

Date: 26 March 2009

TO: All Members of the Executive
FOR ATTENDANCE

TO: All Other Members of the Council
FOR INFORMATION

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** to be held in the **GUILDHALL, ABINGDON** on **Friday, 3rd April, 2009** at **2.30 pm**.

Yours faithfully



Margaret Reed
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

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

A G E N D A

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

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

Open to the Public including the Press

Map and Vision

(Page 5)

A map showing the location of the venue for this meeting is attached.

The Council's Vision is to build and safeguard a fair, open and compassionate community.

STANDING ITEMS

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Minutes

To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 6 February 2009, (previously circulated).

3. Declarations of Interest

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

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

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

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

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

4. Urgent Business and Chair's Announcements

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

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

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

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

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

7. **Financial Monitoring**

(Pages 6 - 7)

Appended to the agenda is a schedule of requests for virements and permanent budget adjustments. Some of these have been approved under delegated authority by the Strategic Director; others require the Executive's approval.

Recommendation

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

KEY DECISIONS

None

OTHER MATTERS

8. **Community Grants**

(Pages 8 - 21)

To receive and consider report 183/08 of the Head of Corporate Strategy

9. **Options for a Shared Calendar and Email System**

(Pages 22 - 26)

To receive and consider report 184/08 of the Head of HR, IT & Customer Services.

10. **Housing Allocations Policy- implementation of sub-regional choice-based lettings scheme**

(Pages 27 - 31)

To receive and consider report 181/08 of the Head of Health and Housing.

11. **Revenue Budget Carry Forwards Requests 2008/09**

(Pages 32 – 36)

To receive and consider report 182 /08 of the Joint Head of Finance.

12. **Property Investment**

(Pages 37 - 39)

To receive and consider report 185/08 of the Strategic Director.

13. **Exception to Standing Orders for a Joint Housing Viability Study**

(Pages 40 - 41)

To receive and consider report 186/08 of the Head of Planning.

14. **Exclusion of the Public, including the press**

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

Item 14 – Appendices to Report 185/08 Property Investment

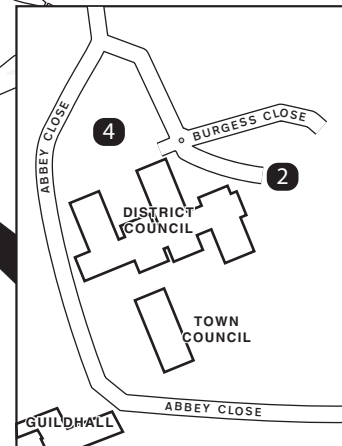
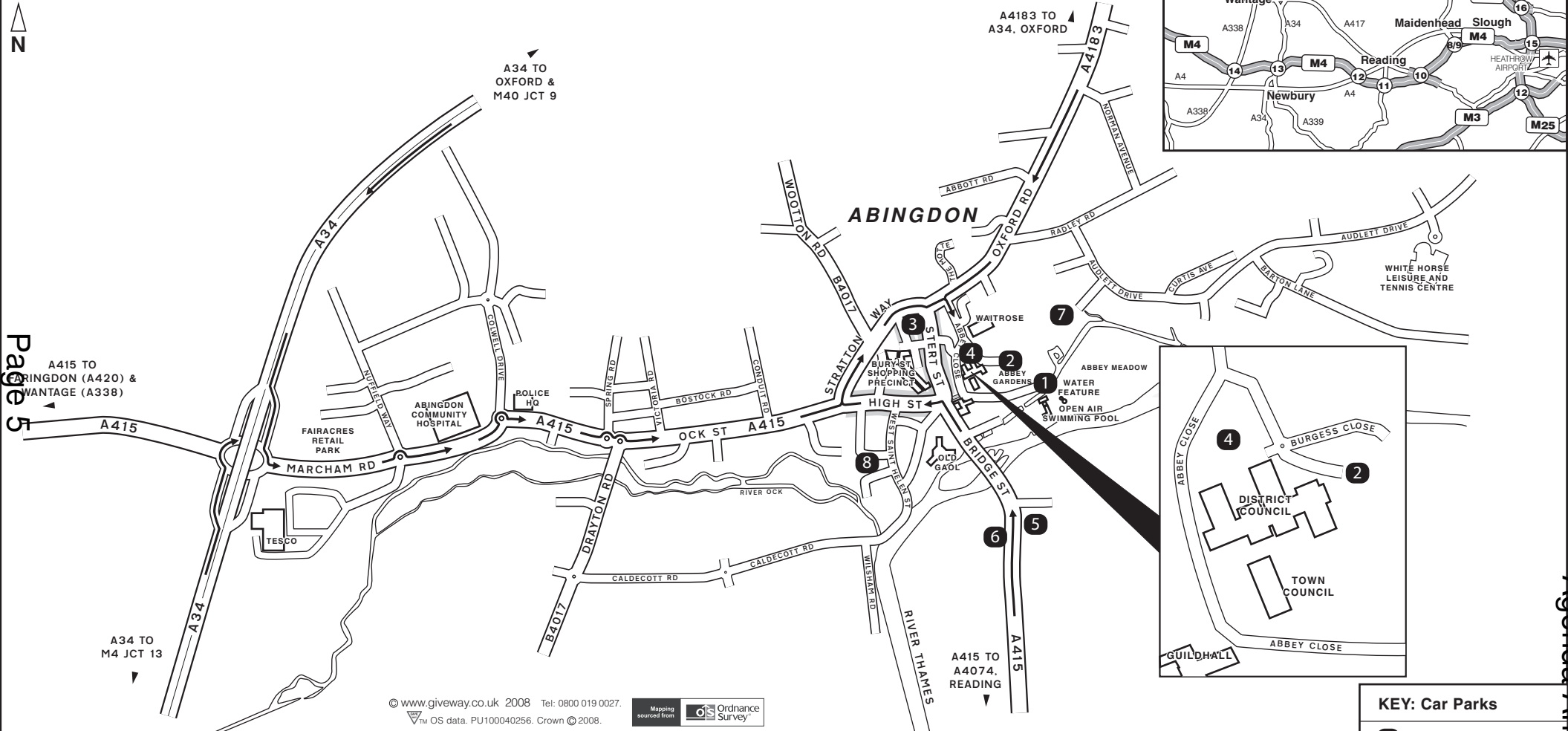
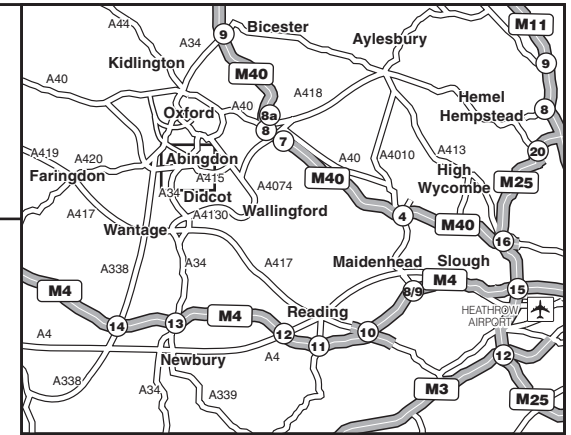
(category 3 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information))

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

15. **Property Investment**

(Pages 42 - 43)

The attached are the confidential appendices relating to report 185/08 which appears elsewhere on the agenda.



