

**Committee:** Development Control Committee  
**Date:** 13 October 2003  
**Agenda Item No:** 6  
**Title:** POLICY PRIORITIES AND BUDGETS 2004/05  
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### **Summary**

- 1 This report outlines the Council's proposed approach to budget setting for 2004/05, within the context of the newly adopted Quality of Life Plan. It also contains early proposals for budget amendment and areas for further research following the meetings between the Leader of the Council, Chairman of Resources, Committee Chairmen, and appropriate officers, agreed at the meeting of the Resources Committee on 26 June and subsequently by Council in July.

### **Background**

- 2 The Council faces another challenging year on its General Fund Budget for 2004/05. The full projected position, at that time, was contained in the Financial and Policy Review report to Resources Committee on 26 June. That Committee agreed, for planning purposes, to continue with the previously set budget target of £7,253,960 as the District Council requirement, which would equate to a Council Tax rise of 7.5% at District level. This projection allowed for no uncommitted growth in services, and indeed required a modest saving of approximately £38,000 to balance the 2004/05 budget. As Members may be aware, a 1% increase in the Council Tax level raises approximately £30,000 in additional income for the Council at District level.
- 3 The budget scenario continues to evolve, based on external and internal factors, and many figures will change in the months ahead as estimates are refined and further external information is obtained.
- 4 The main development since the Resources Committee adopted an overall strategy has been the budget review meetings in August at Member and officer level and involving Chairmen of Committees. These discussions looked at papers submitted by Heads of Service that covered possible growth areas, service reduction possibilities, and charging strategies for income, all in the context of the Quality of Life Plan, the key themes of which are contained in Appendix 1. The dialogue was open and challenging, giving officers a full

opportunity to put across the implications of budget changes, the known views of customers, and their own professional views. The meetings involved substantial preparation and lengthy attendance by many staff. All General Fund revenue budgets were examined in some detail, including 'below the line' items such as interest on balances.

- 5 As a result of those meetings it is considered that the Council is now in a better position to turn its policy aspirations into budget priorities. This process will inevitably take time to complete, with the current year very much a transitional one, yet with substantial and early progress still being made. The full intended approach involves a 5-stage process:
  - Consideration of early ideas for budget review during the current cycle of meetings.
  - Items for further research to be brought back to Committees in the October/November cycle. An important element of the analysis of these items will be the preparation of risk assessments for any significant changes.
  - Consideration of base budgets, any growth bids, and full options for the review of fees and charges in the October cycle.
  - Presentation of full Service Plans to the January Committee cycle, showing how each service will use its proposed funding
  - A proposed 'zero-based budget' approach, with work starting early in the 2004/05 financial year for implementation in 2005/06. Zero-based budgeting is a technique which looks at every element of a budget from a nil (zero) starting point and seeks justification for each item.
- 6 The outcome of all these stages will be a 3-year plan showing the Council's priorities and funding approach in a full and detailed fashion which should be affordable and sustainable in accordance with the new statutory Prudential Code.
- 7 In addition to ideas to expand, reduce or amend specific services, several 'cross-cutting' themes were identified in the August meetings, and these are being looked at by officers prior to reporting back to Members. The areas involved are access to services, administrative support across the Council, and the idea of Trust status for various Council establishments. The emphasis of the first two of these themes will be on improving the way the Council works and interacts with the public, with the Trust status idea possibly bringing financial savings, depending on statutory limitations
- 8 Work on reviewing the Council's budget continues to dovetail with the activities being undertaken by the Interim Director, Strategic Development, and the further development of The Quality of Life Plan. In particular, there are Focus Groups planned around the District in early September, and the outcomes of these will feed into the budget process in the October/November cycle of committees.

## **The Budget Scenario For This Committee**

- 9 In previous years this current cycle of Committees would result in each service Committee being set a target 'cash limit' for the next financial year. This is not the approach being adopted this year, as the Quality of Life Plan adds a significant new dimension to the Council's service and financial planning and requires more detailed work to be undertaken.
- 10 Committees are asked at this stage to focus on 3 key themes included in Appendix 2:
- Any known variances on budgets for the current year
  - Budget review items discussed at the August meetings. Further information on these will be presented in the next Committee cycle
  - Any other views, messages, or priorities that they wish to make at this time.
- 11 Appendix 2 contains an overview of this Committee's budget for the current year, with any known or projected variations highlighted .It is relatively early in the financial year, making accurate projections difficult and unreliable, although significant variations are normally rare. A full budget monitoring report will be submitted to each Committee during the October/November cycle .
- 12 The budget review meetings held in August resulted in no specific proposals to change or review this Committee's budgets for 2004/2005, although members may have their own ideas on new or amended priorities and budget needs.

