. However, this cannot be taken for granted and within the district there are pockets of deprivation and people who find it more difficult to access public services.

At the Vale of White Horse District Council, our vision is to build and safeguard a fair, open and compassionate community. We are committed to the principle of equal opportunities and aim to deliver accessible services and employment opportunities which meet the needs of all our residents and employees.

Our Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11

We have produced our Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11 to help us deliver our vision. It also helps us to meet relevant statutory duties, including those relating to disability, gender and race equality.

Building on what we've already achieved, this Scheme states our overall commitment and approach to equal opportunities. It also sets out the things we will be doing specifically to promote disability, race¹ and gender equality. It has a detailed action plan which sets out all of the things we are going to do over the next three years to improve access to our services.

The scheme covers all of our service and employment functions as well as the partnerships we are involved in and the contractors who work on our behalf.

The beneficiaries of this Scheme will be Council staff, councillors and service users. All staff and councillors are responsible for delivering the commitments and actions in this document.

To help us develop this Scheme, we have sought feedback from representative organisations, service users and Council employees². We have also looked at performance data and the results of a corporate equalities audit we carried out in spring 2007.

In order for this Scheme to be effective, it needs to be managed as a working document. Therefore, we will review this Scheme annually and report on the progress we make against the action plan. It will be fully revised in three years time.

¹ The race equality section of this Scheme consists of the Council's Race Equality Scheme which was adopted in March 2007 (prior to the development of this Scheme).

² Consultation on our Equality and Diversity Scheme did not include the section on Race Equality (it was subject to its own consultation prior to the development of this Scheme)

Our overall approach to equality and diversity (cross cutting issues) covers:

- Measuring our performance relating to equality and diversity
- Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)
- Involvement and participation
- Being a fair employer
- Support for Councillors on equality and diversity issues
- Procurement and partnerships
- Addressing complaints effectively
- Access to information about council services

In addition to these, we have set out specific disability, gender and race equality objectives.

Our priority areas for action on disability equality are:

- Improving access to information for disabled people about the services we and others deliver
- Raising awareness about our services to disabled people
- Supporting our staff to help meet the needs of disabled service users
- Making community and council events accessible for disabled people
- Improving access to our employment opportunities for disabled people
- Improving access to our local town centres
- Raising awareness about reporting disability harassment

Our priority areas for action on gender equality are:

- Raising the Council's profile as a family-friendly employer
- Maintaining our fair and equal approach to pay
- Breaking down any gender based segregation in relation to particular job areas
- Helping to address women's concerns about personal safety
- Raising awareness about transphobic harassment
- Helping to improve the health of men and women in the Vale

Our priority areas for action on race equality are:

- Understanding our new migrant communities
- Improving access to information about our services for people from ethnic minorities
- Raising awareness about our services to people from ethnic minority communities

Timescales, responsibilities and other details for all these areas for action are set out in the Corporate Equalities Action Plan 2008/09-2010/11, at the back of this Scheme

INTRODUCTION TO THE SCHEME

Equality and diversity: the Council's vision and commitment

Our vision is to build and safeguard a fair, open and compassionate community

At the Vale of White Horse District Council, we are committed to the principle of equal opportunities.

We are committed to delivering our services to residents and valuing our employees equally irrespective of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, family responsibility, trade union membership, whether they are suffering from a severe illness or any other irrelevant factor.

Providing our services and employment opportunities in an equal way does not mean treating everybody in the same way. It means that we recognise and value difference and respect our staff and service users as individuals. We therefore strive to provide our services and employment opportunities in ways which meet people's needs in a positive and proactive way.

This commitment is reflected in the Council's corporate priorities to "improve and modernise access to services" and "build our capacity through managerial and organisational development."

What is an Equality and Diversity Scheme and why have we got one?

To help us achieve our vision and commitment and move from principle to practice, we have produced our Equality and Diversity Scheme for 2008/09 – 2010/11.

This Scheme builds on the positive work the Council has already done to make its services and employment opportunities more accessible for everyone. Setting out all of our equality and diversity commitments, objectives and actions in one single document, it will help us approach our work in this area in a co-ordinated way.

It helps us to fulfill our statutory duties arising from the:

- Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986
- Equality Act 2006
- Equal Pay Act 1970 and Equal Pay (Amendments) Regulations 2003

- Race Relations Act 1976 and Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

In addition, the actions set out in this Scheme will help the Council provide customer focused service for everybody and an accessible and fair working environment for its employees and councillors. These outcomes will help the council achieve good value for money and high levels of customer and staff satisfaction.

Promoting disability, race and gender equality through this Scheme

In addition to stating our commitment to equal opportunities, the Scheme looks in detail at how we will ensure our services and employment opportunities meet the needs of disabled people, women and men and people from ethnic minority communities³. It does this by:

- highlighting cross cutting issues which relate to all three groups of people
- identifying examples of good practice in the way we provide our services and employment opportunities which specifically benefit each group
- setting out priority areas for action which will make our services and employment opportunities more inclusive and accessible for each group (these are set out in detail in the Corporate Equalities Action Plan at the back of the Scheme)

We are focusing on making sure our services and employment opportunities meet the needs of these groups because they are more likely to experience acute discrimination and inequality when trying to access services and employment. They are also protected in law, and we have a statutory duty to document how we will promote race, disability and gender equality in everything we do.

What functions does this Scheme cover?

Our Equality and Diversity Scheme covers all of our service and employment functions as well as the partnerships we are involved in and the contractors who work on our behalf.

³ The race equality section of this Scheme consists of the Council's Race Equality Scheme which was adopted in March 2007 (prior to the development of this Scheme).

Who is this Scheme for and who is responsible for managing and delivering it?

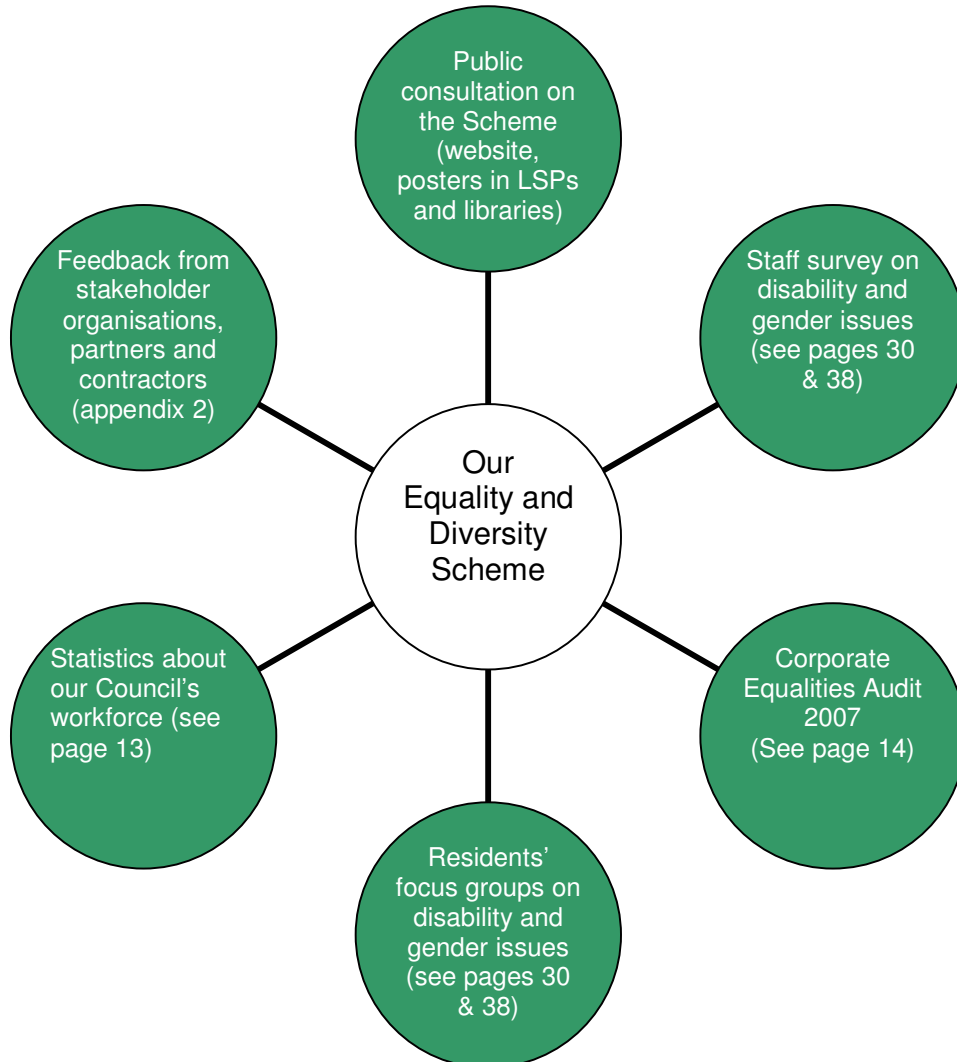
The beneficiaries of this Scheme will be Council staff, councillors and service users.

Everyone at Vale of White Horse District Council is responsible for providing the Council's services and employment opportunities in a fair and equal way. Therefore, all staff and councillors are responsible for delivering the commitments and actions set out in this Scheme.

Some members of staff and councillors have particular responsibilities to ensure that the Council's work on equality and diversity moves forward in a positive direction:

- The Council's Executive is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the our services meet the needs of our all our residents and employees
- Accountability for this Equality and Diversity Scheme rests with the Chief Executive
- The Council's Senior Management Team is responsible for ensuring that the Council has an effective framework in place to realise the commitments identified in this Scheme
- We aim to improve access to our services across all our teams so Service Directors also have day-to-day responsibility for ensuring that their teams deliver the actions identified in this Scheme
- The Council's Equalities Officer is responsible for coordinating, monitoring and reviewing this Scheme (with the exception of the Equality in Employment Policy, which will continue to be maintained by the Human Resources Team).

What has helped to inform this scheme?



How does this Scheme link with other Council strategies and policies?

The Council's Equality in Employment Policy is attached to this Scheme as an appendix. This Scheme also compliments the Council's Social Inclusion Policy and has a direct impact on every strategy and policy the Council develops.

Publishing this Scheme


Our Scheme will be published on our website and on our staff intranet. We will also provide paper copies upon request, in alternative formats and languages if required.

Monitoring progress

This Scheme will be reviewed annually and progress against actions in the CEAP will be reported to councillors and senior managers. It is a working document to enable us to keep our equality and diversity work relevant and comprehensive.

We will fully revise and refresh the Scheme every three years, adding additional sections when appropriate and in response to relevant legislation.

 = actions

 = support available to staff and councillors to help them promote equality and diversity

INTRODUCTION TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND OUR COUNCIL

Community fact file

The Vale of White Horse district is located in the south-western quadrant of Oxfordshire and stretches from Oxford and Didcot in the east and almost to Swindon in the west. It is bounded to the north and east by the River Thames and to the south by the Berkshire Downs. The district covers some 580 square kilometres (224 square miles) of country which is attractive and mainly rural in character.

According to the 2001 census, some 115,600 people live in the Vale (an increase of 3% since 1991). Just over half the population live in the five main settlements in the Vale: Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon (market towns) and Botley and Grove. These places provide many services for people living in the surrounding rural areas. There are more than seventy villages and small hamlets in the district.

The Vale is a remarkable area in which to live, work or visit. It enjoys high levels of employment, prosperity and a good quality of life. However, this cannot be taken for granted and within the district there are pockets of deprivation and people who find it more difficult to access public services.