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Agenda Annex

© www.giveaway.co.uk 2008 Tel: 0800 019 0027. Mapping sourced from Ordnance Survey

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

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

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

KEY: Car Parks	
1	Abbey Close
2	Cattle Market
3	Charter Multi-storey
4	Civic
5	Rye Farm
6	Hales Meadow
7	Audlett Drive
8	West St Helen Street

Virement Requests for Executive Approval
(and requests approved under delegated powers for noting)

Key to Type

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

Budget Virements and Ledger Maintenance requests received at 17 March 2009

Date	Account From	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Account To	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Virement Total £	Virement Percentage	Reason	Type	Authorised by Director/ Deputy Director	Requires Executive Approval
Budget Virements												
04/01/2009	4427	CM31	Corporate Communications	4427	DC11	Development Control	32,600	40.0%	To move budget from the central advertising budget back to Development Control to cover statutory advertising of planning applications	5	Y	Y
04/01/2009	Various supplies & services	CD31	Health Development	1001/1003 /1005	SD01	Sports Development	1,150	46.5%	To provide funding for a health development related project run by Sports Development using underspends on a number of supplies & services budgets	4	Y	Y
15/01/2009	4506	BC01	Building Control	4505	BC01	Building Control	5,980	8.2%	To fund purchase of computer equipment required as part of the joint (with Planning) implementation of the IDOX electronic document management system by using unspent budget for hardware maintenance	1	Y	Y
16/01/2009	2201	CT11	Committee Management	7002	CT11	Committee Management	2,000	10.0%	To cover the cost of setting up meetings by the DSO using unspent budget for room hire	2	Y	Y
16/01/2009	2201	CT11	Committee Management	2201	CT31	Town & Parish Support	2,000	10.0%	To cover the cost of Town Council bookings of the Guildhall in accordance with the agreement - part reversal of virement agreed by Executive in February	3	Y	Y
05/02/2009	4400	HM21	Homelessness	4301	HM21	Homelessness	3,150	18.0%	To provide additional budget for the cost of removals for homeless people which is a statutory duty by using unspent budget for fees & hired services	1	Y	Y
05/02/2009	4400	HM11	Housing Register	4503	HM11	Housing Register	6,100	16.5%	To provide additional budget for unavoidable postage costs by using unspent budget for fees & hired services	1	Y	Y
05/02/2009	4400	HM11	Housing Register	4504	HM11	Housing Register	1,700	4.6%	To provide additional budget for the unavoidable telephone costs by using unspent budget for fees & hired services	1	Y	N
09/02/2009	4512	CH11	Organisational Change	4400	CH11	Organisational Change	18,000	7.0%	To cover the cost of implementing the new VoIP telephone system by using unspent budget for software purchase	5	Y	Y
11/02/2009	4512	DC11	Development Control	4504	DC11	Development Control	1,080	0.7%	To cover the cost of annual charge for monitoring of the mobile tracker phones by using unspent budget for software purchase	1	Y	N

Date	Account From	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Account To	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Virement Total £	Virement Percentage	Reason	Type	Authorised by Director/ Deputy Director	Requires Executive Approval
13/02/2009	4999	SB31	Contingency	9027	CL41	Recycling	50,000	n/a	To remove the Waste Performance Efficiency Grant income budget from Recycling. The grant was budgeted for separately but was included as part of the Revenue Support Grant and not ring fenced.	5	Y	Y
17/02/2009	5000	RS13	Audit	5000	SB11	Corporate Core	4,000	24.7%	Budget for shared cost of Risk Management Officer was initially set up in Audit and now moved to Corporate Core	4	Y	Y
26/02/2009	4400	RS51	Benefit Fraud	4401	RS51	Benefit Fraud	2,600	n/a	To provide budget to cover the cost of National Fraud Incentive external audit fees using underspend on external legal support	1	Y	N
03/03/2009	4504	CH11	Organisational Change	4000	CH11	Organisational Change	4,000	1.50%	To provide additional budget for purchase of equipment to be met from underspend on telephone costs	1	Y	N

Total Virements 134,360

Total Virements

Ledger Maintenance

12/02/2009	1012	PS31	Estates Management	1012	PS21	Facilities Management	4,310	4.9%	To move the budget for standby allowance to Facilities Management in line with expenditure	1	Y	N
12/02/2009	4999	SB31	Contingency	2701	Various		1,980	n/a	Budgets for the estimated cost of property insurance are held across various cost centres. This virement adjusts individual cost centres to match actual expenditure taking the balance from Contingency.	4	Y	N
12/02/2009	3009	Various		4999	SB31	Contingency	19,030	n/a	Budgets for the estimated cost of vehicle insurance are held across various cost centres. This virement adjusts individual cost centres to match actual expenditure putting the surplus into Contingency	5	Y	Y

Total Ledger Maintenance 25,320

Total Ledger Maintenance

Summary	
Total Type 1	28,920
Total Type 2	2,000
Total Type 3	2,000
Total Type 4	7,130
Total Type 5	119,630
Total	159,680

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY
TO EXECUTIVE
3 April 2009

Community Grants

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the budget position for the Executive Committee in respect of Community Grants and to invite Members to consider and determine the grant applications received. The Executive currently considers grant applications twice each year, usually in April and October.
- 1.2 The contact officer for this report is Lorna Edwards, Community Strategy Officer (Tel: 01235 547626).

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

- 2.1 This report supports the Council's Vision in that it supports building and safeguarding a fair, open and compassionate community. It does not conflict with any Council strategy or any Council policy.
- 2.2 Furthermore, the award of grants to community and voluntary sector groups helps to deliver actions set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy which aims to improve the quality of life for everyone in the Vale.

3.0 Recommendations

- (a) *that Members note that the Executive's budget for 2009/10 for Vale-wide grants is £21,714.00*
- (b) *that Members consider and determine the following grant applications:*
- (i) **Oxfordshire Association for the Blind, £5,000, towards running costs***
- (ii) **Oxfordshire Chinese Community and Advice Centre, £7,000, towards running costs and Chinese New Year celebrations***
- (iii) **Wantage Counselling Service, £1,800, towards running costs***
- (iv) **Ryder-Cheshire Volunteers, £2,000, towards running costs***
- (v) **Oxfordshire Rural Education Initiative, £2,000, towards cost of employing an Education Link Officer***

(vi) Vitalise, £2,716.50, towards the provision of care breaks

(c) that Members agree to the request from Area Committees to carry forward any unallocated grant budget from 2008/09

4.0 Community Grants

4.1 The budget position of the Executive for Vale-wide community grants in 2009/10 is shown below

Budget b/f 2008/09	Budget 2009/10	Total Budget 2009/10	Environmental Agenda Proportion	Social Agenda Proportion	Economic Agenda Proportion	Discretionary Proportion
£0	£21,714	£21,714	£7,599.90	£7,599.90	£4,342.80	£2,171.40

5.0 Applications

5.1 Applications for consideration under the Council's Community Grants Scheme have been received from the organisations listed below and there is a narrative providing additional details at Appendix A to the report. The total amount of grants requested is 20,516.50.

(i) Oxfordshire Association for the Blind, £5,000, towards running costs

(ii) Oxfordshire Chinese Community and Advice Centre, £7,000, towards running costs and Chinese New Year celebrations

(iii) Wantage Counselling Service, £1,800, towards running costs

(iv) Ryder-CheshireVolunteers, £2,000, towards running costs

(v) Oxfordshire Rural Education Initiative, £2,000, towards cost of employing an Education Link Officer

(vi) Vitalise, £2,716.50, towards the provision of care breaks

5.2 Members are asked to consider and determine the grant applications.

6.0 Unallocated grant budget

6.1 At the end of 2008/09 the Area Committees have unallocated grants budgets as indicated below:

North East Area Committee	£417.65
South East Area Committee	£0
Abingdon Area Committee	£1,764.72
West Area Committee	To be advised verbally

- 6.2 Those area committees with unallocated grants budget have resolved to request that these amounts be carried forward into 2009/10. The Executive is asked to agree their request.

TOBY WARREN
HEAD OF COMMUNITY STRATEGY

CLARE KINGSTON
HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY

Background Papers: Applications and supporting documents

i) Applicant: Oxfordshire Association for the Blind (OAB), based in Gordon Woodward Way, Oxford

Years in existence: Since 1877

Type of organisation: Registered charity. OAB is an entirely independent local (county) organisation – not affiliated to a larger organisation such as RNIB.

Project, service or event details: The applicant is seeking a grant towards the wide range of important services they provide to blind and partially sighted people in the Vale, and to increase the support for visually- impaired children.

OAB currently provides advice and information on all issues of concern to visually-impaired people and their carers. They demonstrate specialist equipment to enable people to maintain independence and provide regular information updates via a quarterly newsletter sent in large print or on audio tape. A printed Sight Information Guide is also produced and a website is regularly updated and maintained (www.oxeyes.org.uk). OAB is now working with the Parents Support Group, Social and Education Services and RNIB to set up activity days for visually-impaired children.

