

**Committee:** Resources Committee  
**Date:** 11 March 2004  
**Agenda Item No:** 4  
**Title:** INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL  
**Author:** John Dickson (01799) 510300

### **Summary**

- 1 In accordance with legislation, an Independent Remuneration Panel for Members Allowances was established and became operational from 1 October 2001. The Policy & Resources Committee agreed that the three Panel members should be each paid £250 for every annual review.
- 2 Since 2001 the work of the Panel has been monitored and the scope has increased significantly. Travel and subsistence, parish council allowances and probably most significantly pension arrangements have to be now investigated and reports produced. The Panel have recently written to the Council asking that Members attention is drawn to their greater responsibility.
- 3 Following a review of the Panel's workload and responsibilities and also through contacting other Essex authorities it is recommended that the annual review fee be increased to £500 as from 2004.

### **Background**

- 4 A report establishing the Independent Remuneration Panel was submitted to the Policy & Resources Committee on 19 June 2001 (Minute 43 refers). The estimated workload was only indicative as no other Panels had yet been formed and indeed the approved training from INLOGOV who had been involved in setting up some Panels was only undertaken during November 2001.
- 5 The indicative fee of £250 was simply based on approximately 10 hours involvement in each review. Three Reviews have now been completed and information from the Panel show that in every year their work-time has been significantly greater than ten hours. Indeed the Chairman of the Panel's average annual figure is over thirty hours. This involves meetings with Members and Officers, attending Committee meetings, Panel meetings and producing and submitting the Panel's report etc.
- 6 In addition the scope of the Remuneration Panel's workload has increased significantly. Travel and subsistence payments have now to be reviewed and monitored, parish council allowances investigated if requested and also pension arrangements for principal authority councillors. Members will recall that the Panel's report which was approved by Council on 16 December 2003 included a recommendation that the Panel investigate further the applicability of basic and

special responsibility allowances being treated as pensionable as part of the 2004 Review. This will involve meetings/questionnaires being sent to all Councillors. Also as the scheme has been in operation for three years and that eighteen new Councillors had been elected at the May 2003 election, the Panel decided to undertake a comprehensive review including Members' contributions to the process. This also would involve meetings and/or questionnaires although this would not be duplicated. The Panel plan to start their 2004 work during May/June this year. The target is for a full report to be presented, as usual, to the December 2004 Council meeting.

## **Conclusion**

- 7 Based on the Panel's work over the last three years and anticipated heavy workload this year, it is estimated that the Panel will be involved for considerably more than twenty hours per year. A fee of £500 therefore reflects more accurately the time and responsibilities involved in their role.

RECOMMENDED that Independent Remuneration Panel members be paid an allowance of £500 as from 2004/5.

Background Papers: None.

**Committee:** Resources Committee  
**Date:** 11 March 2004  
**Agenda Item No:** 5  
**Title:** E-Government Funding  
**Author:** John Mercer (01799) 510421

## **Summary**

- 1 This report advises the Committee that the Council is to receive IEG (Implementing Electronic Government) funding of £350,000 for e-Government related development in 2004/05. This is £150,000 more than was anticipated when preparing the 2004/05 Capital Programme. The report recommends that the additional funding is spent on accelerating the Council's progress towards the Government target of having all services available electronically by December 2005.

## **Background**

- 2 At its meeting on 3 February 2004 the Resources Committee approved a 2004/05 IT capital programme in the sum of £460,000, to be funded as follows:

a. IEG Funding	£200,000
b. Uttlesford Funding – General Fund	£230,000
c. Uttlesford Funding – HRA	£ 30,000

The figure for IEG funding was based upon the sum received in each of the two preceding years. In both years, the release of funding had followed the submission of an IEG statement to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). At the time of the meeting, the most recent IEG statement (IEG3), submitted in November 2003, had been approved by the ODPM. However, an announcement was still to be made regarding the amount of funding to be received.

- 3 The ODPM has subsequently announced that councils will receive £350,000 funding for e-Government in 2004/05, an increase of £150,000 on previous years. It also announced that councils would receive a further £150,000 in 2005/06. This change in the funding profile reflects the ODPM's wish to ensure that all councils meet the 2005 target and that local citizens receive the benefits of e-government.
- 4 The release of funding will be conditional upon councils providing evidence that they are making progress in specific priority areas. An ODPM consultation paper *Defining E-Government Priority Services & Transformation Outcomes in 2005 for Local Authorities in England* sets out the proposed priority areas and outcomes. The paper can be viewed on the [www.localgov.gov.uk](http://www.localgov.gov.uk) website. Once the list of priorities has been agreed, councils will be asked to report progress in future IEG returns (which will have to be completed in the autumn of 2004 and 2005). The ODPM will also ask councils to complete a baseline assessment of their position in relation to these priorities, when they make their claim for IEG funding at the beginning of the next financial year.
- 5 It is proposed to use the additional £150,000 funding to accelerate the Council's progress towards the target of having all services available electronically by December 2005 (Best Value Performance Indicator 157). Specifically, it is proposed to increase budgets in the following three areas:

<b>Project</b>	<b>Approved Programme £</b>	<b>Revised Programme £</b>	<b>Proposed Increase £</b>
E-Government (compliance with BVPI 157)	130,000	190,000	60,000
First Point of Contact Implementation (IT implications)	120,000	180,000	60,000
Intranet Developments (installation of a personnel system)	40,000	70,000	30,000
			<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> 150,000

- 6 Further information on how the additional funding would be spent is set out on the attached appendix. It should be noted that all three areas are classified within the national strategy as 'E-Government building blocks', and thus suitable areas for utilising IEG funding.

## **Conclusions**

- 7 A meeting of the E-Government Task Group is being arranged to consider this report in advance of this meeting. The views of the Task Group will reported verbally at this meeting.
- 8 The additional funding affords an opportunity for the Council to accelerate the E-Government programme and realise some of the potential benefits of e-government earlier than would otherwise have been possible. It is therefore RECOMMENDED that the revised project budgets, as set out in paragraph 5, be approved.

Background Papers:

Defining E-Government Priority Services & Transformation Outcomes in 2005 for Local Authorities in England  
IEG3 Statement

## **Appendix**

### **Proposals for spending the additional Government IEG funding**

#### **1. E-Government – compliance with BVPI157 – increase in budget of £60,000**

The funding would enable the e-Government programme to be accelerated, increasing the number of Council services available online by 31 March 2005 from an anticipated 85% to around 95%.

Temporary Project Worker (12 month contract) £25,000

- A additional post to add content & develop e-forms in all the 600+ transaction areas that need to be added to the Council website.

Additional development services & related hardware £35,000

- SMS (text messaging) based access to services.
- Automated telephone payments.
- Authentication & registration services.  
(using the Government Gateway – EOLP project)
- Further online application development – see note re areas still requiring development.

#### **2. First Point of Contact Review (IT implications) – Increase in budget of £60,000**

The funding would be used to accelerate the roll-out of the corporate document imaging & CRM (citizen relationship management) systems.

Additional implementation services £10,000

- To assist with server consolidation.
- Accelerated roll-out to departments.

Upgrades to infrastructure – replacement of slow network switches to cope with additional network traffic.

6 x 3Com 3300 switches £740 each 4,440

3 x 3Com 3300 (with fibre) £1,455 each 4,360

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8,800

Additional scanners

2 x Fujitsu 4340 scanners, Kofax 6501, warranties  
scan stations etc

£4,100 each 8,200

Implementation services - £1,000 per scanner 2,000

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10,200

Additional storage & back-up capacity 11,000

Reserve for 'back-scanning' existing filing systems 10,000

CRM System – additional integration & development services 10,000

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£60,000

#### **3. Intranet**

The additional budget would be spent on purchasing and installing a replacement personnel management system, to be integrated with the re-launched Intranet (already funded). It should be noted that this was the first-reserve project brought forward from the original IT Programme.

