

Cabinet Agenda



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Date: 30 June 2011
Website: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

A meeting of the

Cabinet

will be held on Friday 8 July 2011 at 2pm
The Abbey House, Abingdon, OX14 3JE

Cabinet Members:

Councillors

Matthew Barber (Chairman)
Roger Cox (Vice-Chairman)
Yvonne Constance
Reg Waite
Elaine Ware

A large print version of this agenda is available. In addition any background papers referred to may be inspected by prior arrangement.

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 Services Officers know beforehand and they will do their very best to meet your requirements.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Reed', is written in a cursive style.

Margaret Reed
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

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.

Agenda

Open to the Public including the Press

Map and vision

(Page 4)

A map showing the location of the venue for this meeting is attached. A link to information about nearby car parking is http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/transport/car_parking/default.asp

The council's vision is to build and safeguard a fair, open and compassionate community.

1. Apologies for absence

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of personal or personal and prejudicial interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

3. Urgent business and chairman's announcements

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

4. Statements, petitions, and questions relating to matters affecting the Cabinet

Any statements, petitions, and questions from the public under standing order 32 will be made or presented at the meeting.

5. Car parking policy

(Pages 5 - 13)

To consider report 10/11 of the head of economy, leisure, and property.

6. Property system procurement

(Pages 14 - 20)

To consider report 11/11 of the head of HR, IT, and customer services.

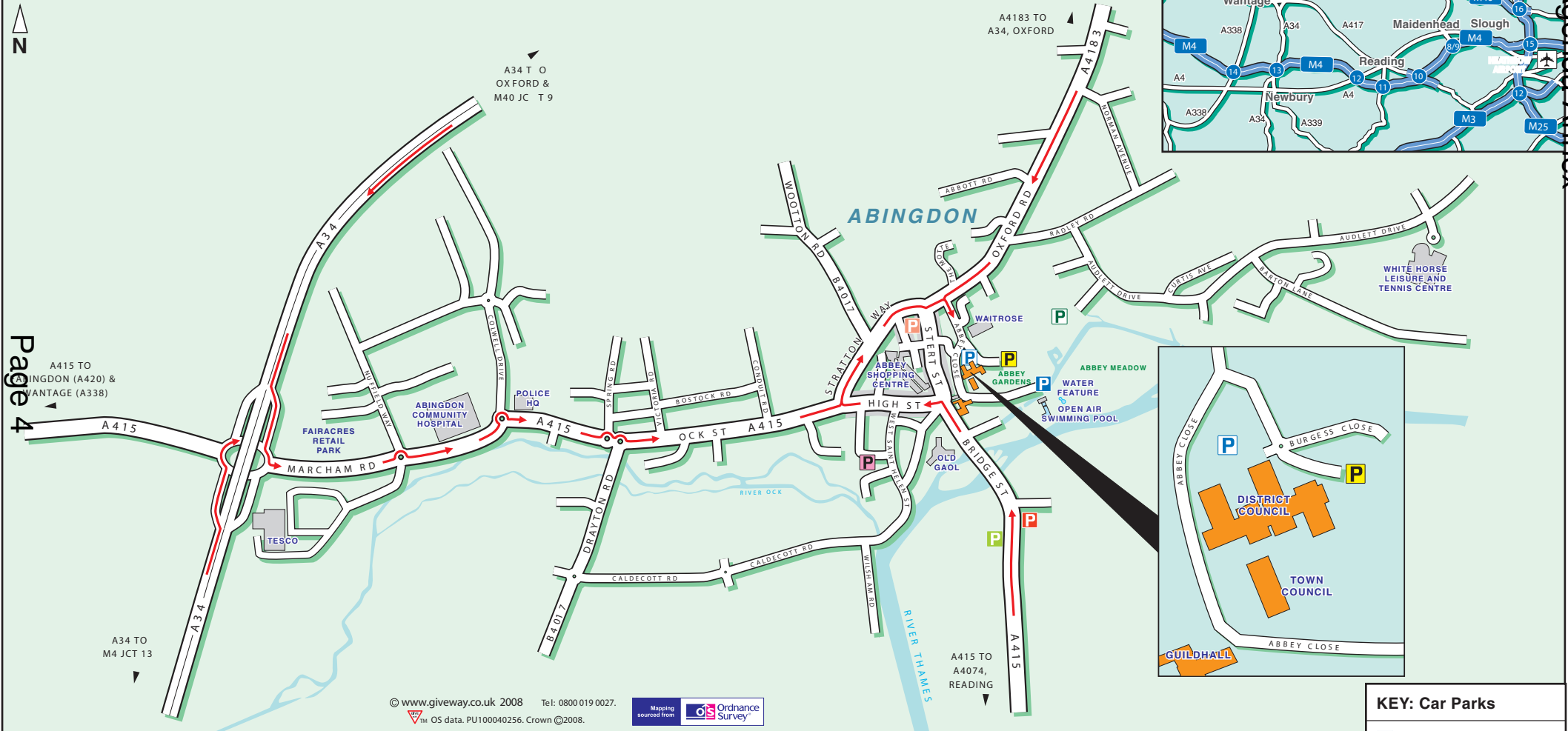
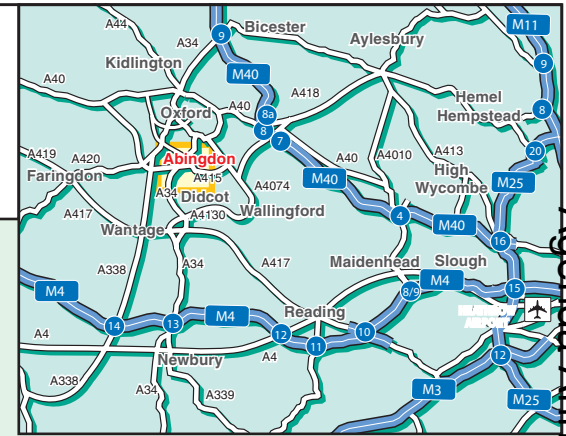
7. Corporate equality policy

(Pages 21 - 27)

To consider report 12/11 of the head of corporate policy.