OAB works closely with all the other specialist groups for visually-impaired people which operate in the Vale and facilitates some activities of other organisations, such as the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, at their centre.

OAB conducted its own survey of needs in 2008 and the results showed that there is a very high demand for services to supplement those of the County Council.

Area of the Vale covered: Vale-wide

Estimate of number of people the project/service/event will benefit: 990

Charge to public for using the project/service/event?: All OAB services are free. Items of specialist equipment are available for sale. When a person is in financial hardship, OAB can often make an item available on loan.

Total estimated project cost: £21,675.00 excl VAT (VAT not payable)

Balances: £474,747 at 31/03/08

Running Costs: £219,849 for whole of Oxfordshire year ending 31/03/08

Own Contribution: £6,540.00 from fundraising activities

Grant Sought: £5,000

Previous Awards (Vale): 2008/09 £3,000.00 towards mobile resource centre and training courses.

Parish Council Support: OAB applied to all the town and parish councils in the Vale in summer 2008 and was awarded £1,075.00. They will apply to them all again in summer 2009.

Other Support: OAB has applied to the trusts listed below for its work in the whole of Oxfordshire in 2009/10, with the following outcomes:

Awarded:

CHK Trust (£5,000), Sobell Foundation (£10,000), Alchemy Foundation (£250.00), CP Lloyd (£100)

Outcome awaited:

Marshall Grant (£2,000), Opportunities for Volunteering, Central Government (£15,000)

Total awarded and being sought: £32,350.

The proportion of OAB service users in the Vale is 28% (990 people in the Vale, out of 3,470 in Oxfordshire). Therefore, approximately £9,060.00 of this amount is allocated to OAB's work in the Vale.

OAB has been awarded £5,000 by South Oxfordshire District Council and has applied to Cherwell District Council. It has made enquiries to Oxford City Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.

Officer recommendation (Toby Warren, Head of Community Strategy):

Recommend support	Yes
Amount recommended	Executive to determine
Reasons:	
Meets CG Scheme criteria	Yes
Supports Council priority(ies)	Cleaner, greener, safer & healthier community and environment
Supports Vale Sustainable Community Strategy action(s)	Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
Budget	£21,714
Remaining Committee meetings	1
Total amount recommended for other applications being considered	
Recommended conditions to grant award	Standard conditions
Other comments	

(ii) Applicant: Oxfordshire Chinese Community & Advice Centre (OCCAC), based in Princes Street, Oxford

Years in existence: 18 years

Type of organisation: Registered charity; the bilingual advice service carries the “Quality Mark” awarded by the Legal Services Commission and holds a certificate from the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner to assist clients with immigration advice.

Project, service or event details: OCCAC has a Service Level Agreement grant of £4,675 towards running costs. This provides stability of funding, which helps OCCAC to explore new funding opportunities and attract grants for additional services of benefit to residents throughout the Vale.

OCCAC had committed itself to raising £28,000 from the community in 2009/10 but in view of the current economic climate they have had to revise this figure downwards to £22,000 which they believe is their absolute limit. As a result, OCCAC believes that without additional financial support from local authorities, increased overhead costs will have to be met from efficiency savings in staffing costs and community services, which will lead to service reduction.

This application is for an additional grant towards:

(a) running the Chinese New Year celebration 2010 (**£2,000**)

The annual celebration is the most important celebration in the Chinese calendar and is attended by over 1,100 people. It promotes a multicultural flavour and cross cultural harmony. It is important that the celebration caters for the whole community and remains affordable for all, especially families from low income or vulnerable backgrounds. This event requires a total subsidy of £5,500.

(b) the running costs of the advice centre (**£5,000**)

13% of OCCAC’s clients are from the Vale district; with running costs of £140,000 p.a. 13% amounts to £18,200. The current SLA grant of £4,675 represents 3.3% of running costs.

Support for OCCAC’s bilingual advice service will benefit non-English speaking Chinese residents Vale-wide, helping them to gain equal access to services. As added value, Chinese residents in the Vale will also benefit from other services provided by OCCAC, such as adult computing and English language training; vocational training (basic hygiene, first aid, health & safety etc); weekly day care and luncheon services for elderly Chinese as well as cultural and community activities (e.g. Chinese New Year celebration).

Area of the Vale covered: Vale-wide

Estimate of number of people the project/service/event will benefit: 950

The Office for National Statistics estimated the Chinese resident population in mid-2005 as follows:

Oxfordshire: 6,600, Cherwell: 600, Oxford: 4,200, South Oxfordshire: 600,

Vale of White Horse: 900, West Oxfordshire: 300

Charge to public for using the project/service/event?: The bilingual advice service is provided free of charge to clients. A small charge is applied for the luncheon scheme (range from £2.50 - £3.50 for elderly) and community activities, such as the Chinese New Year festival celebration (£7 adults; £4

children and elderly). However, charges are kept at a minimum, and concessions apply, in order to promote affordable community activities, and to encourage participation from low-income families.

Total estimated project cost: £140,000 excl VAT (VAT not payable)

Balances: £30,750.74 unrestricted funds at 31.03.08

Running costs: £117,826.29 unrestricted funds year ending 31.03.08

Own Contribution: With the increase in premises and related expenses such as utility costs, OCCAC had committed itself to raising £28,000 a year from the community. However due to the current financial climate the maximum expected to be raised in 2008/09 is £22,000.

Grant Sought: £7,000

Previous Awards (Vale):

£4,675 in 2008/09 (SLA) plus £1,000 one-off
£4,675 in 2007/08 (SLA) plus £1,000 one-off
£4,675 in 2006/07 (SLA) plus £1,000 one-off
£5,500 in 2005/06 (SLA) plus £1,500 one-off
£5,500 in 2004/05 (SLA) plus £4,500 one-off
£5,500 in 2003/04

Parish Council Support: OCCAC applied to all town or parish councils in the Vale district for support in 2007/8 and did not receive any positive responses. OCCAC has been advised to write to all parish councils in the Vale for 2009/10.

Other Support: Oxford City Council has confirmed a grant of £44,664 p.a. for a 3-year partnership agreement (2008-2011) plus an additional £5,000 grant for advice work in 2009/10. Oxfordshire County Council has agreed a grant of £24,432 for advice work services throughout the county in 2009-2011. Has applied to Cherwell District Council for £15,000 partnership agreement over 3 years (outcome awaited). South Oxfordshire District Council has advised that it has no money for advice work; West Oxfordshire District Council has no budget and there are very few Chinese residents in the district.

OCCAC has applied to various district councils, charitable trusts and commercial organisations each year and has found it difficult to obtain support.

Officer recommendation (Toby Warren, Head of Community Strategy):

Recommend support	Yes
Amount recommended	Executive to determine
Reasons:	
Meets CG Scheme criteria	Yes
Supports Council priority(ies)	Cleaner, greener, safer & healthier community and environment

Supports Vale Sustainable Community Strategy action(s)	Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
Budget	£21,714
Remaining Committee meetings	1
Total amount recommended for other applications being considered	
Recommended conditions to grant award	Standard conditions.
Other comments	

(iii) Applicant: Wantage Counselling Service, based in Portway, Wantage

Years in existence: 24 Years

Type of organisation: Registered charity

Project, service or event details: The applicant is seeking a grant towards running costs of providing counselling for clients living within the Vale. The service provides all the necessary support – administration, office, counselling rooms, professional management, clinical supervision, etc, and out of pocket expenses for a team of some 20 fully-trained volunteer counsellors. The main style of counselling offered – psychodynamic counselling – deals with deep-seated problems which generally require some months of regular, weekly, one-hour sessions to be resolved. Local GPs and the Oxfordshire PCT value the Wantage Counselling Service as an additional service for patients in need of longer-term counselling than is currently available through the NHS.

Over the past eleven years over a thousand individuals and couples (about 600 from the Vale) have been seen. No person needing counselling is turned away for financial reasons. Due to the correlation with poor achievement in employment, a disproportionate number of clients pay less than the full fee. This application is for half of the resulting deficit attributable to low-income clients residing in the Vale. The remaining half will be found from trusts, fund-raising and individual gifts. Funding is sought annually from West Berkshire on a similar basis, namely according to the number of their residents using the service.