Cost of a replacement Personnel system, including software, hardware & installation services, £30,000

The system would provide improved functionality, including:

- Self-service options for devolving responsibility to managers and employees.
- Workflow (e.g. tracking & updating appraisals).
- Built in calculators for parental leave etc.

### **Note – Online Services requiring development**

The list of outstanding online developments includes a number of 'mandatory outcomes' contained within the consultation paper *Defining E-Government Priority Services & Transformation Outcomes in 2005 for Local Authorities in England*.

- The development, or purchase, of an online booking system for sports coaching courses, arts & cultural events, museum educational visits etc.
- Integration of the SX3 housing system with the website:-
  - Applications to join housing register.
  - Access to mutual exchange list for moves between council / housing association property.
  - Facility for tenants to report repairs.
  - Access to rent account information.
- Online discussion, feedback and complaint facilities:-
  - Public response to forthcoming decisions on matters of public interest (e-consultation).
  - 'quick vote' facilities using the public website for market research.
  - Maintained public web pages for every councillor.
  - E-enablement of councillor surgeries and home visits.
  - Public inspection of council performance on CPA and BVPI 157.
  - Complaints system, with built-in workflow.
- Shared community information databases, linked to the delivery of services via community portals and / or contact centres, to enable single point of access to a wide and comprehensive range of community information.
- Booking of Leisure Centre facilities (e.g. squash courts) including both direct and contracted-out operations.
- Online renewal of concessionary fare passes.
- Further development of other online services including licensing, trade waste, street care and cleansing etc.

- Online quick checker for housing benefit entitlement.
- Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Online access to the Council's Publication Scheme.

**Committee:** Resources  
**Date:** 11 March 2004  
**Agenda Item No:** 6  
**Title:** Treasury Management and Prudential Code  
**Author:** Nick Harris (01799) 510313

### **Summary**

- 1 There are a number of Treasury Management issues that require the attention of this Committee. These are listed below and are addressed in detail in the main body of the report.
  - Appointment of a Fund Manager
  - The Prudential Code – Treasury Management Indicators (and the Housing Revenue Account Capital Financing cost indicator)
  - Local Government Investments – Draft Guidance
  - Annual Investment Strategy for 2004-05

### **Background**

#### **APPOINTMENT OF A FUND MANAGER**

- 2 At its meeting in June 2002 this Committee resolved that the Council appoint a fund manager to manage a £5m tranche of the Council's cash balances and that advisors be appointed to assist the Council in the selection process. The process was delegated to the Director of Resources.
- 3 Butlers, the Council's treasury management advisors, were appointed to assist in the process and with Butler's assistance a shortlist of four managers was drawn up. Each manager was asked to prepare a written submission that included responses to a number of questions including details of current managed funds, risk management, investment strategies, performance data, fees and reporting arrangements. Additionally each manager was invited to make short presentation to the Director of Resources, Principal Accountant and a Butlers advisor.
- 4 Following the presentations and discussion with Butlers, a decision was made to appoint Standard Life to manage a £5m fund. It was considered that Standard Life offered the best prospect of improved investment returns compared with the current in-house arrangements but with relatively low volatility. The better performance should arise from the specialist expertise and research resource that is available to the fund manager, their ability to invest in Government Securities and Certificates of



Deposit and their ability to combine investments from a number of clients into larger sums that tend to be more attractive to counterparties.

- 5 Discussions with Standard Life about the start date, the range of investment instruments, average investment duration and reporting arrangements are progressing.

## **THE PRUDENTIAL CODE – TREASURY MANAGEMENT INDICATORS**

- 6 At its Extraordinary Meeting on 3 February this Committee considered and approved the majority of Prudential Indicators as required under the Prudential Code. However the Committee agreed that the Treasury Management indicators would be presented to this meeting.
- 7 CIPFA guidance stresses that it is vital not to place too much emphasis on numerical indicators with respect to treasury management in isolation from good practice processes. Its Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services recognises that in the public services the priority is to protect capital rather than maximize returns. It also acknowledges however that a balance has to be struck because the avoidance of all risk is neither appropriate nor possible. Local authorities should not pursue investment for gain as an activity in itself but the effective investment of legitimate surplus funds is a best practice approach to treasury management, which should be encouraged.
- 8 For these reasons the first prudential indicator for treasury management is not a numerical indicator but a statement of good practice.
- Adoption of The Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Sector. This Council adopted the code in March 2002.
- 9 Other Treasury Management Indicators require authorities to recognise the key implications of their borrowing and investment strategies. This has broadly three aspects:
- the exposure to the risk of interest rate changes
  - the exposure inherent in the maturity structure of borrowings
  - the risk associated with long-term investment.

### **Interest Rate Changes**

- 10 Since the Council has been debt free since 1996, a situation that is expected to continue for the next three years, the report on the Prudential Code presented to this Committee at its Extraordinary Meeting on 3 February recommended a nil Prudential Indicator in respect of Net External Borrowing and Capital Finance Requirements. Therefore for Uttlesford exposure to the risk of interest changes relates to its investment activities. Currently the majority of the Council's lending is at fixed rates for fixed durations – the minor exception being £250,000 held in an Abbey National account principally to provide necessary flexibility in day-to-day cash flow management. However as detailed above the Council has appointed Standard Life to manage a £5m tranche of the its cash balances which will increase the pressure on staff to ensure that sufficient cash balances are available at all

times and it may therefore be necessary to invest greater sums on a call basis which tend to be available at variable interest rates. As the arrangement with Standard Life beds down it may be necessary to revisit this limit in which case any change will require the approval of this Committee. It is proposed for this reason that an upper limit of -£2m is placed on net borrowings at variable rates as shown below.

2004-05	-£2m
2005-06	-£2m
2006-07	-£2m

- 11 The converse Indicator for net borrowings is an upper limit on borrowings at fixed rates. Since as detailed above the majority of the Council's lending will be at fixed rates (including the funds to be managed by Standard Life) it is proposed that the upper limit of - £25m be placed on net borrowings at fixed rates as shown below.

2004-05	-£25m
2005-06	-£25m
2006-07	-£25m

The figures are negative because the Council has no borrowings.

### **Maturity Structure of Borrowings**

- 12 As stated above it is anticipated that the Council will remain debt free over the next three years and no indicator is therefore required.

### **Long Term Investment**

- 13 The purpose of this indicator is to contain the Council's exposure to the possibility of losses arising from having to seek early redemption of an investment. Although ensuring sufficient cash is available to meet its day-to-day obligations is always the priority, on occasions the officers view on long term interest rates and the desirability of building in an element of stability in investment income has led to investment being undertaken for periods in excess of one year. Additionally, whilst the details regarding investment durations will be agreed with Standard Life it is likely that there will be a limit in excess of one year for the £5m fund that they have been appointed to manage. It is therefore proposed that the limits be placed on investments to final maturities beyond year end as follows:

2004-05	£10m
2005-06	£10m
2006-07	£10m

It should be stressed that these limits are maximums.