Exempt information under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972

None



By rail – the nearest main line railway stations to Abingdon are either Didcot Parkway (seven miles) or Oxford (eight miles). Radley railway station is located on the main line between Oxford and Didcot and is three miles from Abingdon town centre. For details of train times visit www.nationalrail.co.uk or call 08457 484950

By bus – there are a number of bus routes serving Abingdon town centre. For details of services and timetables, visit Oxfordshire County Council’s website at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk. Contact details for bus operators can be found on the travel information pages on our website www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Parking – details of car parks charges can be found on our website

KEY: Car Parks	
	Abbey Close
	Cattle Market
	Charter Multi-storey
	Civic
	Rye Farm
	Hales Meadow
	Audlett Drive
	West St Helen Street

Cabinet report



8 July 2011

Report of head of economy leisure and property

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To: CABINET

DATE: 8 July 2011

Report no. 10/11

The introduction of free short stay car parking

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- (a) determine whether it wishes to introduce free car parking in line with the proposals set out in paragraph 10 of this report, or on some alternative basis
- (b) determine how it wishes to fund its proposals

In addition, if cabinet does agree to implement free parking, to:

- (c) authorise the head of legal and democratic services to prepare and publish a draft order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and carry out the necessary consultations in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 and to report back to cabinet on the responses received after the end of the consultation period
- (d) agree a change in the Vale Council's parking policy by removing statement B (1) to reflect the fact that the income from the service will not meet the expenditure
- (e) to recommend to full council a supplementary revenue estimate as referred to in paragraph 19 of the report.

Purpose of report

1. This report provides information in order to help the cabinet decide whether it wishes to put into place an election pledge to introduce free short stay car parking in the Vale's three market towns and, if so, how it wishes to do this.

Strategic objectives

2. The provision and pricing of car parking impacts on two of the Vale Council's strategic objectives: supporting a vibrant local economy and managing our business effectively. Introducing free parking may help sustain vibrant market towns, which is a corporate objective.

Background

3. The Vale Council's current car park fees are shown in appendix 1 to this report.
4. The Vale Council's existing parking policy was reviewed in December 2009 and states:
 - "B (1) Income from the service as a whole must at least cover the operating, maintenance and management costs of the car park provision.
 - "B (2) Differential pricing may apply between areas in the Vale, including between car parks in the same town.
 - "B (3) Pricing may be used to regulate and influence usage to achieve a balance between sustainability and environmental objectives, and town centre vitality and viability, hence, short term and long term public parking should be differentially priced

and located to encourage edge of town parking for commuters, thus freeing town centre parking for shoppers and visitors.

“B (4) Parking will be provided free of charge for disabled badge holders.

“B (5) Parking fees and charges will be reviewed annually.”

5. Officers expect that introducing a period of free parking would reduce income significantly (see financial implications in paragraphs 14–19), to the extent that expenditure would exceed income. This means the current policy statement B (1) would require amendment or removal to reflect the fact that income from the service would no longer cover the cost of car park provision.
6. The previous executive of the Vale Council reviewed car parking charges on 7 January 2011, when it decided to make no changes to the daily fees or level of excess charges.
7. Traditionally, car park fees and charges are reviewed every year in December/January in order to implement changes from 1 April. Table 1 below is a ‘memorandum’ account updated from the last report that shows the actual income and expenditure for the last financial year and the forecast up to 2013/14.

Table 1 Car park income and expenditure over a five year period

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
	actual	forecast	original budget	base budget	base budget
Car park income*	(738,670)	(717,987)	(710,280)	(710,280)	(710,280)
Reimbursement for shared posts	0	(42,068)	(50,870)	(50,870)	(50,870)
Total Income	(738,670)	(760,055)	(761,150)	(761,150)	(761,150)
less:					
running costs	538,992	502,474	519,130	534,704	550,745
depreciation **	98,100	98,100	98,100	98,100	98,100
support costs**	226,900	162,007	140,000	144,200	148,526
NET COST	125,322	2,526	(3,920)	15,854	36,221

* Includes car parking fees, parking permits and wayleaves

2009/10 actuals to 31st March 2010

2010/11 is based on current actual spend with a provision for depreciation and support costs

2011/12 Income and expenditure budget is the approved original budget

2012/13 expenditure includes inflation at three percent** Not in revenue budget

8. Looking at income and expenditure over five years enables cabinet to take a medium term view of how income and expenditure are likely to change. It also enables it to set prices designed to ensure that the Vale Council does not make a profit over that period. The table includes support costs and depreciation to give an overall view of running costs.
9. The table shows that the car park ‘account’ made a net loss of some £125,000 in 2009/10. Based on the current fees and charges, the ‘account’ is expected to show a small surplus in 2011/12 before moving into deficit in subsequent years. The introduction of a free parking period will change this significantly of course.

Cabinet’s proposals

10. Based on discussions that have taken place prior to the preparation of this report, officers understand that the proposals cabinet wishes to consider are as follows:
 - a) a two hour period of free parking. Officers estimate that this will result in a reduction in income of around £250,000 a year.

- b) an increase in all parking charges for three hours or more of £0.30 (see appendix 1). Officers estimate that this will generate around £52,000 a year of additional income.
- c) an increase in permit costs of six per cent (which equates to between £0.10 and £0.20 a day for annual permit holders, dependant upon the type of permit held and the location – see appendix 2). Officers estimate that this will generate income of around £5,500 a year.
- d) display of a ticket from the commencement of parking, incorporating the free period. This is the same as the system currently operating at the Orchard Centre car park in Didcot and that which South plans to introduce shortly in its car parks.
- e) an extension of the period in which parking charges apply until 6pm. Because of the two hour free period this would mean that people could park free of charge from 4pm onwards, as is the case at present.
- f) introduction of a ‘no return’ period of two hours covering all of the car parks in a particular town. This will stop users having a free period of parking in the morning, going away for lunch and then returning less than two hours later to have a further period of free parking. Officers advise that whilst this provision is important it will be difficult to enforce, particularly where vehicles are moved from one car park to another.