Area of the Vale covered: The service is provided for clients living within about 20 miles of Wantage, predominantly from the Vale (66% of clients) and West Berkshire (25% of clients).

Estimate of number of people the project/service/event will benefit: 72

Charge to public for using the project/service/event?: Clients with below average resources are allowed to pay less than the £33 cost per one-hour session on an agreed sliding scale based on net household income.

Total estimated project cost: £3,600.00 excl VAT for clients in the Vale (VAT is reclaimable); £57,700 for whole service.

Balances: Accounts being presented to AGM in March 2009. Information on balances to be advised after that.

Running costs: £3,600 for the number of clients in the Vale; £57,700 for running the whole service.

Own Contribution: Fundraising events and appeals raised nearly £1,000 in 2008.

Grant Sought: £1,800.00

Previous Awards (Vale) 2003/04 - £3,000, 2004/05 - £2,500, 2005/06 – £1,500, 2006/07 - £1,000, 2008/09- £1,500.00

Parish Council Support: Receive a regular grant from Wantage Town Council (£575.00 in 2008/09) Advised to apply to all Vale Parish/Town Councils in the Vale.

Parish Precept: Vale-wide

Other Support: Applying to SODC for £570 and to West Berkshire for £1,200 approx (dependent on number of residents using the service). They have also appealed to and received donations from a number of local charities, churches etc (£2,500 in 2007/08).

Officer recommendation (Toby Warren, Head of Community Strategy):

Recommend support	Yes
Amount recommended	Executive to determine
Reasons:	
Meets CG Scheme criteria	Yes
Supports Council priority(ies)	Cleaner, greener, safer & healthier community and environment
Supports Vale Sustainable Community Strategy action(s)	Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
Budget	£21,714
Remaining Committee meetings	1
Total amount recommended for other applications being considered	
Recommended conditions to grant award	Standard conditions
Other comments	

(iv) Applicant: Ryder-Cheshire Volunteers (RCV), based in Kenilworth, Warwickshire

Years in existence: RCV as an organisation – 1986. RCV in the Vale of White Horse - 1989

Type of organisation: Registered charity and company limited by guarantee.

Project, service or event details: RCV is seeking a grant towards the 2009/10 costs of providing opportunities for disabled Vale residents to take up leisure and learning interests of their own choice and which they would otherwise be unable to pursue.

RCV works with people with long-term physical disabilities caused by an illness such as MS, stroke or Parkinson's Disease or by a traumatic accident. It seeks to improve their well-being and overcome the depression and social exclusion which often accompany these conditions and cause further health problems.

RCV's aims are to improve quality of life, to reduce social isolation and to encourage integration into mainstream society. Local volunteers are recruited to help users on a one-to-one basis either at home or by taking them out. A number of users are helped to access existing facilities/clubs independently if they prefer. RCV does its utmost to make each person's choice achievable and to help them overcome the obstacles that stand in the way.

The learning process and subsequent achievement promotes a growth in confidence and self-esteem, which in turn can lead to a more positive outlook and to users becoming more active members of their local community.

The project was set up in response to requests from disabled people, their carers, social services and disability groups. It consistently runs at capacity and occasionally has a waiting list.

The project will be transferred to an independent but affiliated branch of RCV in 2009. The branch will be locally managed which is thought to be advantageous for fundraising.

Area of the Vale covered: Vale-wide

Estimate of number of people the project/service/event will benefit: 57

Charge to public for using the project/service/event?: Users are not charged for RCV's service but pay for the costs/fee of their individual activity.

Total estimated project cost: £21,475 excl VAT (VAT not payable)

Balances: £129,385 unrestricted funds at 31.03.08

Running Costs: £283,416 unrestricted funds at 31.03.09.

Own Contribution: Local fundraising events will be organised with the aim of raising funds of £1,000 at least.

Grant Sought: £2,000

Previous Awards (Vale): £1,000 awarded in 2008/09

Parish Council Support: In the Spring of 2008 applications were sent to every parish and town council in the district. Eight Parish Councils donated a total of £695 and Abingdon Town Council donated £150. Applications will be made again this year.

Other Support: Although it is not a statutory requirement, Oxfordshire Social Services make an annual contribution to RCV's work in the county via a service contract. The proportion for the Vale will be £8,554 in 2009/10.

A number of grant-making trusts give to RCV on a regular basis. Applications are made every Spring and it is estimated that the combined amount for 2009/10 will be £5,500.

Officer recommendation (Toby Warren, Head of Community Strategy):

Recommend support	Yes
Amount recommended	Executive to determine
Reasons:	
Meets CG Scheme criteria	Yes
Supports Council priority(ies)	Cleaner, greener, safer & healthier community and environment
Supports Vale Sustainable Community Strategy action(s)	Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
Budget	£21,714
Remaining Committee meetings	1
Total amount recommended for other applications being considered	
Recommended conditions to grant award	Standard conditions
Other comments	

(v) Applicant: Oxfordshire Rural Education Initiative (OREI), based at Millets Farm, Garford

Years in existence: 10 years

Type of organisation: Association, funds currently held by Northmoor Trust.

Project, service or event details: OREI is seeking a grant towards its ongoing work "Oxfordshire Kids on Farms", in particular towards the employment of an education link officer and the provision of support material. This officer assists in delivering a wide range of educational programmes for school children covering such issues as food production, countryside management and the environment, together with other skills set out in the national curriculum.

The project is managed by a voluntary steering group and it aims to ensure a substantial number of children have the opportunity to visit farms in the county during 2009.

The project links schools with farmers and food suppliers so that children gain an understanding of how their food is produced and subsequently are able to make informed choices in the journey their food takes from farm to plate. In providing this information OREI's aim is to promote an environmentally sustainable future for the countryside.

Area of the Vale covered: Vale-wide

Estimate of number of people the project/service/event will benefit: 400

Charge to public for using the project/service/event?: OREI charges £2.75 per child for a half-day visit.

Total estimated project cost: £10,750.00 incl VAT (VAT cannot be reclaimed)

Balances: £2,555.00 deficit at 31.03.08

Running Costs: £7,975.00 year ending 31.03.08

Own Contribution: Fees and charges £ 3,000.00

Grant Sought: **£2,000.00**

Previous Awards (Vale): 2008/09 £1,000.00; 2006/07 £1,000.00

Parish Council Support: Has contacted all town and parish councils in the Vale and has been awarded £50 by Blewbury Parish Council.

Other Support: Awarded £2,000 by Cherwell DC and West Oxfordshire District Council, £2,000 by Oxford Agricultural Trust, £500 by Drayton Farming, £1,000 by Central Farming Trust.

Officer recommendation (Toby Warren, Head of Community Strategy):

Recommend support	Yes
Amount recommended	Executive to determine
Reasons:	
Meets CG Scheme criteria	Yes
Supports Council priority(ies)	Cleaner, greener, safer & healthier community and environment
Supports Vale Sustainable Community Strategy action(s)	Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
Budget	£21,714
Remaining Committee meetings	1
Total amount recommended for other applications being considered	
Recommended conditions to grant award	Standard conditions
Other comments	OREI has no formal constitution,

	instead it has a "Vision Statement" which sets out its aims and objectives.
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(vi) Applicant: Vitalise, registered office in Kendal, Cumbria

Years in existence: 46 years

Type of organisation: Registered charity and company limited by guarantee

Project, service or event details: Vitalise is seeking a grant towards the cost of subsidising care breaks for disabled residents from the Vale and the weeks given by volunteers. The breaks are subsidised to ensure that they are accessible to those who really need them.

Vitalise provides high quality breaks for disabled people in five fully accessible centres throughout the country supported by fully-trained nursing and core staff. The breaks are based on individual need and ensure that carers have a rest from their vital care role. Disabled people benefit from the stimulation of a change of environment, increased access to the arts, sport and outdoor activities and social interaction. Carers benefit from a break from their vital care role.

To help guests and make their holiday experience more enjoyable Vitalise recruits volunteers. This experience gives volunteers the opportunity to enhance their future employment prospects by developing new skills or exploring career options.

The work of Vitalise is widely recognised by health professionals and local authorities as being vital to the success of care in the community, yet they receive no funding from central government.