ETHNICITY

	Vale of White Horse	South East	National
% of residents from ethnic minority communities (including white Irish and white other) ⁴	6.7	8.7	13.01
Number of residents from ethnic minority communities (including white Irish and white other)	7765	695,967	6,391,695
Example of an equivalent local population	Equivalent to the population in Faringdon & the Coxwells ward (7013)	n/a	n/a

⁴ In accordance with Commission for Race Equality (CRE) guidance, we have redefined our ethnic minority population to include all residents who do not classify themselves as being White British. In previous calculations, we have excluded White other. Please note that for the purpose of calculating relevant BVPIs, we do not include any white categories as ethnic minorities (in accordance with the Audit Commission's guidance)

DISABILITY

	Vale of White Horse	South East	National
% of residents who have a limiting long-term illness/disability	13.1	15.5	17.9
Number of residents who have a limiting long-term illness/disability	15,162	1,237,399	8,809,194
Example of an equivalent local population	Equivalent to the population in Faringdon & the Coxwells + Grove wards (14,431)	n/a	n/a

GENDER

	Vale of White Horse	South East	National
% of residents who are male/female	49.7/50.3	48.8/51.2	48.7/51.3
Number of residents who are male/female	57,506/58,121	3,905,155/ 4,095,490	23,922,144/ 25, 216, 687

AGE

	Vale of White Horse
% of residents who are 0-4 years	5.89
% of residents who are 5-15 years	14.65
% of residents who are 16-19 years	4.97
% of residents who are 20-44 years	33.7
% of residents who are 45- 64 years	25.38
% of residents who are 65 years and over	15.42

RELIGION

	Vale of White Horse
% of residents who are Christian	75.84
% of residents who have no religion	15.75
% of residents who are Muslim	0.48
% of residents who are Buddhist	0.22
% of residents who are Jewish	0.2
% of residents who are Hindu	0.2
% of residents who are Sikh	0.07
% of residents who belong to other religions	0.23
% of residents who did not state their religion	7.01

All the above data has been taken from the 2001 Census results:

<http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadDatasetList.do?a=7&b=277088&c=vale+of+white+horse&d=13&g=481133&i=1001x1003&m=0&nc=1&domainId=16>

Workforce and Councillor fact file

The Council employs 288⁵ people, with the majority of staff working at the main Council offices in the centre of Abingdon.

ETHNICITY

2.94% of staff are from non white ethnic minority communities (not including white Irish and white European)⁶

= 6 members of staff

DISABILITY

5.64% of staff have declared that they have a disability⁷

= 15 members of staff

GENDER

42.7% of staff are male (123), 57.3% are female (165)⁸

All the above data relating to staff is from Q2 2007/08.

The Vale of White Horse District Council has 51 elected Councillors. 29 are male and 22 are female. We do not currently monitor ethnicity or disability data relating to our Councillors but have set ourselves an action to do so (please see page 21 for further details).

Our commitment to continued community and workforce profiling

In order to be an effective public service provider and employer, it is essential that the Council understands the make-up of its staff and the local community. Only by mapping this on a regular basis can we meet the changing needs of our service users and employees. We are committed to community and workforce profiling and will do this through continued employment and service use monitoring (see 'cross cutting issues'), as well as one-off research projects.

⁵ As of September 2007

⁶ As of September 2007

⁷ As of September 2007

⁸ As of September 2007

OUR OVERALL APPROACH TO EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY (CROSS CUTTING ISSUES)

Measuring our performance relating to equality and diversity

Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs)

We use the following BVPI to help us measure our performance in promoting equality and diversity in everything we do:

BVPI 002a - Level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms:

- Progress is measured against a set of levels (Level 1 – Level 5), with Level 5 reflecting the most comprehensive approach
- Vale of White Horse District Council has so far achieved Level 1
- We aim to reach Level 2 by the end of 2007/08 and Level 3 by 2008/09
- Only a third of district councils in the country have reached level 2 or above⁹
- Actions set out in this Scheme will help us to achieve our targets for this indicator

There are additional employment BVPIs to help us measure our performance which are specific to race, disability and gender (these are outlined within the relevant sections of this Scheme). There is also a specific BVPI relating to racial equality (see race equality section for more details).

Our Corporate Equalities Audit

In spring 2007, the Equalities Officer carried out a comprehensive Corporate Equalities Audit. She met with team managers to identify how their services contribute towards promoting equal opportunities and whether more could be done to make them more inclusive and easier to access. As a result of the audit, numerous improvements have been actioned by officers across the Council. The information recorded during these discussions has been circulated to senior managers to enable them to continue supporting their teams in meeting the needs of service users.

This 2007 audit provides us with a useful benchmark against which we can measure future progress.

Action:

- *carry out a corporate equalities audit in 2010/11 to assess council-wide progress in promoting equality and diversity*

⁹ National position (Best Value data 2005/06)

Service area equalities monitoring

As part of the Corporate Equalities Audit, the Equalities Officer also worked with managers to develop monitoring plans tailored to their service areas (an action which they had included in their 2007/08 service plans). The plans set out how they will monitor service use with regards to ethnicity, disability and gender.

Team managers have agreed to produce summaries of their equalities monitoring on a regular basis (most will be produced annually) and these will help to inform their equality impact assessments (see below) and service plans. Where necessary, any gaps or issues will be addressed by service teams taking positive action.

Once this equalities data monitoring has been embedded in the organisation, we will look to extend it to cover age and religion and belief, where appropriate. We will not monitor service use according to sexual orientation because we believe that asking service users and/or employees for this sensitive and extremely personal information would not be appropriate and there is no census data available for bench-marking purposes. However, we will seek to gain feedback on our services from the lesbian, gay and bisexual community using other mechanisms.



The Equalities Officer has produced a guidance note for staff on how to monitor how disabled people, people from ethnic minorities and women use and view our services. This is available on the Council's intranet and includes standard equalities questions which should be added to relevant application forms, feedback forms, customer satisfaction and consultation surveys.

Best Value General Satisfaction Survey

Every three years, we ask local residents how satisfied they are with the services they receive from us. We do this by carrying out a sample survey and the results help us to identify what we're doing right and what we could do better as a Council. Our most recent survey was carried out in 2006.

The results of the survey will inform our Equality Impact Assessments (see page 17) as the data is broken down according to the ethnicity, disability and gender of respondents. Any significant differences between the satisfaction of minority groups and the majority will be explored and addressed by relevant service teams.

We will use future survey results to help us measure our performance in providing high levels of service to residents regardless of their race, disability or gender.

Monitoring employment opportunities

We use the following indicators to help us measure the accessibility of our employment opportunities according to race, disability and gender:

Indicator
Applicants for employment
People shortlisted for interview
Staff in post
Applicants for training and promotion (systems for collecting this data will be in place from 2008/09)
Staff who receive training
Staff that are involved in grievance procedures
Staff that are the subject of disciplinary procedures
People that cease employment with the Council
% of top 5% of earners
Return rates from maternity leave

Human Resources will be responsible for producing an annual summary report of the progress made against the above indicators. The summary data will be included in our Corporate Governance Report and will also be made available to the public.

Staff attitude survey

In summer 2006, the Council carried out a staff attitude survey. One of the sets of questions was about equality and diversity:

- 80% of staff said they understood the importance of equality and diversity
- 69% of staff said they thought the Council was an equal opportunities employer
- By the time the next staff attitude survey is carried out, we aim to maintain the percentage of staff who say they understand the importance of equality and diversity
- As a minimum, we also aim to maintain the percentage of staff who think the Council is an equal opportunities employer
- Actions in this Scheme will help us to achieve these targets

Action:

- *continue to collect equalities data across Council services (including employment opportunities) and ensure it informs service planning and delivery*

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

Equality Impact Assessments help us to look at how our services contribute towards race, disability and gender equality. They are also structured to cover age, sexual orientation and religion and belief equality. They give staff the opportunity to take a step back from their day-to-day work to consider whether these groups have equal access to the services they provide (in proportion with the make up of the local population). Staff seek feedback on their draft EIA findings from external consultees. They then set out any necessary actions they will need to take to improve access to their service.

We carry out Equality Impact Assessments in the following areas:

- Existing service areas/functions – we have a rolling three year assessment programme in place which covers all our current functions and services which are likely to impact on the local community or Council staff. Our current three year EIA timetable is included at Appendix 1.
- Proposed strategies, policies and functions

These assessments are carried out by the relevant service teams because they are responsible for the day-to-day delivery of their service. They are included in service plans and service directors are responsible for ensuring that they are completed.

To ensure that our EIAs bring about positive change, we feed service specific actions identified in EIAs into the relevant teams' service plans. Any corporate actions will be picked up in the annual review of this Scheme.

In addition to EIAs:

- When officers put forward recommendations to our committees, they are encouraged to consider how they may impact on certain groups in the local community or the Council. Relevant guidance is included in the committee report template.
- We consider any equality and diversity implications when we put together our annual budget, via our Strategic Service Review process.



To ensure that our EIAs are robust and clear, we have developed a user-friendly EIA workbook to guide staff through their assessments. The Equalities Officer provides relevant officers with training and support as they complete their work.

We have also produced a separate EIA workbook for officers assessing proposed strategies, policies or functions. This workbook has been designed specifically to fit in with the policy development process.

Actions:

- *Look to set up a residents panel to give feedback on EIAs*
- *Carry out EIAs in accordance with the corporate timetable*

Involvement and participation

The Council recognises the value and importance of involving local residents and its staff in helping to shape the opportunities and services it provides.

Consultation and engagement are not ends in themselves but a first step in providing people who live, work and visit the Vale with a sense of ownership and accountability for local services. This approach to consultation will help the Council achieve continuous service improvement and high levels of customer satisfaction. In the wider picture, it will help to maintain sustainable communities in the district.

We have the following mechanisms in place to give staff and residents the chance to participate in the Council's decision making process:

Vale Voice

We regularly consult a panel of people who live in the district to help make sure that our services are meeting the changing needs of the local community.

The panel has been running since 2003 and has been consulted on key Council issues including the vitality of our town centres, the effectiveness of our website and the way we provide our waste services. It is currently made up of 983¹⁰ residents. Membership of the panel is broadly representative of the district population.

Members are sent surveys on a regular basis and after each survey we send them a newsletter, summarising the results of the survey. The newsletter also sets out what the Council aims to do in response to the feedback from the panel members.

Equality and diversity bulletin

The Equalities Officer is responsible for producing a bulletin for organisations and groups supporting disabled people, ethnic minority communities, women, people from different religions and older people in the Vale. The purpose of the bulletin is to improve access to information about those Council services which may be of particular interest to these groups and their members. It is

¹⁰ As of September 2007

also a useful means of telling people about our consultations and encouraging them to get involved (so that our consultations are as inclusive as possible).

The first bulletin was distributed in August 2007 and provided information about the Dial-a-ride service (which we help to fund) and consultation on our plans for developing the district and strengthening local communities. We also asked disability groups to let us know about any major barriers which prevent disabled people from accessing our services.

We send out this bulletin three times a year.

Actions:

- *Investigate running an equality and diversity event for relevant groups and organisations*
- *Seek feedback from members of the public attending committee meetings*
- *Regularly review and update guidance for staff on how to consult with ethnic minority communities, disabled people and women*
- *Produce three equality and diversity bulletins per year, to target information to organisations and groups supporting disabled people in the Vale*
- *Actively promote the equality and diversity bulletin to all service teams*
- *Produce a checklist for staff on how to run an accessible event*



Staff can use the Equality and diversity bulletin to seek feedback on their services from groups representing people from ethnic minorities, disabled people, women, people from different religions and older people. They can also use write articles for inclusion in the bulletin to promote Council services.

The Equalities Officer and the Council's Head of Communications can provide staff with one-to-one advice about how to ensure their consultations are as inclusive as possible.

Being a fair employer

As an employer, we value our staff and benefit from the diversity and experience they bring to our organisation. We believe it is essential to have a fair and accessible recruitment and selection process so we can always employ the best person for the job. Our job vacancy advertisements actively

encourage applications from all sections of the community and we also ensure that vacancies are advertised using a variety of channels to increase accessibility.

Our pay structure is fair because we have implemented a national Single Status Agreement to harmonise the pay and other terms and conditions of all of our employees. This included assessing every post in the organisation using a common job evaluation scheme to determine its new grade.

We recognise the importance of the work/life balance and therefore offer flexible working opportunities. In addition, we are keen to support staff through any difficulties they may have in their lives (whether they are at home or in the workplace) and employ a part time welfare officer to offer confidential advice and help. We also offer compassionate leave.

It is essential to invest in our staff so we provide them with on-going support and accessible training and development opportunities. With regards to equipping our staff with the skills they need to promote equality and diversity, we run mandatory training sessions on the subject. We also provide briefing sessions to senior managers to update them on strategic issues relating to the Council's equalities work. These training opportunities help us to maintain an inclusive, tolerant and supportive culture within the organisation.

The Council has an 'Equal Employment Policy' which is maintained by the Human Resources Team. This gives more detail about how the Council ensures equality of access to its employment opportunities. A copy of this can be found at the back of this Scheme as appendix 3.