Economic development implications

- 11. Businesses in the Vale’s market towns have struggled in recent years with the growth in out of town and internet shopping. Footfall has declined. Although the cost of parking is not significant, many businesses think it discourages local people wanting to make short visits to town centre shops. The town partnerships (Wantage and Faringdon joint economic forums and the Choose Abingdon Partnership) are working hard to encourage local people into the town centres as they consider that once people come into the town for everyday goods they will then use other shops, particularly independent shops and places to eat.
- 12. Two hours free parking would allow people sufficient time to do everyday shopping and also explore more of what the town centres have to offer without having to pay parking charges. Having said this, officers are unaware of any evidence from national studies that free parking makes a noticeable difference to footfall in town centres.
- 13. Officers also remind cabinet that free parking already exists to an extent in our three market towns. The new Sainsbury’s in Wantage offers unrestricted free parking for two hours. Waitrose in Abingdon offers one and a half hours free parking for shoppers using the store. In Faringdon, users of the two car parks are able to claim back the cost of their first hour’s parking (40p) when spending a minimum of £5 at any of the 25 participating business.

Financial implications

- 14. Like much of local government facing substantial funding cuts and a slow economic recovery, the Vale Council's medium term financial position is extremely sensitive to any changes in its underlying assumptions. This year the Vale Council has already experienced unforeseen pressure caused by the delayed power to generate additional planning fee income. More significantly, the medium term financial plan demonstrates an unsustainable reliance on the use of reserves beyond 2015/16, which will need to be addressed in next year's budget. These pressures will be only partially offset by the 2010/11 out-turn underspend, which was greater than expected.

15. The Vale Council is becoming increasingly dependent on its income-generating services such as car parking to cover its significant costs, instead of placing the burden on general council taxpayers. As government grant funding reduces, income streams such as car parking will become critical to enabling the Vale Council to become more self-sufficient.
16. Offering free car parking for two hours will cause a significant loss of income estimated to be £250,000 per year. This reduces to £192,500 a year if cabinet chooses to increase certain charges as set out in paragraph 10. There are also one-off costs of £10,500 through changes to equipment and signs and advertising the revised parking orders.
17. The loss of £192,500 assumed net annual income from car parking represents a total five year pressure of £962,500 in next year's medium term financial plan, plus a £75,000 part-year impact this year (this includes the one-off costs). The Vale Council does not have sufficient financial resources to meet this pressure. Officers have identified a number of options to help the cabinet determine how it intends to fund free car parking:

a) using new homes bonus

Vale Council received £452,000 of new homes bonus this year, being the first tranche in respect of 2009/10 housing growth. The money is not ring-fenced and is currently held in a reserve account. Some or all of it could be returned to general fund balances, to offset the lower income from car parking.

Next year we expect to receive the second of six tranches of the 2009/10 new homes bonus and also the first tranche (again of six) of the new homes bonus relating to housing growth in 2010/11. Whilst at first sight this may appear to be offering us significant new resources, cabinet should bear in mind two things:

- the government has raised expectations that councils will use new homes bonus to the direct benefit of communities taking new housing, particularly on infrastructure. If cabinet uses the funds to support free car parking, it will have to manage any reaction amongst disappointed local communities that had expected to see these funds spent in their areas.
- the government is giving increasingly strong indications that in future it will fund new homes bonus through reducing or even ending rate support grant to local authorities. On that basis, new homes bonus cannot sustainably address the on-going financial pressure.

b) achieving further shared service efficiency savings

Most staffing changes have now been completed and substantial assumed savings have already been factored into the medium term financial plan. The only significant opportunity for further joint working savings is to investigate a shared office for South and Vale. The Vale's annual saving from this might be sufficient to meet the free parking pressure but such a decision could only be made in conjunction with South.

c) other reactive savings

The cabinet may wish to consider additional lean working efficiency savings in the pipeline but so far unquantified and unbudgeted, although this is inherently risky. Alternatively it might wish to consider unplanned savings such as service cuts. Note that many additional savings, from staff reductions for example, would have to be agreed with South and only half the saving would be receivable by the Vale.

d) business improvement district (BID)

The cabinet may wish to consider the creation of a business improvement district (BID) in order to raise income to offset the cost of free parking. For a BID to be

established a majority of non-domestic rate payers in the bid area must be in favour of the BID proposals. The significant cost of the ballot is normally funded by the BID proposer (or by the BID itself), and in this circumstance is likely to fall to the council. There is no certainty of success and several BIDs have failed to achieve the majority vote.

18. These options all carry risk and are dependent on future political decisions. Officers cannot be confident that they will be sufficient to meet the £192,500 annual pressure. Given this and the other increasing pressures on the Vale Council's future financial health there is a significant risk that the Vale Council will face a substantial medium term financial deficit, which it has no means of addressing other than by service cuts. For these reasons the s.151 chief finance officer strongly recommends against the introduction of free car parking.

Supplementary estimate

19. The £75,000 pressure caused by the introduction of free car parking this year cannot be met from the Vale Council's contingency and will need to be funded from reserves in-year. To effect this, full council will need to approve a supplementary revenue estimate. Therefore, cabinet is requested to recommend a supplementary revenue estimate to council.