RECOMMENDED that this Committee

- 1 Notes any budget variances highlighted in Appendix 2.
- 2 Makes any comments about Council priorities and budgets as they affect this Committee and request officers to bring back information on them to your next meeting.

Background Papers: Guidance from Director of Resources on Budget Review meetings, Submissions from Heads of Service to Budget meetings, August 2003, Revenue Estimates Book 2003/04, and budgetary control reports for 2003/04. Contact Philip O'Dell, Financial Services Manager, telephone 01799-510670

Quality of Life Plan- Key Themes

Strong community leadership

More openness through public scrutiny

Improve access to services

Protect the environment and character of the district

Promote tourism and green leisure opportunities

Encourage low cost housing

Develop better opportunities for young people





**Committee:** Development Control Committee

**Date:** 13 October 2003

**Agenda Item No:** 7

**Title:** PLANNING AGREEMENTS

**Author:** Jacqui Harrison (01799 510420)

The following table sets out the current position regarding outstanding Section 106 Agreements:-

	<b>Planning Current Ref.</b>	<b>Approved by Committee</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Property</b>	<b>Position</b>
1.	UTT/0791/98/REN	7.12.98	Wickford Dev. Co Ltd	Emblems, Gt. Dunmow	No longer required, covered in recent Agreement.
2.	UTT/0443/98/OP UTT/1123/00/OP	18.3.02	Pelham Homes Ltd Croudace Ltd	Rochford Nurseries, Stansted/Birc hanger	Agreement being concluded.
3.	UTT/0816/00/OP	29.4.02	Countryside Properties Plc	Priors Green Takeley/Little Canfield	Agreement being concluded.
4.	UTT/0884/02/OP	22.7.02	Exors of D M Harris	83 High Street, Gt. Dunmow	Agreement being prepared by Essex C.C.
5.	UTT/0875/02/FUL	23/9/02	Granite Estates Ltd	Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden	Agreement being prepared by Essex C.C.
6.	UTT/1382/01/FUL	16/12/02	A Batchelor	Southgates Industrial Park, Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden	Agreement being prepared by Essex C.C.
7.	UTT/1247/02/FUL	24/02/03	M B Rich-Jones	Coach House High Street Stebbing	Negotiations continuing.
8.	UTT/0023/03/OP	07/04/03	Enodis Properties Ltd	Former Sugar Beet Works, Little Dunmow	Negotiations commenced.

9.	UTT/1042/02/OP	07/04/03	Countryside Properties plc	Takeley Nurseries	Negotiations being finalised.
10.	UTT/0518/02/OP	07/04/03	R & E McGowan	Laurels Yard, Takeley	Agreement being drafted
11.	UTT/1810/02/FUL	27/05/03	Welcome Break Group Ltd	Birchanger Green MSA	Agreement being finalised
12.	UTT/0595/03/OP	16/06/03	Ashdon PC & English Villages Housing Assoc	Guildhall Way, Ashdon	Negotiations commencing
13.	UTT/0811/02/OP	On appeal	Easton Properties	The Broadway, Church End, Great Dunmow	Agreement being finalised
14.	UTT/0511/03/OP	16/06/03	Mrs Gatsky	Hamilton Road, Little Canfield	Negotiations commencing
15.	UTT/0630/03/DFO	07/07/03	David Wilson Homes	Barkers Tank, Takeley	Agreement being finalised.
16.	UTT/0147/03/FUL JG/	07/07/03	Estuary Housing Association	Woodlands Park, Gt Dunmow	Agreement being finalised
17.	UTT1513/02/FUL JRM/	28/07/03	Norwich Union	Chesterford Park	Negotiations commencing
18.	UTT/0790/03/REN JGP/	26/08/03	Countryside Properties	Bell College, Saffron Walden	Negotiations commencing
19.	UTT/1002/03/OP KB/	26/08/03	Ms C Cox	The Homestead, Lt Canfield	Negotiations commencing
20.	UTT/1084/03/OP KB/	26/08/03	Mr & Mrs T Boswell	Hamilton Road, Lt Canfield	Negotiations commencing
21.	UTT/1020/03/FUL & UTT/1195/03/FUL JG/	26/08/03	Paul Watkinson	Felsted School	Negotiations commencing
22.	UTT/1340/03/FUL KH/	22/09/03	Coston Engineering	Bowers Lane, Hadstock	Awaiting instructions
23.	UTT/1315/03/FUL KB/	22/09/03	S M Smith	Hamilton Road, Lt Canfield	Awaiting instructions

Background Papers:

Planning Applications  
Files relating to each application

FOR INFORMATION