Supports following Vale Community Strategy strands: Health & Wellbeing; Recreation, Culture & Leisure

Area of the Vale covered: Vale-wide

Estimate of number of people the project/service/event will benefit: 21. Last year 7 residents of the Vale enjoyed 12 weeks of planned breaks and another 14 residents gave 30 weeks of volunteering.

Charge to public for using the project/service/event?: Each guest pays a fee but Vitalise subsidises this with an average of £368 per guest per week; volunteer's expenses are covered at a cost of £215 per week.

Total estimated project cost: £10,866 incl VAT (based on demand last year). VAT is not reclaimable.

Balances: £10,509,000 unrestricted funds at 31.01.08. As Vitalise is a national charity, consolidated accounts only are produced.

Running costs: £9,634,000 unrestricted funds year ending at 31.01.08

Own Contribution: Balance of the subsidy to cover any fundraising

shortfall

Grant Sought: £2,716.50 (25% of the cost of the subsidies)

Previous Awards (Vale): £500 in 2008/09; £400 in 2006/07; £460 in 2005/06

Parish Council Support: None but applicant has been advised to contact all town and parish councils in the Vale.

Other Support: Vitalise operates an ongoing fundraising programme approaching individual trusts, local authorities, companies and individuals; they also operate a local and national events programme; occasionally they benefit from legacies.

Officer recommendation (Toby Warren, Head of Community Strategy):

Recommend support	Yes
Amount recommended	Executive to determine
Reasons:	
Meets CG Scheme criteria	Yes
Supports Council priority(ies)	Cleaner, greener, safer & healthier community and environment
Supports Vale Sustainable Community Strategy action(s)	Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
Budget	£21,714
Remaining Committee meetings	1
Total amount recommended for other applications being considered	
Recommended conditions to grant award	Standard conditions
Other comments	

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HR, IT AND CUSTOMER SERVICES
TO THE EXECUTIVE
3 APRIL 2009

Options for a Shared Calendar and Email System

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

1.1 This Council and South Oxfordshire District Council are currently operating different and incompatible calendar and email systems. The consequence is a great deal of duplication and wasted effort. This report examines the options for moving to a shared calendar/email system that will promote more efficient joint working, the costs to be shared equally by the two councils. The proposal has already been considered by the Joint Senior Management Board at its meeting of 11 March.

1.2 The contact officer for this report is Andrew Down, Head of HR, IT and Customer Services, telephone 01235 540372, email address andrew.down@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

2.0 Recommendations

- (a) *The Executive approves the adoption of Novell GroupWise as the Council's email system*
- (b) *In accordance with Contract Standing Order 2C(3) the Executive approves an exemption to the requirement to obtain competitive quotations or tenders*
- (c) *The Head of HR, IT and Customer Services in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to enter into a contract with Novell for the purchase of GroupWise until 31 March 2011 under Standing Order 2C(3), taking advantage of the favourable terms made available by joining South Oxfordshire District Council's existing contract*
- (d) *Officers to propose options for the optimum long term solution in time for April 2011.*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision

This report is aligned with the council's vision, specifically by contributing to the strategic objective of managing our business effectively.

4.0 Background

4.1 Although the mixed calendar / email environment does not prevent the reliable exchange of messages, it does mean that calendars and address books are not currently capable of being shared. Staff working across both councils are adopting a range of approaches to work around this difficulty:

- some are maintaining two sets of calendars

- some are relying on PAs to manage calendars and to act as a conduit for anyone seeking to know their whereabouts
- some are making printed copies of their calendars available to their team.

4.2 In all cases, calendars of staff who work at both authorities are either not visible to a large number of their colleagues, or complex and wasteful procedures are in place in order to make them visible. The scheduling of appointments is currently an extremely inefficient process.

4.3 Address books are not currently shared, which makes the addressing of email to colleagues at the other council a more laborious task and one which is prone to error.

4.4 An increasing and significant amount of unproductive time is currently being spent on diary management and email.

4.5 Moving to a common calendar / email system will enable Vale staff to be much more efficient in use of time, with seamless sharing of calendars and address lists. A shared calendar / email system could also be used as a common repository for documents which need to be available to staff at both councils.

5.0 Options

5.1 In order to obtain an independent appraisal of the options we commissioned a consultant, and after a competitive exercise we appointed NEC Philips to carry out the work for us.

5.2 NEC Philips ran workshops for non-technical staff at both councils and also conducted a survey, attracting a total of around 150 responses from each council. The workshops and survey results were used as the basis for devising 38 evaluation criteria under five broad headings:

- ease of implementation
- functionality
- application integration
- accessibility for remote and mobile users
- vendor specific criteria.

5.3 NEC Philips has produced a detailed report describing the methodology adopted and providing a comprehensive assessment of five different options. On 5 March their team presented the findings to a group of officers from both councils, including Steve Bishop, five heads of service, and several staff from the two IT teams. The five options were reduced to two which could feasibly be adopted now, and these were evaluated against the agreed tvecriteria.

5.4 OPTION 1 – MICROSOFT EXCHANGE / OUTLOOK

- 5.5 Exchange is the de facto industry standard and is a very low risk option. There is ample support available and Microsoft has a long-term development programme. Exchange is well able to meet the functional requirements of both councils.
- 5.6 Vale currently runs Microsoft Exchange, so a migration of both councils to Exchange would have less impact on Vale users than those from South. However, Vale's current Exchange system is based on the 2000 version of the software, which will reach the end of its supported life during 2010. Even if we do not move to a common system we will need to make a significant investment at Vale in order to carry out the necessary upgrade to remain supported.
- 5.7 Substantial technical work would be required even to move from the current Vale system to a new Exchange environment. For this reason, a migration to Exchange would require significant work at both councils. In effect, it is a completely new system even at Vale.
- 5.8 **OPTION 2 – NOVELL GROUPWISE**
- 5.9 GroupWise is less widely used than Exchange and has more risk attached. Technical support is available but there are fewer support partners to choose from. Novell is guaranteeing to continue support until 2015 but does not have a clear development programme beyond 2011. GroupWise is well able to meet the functional requirements of both councils.
- 5.10 South currently runs GroupWise and has an up-to-date installation. There would be no migration issues for South staff. Migrating Vale's Exchange users to GroupWise would mean following a less well trodden path than in the opposite direction, though this is by no means unprecedented.

6.0 Costs

- 6.1 NEC Philips has presented licence costs for the next two years, for which there is a very high level of certainty, and estimates of the number of days required to carry out the implementation. It is important to note that in addition to these licence and migration costs there will be some server hardware required.
- 6.2 In order to licence the products and to allow for software upgrades for two years, the costs for the two councils combined are as follows:

	Option 1: Microsoft Exchange 2007	Option 2: Novell GroupWise
Minimum software licence cost	£65,779	£26,660
Additional cost for two years' software upgrades	£28,671	£0
Total	£94,450	£26,660

- 6.3 South is one year into a three year licence with Novell which can be extended to include Vale for the remaining two years. It is important to note that the recommended shared solution has a two year life until the three year licence agreement expires at

the end of March 2011. Both councils will need to consider options and adopt a longer term solution from April 2011.

- 6.4 The implementation effort is estimated by NEC Philips as follows. As far as possible we will use our own staff to carry out the implementation although it will be necessary to use some expert advice particularly in designing the detailed technical infrastructure. We expect to require fewer days of expert contractor time than estimated here.

	Option 1: Microsoft Exchange 2007	Option 2: Novell GroupWise
Infrastructure implementation (mainly expert contractor days)	71 days	24 days
Mailbox migrations (mainly in-house resources)	56 days	24 days
Total	127 days	48 days

- 6.5 We currently estimate the hardware costs at around £10,000, though this is dependent on the final design of the system adopted. With either option we would envisage having one mail server at South and one at Vale, allowing for the continued use of both councils' own mail domains (southoxon.gov.uk and whitehorsedc.gov.uk).

- 6.6 Each council included a £50,000 growth bid within its 2009/10 budget. The efficiency benefits of a common email system will be realised equally by both councils and the costs will therefore be shared 50:50. The cost of the recommended solution is within budget.