Legal implications

20. The changes set out in paragraph 10 will require the making of a new car park order. Doing this would be in accord with the general duty upon the council under section 122(1) of the 1984 Road Traffic Act, to ensure the provision of suitable and adequate off street parking facilities and "secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic".
21. The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 grants the power to the council to make an order. The 1984 Act, together with the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, sets out the procedure we must follow. The Vale Council is required to publish the proposed order in the local press. The Vale Council must also consult with the county council (whose consent to the confirmation of the order must be obtained before it is confirmed), and other appropriate organisations including the police. Cabinet must consider all representations received before making the order.
22. Cabinet will need to authorise the head of legal and democratic services to prepare and publish a draft order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and carry out the necessary consultations in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 and to report back to cabinet on the responses received after the end of the consultation period.
23. The legal requirements to change the order as above will take at least four months. If the cabinet agrees in July 2011 to introduce free short stay parking then the free parking may be able to start on 1 December 2011. However, the exact start date will depend on whether the decision is subject to a scrutiny call-in and whether representations are received that cabinet has to formally consider formally.

Risks and options

24. Apart from financial risk that is covered elsewhere, the principal risk is that car parks become too cheap, demand outstrips the supply and users choose to park or go

elsewhere. Officers will monitor the situation but consider that this is unlikely to present a problem in the short term.

25. There is the possibility that those who have paid for permits will no longer be able to park in their chosen locations and they may demand refunds. Officers have not factored this into any of the financial implications.
26. In terms of options there are a broad range extending from introducing totally free parking through to maintaining the status quo or even increasing charges. As cabinet has informally decided how it wishes to proceed, we have not worked up these options but can do so on request.

Conclusion

27. Cabinet wishes to put into place an election pledge to introduce free car parking in the Vale's three market towns. Informally it has decided that it wishes to offer a two hour free parking period and this report is based on that assumption. Officers have set out the evidence that they consider cabinet should take account of prior to making a formal decision.
28. Officers draw particular attention to the financial implications set out in paragraphs 14 - 19. If cabinet chooses to fund free parking through use of new homes bonus, this is possible in the short term but is very unlikely to present a sustainable long-term solution. Cabinet will also have to manage the reaction of communities taking additional housing, who might expect new homes bonus to be spent on improved infrastructure in their locality rather than on free parking.
29. Finally, officers would wish to re-state that the stated income loss of £192,500 a year through the introduction of two hour free parking is very much an estimate. The actual reduction in income will only become apparent once the new arrangements are in place. This will create an immediate medium term budget pressure, which the Vale Council will not be addressing until next year's budget is set.

Background papers

- none

Appendix 1 Vale of White Horse District Council, car park fees and charges from 1 April 2011 (showing an increase of 30p in brackets)

Place	Average Charging periods	up to 1 hour	up to 2 hours	up to 3 hours	up to 4 hours	up to 5 hours	up to 6 hours	up to 8 hours	
Abbey Close, Abingdon	8am to 4pm Mon – Sun	0.60 (no charge)	(no charge)	1.20 (1.50)	3.10 (3.40)	4.00 (4.30)	n/a	5.00 (5.30)	
Audlett Drive, Abingdon	8am to 4pm Mon – Sun	0.60 (no charge)	(no charge)	1.20 (1.50)	3.10 (3.40)	4.00 (4.30)	n/a	5.00 (5.30)	
Charter m/s, Abingdon	8am to 4pm Mon – Sun	0.60 (no charge)	(no charge)	1.20 (1.50)	3.10 (3.40)	4.00 (4.30)	n/a	5.00 (5.30)	
West St Helen St, Abingdon	8am to 4pm Mon – Sun	0.60 (no charge)	(no charge)	1.20 (1.50)	3.10 (3.40)	4.00 (4.30)	n/a	5.00 (5.30)	
Civic, Abingdon	8am to 4pm Mon – Sun	0.60 (no charge)	(no charge)	1.20 (1.50)	3.10 (3.40)	4.00 (4.30)	n/a	5.00 (5.30)	
Cattlemarket, Abingdon	8am to 4pm Mon – Sun	0.60 (no charge)	(no charge)	1.20 (1.50)	3.10 (3.40)	4.00 (4.30)	n/a	5.00 (5.30)	
Males Meadow, Abingdon	8am to 4pm Mon – Sun	0.60 (no charge)	(no charge)	1.20 (1.50)	3.10 (3.40)	4.00 (4.30)	n/a	5.00 (5.30)	
Rye Farm, Abingdon	8am to 4pm Mon – Sun	0.60 (no charge)	(no charge)	1.20 (1.50)	3.10 (3.40)	4.00 (4.30)	n/a	5.00 (5.30)	
Portway, Wantage	8am to 4pm Mon – Sat	0.50 (no charge)	(no charge)	1.00 (1.30)	3.10 (3.30)	4.00 (4.30)	n/a	5.00 (5.30)	
Limborough Road A and B, Wantage	8am to 4pm Mon – Sat	0.50 (no charge)	(no charge)	1.00 (1.30)	2.60 (2.90)	n/a	3.00 (3.30)	3.50 (3.80)	
Mill St, Wantage	8am to 4pm Mon – Sat	0.50 (no charge)	(no charge)	1.00 (1.30)	2.60 (2.90)	n/a	3.00 (3.30)	3.50 (3.80)	
Southampton St, Faringdon	8am to 4pm Mon – Sat	0.40 (no charge)	(no charge)	0.80 (1.10)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Gloucester St, Faringdon	8am to 4pm Mon – Sat	0.40 (no charge)	(no charge)	0.70 (1.00)	2.10 (2.40)	n/a	2.30 (2.60)	2.50 (2.80)	
Botley car parks		No charge							
Market Place, Queen St, Old Abbey House, Guildhall, Abingdon	Permits only (see table in appendix 2)								

All car park excess charges: £80, reduced to £50 if paid within ten days

Appendix 2

Vale of White Horse District Council, permits from 1 April 2011 (showing six per cent increase in brackets)

