

Committee **Licensing**

Date **10 November 2004**

Agenda Item No: **8**

Title: **Service Plans, Budget and Council Priorities 2005/06**

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Summary

- 1 This report outlines the Committee's initial draft General Fund revised estimates of direct costs and income for 2004/05 and estimates for next year, 2005/06, prepared on the basis of existing approved levels of service. Also included in the report is the draft Service Plan of the Executive Manager (Corporate Governance) who manages the licensing function. The report also contains a full set of results from the Prioritisation Working Group set up by the Resources Committee to look at the contribution that services make to the Council's objectives. The Appendices to this report are as follows:

Appendix 1 Base Budget-Committee summary and detailed pages
Appendix 2 Draft Service Plan covering licensing
Appendix 3 Table of High/Medium and Low Priority Services
Appendix 4 Summary of staff briefing note on Prioritisation Exercise

Background

- 2 The Resources Committee meeting on 24 June 2004 targeted a council tax increase of no more than 5% per annum over each of the next four years, the timescale of the Council's Financial Strategy. In practice, due to both potential capping by central government, and the Council's own policy decisions, an increase of no more than 3% may be necessary for 2005/06. Based on existing budgets and anticipated government funding, this would necessitate budget reductions and/or increased income from charging for services totalling approximately £150,000. This figure assumes no provision for new spending pressures, including known increases in statutory costs. Although the overall position will not be clear until the Resources Committee meet in 18 November, it could be that the Council will need to make budget reductions and additional income in the £300,000-£500,000 range.
- 3 Resources Committee on 24 June also set up a joint Member and officer working group to consider the Council's priorities against the light of tightening financial constraints and Comprehensive Performance Assessment comments on prioritisation.

- 4 Executive Managers, in consultation with their staff, have now drafted Service Plans covering the period 2005-2008, including new spending pressures which will need to compete for scarce Council resources.
- 5 Co-ordinated external consultation is planned on the Council's budget, possible council tax levels, budget prioritisation exercise and the draft Corporate Plan.

Revised 2004/05 Budgets

- 6 The process of revising budgets undertaken in this cycle takes the place of more routine budgetary control reports, with the summarised position being:

	£	£	£
BASE ESTIMATE 2004/2005			10,280
<u>Less</u> Internal Charges			<u>80,900</u>
BASE DIRECT COSTS			-70,620
Transferred from Health and Housing Committee:- Administration Assistant (Part Year)			7,460
Adjusted Base Direct Costs			<u>-63,160</u>
Other Variations:-			
<u>Plus</u> Staffing (net)		4,970	
<u>Plus</u> Vet Fees (net)		350	
<u>Less</u> Taxi Drivers Fees (note 1)		-10,000	
<u>Less</u> Vehicle Transfer Fees (note 1)		<u>-5,000</u>	
Total Variation from Adjusted Base			<u>-9,680</u>
Revised Estimate 2004/2005 – Direct Costs			<u>-72,840</u>

Notes on the key variations:

1. Taxi Drivers and Vehicle Transfer Fees
Increased income due to volume of applications.

Draft Budgets 2005/06

- 7 The detailed budgets have been prepared at estimated outturn prices and therefore include provision for agreed future pay awards and other price increases. Prior to any further spending pressures being funded or savings proposals being approved by the Council, the detailed figures have been prepared at the existing approved levels of service. The summarised position for this Committee is as follows:

	£	£	£
BASE ESTIMATE 2004/2005			10,280
<u>Less</u> Internal Charges			<u>80,900</u>
BASE DIRECT COSTS			-70,620
Transferred from Health and Housing Committee:- Administration Assistant			10,100
Adjusted Base Direct Costs			-60,520
Inflation:-			
<u>Plus</u> Pay Award		1,910	
Other Variations - Expenditure:-			
<u>Plus</u> Staffing (net)	5,710		
<u>Plus</u> Vet Fees (net)	350		
<u>Less</u> Taxi Drivers Fees	-10,000		
<u>Less</u> Vehicle Transfer Fees	<u>-5,000</u>	-8940	
Total Variation from Adjusted Base			-7,030
Draft Estimate 2005/2006 – Direct Costs			-67,550

- 8 Internal charges will be added to committee budgets when they are re-presented in the January meeting cycle.