7.0 Additional Implications

- 7.1 The costs described above apply to our use of calendar / email systems and do not include harmonisation of other elements of the IT infrastructure. During 2009 we will develop our plans for IT in line with the proposals which come forward for service delivery. Any increase in joint working may need to be accompanied by investment in shared technology in order to achieve the maximum efficiency benefit.

- 7.2 On calendars and email specifically, after two years from April 2011 it will be necessary to have considered possible options and implemented a longer term solution.

- 7.3 With either of the current options (Groupwise or Exchange) it will be possible to pay no more and continue to use the products from April 2011 as they are at that time, with no further upgrade possible. Eventually it will become necessary to make another substantial investment to bring the system back up to date.

- 7.4 Alternatively, again with either Groupwise or Exchange option, it will be possible to invest in continued support, maintenance and upgrades. Although it is impossible at this stage to know the costs, the team from NEC Philips was very confident that Microsoft would not at that time suddenly become cheaper than Novell.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Either of the two calendar / email options described here will be fit for purpose for both councils. The two systems are very similar in the way they work and the facilities they offer, and the transition from one to the other is easy for users to make.
- 8.2 Exchange offers the assurance of widespread deployment, but the cost to the councils of choosing this option would be high, in part because of the need to licence the product at both councils and in part because of the migration effort.
- 8.3 GroupWise has some particularly useful functions for viewing multiple calendars, scheduling meetings, and searching mailbox contents. It is a fully featured and richly functional system.
- 8.4 The council will in any event require a major upgrade to its email system by 2010. A move to GroupWise offers better value to the council than a solo migration to the current version of Exchange and Outlook.
- 8.5 I therefore recommend that we adopt GroupWise, which offers better value for money with an acceptable level of risk. The costs will be split between the two councils and can be met within the growth bids that were approved as part of budget setting for 2009/10. We plan to complete the migration by 30 September, and do not envisage that extensive training will be required as the basic processes of managing email and calendars will be familiar. It will be possible to use the training materials already available at South Oxfordshire.

ANDREW DOWN
HEAD OF HR, IT AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

Background Papers: Feasibility study by NEC Philips dated 24 February 2009

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HEALTH AND HOUSING
TO THE EXECUTIVE****3RD APRIL 2009****Housing Allocations Policy- Implementation of
Sub-regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme****1.0 Introduction and Report Summary**

- 1.1 The Government has a target for housing authorities to establish Choice Based Lettings (CBL) schemes by 2010. The Vale of White Horse District Council (the Vale) implemented its CBL scheme in September 2004. In 2008, Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council and South Oxfordshire District Council all implemented CBL schemes as a means of allocating social housing.
- 1.2 The Government has also actively encouraged authorities to set up sub-regional CBL schemes across their borders, and offered funding to local authorities to progress this initiative. Such a project has been ongoing in Oxfordshire since 2007, and will be completed in the summer of 2009.
- 1.3 As part of that project, the Councils concerned have agreed to harmonise their allocations policies to ensure a common basis for applicants who qualify for housing across the districts.
- 1.4 This report summarises the proposed changes to the Council's Allocations Policy in order to implement sub-regional CBL.
- 1.5 The report also describes the common operational principles to be adopted by the four authorities.
- 1.6 The contact officer for this report is Lyn Scaplehorn, Team Leader (Housing Advice), telephone (01235 520202 Ext 579), e-mail lyn.scaplehorn@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

2.0 Recommendations

- (a) *that the Executive recommend that the Council adopts the common Allocations Policy as a means of assessing applications for social housing;*
- (b) *that the Executive approve that 10% of all general needs housing be made available for sub-regional allocations, subject to the exclusions and principles described in this report; and*
- (c) *that the Executive approve that all nominations for sheltered and disabled housing be made available for sub-regional allocations subject to the exclusions and principles described in this report.*

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

- 3.1 This report relates to the Council's Corporate Plan and the strategic objective of meeting people's need for housing.
- 3.2 The report implements an agreed action of the Council's Housing Strategy.
- 3.3 The report proposes a new policy relating to the allocation of social housing through the Council's Choice Based Lettings scheme.
- 3.4 The report relates to the affordable housing strand of the Community Strategy.

4.0 Background and Supporting Information

- 4.1 In September 2006, the Oxfordshire Housing Partnership (OHP) agreed that a partnership of four Oxfordshire authorities, comprising Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council, submitted a bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for funding for Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings. This bid was successful.
- 4.2 This bid was promoted to the OHP by this Council since we saw the advantage to applicants that such a scheme would bring, namely to be able to access properties across the County, thus increasing choice, economic and social mobility.
- 4.3 A project group was set up by the OHP to undertake specific tasks and agree operational matters. A Project Manager was appointed and a Steering Group made up of senior management representative from each district, Registered Social Landlord representatives, and a member of the Supporting People team was established to oversee the project to completion.
- 4.4 As part of this project management role, a decision was taken by the Steering Group that a common Allocations Policy be agreed across the four participating authorities as a means of assessing priority for applicants.
- 4.5 The Executive will recall that the Vale amended its own Allocations Policy in 2008. This policy was drafted knowing that further changes would be implemented as part of sub-regional CBL. As such, the changes to the Vale's current Allocations Policy are minimal.
- 4.6 As well as a common Allocations Policy the Steering Group has reached agreement on other operational arrangements to better implement sub-regional CBL.
- 4.7 Finally, as well as agreeing partner issues, there are some aspects of Vale policy that are individual to the Vale, namely around the treatment of key workers. This report proposes a methodology to apply this aspect of the Vale's policy.

5.0 The Common Allocation Policy

- 5.1 A common Allocation Policy has been devised which all four Authorities will use in order to assess applications for housing in its district.

- 5.2 At present the Vale's scheme uses six Bands to determine housing need. Priority within the Band is determined by date of application and applicants with a local connection are prioritised above those without a local connection.
- 5.3 The common Allocations Policy will instead have five Bands, labelling each Band numerically (1-5) so as to distinguish it from all four existing schemes which label bands alphabetically.
- 5.4 Priority within the Bands will be determined by date of original application except for Band 1 where "effective date" (the date that they were placed in their most recent need category or band) will determine priority.
- 5.5 Each Band of the common Allocations Policy contains a number of categories of housing need. These categories were designed to reflect the "reasonable preference" categories of housing need contained within the 1996 Housing Act as required by law.
- 5.6 The Executive will note that reduction in the numbers of bands from 6 to 5 will result in potential alterations in applicant's priority. In practice, however, officers are confident that the banding priority for the overwhelming majority of applicants, and particularly those in high need, will not alter.
- 5.7 The Executive will also note that some additional categories of housing need have been incorporated to allow for the fact some of the partners still own their own housing stock, for example giving priority to releasing voids for maintenance works.
- 5.8 Finally, for those properties allocated to the sub-regional scheme, an applicant's local connection will be to the sub-region, so an applicant in the Vale will be deemed as also having a local connection to each of the three other districts and vice versa.

6.0 Sub-Regional Allocations

- 6.1 Each year, a percentage of general needs properties available to let will be made available for sub-regional lettings. This means that for *that* percentage of properties, applications can be made by applicants from all four partner Housing Registers.
- 6.2 In the first year of operation, this will be 10%; and the policy proposes that this amount can be varied each year by the Steering Group which oversees the operation of sub-regional lettings in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.
- 6.3 The remaining 90% of general needs properties will be made available to applicants who are on the Vale's Housing Register only.
- 6.4 The number of properties to be made available will be calculated using the previous three years' voids figures. Properties will be representative of size, type and location of voids during the previous 3 years. The manager responsible for allocations in each district will usually select properties.
- 6.5 Certain types of properties may be excluded from the sub-regional scheme dependant upon demand in this district. These are:
- properties with 4 or more bedrooms
 - properties in locations which very rarely become available

- 6.6 In addition, properties developed as part of rural exception sites that have specific local restrictions on allocations will also be excluded.
- 6.7 These exclusions are to either enable the districts to meet local demand for particularly scarce properties or to reflect the fact that restrictive allocations policies are enshrined in the planning permissions for the properties
- 6.8 In addition, all sheltered properties will be advertised through the sub-regional scheme, as will all disabled properties that have had substantial adaptations. However, all districts will be allowed to exclude such properties where there is a high local need for such a property.
- 6.9 General needs properties will be let on a reciprocal basis, i.e. the number of households moving into a district through sub-regional CBL will be equal to the number leaving that district.
- 6.10 Reciprocity will be closely monitored, both internally and by the Steering Group. If one Authority area re-housed a higher number of applicants than those leaving, it reserves the right to reduce the number of vacancies available for sub-regional bids.

