

Ex.67

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE

HELD AT THE GUILDHALL,
ABINGDON ON FRIDAY, 6TH
FEBRUARY, 2009 AT 2.30PM

Open to the Public, including the Press

PRESENT:

MEMBERS: Councillor Tony de Vere (Chair), Jerry Patterson (Vice-Chair), Mary de Vere, Richard Farrell, Jenny Hannaby, Angela Lawrence and Richard Webber

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Alice Brander, Steve Bishop, Steve Culliford, William Jacobs, Matt Prosser, Mark Saunders and Robert Woodside

NON-PARTICIPATING MEMBER: Councillor Matthew Barber

NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 1

Ex.105 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from David Buckle, Chief Executive.

Ex.106 MINUTES

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 3, 5 and 11 (re-convened meeting) December 2008 were adopted and signed as a correct record.

Ex.107 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Angela Lawrence declared a personal interest in item 11 'Revenue budget 2009/10 and capital programme to 2012/13' as she was an Abingdon Town Councillor and the budget proposals included a grant to the Town Council (minute Ex.115 refers).

Ex.108 URGENT BUSINESS AND CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

Ex.109 STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 32

None

Ex.110 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 32

None

Ex.111 FINANCIAL MONITORING
(Time: 2.33pm to 2.34pm)

The Executive received and considered an agenda report setting out requests for virements and permanent budget adjustments. Some of these had been approved under delegated authority by the Strategic Director; others required the Executive's approval.

RESOLVED

that the virements and permanent budget adjustments set out in the agenda report be approved.

Ex.112 CORPORATE PLAN 2009-12
(Time: 2.34pm to 2.40pm)

The Executive received and considered report 146/08 of the Principal Performance Management Officer regarding a review of the Council's existing corporate plan and the preparation of a new plan. The Corporate Plan 2009-12 set out the Council's vision, strategic objectives and corporate priorities for the next three years. It included key targets, actions and measures showing how each of the corporate priorities would be achieved. It had been developed following consultation with Members, the Management Team and residents.

In December 2008, MORI ran three extended discussion groups of residents looking at the proposed strategic objectives and corporate priorities. Overall, there was positive support for the objectives and priorities included in the draft plan. The comments and views raised at these discussion groups would be used to help develop and improve the services delivered by the Council. The three priorities which received the greatest support were housing, a clean Vale and the economy of the Vale. Another key message was that the Council needed to improve communication about the services provided and its achievements; this was now a corporate priority.

It was proposed that the Council's vision statement should be streamlined. The primary heading of "Our Vision is to build and safeguard a fair, open and compassionate Community" would be retained but in the interests of clarity, the six detailed aims would be dropped as they were largely incorporated in the new plan.

The Executive welcomed the draft plan and supported the amendments to the Council's vision statement. This served as a good basis to develop the service plans and stand the Council in good stead for the next year. Members were particularly pleased with the revised description for affordable housing and at the priority to sustain vibrant market towns through partnerships.

Members noted that the final version of the plan would be published in March or April. This would essentially be a web-based document, but a limited number of hard copies would be produced. Before publication, explicit numbers would have to be added to the targets in appendix 1. These would need to be agreed as soon as possible after the new Heads of Service had been appointed.

R E C O M M E N D E D

that the Council be recommended to:

- (i) agree the six strategic objectives and associated corporate priorities, key targets, actions and measures to be included in the Corporate Plan 2009-12, as set out in Appendix A to these minutes;*
- (ii) delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree the final version of the plan; and*
- (iii) agree an amendment to the Council's vision statement, to improve clarity and compactness, by dropping the six aims since these are largely incorporated in the body of the new Corporate Plan.*

Ex.113 LOCAL AUTHORITY CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN

(Time: 2.40pm to 2.53pm)

The Executive received and considered report 147/08 of the Deputy Director (Housing and Community Safety) which sought approval of the draft Carbon Management Plan. The plan set out how the Council could meet a proposed commitment to reduce carbon emissions from its own operations by 20% by 2012. In doing so the Council would meet its Local Area Agreement (LAA) 2 commitments to reduce carbon emissions by 8% by 2010 based on a 2008 baseline. The draft plan also set out how the Council would implement various projects to achieve its carbon reduction targets. The Council had a legal obligation to have regard to the latest published energy measures report; it was noted that this had been taken into account in the preparation of the plan. The plan highlighted areas critical to the Council reducing emissions:

- Contractor emissions - it was important to work with contractors to reduce carbon emissions
- Governance - all relevant service plans and any future plans should take full account of the plan
- Funding - although the Council had already proposed £150,000 capital until 2011, further £130,000 capital would be required to fully fund all the capital projects over the life of the plan. Reduced energy costs for the Council could be £200,000 by 2012 or higher if appropriate saving-sharing agreements could be reached with leisure centre operators
- Corporate property review - the review would have an impact on the viability of certain projects, for example investment in energy saving measures
- Monitoring - a robust and accurate carbon and cost savings monitoring regime was central to the success of the plan

The Executive welcomed the plan which would guide the Council in securing significant emissions reductions in line with its climate change strategy target, the new Corporate Plan, and the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement (LAA) 2 target. The plan would also have clear financial benefits in the medium term. The Executive was also keen to see performance improve so that the Council could move to the top of the performance matrix set out in appendix A to the plan. To do this carbon reduction strategies would need to be embedded throughout the whole Council and continually be a part of every service plan.

Members asked that an amendment was made to the plan to clarify the future of the civic halls. There was a possibility, not a probability, that the management of the civic halls could be transferred in the future.

The Executive thanked the Principal Energy Officer and his team and Councillor Angela Lawrence, the previous portfolio holder, for their work on this plan.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the draft Carbon Management Plan be approved, subject to an amendment to clarify that it is a possibility, not a probability, that the management of the civic halls would be transferred;*
- (b) that the new corporate target of reducing carbon emissions from the Council's own operations by 20% by 2012 be adopted;*
- (c) that it be noted that in addition to the £150,000 capital already proposed in the capital programme, there is a further requirement for £130,000 additional capital expenditure to fully fund capital projects in the Carbon Management Plan. This comprises £80,000 for new boilers at Abbey House, Abingdon already bid for by Property and Estates and a further £50,000 for other identified measures;*
- (d) that the importance of the corporate property review be noted, to the delivery of projects within the Carbon Management Plan; and*
- (e) that the first annual review of the plan in 2010 be presented to the Scrutiny Committee and future reports be built in to that committee's review programme.*

Ex.114 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR 2009/10

(Time: 2.53pm to 2.55pm)

The Executive received and considered report 148/08 of the Strategic Director which set out the detailed treasury management strategy for 2009/10 and gave an indication of expected treasury operations for 2010/11 and 2011/12.

The preparation of a strategy was governed by the prudential capital financing regime which laid down four key legislative requirements:

- The reporting of the prudential indicators setting out the expected capital activities. This formed part of the budget proposal to the Council in February
- If the Council borrowed to fund capital expenditure it would need a minimum revenue provision policy to set out how the Council would pay for capital assets through revenue each year. However, this was not applicable to this Council at this time but if it was a report would be brought forward
- A treasury management strategy statement, which set out how the Council's treasury service would support the capital programme and revenue budget, the day to day treasury management, and the limitations on activity through treasury prudential indicators

- An investment strategy which set out the Council's criteria to select investment counterparties and limiting exposure to the risk of loss

The report set out the Council's powers for investing funds and guidance on prudent investment. Priority had to be given to security and liquidity but it was reasonable to seek the highest return consistent with those aims. The guidance discouraged the use of speculative investments such as equities. Borrowing to invest remained unlawful.

The Treasury Management and Investment Strategy Statement set borrowing limits, investment objectives, approved organisations for investment, guidelines and performance criteria for the in-house operation. There had been no significant change in the Council's circumstances but the current economic climate and difficulties in the money markets had prompted a review of approach. The result had been to maintain similar base criteria as in previous years but tailor it by:

- implementing a more restrictive operational approach than that set out in the strategy until such time as the banking system returns to normal operation. This approach had been in adopted since October 2008 (following the collapse of the Icelandic bank in which the Council had investment). However, the strategy would allow the investment service flexibility to return to the fuller criteria without a further Council resolution
- including those institutions with wholesale guarantees where the Government had a sovereign 'AAA' rating from all three main rating agencies. Any investments would be limited to amounts and maturities within the terms of the guarantee

The Executive supported the proposed strategy.

R E C O M M E N D E D

that recommend to Council to approve:

- (i) the Treasury Management Strategy 2009/10 to 2011/12 and the treasury prudential indicators, contained within Appendix B to these minutes;*
- (ii) the Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator;*
- (iii) the Investment Strategy 2009/10 contained in the treasury management strategy and the detailed criteria included in Annex A1 to the appendix.*

Ex.115 REVENUE BUDGET 2009/10 AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME TO 2012/13

(Time: 2.55pm to 3.05pm)

(Councillor Angela Lawrence declared a personal interest in this item and in accordance with Standing Order 34 she remained in the meeting during consideration of this item as the detail of the matter relating to her interest was not discussed.)