9 Service Plans and Spending Pressures

Appendix 2 contains the full draft Service Plan relating to this Committee's responsibilities. Service Plans have been prepared by Executive Managers, meaning that there is not a complete fit to the Council's committee structure. The Executive Manager (Corporate Governance) will highlight those parts of the Service Plan relevant to this Committee at the meeting. Service Plans will need to be reviewed based on decisions taken during the budget process and revised Service Plans will be brought back to this Committee in January 2005 for final agreement.

- 10 A summary of the spending pressures for this Committee is given below:

	Ongoing From 2005/06	one-off	capital
	£000	£000	£000
Licensing enforcement post and computer software	31	0	0

The cost of this post in 2005/06 will be offset by year one income of £30,000, although the income after the first year is expected to be only £15,000 per annum.

The Committee should also note that the draft Service Plan highlights the need for a trainee solicitor post working on licensing & gambling issues from the financial year 2006/07. The annual cost will be between £19,000 to £24,000 at current prices. This post is would be part of Legal Services and is therefore for the Resources Committee to consider, but will no doubt be of interest to Members of this Committee.

- 11 This Committee will be asked to consider whether it accepts that the spending pressures need to be met, either through new or re-directed resources, and to make proposals accordingly to the Resources Committee. The Resources Committee will need to consider these spending pressures in the light of the Council's overall financial position for the next financial year and beyond.
- 12 The Corporate Plan is currently being revised for presentation in draft to the full Council on 14 December. Any revenue budgets relevant to this Committee will be included in the overall budget position reported to the Resources Committee on 18 November, and will then be added to this Committee's budget in the next cycle of meetings if approved by the full Council.

Prioritisation Process

- 13 Paragraph 3 of this report reminded Members that the Resources Committee set up a Member/officer working group to look at prioritisation. This group has now met several times and have compiled an analysis of front line services based on their contribution to the nine themes in the Council's Quality of Life Corporate Plan. A summary of these themes is given below:

Providing strong community leadership and openness
 Protecting and enhancing the environment and character of the district
 Improving rural transport
 Encouraging appropriate economic development
 Improving the supply of good affordable homes
 Promoting tourism, culture and leisure opportunities
 Improving access to value for money services
 Improving community safety and the health of the population

Supporting lifelong learning and developing better opportunities for young people

- 14 The nine themes outlined in paragraph 13 relate to specific outcomes, and dovetail with the five themes of Excellence, People, Customers, Community and Communication, which provide a more internally focussed framework for improvement.
- 15 The outcome of the working group's activities is the prioritisation table, structured by High, Medium and Low contributions to the nine themes. The table, in alphabetical order within each category, is shown in Appendix 3.
- 16 Support services do not contribute directly to the themes contained within the Corporate Plan and because of this, and the need to focus resources on front line services, have been included in the Low category of the prioritisation exercise.
- 17 Members who attended the Council Away Day on 9 October will be aware that an exercise was undertaken there aimed at validating or checking the conclusions of the working group. Similarly, an exercise involving the Joint Management Team (JMT) of middle managers was worked through during September. The outcomes of all three exercises have now been compared and there is a consensus on most of the results. Where differences do exist it is felt that the working group's views should prevail, as they went through a much more detailed process and had considerable time and officer support in coming to their conclusions.
- 18 Resources Committee on 18 November will use the prioritisation process outcomes to steer the budget process for the next financial year and beyond. With a shortfall on the budget already identified, as explained in paragraph 2 of this report and many spending pressures being brought to committees, this is likely to involve Resources Committee setting savings and additional income targets to be considered by committees in the January committee cycle, based on officer proposals. To get the full benefit of the prioritisation process being undertaken, these targets will also need to consider the current cost and quality of services, and the Council's future aspirations for each service's cost and quality, based on the priority of each service. This information on current cost and quality is currently being compiled and will be brought to this committee in the January committee cycle to put any savings required from individual services into context.
- 19 It is important to point out that any savings targets or funded spending pressures proposed by the Resources Committee will be on an individual service basis, as this, rather than whole committee budgets, has been the basis of the prioritisation approach adopted. This means that, unlike previous years, committees will not have flexibility across services in how they make budget reductions, or how they spend additional resources.
- 20 A potential key implication of the prioritisation process is the effect on staff morale and motivation for those whose services are not shown as a High

priority. Concern over this has prompted the Chief Executive and the Executive Management Team to hold a briefing for staff across the Council, and to prepare a note for staff to receive detailed briefing from their Executive Manager. A summary of the briefing note is contained at Appendix 4. The key point being stressed to staff is that the placing of their service into the Medium or Low categories, rather than the high category, is no reflection on their individual abilities, commitment or efforts, but is a reflection of the Council's policy priorities and, at a time of limited resources, necessary financial strategy.