### **Capital Financing Cost Indicator**

- 14 At this Committee's meeting on 3 February 2004, various indicators were set in accordance with the requirements of the new Prudential Code. Other than the

indicators for Treasury Management that are addressed above, the only indicator that could not be set at that meeting was in respect of the Capital Financing cost indicator for the Housing Revenue Account, where further guidance was awaited from the Government. This has now been received and the indicator can be set. The indicator expresses capital financing costs to net revenue streams in percentage terms and is set individually for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. A rapid rise over time will indicate a larger proportion of resources being taken up for capital purposes at the expense of annual service provision. The General Fund Indicator has already been set, and the Housing Revenue Account indicator, based on the agreed Capital Programme can now be set as follows

2004-05	18.2%
2005-06	17.5%
2006-07	17.0%

The largest element of the capital financing costs for the Housing Revenue Account is the depreciation on dwellings figure, at almost £1.8m.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS – DRAFT GUIDANCE**

- 15 The regulations governing what investments a local authority can undertake - the Approved Investment Regulations (1990) - are being repealed on 1 April 2004 to be replaced by Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003. With effect from this date investments will be dealt with by guidance, not legislation. In December 2003 the Government issued draft guidance for consultation. The consultation period ended on 30 January and final guidance is expected this month, which gives little time for authorities to have a complete strategy in place; this element of the report is written on the understanding that the final guidance will not materially differ from the draft although there are a number of issues that require clarification. The following is a summary of the guidance as it currently stands:

### **Annual Investment Strategy**

- 16 There is also a requirement in the CIPFA Treasury Management Code for authorities to produce an annual investment strategy and an annual report on it. The guidance supplements this with the requirement to cover:

Specified Investments  
 Non- specified Investments  
 Liquidity of Investments

These terms are examined in further detail below:

#### Specified Investments

- 17 This identifies investments that offer high security and high liquidity. Authorities will be able to use these with minimal procedural formalities. These instruments must be sterling denominated and have a maturity of less than one year and if made with a body corporate this body must have been awarded a high credit rating by a credit

rating agency. The Annual Investment Strategy must state how a high credit rating is to be defined, how frequently ratings are to be monitored and what action is to be taken when ratings change.

#### Non-Specified Investments

- 18 All other security types fall into this category, which appears to be a very wide definition and includes the use of derivative instruments. The Annual Investment Strategy must set out the procedures for determining which categories may prudently be used, which categories have been so identified and the maximum amounts that may be held in each category at any time during the financial year.

#### Liquidity of Investments

- 19 The Annual Investment Strategy must set out procedures for determining the maximum periods for which funds may prudently committed and the minimum amount which is to be held during the financial year in investments other than long-term investments.

### **ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2004-05**

- 20 The Council has customarily considered an annual strategy statement but the adoption of the Treasury Management Code of Practice and the imminent Government guidance outline above place new requirements on the Council. Additionally the advent of the 2003 Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities requires certain decisions to be made on treasury management matters. The suggested strategy for 2004-05 covers the following:

- Treasury Limits
- The current treasury position
- Prospects for interest rates
- Specified Investments.
- Non Specified Investments
- Liquidity of Investments

#### Treasury Limits

- 21 It is a statutory duty under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003 for the Council to determine and keep under review how much it can afford to borrow. The amount so determined is the "Affordable Borrowing Limit". The Council must have regard to the Prudential Code when setting its limit for the next three years. In the report to the meeting of this Committee on 3 February it was resolved that since it was expected that the Council's debt free status would remain for 2004-05 to 2006-07, the related Prudential Indicators would be nil. It follows therefore that the "Affordable Borrowing Limit" should also be set at nil.

#### The Current Treasury Position

- 22 The Council currently has £23.75 million invested principally in UK Building Societies and UK registered banks. All of these institutions meet the Council's lending criteria approved by the Policy and Resources Committee in January 2001.

## Prospects for Interest Rates

- 23 As part of its arrangement with the Council for treasury management advisory services Butlers provide regular commentaries on the future movements in interest rates. Their view is that the Bank of England's Base Rate (currently 4%) will continue its upward trend in 2004 but will peak at 4.5% by September 2004. The reason for this forecast is largely that revisions to previously published GDP (Gross Domestic Product – a measure of economic activity) revealed an economy that was growing faster than previously thought with the inevitable inflationary pressures that such growth will bring. Concerns about the effects of house price inflation and fears about a price crash similar to that in the early 1990s is also a factor. Nevertheless Butlers believe that the Bank will want to avoid sharp rises in the base rate for fear of precipitating a recession due to massive cutbacks in consumers' expenditure.

## Specified Investments

- 24 As noted above the Strategy must state how a high credit rating is to be defined, how frequently ratings are to be monitored and what action is to be taken when ratings change. Currently the Council's approved lending criteria allow it to lend to banks that have been awarded ratings by Fitch as follows:

Short Term	F1+ or F1
Long Term	A+ or better
Individual Rating	B/C or better
Support Rating	3

To qualify as Specified the investment must be made with an institution having a "high" credit rating although "high" is not precisely defined in the guidance. Since the guidance also states that the Specified Investments must have a maturity of less than one year it makes sense that the Short Term Rating should form the mainstay of the criteria and it is proposed that in order to be described as a Specified an investment must be made with an institution carrying a Short Term Rating of F1 or F1+.

- 25 With regard to monitoring, as part of its service from Butlers, the Council is notified immediately by email of changes to the credit rating of individual banks. A regular summary report is also provided. It is proposed that the summary reports augmented by subsequent email alerts be consulted when a new investment is being considered.
- 26 If a rating is changed to less than F1 prior to a proposed investment being made, this may disqualify the bank from becoming a counterparty. If the rating changes during the duration of an investment to lower than F1, the Council's Section 151 Officer will determine whether to request early repayment which will incur a cost or to let the investment run to maturity. In reaching this decision advice will be sought from Butlers and the Principal Accountant, the officer with day-to-day responsibility for treasury management.

## Non Specified Investments

27 This is less straightforward as a number of different areas must be considered:

*Criteria where the institutions have no credit rating*

28 Historically, the Council has invested much of its portfolio with the top 20 Building Societies ranked by asset size. Of these, only seven have a Fitch rating and one of these has rating below F1. (The remainder have not applied to be rated but are nevertheless considered to be financially sound). It is proposed that the Council lends only to Building Societies with assets in excess of £1 billion and these currently number nineteen. The six Societies that have a rating of F1 or better will fall into the Specified category so long as an investment is made for a period of less than one year. It is proposed that investments with the remaining thirteen be similarly limited to periods of less than one year.

*Criteria for investments in excess of one year*

29 The Council is advised that in the main the best rates for longer term investments will come from Building Societies, with only a few banks willing to quote for periods longer than one year. Therefore it is necessary to determine how rating criteria are used for long term investing. It is proposed that the following is adopted:

Societies with a 'A-' or better long-term rating – two year maximum duration.

Societies with a 'AA-' or better long-term rating – four year maximum duration

Societies with a 'AAA' long-term rating – five year maximum duration

30 It is further proposed that as a further proviso building societies must have the following individual and support ratings:

For a two year investment limit:

Individual Rating – C or better

Support Rating – 3 or better

For a four year investment limit:

Individual Rating – B or better

Support Rating – 2 or better

For a five year investment limit:

Individual Rating – B or better

Support Rating – 1

Although it is understood that many banks may be less willing than building societies to offer suitable rates for long term deals it is proposed that the same criteria be applied.

*Criteria for what instruments the Council is willing to use*

31 Currently the Council invests almost its entire portfolio in fixed rate, fixed duration investments, the exception being a £250,000 deposit with Abbey National. For the year ahead it is not proposed that the Council directly uses any other instruments.

With regard to the fund manager, Standard Life it is probable that the terms of the appointment will give Standard Life the scope to invest the Council's funds in UK Government securities (Gilts) or Certificates of Deposit (fixed rate and duration but can be traded in the financial markets at a price determined by supply and demand). It is therefore proposed that Gilts and Certificates of Deposit be approved as investment instruments.