Actions:

- *Actively promote the Council's welfare service to staff*
- *Continue to train new members of staff on equality and diversity issues*
- *Provide training for managers on their specific role and responsibilities relating to equality and diversity*

Support for Councillors on equality and diversity issues

As representatives of their local communities, Councillors bring a large amount of knowledge and awareness to the Council about the needs of people living in the Vale. To help us get the most from this expertise, it is important that we:

- ensure Councillors can easily access the Council's decision making process, regardless of disability, gender, ethnicity or any other irrelevant factor

- equip Councillors with the information they need to promote equality and diversity in everything they do

We are delivering equality and diversity training to newly elected members following the May 2007 elections. In addition, we have run a training session for committee chairs and vice chairs about chairing accessible meetings.

Action:

- *Monitor equalities data relating to our Councillors so we can meet their needs more effectively*

Procurement and partnerships

We often use contractors or work in partnership with other organisations to help us deliver our services. We want to ensure that our contractors and partners are helping us to promote equality and diversity.

Procurement

The Council aims to have a fair and accessible procurement process by:

- simplifying the guidance available to potential suppliers about how we procure goods, works and services
- making information about the Council's procurement opportunities more accessible ('meet the buyer' event, information on the website)

When we use contractors, we will make sure that they strive to meet the needs of all our residents and/or employees by:

- seeking information from tenderers about their equality and diversity policies and practices and using this to help shortlist suitable candidates
- including standard equality and diversity clauses in major contracts to ensure contractors meet relevant statutory duties
- consulting our major contractors on any statutory equality and diversity policies/schemes we develop

Service delivery through partnership

We work with a number of organisations from the voluntary and community sector to provide specialist services for people living in the Vale. For example, we have service level agreements in place with the Oxfordshire Rural

Community Council and the Oxfordshire Chinese Community Advice Centre. Both these organisations provide services for people who often find it difficult to access services.

Our standard service level agreement template includes a section on equality and diversity, to help ensure that our partners are helping us to promote accessible and inclusive services for all.

Strategic partnerships

Working in partnership with other organisations often helps us to maximise our resources and better co-ordinate the services we deliver. We are key members of a number of strategic partnerships, including the Vale Local Strategic Partnership, the Vale of White Horse Community Safety Partnership, Oxfordshire Sports Partnership and the Oxfordshire Rural Transport Partnership. We will always encourage these partnerships to consider equality and diversity issues with regards to the work they carry out.

Actions:

- *inform major contractors and strategic partners of this Scheme, reiterate their responsibilities and identify any relevant support needs they may have*
- *review the equality and diversity section in the standard Service Level Agreement template to ensure it reflects the Council's current legal duties*
- *send out copies of this Scheme to partners with any new Service Level Agreements*

Addressing complaints effectively

Complaints about how we are meeting our equalities duties or other complaints about equality of access to our services will be dealt with through our established complaints procedure, which is available to all members of the public. They can find out more about this procedure by looking on our website or by talking to any member of staff at one of our Local Services Points (LSPs).

Equality and diversity related complaints from members of staff are handled by the Human Resources team. We do not tolerate any form of harassment or bullying in the workplace and we will always investigate any such complaints. More detail about how we proactively tackle harassment and bullying at work is set out in our 'Bullying in the workplace' policy.

Action:

- *Develop the corporate complaints process in order to capture complainants' equalities data and systematically flag any complaints which relate to equality and diversity*

Access to information about council services

Residents can find out about our services through any of the following channels:

- the Council's website: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/>
- Vale Views, the regular Council newsletter for residents
- our Local Service Points (Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon)
- telephone – 01235 520202
- email – comments@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Council staff can find out more about the work of the Council through the following channels:

- The Horse's Mouth, a more informal newsletter for people working at the Council
- Team Brief, a bulletin which keeps service teams up to date on Council issues, initiatives and achievements
- staff Intranet

Action:

- *Develop an 'accessible information' policy for the Council which includes when/how we make information available in alternative formats and languages*

DISABILITY EQUALITY

Disability in the Vale

- According to the Census 2001 figures, 13.1% of people living in the district have classed themselves as disabled (15,162 people). This proportion is slightly lower than that in the South East region as a whole, where 15.5% of the population are disabled. However, with many people experiencing 'hidden' and/or newly classified disabilities, we would expect both the percentage in the Vale and the region now to be higher.
- 5.8% of people working at the Council have a disability. This is lower than the percentage of economically active disabled people in the district as a whole (9.07% of the local population who are economically active are disabled). Within our Council, 16.7% of the top 5% of earners have a disability.

What do we mean when we use the word 'disability'?

According to the Disability Discrimination Act, a disabled person is 'someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. This definition includes people with the following conditions (although this list is not exhaustive):

- cancer
- diabetes
- HIV
- multiple sclerosis
- heart conditions
- poor sight, except where the person's sight can be corrected by glasses or contact lenses
- poor hearing
- a significant mobility difficulty
- mental health conditions
- epilepsy
- dyslexia
- learning disabilities

What do we mean when we use the word 'access'?

Through the implementation of this Scheme, we will take positive action to ensure that disabled residents, employees and councillors have equal access to our services and employment opportunities. When we use the terms 'access' or 'accessibility', we are talking about them in the widest sense: access to service information, physical access to services and opportunities, access to support and to excellent customer service.

The Disability Equality Duty

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 requires all local authorities (and a number of other public bodies) to positively promote disability equality in everything they do by having due regard to:

- promoting equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- eliminating discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- eliminating harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- promoting positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- encouraging participation by disabled persons in public life; and
- taking steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

We also have the following specific duties to:

- publish a Disability Equality Scheme demonstrating how we intend to fulfill the general and specific duties
- involve disabled people in the development of the Scheme
- ensure our Scheme includes a statement of:
 - the way in which disabled people have been involved in the development of the Scheme
 - our methods for impact assessment
 - steps we will take towards fulfilling the general duty (the 'action plan')
 - our arrangements for gathering information in relation to employment, and, where appropriate, our delivery functions
 - our arrangements for putting the information gathered to use, in particular in reviewing the effectiveness of our action plan and in preparing subsequent Disability Equality Schemes
- take the steps set out in our action plan (unless it is unreasonable or impracticable for it to do so) within three years of this Scheme being published and put into effect the arrangements for gathering and making use of information
- publish a report containing a summary of the steps taken under the action plan, the results of our information gathering and the use to which we have put the information.

Our Equality and Diversity Scheme will help us to meet all of these duties.

What we do already to meet the needs of disabled people in the Vale

The Council is already being proactive in a number of ways to help it deliver more accessible and inclusive services and job opportunities for everybody, including disabled residents, Council employees and councillors. Some of these are outlined below:

Access to our services

Planning

- Planning officer surgeries are held on Friday mornings in Wantage and Faringdon

Economic development and tourism

- Our tourism website has a section on assistance for disabled people who are visiting the district

Support for young people

- Members of the youth forum have taken part in a session on disability awareness

Local services points (LSPs) and Council buildings

- All desks at the Abingdon LSP are wheelchair accessible. Two are fitted with a hearing loop system, as well as the cash desk
- LSP staff are trained to help people understand and complete forms (e.g. benefits)
- 100% of our buildings which open to the public have public areas which are suitable for, and accessible to, disabled people

Housing

- We offer a variety of ways to access the choice based lettings service – on the internet, via LSP, computers in VWHDC offices, paper based newsletters which are distributed to GP surgeries etc (can be posted out free of charge upon request)
- We make it clear which properties in the choice based lettings scheme have been adapted for disabled people to help disabled people make an informed decision about the properties they want to bid for
- Energy team carried out an energy survey for The Knowl (drop in centre supporting people with mental health difficulties), free of charge

Assisted travel

- We run a hospital appointments allowance scheme
- We help to fund Octabus, a Dial-a-Ride scheme which operates 5 days a week in the Vale

Benefits

- We offer home visits for people unable to come to the Council offices for benefits advice

Arts development

- We part fund 'Ithaca' arts organisation which works with disabled people and older people

Sports development

- We part fund a Disability Community Sports Coach (6 hours per week)

Parks and leisure centres

- People who are registered as disabled are entitled to our discretionary 'Access to Leisure Pass' scheme which entitles them to discounted admission prices in all Council leisure centres
- Our GP referral scheme at our leisure centres helps people access leisure activities to improve their health

Council meetings

- We hold all public council meetings in wheelchair accessible venues and proactively meet any access requirements from members of the public

Access to our employment opportunities

- We are positive about employing disabled people and have gained Jobcentre Plus' 'two ticks' symbol in recognition of this approach. We interview all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and have agreed to take part in the guaranteed interview scheme. In addition, the information sheet we send out to people applying/being invited for interview outlines our commitment, as an employer, to disability equality.
- Disabled members of staff have equal access to training opportunities and we provide any support which they may need in order to take part in training sessions. For example, we have provided a signer for a member of staff who is profoundly deaf.
- Our welfare officer can provide free counseling and support for staff dealing with situations which are causing them mental and/or emotional stress.
- We make reasonable adjustments to help disabled employees carry out their day-to-day work and these are discussed with the relevant employees when they are appointed. As part of this process, we seek advice from an independent medical expert about how we can best meet the needs of disabled members of staff who are joining the Council.

Staff training on disability equality issues

The mandatory equality and diversity training for staff covers a broad range of equality and diversity issues, including disability equality. In addition, we have

run several training sessions focusing specifically on access to services for disabled people.

Support for disabled Councillors

We are providing general equality and diversity training for Councillors which covers disability equality. Our training session on 'chairs accessible meetings' also addressed the role of the chair in helping to meet the needs of disabled attendees (including committee members).

All our public committee meetings are held in wheelchair accessible venues to ensure that Councillors with disabilities can attend (this also ensures access for disabled residents).

Disability equality – priority areas and actions

Although we have made significant progress towards improving the accessibility of our services for disabled people, we recognise that there is still more that we can do.

We have identified a number of priority areas for the Council to address. These are set out below, along with the actions we will take. Timescales, responsibilities and other details for the actions are set out in the Corporate Equalities Action Plan 2008/09-2010/11, at the back of this Scheme.

1. Improving access to information for disabled people about the services we and others deliver

Actions:

- *Set up a page on our website which signposts people to disability support organisations and other useful sources of information*
- *Write and circulate guidance note for staff on how to produce a 'clear print' document which is accessible for people with sight problems*

2. Raising awareness about our services to disabled people

Actions:

- *Promote the Octabus Dial-a-Ride service to residents*
- *Review the take up of our 'Access to Leisure' passes and identify any future promotion needed*
- *Develop a marketing plan for promoting the assisted waste collection service*

3. Supporting our staff to help meet the needs of disabled service users

Actions:

- *Info sheet for staff about availability of hearing loops in the Council*
- *Put together a staff handbook about understanding and meeting the needs of our service users with disabilities to ensure they can access our services and opportunities*

4. Making community and council events accessible for disabled people

Actions:

- *Ensure Local Strategic Partnership meetings are accessible*
- *Purchase of a portable hearing loop system for meetings rooms within the Council offices at Abbey House*
- *Draw up a checklist for groups awarded community grant funding to run an event(s) on 'organising an accessible event'*

5. Improving access to our employment opportunities for disabled people

Actions:

- *Encourage managers to pro-actively and regularly review the support needs of their team members with disabilities and/or caring responsibilities*
- *Review recruitment information to ensure it actively promotes the council's approach to disability equality as an employer*

6. Improving access to our local town centres

Actions:

- *Raise pavement issues with OCC through our involvement with local town centre transport schemes*
- *Raise general public awareness about inconsiderate parking in disabled bays to try and limit this abuse*

7. Raising awareness about reporting disability harassment

Action:

- *Run an initiative to encourage people to report incidents of disability harassment*

How we have identified these priority areas and actions

In addition to considering performance data and the results of our Corporate Equalities Audit, we carried out some specific consultation with service users, staff and stakeholders which helped us to identify these priority areas and actions:

- running a residents' focus group, involving members of Vale Voice (our Citizens' Panel) with direct experience of disability
- carrying out a staff survey to pick up on any issues relating to the Council's approach to disability equality as an employer
- carrying out a sample survey involving members from a group for older people in Abingdon
- asking organisations representing disabled people in the Vale for their feedback via an article in the Council's equality and diversity bulletin

Also, when we carried out the public consultation on the draft version of this Scheme, we automatically consulted on this section covering disability equality.

