

9 November 2004

Dear Councillor

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Resources Committee will be held at the Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden on Thursday 18 November 2004 at 7.45 pm, or at the conclusion of the question and answer session, whichever is the earlier.

Yours faithfully

ALASDAIR BOVAIRD

Chief Executive

Commencing at 7.30 pm, there will be an opportunity of up to 15 minutes for members of the public to ask questions and make statements subject to having given two working days prior notice

A G E N D A PART I

- 1 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest.**
- 2 Minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2004 (previously circulated).**
- 3 Business Arising.**
- 4 Items referred from other committees
 - i) Health and Housing Committee, 4 November 2004 – Rent Deposit Scheme
- 5 Audit Commission report on 2003/04 Accounts (to follow).
- 6 Resources Committee Service Plans Budget and Council Priorities (to follow).
- 7 Resources Committee Capital Programme (to follow).
- 8 Council Capital Programme (to follow).
- 9 Executive Programme Office Resources.
- 10 Cinema at Saffron Walden Courtyards High School.

14 November 2004

- 11 Counter Fraud Partnership.
- 12 Employee Development.
- 13 Partnership in performance improvement statement.
- 14 TUPE Transfer of Staff.(to follow)
- 15 Corporate Capacity and Central Staffing Resources (to follow).
- 16 Staff Communication and Morale (to follow).
- 17 Home Computing Initiative.
- 18 Amended Travel Plan.
- 19 Any other business which the Chairman considers to be urgent.

Part II

(Para 1 of part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

- 20 Request for early retirement (to follow).

To: Councillors R P Chambers, A Dean, M A Gayler, R T Harris, V J T Lelliott, A J Ketteridge, A R Row, S C Jones, M J Savage and P A Wilcock

Lead Officer: Philip O'Dell
Committee Officer: Victoria Borges

MEETINGS AND THE PUBLIC

Members of the public are welcome to attend any of the Council's Committee meetings and listen to the debate. All agendas, reports and minutes can be viewed on the Council's website www.uttlesford.gov.uk.

Members of the public and representatives of parish and town councils are now permitted to speak at the meetings. You will need to register with the Committee Officer by 2.00 pm on the Friday before the meeting. An explanatory leaflet has been prepared which details the procedure and is available from the Council offices at Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow.

The agenda is split into two parts. Most of the business is dealt with in Part 1 which is open to the public. Part II includes items which must be discussed in the absence of the press or public, as they might deal with information which is personal or sensitive for some other reason. You will be asked to leave the meeting before Part II items are discussed.

You are entitled to see any of the background papers that are listed at the end of each report.

If you want to inspect background papers or speak before a meeting please contact

either Mick Purkiss on 01799 510430, Maggie Cox on 01799 510369, Cathy Roberts on 01799 510434 or Peter Snow on 01799 510431 or by fax on 01799 510550.

FACILITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Council Offices has facilities for wheelchair users, including lifts and toilets. The Council Chamber has an induction loop so that those who have hearing difficulties can hear the debate.

If you are deaf or have impaired hearing and would like a signer available at a meeting, please contact Mick Purkiss on 01799 510430 or email mpurkiss@uttelford.gov.uk as soon as possible prior to the meeting.

FIRE/EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

If the fire alarm sounds continuously, or if you are instructed to do so, you must leave the building by the nearest available exit. You will be directed to the nearest exit by Committee staff. It is vital you follow their instructions.

- You should proceed calmly; do not run and do not use the lifts.
- Do not stop to collect personal belongings.
- Once you are outside, please do not wait immediately next to the building.
- Do not re-enter the building until told to do so.

ITEM 4 - REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Committee: Health and Housing Committee

Date: 4 November 2004

Agenda Item No: 8

Title: Rent Deposit Scheme

Author: Judith Snares (01799) 510671

Summary

- 1 This report advises the Committee on the progress made to date regarding the feasibility of introducing a Rent Deposit Scheme (RDS) in Uttlesford and recommends that further work be undertaken in order for a scheme to be operative in 2005/6.

Background

- 2 In 2003 the Council adopted its Homelessness strategy. One of the key objectives is to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families and to ensure there is sufficient accommodation available for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. In this context the Government now measures Councils' performance against the target introduced in new legislation of limiting the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families only in emergencies and then for a maximum of six weeks.
- 3 Local Authorities are now expected to provide comprehensive housing advice and appropriate assistance not only to those who are statutorily homeless but also to those who are either intentionally or non statutorily homeless. Preventing homelessness is a high priority.
- 4 As part of the ongoing work by officers to consider different ways of assisting this client group the reintroduction of a Rent Deposit Scheme has been investigated. The Committee should note that a scheme of this type was operated in the District by the Cambridge based charity Wintercomfort but for various reasons this failed 3 to 4 years ago.
- 5 In order to show the Committee how a reintroduced RDS might operate a model of how it would enhance the current homelessness service is appended to this report. It shows a clear progression, for the client, from initial advice to being given real housing options.
- 6 This model would help meet the Council's duty regarding the provision of advice and assistance to all categories of clients who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and in some cases prevent the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 7 Through a RDS a number of people only previously supplied with advice could be helped to obtain accommodation within the private sector.

Currently any advice given on housing options within the private sector is limited by the client's ability to pay rent deposits which can be of 4 – 6 weeks rent in advance. For many of the client groups that approach the Council this amount of money is not achievable and therefore a RDS would create housing options that may otherwise be unaffordable.