Place	Daily (24 hrs in advance) NO CHANGE £	Residents annual £	Residents 6 month £	6 or 7 day Annual £	6 or 7 day 3 months £	6 or 7 day 1 month £	5 day Annual £	5 day 3 months £	5 day 1 month £	School term (10 mins) to be available for all car parks £	Other permits £
Abbey Close, Abingdon Audlett Drive, Abingdon Charter m/s, Abingdon West St Helen St, Abingdon	5.50 (5.80)	271.00 (287.00)		735.00 (779.00)	220.00 (233.00)	74.00 (78.00)	613.00 (650.00)	183.00 (194.00)	61.00 (65.00)	10.00 (10.60)	
Hales Meadow, Abingdon Rye Farm, Abingdon	5.50 (5.80)			490.00 (519.00)	148.00 (156.00)	49.00 (52.00)	487.00 (516.00)	179.00 (190.00)	58.00 (61.00)		
Market Place, Queen St, Abingdon	5.50 (5.80)			562.00 (596.00)						10.00 (10.60)	20 min (book of 100) 3.50 (3.70)
Abbey House, Abingdon	5.50 (5.80)						135.00 (143.00)			10.00 (10.60)	
Portway, Wantage	5.50 (5.80)	112.00 (119.00)								10.00 (10.60)	
Limborough Road A and B, Wantage		135.00 (143.00)	67.00 (71.00)	429.00 (455.00)	128.00 (136.00)	43.00 (46.00)				10.00 (10.60)	
Mill St, Wantage		135.00 (143.00)	67.00 (71.00)	429.00 (455.00)	128.00 (136.00)	43.00 (46.00)				10.00 (10.60)	
Gloucester St, Faringdon		112.00 (119.00)		306.00 (324.00)	92.00 (98.00)	31.00 (33.00)				10.00 (10.60)	One day/week annual 34.00 (36.00)
Guildhall, Abingdon	No charge										

General

- permits include VAT at 20 per cent, which may be subject to change
- permit replacements, £12.00 including VAT
- permit refunds (admin cost), £10.00 including VAT

Cabinet report 8 July 2011



Report of Head of HR, IT and Customer Services

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Wards affected: (all)

South Cabinet member responsible:

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To: SOUTH CABINET

DATE: 11 July 2011

Report no. 11/11

Vale Cabinet member responsible:

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To: VALE CABINET

DATE: 8 July 2011

Decision to award a contract for a joint property based database system

Recommendation(s)

- (a) That cabinet approve the award of a contract for property based database systems to Ocella Software Systems Ltd (Ocella).
- (b) That cabinet authorise the head of HR, IT and customer services to arrange for officers to finalise terms and conditions and enter into a contract with Ocella.

Purpose of report

1. This report recommends that cabinet approves the award of a contract to replace the councils' two existing property systems with a single joint system serving both councils. This essential software supports core council functions including planning, building control, land charges, environmental health and licensing.

Strategic objectives

2. The proposed contract award contributes to the shared strategic objective of managing our business effectively by making a financial saving for the councils whilst also

delivering improved, harmonised IT systems that will enable council officers to work more effectively and efficiently at both councils.

Background

3. In September 2010, South Cabinet and the then Vale Executive approved an IT strategy and investment plan, which authorised the head of HR, IT and customer services to commence the procurement to replace the property systems for both councils with a single, harmonised system.
4. The head of HR, IT and customer services appointed a project manager from the service to run the procurement process, and organised an officers' board - comprising the heads of planning, health and housing, HR, IT and customer services, the performance and projects manager, the project manager and a contracts solicitor to check and challenge the process, communicate across the councils and make key recommendations.
5. The head of HR, IT and customer services also set up a project board to oversee the procurement, consisting of each Cabinet / Executive member with portfolio responsibility for IT at South and at Vale and the relevant strategic director.
6. At South, a system called Ocella is currently in use, while Vale uses a system called UNI-form. The two systems cover similar council functions, with some differences, as now briefly described.

The current South system

7. At South the following Ocella modules are in use:
 - planning (such as management of planning applications, enforcement and appeals)
 - building control (ensuring correct building construction and safety)
 - environmental health (inspection and enforcement of public health issues)
 - land charges (maintenance and searching of a register of local land charges)
 - licensing (management of various licences such as those for taxis)
8. Additionally, South uses a separate gazetteer system (a directory of geographical addresses) called Acolaid.
9. Officers at South have built basic databases for housing grants and estates.

The current Vale system

10. At Vale the following UNI-form modules are in use:
 - planning
 - building control
 - environmental health
 - land charges
 - housing grants (processing applications including Disabled Facilities Grants)

- estates (managing the council's property portfolio)
- gazetteer

11. Additionally, Vale uses a separate licensing system called LalPac.

Purchasing options

12. Officers had previously explored whether the councils could just extend one of the current systems to cover both councils. However, the councils had to run a formal procurement to tender this contract to comply with EU regulations and the councils' contracts procedure rules because the value of the contract over its lifetime of five years is in excess of the EU threshold (currently £156,442).

13. The project board considered an evaluation of the procurement options, finding that it did not look feasible to use a contract from another authority, nor to drawdown under an existing framework agreement, and agreed to use the competitive dialogue process as the procedure likely to deliver best value for money.

Scope and structure of the procurement

14. The project manager and IT applications manager undertook an analysis of the systems that could be covered by this procurement and met with officers that use the current systems across both councils to refine the scope of the procurement and draft a requirements specification. This included general technical and software requirements in addition to service-specific requirements.

15. The officers' board and project board agreed the systems that the procurement should cover and agreed to divide the procurement into eight lots accordingly, to enable us to make separate decisions about each discrete area of functionality, while still allowing suppliers to come up with a single system that would cover as much as possible in accordance with the principles of the councils' joint IT strategy.

16. Suppliers had to bid for lot 1 – which the project board considered to be the core functionality of systems for planning, environmental health, land charges and building control.

17. In addition, we encouraged suppliers to bid for any of seven discretionary lots covering the other modules as listed above (7-11), details of which are in Annex 1 to this report.

Procurement process

18. The first stage of the tender was to pre-qualify suppliers according to their technical capacity, professional ability, and their economic and financial standing. In total, 17 suppliers submitted a completed pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) in February 2011.