#### *Monetary Limit*

- 32 The Guidance states that through the Annual Investment Strategy the Council must set a limit on the amount that may be held in Non Specified Investments at any time during the year. As stated earlier in this report, most of the Council's cash balances are invested in Building Societies the majority of which can only accept Non Specified investments because they have not applied for a credit rating. Taking this into account and the wider freedoms likely to be given to Standard Life, the large part of the Council's portfolio will be in Non Specified Investments. It is therefore proposed that the overall limit for Non Specified Investments be set at £20m for 2004-05. Within this figure there should be a limit for holdings of Gilts and a limit for Certificates of Deposit (CDs) held on behalf of the Council by Standard Life. These will be the subject of negotiations with Standard Life but it is envisaged at this stage that holdings of Gilts would not exceed £2m and CDs £3m.

#### *Liquidity of Investments*

- 33 In determining the amount of funds that can be prudently committed for more than one year the Council must consider the relationship between overall funds and foreseeable spending needs, together with the need to make provision for contingencies and maintain adequate reserves. The Strategy must also state the minimum amount that is to be held in short term investments.
- 34 As noted above when day-to-day cash flow considerations permit and when officers consider there is financial benefit to the Council, funds have been invested for periods greater than one year. Taking this and the needs of the fund manager into account it is considered that it would be prudent to maintain a minimum level of £8 million in short term investments.

It is RECOMMENDED that

1. The appointment of Standard Life to manage a £5m tranche of the Council's cash balances is noted.
2. The Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and the Capital Financing Indicator for the Housing Revenue Account included in this report in paragraphs 10-14 be recommended to the Council meeting on 20 April for approval.
3. The Local Government Investments – Draft Guidance is noted.
4. The Annual Investment Strategy 2004-05 is approved.

Background Papers: Written submissions from prospective fund managers.  
The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities  
(CIPFA)  
Local Government Investments – Draft Guidance (ODPM)



**Committee:** Resources Committee

**Date:** 11 March 2004

**Agenda Item No:** 7

**Title:** Service Plans 2004 – 2005:  
Finance Services  
IT & Anti Fraud  
Legal & Democratic Services  
Revenue Services  
Personnel & Office Services

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### **Summary**

- 1 This report provides Resources Committee with an overview of Service Planning for the authority as a whole and a summary of the specific Service Plans for Finance Services, IT & Anti Fraud, Legal & Democratic, Revenue Services and Personnel & Office Services

### **Background**

- 2 The Council is committed to improving services and performance. Service Plans are an integral part of the process. Through the production of Service Plans the Council is able to determine resource allocation and project manage a range of service priorities during a set time. Service Planning ensures that managers have clearly identified that the resources are in place to deliver the aspirations of Members, the community and any new legislation that may come on stream.
- 3 Service Planning cannot be considered in isolation and is now an integrated part of the Service & Financial Planning cycle within the authority that begins with political, managerial and community aspirations and legal requirements.
- 4 These aspirations and requirements form the basis of resource allocation and if funding is agreed the targets that underpin Service Plans are linked to the appraisal framework of staff. All staff are regularly appraised and part of the process involves setting targets linked to the delivery of service and corporate plans. These are particularly important in Uttlesford at present as the Council works towards becoming more of a performance and reward culture.

A diagram outlining this process is shown at Appendix A.

- 5 Service Planning for 2004 – 2005 has been developed using a template for all services within the Council. Heads of Service have produced Service Plans for 2004/2005 that include:
- Brief introduction to the Service
  - The contribution made by the Service to the Mission Statement of the Council
  - The five Strategic Themes from the Corporate Plan – How the Service will deliver sections of the Corporate Plan
  - The aim of the Service
  - Situation Analysis involving the performance, strengths, weaknesses, partnerships and customer perspective of the service.
  - Key Aims and Objectives 2004 to 2007
  - Appendices which cover Staff Resources, Accommodation, Equality and Risk Management and provide a comprehensive Annual Work Programme.
- 6 The information aims to provide the existing strengths and weaknesses of the service, how its plans will be delivered and the contribution the department will make to the strategic and performance framework of the Council.

7 **Revenue Service Plan – Summary**

**Key Aims for 2004 – 2007**

This section of the service plan sets out key aims for the benefits service, which flow from the Strategic Policy Objectives. Individual action plans will ensure that the key aims are met within the timescales given.

Detailed Analysis of Key Aims

*Strategic Policy Objective 1*

To be 'above standard' in 100% of all six modules.

*Strategic Policy Objective 2*

Ensure that all customers are able to access the benefits service quickly and easily  
 Make improvements to reception and interviewing facilities.  
 Saturday morning opening.  
 Increase telephone access hours  
 Provide staff presence at Dunmow CIC  
 Improve the standard of benefit decision letters  
 Provide facility for customers to receive information in large print, Braille or audiotape.

### *Strategic Policy Objective 3*

#### Processing claims speedily and accurately

Develop links with CAB with the aim of improving the speed and accuracy of processing claims  
Introduce 'workflow' technology to compliment document imaging (incl additional VDU screens)  
Pilot the introduction of home working  
Implementation of new Sx3 server  
Introduce direct payment of housing benefit  
Development of the Essex Training Partnership  
Introduce individual performance targets for members of staff

### *Strategic Policy Objective 4*

#### In accordance with it's strategy, maximise the take-up of benefit (appendix 4)

Using Sx3 management information and census data, identify areas of low take-up and publicise HB and CTB in those areas.  
Develop web page.  
Develop links with the CAB to maximise take-up of benefit.  
Produce literature and information in 'Plain English'.  
Pilot use of mobile library service to encourage take-up of benefit.  
Continue to use the day centres to promote and encourage benefit take-up.  
Develop partnership working with the Pensions Service.

### **Strategic Policy Objective 5**

#### Efficient and effective performance management

Develop management reports to assist in improving the speed and accuracy of processing claims and overpayment recovery.  
To review all sundry debts originally raised on the Radius system to determine their recoverability. The debt to be reduced by 50%.

### **Strategic Policy Objective 6**

#### Quality and performance initiatives

Consider application for Quality standard, such as IIP, Chartermark etc.

The real measure of the success of this plan is whether it will drive significant improvements for our customers. The service that the Benefits Team provides has to compare favourably with other service providers. We have made significant improvement in recent years and the service now performs in the top quartile in

most areas of its work. Also, we have achieved excellent results in the general service standards areas such as the time taken to deal with correspondence. Everyone connected with the service should be congratulated on this considerable achievement. However, we must aim for continuous improvement in service delivery and to reach top quartile performance in all areas of our work. Due to the Council's current financial position we must also strive to maximise income and contain or reduce expenditure.

## 8 **Personnel and Office Services**

### **Key Aims for 2004 – 2005**

This section of the service plan sets out key aims and objectives for the service over the coming year and analyses the strengths and weaknesses of each key aim. These have been developed into specific objectives for planned improvement and development of the service against each key aim.

#### **Key Aim 1 To develop further effective industrial relations**

#### **Key Aim 1 – Strengths**

- a) Single Status meetings taking place on a bi-monthly basis. The working relationship is good.
- b) During intervening months single-issue meetings take place as and when required. Single issue topics are explored and brainstormed fostering good working relationships.
- c) Unison meet informally with the Head of Personnel (and vice versa) to raise issues that can be dealt without the need for formal processes.
- d) PPN flow chart followed to introduce.

#### **Key Aim 1 – Weaknesses**

- a) DSO negotiations are not completed as yet but will follow the updating of the JE scheme and the re structure is likely to move the DSO function back in house.

**Key Aim 2 To ensure the organisation is able to recruit and retain staff with the right skills knowledge and competency levels in an appropriate manner.**

### **Key Aim 2 – Strengths**

- a) The application form has been updated to comply with equal opportunities requirements and to provide general updating. All Services follow the corporate recruitment and selection process. Hard copy email etc all allowed and encouraged. Applicants can complete an on line application form or if they prefer use an on line word document and down load/complete/send.
- b) Use has been made of personality and intelligence tests during the selection process. The tests are now being used during redeployment.
- c) IT software skills now are tested when required for the post and advised on the person specification.
- d) The Head of Personnel must certify all contracts of employment. When not available contracts are created by one Personnel Officer and verified then signed by the second Personnel Officer.
- e) Use of pilots to develop PPNS has been well received and assisted with policy development.
- f) Personnel Team provide constructive and consistent advice and guidance. The team respond to requests for flexible approaches and apply them in a corporate manner.