The Executive received and considered report 149/08 of the Head of Finance which set out the draft revenue budget 2009/10 and capital programme to 2012/13.

Tabled at the meeting was an amended appendix A, setting out a draft medium term plan and capital programme. The amended medium term plan included adjustments for (line 90) the receipt of the Local Authority Business Growth Incentives (LABGI) grant which reflected the Council's number and value of business properties, and (line 91) additional Government grant towards the increasing administrative cost of providing housing benefit.

The proposals included some budget reductions necessary because of the level of Government grant received and the current economic climate. A list of cost reduction ideas was set out in appendix D. However, Members asked that item PC12 was removed, this related to a reduction in the community grants budget of £10,000.

The result of these changes was that the proposed District Council Tax for a band D property of £112.31.

The Executive supported the budget proposals, as amended, and delegated authority for any minor amendments to be made before the Council meeting on 25 February, subject to the further amendments being notified to the Council.

R E C O M M E N D E D

(a) *that the Council approves:*

- (i) *the Council's Medium Term Plan 2009/10 to 2013/14, set out in the budget papers Appendix A, as amended by the inclusion of an amount for the Local Authority Business Growth Incentives (LAGBI) grant and additional grant towards the cost of housing benefits' administration (lines 90 and 91 respectively);*
- (ii) *the inclusion of the unavoidable growth items within the Council's budget, Appendix B;*
- (iii) *the inclusion of the growth items within the Council's budget, Appendix C;*
- (iv) *the cost reduction ideas listed to be implemented into the Council's budget, Appendix D, subject to the removal of item PC12 which related to the reduction of the community grants budget;*
- (v) *the items proposed for the Capital Programme 2009/10 and to note possible future capital schemes for 2010/11, Appendix E;*
- (vi) *the fees and charges to support the budget as proposed, Appendix F; and*

R E S O L V E D

- (b) *that authority be delegated to the Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Finance, Councillor Jerry Patterson, to make any late changes to the Executive's budget proposals arising out of circumstances unknown as at 6*

February 2009, as long as they have no significant impact on the delivery of Council services as proposed and are notified to Council.

Ex.116 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE REPORT - THIRD QUARTER 2008/09
(Time: 3.05pm to 3.20pm)

The Executive received and considered report 150/08 of the Management Team which looked at corporate governance for the third quarter of 2008/09, being October to December 2008. The report concentrated on:

- corporate priorities
- national indicators
- progress against service prioritisation plans
- key staffing data (sickness levels and turnover)
- progress with business process improvement reviews
- a financial commentary

At its meeting on 27 January 2009 the Management Team considered a third quarter corporate governance exception report. The Management Team agreed the exceptions, comments and actions to be included in this report where performance/actions were not on target.

The Executive reviewed progress against the corporate priorities. In relation to the 'facilitating the provision of affordable housing', the Council was facing a challenging time. Despite affordable housing provision being included in many planning agreements, developments were not proceeding due to the downturn in the economic climate. The Council was developing strategies to overcome the worst effects and attempting to prevent homelessness with early intervention.

Turning to performance against national indicators (NI), the portfolio holder expressed concern at performance against NI 195: improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of graffiti, litter, detritus and fly posting). At the end of the first sampling period cumulative performance was 7% (good performance was a low %). By the end of the second sampling period the cumulative performance had declined to 14%. Despite efforts to persuade the County Council to increase its budget for weed control, no action had been taken. The portfolio holder promised to raise this again with the County Council as this was having an increasingly adverse effect on the Vale's performance against its targets and was contrary to the outcome of recent consultation with residents on the draft Corporate Plan which identified 'a clean Vale' as being one of the three highest priorities. The Executive supported the portfolio holder in her quest to encourage the County Council to allocate further funds to weed control to raise performance against this target. Members were keen to achieve better than the national average performance. The Executive asked the Strategic Director to draft a letter to the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership and Oxfordshire County Council to highlight the problem and ask for higher standards of weed control. Continued poor performance could have an adverse effect on Local Area Agreement targets and performance awards.

The Executive noted progress against the 26 service prioritisation plans included in the 2008/09 budget. Members also noted that staff sickness was very slightly lower this quarter compared to the same quarter last year, whereas staff turnover was lower this quarter compared to both the previous quarter and also quarter two last year.

Turning to the financial commentary, the Executive noted that the second quarter budget monitoring report to the Executive on 5 December 2008 had identified a potential overspend against the budget of £910,000 with a significant element of the overspend being as a consequence of a shortfall in income from planning fees, legal land searches and car parking, and a substantial budget pressure on assisted travel. As a result the Executive had instructed officers to take any measure required to bring the budget back in balance. Since that date recruitment to staff vacancies had been held and the use of £140,000 of unallocated Planning and Delivery Grant had been pledged to offset some of the shortfall in planning income.

Contrary to expectations the income from investments was likely to exceed the budget in the current year. The sharper fall than expected in interest rates meant that the Council's fund manager had made greater capital gains on the redemption of certificates of deposit than expected on their holding. However, this was not expected to continue into 2009/10. A projected drop in the return on property investments meant the total investment and property income earned in 2008/09 would be £117,000 below budget.

Other budget pressures increases had emerged over the third quarter. The overall effect had been to reduce the predicted year-end overspend to just under £800,000. This figure was used to identify the likely level of general fund balances going forward into the budget setting process for 2009/10. However, despite Members not explicitly calling for any action, they asked that the Strategic Director (Chief Finance Officer) and other officers should look at how the overspend could be reduced further.

RESOLVED

- (a) *that the Management Team's corporate governance report be received;*
- (b) *that the Strategic Director be requested to write to the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership to highlight that the County Council's reduction in its weed control budget is having an adverse effect on this Council's national indicator performance to improve street and environmental cleanliness and could impact on Local Area Agreement performance and performance awards, and that higher standards of weed control be encouraged; and*
- (c) *that the Strategic Director (Chief Finance Officer) and other officers should actively take steps to reduce the predicted overspend.*

Exempt Information Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972

None

The meeting rose at 3.20 pm

Value for the Vale

Providing high quality value for money services for our residents

Corporate Plan 2009-12

Foreword

by the leader and chief executive

We are pleased to present our Corporate Plan for 2009-12, which sets out our objectives and priorities for the next three years, and outlines how we intend to achieve them. It is an ambitious programme of work, but one we are sure our dedicated staff and councillors will work hard to deliver.

One of the key challenges we face is the current economic climate and addressing the many ways it will impact on residents. The plan strives to ensure that the Vale remains a sustainable and vibrant place to live and work during this period, by supporting people and the local economy where possible, and ensuring that we are ready to take advantage of the upturn when it occurs.

For the coming year we want to start tackling head-on some of the issues that people in the Vale feel are important, such as market town vitality and the problems of flooding and other issues associated with climate change. We want to make sure that there are more affordable homes, and that our towns and villages are cleaner, greener and safer communities.

One of the key challenges we face is delivering high quality and good value services with increasingly limited resources. We will continue to search for new ways of getting the best value for our council tax payers.

We are lucky that we live in a beautiful area with vibrant towns and villages and an economy that is relatively resilient in the face of economic stress. We want to continue to do what we can to improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in the Vale.



Tony de Vere – Leader of the Council
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If you want to make any comments on this Corporate Plan please feel free to email



either of us.

David Buckle – Chief Executive
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Introduction

This Corporate Plan relates to the period 2009-12 and covers the current administration up to the next elections in May 2011. Following the next election, a new four year Corporate Plan will be developed.

This plan forms the link between the vision and the services that the council tax payers of the district tell us they want. It is expressed as six strategic objectives, each associated with a set of corporate priorities. We use these to help us decide how resources should be deployed, as a basis for our Community Strategy, and to determine how we work within the Local Area Partnership to achieve broader goals that benefit the residents of the Vale.

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

The objectives and priorities described in this plan have been recently validated in user forums across the district. Feedback from these meetings has been incorporated into the plan. There will be regular opportunities for the residents and local groups of the Vale to express their views and the council will continue to respond to their needs and wishes on the performance and focus of their council. We hope you find the plan informative and we welcome any views on its content or structure.

Working in Partnership

We are responsible for delivering a wide range of services to our residents, people who work within our district and visitors. Some of these services we provide directly, but many are delivered in partnership with other organisations. These include public bodies such as the police, with private sector companies for services like waste collection and with the voluntary sector who are often used for the provision of specialist services.

Vale Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Development Framework

The council approved a Sustainable Community Strategy in November 2008 called 'Working together for a better Vale'. It was prepared by the Vale Partnership, which brings together representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors in the Vale. This long term plan will address current issues, but will also look to improve the quality of life in the Vale in the years ahead.