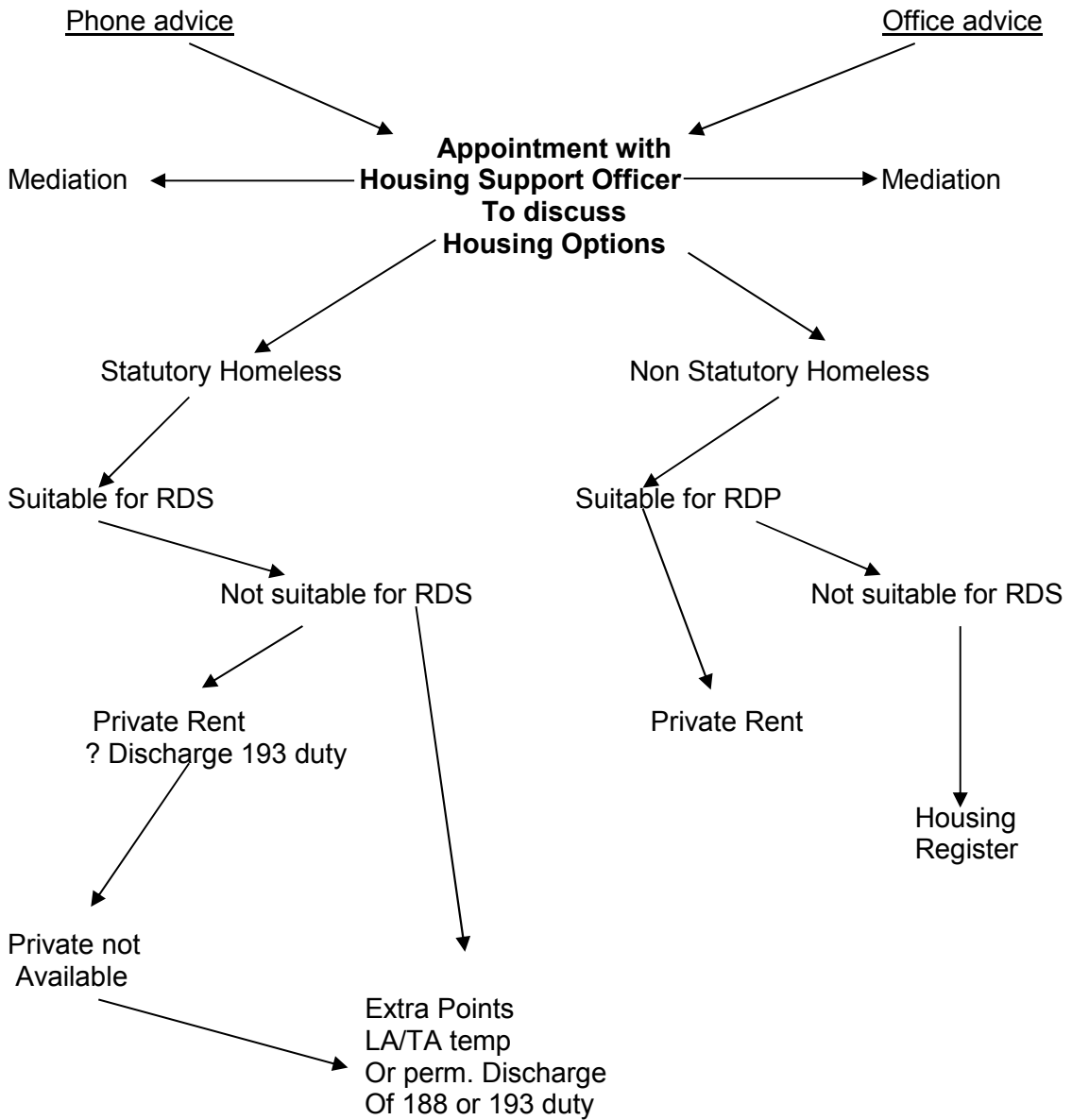
- 8 Research has been carried out to ascertain how Rent Deposit Schemes assist Councils in this Region and what type of scheme may be appropriate for Uttlesford District Council. This research has shown that Uttlesford is one of the few Authorities within the region that does not have a scheme. It appears that the various schemes currently operated have the same objectives but individual Councils tailor schemes to best fit their local situation.

The Way Forward

- 9 Discussions have taken place with local agents and landlords within the District and it is felt that there could be some prepared to commit to such a scheme. Should a scheme be agreed a great deal of promotion would be required and success could not be guaranteed. In an area like Uttlesford market conditions and the type of accommodation available for rent are very major factors.
- 10 Officers have initially looked at two models for running a scheme. One would be to pay a fee to an outside agent to run the scheme for the Council, with the Council making referrals of suitable candidates and providing the rent deposit guarantee but with the agent working with the clients and landlords to arrange the actual lettings.
- 11 The other option would be to run the scheme in house, this could initially be done within existing staff resources but there could be a staffing resource issue should it prove to be successful.
- 12 Either model relies on the careful vetting of clients to ensure that they are suitable for this type of scheme and the active engagement of landlords and agents through careful marketing and advertising of the scheme.
- 13 If the Committee is minded to agree that Uttlesford should look to introduce such a scheme then the Council would need to make provision of £25k from the General Fund for 2005/6. It should be noted that this issue has been inserted in the draft Housing Services Plan 2005/6. A further report on a possible scheme for Uttlesford would then be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee recommends to the Resources Committee that £25k be budgeted for a Rent Deposit Scheme in 2005/6 subject to a scheme being approved at a future meeting of this Committee.

Threatened With Homelessness



Committee **Resources Committee**

Date **18 November 2004**

Agenda Item No: **6**

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

Author: **Philip O'Dell (01799) 510670, Carole Hughes (01799) 510407, Michael Perry (01799) 510416, Mike Brean (01799) 510330**

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 are draft Service Plans, including spending pressures, prepared by those Executive Managers whose services are controlled by this Committee. The report also contains a full set of results from the Prioritisation Working Group set up by this 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 Plans
Appendix 3 Table of High/Medium and Low Priority Services
Appendix 4 Summary of staff briefing note on Prioritisation Exercise

Background

2. This Committee's 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.
3. The meeting 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			3,164,057
<u>Plus</u> Internal Charges			938,710
BASE DIRECT COSTS			4,102,767
Transferred to Environment Committee:-			
Q of L Plan P24 Mobile Recycling Units			-20,000
Transferred from/to Community & Leisure Committee:-			
Executive Programme Manager - Q of L (Part Year)			51,200
Q of L Plan P183 Tourism Marketing Plan			-5,000
Q of L Plan P184 Tourism Staffing			-9,370
Previously Reported Variations:-			
<u>Use of Earmarked Reserves:-</u>			
<u>Plus</u> Members Training		10,000	
<u>Plus</u> Land Registry		5,000	
<u>Plus</u> Corporate Training		8,000	
<u>Plus</u> IT Projects		10,000	
<u>Plus</u> Q of L Feasibility Studies		40,000	
<u>Plus</u> Q of L Temp Programme Assistant		6,000	79,000
<u>Changed Pattern in use of Reserves:-</u>			
<u>Less</u> Telephone Equipment moved to 05/06			-8,500
Variations funded from Reserves:-			
<u>Plus</u> Judicial Review of Gov't White Paper			50,000
Adjusted Base Direct Costs			4,240,097