### **Key Aim 2 – Weaknesses**

- a) Exit questionnaires are currently used to inform. Exit interviews are now needed to encourage development of a retention strategy that meets the needs of Uttlesford.
- b) Updated recruitment and selection training required for all managers/supervisors who recruit.
- c) The recruitment process needs to be adapted to take into account the needs of the future needs of the Council (see personnel strategy)

- d) Although the personnel computer system has been upgraded and team have developed their knowledge it is not as adaptable as some other systems are. Not enough user licenses have been bought to enable each employee to have access to their records on line.
- e) More complex reports need to be developed on the personnel computer system.
- f) A feedback loop from non-return applicants, unsuccessful applicants etc in order to inform future recruitment strategy.

**Key Aim 3 To actively develop employees in order to meet future organisational objectives.**

**Key Aim 3 – Strengths**

- a) New personnel strategy adopted.
- b) New appraisal scheme in place for all staff. Greater opportunities for training and development in place.
- c) Access to advice on the web page developed and will continue to be developed, eg part time annual leave calculation checklist. Flexi time record.
- d) Equal Opportunities Policy on employment and Council service delivery agreed and implemented.
- e) Personnel is used as a source of advice and guidance.
- f) Supervisory leadership development training in place.
- g) Asserting reasoning and influencing skills training in place for supervisors, team leaders and managers.
- h) Office manager trained to deliver customer service training.

**Key Aim 3 – Weaknesses**

- a) Personnel strategy not yet integrated.
- b) No corporate training providers.
- c) There may be unequal access to training throughout the authority.
- d) No management development programme.

**Key Aim 4 – To ensure the delivery of effective corporate communication systems through telephony, reprographics, desk top publishing, customer service, mail delivery etc.**

**Key Aim 4 – Strengths**

- a) Multi functional supportive team.
- b) Enhanced call monitoring statistics available to management.
- c) Telephony operator with excellent skills who assists other areas of administration. Telephonist is covered during breaks and absence by mail room staff.
- d) Mail Room staff have achieved the Gold standard as assessed by the royal Mail. The new mail room location has been developed to meet the security requirements of the revenues and benefits verification project. Corporate Administrators and Telephonist assist at peak times as do staff from other corporate teams.
- e) Excellent stewarding function.
- f) The Community Information Centre and Reception teams ensure they keep up to date with vital information about the Council and public views so as to produce the Uttlesford News. CIC staff absences and cover requirements are met by Corporate Administrators.
- g) Good courier service.
- h) Procedures recently revised for liaison with Committee Section over preparation and distribution of Council agenda and minutes.
- i) Professional standard desk top publishing available.

#### **Key Aim 4 – Weaknesses**

- a) The room booking system is coming to the end of its life frustrating users.
- b) Some confusion caused by new Thaxted CIC being seen as TIC. Role of the volunteers caused some concern. Teething problems now dealt with.
- c) The Thaxted CIC is not attracting high volume callers and as a result has a high cost per caller.
- d)

**Key Aim 5 – To provide an effective corporate facility and supply service that is monitored and reported upon.**

#### **Key Aim 5 – Strengths**

- a) Good procurement skills.
- b) Excellent reprographics team in place. Reduced paper stock requiring less space and outlay managed by job. Professional standard Desk Top Publishing system in place.
- c) Ability to transfer desk top publisher documents to the web now in place.
- d) Reprographic and colour printing facility available.
- e) Understanding of DTP and reprographics service developed amongst users.
- f) Multi skilled corporate administrators able to assist all teams within the building. By avoiding specialism there is no loss of facility when a member of staff is absent.

#### **Key Aim 5 – Weaknesses**

- a) Some outsourcing of design work and printing is done by some teams without reference to reprographics guidance. For example Apple Mac designs do not convert well to windows packages increasing costs through in house conversion costs and loss of quality.
- b) Individual procurement is taking place possibly costing the authority money as economies of scale are being lost. This occurs for example in externally sourced printing purchasing of uniforms, reprographics etc.



## 9 IT and Anti Fraud

### **Key Influences impacting upon the IT Section:**

**i. E-Government** – Continues to be a major focus of ICT development within the Council. ITS are confident of attaining the 2005 target, provided adequate levels of funding are forthcoming.

A draft E-Government Strategy has been prepared and submitted to the E-Government Task Group. A second draft, reflecting the priorities contained within the Quality of Life Corporate Plan, will be produced shortly.

**ii. Quality of Life Corporate Plan / Change of Administration** - the ICT related Corporate Plan targets largely reflect existing plans and programmes. The most significant new area is the First Point of Contact initiative, the IT elements of which have now been incorporated into the 2004/05 IT Programme.

**iii. Budget Constraints** – E-Government, and the general increase in user-requested ICT developments, is putting a large strain on ITS' financial resources. Without a further injection of revenue funding, the ICT will inevitably deteriorate.

**iv. CPA, Best Value & Other Reviews** – IST has not been involved in the majority of best value reviews during 2003/04. On a more positive note, ITS was closely involved in the Revenues Best Value review and has been working with the Head of Revenues to obtain funding for a range of ICT related initiatives.

**v. The economy and the impact on retention and recruitment** – ITS salaries remain well below market rates.

### **Key Aims for 2004 to 2007**

#### **Key Aim 1 – To provide a first class user support service.**

- Service desk
- Installation and support of various desktop devices.
- First line application support.
- User training, including product specific training
- Awareness sessions, newsletters, articles etc.

### **Key Aim 1 - Strengths**

- Generally users are satisfied with the service received. The overall satisfaction rating is 3.73 out of 5.00, compared to a national upper quartile average of 3.56 & a previous score of 3.61.
- Help desk calls are answered and resolved promptly – 80% are dealt with within the SLA target and 49% of all calls answered within 15 minutes.
- Service Desk staff are highly skilled and experienced. They are patient & understanding with users.
- The ITS takes a pro-active approach to training & development.
- There is considerable enthusiasm for training amongst users.
- Co-ordination of training needs with Personnel Section has improved.

### **Key Aim 1 – Weaknesses**

- The Service Level Agreement is somewhat out of date and is not used to inform users about the service they can expect to receive.
- An escalation procedure for service desk calls needs to be developed.
- Problems being experienced placing calls onto the help desk system.
- Software licensing was not kept up to date for part of 2003/04
- More tasks could be transferred to the Service Desk, provided appropriate training & documentation are produced. Problem solving scripts & documentation still to be developed.
- Members are unhappy with the remote dial-up service, primarily the length of time taken to open attachments, and the need for two log-ons.
- A number of problems are experienced with users
  - A number of users find working with computers difficult.
  - Many users have poor IT skills upon joining the Council.
  - Budgets for training are generally inadequate and there is a reluctance to increase them in some Sections.
- IT aptitude testing is not built into the Council's recruitment processes.
- There is no integrated IT induction process, including skills assessment.
- There is no specific training programme to equip staff with the necessary skills for e-government.

### **Key Aim 1 – Anticipated Outcomes**

- User satisfaction rating increased from 3.73 to
  - 3.80, by 31 March 2005.
  - 3.90, by 31 March 2006, and
  - 4.00 by 31 March 2007.
- Help calls resolved within target, increased from 80% to
  - 85% by 31 March 2005.
  - 90% by 31 March 2006 & thereafter.
- All users to have satisfactory levels of skills, both general and e-government specific, by 31 March 2006.
- Members satisfied with the service, by 31 March 2005.
- Service desk dealing with 80% of all support calls by 31 March 2006.