Underpinning the actions in the strategy is the need for sustainability. This is generally defined as meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The partnership's vision for the future is for a sustainable Vale:

- With prosperous, inclusive and thriving communities that have good access to a range of housing, jobs and services.
- Where everyone can feel safe and enjoy life.
- Where our needs can be met without compromising the natural and built heritage or the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

The strategy is a commitment by the council and its partners to work together with available resources to provide services that will help to improve quality of life and maintain communities where people want to live and work, now and in the future. Some of the issues will be tackled through policies and proposals in the Local Development Framework (LDF). This is an important plan which will help shape the future of the Vale up to 2026. It contains a Core Strategy which sets out a long term vision and key objectives for the district up to 2026. Major new sites for housing, employment and retail development will be identified in the plan, as will the infrastructure needed to support them.

The Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement 2008-11

This is a three year agreement between the government and a wide range of key partners across Oxfordshire. The aim is to develop partnership working which will lead to improvements in service delivery. The agreement is being managed by the Oxfordshire Partnership which is the county wide local strategic partnership. The key priorities of the agreement are, in part, measured by performance against 35 National Indicators. Targets have been agreed with the government and if these are met the partnership will share reward grant at the end of the three year period. There are direct links with many of the national Indicators included in the agreement and our corporate priorities. Full details can be found later in this plan.

Working with South Oxfordshire District Council

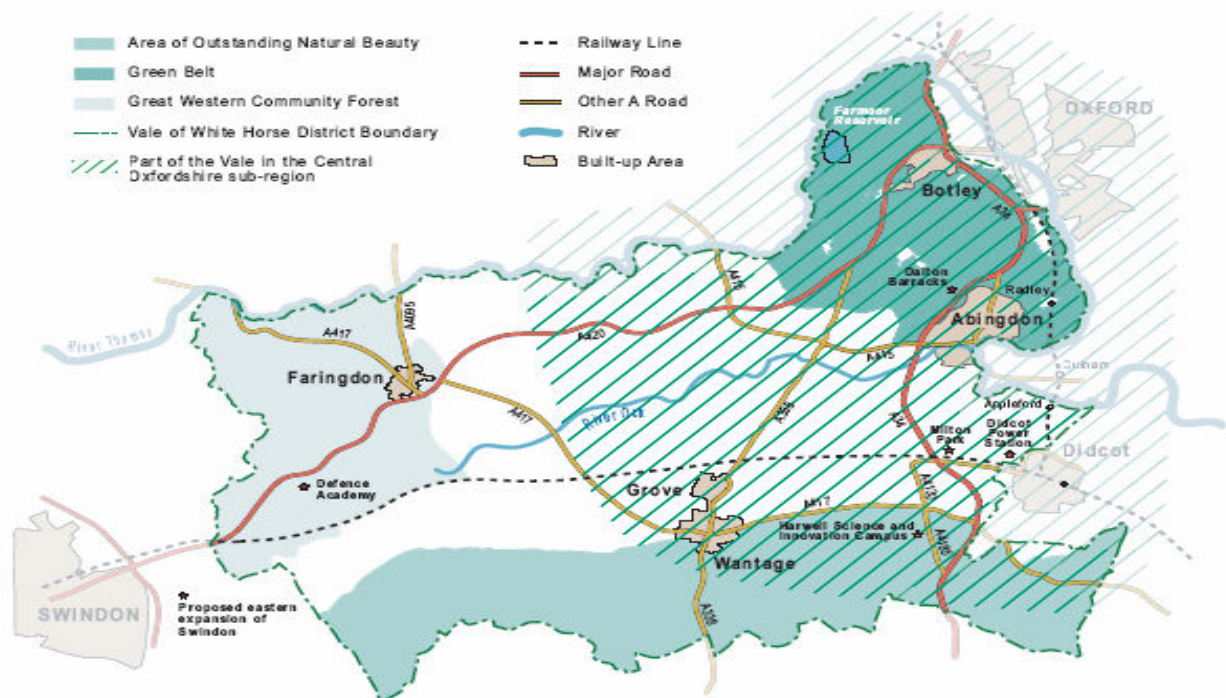
The two councils have a long history of joint working together, and more recently, shared services. For example, a shared finance service has been in place since 2006. This includes

a joint revenues and benefits contract with Capita and internally provided accountancy, finance client side, benefit fraud and audit services. We will be extending joint working further with the introduction of a joint waste collection and street cleaning service in 2010.

Both councils have agreed to create a shared management team. Substantial savings will arise from having a reduced number of senior managers. These savings will help both councils address budget challenges for later years identified in their respective medium term financial plans. Councils are under increasing financial pressure through reducing government grants, limits on council tax increases and increasing expectations from customers. These pressures are heightened by the Government's expectation of further efficiency savings from every council. Both councils face challenges to set balanced budgets for 2009/10 and later years whilst seeking to improve frontline services in our priority areas.

The creation of a shared management team will lead to annual joint savings of around £750,000. In addition, there are a number of non-financial benefits which are equally important. Best practise will be encouraged across both councils. Having a common senior management structure will make it easier to achieve joint delivery of services in areas where the two councils positively decide that they wish to do this where a single service delivery arrangement could deliver financial and operational benefits. Finally there is a potential set of benefits around the profile that will result from shared working. The new management team is responsible for delivering services to a population of nearly 250,000, larger than any single district council in the country.

The Vale of White Horse in context



The Vale of White Horse is located in the upper Thames Valley and is one of five districts within Oxfordshire. The council takes its name from the famous 3,000 year old monument carved on the crest of White Horse Hill, Uffington. It is the oldest of all the white horses in England. The Vale is bounded to the north and east by the River Thames and to the south by the Berkshire Downs. The district covers some 224 square miles (580 square kilometres) of country that is attractive and mainly rural in character.

The flood plains of the Thames and its tributaries cover extensive areas of the district. With some 4,500 homes that could be affected by flooding, this is a serious issue in the Vale. Flooding could become more frequent and cover larger areas as a result of climate change.

The Vale's Population

The population of the Vale was estimated as 117,000 in 2007. About half the population lives in the three historic market towns of Abingdon, Faringdon, and Wantage, plus North Hinksey (Botley) and the expanded village of Grove. The remainder is distributed in more than 60 villages and hamlets throughout the Vale. In common with much of the country the Vale has an ageing population with a little over 16% of its population over 65 years old.

The population of the Vale is projected to reach 139,000 by 2026. The proportion of the population that is over 65 will rise by 47% whereas the proportion of those 14 and under will rise by only 11.3 %. In common with national trends, the Vale will see an increasingly ageing population, with growing numbers of smaller and single person households.

The Vale has a relatively small black and minority ethnic population, compared to the national average. The 2001 Census shows that 6.7% of the district population (7,765 people) describe themselves as members within ethnic groups other than white British. Of these, those most represented in the district include Irish (1,176), people from other white ethnic groups (3,821), Chinese (499) and Indian (415). The percentage of people who describe themselves as other than white British people within the district is lower than the Oxfordshire average (10.1%) and about 2% lower than the South East as a whole (8.7%). In terms of disability, just over 13% of our residents have a limiting long-term illness / disability.

Housing

There has continued to be a sustained increase in the number of households. This reflects the national trend towards smaller and more rapidly forming households. The Vale has over 48,600 households of which nearly a quarter consist of a single person. Average private household size is expected to fall from 2.4 in 2006 to 2.29 in 2026, meaning that in 2026 there will be just over 59,000 private households, which is a rise of 24% over the 2006 figure. The level of owner occupation is 76.2% (March 2004) which is above the national average of 74.4%.

Compared with the national average the housing stock is relatively modern and in generally good condition. Between 1996 and 2007 nearly 4,000 homes were built in the Vale, of which almost 1,200 were affordable. Nevertheless, with house prices nearly nine times higher than average incomes, many local people continue to find it difficult to buy their own home or rent from a private landlord. The problem is particularly acute in the smaller communities where house prices are very high and few properties are available to rent from housing associations.

Employment and the Economy

The Vale's economy has remained strong throughout the 1990s and early years of the new century, and opportunities for employment have been good. There is an above average proportion of people who are economically active (86.6%) with above average earnings. Unemployment levels remain comparatively low. However, as with all areas in the country there are uncertainties about the economic future of the district as a result of the current credit crisis and economic down turn.

Science Vale UK in south central Oxfordshire is an area of economic growth that comprises:

- The Harwell Science and Innovation Campus. This includes the Diamond Synchrotron and the ISIS neutron source. Over 4,500 people work for around 100 companies at the site.
- Milton Park, which is one of Europe's largest multi-use business parks. It has over 160 companies employing around 6,500 people
- The towns of Wantage and Didcot
- The expanded village of Grove

The Science Vale UK Partnership has come together to ensure that the development momentum continues and that the area establishes itself as a world leading site for scientific, research and development and high technology businesses.

The Vale also has two key military related sites providing a range of jobs. These are the Defence Academy at Watchfield and Dalton Barracks on the edge of Abingdon. There are

numerous rural business sites outside the main settlements and the rural economy is also supported by business activities which are directly related to the countryside, such as farming, forestry and equestrian activities. The Vale, in partnership with South Oxfordshire District Council, has secured joint grant funding in 2008 of £1.8 million to help revitalise and support rural businesses.