19. The evaluation panel of officers scored the PQQ responses and invited the five highest-scoring qualified bidders to participate in competitive dialogue. We provided these five suppliers with a descriptive document including a draft requirements specification, and invited them to submit a draft response to these requirements, including an indicative pricing schedule.

20. The project manager also invited representatives from the five suppliers to attend an afternoon supplier event to provide them with an opportunity to clarify our requirements with user representatives from the relevant services. Three suppliers attended and one submitted questions in advance. These suppliers gave us positive feedback that this event was a good way for them to understand our requirements.
21. Following the supplier event, four suppliers submitted draft responses and one supplier withdrew from the process, confirming that they did not wish to tender.
22. Officers reviewed the draft responses submitted and identified that two of the four suppliers stated that they could not meet a significant number of essential requirements.
23. The project team then invited the two remaining suppliers to participate in separate dialogue meetings on 24 March 2011. These meetings with each supplier were to discuss commercial, financial, legal and technical issues and to agree the best deal for the councils. Both suppliers gave us positive feedback that they found these meetings an efficient and effective way of tailoring their tenders to our requirements and that the dialogue process made tendering 'as painless as possible'.
24. The suppliers then had the opportunity to re-draft their responses and respond to any amended or additional requirements that the councils specified, and submit their final tender.

Tender evaluation

25. A user representative from each service area that uses the system evaluated each relevant section of the tenders. In addition, the head of HR, IT and customer services, and the IT applications manager also evaluated all sections of the tenders.
26. In accordance with the councils' tender evaluation policy, the project board agreed the following weighting of evaluation criteria for each lot:
 - 25 per cent on response to requirement specification for that lot
 - 5 per cent on ability to provide a comprehensive solution
 - 10 per cent on compliance with the councils' IT strategy, method statement and implementation plan relevant to that lot
 - 60 per cent on price for that lot as provided in their pricing schedule (calculated over the five year lifetime of the contract).
27. We specified that only the supplier that scored highest for Lot 1 may be awarded a contract for Lot 1 as this was the core functionality that we needed.
28. If the supplier that scored highest for Lot 1 also scores highest on the evaluation of any of the other lots (2-8) in the procurement, the councils may decide to include any of those lots in the contract.
29. The councils reserved the right not to award a contract for any of the lots in the procurement. For any lot which the councils do not award a contract during this procurement, the councils may decide to run further separate procurements for these

lots according to the councils' contracts procedure rules and all relevant legislation, or to run projects to develop existing systems if this is likely to deliver best value.

30. The scores were moderated by an evaluation panel and a recommendation for each lot was agreed by the officers' board, which the head of HR, IT and customer services and the project manager discussed and agreed with the project board.
31. Please see Annex 1 for a summary of the evaluation outcomes and recommendations for each lot.

Financial implications

32. The project board agreed that all costs would be split equally between the two councils.
33. The one-off cost of additional software licences is £10,000 which can be met from existing IT budgets. The one-off revenue cost of £48,800 for implementation and data migration is covered by growth bids which have been approved by the Cabinets for 2011/12.
34. The annual revenue cost for maintenance of the new system for both councils is £40,000, to be shared into equal sums of £20,000 at South and £20,000 at Vale.
35. The current revenue budgets for maintenance of the equivalent systems are £40,085 for Ocella at South, and £57,690 for Uniform at Vale.
36. The new contract will therefore save South £20,085 and Vale £37,690 per year. After implementation costs this adds up to a combined saving of £230,075 over the five-year contract, and a saving of £403,400 over eight years if the councils choose to take up the option to extend the contract for a further three years.
37. In a separate project we are comparing Ocella with Vale's current licensing system, LalPac. If the decision is to implement Ocella's licensing module at Vale, a further annual saving of £12,000 will become available at the time that LalPac is decommissioned.
38. In order to achieve clarity over software budgets and to ensure that the projected savings can be secured in practice, we propose to transfer the relevant revenue budgets to a new cost centre set up for this purpose.

Legal implications

39. The fully compliant EU procurement process has been overseen by the project board.
40. The risk of challenge should be low because the project team has at every stage complied with both the EU regulations and contracts procedure rules, and has worked closely with suppliers to make sure they understand the process throughout and are unlikely to dispute any stage of the process.
41. Though this contract will make a saving on ongoing revenue costs, the new contract value over five years exceeds the EU threshold, therefore contracts procedure rule 57.5 requires Cabinet approval.
42. The councils are required to enter into a formal contract with our preferred supplier.

Risks

43. There is a risk of under-performance of the supplier. This has to be managed by careful project management of the implementation of the new system across both authorities by the implementation project manager. Once the system is in place, the IT applications manager will act as the contract manager.
44. As with any software supplier it is possible that the successful supplier will cease trading or be taken over by another company, though there is no suggestion of any specific risk in this case. We plan to mitigate this risk by entering into an escrow agreement to lodge the source code of the system with a third party - which we can then access in an emergency.

Implementation / project management

45. The implementation of the system is a distinct project, for which the head of HR, IT and customer services has already appointed a project manager and established a project board of relevant officers to govern the project. We aim to launch the new system on 1 April 2012, subject to agreement of the project plan with the supplier.
46. Impact on service delivery – it will take time to train officers to use systems and there will inevitably be pockets of resistance to changing system. However, there will be officers who are pleased with the new system, as well as those who will find it significantly simpler to only have to use one system as they increasingly reap the benefits of efficiency while working across the two councils.
47. IT support and development were involved in evaluating the tenders and the maintenance of the proposed new joint system should be simpler than the arrangements for the separate systems currently in place at both councils.
48. Having a single system will enable front-line service teams to work to a single set of procedures, facilitating shared working and offering improved resilience. Any changes to systems, reports or letters arising from new legislation or policies will only have to be made once.