RECOMMENDED that this Committee

- 1 Approves and comments as appropriate on the revised 2004/05 budget and draft 2005/06 budget, and submits them to the Resources Committee
- 2 Approves and comments as appropriate to the Resources Committee on the elements of the draft Service Plan relating to this Committee's activities, and in particular the new spending pressures identified
- 3 Notes the prioritisation analysis contained in Appendix 3 and submits any comments on this to the Resources Committee

Background Papers: Base Budget Working Papers, Service Plan notes of guidance, Prioritisation meetings files, reports to Resources Committee on 24 June and 23 September 2004

APPENDIX 2
CORPORATE GOVERNANCE SERVICE PLAN 2005 – 2008

Service Departments:-	Services Provided :-	Challenges and opportunities:-
<p>Corporate Governance provides the following services to the Council:-</p> <p>1. Benefit Fraud</p>	<p>Investigates possible cases of fraudulent claims for housing and council tax benefit bringing prosecutions or applying other sanctions as appropriate. Prosecutions are handled in-house with counsel being used for crown court hearings.</p>	<p>Negotiations are currently in progress for the provision of this service in partnership with another authority. If this comes to fruition the maintenance of the level of subsidy will be challenging. If the discussions do not lead to a partnership then the department will need to be rebuilt following staff departures.</p>
<p>2. Democratic Services</p>	<p>Provides support for the Council and its Committees. The service prepares agendas, minutes and reports and follows up on actions. It undertakes Member support and training and is responsible for electoral registration and holding elections.</p>	<p>A formal review of the Council's democratic structure is currently being undertaken. Should the Council decide to move towards area committees there will be severe resource implications. County elections are to be held in 2005 and a general election will be held in 2005/6. There is also a proposed government project for a co-ordinated on-line register of electors.</p>
<p>3. Emergency Planning</p>	<p>Ensures that the Council is able to meet its statutory requirements to respond to emergency situations.</p>	<p>The Civil Contingency Bill is likely to become law in March 2005. The Council will be required to conduct a fundamental review of its emergency procedures and to carry out exercises in emergency response on a planned basis. The Council will also be required to carry out risk assessments to gauge the risk of an emergency occurring, the risk</p>

4. Internal Audit	This function is supplied in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council. The partnership carries out audits of internal services, gives audit related advice and consultancy and carries out forensic analysis of irregularity and fraud.	of an emergency requiring a sustained response and to have in place plans to ensure normal service delivery. There may be opportunities to expand the partnership to include other authorities to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Unplanned work and special inquiries can distract the service from its objectives.
5. Legal Services	Legal Services provide legal support for the Council, its Committees and its various services in the form of legal advice, representation in court proceedings, conveyancing and legal drafting.	Legal services is seeking to achieve Lexcel accreditation to demonstrate excellence in service delivery. If the partnership for benefit fraud becomes permanent there is a risk of losing that area of legal work at increased cost to the Council. Changes in legislation (referred to below) will provide challenges for the service.
6. Licensing	Currently administers private hire and hackney carriage licences, public entertainment licences and fulfills other licensing functions.	The Licensing Act 2003 becomes partially effective in February 2005 and is likely to be fully in force by November 2005. This will impose strains on the service and additional resources may be required to fulfill the statutory functions. Further proposed changes in legislation (relating to charitable collections and gambling) will impose additional strains. The expansion of Stansted Airport increases demand for private hire licences in particular.
7. Local Land Charges	Maintains the register of local land charges and processes searches and requests for information.	
8. Monitoring Officer	The Executive Manager	Regulations now permit an