Other Variations - Expenditure:-			
<u>Less</u>	Staffing Costs (net)	-100,200	
<u>Less</u>	Q of L deleted schemes	-50,000	
<u>Plus</u>	VFM Studies	5,000	
	- net savings not achieved		
<u>Plus</u>	Reprographics Contract	16,420	
	- understated budget		
<u>Plus</u>	Deeds Library increased costs	5,000	
<u>Plus</u>	Bank Charges increased costs	2,000	
<u>Plus</u>	Admin Review – saving not achieved	20,000	
<u>Plus</u>	Telephones savings moved to 05/06	11,000	
<u>Plus</u>	Insurance Premiums	8,060	
<u>Plus</u>	Software Charges	16,610	
<u>Less</u>	Housing & Council Tax Benefits (net)	-9,940	
<u>Plus</u>	Other (net)	-2,797	<u>-78,847</u>
Other Variations – Income:-			
<u>Less</u>	Fee Income – Legal Services	-15,000	
<u>Less</u>	Fee Income – Land Charges	-2,000	
<u>Less</u>	Rental Income – Dunmow Offices	-7,500	<u>-24,500</u>
Total Variation from Adjusted Base			-103,347
<u>Less</u>	ODPM Grant – E Government <i>(this will be adjusted below the line)</i>		-150,000
Direct Budget Total			3,986,750
<u>Plus</u>	ODPM Grant – E Government <i>(Revenue Contribution to Capital)</i>		150,000
Revised Estimate 2004/2005 – Direct Costs			<u>4,136,750</u>

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 DIRECT COSTS			4,102,767
Transferred to Environment Committee:-			
Q of L Plan P24 Mobile Recycling Units			-20,000
Transferred from/to Community & Leisure Committee:-			
Executive Programme Manager - Q of L			60,340
Q of L Plan P183 Tourism Marketing Plan			-5,000
Q of L Plan P184 Tourism Marketing			-14,360

	Previously Reported Variations:-		
	<u>Use of Earmarked Reserves:-</u>		
<u>Plus</u>	Land Registry	5,000	
<u>Less</u>	Q of L one off 2004/05	-45,000	
<u>Plus</u>	Q of L One off 2005/06	115,000	75,000
	<u>Other:-</u>		
<u>Plus</u>	VFM Studies (net) One off	5,000	
<u>Plus</u>	Q of L Corporate Plan	13,200	
	Online Procurement;		
<u>Plus</u>	- Essex Market Place Subscription	13,000	
<u>Less</u>	- Target Savings	-39,000	-26,000
			-7,800
	Adjusted Base Direct Costs		4,190,947
	Inflation:-		
<u>Plus</u>	Pay Award	84,080	
<u>Plus</u>	Other	27,870	111,950
	Other Variations - Expenditure :-		
<u>Plus</u>	Staffing – Annual Increments	20,750	
<u>Plus</u>	Staffing – Other (net)	-119,220	
<u>Less</u>	Q of L deleted schemes	-50,000	
<u>Plus</u>	Reprographics Contract	20,670	
<u>Plus</u>	Deeds Library Increased Costs	5,000	
<u>Plus</u>	Bank Charges	4,000	
<u>Plus</u>	Admin Review	20,000	
<u>Plus</u>	Insurance Premiums	4,120	
<u>Plus</u>	Housing Benefits Protection	38,000	
<u>Plus</u>	Audit Fees	20,000	
<u>Plus</u>	Other (net)	783	-35,897
	Other Variations - Income:-		
<u>Less</u>	Fee Income – Land Charges	-2,000	
<u>Less</u>	Rental Income – Dunmow Offices	-23,000	-25,000
			-60,897
	Total Variation from Adjusted Base		51,053
<u>Plus</u>	ODPM Grant – E Government <i>(this will be adjusted below the line)</i>		50,000
	Direct Budget Total		4,292,000
<u>Less</u>	ODPM Grant – E Government <i>(Revenue Contribution to Capital)</i>		-50,000
	Draft Estimate 2005/06 – Direct Costs		4,242,000

8 Apart from inflation, also included are amounts to cover other unavoidable variations such as those arising from contractual commitments, any projections for 2004-2005 identified last year, and variations in the planned property maintenance programme. Excluded are any items related to service changes, which would require specific Committee approval.

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

- 9 Fees and charges for this Committee will be examined prior to the next meeting, as part of any budget reduction exercise.

10 **Service Plans and Spending Pressures**

Appendix 2 contains the full draft Service Plans relating to this Committee's responsibilities. The Service Plans have been prepared by Executive Managers, meaning that there is not a complete fit to the Council's committee structure. The relevant Executive Managers will highlight those parts of their Service Plans relevant to this Committee at the meeting. These 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.

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

	Ongoing	One-off
	£000	£000
	from 05/06	
Temporary HR specialist	0	37
Consultancy re ECC framework	0	5
Staff Leadership/middle manager Programme	7	25
Employee Reward Scheme	40	0
Home Computing Initiative	0	75
Additional Steward	10	0
Education Fund	12	0
Customer care training initiative	5	3
HR consultancy/EMT development/Employee assistance programme	8	0
Flexi-time swipe card system-revenue costs of capital scheme	2	0
New accountant post	33	0
Strategic Development Advisory Group posts (net)	37	0
Improved payment facilities	0	15
Charter Mark application and Plain Crystal Mark	0	7
Public access channels-digital tv/kiosks	0	20
Credit Union scheme	3	0
Partnership with Pensions & Job Centre Plus	0	5
Partnership with Library Service/mobiles	0	3
Access to Services review implications, Including staffing and physical locations etc- initial budget provision. Figures will vary depending on option and will be part year for 2005/06	100	200
Support for Leader/CEX	50	0
Programme Office running Costs	<u>85</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	392	395

- 12 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. This 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, as put forward by other committees and covered in a later report on the agenda of this meeting.
- 13 A report elsewhere on this agenda gives details of any capital schemes relating to this committee. The revenue consequences of these schemes will be incorporated into the budget summary the Committee will be considering at this meeting.
- 14 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 are all included in the overall budget position reported on elsewhere in this agenda.

Prioritisation Process

- 15 Paragraph 3 of this report reminded Members that this 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

- 16 The nine themes outlined in paragraph 15 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.
- 17 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.
- 18 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.

- 19 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.
- 20 The report elsewhere on this agenda covering the Council's overall budget proposes using 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 put forward by committees, this is likely to involve this 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.
- 21 It is important to point out that any savings targets or funded spending pressures proposed by the this 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.
- 22 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
- 2 Approves charging of £50,000 in relation to the Judicial Review of the Government White Paper to the external legal fees earmarked reserve

- 3 Approves and comments as appropriate on the draft Service Plans relating to this Committee's activities, and in particular the new spending pressures identified
- 4 Notes the prioritisation analysis contained in Appendix 3

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

Committee: Resources
Date: 18 November 2004
Agenda Item No: 7
Title: Draft Capital Programme 2005-06
Author: Nick Harris (01799) 510313

Summary

- 1 In previous years it has been the practice to report the capital programme and funding details for the whole Council only to the Resources Committee. This year, individual Policy Committees have the opportunity to comment on and propose changes to the draft programme. This report therefore includes details only of schemes that are the direct responsibility of this committee. A report detailing the draft capital programme in full can be found elsewhere on the agenda.
- 2 This approach is consistent with resolution of the Resources Committee at its meeting on 23 September 2004 that a review of the Capital Programme takes place and a report be taken to all relevant Committees in the November cycle of meetings.