Conclusion

49. Ocella submitted the tender which is clearly the most economically advantageous to the councils. Awarding the contract to Ocella will result in significant financial savings for both South and Vale and enable both councils to achieve other efficiencies already identified as part of the Fit for the Future programme. Therefore I ask Cabinet to approve the recommendations of this report to approve the award of a contract to Ocella.

Background papers

- Joint Cabinet and Executive report on the IT strategy and investment plan (September 2010)
- Minutes of project board meeting (26 April 2011)

• ANNEX 1 – EVALUATION OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

Lot 1 - Planning, Environmental Health, Building Control and Land Charges

- Evaluation outcome: Ocella - 93% Supplier 2 - 79%
- Total cost over 5 years: Ocella - £251,800 Supplier 2 - £359,350
- Recommendation: award contract to Ocella

Lot 2 - Gazetteer / Street Naming and Numbering

- Evaluation outcome: Ocella did not bid Only Supplier 2 bid for this lot
- Recommendation: no award in this procurement – stay with current systems

Lot 3 - Licensing

- Evaluation outcome: Ocella - 87% Supplier 2 - 42%
- Total cost over 5 years: Ocella - £3,250 Supplier 2 - £30,000
- Recommendation: award contract to Ocella at South, review LalPac at Vale

Lot 4 - Corporate Property

- Evaluation outcome: Ocella did not bid Only Supplier 2 bid for this lot
- Recommendation: no award in this procurement – separate project

Lot 5 - Leisure and Technical Services

- Evaluation outcome: Ocella did not bid Only Supplier 2 bid for this lot
- Recommendation: no award in this procurement – separate project if necessary

Lot 6 - Housing Grants

- Evaluation outcome: Ocella - 91% Supplier 2 - 57%
- Total cost over 5 years: Ocella - £5,250 Supplier 2 - £16,400
- Recommendation: project to decide whether to use Abritas or Ocella

Lot 7 - Parks Maintenance

- Evaluation outcome: Ocella did not bid Only Supplier 2 bid for this lot
- Recommendation: no award in this procurement – stay with current system

Lot 8 - Planning Policy Monitoring

- Evaluation outcome: Ocella - 91% Supplier 2 - 46%
- Total cost over 5 years: Ocella - £1,000 Supplier 2 - £7,650
- Recommendation: award contract to Ocella

Cabinet report



8 July 2011

Report of Head of Corporate Strategy

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DATE: 8 July 2011

Report No. 12/11

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DATE: 11 July 2011

Draft Corporate Equality Policy

Recommendations

- (a) that cabinet approves the harmonised Corporate Equality Policy (CEP) in appendix one.
- (b) that the head of corporate strategy, in consultation with the relevant cabinet member, is authorised to make any further changes to the CEP to reflect any changes to the duties currently being consulted on, following final government approval.

Purpose of Report

1. To seek cabinet approval to the councils' harmonised Corporate Equality Policy.

Strategic Objectives

2. The CEP contributes directly towards the councils' strategic objective of managing our business effectively; in particular through our corporate priorities to 'provide equality of access to our services' (South) and to 'optimise access to our services' (Vale).

Background

3. The Equality Act 2010 includes a new single public sector equality duty which will replace the existing race, disability and gender equality duties and will extend to also cover gender reassignment in full, age, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and sexual orientation.
4. The general duties, which form the new public sector equality duty, requires public bodies, and others who exercise public functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; to advance equality of opportunity; and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it¹.
5. The Act contains a power enabling the Minister to make regulations imposing specific duties on public bodies to support better performance of the general duties. These regulations have been revised recently and are currently being consulted on. The government intends to bring them into force in July 2011. In order not to delay this policy the specific duties have been included in their draft form in this policy.
6. The councils' have a formal requirement to produce a CEP. We need to ensure our CEP is consistent with all statutory equality legislation, and have therefore updated it to reflect the Equality Act 2010 and the new joint working arrangements.
7. The CEP sets out the councils' commitment to ensuring equality considerations are included in everything we do; it will help to demonstrate how we meet our duties under the Act. Our CEP covers the following areas of work:
 - assessing the impact of service and employment design
 - collecting monitoring data to understand our communities
 - consultation and engagement
 - advancing equality of opportunity in contracts where relevant
 - equalities training
 - commitment to the Equality Framework for Local Government
 - human resources policies
 - monitoring complaints.
8. Our CEP does not contain an action plan. During 2011/12 the councils' will develop equality objectives and a harmonised Corporate Equality Action Plan that will reflect the requirements of the Act and the Equality Framework for Local Government.
9. The main changes to our CEP as a result of the Act are:
 - we now need to consider the additional protected groups of marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment in full as the person is no longer required to demonstrate they are under medical supervision
 - the need to develop equality objectives instead of producing a comprehensive equality scheme

¹ A "protected characteristic" under the Act - colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, age, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion, belief, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity

- the need to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it, previously this only applied to race

Options

10. Not to have a policy. Without it we risk the possibility of challenge from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, on how we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Financial Implications

11. There are no immediate financial implications as a result of this policy.

Legal Implications

12. The review of this policy ensures it is consistent with the Equality Act 2010.

Risks

13. This policy demonstrates our commitment to equality and demonstrates explicitly how we will meet the requirements of the Act. Without it we risk the possibility of challenge e.g. from the Equality and Human Rights commission, on how we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Other Implications

14. None

Conclusion

15. Our CEP outlines and demonstrates the councils' commitment to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Framework for Local Government.

Background Papers

- None

Corporate Equality Policy

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

1. South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council are committed to equality. We will have due regard to the general duty when exercising our functions in order to:
 - eliminate any potential for unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
 - advance equality of opportunity in service delivery and employment between people who share a protected characteristic¹ and those who do not
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not².

We are committed to meeting our specific duties to³:

2. Prepare one or more equality objectives that are specific and measurable to meet any of the general duties, no later than 6 April 2012 and at subsequent intervals no greater than four years.
3. Publish information relating to our employees and people who are affected by our policies and practices⁴ to demonstrate compliance with the general duty, no later than 31 December 2011 and at subsequent intervals no greater than one year.