We are very grateful to all the people who gave us feedback and information which has helped us to shape this section of the Scheme.

Monitoring progress on promoting disability equality

In addition to the generic indicators and targets we will use to measure our overall progress in promoting equality and diversity, we will use the following key indicators to help us measure our performance in promoting disability equality:

Indicator	Current performance	Target performance	How will we measure this?	When?
Percentage of disabled people who are (net) satisfied with Council services	41% (compared with 44% of non disabled people)	Equivalent to non disabled people	BVPI general satisfaction survey (or similar survey)	2009/10

Percentage of employees with a disability (BVPI 16a)	5.8% (Q1 2006/07)	5.9% (2008/09 & 2009/10)	HR employee data	2008/09 & 2009/10
Percentage of top 5% of earners with a disability (BVPI 11c)	16.7% (Q1 2006/07)	16% (2008/09 & 2009/10)	HR employee data	2008/09 & 2009/10

GENDER EQUALITY

Men and women in the Vale

- 49.7% of people in the Vale district are male and 50.3% are female, according to the Census 2001 figures. In the South East region as a whole, 48.8% of the population male and 51.2% are female.
- The gender split for Council staff is 42.7% male/57.3% female¹¹.
- Within our Council, 21.4% of the top 5% of earners are women¹². This is lower than the percentage of women working in the Council as a whole.
- 24.9% of the Council's workforce work part time. Within this group, 82.9% are women.
- There are no service areas in the Council where women are significantly underrepresented. This is the same for male employees, with the exception of the Local Service Point where the majority of officers are female.

The Gender Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2006 requires all local authorities (and a number of other public bodies) to positively promote gender equality in everything they do by having due regard to need:

- to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

These legislative changes also include the elimination of discrimination and harassment on the grounds of gender reassignment.

The gender equality duty upholds legislation against discrimination defined as unlawful within the Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Pay Act, in the areas of:

- sex discrimination
- sexual harassment
- on grounds of pregnancy and maternity leave
- against married persons and civil partners
- victimisation

We also have the following specific duties to:

- prepare and publish a Gender Equality Scheme (GES) outlining how the gender equality duty will be met
- identify objectives that specifically address the causes of any gender pay gap
- consult stakeholders (service users, employees, trade unions etc) in identifying broader and specific gender equality objectives

¹¹ As of September 2007

¹² As of Q1 2007/08

- gather and use relevant information on policies and practices in relation to gender equality
- assess the impact of current and proposed policies and functions on gender equality and difference
- develop and implement an Action Plan alongside the GES that is reported on annually and reviewed every 3 years

Our Equality and Diversity Scheme will help us to meet all of these duties.

The gender pay gap

The new gender legislation has a particular aim to address and ultimately help resolve the evidenced pay gap between men and women. Nationally, the gender pay gap (the difference between men's and women's median full-time hourly earnings) is 12.6%.

According to the Gender Equality Duty Code of Practice¹³, the three main causes of the gender pay gap are:

- discrimination (including pay discrimination and pregnancy)
- the impact of women's disproportionate share of caring responsibilities
- the concentration of women in particular occupations

The gender pay gap at the Council stands at 7.5% (based on basic salary) which is better than the national figure. We are confident that this gap does not indicate any gender based pay discrimination because we have adopted a single status agreement to ensure that salaries are in no way dependent on gender. In addition, we will have carried out an equal pay review by the end of 2006/07. Any actions arising from this review will compliment this section of our Equality and Diversity Scheme.

Instead, we believe that the gap is a result of more women being employed in lower grade jobs in the Council than men.

Gender reassignment issues

The Equal Opportunities Commission defines 'transsexual' as a term 'usually used to describe a person who intends to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment (which may or may not involve hormone therapy or surgery)¹⁴. There are estimated to be about 5000 transsexual people in the UK.

¹³ 'Gender Equality Duty Code of Practice, England and Wales' - page 34
(http://www.eoc.org.uk/PDF/GED_CoP_Draft.pdf)

¹⁴ 'Meeting the gender duty for transsexual staff - guidance for public bodies working in England, Wales and Scotland' – page 2
(http://www.eoc.org.uk/Docs/Meeting_the_gender_duty_for_transsexual_staff.doc)

Transsexual people may experience discrimination or prejudice at work or in life generally. There can be hostility in the workplace where an individual is known to be undergoing the gender reassignment process. Transsexual people can also face transphobia in the community, where they are harassed because they have undergone gender reassignment.

There is a lot of ignorance around transgender issues, and people from this group may often find themselves without support from or inclusion with either gender: they can face rejection from both men and women.

Gender and health

In 2006, life expectancy for women in Oxfordshire was 82.1 years and men 78.3 years¹⁵, both above the national levels.

Health issues vary between men and women. According to the Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust¹⁶:

- men typically develop heart disease 10 years earlier than women
- women are 2.7 times more likely to develop an auto immune disease such as diabetes than men
- women are more likely to suffer from arthritis and rheumatism than men
- men are twice as likely as women to both develop, and die from, the ten most common cancers affecting both sexes

The National Health Service leads on health matters but as a community leader and responsible employer, it is important that the Council recognises gender related health issues.

What we do already to meet the needs of men and women in the Vale

The Council is already being proactive in a number of ways to help it deliver more accessible and inclusive services and job opportunities to everyone, regardless of their gender. Some of these are outlined below:

Access to our services

Planning

- With the Grove development, the planning policy team carried out numerous events to enable local people to have their say in the planning

¹⁵ 'Gender Equality Scheme 2007-2010' – Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust
(<http://www.oxfordshirepct.nhs.uk/patient-matters/equality-and-diversity/documents/OxfordshirePCTGenderEqualityScheme0710.pdf>)

¹⁶ 'Gender Equality Scheme 2007-2010' – Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust
(<http://www.oxfordshirepct.nhs.uk/patient-matters/equality-and-diversity/documents/OxfordshirePCTGenderEqualityScheme0710.pdf>)

process. These included afternoon and evening workshops which were held in the local community

Economic development

- The economic development team grant funds Faringdon Enterprise Gateway, helping under represented groups get started in business. They recently ran a project to encourage more women to set up their own businesses

Car parks

- We have introduced parent and toddler bays in the multistory car park
- Staff are offered free personal safety alarms from the car parks team

Community safety

- We part fund an outreach worker to help women suffering from domestic violence in the district

Housing

- We help homeless families find suitable accommodation by introducing them to private landlords and guaranteeing the deposit

Benefits

- We offer home visits for people unable to come to the Council offices for benefits advice

Sports development

- The sports development team has set up and run numerous sporting opportunities to encourage more women to take up sport e.g. women's netball initiative

Parks and leisure centres

- Single parents are entitled to our discretionary 'Access to Leisure Pass' scheme which entitles them to discounted admission prices in all leisure centres

Access to our employment opportunities

- We operate a flexible working hours scheme for staff. This provides employees with a degree of flexibility in determining their starting and finishing times to suit their travelling arrangements and other personal needs or circumstances. It also allows time to be accrued and carried forward.

- Childcare vouchers are available to all employees and can be used to pay for a wide range of childcare. The scheme enables staff to be paid a portion of their salary in childcare vouchers. Salary taken in the form of childcare vouchers is exempt from Tax and National Insurance.
- We have a policy and procedure in place to specifically to ensure that every employee understands that they have the right not to be sexually harassed and the right to complain about it should it occur.
- When an employee is on maternity leave, they are sent copies of the staff newsletter to help keep them informed of developments at the Council so that their return to work is as easy as possible.
- We can grant up to 10 days in any one leave year for 'compassionate' purposes

Gender equality – priority areas and actions

Although we have made significant progress towards improving the accessibility of our services for everybody, regardless of gender, we recognise that there is still more that we can do.

We have identified a number of priority areas for the Council to address. These are set out below, along with the actions we will take. Timescales, responsibilities and other details for the actions are set out in the Corporate Equalities Action Plan 2008/09-2010/11, at the back of this Scheme.

1. Raising the Council's profile as a family-friendly employer

Actions:

- *Promote family friendly aspects of VWHDC employment to all job applicants*
- *Research how good practice councils deal with covering childcare costs for interviews*
- *Encourage managers to pro-actively and regularly review the support needs of their team members with caring responsibilities*

2. Maintaining our fair and equal approach to pay

Action:

- *Carry out an Equal Pay Review every three years*

3. Breaking down any gender based segregation in relation to particular job areas

Action:

- *Lobby chartered institutes about encouraging more women into sectors where they are significantly under represented*

4. Helping to address women's concerns about personal safety

Actions:

- *Regularly promote the free personal security alarms which are available to all members of staff*
- *Support the actions of the Oxfordshire Domestic Violence Steering Group*

5. Raising awareness about transphobic harassment

Action:

- *Promote Thames Valley Police's 'Tru-Vision' reporting scheme (where people can report transphobic crime)*

6. Helping to improve the health of men and women in the Vale

Actions:

- *Article in the equality and diversity bulletin about Council sport initiatives for women*
- *Promote Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust services which aim to tackle gender based health inequalities to Council staff and residents*

How we have identified these priority areas and actions

In addition to considering performance data and the results of our Corporate Equalities Audit, we carried out some specific consultation with service users, staff and stakeholders which helped us to identify these priority issues and actions:

- We ran two residents' focus groups, involving members of Vale Voice (our Citizens' Panel). One was for women and one was for men so participants felt comfortable to talk about the difficulties they face in accessing Council services because of their gender.
- We carried out a staff survey to ask employees if they experienced any difficulties in accessing employment opportunities due to their gender.
- We asked organisations representing women in the Vale for their feedback via an article in the Council's equality and diversity bulletin

We are very grateful to all the people who gave us feedback and information which has helped us to shape this section of the Scheme.

Monitoring progress on promoting gender equality

In addition to the generic indicators and targets we will use to measure our overall progress in promoting equality and diversity, we will use the following key indicators to help us measure our performance in promoting gender equality:

Indicator	Current performance	Target performance	How will we measure this?	When?
Percentage of top 5% of earners who are women (BVPI 11a)	21.4% (Q1 2006/07)	14% (2008/09 & 2009/10)	HR employee data	2008/09 & 2009/10

RACE EQUALITY

This section consists of the Council's Race Equality Scheme (RES) which was adopted in March 2007 (prior to the development of this over-arching Equality and Diversity Scheme).

The RES can be downloaded from the Council's website at <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/community%5Fand%5Fliving/equality%5Fand%5Fdiversity/raceequalityscheme.asp>. Paper copies are also available upon request.

To effectively integrate our RES into this Equality and Diversity Scheme, we will revise and refresh it in line with the rest of the Equality and Diversity Scheme. Actions on race equality are also included in the corporate equalities action plan at the back of this Scheme.

The public consultation on our draft Equality and Diversity Scheme did not include this section on Race Equality as it was subject to its own consultation in early 2007.