	<p>Corporate Governance fulfills the statutory role of the Council's Monitoring Officer</p>	<p>Ethical Standards Officer appointed by the Standards Board to refer complains of breaches of the Councillor's Code of Conduct (both at district and town or parish level) to the Standards Committee. Further regulations to be laid shortly will permit reference of allegations to the Monitoring Officer for local investigation. Depending on the level of references this may have resource implications.</p>
<p>Key Aims and Objectives</p>	<p>The key aim is excellence. Our people have to be equipped to deliver it, our customers have to experience it, the community has to benefit from it and to achieve it we must communicate.</p> <p>All elements of Corporate Governance are committed to providing excellent services. Members of the teams are appropriately trained to enable them to fulfill their roles and to take on new tasks. Some services have primarily an internal client base (benefit fraud, democratic services, internal audit and legal services). Others are more outwardly focused (emergency planning, licensing and local land charges). The Monitoring Officer has both internal and external clients (Town and Parish Councils). In each case challenging locally adopted performance indicators ensure high quality service delivery and interaction with clients is seen as a key feature of service delivery. Internally focused services support client departments in providing community leadership.</p>	<p>Date</p>

<p>2005 to 2006</p>	<p>Outwardly focused services support the community by establishing emergency plans, regulating licenced activities and providing an efficient local land charge service to enable rapid progress of property transactions.</p> <p>All services communicate not only with each other but also with service users by way of regular meetings. Key objectives for the period 2005 – 2008 follow.</p> <p>Benefit fraud will either move forward in partnership or be re-established within the Council.</p> <p>Democratic Services will prepare for and administer the County Council Elections Democratic Services will assess the value of targeted canvassing.</p> <p>Emergency Planning will prepare for the implementation of the Civil Contingencies Bill to enable the Council to deliver its obligations once the Bill becomes law (expected March 2005)</p> <p>Internal audit will explore how the profile of audit related governance issues can be raised by adopting the features of an audit committee.</p> <p>Legal Services will demonstrate excellence in service delivery by preparing for Lexcel accreditation.</p> <p>Legal Services and Licensing will prepare for the implementation of the Licensing Act 2003 both during the transitional period and thereafter.</p>	<p>Continuing.</p> <p>May 2005</p> <p>December 2005</p> <p>March 2006</p> <p>March 2006</p> <p>October 2005</p> <p>February 2005/ November 2005</p>
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2006 to 2007	Local Land Charges will move towards full electronic search delivery.	June 2005
	The Monitoring Officer will ensure that arrangements are in place to enable local investigations of complaints.	When regulations are made and effective.
	Democratic Services will will prepare for and administer the General Election.	June 2006
	Emergency Planning will devise and test plans for business continuity in the event of a disaster.	March 2007
	Internal Audit will investigate the expansion of the Audit Partnership to include one or more other authorities.	March 2007
	Legal Services will achieve Lexcel accreditation	May 2006
	Legal Services and Licensing will prepare for the implementation of the Gambling Bill when the same becomes law	March 2007
2007 to 2008	Local Land Charges will endeavour to achieve 95% of standard local searches completed within 6 working days (national standard of 100% within 10 working days currently being met).	March 2007
	Democratic Services will prepare for and administer the UDC district, town and parish elections	May 2008
	Emergency planning will prepare and validate plans to deal with a mass evacuation	March 2008
	Internal audit will explore the	March 2008

	<p>viability of further expansion of the Audit Partnership</p> <p>Legal Services will prepare any legal agreements required in connection with the expansion of Stansted Airport.</p>	<p>March 2008</p>
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Appendix A : Current Staff Resources

Executive Manager Corporate Governance	Michael Perry
Benefit Fraud	
Investigating Officer	Paul Woolcott
Investigating Officer	Vacant
Administration Officer (Part time 25 hours)	Vacant
Democratic Services	
Democratic Services Manager	Mick Purkiss
Committee Officer (Part time 18.5 hours)	Maggie Cox
Committee Officer (Part time 30 hours)	Catherine Roberts
Committee Officer	Victoria Borges
Electoral Services Officer	Peter Snow
Committee and Electoral Services Assistant	Linda Bunting
Members Assistant	Jane Mackie
Emergency Planning	
Emergency Planning Officer	Sarah Baker
Internal Audit	
Audit Manager	Simon Martin
Internal Auditor	Glenn Bayford
Internal Auditor	Sheila Bronson
Internal Auditor	Jonathan Smith
Legal Services and Local Land Charges	
Solicitor (Non-contentious)	Catherine Nicholson
Solicitor (Litigation and Planning)	Christine Oliva
Local Land Charges/Legal Officer	Val Rogacs
Legal Assistant	Jo Hayden
Clerical/Junior Legal Assistant	Sarah Pawsey
Licensing	
Licensing Enforcement Officer	Murray Hardy
Licensing Officer	Amanda Turner
Administration Assistant (Part time 30 hours)	Joanne Jones

The Civil Contingency Bill will impose strains on the Emergency Planning Officer and it is likely that either an additional staff resource or outside consultancy assistance will need to be brought in to assist with business continuity planning. The estimated cost is £15000.