Strategic Objectives and Corporate Priorities

Strategic Objective: Meeting people's need for housing

Corporate Priorities

1. Enable affordable homes to be built in the district each year in line with the Vale's ambitious targets
2. Help people in housing need to resolve their housing problems

Strategic Objective: Supporting a vibrant local economy

Corporate Priorities

1. Work in partnership to sustain vibrant market towns
2. Support rural business and communities
3. Promote 'Science Vale UK' as a world leading area for science and technology

Strategic Objective: Managing our business effectively

Corporate Priorities

1. Provide value for money services that meet the needs of our residents and service users
2. Optimise access to our services
3. Improve communication about the council's activities and achievements

Strategic Objective: Rising to the challenge of climate change

Corporate Priorities

1. Minimise our impact on the causes of climate change
2. Respond to the effects of climate change, particularly flooding
3. Minimise the waste we produce and maximise recycling

Strategic Objective: Helping to maintain a safe Vale

Corporate Priorities

1. Help to maintain, or further reduce, low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour
2. Reduce the fear of crime and anti social behaviour

Strategic Objective: Keeping the Vale a clean place to live

Corporate Priorities

1. Deal effectively with litter and detritus
2. Tackle 'envirocrime', such as fly tipping, dog fouling and graffiti

Meeting people's need for housing

Enable affordable homes to be built in the district each year in line with the Vale's ambitious targets

Help people in housing need to resolve their housing problems

There are over 48,000 homes in the Vale and our housing stock is relatively modern and generally in good condition. Between 1996 and 2007, almost 4,000 homes were built, of which almost 1,200 were affordable. Affordable housing includes both low cost market housing and subsidised housing that is available to people who cannot afford to occupy houses generally available on the local market.

However, with house prices nearly nine times higher than average incomes, many local people continue to find it difficult to buy their own home or rent from a private landlord. The problem is particularly acute in the smaller communities where house prices are very high and few properties are available to rent from housing associations. The high cost of houses in the area and the fact that relatively few new houses are being built in rural locations mean that local villagers have limited access to suitable housing. A key challenge for the future will be to secure the provision of affordable housing to meet needs in the Vale's rural communities.

The council will facilitate the provision of affordable housing for people who live and work in the Vale. This will be done through the policies in the current Local Plan and in the new Local Development Framework, which will be agreed during 2009. The framework will include a target that 40% of all new housing will be affordable.

The council is committed to preventing homelessness in the district. Homeless acceptances have been reduced significantly over the last five years and, on average, over 200 households a year are prevented from becoming homeless. Our approach is prevention through early intervention using appropriate advice and a range of initiatives. We also intend to keep the number of households who are accommodated in nightly charge properties, for example in bed and breakfast, to a minimum.

The council was the first in Oxfordshire to set up a choice based lettings scheme for people on the housing waiting list. We are now working with other authorities to further increase housing mobility by setting up a scheme that enables Vale residents to apply for housing throughout Oxfordshire.

Supporting a vibrant local economy

Work in partnership to sustain vibrant market towns

Support rural business and communities

Promote 'Science Vale UK' as a world leading area for science and technology

As is seen from the context statement at the start of this plan, the Vale's mix of historic rural communities, growing urban areas, and thriving high technology centres provides a unique and buoyant mix of employment and location. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates nationally and are recognised as an attractive and safe area to live.

That said, the market towns in the district are all faced with significant competitive challenges from larger shopping complexes in nearby cities and conurbations, made worse by the increasing preparedness on the part of consumers to travel significant distances to shop. The council is determined to work with local communities to develop a strategy to support Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon town centres in order to maintain and improve business and user confidence.

Outside the towns, rural communities in the Vale have their own challenges and this is recognised as a common issue for similar areas. The European Union has allocated £1.8 million under its rural development fund to southern Oxfordshire, including the Vale. The council will work, in partnership with South Oxfordshire District Council and others, to ensure that the funding that has been allocated is spent to the maximum benefit of rural residents. The funding will provide support to a wide range of projects and training for farmers, growers, food businesses and for improving tourism in rural areas.

The Science Vale UK project present a significant opportunity to make our area an international focus for inward investment, research and development. In 2006 the Government decided that the Harwell site should become the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus which forms a key component of the Science Vale project. The Government's aim is to develop the campus to ensure that the facilities located there are internationally competitive, support world-class science, and maximise opportunities for knowledge transfer.

Milton Park, one of the largest business parks in Europe, is also part of the project. It is a location for a cluster of knowledge based businesses employing more than 6,500 people. These two locations, together with areas earmarked for residential accommodation in Wantage and neighbouring Didcot, form the heart of the project. The council has decided that it will support the partnership developing Science Vale UK and work to increase its profile as a first choice location for business and research. We will work with our partners in the project to promote further investment.

Managing our business effectively

Provide value for money services that meet the needs of our residents and service users

Optimise access to our services

Improve communication about the council's activities and achievements

Local councils are not immune from broader economic realities. Like many households, the council is experiencing reducing income in real terms, and rising costs. However we continue to provide good quality services for one of the lowest council tax rates in the England. Against this background, we have a responsibility to ensure services are delivered effectively and efficiently, representing good value for money to the district's council tax payers. As part of this, we aim to have a sustainable financial base, captured in a five year medium term financial plan.

We work to ensure that taxes and charges are collected properly, and in a timely and equitable manner. We also continually review how our services are delivered and work to make them more efficient while maintaining and improving quality. In order to protect the local economy, we also pay our bills as soon as is practically possible. It is important residents know that we are being careful with their money.

We achieve this in a number of ways. Firstly, services are benchmarked for cost and quality against other similar authorities. This enables us to identify underperformance and to benefit from a best of breed approach to service delivery.

Secondly, we have put in place a rolling review of the business processes that support the services we deliver in order to weed out inefficiencies and redundant work. We challenge the managers of those services to reduce costs by innovation and deployment of technology, while sustaining high levels of service and set them annual targets for cost reduction.

Thirdly, we compare internal service delivery costs of service against independent external providers, outsourcing services where this makes financial sense for council tax payers.

Lastly, we look to collaborate where we can in order to take advantage of economies of scale. A clear example of this is a recent decision to form a joint senior management team with South Oxfordshire District Council. This initiative has already reduced management overheads as a percentage of total costs, and we remain confident that further significant savings will be realisable over the period of this plan as services are reviewed and combined where that makes sense. In addition, it has allowed both councils to jointly tender for waste services resulting in significant improvements in service at reduced costs. These benefits will be realised from 2009 onwards.

The council holds a number of assets, not least various civic properties based in the major towns across the district. These represent a significant cost and discussions have begun to

see if a better way of managing the properties can be found. We are determined to significantly reduce the costs of sustaining them over the next few years.

The Vale is a diverse and disparate area and we work to ensure there is even handed access to services for council tax payers across the district. As part of this we are working to increase the functionality of our website to allow residents to contact us, request and pay for services at times that suit them. That said, we recognise that care needs to be taken not to exclude residents that do not have access to this type of technology. We will review our Customer Contact Strategy during 2010 in order to ensure that a fair balance is struck between benefiting from the savings that increased use of technology offers and the quality, range and manner in which we deliver services.

The council has various statutory requirements placed upon it. Among these is a requirement to treat all employees and customers equally and fairly. We take this requirement seriously and will work to deliver an equality and diversity scheme action plan, including equality impact assessments that achieve this goal.

It is important that the council communicates effectively with residents, both in terms of consulting people about their priorities and needs, and in communicating progress that is being made. In this context, we intend to increase opportunities for local residents to comment on the council.

Rising to the challenge of climate change

Minimise our impact on the causes of climate change

Respond to the effects of climate change, particularly flooding

Minimise the waste we produce and maximise recycling

Climate change is one of the most important challenges facing society. 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 and we have put tackling global warming at the heart of our agenda over the next four years.

The council agreed a Climate Change Strategy in October 2008. This provides the framework for the council to set about reducing the carbon footprint of its own activities and of the local community. We are working in partnership with the Carbon Trust, South Oxfordshire District Council and Aylesbury Vale Borough Council and have developed an ambitious Carbon Management Plan. The council established its carbon footprint in 2007 and we will deliver a 20% reduction in CO₂ by 2012. In delivering the Carbon Management Plan, the council will also make financial savings on its energy costs.

We also recognise that we need to respond to the effects of climate change. The devastating floods of July 2007 and 2008 are obvious examples. The council is working with local communities to ensure that they are well prepared for any future floods by providing technical advice and guidance. Already, many local community flood groups have been formed and some have been helped with grant funding.

The council has signed a new joint waste management contract with South Oxfordshire District Council and Verdant Group Plc which will be delivered from October 2010. Under the new contract the recycling rate will improve substantially. In 2008/9 a recycling rate of 37% was achieved and by 2011/12 this will rise to 46%. There will be many other benefits coming from the new contract including the weekly collection of food waste and a fortnightly collection of a wider range of recyclable materials. A modern fuel efficient fleet of vehicles will be used. The engines will be converted by a local company, Regenattec of Milton Park, to run on pure plant oil which is a sustainable biofuel. This will lead to a reduction in CO₂ of over 70%. Collection rounds will be devised to minimise the amount of fuel used and will cross the boundary between the two councils where appropriate. All of these developments will significantly reduce the amount of CO₂ produced by the council.