CORPORATE EQUALITIES ACTION PLAN 2008/09 – 2010-11

2008/09

Action number	Cross cutting/priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding	Equalities strand
1	Improving access to information for disabled people about the services we and others deliver	Set up a page on our website which signposts people to disability support organisations and other useful sources of information	Web page live	End of June (Q1)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability
2	Understanding our new migrant communities	Monitor the development of new migrant communities in the Vale	Relevant ethnicity data in equalities monitoring summaries from service teams is reviewed	End of June (Q1)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Race
3	Involvement and participation	Actively promote the equality and diversity bulletin to all service teams	Article in team brief	End of June (Q1)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race

Action number	Cross cutting/priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding	Equalities strand
4	Partnerships and procurement	<i>Inform major contractors and strategic partners of this Scheme, reiterate their responsibilities and identify any relevant support needs they may have</i>	Letter and scheme sent to major contractors and strategic partners	End of June (Q1)	Katharine Doherty, Mike Mackay and Lorna Edwards	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
5	Partnerships and procurement	<i>Review the equality and diversity section in the standard SLA template to ensure it reflects the Council's current legal duties</i>	Review completed	End of June (Q1)	Lorna Edwards and Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
6	Making community and council events accessible for disabled people	<i>Ensure Local Strategic Partnership meetings are accessible (asking for people to let us know about special requirements)</i>	Invitations to LSP meetings ask people about any special requirements	End of June (Q1)	Lorna Edwards	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
7	Partnerships and procurement	<i>Send out copies of this Scheme to partners with any new SLAs</i>	Copies of this Scheme sent out with new SLAs	End of September (Q2) onwards	Lorna Edwards	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race

Action number	Cross cutting/priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding	Equalities strand
8	Supporting our staff to help meet the needs of disabled service users	<i>Put together a staff handbook about understanding and meeting the needs of our service users with disabilities to ensure they can access our services and opportunities</i>	Handbook produced and circulated to staff	End of September (Q2)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability
9	Improving access to our employment opportunities for disabled people and carers	<i>Encourage managers to pro-actively and regularly review the support needs of their team members with disabilities and/or caring responsibilities</i>	Briefings/ meetings held between HR officers and managers	End of September (Q2)	Alan Burnett	Within existing resources	Disability Gender
10	Promoting the right work/life balance to help people manage caring responsibilities	<i>Promote family friendly aspects of VWHDC employment to potential staff and new staff (via 'working at the Vale' info sheet)</i>	'Working at the Vale' info sheet updated to highlight family friendly aspects of VWHDC	End of September (Q2)	Jakki Breeze	Within existing resources	Disability Gender
11	Raising awareness about our services to disabled people	<i>Promote the Octabus Dial-a-Ride service to residents</i>	Promotional article in Vale Views	End of September (Q2)	Ben Watson	Within existing resources	Disability

Action number	Cross cutting/priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding	Equalities strand
12	Equality Impact Assessments	Look to set up a residents' panel to give feedback on EIAs	Proposal paper produced for consideration by Organisation Change	End of December (Q3)	Katharine Doherty	Proposals may have cost implications	Disability Gender Race
13	Involvement and participation	Produce a checklist for staff on how to run an accessible event	Checklist produced and made available to staff	End of December (Q3)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
14	Improving access to information about our services for people from ethnic minorities	Carry out a council wide survey about requests for translated material/ interpreters	Survey completed and results shared with communications	End of December (Q3)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Race
15	Helping to address women's concerns about personal safety	Regularly promote the free personal security alarms which are available to all members of staff	Article in The Horse's Mouth Posters displayed in Council offices	End of December (Q3)	Katharine Doherty and Beverley Mizen	Within existing resources	Gender
16	Access to information about council services	Develop an 'accessible information' policy for the Council which includes when/how we make information available in alternative formats and languages	Policy developed and made available to all staff and councillors	End of December (Q3)	Nikki Malin and Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Race

Action number	Cross cutting/priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding	Equalities strand
17	Improving access to information for disabled people about the services we and others deliver	Write and circulate guidance note for staff on how to produce a 'clear print' document which is accessible for people with sight problems	Guidance note produced and made available to all staff	End of December (Q3)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability
18	Helping to improve the health of men and women in the Vale	Article in the equality and diversity bulletin about Council sport initiatives for women	Article included in bulletin	End of December (Q3)	Jo Paterson	Within existing resources	Gender
19	Measuring our performance relating to equality and diversity	Produce an annual equality and diversity report regarding access to our employment opportunities	Summary report produced	End of Q4 (to be included in Corporate Governance Report)	Gill Lay/Ruth Fisher	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
20	Measuring our performance relating to equality and diversity	Continue to collect equalities data across all relevant Council services to help inform service planning and delivery	Summary reports produced & used for EIAs and service planning	End of March (Q4)	Service managers	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
21	Improving access to our local town centres	Raise pavement issues with OCC through our involvement with local town centre transport schemes	Accessible pavements issue flagged during relevant transport meetings	End of March (Q4) onwards	Gordon Willcox	Within existing resources	Disability

Action number	Cross cutting/priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding	Equalities strand
22	Equality Impact Assessments	Carry out EIAs in accordance with the corporate timetable	EIAs completed	End of March (Q4)	Relevant Deputy Directors	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
23	Involvement and participation	Review guidance for staff on how to consult with ethnic minority communities, disabled people and women	Guidance reviewed and updated as necessary	End of March (Q4)	Nikki Malin and Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
24	Involvement and participation	Produce three equality and diversity bulletins per year, to target information to organisations and groups supporting disabled people, people from ethnic minorities and others in the Vale	Bulletins produced and sent to relevant organisations	End of March (Q4)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
25	Support for Councillors on equality and diversity issues	Monitor equalities data relating to our Councillors so we can meet their needs more effectively	Survey of Councillors carried out	End of March (Q4) Tbc Carole N.	Carole Nicholl	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race

Action number	Cross cutting/priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding	Equalities strand
26	Complaints	<i>Develop the corporate complaints process in order to capture complainants' equalities data and systematically flag any complaints which relate to equality and diversity</i>	Corporate complaints process reviewed and improved	End of March (Q4)	Joshua White and Nikki Malin	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
27	Raising awareness about our services to disabled people	<i>Review the take up of our 'Access to Leisure' passes and identify any future promotion needed</i>	Review carried out and any future actions for promotional activity identified	End of March (Q4)	Chris Webb	Within existing resources	Disability
28	Raising awareness about our services to disabled people	<i>Develop a marketing plan for promoting the assisted waste collection service</i>	Plan produced	End of March (Q4)	Dave Wilson and Nikki Malin	Within existing resources	Disability
29	Making community and council events accessible for disabled people	<i>Purchase of a portable hearing loop system for meetings rooms within Abbey House</i>	Portable hearing loop system purchased	End of March (Q4)	Andrew Morgan	Within existing resources	Disability
30	Improving access to our employment opportunities for disabled people	<i>Review recruitment information to ensure it actively promotes the council's approach to disability equality as an employer</i>	Recruitment information reviewed and updated if necessary	End of March (Q4)	Jakki Breeze	Within existing resources	Disability

Action number	Cross cutting/priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding	Equalities strand
31	A fair employer	<i>Run equality and diversity training courses for new starters</i>	Staff training sessions delivered	End of March (Q4)	Sandra Varney and Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
32	Raising awareness about our services to people from ethnic minority communities	<i>Embrace partnership project</i>	3 newsletters produced	End of March (Q4)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Race
33	A fair employer	<i>Run equality and diversity training courses for managers</i>	Manager training sessions delivered Article in team brief to inform all staff that sessions have been held	End of March (Q4)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
34	Helping to address women's concerns about personal safety	<i>Support the actions of the Oxfordshire Domestic Violence Steering Group</i>	Relevant 2008/09 actions completed	By the end of March (Q4)	Liz Hayden	Within existing resources	Gender

2009/10

Action number	Cross cutting/priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding needed	Equalities strand
35	Understanding our new migrant communities	<i>Monitoring the development of new migrant communities in the Vale</i>	Relevant ethnicity data in equalities monitoring summaries from service teams is reviewed	End of June (Q1)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Race
36	Supporting our staff to help meet the needs of disabled service users	<i>Info sheet for staff about availability of hearing loops in the Council</i>	Information sheet produced and made available to staff	End of June (Q1)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability
37	A fair employer	<i>Actively promote the Council's welfare service to staff</i>	Article in team brief, posters on staff notice boards	End of June (Q1)	Ann Cox	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
38	Tackling incidents of transphobic harassment	<i>Promote Thames Valley Police's 'Tru-Vision' reporting scheme (where people can report transphobic crime)</i>	Information and link to Tru-Vision's website on our website	End of June (Q1)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Gender

Action number	Cross cutting/priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding needed	Equalities strand
39	Involvement and participation	<i>Investigate running an equality and diversity event for relevant groups and organisations</i>	Levels of local interest gauged Examples of good practice sought Potential topics for the event identified	End of September (Q2)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
40	Involvement and participation	<i>Seek feedback about the accessibility of Council meetings from members of the public attending committees</i>	Survey carried out and results used to inform service delivery	End of September (Q2)	Carole Nicholl	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
41	Making community and council events accessible for disabled people	<i>Draw up a checklist for groups awarded community grant funding to run an event(s) on 'organising an accessible event'</i>	Checklist produced and sent to relevant groups	End of September (Q2)	Katharine Doherty and Lorna Edwards	Within existing resources	Disability
42	Improving access to our local town centres	<i>Raise general public awareness about inconsiderate parking in disabled bays to try and limit this abuse</i>	Article in Vale Views	End of September (Q2)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability

Action number	Cross cutting/priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding needed	Equalities strand
43	Promoting the right work/life balance to help people manage caring responsibilities	<i>Research how good practice councils deal with covering childcare costs for interviews</i>	Research completed and findings circulated to head of HR and Equalities Officer	End of September (Q2)	Jakki Breeze	Within existing resources	Gender
44	Raising awareness about reporting disability harassment	<i>Run an initiative to encourage people to report incidents of disability harassment</i>	Initiative run	End of December (Q3)	Liz Hayden and Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability
45	Measuring our performance relating to equality and diversity	<i>Produce an annual equality and diversity report regarding access to our employment opportunities</i>	Summary report produced	End of Q4 (to be included in Corporate Governance Report)	Gill Lay/Ruth Fisher	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
46	Measuring our performance relating to equality and diversity	<i>Continue to collect equalities data across all relevant Council services and ensure it informs service planning and delivery</i>	Summary reports produced	End of March (Q4)	Service managers	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
47	Equality Impact Assessments	<i>Carry out EIAs in accordance with the corporate timetable</i>	EIAs completed	End of March (Q4)	Relevant Deputy Directors	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race

Action number	Cross cutting/priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding needed	Equalities strand
48	Involvement and participation	<i>Produce three equality and diversity bulletins per year, to target information to organisations and groups supporting disabled people, people from ethnic minorities and others in the Vale</i>	Bulletins produced and sent to relevant organisations	End of March (Q4)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
49	A fair employer	<i>Run equality and diversity training courses for new starters</i>	Staff training sessions delivered	End of March (Q4)	Sandra Varney and Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
50	Breaking down any gender based segregation in relation to particular job areas	<i>Lobby chartered institutes about encouraging more women into sectors where they are significantly under represented</i>	Letters sent to relevant institutes	End of March (Q4)	Gill Lay	Within existing resources	Gender

2010/11

Action number	Cross cutting/ priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding needed	Equalities strand
51	Understanding our new migrant communities	<i>Monitoring the development of new migrant communities in the Vale</i>	Relevant ethnicity data in equalities monitoring summaries from service teams is reviewed	End of June (Q1)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Race
52	Measuring our performance relating to equality and diversity	<i>carry out a corporate equalities audit</i>	Audit completed. Results recorded and circulated to senior management	End of September (Q2)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
53	Measuring our performance relating to equality and diversity	<i>Produce an annual equality and diversity report regarding access to our employment opportunities</i>	Summary report produced	End of Q4 (to be included in Corporate Governance Report)	Gill Lay/Ruth Fisher	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
54	Measuring our performance relating to equality and diversity	<i>continue to collect equalities data across all relevant Council services and ensure it informs service planning and delivery</i>	Summary reports produced	End of March (Q4)	Service managers	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race

Action number	Cross cutting/priority area	Action	Deliverable(s)	Completion date	Lead officer(s)	Funding needed	Equalities strand
55	Involvement and participation	<i>Produce three equality and diversity bulletins per year, to target information to organisations and groups supporting disabled people, people from ethnic minorities and others in the Vale</i>	Bulletins produced and sent to relevant organisations	End of March (Q4)	Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
56	Addressing any gender based discrimination in the workplace	<i>Carry out an Equal Pay Review</i>	Equal Pay Review completed	End of March (Q4)	Gill Lay	Within existing resources	Gender
57	Equality Impact Assessments	<i>Carry out EIAs in accordance with the corporate timetable</i>	EIAs completed	End of March (Q4)		Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
58	A fair employer	<i>Run equality and diversity training courses for new starters</i>	Staff training sessions delivered	End of March (Q4)	Sandra Varney and Katharine Doherty	Within existing resources	Disability Gender Race
59	Helping improve the health of men and women in the Vale	<i>Promote Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust services which aim to tackle gender based health inequalities to Council staff and residents</i>	Article in Team Brief, information posters on staff notice boards	End of March (Q4)	Julia Singh	Within existing resources	Gender