7.0 Key Workers

- 7.1 Under the Vale's current Allocations Policy, key workers are placed in Band D. The Council aims to let 5% of all vacancies to Band D applicants so as to assist key workers. This methodology of assisting key workers is unique to the Vale.
- 7.2 Under the common Allocations Policy, there is no Band specifically for key workers.
- 7.3 However, under the proposed changes the Vale can continue to assist key workers by advert labelling specific properties advertised on CBL. This means that 5% of advertised vacancies would be advertised as being available to key workers only.

8.0 Risk assessment

- 8.1 The project has been partly financed by Government with capital and revenue contributions from the four councils. In addition, staff resources have been allocated to the project in service plans.
- 8.2 The project management methodology included a risk assessment covering non completion, finance and impact upon the partnership, and all risks were identified and mitigated to acceptable levels.
- 8.3 There is also a political risk of applicants finding the alterations confusing. Officers will manage this via a programme of intense communication with Members, applicants and key partner agencies.

9.0 Financial Implications

- 9.1 Funds have already been granted to cover both the capital costs and on-going revenue costs of implementation off the sub-regional scheme as described in this report.

PAUL STAINES
HEAD OF HEALTH AND HOUSING

Background Papers: Existing Allocations Policy
Draft Sub-Regional Allocations Policy

REPORT OF THE JOINT HEAD OF FINANCE, RIDGEWAY SSP
TO THE EXECUTIVE
3 APRIL 2009

Revenue Budget Carry Forward Requests 2008/09

1.0 Introduction and report summary

1.1 This report refers to a list of budgets requested to be carried forward from the 2008/09 revenue budget. The projected outturn position on the budget is for an overspend, consequently the carry forward requests made relate only to unspent grant allocations which would have to be returned if not spent and where there has been a late starting project which has meant that the profile of spend needs to be delayed.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 *That Members consider the revenue budget carry forward requests and approve the budgets to be carried forward from 2008/09 to 2009/10 (Total £62,245)*

3.0 Value for the Vale – Corporate Plan 2009-12

3.1 The recommendation meets the strategic objectives and corporate priorities as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2009-12 in that it maximizes the use of partnership funding and scarce resource to:

- provide value for money services that meet the needs of our residents and service users; and
- helping to maintain a safe Vale.

4.0 Revenue Budget Carry Forward Requests

4.1 Members are requested to approve the carry forward of 2008/09 revenue budgets to 2009/10 for the reasons identified in the table below.

4.2 Members will recall that restrictions on expenditure have been maintained since January 2009 because of projected budget pressures in the Revenue budget. These budget pressures have been mainly as a consequence of the downturn in economic circumstances leading to a reduction in income to the Council.

4.3 Twelve requests have been received to carry forward budget to next year. Of these, six are partnership grants awarded for specific projects. Unspent grant money would need to be returned and in a number of cases the grant money has been committed and is awaiting payment.

4.4 Two requests relate to the Chair of the Council's budget which follows the Civic Year to the end of May not the financial year and should therefore be carried forward.

- 4.5 One request seeks to top up funding identified in other budgets for a one-off purchase of expensive equipment for the Faringdon pool.
- 4.6 One relates to the repair of the boundary wall of Abbey Gardens caused by car damage. Officers are seeking to claim costs from the car driver but in the meantime urgent repairs are required.
- 4.7 Of the remaining two requests, one relates to an ongoing project and the second to an allocation of contingency in 2008/09 to meet the cost of a pension on a recently retired member of staff.
- 4.8 A small amount of unallocated community grant funding will also be requested to be carried forward but at the time of writing this report the amount is still unknown.

5.0 Revenue Budget Carry Forward Requests 2008/2009 to 2009/2010

Cost Centre Name	Agresso Cost Centre	Agresso Account	Amount of budget to transfer	Reason for carry forward requested
Contracts & Procurement				
Sport & Recreation Operations	SR21	2000	£5,000	There is an acute and identified need to replace the air handling unit at Faringdon swimming pool. This is likely to be approximately £80k. Other sources of funding have been identified to the value of £75k from existing leisure, property and carbon management budgets and an underspend on the repairs and maintenance budget in 2008/09 has been maintained to fund the remaining £5k. The existing unit has reached the end of its useful life and as a result is constantly breaking down. These breakdowns are causing disruptions to customers and an unfair burden of repair costs to our contractor
Sports Development	SD01	9102	£3,450	Partnership grant from Sport England. Equipment for 'no limits' project needed to be adapted for disabilities and as a result has delayed the start of this project. If the grant is not carried forward and spent then it must be returned.

GO Active	SD02	100*/2001/ 4400	£5,260	The first installment of partnership grant from PCT and Sport England has been received in 2008/09. Expenditure on the Go Active project didn't start until December 2008 and is an on-going three year project. It is necessary to carry forward the unspent budgets in order to complete the project commitments.
Parks & Open Spaces	PA41	2006	£2,500	During late 2008 damage to the boundary wall of Abbey Gardens was caused by a vehicle damage. £2,500 was set aside in the repairs and maintenance budget to cover the cost of the repair whilst action was taken to recover the cost through the driver's insurance. This is still ongoing and the repair could not be done until the weather was better. Therefore it is requested that this set aside money be carried forward.
Housing				
Community Safety	CS21	4706	£1,000	This funding is committed Area Based Grant. This allocation has been allocated to the purchase and installation of "tri-signs" - warning information signs to be installed around the District carrying messages against crime and disorder.
Community Safety	CS21	4706	£3,000	This funding is committed Area Based Grant. The carry forward is to contribute towards expenditure that will be incurred by Property Services (PS31 Estate Management) for repairs and maintenance works at the Charter in Abingdon. Part of these works is the erection of railing at the premises and it is this portion of the costs that will be funded through the grant. The works in total have been

				commissioned but are unlikely to be complete by year end.
Community Safety	CS21	4706	£2,745	This funding is committed Area Based Grant. Community Safety are acting as third party funders to support an application the WREN to cover the costs of renovation of a play area. The application to WREN could not be made until matched funding had been secured, hence delay in incurring grant expenditure.
Homelessness	HM21	4705	£3,690	An approved grant allocation to Berkshire Women's Aid has not yet been claimed and therefore needs to be carried forward.
Organisational Development & Support				
Organisational Change	CH11	4400	£11,890	Work on the DWP connection, compliant with Government Connect is on going, due for completion by end of September 2009
Strategy (SB)				
Unapportioned overheads	SB21	1301	£21,210	Pension past service costs. A budget was transferred from contingency to cover the full hidden cost of one early retirement. Only one year was required so the excess budget needs to be carried forward to meet next year's obligation whereupon the base budget will be amended in next year's budget setting process.
Strategy (CE)				
Civic Responsibilities	CE01	2201	£850	The Civic Year ends at the end of May which does not fit in with the financial year. An event is held at the end of each civic year with the money used to cover this being taken from the previous financial year's budget to avoid the new civic year budget from being affected. £1,000 is already being offered up as a saving from CE01 2201 in 2009/10. This allocation is for the hire of

				the room.
Civic Responsibilities	CE01	4600	£1,650	A carry forward requested from the Chair's allowance for the same reason as above.
TOTAL			£62,245	

ALICE BRANDER
CHIEF ACCOUNTANT

WILLIAM JACOBS
JOINT HEAD OF FINANCE

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR
TO THE EXECUTIVE
3 APRIL 2009

Property Investment Policy

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 The current Property Investment Policy was agreed in March 2004.
- 1.2 This report considers the policy on property investment and the current economic climate. It proposes a change to the policy and an addition to the capital programme.
- 1.3 The Contact Officers for this report are Steve Lawrence, Principal Accountant (Technical) (01235 540321) Stephen.lawrence@whitehorsedc.gov.uk and Andrew Morgan, Head of Property Services (01235 520202 ext. 542) andrew.morgan@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

2.0 Recommendation

to recommend to Council that:

- a) *the Property Investment Policy be amended so that the maximum percentage of the investment portfolio in property should be 80% of the total (a change from 75%) and the cash funds invested (i.e. not held for cash-flow purposes) should not fall below £5 million (from £10 million).*
- b) *A sum of £5.5 million be included in the capital programme for 2009-10 for the possible purchase of an investment property up to the value of £5.2 million plus costs, the actual purchase to be agreed by the Portfolio holder with responsibility for property.*

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

This report supports the Corporate Plan objective of managing our business effectively by optimising the use of the Council's assets. It complies with the Council's strategies for sound financial management and recommends a change in the policy on property investment.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 The Executive, various Committees, and full Council have considered the Council's Investment Strategy in 1999, 2001 and 2004 and agreed that the best way of maximising the return on the Council's investments, within the constraints local authorities operate under, was to hold some as cash reserves and some in property held purely for rent income and capital growth.