Capital Strategy

- 3 Members will be aware that the Council is required to prepare a Capital Strategy setting out the framework within which the use of capital resources – both financial and physical assets – can be co-ordinated and allocated in accordance with the Council's key objectives. Council approved the Strategy for submission to the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East) in July 2003. GO-East assessed the Strategy as "Good" meaning that the Council will not have to submit a Strategy in the future.

Prioritisation

- 4 The Capital Strategy requires all capital bids to be evaluated by a Capital Strategy Officer Group. Proposed capital schemes and projects are assessed by the Group against
 - The Council's key objectives and priorities.
 - Service Plans and Best Value Reviews.
 - The Prudential Code for Capital Finance.
 - Public Consultation Responses.

The Group are also required to consider:

- Whether the scheme is affordable.
- Whether the capital investment is prudent.
- Whether the project outcome is sustainable.

- 5 The prioritisation described above has not yet been applied to the bids identified in this report but it is considered that seeking input from Members at a relatively early stage will inform the process and help to minimise late submissions.

Asset Management Plan

- 6 Items relating to the acquisition of or improvement to Council buildings and other facilities are also included in the Asset Management Plan, a preliminary draft of which has been submitted to Go-East for initial appraisal.

Proposed Draft Programme

- 7 The detailed figures are attached at Appendix CP1.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee considers its 2005-06 capital programme and indicates any schemes and projects that it wishes the Capital Strategy Officer Group to evaluate.

Background Papers: Service Plans, Draft Asset Management Plan

Appendix CP1

Resources Committee

Appendix CP1

Draft Capital Programme 2005-06

<u>Project/Scheme</u>	2004-05 Estimate	2004-05 Revised	2005-06 Estimate	2006-07 Estimate	2007-08 Estimate	2008-09 Estimate
	£	£	£	£	£	£

Committee: Resources
Date: 18 November 2004
Agenda Item No: 8
Title: Council Draft Capital Programme 2005-06
Author: Nick Harris (01799) 510313

Summary

- 1 In previous years it has been the practice to report the capital programme and funding details for the whole Council only to the Resources Committee. This year, individual Policy Committees have the opportunity to comment on and propose changes to the draft programme. This report therefore includes details of schemes that have been considered during this cycle by these Committees. Minor corrections, amendments and updates to the previously presented figures have been included.
- 2 This approach is consistent with resolution of the Resources Committee at its meeting on 23 September 2004 that a review of the Capital Programme takes place and a report be taken to all relevant Committees in the November cycle of meetings.

Capital Strategy

- 3 Members will be aware that the Council is required to prepare a Capital Strategy setting out the framework within which the use of capital resources – both financial and physical assets – can be co-ordinated and allocated in accordance with the Council's key objectives. Council approved the Strategy for submission to the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East) in July 2003. GO-East assessed the Strategy as "Good" meaning that the Council will not have to submit a Strategy in the future.

Prioritisation

- 4 The Capital Strategy requires all capital bids to be evaluated by a Capital Strategy Officer Group. Proposed capital schemes and projects are assessed by the Group against
 - The Council's key objectives and priorities.
 - Service Plans and Best Value Reviews.
 - The Prudential Code for Capital Finance.
 - Public Consultation Responses.

The Group are also required to consider:

- Whether the scheme is affordable.
- Whether the capital investment is prudent.
- Whether the project outcome is sustainable.

5 The prioritisation described above has not yet been applied to the bids identified in this report but it is considered that seeking input from Members at a relatively early stage will inform the process and help to minimise late submissions.

Asset Management Plan

6 Items relating to the acquisition of or improvement to Council buildings and other facilities are also included in the Asset Management Plan, a preliminary draft of which has been submitted to Go-East for initial appraisal.

Proposed Draft Programme

7 The detailed figures are attached at Appendix CP1. As indicated in paragraph 1 above there are a number of amendments to previously advised figures:

Community Project Grants

At its meeting on 2 November the community and Leisure Committee resolved to recommend to the Resources Committee that additional funding of £16,000 be made available and ring fenced for the four main centres.

Emergency Radio System Replacement

Omitted from report to Community and Leisure Committee. The Committee was advised of this omission and resolved to include this item in its draft programme.

CCTV System – Essential Upgrade

The anticipated cost has reduced by £25,000 to £100,000.

Hill Street Conveniences – Refurbishment

Enhanced signage and the hire of temporary facilities until completion of the works will increase the scheme's cost by £3,000 to £74,000.

Light Van Replacement – General Fund

Omitted from Resources report.

8 This report addresses the General Fund schemes only. The Housing Revenue Account programme will be addressed as part of the consideration of the overall HRA budget and rent setting process. As indicated above the programme must be considered in the light of affordability and prudence.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee considers the 2005-06 capital programme and indicates any schemes and projects that it wishes the Capital Strategy Officer Group to evaluate.

Background Papers: Service Plans, Draft Asset Management Plan

Appendix CP1

Appendix
CP1

Draft Capital Programme 2005-06

<u>Project/Scheme</u>	2004-05 Estimate	2004-05 Revised	2005-06 Estimate	2006-07 Estimate	2007-08 Estimate	2008-09 Estimate
	£	£	£	£	£	£
<u>Community and Leisure Committee</u>						
Bridge End Gardens	173,200	173,200				
Bridge End Gardens Wall Replacement	30,000	30,000				
Cinema Provision at SWHS	80,000		80,000			
Community Project Grants	24,000	24,000	52,000	52,000	52,000	52,000
Stansted Skateboard Ramp	19,000	19,000				
Takeley Day Centre - Upgrade Heating			7,500			
CCTV System - Essential Upgrade			100,000			
Emergency Radio System			10,000			
	326,200	246,200	249,500	52,000	52,000	52,000
<u>Health and Housing Committee</u>						
Private Sector Renewal Grants	70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000
Disabled Facilities Grants	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000
Airport Noise Monitoring Equipment	6,000		21,000			

Hill Street Conveniences - Refurbishment	45,000	74,000				
	181,000	204,000	151,000	130,000	130,000	130,000