APPENDIX 1

Equality Impact Assessment timetable 2007/08 – 2009/10

2007/08		
Service Area	Service block	Function to be assessed
ODS	Communications	Consultation (including citizens' panel)
Planning & Community Strategy	Community Strategy	Community Funding/ Grants
Housing and Community Safety	Housing	Disabled Facilities Grants
ODS	Contact Services	LSPs - Customer advice and information/enquiries Cash transactions
Environmental Health	Environmental Protection	Environmental protection
Environmental Health	Food/Health and Safety	Food safety (including education) Health and safety
Finance	Ridgeway Shared Services	Community taxation
Housing & Community Safety	Housing	Housing advice, homelessness and temporary accommodation
Housing & Community Safety	Housing Register	Housing register and choice based lettings
ODS	Human Resources	Recruitment and selection
ODS	Human Resources	Training and development
Contracts and Procurement	Sport and Recreation (facilities)	Leisure facilities (sports)
Environmental Health	Licensing	Licensing (including taxi licensing)
Planning & Community Strategy	Development Policy	Development Policy
Planning & Community Strategy	Development Control	Applications, decisions Enforcement

2008/09		
Service Area	Service block	Function to be assessed
Finance	Ridgeway Shared Services	Benefit advice/information Applications Decisions Payments

2008/09		
Service Area	Service block	Function to be assessed
		Fraud
Finance	Ridgeway Shared Services	Concessionary fares Assisted travel
ODS	Human Resources	Health & Safety Welfare Employee relations (including liP)
ODS	Communications	Corporate communications (including the website)
Planning & Community Strategy	Economic Development and Community	Community Strategy & partnership working
Planning & Community Strategy	Economic Development and Community	Support for young people
Planning & Community Strategy	Economic Development and Community	Economic development and tourism advice
Commercial services	Direct Services Organisation	Emergency Planning
Environmental Health	Environmental Protection	Council burials
Commercial services	Direct Services Organisation	Direct Services Organisation (including emergency response – land drainage and flood prevention, drain blockages, sewage treatment, septic tanks)
Estates	Property Services	Property and facilities management (including construction of public buildings AND civic hall & guildhall facilities)
Housing & Community Safety	Energy Team	Fuel Poverty/ HECA /discretionary grants
Legal & Democratic Services	Legal/local land charges	Local land charges
Contracts and Procurement	Arts Development	Arts Development
Contracts and Procurement	Sport Development	Sports Development
Housing & Community Safety	Enabling Housing Function	Housing enabling Regulation
Housing and Community Safety	Community Safety	Community Safety CCTV
Contracts and Procurement	Parks and open spaces Landscaping	Parks, Open spaces and landscaping

2008/09		
Service Area	Service block	Function to be assessed
	Services	
Planning	Car parking	Car parks
Contracts and Procurement	Waste Management	Unwanted and abandoned vehicles Dumped waste
	Waste management	kerbside refuse collection kerbside recycling collection provision of bring banks bulky waste collections garden waste (?) waste minimisation
Contracts and Procurement	Waste Services	Public conveniences

2009/10		
Service Area	Service block	Function to be assessed
Planning and Community Strategy	Transport policy	Transport policy
Legal and Democratic Services	Elections	Elections and electoral registrations
Planning & Community Strategy	Health Development	Health Development
Contracts and Procurement	Waste Services	Street cleansing service Dog waste
ODS	Organisational Change	Risk Management Data management
Audit and performance management	Audit	Internal Audit
Finance	Ridgeway Services	Income/morgages
Commercial services	Building Control	Building Control
ODS	Communications	Postal Service
Legal & Democratic Services	Committee Management	Committee management Member services Liaison with town and parish councils
Finance	Ridgeway Services	Accountancy and payments
ODS	Organisational Change	Help desk and administration Applications Security and Disaster Recovery Technical and Network Business Support Information Technology Strategy
Legal Services	Legal	Legal Support and advice (internal)
ODS	Organisational	Performance Management and

2009/10		
Service Area	Service block	Function to be assessed
	Change	Best Value
ODS	Organisational Change	Policy Development
Planning & Community Strategy	Planning Policy	The Council's Agenda 21 Statement
Planning & Community Strategy	Planning Policy	Environmental Planning and Conservation
Planning & Community Strategy	Planning Policy	Countryside Conservation

APPENDIX 2

List of consultees

Oxfordshire Chinese Carers Group

Oxfordshire Chinese Community & Advice Centre

Oxfordshire Older Chinese People Centre (HAPPY PLACE)

OXS RAD

Oxford Deaf and Hard of Hearing Centre

Oxford Diocesan Council for the Deaf

Oxfordshire Council of Disabled People (OCDP)

Oxfordshire Association for the Blind (OAB)

Dialability

Autism Family Support

Multiple Sclerosis Society (Oxford & District)

Age Concern Oxfordshire City & County

Oxfordshire Dyslexia Association (ODA)

South and Vale Carers' Centre

Abingdon Cancer Support Group

Abingdon Family Centre

African-Caribbean Community Action Network

Alzheimer's Society (Oxfordshire)

Asian Cultural Centre

Faringdon Family & Childrens Centre

Oxford Synagogue & Jewish Centre

Oxfordshire Racial Equality Council

Oxfordshire MIND

Berkshire Women's Aid

The Oxfordshire Federation of Women's Institutes

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

Members of staff

Service users who attended our focus groups

Members of the Evergreen club, Abingdon

We are very grateful to everybody who gave us feedback to help us develop our Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11.

APPENDIX 3

Equality in Employment Policy



EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT POLICY

1.0 Our Policy Statement

- 1.1 Vale of White Horse District Council believes that all employees and prospective employees should be treated equally, fairly and with respect. We are committed to the principle of equal opportunities and believe we should value those who work for us or want to work for us equally irrespective of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, family responsibility, trade union membership, whether they are suffering from HIV or AIDS or any other factor irrelevant to their employment. This policy covers all aspects of the Council's role as an employer including recruitment, promotion, transfers, training, health and safety, dismissal, terms and conditions, pay and benefits probationary, grievance and disciplinary procedures.
- 1.2 We want to attract talented people to work for the Council, stay with the Council and perform effectively while they are employed by the Council. Recruitment and selection criteria, procedures and practices will be kept under regular review to ensure that individuals are selected or promoted on the basis of the requirements of the job and their ability to do it. Where appropriate, special training will be given to assist employees to progress within the Council.
- 1.3 The Council will pursue a programme of action to make this policy fully effective and will regularly review its effectiveness. The Council will set target figures for the representation of different groups throughout the organisation.

2.0 Why We Have a Policy

- 2.1 As a community leader and large employer, the Council aims to be an exemplar organisation in the application of equal opportunity principles and practice.

- 2.2 The Council recognises that, as it moves towards a workforce which is representative of the whole community, it becomes better able to identify and deliver services to the whole of the community it represents and serves.
- 2.3 This policy helps the Council meet a number of the objectives supporting its Vision, which is to:-

'build and safeguard a fair, open and compassionate community'.

The Vale of White Horse District Council aims to:

Strengthen local democracy and public involvement through access to information, consultation, and devolution of power so that everyone can take part in our community and contribute to the decisions which affect our lives.

Create a safer community and improve the quality of life among Vale residents.

Encourage a strong and sustainable economy which benefits all who live in, work in or visit the Vale.

Help disadvantaged groups and individuals within the Vale to realise their full potential.

Provide and support high quality public services which are effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of people within the Vale.

Protect and improve our built and natural environment.

- 2.5 The policy helps the Council put its values into action to ensure the organisation is fair, open and compassionate and that people are valued and respected.
- 2.6 The Council wishes to ensure it has the best employees and that they work to their full potential by recognising each individual's contribution, developing their capability and allowing them to use their talents.

3.0 The Law and Equality

- 3.1 The policy addresses the Council's legal duties under the Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986, Race Relations Act 1976, Equal Pay Act 1970, Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005, the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 and the Equality Act 2006. It also assists the Council in complying with various non-statutory codes of practice.
- 3.2 The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and Race Relations Act 1976 oblige employers and employees not to discriminate on the

grounds of sex (against men or women) or marital status or race (including colour, nationality and ethnic origins). The Acts also give councils a duty to make appropriate arrangements to ensure that their functions are carried out with regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

3.3 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005 makes it unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person in any aspect of employment for a reason connected with their disability. It defines disability as "a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities". A Disability Equality Duty has been introduced.

3.4 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires local authorities to ensure that every appointment of a person to a paid office or employment shall be made on merit.

3.5 The Equality Act 2006 introduces a gender equality duty requiring unlawful sex discrimination to be eliminated and the promotion of equality of opportunity between men and women.

3.6 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 allows employers to discriminate on the grounds of gender and disability in certain circumstances when undertaking risk assessments and establishing the necessary controls. An example might be where manual handling tasks could not safely be undertaken by a person with a particular form of disability. Such discrimination should be exceptional and justifiable. Where necessary, reasonable modifications to workplaces or systems of work should be undertaken to ensure that no discrimination takes place.

4.0 Objectives of Our Policy

4.1 To prevent unjustifiable direct and indirect discrimination in the selection and employment of people.

(a) Direct discrimination is treating a person from a particular group less favourably than others are or would be treated in the same circumstances.

(b) Indirect discrimination is the application of a requirement or condition (intentional or unintentional) which has a discriminatory effect on people from a particular group.

- 4.2 To stimulate equality of opportunity by the elimination of conditions, requirements, procedures and practices which are unjustified.
- 4.3 To recruit and retain the best person for the job and to develop them within that job regardless of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, family responsibility, trade union membership, whether they are suffering from HIV or AIDS or any other factor irrelevant to their employment.
- N.B. The usual retirement age for Council employees is 65 years but under the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 employees may request to continue working beyond their 65th birthday.
- 4.4 To achieve a workforce which reflects the overall composition of the community the Council is seeking to serve.

5.0 Responsibilities and Roles

- 5.1 This policy applies to all Members and employees of the Council. It has particular relevance to those in a position of responsibility with control over other employees and those responsible for recruitment and selection.
- 5.2. The Chief Executive is responsible for the overall implementation and operational effectiveness of the Policy.
- 5.3 Each Director is responsible for the implementation of the policy within their directorates.
- 5.4 The Human Resources Manager is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy; ensuring its communication to all job applicants and new employees, ensuring that the Council's personnel policies and procedures comply with it, identifying areas for further action and providing specialist training and advice.
- 5.5 PRAC is responsible for considering the effectiveness of the policy and progress towards the achievement of targets on an annual basis and is responsible for reviewing these targets as appropriate.
- 5.6 Each and every employee, irrespective of their job or level within the organisation has a personal responsibility to comply with this policy. Anyone discriminating unfairly will be guilty of misconduct and dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

6.0 Specific Measures

6.1 The Council will develop new procedures to enable compliance with this policy to be monitored and to ensure unfair discrimination is prevented.

6.2 A separate Employment of Ex-Offenders Policy has been adopted by the Council aimed at ensuring that the Council complies with the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

6.3 A separate HIV and AIDS Policy has been adopted by the Council aimed at preventing unfair discrimination against those with HIV and AIDS.

6.4 A separate Sexual Harassment Policy has been adopted by the Council aimed at ensuring that sexual harassment does not occur and that any instances are properly dealt with.

6.5 A separate Access Policy has been adopted by the Council aimed at preventing Disability Discrimination .

6.5 The Council will keep its recruitment advertising practices under review to ensure the level of local, regional and national coverage is appropriate.

7.0 Monitoring and Review

7.1 The Council will seek evidence of systematic change contributing to the achievement of the Council's aims. The effectiveness of this policy will be regularly monitored and reviewed.

7.2 The Council will therefore:

- (a) monitor the characteristics of those applying for its jobs at each stage.
- (b) Monitor the characteristics of its workforce.
- (c) Identify trends to assist in policy planning.
- (d) Identify indicators of possible discrimination.
- (e) Monitor the targets set for achieving equality in employment.
- (f) Require that thorough recruitment and selection procedures be operated and monitored.

- (g) Require that adequate records are kept on training, development, conditions of service, reasons for leaving, and disciplinary cases.
- (h) Communicate centrally held data to Directors and Managers to enable them to respond effectively.