External support may also be necessary to comply with the District Auditor's report on the Council's risk management strategy. The estimated cost is again £15000, and will be funded by virement of existing budgets in the current year.

Legal Services will be stretched by the Licensing Act 2003 and (when it becomes law) the Gambling Act. An additional resource will to be required within the next three years to deal with these challenges. It is considered that a trainee solicitor would be able to

provide the additional support required. The estimated cost of a trainee solicitor would be £19200 - £24000

Licensing will be also be stretched by the above referred to Acts. Whilst current staff levels should be able to cope with administration of licensing there is no capacity for enforcement work. Further hackney carriage and private hire operators have indicated that they would prefer the Council to take a more proactive role in enforcement. There are insufficient resources to do this at present. Ideally the service should appoint an enforcement officer. The Licensing Act will generate an income for the Council but there are no figures available at present. It is also intended to explore whether the hackney and private hire trade would be prepared to contribute to the costs of enforcement by way of an increase in fees.

The Monitoring Officers role is unfunded. The Corporate Manger Human Resources is the Deputy Monitoring Officer. When allegations of a breach of the Code of Conduct are referred for local investigation resources will be required to enable the investigations to be carried out. The proposed post of Trainee Solicitor would provide support in this connection.

Appendix B: Annual Work Programme

- Benefit fraud will improve working relations with the Benefits Section by way of meetings, joint training exercises and giving feedback to improve upon referrals.
- Democratic Services will:-
 - Continue to service all council and committee meetings to timetable
 - Deliver development programmes for Members
 - Make diversion, tree preservation and street closure orders
 - Deal with ombudsman complaints
 - Maintain the Council's Data Protection Act registration
 - Maintain an accurate Register of Electors
 - Administer all elections held in the District
- Emergency Planning will:-
 - Prepare for the implementation of the Civil Contingencies Bill
 - Carry out a review of the Council's Emergency Procedures Manual
- Internal Audit will:-
 - Agree and complete audit plans and report back the findings
 - Raise the profile of audit related corporate governance issues
 - Encourage other authorities to consider joining the partnership
- Legal Services will:-
 - Train relevant staff on new legislation and procedures
 - Train Members and staff in licensing
 - Review project work to assess the impact on service delivery
 - Work towards Lexcel accreditation
- Licensing will:-
 - Continue to administer hackney carriage and private hire licenses and charity collections
 - Implement the Licensing Act 2003
- Local Land Charges will:-
 - Continue to deliver 100% of standard searches within 10 working days
 - Continue to deliver 90% of standard searches within 6 working days
 - Review and update service level agreements with client departments
 - Hold an open day for customers
 - Pursue NLIS level 3 search delivery
- The Monitoring Officer will support Members of the Standards Committee in dealing with local determinations and arrange for local investigations of allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct as required.

Appendix C: Hard to Reach Groups

Corporate Governance does not discriminate against any person in provision of services or recruitment on grounds of race, ethnic origin, disability, gender, gender orientation, religion, age or any other grounds.

The service will make reasonable adaptations where necessary to assist in the provision of services or recruitment of people with disabilities including (but not limited to) the provision of large print, Braille translations or tape-recorded document for those with visual impairment. Democratic Services offer to provide a signer for meetings for those who are deaf or have impaired hearing. Democratic Services also promote postal voting for those unable to attend polling stations and monitor polling stations to ensure they are suitable for use by those with disabilities.

When undertaking court proceedings where it is known that the other party has special needs Legal Services ensure that the court is aware of those needs and can make suitable provision for those needs to be met (e.g. transfer of cases to a court with wheelchair access).

Where the service becomes aware of dealing with a person whose first language is not English it will arrange for all correspondence and documents to be translated if required.

Appendix D: Risk Management

1. All of the teams are staffed to minimum levels. Absences (due to ill-health, holidays, pending filling a vacancy etc) can therefore severely impact upon service delivery. Many of the positions are specialist and backfilling can be difficult. Cross department working is being encouraged to try and combat this.
2. A computer malfunction at the time of an election would prejudice the service's ability to manage the election. Procedures are in place to enable an election to be run without the use of computers but delivery of other non-statutory services would be hindered during that period.
3. It is not possible to gauge the amount of work which will be generated by the Licensing Act 2003 between the first and second appointed days (the transitional period) and officers have no means of controlling the volume of work as the timing of applications is in the hands of the potential applicants. Short term additional resources may be required.