**Key Aim 2 – To provide a third line technical service & undertake an on-going programme of technical developments & enhancements**

- Development & support of the IT infrastructure.
- Dev. & support of specialist applications such as CAD & DTP.
- E-Government infrastructure projects, including Essex Extranet, Registration & authentication etc.

**Key Aim 2- Strengths**

- The ITS has strong technical skills in key areas such as Windows 2000 and Citrix.
- The ITS has built a very strong IT infrastructure, superior to many other Councils. This provides a strong base from which to launch future initiatives.
- The majority of technical support and development is done well and on time.
- Users enjoy a low level of downtime.
- Backup arrangements have been vastly improved in recent months.

**Key Aim 2 - Weaknesses**

- The Unix Superserver, which is retained primarily to run the legacy financial systems, is the only Unix platform left. It is old & unsupported.
- Change control is still patchy and the disaster plan needs updating.
- Formal technical or network strategies are required, in order to identify future technical requirements.
- There are insufficient UPSs for the number of servers in operation (cost issue). Also, the computer electrical circuits are still not right, despite work being carried out by the Council's electrical contractor.
- Although security arrangements are good, there is no written IT Security Policy.
- Technical arrangements for home & mobile working require further development.

**Key Aim 2 - Anticipated Outcomes**

- IT infrastructure continues to be developed in line with the demands being placed upon it.
- Downtime for all applications reduced from 1% to 0.5% by 31 March 2005.
- Compliance with eGIF including e-GMS by 31 December 2005.
- District Audit fully satisfied with Council's security arrangements by 31 March 2005.
- District-wide broadband availability increased in line with Corporate Plan targets.

### **Key Aim 3 To support and develop applications and databases**

- Support & Development of Office 2000, including database & spreadsheet development.
- Support & development of a range of Oracle & SQL based applications including Housing, Building Control, Planning, Land Charges & Environmental Health.
- Misc. applications such as financial management and electoral registration.
- Support & development of document imaging.
- Regional / national projects, such as Planning Portal & Change of Address.
- Corporate application developments.
- E-Government application projects, including regional and national projects.

### **Key Aim 3 – Strengths**

- The staff are highly skilled, well trained and experienced in the applications they support. They also have a good knowledge of the business of the Council.
- The range and quality of the Council's applications are in many cases more advanced than those within other Councils.
- Users are happy with the applications support they receive, scoring support at 3.82 out of 5 (upper quartile national average of 3.56).
- User satisfaction with individual applications ranges from 3.98 (outlook 2000) to 3.00 (housing)
- The IT Section has a long & successful track record of completing projects on time and within budget. IT project work is well regarded by the IDEA.
- The Council has an extremely strong base from which to launch further developments.
- The IT Section is pro-active in seeking new sources of funding.

### **Key Aim 3 - Weaknesses**

- The Radius financial applications are older than the Council's other applications (this is reflected in the user satisfaction rating of 3.11).
- New projects approved during Best Value & other reviews are by-passing the capital programming process. Consequently, they are not adequately resourced, or thought-through.
- The Essex Online Partnership is failing to deliver benefits to the Council, whilst diverting a considerable amount of ITS resource.
- Users are generally satisfied with the outcome of projects (satisfaction rating of 3.58), although less so with communications during projects (satisfaction rating 3.17).

### **Key Aim 3 – Anticipated Outcomes**

- All applications modernized by 31 March 2005.
- First Point of Contact systems developed in line with Corporate Plan targets.
- All user satisfaction ratings for applications equal to, or in excess of, the national upper quartile by 31 March 2006 (including contracted services).
- E-Procurement fully established & 80% of small value items being purchased electronically, by 31 March 2006.
- All council services available outside standard working hours via the Internet or telephone contact centre, by 31 December 2005.
- 100% e-ennoblement of services in line with BVPI157 2005 target.
- Participation in appropriate regional & national e-government projects completed by 31 March 2006.

#### **Key Aim 4 – To manage contracts with a range of third party suppliers**

- Managing business relationships with suppliers and specialist support contractors / consultants.
- Hardware maintenance contract.
- Application support agreements.
- Technical consultancy arrangements.

#### **Key Aim 4 – Strengths**

- The Council has a number of extremely good suppliers, including Ocella, Anite, Radius, Media Paradigm and Fox IT.
- Significant savings have been achieved in hardware maintenance costs, application support charges etc.
- An increasingly strong line is being taken with under-performing suppliers.

#### **Key Aim 4 – Weaknesses**

- Unfortunately, the Council also has a small number of suppliers (including SX3, and Selection Services) who are still under performing.
- Current financial regulations make it difficult to build effective partnerships with good suppliers.
- Select supplier lists are somewhat out of date.

#### **Key Aim 4 – Anticipated Outcomes**

- All contractors performing satisfactorily by 31 March 2005.
- Select lists brought up to date by 31 March 2005

#### **Key Area 5 – To manage corporate information management systems**

- Design & development of the Intranet and Council website.
- Content Management systems
- GIS applications & the use of corporate GIS data
- Regional / national information management projects, such as NLPG & NLIS
- Corporate information management.

#### **Key Area 5 - Strengths**

- The Council has invested heavily in information management systems over the last few years. For example, it has one of the most well-developed GIS systems in local government.
- The Council has NLPG accreditation, with NLIS accreditation to level 2.
- The new website is as good as most in local government.

#### **Key Area 5 - Weaknesses**

- The Intranet needs updating.
- The District Auditor requires that the Council's data sets be formally classified.
- The Council does not have a written Information Management Strategy.
- The GIS data sets are not available via the Internet.

#### **Key Aim 5 – Anticipated Outcomes**

- Information management policies & strategies in place by 31 March 2005.
- NLIS to level 3 accreditation by 31 December 2005.
- Website classified as 'Transactional Plus' by SOCITM by 31 December 2004.
- Website fully compliant with level AA of W3C web accessibility initiative (WAI) standards by 31 March 2006.
- Transactional Intranet fully developed by 31 March 2006.

#### **Key Area 6 – To develop key IT strategy**

- Production of IT Strategy, including e-Government strategy.
- Funding applications.
- IT Capital and Revenue programmes.
- Service Planning.
- Business Continuity Planning.
- Development of partnerships.

### **Key Area 6 - Strengths**

- Service management processes are generally well developed, eg Service Planning, Investors in People (IiP) & budgetary planning.
- The Council's IEG1, 2 & 3 statements have all been accepted without reservation by the ODPM.
- A draft E-Government Strategy has been prepared & submitted to the E-Government Task Group. It now needs to be amended to reflect the priorities contained in the recently approved Quality of Life Corporate Plan.
- The IT Section has carried out a range of innovative partnership working.

### **Key Area 6 - Weaknesses**

- Greater integration of IT strategy into wider Council strategy is required.
- There is insufficient revenue funding for the e-government programme.
- There are unrealistic expectations from partnership working.
- There has been no consultation with the general public regarding their requirements under e-government.
- A number of detailed sub-strategies need to be prepared to supplement the E-Government Strategy.
  - Social Exclusion Strategy.
  - Detailed Technical Strategy
  - Detailed capacity assessment for IT resources.
- Considerable work is required before the Council will be able to meet the 2005 requirements of the Freedom of Information Act.

### **Key Aim 6 – Anticipated Outcomes**

- E-Government strategy finalised by 31 March 2004.
- All other strategies in place by 31 March 2005.
- Internal targets established for take-up of e-services and performance monitored. As a minimum, there will be a 3-fold increase in use of corporate website between 2003/04 and 2005/06.
- Additional revenue and capital funding obtained in each of the next three years.