8.0 Training for Equality

- 8.1 All Members and employees will be made aware of this policy.
- 8.2 Training to support the provisions of this policy will be provided to all Members and employees as appropriate and in particular to all those in a position of responsibility with control over other employees and those responsible for recruitment and selection.
- 8.3 The provisions of this policy will be included in the induction of all new Members and employees.
- 8.4 The Council will consider providing training as deemed appropriate to assist relevant groups of employees to enter occupations within the Council where they are currently under-represented.

9.0 Resources

- 9.1 In striving to be an equal opportunity employer, the Council will seek to make available appropriate resources to achieve the aims set out in this policy.

10.0 Complaints under Our Policy


- 10.1 Any employee who has a complaint about the operation of this policy or believes that the Council has unfairly discriminated against them shall follow the process outlines in the Council's grievance procedure or shall take the matter up with the Human Resources Manager.
- 10.2 Any Member who has a complaint about the operation of this policy or believes the Council has unfairly discriminated against them shall in the first instance take the matter up with the Chief Executive.
- 10.3 Any job applicant who has a complaint about the operation of this policy or believes the Council has unfairly discriminated against them shall, in the first instance, take the matter up with the recruiting officer, who will deal with it in accordance with the Council's Comments and Complaints Procedure.

You can get our Equality and Diversity Scheme in alternative formats, upon request. These include large print, computer disk and email.

This document is also available in alternative languages, upon request

本文件可以應要求，製作成中文 (繁體字) 版本。

Please contact Katharine Doherty (Equalities Officer) at Vale of White Horse District Council.

 01235 520202

 equalities@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR & MONITORING OFFICER
TO EXECUTIVE
7 DECEMBER 2007

Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members of the Executive on the project to refurbish and extend the facilities at the North East Abingdon Community Association (NEACA); to draw the attention of Members to the criteria of the Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund and to seek confirmation that a portion of the funding awarded in 2004 from this Fund can still be made available to NEACA for the revised project.
- 1.2 The contact officer for this report is Lorna Edwards, Community Strategy Officer (Tel: 01235 547626).

2.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

- 2.1 This report supports the Council's Vision and Priorities. It also supports the Vale Community Strategy. It does not conflict with any Council strategy or any Council policy.

3.0 Recommendations

- (a) *that Members note NEACA's revised project resulting from its unsuccessful lottery bid; and*
- (b) *that Members agree that NEACA should receive funding from the Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund to obtain WREN funding for the revised project, the precise amount being dependent on the amount of grant awarded by WREN*
- (c) *that the Council's Community Funding Advice Service, provided by Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA), be requested to work with NEACA to identify funding that may be needed to make up any shortfall for the project*

4.0 Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund

- 4.1 The Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund was set up by Executive and applications to the Fund are determined by Executive.
- 4.2 It is a capital fund for projects such as the refurbishment, rebuilding or extension of village halls or other community facilities. The fund is designed to provide assistance to community groups who are making grant applications for capital funding to one of the National Lottery funds or, in the case of parish councils as well as community groups, to environmental trusts (which have been set up by landfill companies as a result of the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme) such as WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd).

4.3 Generally speaking an application for a grant to one of the National Lottery funds has more chance of success if the applicant organisation is not applying for a grant to cover 100% of the project cost. Increasingly Lottery funds require that a significant proportion of the total funding needed comes from other sources. However for large projects it may be difficult to raise a significant proportion of the total funding required from other sources. In these circumstances an application for funding can be made to the District Council's Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund.

5.0 Request from the North East Abingdon Community Association (NEACA) concerning a previous grant award

5.1 Information on the background to the application from NEACA, submitted in 2004/05 and for which a grant of £25,000 was awarded by the Executive on 4 June 2004, is included under Appendix A.

5.2 Members are advised that the Abingdon Area Committee awarded a grant of £50,000 to NEACA towards the original project on 25 May 2004. At its meeting on 25 October 2007 the Abingdon Area Committee resolved that this grant should be confirmed. The Committee considered that the aims of the project remained unchanged and, despite a reduction in the cost of the project, a reduction in the amount of the award could result in the failure of the project aims.

5.3 Members are asked to note that under the criteria for the Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund the Executive may make an award to NEACA to secure WREN funding. An award of £5,500 will secure the WREN grant of £50,000, if NEACA's application to WREN is successful. The decision to award the remaining £19,500 of the £25,000 funding originally awarded under this scheme can only be taken if NEACA receives grant funding from another organisation whose grant conditions require a proportion of the grant to be met by the applicant. This is not the current situation.

5.4 If NEACA increases its application to WREN by £19,500 to cover the shortfall from the amount originally allocated by the Council, the amount required from the Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund will increase from £5,500 to £7,645.

TOBY WARREN
HEAD OF COMMUNITY STRATEGY

TIM SADLER
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR & MONITORING OFFICER

Background Papers: Letter, original application and supporting documents

North East Abingdon Community Association (NEACA)

Background

On 25 May 2004 the Abingdon Area Committee considered a grant application from NEACA for a grant towards the cost of providing a multifunctional facility for educational and recreational use and awarded a grant of £50,000.

The application was also considered by the Executive on 4 June 2004 and an award of £25,000 was made from the Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund to help NEACA in its application to the Lottery for a major portion of the project funding. The total project cost was estimated at £930,000 including VAT and NEACA's application to the Lottery was for £519,000 over two years.

As fundraising for a large-scale project can take several years, the project was divided into three phases. Phases I and II and part of Phase III have been carried out. Following the unsuccessful outcome of NEACA's Lottery bid, the Phase III extension was put on hold so that other funding could be raised and alternative solutions explored.

Current situation

After researching various options NEACA has decided not to proceed with an extension to the existing building but to go ahead with the construction of a log cabin produced by Cabinco and a refurbishment of the current facilities.

The log cabins are being used widely for the provision of community facilities and additional classrooms. They are purpose-designed, economic to build, heat and maintain. The log cabin can be made and delivered within eight weeks from the date of the order which would mean that, subject to planning permission being granted, the cabin could be built before the end of the financial year.

The refurbishment would include the installation of a new heating and ventilation system and bringing the existing hall up to modern standards in terms of décor, thus making it more attractive for the use of local residents on a daily basis. Previous use has been restricted due to pre-school activities.

The estimated cost is £230,000 for the purchase and installation of the cabin, the cabin furnishings, the new heating and ventilation system and refurbishment of the current hall.

The proposed financing of the revised Phase III project is as follows:

Funding source	Amount
NEACA Phase III Fund	£55,000

ORCC	£9,000
WREN	£50,000
Loan to be repaid by Social Club	£41,000 (or £91,000 if WREN application is unsuccessful). Note: for the Phase II extension a loan of £76,000 was repaid over a period of 10 years.
VWHDC grant (revised project approved by Abingdon Area Committee on 25/10/07)	£50,000
<i>VWHDC grant, subject to approval of its use for revised project</i>	<i>£25,000 from Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund via Executive</i>
TOTAL	£230,000

The funding awarded to NEACA by the District Council has been accrued for three financial years as a result of the setbacks in fundraising.

NEACA is still committed to achieving the original aims of the project, namely to provide the pre-school with dedicated and appropriate facilities; to engage young people in valuing their local facilities and area and reduce anti-social behaviour, to provide young people and the elderly with somewhere safe to meet, and to encourage understanding and acceptance between differing elements of the local population.

There are clear benefits for the community if the project could be completed without further delay.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING
OF THE FLOOD RECOVERY
GRANT ADVISORY GROUP**

**HELD AT THE CONFERENCE ROOM 1,
COUNCIL OFFICES, ABBEY HOUSE,
ABINGDON ON THURSDAY, 4TH
OCTOBER, 2007**

PRESENT:

Members: Councillors Zoe Patrick (Chair), Terry Cox and Angela Lawrence

Substitute Members: Councillor Samantha Bowring for Beth Fleming and Councillor John Woodford for Bob Johnston.

Ex-Officio Member: Councillor Jerry Patterson.

Officers: Bill Farrar, Carole Nicholl, Tim Sadler, Peter Dela and Nikki Malin

Invitees: Councillor Jim Moley.

6. Apologies for Absence

The attendance of Substitute Members was recorded as referred to above with apologies for absence having been received from Councillors Beth Fleming and Bob Johnston. An apology for absence was also recorded from Councillor Melinda Tilley.

At this point in the meeting the Chair welcomed Councillor Jim Moley whom she had agreed could attend to make a statement and observe the meeting.

7. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Terry Cox reminded the Group that his home had been flooded. However he did not consider that the interest was personal interest in that it was unlikely that he would be more affected by the business being discussed than the majority of the inhabitants of the Ward affected. Furthermore, he clarified that even if it was considered that he might have had a personal interest, in so far as although he believed he was not more affected than the majority of the residents in the Ward, but it was subsequently found that he was, his interest would not be prejudicial as he did not believe a member of the public knowing all the facts would reasonably think the personal interest was so significant that it was likely to prejudice his judgement of the public interest.

Councillor Samantha Bowring declared the same interest.

8. Notes of the Last Meeting

The Notes of the meeting of the Flood Recovery Grant Advisory Group held on 24 August 2007 were adopted and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendments: -

1. The addition of the name "Zoe" before "Patrick" in the list of Members present.

2. The deletion of the word "wever" and the substitution thereof with the word "However" in the last bullet point before the resolutions in Minute 4.
3. The inclusion of the following paragraph after the paragraph in Minute 3 – Declarations of Interest "Councillor Angela Lawrence raised concern regarding the declaration of interest made by Councillor Terry Cox in terms of consideration being given to awarding a grant payment which Councillor Cox might benefit from. She commented that had she been likely to benefit from a grant payment she would not have taken part in the consideration of the matter."

At this point in the meeting, the Group was advised that discussion of Parish Flood Action Groups had taken place at the Parish, Town, District and County Liaison meeting held on 27 September 2007, the Notes of which were being drafted by the County Council who had facilitated the event.

One Member suggested that the Council needed to consider a policy on working with town and parish councils and parish meetings in respect of grants for flood prevention schemes.

It was noted that Notes of the meeting held on 24 August 2007 would be submitted to the Executive on 5 October 2007.

9. Progress on Flood Recovery Grant

The Group received and considered an oral report from the Strategic Director who advised of the following: -

- It had now been established that 1000 households had been flooded.
- 430 grant applications had been processed and there were a further 50 grant applications in the pipeline yet to be processed.
- Only about 50% of the households flooded had claimed the grant.
- If every eligible householder claimed then the total grant received would be exceeded.
- There were another 600 homes where there had been damage caused by flooding in a garage or a shed.
- There were three grant claimers who did not have a bank account and therefore another means of payment would be arranged.
- The Government Office for the South East (GOSE) had advised the Council that there would be no additional grant funding.

It was noted that West Oxfordshire District Council had received more funding than this authority as it had notified GOSE of a higher number of homes flooded.

One Member commented that as residents had had to leave their homes they might not be receiving their mail, including grant claim forms. In response it was commented that the Form was on the website. However, the Strategic Director believed that the issue of forms was being monitored and he sought to clarify the position. It was commented that if the forms were available on the website then there was no reason

why local Members could not issue them, although the Strategic Director sought to check this.

In response to a question raised it was noted that additional properties were being highlighted in the north east of the Vale in villages such as Buscot. This was in line with the progress being made by the Emergency officer in visiting other areas of the District. The Strategic Director undertook to provide a copy of the list of properties to Members of the Group.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the report be received; and*
- (b) that the Strategic Director be requested to clarify the position with regard to the issue of grant claim forms and to provide a copy of the list of properties flooded to Members of the Group.*

10. Statements

The Chair welcomed Councillor Jim Moley to the meeting and invited him to make a statement about his concerns.

Councillor Jim Moley made a statement raising concern regarding the need for continuous maintenance of waterways, ditches and culverts. He commented that there was a danger of this being confused with flood prevention. He explained that if he was a riparian owner he would be resistant of his duties regarding continuous maintenance and he would make the tax payer pay. He questioned whether maintenance could be classified as the duty of a riparian owner. He commented that there were issues which needed addressing concerning the main river and critical ordinary river courses and the responsibility of the Environment Agency. He explained that the Environment Agency has agreed to take over the lead regarding one water course near Wantage. He referred to riparian duties filtering to the tax payer commenting on the responsibilities of the Environment Agency, specifically in connection with the watercourse at Locks Lane, Wantage. He referred to a project of the Joint Environmental Trust for Wantage, funded by the Town and District Councils, which was to clear silt along the Letcombe Brook in Wantage which was the duty of the riparian owners. He commented that riparian owners would expect these projects to continue.