Environment Committee

Flood Relief Schemes	50,000	50,000				
Upgrade of Recycling Bring Sites			20,000			
Trade Waste Bin Replacements			20,000			
Depot Replacement - Great Dunmow			150,000	400,000		
Refuse Collection Vehicles	251,000	126,000	205,000	251,000	246,000	
Recycling Vehicles					126,000	
Street Cleansing Vehicles	56,000	56,000	95,000		125,000	
Mobile Recycling Unit	20,000					
Saffron Walden Cemetery - Gravestone Works			7,000			
Shire Hill Depot Improvements			20,000			
	377,000	232,000	517,000	651,000	497,000	

Transport and Highways Committee

Car Parking - Equipment	15,000	15,000				
Cycle Track	25,000		25,000	25,000		
Linking Green Lanes	10,000		10,000	10,000		
Surfacing Stansted Coach Park	35,000	35,000				
	85,000	50,000	35,000	35,000	-	-

Resources Committee

IT Programme

Intranet Developments	40,000	70,000				
-----------------------	--------	--------	--	--	--	--

FMS Replacement	100,000	100,000				
On line Booking System	10,000	10,000				
E Government Compliance	130,000	190,000				
First Point of Contact Review	120,000	180,000				
Members - Home Computing	20,000	20,000				
Revenues Best Value Review	25,000	25,000				
Minor Projects	20,000	20,000				
Records Management	45,000	45,000				
Replacement Server Programme	10,000	10,000				
Technical Strategy Implementation	20,000	20,000				
Partnership Funded Projects					170,000	
2005-06 Programme					150,000	
Additional Government Grant					150,000	
Works to Improve Access for Disabled People	35,000	35,000				
General Fund Premises Reinstatement	100,000	100,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
Extension of IT Network to Sheltered Housing					10,000	
Installation of Air Conditioning at London Road Offices					15,000	
Accommodation Works - Planning Staff		8,500				
Flexi - Time Swipe Cards					18,000	
Light Van Replacement - DSOs	54,000	36,000	35,000	30,000	50,000	65,000
Light Van Replacement - Gen. Fund	52,000	70,000	45,000	38,000	38,000	40,000
Total	781,000	939,500	683,000	158,000	178,000	195,000
Grand Total	1,750,200	1,671,700	1,635,500	1,026,000	857,000	377,000

Committee: Resources
Date: 18 November 2004
Agenda Item No: 9
Title: Executive Programme Office Resources
Author: Sarah McLagan (01799) 510560

Summary

- 1 This report updates members on progress to establish the Executive Programme Office (EPO) and provides justification for the provision of a permanent post and budget to assist the EPO with work to delivery projects emerging from the new Corporate Plan.

Background

- 2 In June, the Committee noted the responsibilities of the two Executive Programme Managers (EPM) - Quality of Life and Access to Services - and confirmed the establishment of a separate heading in the Resources Committee budget called "Executive Programme Office". It agreed to adopt a project management framework, which would be incorporated into the Corporate Plan review. It also agreed that a temporary Programme Assistant post could be created and that £40k be made available from reserves to fund initial options appraisals/feasibility studies in connection with Quality of Life theme projects in the Quality of Life Corporate Plan.
- 3 However, the Committee asked that a further report be presented to it in November 2004 that justified the need for a permanent Programme Assistant post and for a permanent budget to support the cost of option appraisals, feasibility studies and other activities to implement the projects emerging from the new Corporate Plan.

The Programme Assistant Post

- 4 During the summer, work was carried out to draw up a Job Description and get it evaluated for the post of Programme Assistant. As the timing of the conclusion of this work coincided with the summer holiday period, it was decided to delay advertising the post until September. During this period, work was also undertaken to appoint a Personal Assistant (PA) to collectively support the EPMs and the Executive Manager, Strategy & Performance. Funding for this post was to come from saving made by not filing a vacancy in Corporate Administration. However, there was no appropriate internal candidate to fill this post and, consequently, the decision was taken to advertise externally. Again, it was decided to delay advertising until after the summer holiday period.

- 5 In the meantime, the EPM (Access to Services) has been successful in securing a new position for another employer. The Chief Executive has recently confirmed the new arrangements for delivering Access to Services projects - deletion of the EPM's post and the consolidation of all of the IT functions under the management of the EM Customer Services.
- 6 Consequently, the functions of the EPO will be concentrated around projects emerging from the new Corporate Plan and corporate initiatives and objectives such as the Service Prioritisation exercise.
- 7 The EPM will require support to manage and develop the EPO. This support will be in terms of personal assistant (PA) functions and project management/programme office functions. It is suggested, therefore, that a person is appointed who can provide a combination of these two specialised functions.
- 8 However, the nature of Project Management is such that the support that is needed will fluctuate according to the level and type of work to be done. Consequently the job description will be written to reflect this and allow for the person to undertake alternative duties e.g. to provide central administration support, when there is less project management work to be done.
- 9 This approach would also allow the new Executive Manager, Strategy & Performance, to consider their own requirements for PA support within the context of their own staffing arrangements.
- 10 It is suggested, therefore, that the post of PA/Programme Assistant is created on a permanent basis at an estimated cost of £25,000 p.a. from 2005/06 and that the pro rata cost of the appointment in 2004/05 (approximately £6,000) be funded from reserves. The original funding that was envisaged from Corporate Administration has had to be used to support capacity shortfalls in the Human Resources unit.

Permanent Executive Programme Office Budget

- 11 The Committee required officers to provide it with a multi-year justification for the establishment of a permanent budget to meet the costs associated with implementing the Quality of Life Corporate Plan. Members will appreciate that the new Corporate Plan is currently being consulted on and projects and budgetary requirements may change leading up to its final approval in February 2005.
- 12 As Members will have seen in the Draft Corporate Plan, it is expected that most of the 58 projects will be delivered and funded from existing resources. However, there are (currently) 6 projects within the Plan that will require additional, one-off resources to employ additional capacity to help to progress them and enable Members to make decisions about whether to proceed with them. These projects are set out in the table below.