Helping to maintain a safe Vale

Help to maintain, or further reduce, low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour

Reduce the fear of crime and anti social behaviour

The Vale is a safe place in which to live, work and visit and overall crime levels are very low. We work with a wide range of organisations through the Vale Community Safety Partnership so that we all contribute in a co-ordinated way. Our aim is to build on the reductions in crime that have been achieved over recent years and to support a community in which people feel safe, regardless of age gender or ethnic background.

We want to reduce the fear of crime by making sure that local people are aware that the Vale has very low levels of crime. We will do this in a number of ways. For example, we will continue to develop and improve the Vale 'Nightsafe' scheme which involves working with licensees and others to reduce town centre violence. The work of neighbourhood action groups will also be important in reducing the fear of crime. A quarterly community safety newsletter will help to spread the message, as will running a number of specific crime reduction campaigns.

One of the things we will do over the next four years is to reduce irresponsible drinking and behaviour by helping to develop and implement a range of existing and new initiatives. Test purchasing exercises use 14 or 15 year olds, supported by local authority officers and the police, to see if licensed premises will sell alcohol to underage customers. If premises fail the test, fixed penalty notice fines are served on staff. For repeat offences licences to sell alcohol can be revoked. The young people's targeted alcohol project is being piloted in Wantage and it targets under 16s who are repeatedly caught drinking alcohol in public. They and their parents then have to attend an awareness raising workshop which highlights the health risks and potential safety consequences of drinking.

CCTV has a part to play in local crime reduction. We are committed to support and develop the use of CCTV in the Vale. Where the need for new cameras is identified we will develop a business case to gain funding for future developments.

Keeping the Vale a clean place to live

Deal effectively with litter and detritus*

Tackle 'envirocrime', such as fly tipping, dog fouling and graffiti

The Vale is set in an area of outstanding countryside and tourism makes a significant contribution towards the local economy. With this in mind, the cleanliness of the district plays an important part in maintaining the visual and economic well being of the area.

Our external contractor is responsible for collecting litter and detritus along roads and in public areas, the removal of fly-tipping and emptying litter bins. Over the last couple of years levels of cleanliness, as measured by national indicators, has improved significantly. It remains a priority for further improvements to be made. The Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement includes a national indicator which measures street and environmental cleanliness and there is a challenging target for improvement over the period 2008-12.

We have taken a strong stance against envirocrimes. These include offences such as fly-tipping, dropping litter and dog fouling. Vale Voice, our citizens' panel, has told us that there is widespread concern about environmental crimes generally. The two of greatest concern are litter and dog fouling. Our two environment wardens deliver a service striking an effective balance between education and awareness raising and enforcement. This is through the issue of fixed penalty notice fines or prosecution through the courts. One recent initiative has been the successful pilot in Grove of a 'dog fouling action area'. This gained widespread positive publicity in the local media and resulted in the issue of a fixed penalty notice. This scheme will now be rolled out to other towns and villages.

Our environment wardens work to raise awareness of how local people can improve environmental quality through community schemes such as local voluntary litter-picks in villages and towns. Our contractors help with this work, providing a wide range of equipment and then removing the waste at the end of the day.

* Detritus includes dust, mud, soil, grit; rotted leaf, grass cuttings and other bits of vegetation; and fragments of glass and plastics.

Our Spending Plans

Revenue Budget 2009/10

Every year balancing the budget is a challenge due to rising costs, decreasing Government grant and new requirements, for instance the free bus pass scheme for the over 60s and disabled people. This year the challenges are even greater because of the economic downturn. This means that income from investments, which usually pays for some of our services, is reducing as is income from things like planning application fees and car parking. We need about £16 million a year to run the council. About £7 million comes from the Government; the remaining amount comes from council tax, income from investments and fees and charges.

We are increasing council tax by 4.8%. Although this is an above inflation increase, we think it is necessary to avoid significant service reductions or higher fees and charges. Even with this increase, we will still be one of the lowest charging district councils in the country. It amounts to around 10p per week.

The following highlights some of the main elements in the budget.

Budget increases

Increasing costs, increasing service demands and income reduction add up to £1.1 million next year. The main reasons for this include:

- The free bus pass scheme for the over 60s and disabled people. This will cost £300,000 more than originally predicted.
- A drop in income of almost £200,000 from our land charges service, which people use when they are buying or selling houses.
- A drop of £150,000 in planning application fees as fewer developers and households apply.
- A drop of almost £100,000 in parking income with permits and pay and display parking.

Increased investment in our community

There are areas where the council wants to invest to improve the community and the services we offer. These include:

- Funding the Abingdon Partnership to improve the town centre
- Increasing disabled facilities grants to help people stay in their own home
- Increasing our support fund for organisations that apply for National Lottery and other organisations that need matched funding
- Supporting Abingdon Town Council's bid to improve the County Hall and museum
- Funding schemes to reduce the council's carbon footprint as part of our commitment to rising to the challenge of climate change

Cost reduction ideas

As with domestic budgets, we asked our officers to identify ways of saving money or increasing income. These have led to a reduction in costs of around a million pounds per year on-going. Some of the more significant items are detailed below.

- Creating a shared waste team to monitor the new waste and street cleaning contract with South Oxfordshire District Council
- Carefully reviewing whether we should fill jobs when they become vacant
- Reducing the size of internal corporate administration teams
- Transferring our out of hours service to Oxford City Council's call centre

How will we implement this plan and monitor progress?

Our Corporate Plan sets out the council's priorities and drives how resources are allocated over the lifetime of the plan. Each strategic objective is associated with a number of corporate priorities. The strategic objectives have not been ranked in any particular order to show relative importance. In order to ensure these priorities are achieved, and to allow councillors and officers to monitor progress, actions are identified, targets are set and performance is measured against these targets and then reported on. The next section describes the actions and targets associated with each corporate priority; Appendix 1 includes more details about the actual measurements and – where appropriate – when we expect them to be achieved.

There are two types of measures:

- National Indicators (NIs). These are part of a set of central government's national indicators that apply to all councils. The indicators which are included in the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement 2008-11 have (LAA) included at the end of the indicator description.
- LPTs are local performance targets. These are described and measured locally where the officers and councillors feel there are important priorities to measure that are not covered by a national indicator.

Each of these indicators and actions are written into annual service plans that are agreed with senior officers and councillors within the council. All plans are monitored and progress is recorded in quarterly reports made to our Executive and Scrutiny Committee. These reports can be seen on our website.

Strategic Objective : Meeting people's need for housing	
Targets actions and measures	
Key targets and actions	Measures
Corporate Priority 1. Enable affordable homes to be built in the district each year in line with the Vale's ambitious targets	
<p>Facilitate the provision of affordable housing for people who live and work in the Vale through the current Local Plan and the Local Development Framework once it has been agreed</p> <p>Ensure the development of new and other suitable types of affordable houses</p> <p>Provide the right balance of rented, shared ownership and other types of intermediate housing. Use regular housing needs surveys to give an accurate picture of the district's housing requirements</p> <p>Provide new affordable housing in rural communities</p>	<p>NI 154 Net additional homes provided (LAA)</p> <p>NI 155 Number of affordable homes delivered (LAA)</p> <p>LPT - Develop five rural affordable housing exception sites by the end of 2011</p>
Corporate Priority 2. Help people in housing need to resolve their housing problems	
<p>Provide high quality advice and support to help prevent households becoming homeless</p> <p>Provide high quality temporary accommodation suitable for the needs of homeless people</p> <p>Promote housing mobility by setting up a scheme that enables Vale residents to apply for housing throughout Oxfordshire</p> <p>Keep the number of households who are accommodated in nightly charge properties to a minimum</p>	<p>NI 156 Number of households living in temporary accommodation (LAA)</p> <p>NI 181 Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims and change events</p> <p>LPT – The number of households who are placed in temporary accommodation because they are homeless</p> <p>LPT – A reduction in the number of homelessness acceptances</p> <p>LPT - The average number of days that households are accommodated in nightly charge properties during the year</p> <p>Implement the sub regional Choice Based Letting Scheme by 31.5.09</p> <p>Eliminate the use of out of district bed and breakfast placements for young people by 31.12.2009</p>

Strategic Objective : Supporting a vibrant local economy	
Targets actions and measures	
Key targets and actions	Measures
Corporate Priority 1. Work in partnership to sustain vibrant market towns	
Prepare a market towns strategy for the Vale and action plans for Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage, in collaboration with stakeholders, by the end of March 2010 Support the creation of an Abingdon Town Partnership and part fund a partnership officer to manage an action plan	LPT 1 – Actions in the market towns that maintain or improve business confidence (measured by survey) LPT 2 –Vacant retail units - set a target for the % change year to year from a baseline date
Corporate Priority 2. Support rural business and communities	
Ensure that rural communities benefit from the EU rural development funding that has been allocated to southern Oxfordshire, including the Vale	LPT – The amount of funding allocated to projects within the Vale LPT – The number of jobs created / safeguarded as a result of projects delivered
Corporate Priority 3. Promote ‘Science Vale UK’ as a world leading area for science and technology	
Increase the profile of the area so that it is seen as a first choice location for high value added businesses and research and an attractive place to live Project manage the partnership developing Science Vale UK as a global hotspot for enterprise Promote additional investment in physical and social infrastructure for the benefit of residents and businesses	Co-ordinate the implementation of the agreed business plan 2008/11 which will include the following measures: LPT 1 – At least one new large science related enterprise employing more than 50 people locates in the area during the next four years LPT 2 – There is an overall growth in employment of at least 250 new jobs in the next four years LPT 3 – Level of business confidence (measured by survey). Over a four year period business confidence is maintained or improved.