Human rights

4. The councils' are committed to meeting their legal duties under the Human Rights Act 1998 in service delivery and employment. When making decisions, developing policies or strategies, designing processes and practices we will ensure, so far as is possible, that they are compatible with the Convention rights. We will also ensure that when service users or employees secure the enjoyment of a Convention right they do so without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

Overview

5. The councils' recognise this means ensuring that different people receive services, consultation and employment opportunities in a fair and equal way. The councils' therefore commit to recognising, accommodating and valuing diversity and human rights across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse, and to incorporating this commitment into the planning and delivery of our services and functions. This is demonstrated through our corporate priorities to 'provide equality of access to our

¹ A "protected characteristic" under the Act colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, age, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion, belief, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity

² Bullets two and three do not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership

³ Subject to final government approval – expected July 2011

⁴ Particularly relating to people who share a relevant protected characteristic

services' (South) and to 'optimise access to our services' (Vale); and our commitment to delivering against the Equality Framework for Local Government.

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF SERVICE AND EMPLOYMENT DESIGN

6. In order to ensure service and employment opportunities the councils' provide and the policies or strategies they write do not discriminate, advance equality of opportunity, foster good relations between different groups of people and take account of human rights, we carry out a rolling program of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs). The councils' use satisfaction and service user data to inform our assessments and consult relevant affected stakeholders. Action plans and the development of equality objectives address any need to improve access and uptake for specific groups.
7. The councils' are committed to considering the impact budget decisions have on vulnerable groups and publish the results of these assessments. We also consider the impact of any changes to service design through our 'Fit for the Future Program' and have processes in place to ensure equalities is considered in our cabinet/executive reports.

COLLECTING MONITORING DATA TO UNDERSTAND OUR COMMUNITIES

Service user data

8. The councils' routinely collect equality monitoring data through our corporate consultation⁵ with service users. Many service teams also collect monitoring data and feedback is used to inform EIAs and service planning. We will address gaps in our data collection relating to the new equality strands⁶ where it is appropriate to do so during the EIA process and these actions will form part of the relevant service team's action plan.

Equality mapping project⁷

9. We are working with other partners on equality mapping, to develop a single resource for public services to be able to access information about diversity and inequality in Oxfordshire in order to better understand the communities we serve.

Employment data

10. We monitor performance by equality strand across a number of aspects of employment and training.⁸ These indicators help us ensure our employment practices are accessible for potential and current employees, according to race, disability, gender and age. Staff are also encouraged to provide information relating to their sexuality, religion or belief and carer status.

⁵ citizens panels (south & vale), annual residents survey (south), place survey (south & vale)

⁶ gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity

⁷ Oxfordshire county council lead

⁸ Applications for employment, applicants short listed, staff in post, applications/approval for training, staff ceasing employment, workforce representation by job group, staff subject to/involved in disciplinary and grievance procedures.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO TACKLE PREJUDICE AND REDUCE COMMUNITY TENSIONS

11. The councils' work in partnership to improve community cohesion and reduce tensions by supporting the South and Vale Independent Advisory Group. We are key partners of HALT⁹ and Oxfordshire Mantra, who aim to challenge and eliminate all forms of hate crimes and incidents, through providing a comprehensive system of reporting and recording of hate crime and incidents.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

12. The councils' use a variety of methods to consult and engage with members of the public. In addition to our citizen's panels, we hold specific workshops with our disability and ethnicity panels as part of the EIA process or to inform strategy, policy or service delivery.
We also belong to a number of partnerships¹⁰ to improve our engagement and consultation opportunities with equality groups.

USING PROCUREMENT TO ADVANCE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

13. We aim to ensure equality considerations are included at relevant stages of the procurement process:

- equality requirements included within our procurement policy
- standard equality and diversity clauses in all major contracts, relevant contracts specifications and other tender documents
- review of contractor performance.

EQUALITIES TRAINING

14. The councils' are committed to ensuring that staff and councillors have the relevant skills and knowledge to ensure they do not discriminate against, harass or victimise customers or colleagues and seek ways to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.
All staff attend mandatory equality training and relevant staff attend human rights and disability awareness training. We also offer equalities training to all councillors.

COMMITMENT TO THE EQUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

15. We are committed to achieving the requirements of the Equality Framework for Local government in order to mainstream equalities in everything we do, and have set a target to be 'Achieving' councils in accordance with the Framework.¹¹

⁹ Homophobic awareness liaison team

¹⁰ HALT, Vale disability access group, Didcot access group, Embrace (race equality)

¹¹ Levels of framework – 'developing' 'achieving' 'excellent'

HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES

16. The councils' have a separate Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy and a number of other policies that ensure fair and equal treatment of staff who share a protected characteristic e.g. dignity at work, recruitment and selection, parental and carers leave.

MONITORING COMPLAINTS

17. Both councils monitor complaints that relate to potential discrimination and harassment and have processes in place to ensure that people with disabilities and limited English can access the process in a way that meets their needs.

HOW WE MONITOR AND REVIEW OUR POLICY

18. The councils' cabinet is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the planning and provision of our services meet the needs of our all our residents and employees and for approving our Corporate Equalities Policy.
19. Our scrutiny committees are responsible for monitoring the progress we make on promoting equality through an annual update report.
20. All our staff and councillors are encouraged to promote equality of opportunity in everything they do, ensure they eliminate all potential forms of discrimination and harassment and foster good relations between different groups of people.
21. In addition, some members of staff have specific responsibilities with regards to this policy:
- accountability for our Corporate Equality Policy rests with the strategic director for corporate strategy
 - the shared equalities officer is responsible for coordinating, and monitoring progress on our equalities programme and for reviewing this policy.
22. The policy will be reviewed in three years time (July 2014) or as the result of new legislation.

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