DCP Ref.	Action	Comments	2005/06 (£000)	2006/07 (£000)	2007/08 (£000)
People					
9a	Skills Audit of Members and staff to understand development needs	Expert needed to carry out this specialised work	10		
Customers					
12a	Evaluation of requirements to introduce Smartcard technology	Expert needed to carry out this specialised work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To share funding with regional, county and other key players. ○ £ still to be quantified ○ It is not yet clear which year the study would be carried out 	?	?	
12b	Identification of key public transport routes to identify need for provision of buses or other modes of transport	Expert needed to carry out this specialised work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shared partnership funding ○ £ still to be quantified ○ It is not yet clear which year the study would be carried out 	?	?	
13a/b	Arts/Cultural Industries Centre Study	Expert needed to carry out this specialised work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shared partnership funding ○ £ still to be quantified (Some of the work carried out to develop a new Leisure & Cultural Strategy can be used to inform the study) 	?		
Community					
18	Plan for both war and peacetime civil emergencies and terrorism, including the production of Business Continuity Plans	Expert needed to support the work to produce Business Continuity Plans	15		

DCP Ref.	Action	Comments	2005/06 (£000)	2006/07 (£000)	2007/08 (£000)
23d	In conjunction with ECC, SWTC and Wendens Ambo PC, carry out a study to ascertain how to develop a safe cycle way from Saffron Walden to Audley End Station	Expert needed to carry out this specialised work	?		
23e	Identify the opportunities to provide a Country Park facility in the district	Expert needed to carry out this specialised work (Some of the work carried out to develop a new Leisure & Cultural Strategy can be used to inform the study)	?		
TOTALS			60?	?	

- 13 Due to the specialist nature of some of the studies it is difficult to quantify their costs and, in some cases, it is not clear which year the work will be carried out. Therefore, it is suggested that the Council establish a revenue budget of £60k from which the Programme Office can draw funding to meet the cost of employing additional capacity, second an employee or to purchase expertise from other authorities or partner agencies. Should there be insufficient funding available to meet the cost of all of the 6 projects, officers will make a further report to the Committee.

Why the need for Additional Capacity?

- 14 Work to evaluate and draw conclusions about the prospect to progress with the above projects cannot be done in-house by staff. There is not the expertise in these fields. In addition, Members will appreciate that the Council does not have the capacity to release staff from day to day service delivery activities to carry out such studies. To enable the Council to deliver these projects, additional capacity can be achieved by the use of external experts, arranging secondments or by buying in expertise from other authorities or partner agencies that have specific knowledge and experience of the subject matter.
- 15 It will, however, be essential to provide a clearly defined brief/Terms of Reference to ensure that the required result is produced. The brief will need to be output/results based to ensure that the Council receives value for money.
- 16 Because of the specialist nature of the required work, it will be essential that the Council recruit a person with expertise and experience in the subject matter. Whether the person is employed on a short-term contract e.g. paid at

a day rate, or on a 3-6 month contract, the Council will still have to pay the going rate for their professional expertise.

- 17 It may be possible to buy-in some expertise and advice from other authorities, either through a secondment arrangement or by purchasing paperwork/documentation that they have produced that gives information about a similar example (e.g. as we did with our PFI documentation). There would still be a requirement, however, to employ a person with expertise to pull the information together and tailor it to our own project.
- 18 The principle of requiring the production of a study/appraisal of the options associated with a project is the basis of good project management practice. It is essential that the Council adopt a practice where it requires information regarding the feasibility of a project to enable it to judge whether or not it should be initiated.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1 the post of PA/Programme Assistant is created on a permanent basis at an estimated cost of £25,000 p.a. from 2005/06 and that the pro rata cost of the appointment in 2004/05 (approximately £6,000) be funded from reserves
- 2 a revenue budget of £60k be created to meet the cost of employing additional capacity to carry out the work to develop feasibility studies/options appraisals associated with projects in the new Corporate Plan.

Background Papers: Programme Office file

Committee: Resources
Date: 18 November 2004
Agenda Item No: 10
Title: Cinema at Saffron Walden County High School
Author: Sarah McLagan (01799) 510560

Summary

- 1 This report provides the Committee with details of the proposal to establish a Cinema at Saffron Walden County High School (SWCHS). It recommends that, subject to the establishment of a satisfactory partnership agreement with SWCHS to establish an independent trust to manage a cinema, the Council makes a contribution of £80,000 from the Capital Programme for the purchase of equipment for the Cinema and agrees to an ongoing revenue contribution of £5,000 per annum (Index Linked).

Background

- 2 The Quality of Life Plan has an objective to provide a Cinema in the Council Chamber, for which an allocation of £80k has been made in the Capital Programme. In June 2004 the Resources Committee agreed that the feasibility of establishing a Cinema in the Council Chamber was inappropriate and confirmed that further investigations should take place to consider whether a community cinema could be provided in partnership with SWCHS in their new multi-purpose hall, which is part of a £1.6m building project. It was agreed that the £80k should be rolled into 2005/06 and agreed in principle that it could be used to support the provision of a cinema at SWCHS.

Development of a "Cinema"

- 3 Since June, SWCHS has progressed with the building of the new development and work started on site in early October and is due to be completed in September 2005. The plans include for the provision of five new classrooms, an extension to the Schools library, staff facilities and a new multi-purpose hall in the style of an auditorium, which includes a projection/technical room at first floor level and has the potential to house professional standard 35mm projection equipment. This would enable a full cinema facility, showing current releases, to be provided.
- 4 The development of a cinema in the multi-purpose hall would require additional works and equipment, some of which could be covered by the £80k that the Council has allocated for the project. The additional works in question include –

- Auditorium style raked seating
- Cinema standard “black-out” to window and doors
- Acoustic finishes to walls and measures to reduce sound transmission
- Projection and Sound Systems.

5 The Council’s £80k would be used by SWCHS for the purchase of most of the above which is estimated to total £90k. The School would apply for funding from relevant sources to meet the remaining costs of £10k.

Operation of a “Cinema”

6 SWCHS has employed a freelance consultant (recommended by Screen East) to provide advice about how a cinema might operate at the School. The consultant has advised about a number of different options for the most appropriate vehicle to use to manage the facility, including the School itself, a commercial cinema operator and an independent trust. Based on this advice, the School and officers consider that the most practical and appropriate option is to establish a newly constituted, independent trust that would “lease” the auditorium from the School in return for the provision of a professional standard cinema facility. SWCHS would benefit from access to these facilities for teaching at non-public-use times.

7 The consultant has advised that, under the independent trust option, the most effective method of operating the cinema would be as follows –

- The cinema would be used as a public cinema facility on four consecutive evenings each week – Friday Saturday, Sunday and Monday - with additional matinee or early evening screenings on Saturday and Sunday and with scope to extend the screening programme during the school holiday periods
- Day to day management of the cinema would be undertaken by a part-time manager – they would be responsible for financial management, stock management and staff and volunteers and their training
- A part-time projectionist would be employed to run the projection/technical aspect of the operation
- The box office, kiosk sales and ushering would be undertaken by volunteers
- Programming and film bookings would be contracted out to an external provider
- Plant maintenance, cleaning and utilities would be provided by the School at cost.