Categorisation based on contribution to the 9 Themes of the Quality of Life Plan

All headings are from the Council's Budget Book and are alphabetical within category

High Contributors	
	CIC's
	Community and Leisure Grants
	Development Control and Enforcement
	Homelessness
	Other General Fund Housing (Social Housing Enabling and Housing Advice)
	Planning Policy
	Public Relations
Tourism	
Medium Contributors	Assisted Travel
	Bridge End Gardens
	Building Control
	Car Parks
	Community Safety
	Community Wardens
	Conservation and Enhancement
	Day Centres
	Drugs
	Leisure Centres
	Licensing
	Local Amenities (Gardens and Open Spaces and Thaxted Guildhall)
	Museum
	Other Housing Grants (Springboard Home Improvement)
	Public Conveniences
	Public Health
	Recycling
	Refuse Collection
Renovation Grants	
Sports Development	
Street Cleansing	
Youth and Arts	
Low Contributors	Animal Warden
	Benefits and Anti-Fraud Admin
	Cemetery
	Central Services
	Contract Management
	Committee Administration
	Corporate Management
	Council Tax Collection
	Democratic Representation
	Depots
	Elections
	Emergency Planning
	Financial Services
Industrial Estate	

	Information Technology
	Land Charges
	Land Drainage
	Legal Services
	National Non-Domestic Rates
	Office Services- Saffron Walden and Dunmow
	Personnel Services
	Pest Control
	Planning Grants
	Septic Tanks
	Vehicle Management

Briefing Note for Staff on Budget Prioritisation Exercise

In June this year the Resources Committee set up a Member / officer working group to look at prioritisation of the Council's services in the light of:

- *A difficult budget position, with the threat of Central Government 'capping' of the Council Tax*
- *Comments in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) about lack of clarity on the Council's priorities*

*The working group used the Council's Corporate Plan as the basis of this exercise, awarding points to each service based on **its contribution to the 9 Quality of Life Themes** (character of the district, affordable homes, leisure opportunities etc). On this basis every service was identified as **High/Medium or Low priority**.*

*The exercise is therefore **not** about whether:*

- *A service is important for other reasons (eg it is statutory or earns income etc)*
- *Whether the staff are committed and are performing well*
- *Whether the service is currently of a good standard and is well received by the public*

It is about:

- *Where Members want the focus of the Council's efforts to be*
- *The need to put any new and limited resources into higher priority areas (proposals for new spending next year currently stand at several hundred £000s, yet this cannot be afforded)*
- *The need to reduce spending, if possible and over time, on lower priority areas*

The extent of any adjustments to current resources in a service will become more apparent as the Council's budget process unfolds in the months ahead. Members are unlikely to make unrealistic decisions about our ability to do this, and whilst none of us have a jobs guarantee, there is a general recognition that the Council's overall staffing numbers are not excessive. This could mean changes of roles for some staff, managed in a structured and supportive way, including training where necessary.

Support services were clearly more difficult to score regarding a direct contribution to the Quality of Life Themes, but must face their own fair share of any necessary change in the Council's resources. On this basis, they have been put in the Low contribution category.

EMT wish to stress that this necessary process is not a reflection on the excellent staff that work throughout the Council and are committed to working with any staff affected by the changes that may occur. Uttlesford is not alone in needing to go

through this process and at an operational level there should be no sense of reduced value or worth on the part of any staff based on the categorisation involved in the process. The Council's commitment to improved development and opportunities for staff mean that everyone will continue to be valued on an equal basis.

Prioritisation has, to an extent, always happened, but in a vague and poorly understood way. There have been budget freezes in the past, and a failure to invest in services. The process currently being undertaken makes it more open and explicit, which can of course hurt. It isn't however a reflection on individuals.

Once Resources Committee on 18th November see the overall budget scenario, targets for savings and /or increased income can be set (as they always are), but will be service, rather than committee specific.

EM's will work with staff to explain to Members the effect of any proposed reductions in budgets. Whilst Members will not move away from the principles of prioritisation, they will be interested in the potential effects, and will take on board views from within the Council and via the extensive external consultation being undertaken on the budget.

Alasdair Bovaird

22/10/04