## **10 Legal Services**

### **Key Aims for 2004 - 2007**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>By (date)</b>
Enter into service level agreements with Client Departments	1/6/04

Provide training to Members of the Standards Committee to enable them to deal with referrals of allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct	1/6/04
Review the Member/Officer protocol	30/6/04
Conduct a formal review of the democratic structure of the Council	31/12/04
Move to the next stage of electronic land charge search delivery	End 2005
Subject to funding seek Lexcel accreditation	End 2006
Review staff levels/training arrangements to ascertain whether a case can be made for the employment of a trainee solicitor	End 2007

### **Work Programme 2004 – 2005**

1. Move towards the next level of electronic service delivery for local land charges
2. Continue the provision of legal services in-house
3. Maximise use of the case management system
4. Prepare for and implement enforcement procedures for car parking after decriminalisation
5. Train Members of the Standards Committee to enable them to undertake local determinations of referred allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct
6. Develop process maps for new areas of work as appropriate
7. Maintain the registers of District, Town and Parish Councillors' interests
8. Review the Member/Officer protocol
9. Review the democratic structure of the Council



## 11 Financial Services

### Key Aims for 2004 – 2007

1. Continue to comply with all legislation, codes, and best practice regarding local government finance and financial management. Outcome/evidence = Audit and CPA judgements.
2. Continue to protect the Council's financial strength and maximise opportunities to improve it. Outcome/evidence = Budget, reserve and capital spending strength.
3. Improve the range and quality of the services we provide to internal and external customers and other stakeholders. Outcome/evidence = Customer satisfaction levels.
4. Provide all necessary support to implementation of the Quality of Life Corporate Plan. Outcome/evidence = Availability of financial resources and skills to achieve the Plan.
5. Respond to other Council policy initiatives and changes, such as a possible move to Cabinet system or area committees. Outcome/evidence = Successful response.
6. Develop staff skills to enable other objectives above to be met. Outcome/evidence = retention of suitably skilled and motivated staff.

### Strengths and Weaknesses assessment:

We have skilled, experienced and committed staff, with low turnover levels, and are likely to be able to continue to achieve objectives 1, 2 and 3. We have established working procedures and good relationships with our customers.

Although our working procedures are good, we are less strong on formal documentation of such procedures, and rely on the knowledge and experience of key individuals, thereby carrying a risk.

Lack of staffing resources may be a problem regarding objectives 4 and 5.

The loss of the post of Director of Resources will cost us a high level, experienced and productive resource. The Director currently spends about 70% of his time on our activities, and this needs to be absorbed in the very year when our workload is increasing more than ever before. We have a new Financial Management System going live on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2004, Zero-based budgeting to implement in spring 2004, and a legal requirement to close the Council's Accounts a month earlier than previously. We have other major issues to deal with in the next 12 months, such as the Business Growth initiative, whereby the Council may retain an element of Business Rate increase, plus a possible new approach to the whole of local government's funding mechanisms. We also need to work through the full implications of the new statutory Prudential Code and the revised arrangements for capital financing. Many other initiatives can be added to this list.

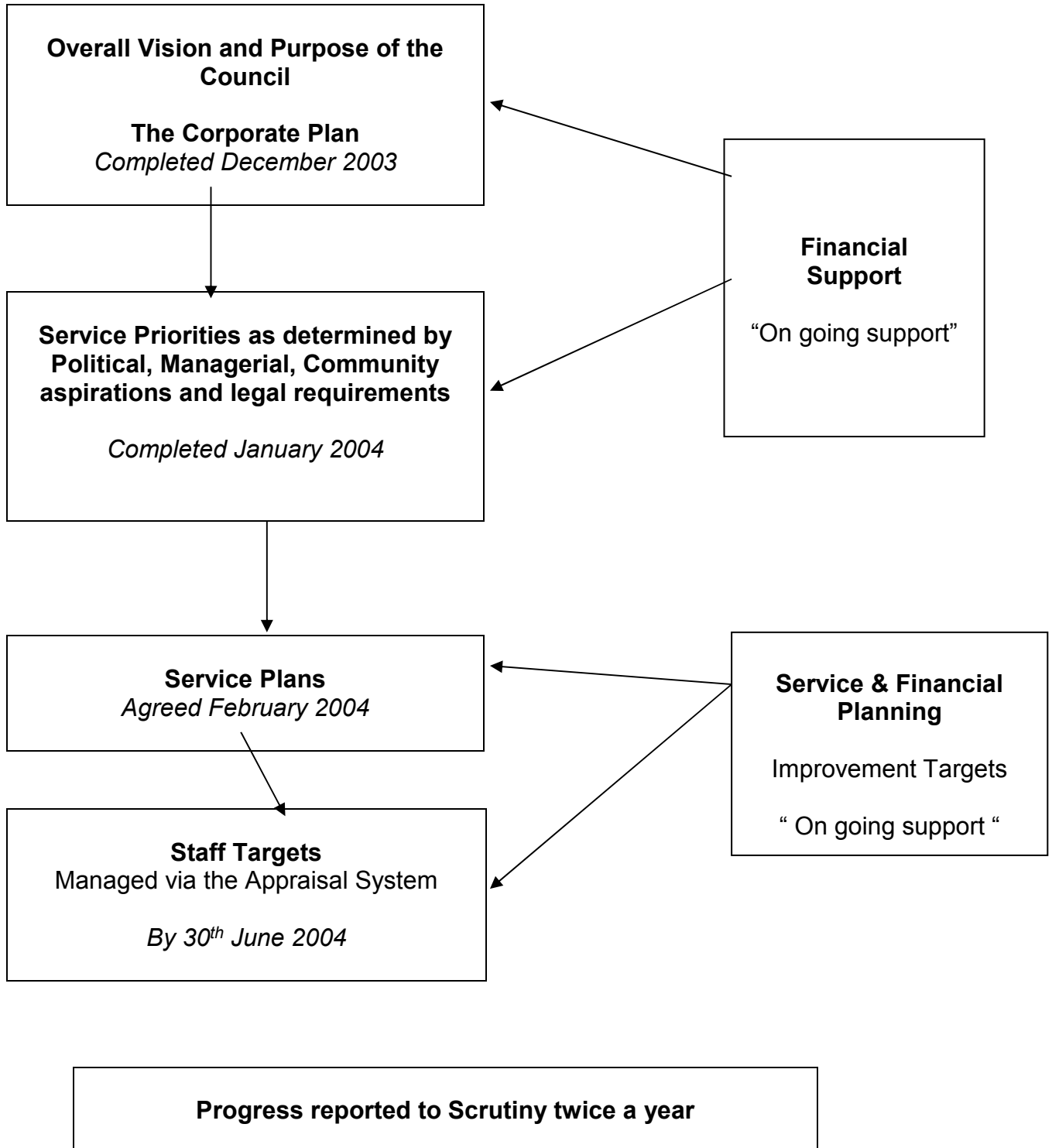
On a practical level, we will have a shortage of senior staff available to attend committee and other meetings and will need to encourage and develop other staff to undertake this role.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee notes the Service Planning process and confirms the Service Plans for Revenues, Legal ,IT and Financial Services for 2004 – 2005

Background Papers: Service Plans 2003/4/05

## Appendix A

### Service Planning Process 2004- 2005



**Committee:** Resources  
**Date:** 11 March 2004  
**Agenda Item No:** 8  
**Title:** MEMBER TRAINING – PROGRESS REPORT  
**Author:** Mick Purkiss (01799) 510430

### **Summary**

- 1 This report provides an evaluation of the feedback from Members and recommends that a training programme be developed.

### **Background**

- 2 In December all Members were asked to complete a questionnaire providing an assessment of their needs for learning and development skills. Completed questionnaires were returned by 36 of the 44 Councillors.