8 The programme of films would be on the basis of the cinema showing one main title per week, occupying four evening screenings. The two matinee or early evening screenings would be targeted at identified niche audiences – U, PG, 12 cert. films and repertory films for senior citizens etc.

9 On the basis set out above, it is anticipated that the cinema would be able to secure mainstream films approximately 8 weeks after national opening. The

programme would be marketed through the production of a 2-monthly brochure, supported by selected local press advertising, poster displays etc. Use would also be made of the Council's website, the TIC/CICs and they would directly market the programme to the School's pupils.

Revenue Calculations

- 10 The consultant has calculated that the net cost of operating the cinema at SWCHS would be approximately £5k per annum. His calculations take into account -
- a. Predicted demand levels for the cinema at SWCHS, using standard analysis techniques and actual average audience admission data provided by 23 independent and broadly specialised cinemas across the UK
 - b. A 70:30 ratio split between the number of full-price and concessionary tickets sold
 - c. Income - based on the outcome of the above calculations applied to full ticket price of £4.50 and a concessionary ticket price of £3.50 (these charges are comparable to those made at the Haverhill Arts Centre). There would also be modest income from kiosk sales and on-screen advertising
 - d. Expenditure – accounting for film transportation and hire costs, the films booking agency fees, licences, insurances and the Performing Rights Society tariff payments, staffing, marketing, kiosk stock purchases and the lease payments to the School. It also includes a budget to meet the on-going cost of replacing/repairing equipment.
- 11 With regard to the levels of predicted demand for the cinema, officers have asked the School to employ the consultant to carry out some market testing work to be clearer about the level of use that local people would make of the facility. The Council is to pay for this work (£2k) which will involve people being asked whether and how frequently they would use the facility. Surveys will be carried out in Saffron Walden and in a couple of hinterland villages (e.g. Debden, Newport). In addition, the consultant will survey a small sample of residents in Thaxted, Stansted and Dunmow. The results of this work will be available to officers in mid December.

Partnership Implications for the Council

- 12 SWCHS wishes to secure a partnership agreement with the Council to establish an independent trust to manage a cinema. It is envisaged that this would be achieved through a binding agreement with the School and that the Council would have representation on the board of the independent trust. To enable the cinema auditorium to be developed to an appropriate standard, the School is asking the Council to contribute £80k from its capital programme to meet the costs outlined in paragraph 4/5 above. In addition, however, to enable the facility to operate as described, it is necessary for the Council to contribute an ongoing revenue contribution of £5k per annum (Index Linked).

- 13 The School has made it quite clear that it is not seeking to profit from its position. Indeed, it would contribute £7k per annum in-kind core support, requiring the independent trust to covenant any end of year surplus back to it, up to the amount that it has provided in-kind. In addition, the School has agreed to undertake all of the employment services for the two part-time members of staff on behalf of the independent trust.
- 14 Officers have advised the School that the partnership agreement must include clauses that deal with a situation where it has become clear that the operation is not going to be sustainable. It concurs with this requirement and agrees that, for example, neither the Council nor the School would “bail-out” the operation were the deficit to increase above the originally agreed level of revenue contribution. However, the agreement would also require both parties to use its best endeavours to secure another route to make the facility available to the public for the showing of films.
- 15 Officers understand that Saffron Walden Town Council has been asked to make a financial contribution to the project in terms of a one-off contribution towards the initial start-up period of operation and an on-going commitment to revenue costs.
- 16 In the middle of October, the School held a meeting with representatives from local organisations with an interest in promoting the town and its facilities – Saffron Walden Arts Trust, Saffron Walden Initiative, a local Film society – to consider whether there is support for the establishment of an independent trust to take the project forward. The attendees showed unanimous support for the proposal and agreed to meet again at the beginning of December and bring other interested people along so to discuss and progress the establishment of the independent trust and make commitments to doing so. Clearly, it is important that the Council provides a Member representative to attend at this and future meetings to establish the trust.

Conclusions

- 17 Clearly, if successful, this is an incredibly cost effective way for the Council to meet a long-standing desire/requirement of residents/young people/local film buffs for the provision of a cinema. The standard of the facility would be equivalent to other professionally run, independent cinema facilities, although it is acknowledged that it would not to the commercial standard of an Odeon or equivalent facility.
- 18 The proposal presents the ideal opportunity for the Council to achieve its objective to provide a cinema, but without the commitment that would be required if it were to seek to run it itself and/or from its own premises.
- 19 It is essential that there is an appropriate partnership agreement between the Council and the School, that they work together to establish the independent trust and that the Council and the School has representation on the independent trust to enable them to contribute to the development and management of the cinema facility.

- 20 To address potential criticism that Saffron Walden has been provided with a facility that many across the district would like to use, it is suggested that, through the partnership agreement with the School, the trust would be required to consider a mobile service to other appropriate venues in the district and opportunities to provide transportation to the facility at the School. These aspects would need to be investigated once the cinema is established/up and running and might require the Council to consider a financial contribution towards the costs associated with provision e.g. purchase of mobile equipment, subsidising transportation costs.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1 subject to the establishment of a satisfactory partnership agreement with SWCHS to establish an independent trust to manage a cinema, the Council contributes £80,000 from its Capital Programme for the purchase of equipment for the Cinema at SWCHS and agrees to an ongoing revenue contribution of £5,000 per annum (Index Linked) from September 2005
- 2 the Council appoints a Member representative to the Independent trust to operate the cinema facility.

Background Papers: Programme Office File

Committee: RESOURCES
Date: 18 November, 2004
Agenda Item No: 11
Title: Counter Fraud Partnership
Author: Michael Perry (01799) 510416

Summary

- 1 On 24 June, 2004 Members resolved to pursue a Counter Fraud Partnership with East Herts. District Council subject to satisfactory consultations with staff. This report is to advise Members of the outcome of the consultations and to recommend that the service is currently retained in house.