5.0 Current position

- 5.1 Attached in the confidential part of the agenda at Appendix A is a schedule of non-operational property held for investment. The value of properties held solely for investment was £37.8 million at 31 March 2008.
- 5.2 The Council had £11.7 million of capital receipts and £7.7 million in reserves and balances when the accounts were closed at 31 March 2008. This cash holding was split £17.3 million with a fund manager (Investec Asset Management) and £1.8 million held in-house invested short-term and used to ease cash flow. (The balance was tied up in other miscellaneous loans, the difference between debtors and creditors etc.)

6.0 The state of the property market

- 6.1 The current world economic climate and turmoil in the money markets has also affected values and yields on investment property. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) expects the commercial property market to see at least a 16% decline in capital values in 2009 and a further drop of up to 10 percent in 2010. In addition The RICS expects rents to fall by ten percent in 2009, four percent in 2010 and three percent in 2011.
- 6.2 Difficult trading and credit conditions mean that potential opportunities will be created with a number of forced disposals of investments, by a variety of organisations, looking increasingly likely. The key to their worth as an investment opportunity will be the quality of covenant which is offered. Unfortunately this is very difficult to assess with apparently sound businesses struggling.
- 6.3 There are currently good quality property investment opportunities available, to purchasers holding cash, at annual returns in the region of 6% and with the prospect of capital appreciation when the current downturn ends. By comparison the rates available for cash investments are between 1.5% and 2% depending on the period. So, even given the possible, declining, medium-term rates outlined in 6.1 above, these still represent a higher return than cash equivalents.

7.0 Current policy

- 7.1 It is difficult to say precisely how much of the Council's cash can be regarded as available for investment since all of it is on relatively short notice. If we regard the cash held in-house as adequate for cash-flow management, there is currently £15 million invested through the fund manager. Applying a 10% reduction to the Council's investment property holding would give a notional value at the year end of £34 million making a total of £49 million available. The investment in property currently represents 69% of this figure. These figures are always moving as values change but 80% in property (up from 75% under the present policy) would mean that £5.2 million of cash could be invested in property if the right opportunity came along. The Council's Financial Strategy is to move to a position where core services are funded from council tax and revenue income/government grants and developments can be funded from the income on investments. (Recommendation (q) of the budget proposal agreed 11 February 2004). This has proved very difficult to move towards given the pressure on the Council's finances.

8.0 Conclusion

8.1 The overall investment strategy of putting a significant proportion of funds available in property has been justified in terms of spreading risk and generating revenue income and capital appreciation. Attached in the confidential part of the agenda at Appendix B is a table showing the rents received from investment properties purchased since 2000 compared with the interest lost. The Council still needs to retain a cash fund for emergencies but experience has shown that £5 million would be sufficient. The downturn in the property market makes it a poor time to try to dispose of any property but could also mean that there may be opportunities to add to the property portfolio which could be accommodated in a revised policy up to a value of £5.2 million plus up to £300,000 costs. The new part of the policy would therefore become:

- the maximum percentage of the investment portfolio in property should be 80% of the total and the cash funds invested (i.e. not held for cash-flow purposes) should not fall below £5 million,

The other elements of the policy would remain as:

- in general, properties for investment will be from the categories retail, offices, industrial land and buildings, and,
- only property located in the U.K. will be considered.

8.2 Any proposal for the acquisition of a property would be developed by the Asset Management Group. The lack of any budget for property acquisition doesn't allow proposals to be considered at short notice and an offer made (subject to contract etc.) in the timescales necessary. It is therefore proposed that an amount of £5.5 million be included in the 2009-10 capital programme for the possible acquisition of an investment property up to the value of £5.2 million plus costs if a good opportunity arose.

STEPHEN LAWRENCE
PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTANT (TECHNICAL)

ANDREW MORGAN
HEAD OF PROPERTY SERVICES

STEVE BISHOP
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

Background Papers:
none

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING TO THE EXECUTIVE

3RD APRIL 2009

Exception to Standing Orders for a Joint Housing Viability Study

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

1.1 The Local Development Framework needs to be supported by a sound evidence base. As part of this process, officers have identified the need to commission a study of the viability of affordable housing in the Vale and South Oxfordshire. Officers propose to commission a study of housing viability jointly with South Oxfordshire District Council. An exception to the Council's Standing Orders is needed to enable the study to be procured effectively.

1.2 The contact officer for this report is Peter Williams, Principal Policy Officer (Planning), telephone (01235 520202 ext 502). **Email address** [**peter.williams@whitehorsedc.gov.uk**](mailto:peter.williams@whitehorsedc.gov.uk).

2.0 Recommendation

- (a) *that an exception to Contract Standing Orders be authorised under Standing Order 2C to commission a housing viability study jointly with South Oxfordshire District Council using the contract standing orders operated by SODC rather than the Vale's Contract Standing Orders, for the reasons outlined in the report.*
- (b) *Members are also recommended to delegate to the Head of Planning authority to enter into a contract for a Housing Viability Study jointly with South Oxfordshire District Council to support the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework.*

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

This report relates to the Council's Strategic Objective of meeting people's need for housing and the Corporate Priority of enabling affordable homes to be built in the district. The report does not conflict with any Council Strategies.

4.0 Justification for an Exception to Standing Orders

4.1 Information on the viability of affordable housing requirements is required by the government's Planning Policy Statement 3: 'Housing' to justify affordable housing policies in a Local Development Framework. Both this Council and South Oxfordshire District Council therefore need to commission a study to determine the viability of the proposed thresholds, percentages and tenure splits for affordable housing. Based on the costs incurred by other councils the joint contract is expected to cost in the region of £26,000.

4.2 Undertaking a joint study would save each council a substantial sum of money when compared to each doing their own study. For South Oxfordshire a study needs to be completed by the end of June whereas our requirement is for a completed study by the

end of July in order to meet committed deadlines for the Core Strategy submission in January 2010. It is imperative that the procurement process is undertaken as swiftly as possible. Members will recall that the recent joint Housing Needs Assessment was commissioned by this Council, so it is now the turn of South Oxfordshire District Council to take the lead on this study. In addition South Oxfordshire's procurement process for this type of contract is simpler and more efficient than this Council's. The contract will go through the procurement process at SODC and it would be an unnecessary duplication to require the study to be put through another public procurement process.

- 4.3 Standing Order 2C of the Council's Contract Standing Orders allows a specific contract to be approved by or on behalf of the Council without compliance with Standing Orders if there are special circumstances justifying an exception.
- 4.4 In respect of a specific contract, exceptions can be made if:- (a) the relevant Chief Officer has reported to the Council or Executive or the appropriate Committee the special circumstances justifying the exception and (b) at the appropriate meeting it has been resolved to approve the exception. The exception needs to be recorded in the minutes.
- 4.5 The special circumstances outlined above, including the fact that another public procurement process is being used, justify the exception to this Council's standing orders.
- 4.6 Members are therefore recommended to authorise an exception to Contract Standing Orders to allow the use of the procurement process operated by South Oxfordshire District Council rather than the Vale's Contract Standing Orders.
- 4.7 Members are also recommended to delegate to officers authority to enter into a contract for a Housing Viability Study jointly with South Oxfordshire District Council to support the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework.

ADRIAN DUFFIELD
Head of Planning

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