Strategic Objective : Managing our business effectively	
Targets actions and measures	
Key targets and actions	Measures
Corporate Priority 1. Provide value for money services that meet the needs of our residents and service users	
<p>Maintain the Vale's reputation for high quality services and low council tax</p> <p>Ensure delivery of the highest quality services and demonstrate VFM in all of our key services</p> <p>Agree and deliver a Business Process Improvement Programme</p> <p>Identify further joint working opportunities, principally with SODC, and deliver cashable efficiency savings</p> <p>Undertake reviews and bring forward proposals, in time for implementation in the 2010/11 budget, for a significant reduction in the costs of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tilsley Park ➤ Abingdon Guildhall ➤ Wantage Civic Hall ➤ Faringdon Corn Exchange 	<p>NI 179 Value for money – total net value of ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains (LAA)</p> <p>LPT – percentage of residents satisfied with the overall quality of council services</p> <p>LPT – Average sickness absence per employee per annum</p> <p>LPT – average time to pay an invoice</p>
Corporate Priority 2. Optimise access to our services	
<p>Agree a new / updated Customer Contact Strategy, which promotes moving customers to the web wherever possible, in time for implementation in the 2010/11 budget</p> <p>Deliver the Equality and Diversity Scheme Action Plan, including equality impact assessments</p>	<p>NI 140 Fair treatment by local services (LAA) (Place Survey)</p> <p>LPT – the % of payments made on line or electronically</p>
Corporate Priority 3. Improve communication about the council's activities and achievements	
<p>Use Vale Voice, our residents panel, to measure progress with our strategic objectives and priorities.</p> <p>Improve communication with our residents and customers so that the council can demonstrate that it provides high quality VFM services.</p> <p>Communicate effectively with staff to ensure that they are engaged with and motivated by the council's activities</p>	<p>NI 5 - Overall/general satisfaction with local area (LAA) (Place Survey)</p> <p>NI 4 - % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality (Place Survey)</p> <p>LPT – Times best council staff survey</p>

Strategic Objective : Rising to the challenge of climate change	
Targets actions and measures	
Key targets and actions	Measures
Corporate Priority 1. Minimise our impact on the causes of climate change	
<p>To reduce the carbon footprint arising directly or indirectly from the council's operations</p> <p>Implementing the Carbon Management Plan and achieving:</p> <p>1. A reduction in carbon emissions of 20% by March 2012 (<i>baseline 2007</i>)</p> <p>2. A 10% reduction in business mileage (council staff) by March 2010</p> <p>Investigate the purchase of renewable energy for Vale buildings in time for implementation in the 2010/11 budget</p> <p>Investigate the use of grey water schemes for Vale parks and gardens in time for implementation in the 2010/11 budget</p>	<p>NI 185 CO2 reduction from local authority operations (LAA)</p> <p>NI 186 Per Capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the LA area</p>
Corporate Priority 2. Respond to the effects of climate change, particularly flooding	
<p>Produce a Climate Change Adaptation Plan by 31.12.09 using the outcomes of the 'Profile of Climate Impacts' assessment</p> <p>Facilitate the creation of a Vale Flood Alliance of Local Community Flood Groups (as a self governing body)</p> <p>Deliver an agreed number of projects on 'ordinary water courses' (streams, brooks, ditches) which will reduce the impact of flooding</p>	<p>NI 188 Adapting to climate change (4 levels of performance)</p> <p>NI 37 Awareness of civil protection arrangements in the local area (<i>includes flooding</i>) (Place Survey)</p> <p>LPT – 100% take up of grants for capital schemes (flooding)</p>
Corporate Priority 3. Minimise the waste we produce and maximise recycling	
<p>Increase the percentage of household waste sent for recycling and composting</p> <p>Reduce the amount of waste produced per household</p>	<p>NI 192 Percentage of Household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (LAA)</p> <p>NI 191 Residual household waste per household (LAA)</p> <p>LPT – Consider including one measuring total waste arisings (this then gives the overall waste / recycling picture)</p>

Strategic Objective : Helping to maintain a safe Vale	
Targets actions and measures	
Key targets and actions	Measures
Corporate Priority 1. Help to maintain, or further reduce, low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour	
Develop and support a range of initiatives to reduce irresponsible drinking and behaviour	NI 20 Assault with less serious injury rate (LAA)
Continue to develop and support the Vale 'Nightsafe 'scheme, working with licensees to reduce town centre violence	NI 15 Serious violent crime rate NI 16 Serious acquisitive crime rate
Develop the young peoples targeted alcohol project to reduce alcohol abuse	NI 32 Repeat incidents of domestic violence (LAA) NI 30 Re-offending rate of prolific and priority offenders LPT - Alcohol test purchasing exercises – deliver an agreed number
Corporate Priority 2. Reduce the fear of crime and anti social behaviour	
Reduce the fear of crime by making sure that local people are aware that the Vale is a safe place to live	NI 21 Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police (LAA) (Place Survey)
Improve the partnership approach to crime reduction by further developing neighbourhood action groups	NI 17 Perceptions of anti-social behaviour (Place Survey)

Strategic Objective : Keeping the Vale a clean place to live	
Targets actions and measures	
Key targets and actions	Measures
Corporate Priority 1. Deal effectively with litter and detritus	
<p>Ensure that the Vale retains a clean environment</p> <p>Improve community satisfaction with the cleanliness of the district</p> <p>Improve co-ordination between relevant contractors and the county highways department to improve the quality of litter picking of principal roads and open spaces</p>	<p>NI 195 Improved street and environmental cleanliness (graffiti, litter, detritus and fly posting) (LAA) – also included in priority 2</p> <p>LPT – Satisfaction with street cleanliness (former BVPI 89). Vale Voice Survey</p>
Corporate Priority 2. Tackle ‘envirocrime’, such as fly tipping, dog fouling and graffiti	
<p>Improve the local environment by reducing fly tipping</p> <p>Take robust enforcement action to reduce the overall number of ‘envirocrimes’</p> <p>Designate ‘dog fouling action areas’ where a co-ordinated programme of publicity, community engagement and enforcement will be used to reduce the problem</p> <p>Develop a more robust response to graffiti in the Vale</p>	<p>NI 196 Improved street and environmental cleanliness (fly tipping) (LAA)</p> <p>NI 195 Improved street and environmental cleanliness (graffiti, litter, detritus and fly posting) (LAA) – also included in priority 1</p> <p>LPT – % of ‘Grot Spots’ cleaned up within the target number of days</p> <p>Designate four ‘dog fouling action areas’ for 2009/10</p>

Targets are to be agreed as part of the service planning process. Discussions to take place between Strategic Directors, Heads of Service and Portfolio Holders.

Appendix 1

Summary of National Indicator Targets

Future year's targets will be subject to annual review and will be included in an annual update to this plan.

Meeting people's need for housing

National Indicator		Target 2009-10	Target 2010-11	Target 2011-12
154	Net additional homes provided (LAA)			
155	Number of affordable homes delivered (LAA)			
156	156 Number of households living in temporary accommodation (LAA)			
181	Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims and change events			

Managing our business effectively

National Indicator		Target 2009-10	Target 2010-11	Target 2011-12
179	Value for money – total net value of ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains (LAA)			
140	Fair treatment by local services (LAA) (Place Survey)			
5	Overall/general satisfaction with local area (LAA) (Place Survey)			
4	% of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality (Place Survey)			

Rising to the challenge of climate change

National Indicator		Target 2009-10	Target 2010-11	Target 2011-12
185	CO2 reduction from local authority operations (LAA)			
186	Per Capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the LA area			
188	Adapting to climate change (four levels of performance)			
37	Awareness of civil protection arrangements in the local area (<i>includes flooding</i>) (Place Survey)			
192	Percentage of Household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (LAA)			
191	Residual household waste per household(LAA)			

Helping to maintain a safe Vale

National Indicator		Target 2009-10	Target 2010-11	Target 2011-12
20	Assault with less serious injury rate (LAA)			
15	Serious violent crime rate			
16	Serious acquisitive crime rate			
32	Repeat incidents of domestic violence (LAA)			
30	Re-offending rate of prolific and priority offenders			
21	Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police (LAA) (Place Survey)			
17	Perceptions of anti-social behaviour (Place Survey)			