### **Evaluation**

- 3 Overall, the response indicates that there is a desire for Members to develop their skills. One Member commented that “we have serious responsibilities and need to be appropriately skilled, otherwise we cannot provide the kind of partnership and leadership necessary to work with our officers to implement our ideas and deliver the services the public need and expect.”
- 4 Members were asked whether they felt training should be compulsory. About 60% thought that it should and whilst appreciating that individual’s needs are different, officers feel that there should be a minimum package of training.
- 5 Most Members have received some training in the past 12 months and the overwhelming majority have said that this was helpful and effective.
- 6 There was no clear consensus on the preferred time for training. The majority of Members preferred to receive training from a combination of council officers and external trainers. Attending sessions provided by the IDeA was also rated highly. It was also suggested that a skills audit be undertaken so that best use can be made of Councillors’ existing skills and experience.
- 7 The majority of Members were prepared to attend training sessions as often as necessary and were happy to attend joint sessions with officers or with other Councils. There are many advantages in having joint training sessions with Councillors and officers and it is suggested that opportunities be sought particularly on skills based issues.

- 8 The main obstacle to attending training sessions was work commitments.
- 9 Members were asked to identify five priority areas for training. Scrutiny remains the top priority for training and this is being addressed with training having been held at Thurrock Council in October 2003 and a planned session being facilitated by RADA on 29 March 2004. In addition to the subjects put forward in the questionnaire, a number of Members suggested that training on public speaking/speaking at meetings would be useful and this could be addressed in sessions on Communication.

The following subjects were given high priority by Members:

- Scrutiny - 53%
- Finance - 50%
- Planning - 47%
- Communication - 36%
- IT Skills - 36%
- Chairing Meetings - 28%
- Best Value - 25%
- Leadership - 22%

In relation to leadership, the Leader and Deputy Leader have attended the IDeA Leadership Academy and have recommended this initiative to other Members which could be developed into a rolling programme aimed at Chairs of Committees.

- 10 Nearly 60% of Members had used the Mentoring Scheme and all said they would recommend it to new Members. It may be that the scheme needs greater promotion as two Members were unaware of its existence.
- 11 Half of the Members felt that training should be evaluated using evaluation forms and 38% suggested there should be individual feedback to officers. There was little support for using Focus groups.

### **Future Work**

- 12 The feedback has been very useful in identifying Members' needs and how these can best be met. As mentioned earlier, Scrutiny is the highest priority and this is being looked at in the current year. It is vital that Scrutiny is meaningful and effective and officers will continue to seek out further training opportunities.
- 13 Training on Planning Issues has been delivered prior to meetings of the Development Control Committee. This continues to be the most effective method of delivery, although there may be occasions where an evening workshop is required.
- 14 IT training is largely met in house and it is considered that training should continue to be delivered in this way wherever possible.

- 15 The other priority areas will now need to be built into a Training Programme and where any individual needs have been identified these will be addressed on a one to one basis.
- 16 A number of dates have been included in the Timetable of Meetings for Member Workshops and a list of subjects will be identified for these.
- 17 In the current year the base budget is £3,000 and a further £22,000 is available in an earmarked reserve (Resources Committee 23 January 2003 Minute R667). Approximately £7,000 has been spent up to January 2004. The budget for 2004/05 is £15,000 and the unspent balance from the reserve will be carried forward.

**RECOMMENDED that**

- 1 a detailed training programme be prepared based on the information provided above and, in particular, to include further in house training for planning and IT and specific training events/workshops for Finance, Communication (including public speaking and speaking at meetings), dealing with media, chairing meetings, Best Value and Leadership.
- 2 the Committee and PR Manager to keep Members informed of external training opportunities and arrange attendance where requested.
- 3 A programme of chairs for policy and scrutiny committees to attend the IDeA Leadership Academy be drawn up so that all appropriate Members have attended the programme by the end of the financial year 2004/05.
- 4 opportunities be sought for joint training sessions for Members and Officers

Background Papers: Analysis of Members' Feedback.

**Committee:** Resources  
**Date:** 27 February 2004  
**Agenda Item No:** 9  
**Title:** Green Travel Update  
**Author:** Bronwen Stacey (01799) 510363

**Summary**

- 1 This report advises Members of the progress of the work and achievements of the Travel Plan Working Group to date.

## **Background**

- 2 The Travel Plan Working Group (TPWG) has met 5 times.

So far, the group has:

Examined the existing Travel Plan, to identify what the remit of the TPWG should be, and how to achieve this. The group has also identified 'specialists' in specific areas, whose knowledge and input should be harnessed. It is the view of the Group that a number of issues contained in the Travel Plan should be addressed on an ongoing basis, rather than all addressed via recommendations to be made on 1 June. With that in mind, a number of issues have been progressed, prior to 1 June.

- 3 The TPWG has developed, and undertaken 3 surveys:

### **The Visitors Survey**

Has been conducted in two parts:

the first week was undertaken during the first week in December 2003, by students at Saffron Walden County High School (under a purpose-driven new partnership initiative), and has been given to a member of Community and Leisure team, whose services have been offered, to assist with the data input and analysis of the Surveys.

The second (and final) week of the Visitors Survey was conducted by Mr Robinson, under a casual contract, during the first week of February. Due to the volume of the data, analysis is not yet complete.

**The Staff Survey** of work-related and travel patterns was conducted at the end of November, and the responses have been analysed.

### **The UDC Travel Plan Questionnaire for Members.**

Was undertaken in late January. The responses have been collated and analysed.

### **The Travel Plan Recommendations (due by 1 June).**

The TPWG agrees that the recommendations of the group regarding a sustainable transport plan will be based primarily on the findings of the surveys undertaken; these will be studied and the main findings and outcomes of all three will be co-ordinated, in order to produce a set of recommendations which draw on all three collective viewpoints to produce one concerted way forward, on areas outlined in the existing draft Travel Plan, and possibly other associated issues.

- 4 **The Car-Share Register** has been radically overhauled and the icon has now been placed on the Citrix Desktop. It will be launched formally as soon as possible. The formal launch will include an explanation and offer to hold a few short sessions to demonstrate how the information may be lodged and accessed, to best effect. Currently there are only a handful of employees

registered, but the formal launch should assist to raise the profile and credibility of the Car Share Register, and help to encourage its usage.

- 5 A Proposal to Further Develop the Overflow Car Parking opportunities for members of the public from 10.30am onwards is being progressed by the group.
- 6 A Proposal to Address Parking for Visitors to Meetings with council employees is currently being progressed.
- 7 Public Transport. One member of the TPWG is a member of the Essex Transport Advisory Group. He has reviewed the requirements outlined in the Travel Plan, and assessed the current accessibility and level of information available through UDC. His views and recommendations will either be made in the Recommendations, or may be progressed earlier, if possible.

RECOMMENDED that:

- 1 Members note progress to date.
- 2 Members agree that a final report with recommendations be presented to the next meeting of the committee.

Background Papers: The current Travel Plan, to be found at [\\udc22\intranet3\personpub\Travel\\_Plan.doc](\\udc22\intranet3\personpub\Travel_Plan.doc)

**Committee**                      **Resources**

**Agenda Item No:**        **10**

**Date**                              **11 March 2004**

**Title:**                            **Staffing Update**

**Author:**                        **Carole Hughes (01799) 510407**

### Summary

- 1 The table below shows each vacancy that has arisen since the last date of the table prepared for Resources Committee. It shows the date the vacancy arose, the job title, the relevant Service and the decision taken. The decision taken section refers to whether the vacancy was to be advertised and recruited to and on what basis or whether it is frozen.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Service</b>	<b>Decision</b>
19/01/04	HGV Drivers x 3	DSO	To advertise and recruit on a permanent basis