He referred to the Letcombe Brook commenting that the Leat was not being addressed. He reiterated that authorities were failing in getting riparian owners to carry out their duties.

He suggested that there should be balancing pond to reduce the impact on the Ock and the Letcombe Brook although he commented that the Environment Agency was opposed to this. He suggested that the Council should approach the Government seeking firmer duties for the Environment Agency.

Finally, he referred to the additional damage to properties during the flooding caused by vehicles driving through flood waters. He commented that traffic continued along roads even when they were closed. He commented on the need to have diversions

clearly identified and that drivers were reluctant to follow road closure signs unless other directions were offered.

The Chair thanked Councillor Moley for his statement.

One member agreed with the comments made about signage suggesting that signage was important. He referred to Kennington where a flood prevention scheme had worked well, not least because the Parish Council had purchased signs and barriers which were available for local people to put out as soon as problems occurred.

In response to the general comments made, the Member commented that the Council was not resourced to address an emergency of the scale experienced and that it would be beneficial for the parishes to take responsibility for addressing flooding in their areas.

11. Reviews

The Group received and considered the following documents which were circulated prior to the meeting: -

1. Internal Review – The Flooding Emergency 20 July – 27 July 2007
2. Gold, Silver, Bronze Command Structure used by Emergency Services (Appendix 6)
3. Flooding Incident – July 2007 – Schedule of Events (Appendix 7)
4. Briefing Note for the Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 12 September 2007 setting out the Council's Response to the Recent Flooding (Appendix 8)
5. Flooding in the Vale of White Horse District 20 July – 26 July 2007 – Types of Flooding (Appendix 9)
6. Internal Report – Main Observations from Flood Interviews – July 2007 (Appendix 10)
7. Outcome of the Flooding Workshops – September 2007 (Appendix 11)
8. Flooding Reviews – Flow Chart showing Environment Agency, County Council and District Reviews Process (circulated at the meeting).

The Strategic Director drew Members' attention to the Flow Chart and explained the diagram in terms of the action being taken by this authority, the County Council and the Environment Agency. It was noted that there was to be a National Review drawing lessons from incidents throughout the country and what could be done. The Director reported that he had today heard that the external auditor wanted to know about this authority's experience and costs in dealing with the flooding incident.

Reference made to the Internal Review – The Flooding Emergency 20 July – 27 July 2007 document and it was noted that this was not intended for publication at this stage as it was noted that it was in draft form.

It was noted that the document set out the Council's statutory duty and policy and explained that the Council had carried out what it was supposed to carry out within its limited resources.

One Member reported that a clear message needed to be given to the public. He commented that some residents had expected the Council to send out a team to stop the flooding. He suggested that messages about sand bags needed to be clear and that the public's expectations should not be raised. He commented that a suggestion had been made to him that localised sand bins would be beneficial within the rural vale.

The Officers commented that the review Document was an assessment about how the Council complied with its statutory duty and policy.

It was highlighted that there were no records of any of the warnings having been received on the Tuesday and Wednesday. Such warnings were normally received by fax.

One Member commented that there were messages on the radio that there was a risk of flooding as there would be heavy rainfall. He believed that this message had been on the radio on the Monday evening.

It was explained that the warning was not transformed into a formal notice to the Council until the Thursday. However, it was questioned that even if the Council had known of the warning earlier where action would have been targeted and what would that action have been.

It was noted that the Council frequently received flood warnings and that it was impossible to distinguish a real threat from the many possible threats.

One Member commented that some residents in her Ward had informed her that the Council had known of the flooding possibility in advance of the warning. The Officers responded that the Council received flood watch information and did not receive anything over and above what was available to everyone else.

It was noted that the Emergency Officer had acted within 5 minutes of the warning to notify the Duty Officer. Furthermore, the Direct Services Organisation Team had been notified also.

One Member commented that many homes were flooded before the warning. She commented that she had undertaken some survey work and had some written comments which she undertook to provide to the Officers.

One Member referred to the Council not acting until the Friday afternoon after an emergency meeting had been held. The Officers responded that whilst the meeting was held at that time, it did not mean that no action was being taken. It was reported that the Direct Services Organisation Team had been working all day delivering sand

bags. It was commented that the Council had recognised the situation was an emergency fairly early on and it should be noted that it was difficult to determine when any situation became an emergency.

One Member commented that some residents had been assured that the Council would be sending someone out with sand bags, but the sandbags never arrived. He reported that there were no follow up calls asking residents if they were alright and that people had interpreted that as the Council not really being concerned for their welfare.

The Officers responded that at the early stages of the emergency some return calls had not been made due to the level of further calls being received. It was explained that the Officers had prioritised the list of callers. Officers had considered every call to assess each situation, with residents receiving returned calls late into the Friday evening.

Another Member commented that there was no authority in the country that had the resources to deal with this type of emergency.

The Group welcomed the report and agreed to pass their detailed comments to the Deputy Director (Commercial Services) outside of the meeting.

The Head of Communications referred to feedback she had received from the public and it was agreed that this should be included as an additional appendix to the report.

It was noted that the Council needed to build into its processes a mechanism showing that it was taking on board what the public were saying and that action was being done about it.

It was noted that the document was intended as an internal review but that the external messages received should be reflected upon and should be included.

One Member commented that the Council should not merely state that it fulfilled its statutory duties as although this was the case, the Council did more than that and this message should be conveyed to the public.

One Member referred to the conclusions in the report commenting that the text in paragraph 8 should be amended to provide that "the Council could aim to take the actions set out where practicable" rather than "the Council would take that action".

One Member noted that all Councillors had been invited to give their comments on flooding events in their wards to the Officers.

At this point in the meeting one Member suggested that there should be enforcement by the Council of the riparian owners of water courses etc to carry out their duties of maintenance.

RESOLVED

that the report be received and that Members forward their comments on the internal review document to the Deputy Director (Commercial Services) as soon as possible after the meeting.

12. Policy Statement on Flood Defence

The Group received and considered the following document which was circulated prior to the meeting: -

1. Vale of White Horse District Council - Policy Statement on Flood Defence – September 2004 (Appendix 1).
2. Flooding Information Leaflet (Appendix 5).

The Group was advised that the policy needed to be updated such as in respect of the scheme of delegation; property references and water course numbers some of which had now transferred into main rivers. The Council would then need to approve the amended policy.

It was noted that the policy statement (Appendix 1) emanated from the main legislation and the River Thames Oxford Area Group.

One Member referred to the ditch which crossed the A417 between Stanford in the Vale and Goosey. He commented that this ditch was not referred to and yet there were often flooding problems. He advised that water could be seen creeping across the fields towards Goosey and he advised that he was worried that some of these types of areas were not reflected in this and other documents. He reiterated that there was nothing stated recognising these regular problems and he questioned how the Council could make sure such areas were addressed.

The Officers reported that County Highway had the main interest in the A417 and it had carried out works to alleviate the regular flooding

One Member referred to the comments made earlier in the meeting regarding the duties of riparian owners. He reported that in 1973 there was major flooding in East Hanney. At that time it had been difficult to get a meeting together to discuss the matter due to the multitude of bodies involved. He explained that the situation was that a large amount of work was required near some 30 houses which were privately owned but in the end the District Council carried out the work at a significant cost. He commented that pursuing riparian owners was not the answer in this case and he was happy to report that there had been no flooding for 24 years.

Responsibilities were noted as follows: -

<u>Organisation / Person</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
Environment Agency	Main rivers
County Council as Highway Authority	Culverts, road ditches
District Council	Ordinary water courses

Riparian owners	Land abutting a water course

It was commented that enforcement was the responsibility of the Environment Agency in many cases but that the Environment Agency was not likely to pursue such enforcement.

One Member commented that the law as it stood was a nonsense. He commented that continuous maintenance was essential otherwise there would be continued regular flooding. He commented that this Council had little control and that the Environment Agency had the responsibility but took no action. He questioned who was responsible for taking enforcement action against Thames Water commenting that the drainage in Wantage was the responsibility of that organisation. He emphasised that the Government should sort this matter out with new legislation.

One Member responded that landowners were accepting that they had to keep their ditches clear. Another Member commented that in the past drains and ditches could be cleared with the mud being spread on the land, but this was no longer possible without a Ditching Certificate. Furthermore, only ditches on one side of a road could be cleared because of the possible adverse environmental impact. He considered that new rules understandably deterred farmers from clearing their ditches.

The Officers commented that this was the type of information that the National Review was seeking to obtain.

One Member commented on flooding at Peachcroft fields and the impact on Radley ditch and it was reported that the Environment Agency had carried out remedial works in this area. The Officers commented that Schedule 1 to Appendix 1 included primarily non main river water courses only and that Radley ditch was classified as a main river. It was commented that the Schedule needed updating as it related to the position in 2004.

One Member commented that within the policy there was no clarification of what were main and non main rivers and it was considered that this should be specified, although it was accepted that the list continually changed. Other Members agreed that it would be helpful to include such information and the Deputy Director (Commercial Services) undertook to amend the document accordingly.

Reference was made to the risk of flooding and it was agreed that this should be clearly defined including details of what the Council was resourced to deal with.

One Member referred to paragraph 4.2 of Appendix 1 noting that the Council welcomed any comments on the approach and policies set out in the statement. The Deputy Director (Commercial Services) advised that he would welcome any views on suggested changes to the policy.

Reference was made to the Terms of Reference of this Group and it was considered that these should be amended to enable the Group to consider and advise on new policies. The Leader of the Council undertook to amend the Terms of Reference accordingly.

Reference was made to the Flooding Information Leaflet (Appendix 5) and it was noted that this needed updating. It was emphasised that it should be made clear that residents should listen to the local radio stations for local flooding information.

Furthermore it was suggested that longer term flooding prevention works which could be taken needed to be included also.

RESOLVED

That the information be received and that the Deputy Director (Commercial Services) be requested to update the documents having regard to the information set out above and to any additional comments received outside of the meeting it being noted that the Policy Statement on Flood Defence would be agreed by Council.

13. Vale District Operational Flood Plan

The Group received and considered the following documents which were circulated prior to the meeting: -

1. Oxford Area Flood Information – Guidance Booklet to the Management of Flooding and Flood Risk (Appendix 2).
2. Vale District Operational Flood Plan (Appendix 3).

RESOLVED

That the documents be received

14. Enforcement Policy on Clearing Ordinary Water Courses

The Group received and considered the following documents -

1. Enforcement Policy for Clearance of Ordinary Watercourse – July 2004 (Appendix 4) (circulated prior to the meeting).
2. Land Drainage Capital Programme (Circulated at the meeting).

Reference was made the Land Drainage Capital Programme which was provided for information only. It was noted that a scoring mechanism was used based on the number of properties flooded.

The Strategic Director reported that two letters had been received from residents asking that the following be included on the Environment Agency's list for review: -

1. Upper end of the river Stert ending in Abingdon; and
2. St Helens Mill, Abingdon

The Officers commented that they had been invited by many Parish Councils to visit their areas and give advice on flood remediation possibilities in the short term and suggestion for the long term.

One Member referred to the need for resources for the future and sought an assurance that this was being considered. The Leader responded that the Council had just commenced its budget setting process and that resources towards flooding schemes would be included.

RESOLVED

that the papers be received.

15. Protection of Homes from Risk of Flooding

The Group received and considered the following documents which were circulated at the meeting: -

1. Letter from the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs.
2. Environment Agency – Where to get Kitemark Certified Flood Products.

One Member commented that every year packs were sent to residents of homes likely to flood advising of the measures which could be taken. She considered that the issue was not providing information but getting residents to take notice of it.

One Member considered that residents needed expert advice and were worried about wasting money on measures which would not work.

One Member suggested that any remaining funds after all the grants had been paid, could be used towards self help schemes. It was noted that the deadline for applications to receive a grant was 31 October 2007 and thereafter it would be possible to determine the amount of funds remaining, if any.

Reference was made to the Red Cross Effort and it was noted that £252,450 had been allocated to Oxfordshire from the Red Cross Fund which was being administered by West Oxfordshire District Council.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

16. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Group would be held on Wednesday 7 November 2007 at 10.30am.

The meeting rose at 4.22 pm

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

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