Keeping the Vale a clean place to live

National Indicator		Target 2009-10	Target 2010-11	Target 2011-12
195	Improved street and environmental cleanliness (graffiti, litter, detritus and fly posting) (LAA)			
196	Improved street and environmental cleanliness (fly tipping) (LAA)			

National Indicators included in Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement – not linked to a corporate priority

NI 8 Adult participation in sport (established by survey)

NI 6 Participation in regular volunteering (LAA) (Place Survey)

Treasury Management Strategy 2009/10 – 2011/12

1. The treasury management service is an important part of the overall financial management of the Council's affairs. The prudential indicators that will be included in the budget proposal consider the affordability and impact of capital expenditure decisions, and set out the Council's overall capital framework. The treasury service considers the effective funding of these decisions. Together they form part of the process which ensures the Council meets balanced budget requirement under the Local Government Finance Act 1992. There are specific treasury prudential indicators included in this strategy which require approval.
2. The Council's treasury activities are strictly regulated by statutory requirements and a professional code of practice (the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management). This Council adopted the current Code of Practice on Treasury Management in March 2002. This adoption meets the requirements of the first of the treasury prudential indicators.
3. The policy requires an annual strategy to be reported to Council outlining the expected treasury activity for the forthcoming year. A key requirement of this report is to explain both the risks, and the management of the risks, associated with the treasury service. A further treasury report is produced after the year-end to report on actual activity for the year.
4. This strategy covers:
 - The Council's debt and investment projections;
 - The Council's estimates and limits on future debt levels;
 - The expected movement in interest rates;
 - The Council's borrowing and investment strategies;
 - Treasury performance indicators;
 - Specific limits on treasury activities;
 - Any local treasury issues.

Debt and Investment Projections 2009/10 – 2011/12

5. The Council has to detail its borrowing requirement, any maturing debt which will need to be re-financed, and the effect this will have on the treasury position over the next three years. This Council has no external debt and doesn't expect to borrow except temporarily for cash flow purposes. The table therefore only specifies the limits for any likely temporary borrowing and highlights the expected change in investment balances.

£m	2008/09 Revised	2009/10 Estimated	2010/11 Estimated	2011/12 Estimated
External Debt				
Operational boundary	£2 million	£2 million	£2 million	£2 million
Authorised limit	£5 million	£5 million	£5 million	£5 million
Limit at variable interest rates	nil	nil	nil	nil
Limit for maturity > 1 year	nil	nil	nil	nil
Investments				
Total Investments at 31 March	£15 m	£15 m	£15 m	£15 m

The following information has been provided by Butlers, the Council's investment advisers.

Expected Movement in Interest Rates

Annual Average %	Bank Rate	Money Rates	
		3 month	1 year
2008/09	3.9	5.0	5.3
2009/10	1.0	1.6	1.8
2010/11	1.7	2.1	2.8
2011/12	2.4	2.8	3.6

6. The UK economy has entered a profound recession, worsened by a dangerous combination of negative growth and dislocation in the domestic and world financial markets. The situation in the economy is considered critical by the policy setters who are concerned that the testing financial environment, the sharp decline in house prices and persistently tight credit conditions could trigger a collapse in consumer confidence. At best this could deliver a short, sharp downturn, at worst a prolonged Japanese-style recession.
7. The sharp downturn in world commodity, food and oil prices, the lack of domestic wage pressures and weak retail demand promises a very steep decline in inflation in the year ahead. In the recent pre-Budget Report, the Treasury suggested RPI inflation could fall to minus 2.25% by September 2009. Inflation considerations will not be a constraint upon Bank of England policy action. Indeed, the threat of deflation strengthens the case for more aggressive policy ease.
8. The Government's November pre-Budget Report did feature some fiscal relaxation but it also highlighted the very poor health of public sector finances. The size of the package is considered insufficient to kick-start the economy. The onus for economic stimulation will fall upon monetary policy and the Bank of England.
9. The Bank will continue to ease policy and the need to drive commercial interest rates, currently underpinned by the illiquidity of the money market, to much lower levels suggests the approach will be more aggressive than might otherwise have been the case. A Bank Rate below 1% now seems a distinct possibility and short-term LIBOR rates of below 2% may result. Only when the markets return to some semblance of normality will official rates be edged higher.
10. Long-term interest rates will be the victim of conflicting forces. The threat of deep global recession should drive bond yields to yet lower levels and this will be a favourable influence upon the sterling bond markets. But the prospect of exceptionally heavy gilt-edged issuance in the next three years (totalling in excess of £100bn per annum), as the Government seeks to finance its enormous deficit, could severely limit the downside potential for yields.

Investment Counterparty and Liquidity Framework

11. The primary principle governing the Council's investment criteria is the security of its investments, although the yield or return on the investment is also a key consideration. After this main principle the Council will ensure:
- It maintains a policy covering both the categories of investment types it will invest in, criteria for choosing investment counterparties with adequate security, and monitoring their security. This is set out in the Specified and Non-Specified investment sections below.
 - It has sufficient liquidity in its investments. For this purpose it will set out procedures for determining the maximum periods for which funds may prudently be committed. These procedures also apply to the Council's prudential indicators covering the maximum principal sums invested.
12. The Strategic Director will maintain a counterparty list in compliance with the following criteria and will revise the criteria and submit them to Council for approval as necessary. This criteria is separate to that which chooses Specified and Non-Specified investments as it selects which counterparties the Council will choose rather than defining what its investments are. The rating criteria use the **lowest common denominator** method of selecting counterparties and applying limits. This means that the application of the Council's minimum criteria will apply to the lowest available rating for any institution. For instance if an institution is rated by two agencies, one meets the Council's criteria, the other does not, the institution will fall outside the lending criteria.
- **Banks 1 – the Council will use banks which have at least the following Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's ratings (where rated):**
 - Short Term – F1 P-1 A-1 (Fitch/Moody/S&P)
 - Long Term – A- A3 A
 - Individual / Financial Strength – C(Fitch / Moody's only)
 - Support – 3 (Fitch only)
 - **Banks 2 – In addition, the Council will use banks** whose ratings fall below the criteria specified above if all of the following conditions are met (a) wholesale deposits in the bank are covered by a government guarantee; (b) the government providing the guarantee is rated "AAA" by all three major rating agencies (Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's); and (c) the Council's investments with the bank are limited to amounts and maturities within the terms of the stipulated guarantee.
 - **Bank Subsidiary and Treasury Operations – the Council will use these where the parent bank has the necessary ratings outlined above.**
 - **Building Societies – the Council will use Societies with assets in excess of £500 million.**
 - Money Market Funds – AAA
 - UK Government (including gilts and the DMADF)
 - Local Authorities, Parish Councils etc
 - Supranational institutions
13. The time limits for institutions on the Council's Counterparty List are as follows (these will cover both Specified and Non-Specified Investments):

Ratings short term/long term	Fitch	Moody's	Standard & Poor's	Money Limit	Time Limit
Upper Limit Category	F1+/AA-	P-1/Aa3	A-1+/AA-	£5m	3 yrs
Lower Limit Category	F1/A-	P-1/A3	A-1/A-	£5m	1 yr
Other Institution Limits	-	-	-	£5m	3 yrs
Guaranteed Organisations	-	-	-	£5m	various

(The Upper Limit category will include banks and building societies. The Lower Limit category will normally be used for unrated subsidiaries and unrated building societies. The Other Institution Limit will be for other local authorities, the DMADF, Money Market Funds and Gilt and Supranational investments. These are all considered high quality names – although not always rated – and therefore will likely have the same limit as the Upper Category. Guaranteed institutions will need to be restricted to the terms of the guarantee.)

In exceptional circumstances short term variations to these limits will be allowed, subject to the written authority of the Strategic Director.

14. The proposed criteria for Specified and Non-Specified investments are shown in Annex A1.
15. In the normal course of the council's cash flow operations it is expected that both Specified and Non-specified investments will be utilised for the control of liquidity as both categories allow for short term investments.
16. The use of longer term instruments (greater than one year from inception to repayment) will fall in the Non-specified investment category. These instruments will only be used where the Council's liquidity requirements are safeguarded. This will also be limited by the investment prudential indicator below.

Investment Strategy 2009/10 – 2011/12

17. Expectations on shorter-term interest rates, on which investment decisions are based, show a likelihood of the current 1.5% Bank Rate (at 15 Jan) reducing even further. The Council's investment decisions are based on comparisons between the rises priced into market rates against the Council's and advisers own forecasts.
18. There is a clear operational difficulty arising from the current banking crisis. Ideally investments would be invested longer for better returns, however doubts on counterparty creditworthiness suggests shorter dated investments would provide better security.
19. **The criteria for choosing counterparties set out above provide a sound approach to investment in "normal" market circumstances. Whilst Members are asked to approve this base criteria, under the exceptional current market conditions the Strategic Director will temporarily restrict further investment activity to those counterparties considered of higher credit quality than the minimum criteria approved. These restrictions will remain in place until the banking system returns to "normal" conditions. Similarly the time periods for investments will be restricted.**

20. Examples of these restrictions might include the greater use of the Debt Management Deposit Account Facility (DMADF – a Government body which accepts local authority deposits), Money Market Funds, guaranteed deposit facilities and strongly rated institutions offered support by the UK Government. The credit criteria has been amended to reflect these facilities.

Sensitivity to Interest Rate Movements

21. Future Council accounts will be required to disclose the impact of risks on the Council's treasury management activity. Whilst most of the risks facing the treasury management service are addressed elsewhere in this report (credit risk, liquidity risk, market risk, maturity profile risk), the impact of interest rate risk is discussed but not quantified. The table below highlights the estimated impact of a 1% increase/decrease in all interest rates to treasury management income for next year. Similar figures are expected to be shown for costs i.e. interest on borrowing but the Council has no debt.

Interest rate variance	2009/10 Estimated + 1%	2009/10 Estimated - 1%
Revenue Budget variance £ m		
Investment income	+ £0.301 m	- £0.300 m

Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and Limits on Activity

22. There are four further treasury prudential indicators. The purpose of these prudential indicators is to contain the activity of the treasury function within certain limits, thereby managing risk and reducing the impact of an adverse movement in interest rates. However if these are set to be too restrictive they will impair the opportunities to generate income. At this Council, with no debt, these indicators apply only to investments. They are:
- Upper limits on variable interest rate exposure – With the level of operation at this Council we have not felt the need to use period investments at variable interest rates. Currently an instant access bank deposit account is used for “overnight” investment. The interest rate is revised every week by the bank but we could move our funds at any time.
 - Upper limits on fixed interest rate exposure – Similar to the previous indicator this covers a maximum limit on fixed interest rates.
 - Maturity structures of borrowing – These gross limits are set to reduce the Council's exposure to large fixed rate sums falling due for refinancing. As previously stated this does not apply here.
 - Total principal funds invested for greater than 364 days – These limits are set to reduce the need for early sale of an investment, and are based on the availability of funds after each year-end.
- These limits, which include cash held by the fund Manager, are higher than the Council's actual total funds because cash received during the year is invested until it is paid over to the Government or to precepting bodies.

23. The Council is asked to approve the following prudential indicators:

£m	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Interest rate Exposures			
	Upper	Upper	Upper
Limits on fixed interest rates:			
• Debt only	nil	nil	nil
• Investments only	£50 m	£50 m	£50 m
Limits on variable interest rates			
• Debt only	nil	nil	nil
• Investments only	£10 m	£10 m	£10 m
Maturity Structure of fixed interest rate borrowing 2009/10 – not applicable			
Maximum principal sums invested > 364 days			
Principal sums invested > 364 days	£20 m	£20 m	£20 m

Performance Indicators

24. The Code of Practice on Treasury Management requires the Council to set performance indicators to assess the adequacy of the treasury function over the year. These are distinct historic indicators, as opposed to the prudential indicators, which are predominantly forward looking. Performance indicators that we use are:
- Investment returns above the 7 day LIBID rate (in-house and Fund Manager).
 - Investment returns compared to similar local authority funds (FM only). Target is to be in the top quartile.
 - Full investment of daily balances (in-house only).
 - Maintenance of a balanced portfolio.

The results of these indicators will be reported in the annual Treasury Management Report.

Treasury Management Practice (TMP) 1 (5) – Credit and Counterparty Risk Management

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now CLG) issued Investment Guidance on 12th March 2004, and this forms the structure of the Council's policy below. These guidelines do not apply to either trust funds or pension funds which are under a different regulatory regime.

The key intention of the Guidance is to maintain the current requirement for Councils to invest prudently, and that priority is given to security and liquidity before yield. In order to facilitate this objective the guidance requires this Council to have regard to the CIPFA publication Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes. This Council has adopted the Code and will apply its principles to all investment activity. This part, TMP 1(5), covering investment counterparty policy requires approval each year.

Annual Investment Strategy - The key requirements of both the Code and the investment guidance are to set an annual investment strategy, as part of its annual treasury strategy for the following year, covering the identification and approval of the following:

- The strategy guidelines for decision making on investments, particularly non-specified investments.
- The principles to be used to determine the maximum periods for which funds can be committed.
- Specified investments the Council will use. These are high security (i.e. high credit rating, although this is defined by the Council, and no guidelines are given), and high liquidity investments in sterling and with a maturity of no more than a year.
- Non-specified investments, clarifying the greater risk implications, identifying the general types of investment that may be used and a limit to the overall amount of various categories that can be held at any time.

This strategy is to be approved by full Council.

The investment policy proposed for the Council is:

Strategy Guidelines – The main strategy guidelines are contained in the body of the treasury strategy statement.

Specified Investments – These are sterling investments of not more than one-year maturity, (or those which could be for a longer period but where the Council has the right to be repaid within 12 months if it wishes) and not defined as capital expenditure (making an investment in a company). These are low risk assets where the possibility of loss of principal or investment income is small. These would include investments with:

1. The UK Government (such as the Debt Management Account deposit facility, UK Treasury Bills or a Gilt with less than one year to maturity).
2. Supranational bonds of less than one year's duration.
3. A local authority, parish council or community council.
4. Pooled investment vehicles (such as money market funds) that have been awarded a high credit rating by a credit rating agency.
5. A body that has been awarded a high credit rating by a credit rating agency (such as a bank or building society although non-rated subsidiaries and low or non-rated building societies will need to be non-specified investments.)
6. A body which has been provided with a government issued guarantee for wholesale deposits within specific timeframes. Where these guarantees are in place and the government has an AAA sovereign long term rating these institutions will be included within the Council's criteria temporarily until such time as the ratings improve or the guarantees are withdrawn. Monies will only be deposited within the timeframe of the guarantee.

For category 4 this covers pooled investment vehicles, such as money market funds, rated AAA by Standard and Poor's, Moody's or Fitch rating agencies.

For category 5 this covers bodies with a minimum rating of F1+ (or the equivalent) as rated by Fitch, Moody's, or Standard and Poor's rating agencies. Within these bodies, and in accordance with the Code, the Council has set additional criteria for the time and amount of monies which will be invested in any of these bodies. This criteria is 3 years and £5 million

Non-Specified Investments – Non-specified investments are any other type of investment (i.e. not defined as Specified above). The identification and rationale supporting the selection of these other investments and the maximum limits to be applied are set out below. Bonds and Gilt-edged securities are included for the benefit of the Council's Fund Manager. Non specified investments would include any sterling investments with:

	Non Specified Investment Category	Limit £ or %
a.	<p>Supranational Bonds greater than 1 year to maturity</p> <p>(a) Multilateral development bank bonds - These are bonds defined as an international financial institution having as one of its objects economic development, either generally or in any region of the world (e.g. European Investment Bank etc.).</p> <p>(b) A financial institution that is guaranteed by the United Kingdom Government (e.g. The Guaranteed Export Finance Company {GEFCO})</p> <p>The security of interest and principal on maturity is on a par with the Government and so very secure, and these bonds usually provide returns above equivalent gilt edged securities. However the value of the bond may rise or fall before maturity and losses may accrue if the bond is sold before maturity.</p>	Any one name up to 20% of the value of the fund.

b.	Gilt edged securities with a maturity of greater than one year. These are Government bonds and so provide the highest security of interest and the repayment of principal on maturity. Similar to category (a) above, the value of the bond may rise or fall before maturity and losses may accrue if the bond is sold before maturity. Average duration of investments for fund should not exceed 5 years.	Maximum proportion of fund invested for longer than 1 year not to exceed 60%
c.	Building societies not meeting the basic security requirements under the specified investments. The operation of some building societies does not require a credit rating, although in every other respect the security of the society would match similarly sized societies with ratings. The council may use such building societies which have a minimum asset size of £1 billion, restricted to 1 year, and minimum asset size of £500 million restricted to 6 months.	Each £3 million
d.	Any bank or building society that has a minimum long term credit rating of AA- or equivalent, for deposits with a maturity of greater than one year (including forward deals in excess of one year from inception to repayment).	Maximum limit of 50%
e.	Any non rated subsidiary of a credit rated institution included in the specified investment category. These institutions will be included as an investment category subject to a guarantee from the parent company, and a maximum period of investment of 6 months.	£3 million

The Monitoring of Investment Counterparties - The credit rating of counterparties will be monitored regularly. The Council receives credit rating information from Butlers on a daily basis, as and when ratings change, and counterparties are checked promptly. On occasion ratings may be downgraded when an investment has already been made. The criteria used are such that a minor downgrading should not affect the full receipt of the principal and interest. Any counterparty failing to meet the criteria will be removed from the list immediately and if required new counterparties which meet the criteria will be added to the list.

Use of External Fund Managers – It is the Council's policy to use an external fund manager for part of its investment portfolio. The fund manager will use both specified and non-specified investment categories, and is contractually committed to keep to the Council's investment strategy. The performance of each manager is reviewed quarterly