Background

- 2 Prior to 1 June, 2004 the Benefit Fraud Team fell within the IT and Benefit Fraud Section of the Council. With effect from 1 June, 2004 the Benefit Fraud Team was transferred to Corporate Governance.
- 3 Prior to the change of responsibility the Head of IT and Benefit Fraud had been engaged in negotiations with East Herts. District Council with a view to the Councils joining in partnership to carry out benefit fraud investigations and prosecutions. The outcome of those negotiations was reported to Members on 24 June, 2004. A copy of that report is appended for ease of reference.
- 4 It is understood that the manager concerned acknowledged at the Committee meeting that there had not been proper staff consultation. At that stage the team had effectively been reduced to one full time investigator and one part time administrator following the departure of one of the two investigators from the authority.
- 5 When staff were consulted it was clear that they were opposed to the partnership. The reason for this is that it was proposed that UDC staff would be relocated to East Herts. District Council offices and that the partnership would operate solely from that site. One member of staff was not prepared to relocate for personal reasons (she has in fact since relocated to a different department within the Council). The other member of staff raised objections on operational grounds. These may be summarised as follows -
 - a. A significant proportion of investigations should be triggered by referrals from the Benefits Section. Without being present on site so that there was frequent direct contact between Benefit Fraud Investigators and the Benefits Section it was felt that there would be a dramatic reduction in the number of referrals received. It was pointed

out (and acknowledged) that when the Fraud Section was based for a short period of time in the Lodge adjoining the Council Offices the working relationship between the Benefit Fraud Investigators and the Benefits Unit deteriorated and the number of referrals received was significantly reduced. The relevant officer voiced concerns that if the entire Fraud Team were based at Bishops Stortford referrals would all but dry up.

- b. The majority of East Herts. District Council's work does in fact come from referrals. East Herts. operate a system of scoring referrals and investigating those with higher scores first. If the number and quality of referrals from Uttlesford was not at least maintained this could result in very few Uttlesford cases being passed for investigation which would have an adverse effect on the subsidy recovered.
- c. Being based at Bishops Stortford would increase travelling time for carrying out investigations, particularly in the north of the district, thereby reducing the amount of time investigators can spend doing investigations.
- d. Interviews and the administration of cautions must be carried out where convenient to the customer which will involve two officers travelling from Bishops Stortford to either Great Dunmow or Saffron Walden whenever these activities needed to be carried out in respect of Uttlesford residents.

- 6 The Executive Manager – Corporate Governance shares these concerns. He has canvassed the issue of referrals with both the former line manager of the Fraud Investigators and the Executive Manager, (Customer Services) who is currently responsible for the Benefits Team. Both have agreed that there is a risk that the number and quality of referrals will decline if there is not regular contact between the investigators and the Benefits Section.
- 7 These concerns have been raised with East Herts. East Herts. are not prepared to operate the partnership jointly from Bishops Stortford and Saffron Walden but will only consider it if all staff are based at Bishops Stortford.
- 8 It has been established that Stevenage Borough Council and Hertsmere Borough Council operate Benefit Fraud in Partnership. However, investigators are based at both of the Council's offices with the Manager travelling between the two to supervise operations. The idea of all investigators being transferred to one site was apparently not considered for logistic reasons.
- 9 There are other issues which have emerged since UDC's restructuring has taken place. The first concerns the guarantee which East Herts. were prepared to offer with regard to subsidy. UDC has a subsidy target of £120,000 per annum. East Herts. were prepared to guarantee that at least 75% of that sum (£90,000) would be met and any deficit would be made up by East Herts. (It should be noted, however, that the income figure of £120,000

from subsidy is built into the Council's baseline budget). East Herts. have not confirmed that this offer is still being made. They point out (fairly) that when the partnership was first mooted and agreed Uttlesford would be taking to the partnership two experienced investigators and an administrative officer. Now Uttlesford is only in a position to bring one investigator. East Herts. asked that UDC should re-evaluate what it is now bringing to the partnership and what its expectations of the partnership are.

- 10 In the longer term there may be an issue with regard to the carrying out of prosecutions. East Herts. District Council use the services of a firm of solicitors for their prosecutions. (This firm was also used for benefit fraud prosecutions prior to January, 2002). UDC prosecutions are carried out in house by the Legal Services Team. Both the external solicitors and the Legal Services Team have excellent success rates in the courts. However, last year Legal Services carried out three times as many prosecutions as were carried out by the external solicitors in the last year they did work for this Council. The internal re-charge was one half of those solicitors costs for that period. Whilst East Herts. are content for Uttlesford prosecutions to continue to be carried out in-house by the UDC Legal Services Team for the trial period they are not prepared to commit to that should the partnership become permanent and have indicated that they may at that stage wish all prosecutions to be outsourced. It is not considered that it would be cost effective to take this course of action. Further, with benefit fraud officers based at the same site as the Legal Services Team there is instant access to legal advice which would not be available if the investigators were off-site or if external solicitors were used.
- 11 Although the former Manager determined to defer seeking a replacement for the investigator who left the Council pending a decision on the way forward with the partnership it is clear that whether or not the partnership goes ahead an additional investigator will be required. At the time of writing this report a recruitment process is underway and a verbal update will be given to Members at the meeting.
- 12 In discussions between the current investigator, the former administrator and the Executive Manager - Corporate Governance, a view has been expressed that a team of two full-time investigators could function without administrative support. Subject to the view of Members, if the partnership with East Herts. does not proceed it is intended to endeavour to run the section without administrative support for a trial period.
- 13 If the partnership does not go ahead there will effectively be no third tier management for the investigators. This means that the work formally undertaken by the team's third tier manager together with the work undertaken by the administrator would need to be shared between the investigators. Paragraph 8 of the report presented on 24 June, suggests that it has been difficult to generate work to occupy two full-time investigators and that the establishment could therefore be reduced by half a post. If that is the case then the investigators ought to have capacity to deal with the additional tasks involved. If they do not it may be necessary to recruit an administrator

on similar terms to the previous post holder.

- 14 Comparing the figures in Appendix 2 of the 24 June report assuming that the Counter Fraud subsidy target was met the difference between the partnership and an in-house service was £480 per annum. In the event that the partnership does proceed East Herts. have made it clear that it would expect UDC to fund an administrative post from the outset (in place of the post currently vacant here). If the service remains in house and the experiment is successful then there would be a net saving of £13,330 per annum to the Council.
- 15 In conclusion –
- a. The financial benefits to the Council of a partnership are at best marginal and depend upon the partnership producing £30,000 per annum more than the figure East Herts. are prepared to guarantee.
 - b. There are operational difficulties in UDC fraud investigators being based off site.
 - c. There are longer term financial implications in the event that UDC legal work was to be outsourced by East Herts.

RECOMMENDED that Members resolve not to proceed with the proposed partnership at this stage and continue with the provision of the Benefit Fraud Service in house.

Committee: Resources Committee
Date: 24 June 2004
Agenda Item No: 16
Title: Counter-Fraud Partnership
Author: John Mercer (01799) 510421

Summary

- 1 This report sets out options for the future management of the Council's Counter-Fraud function. It recommends the establishment of a formal counter-fraud partnership with East Hertfordshire District Council (East Herts) for an initial period to 31 March 2006.
- 2 The proposals in this report have been discussed with managers at East Herts. The agreement of East Herts Executive Board will of course be required before the partnership can be pursued further.

Background

- 3 Uttlesford's Counter-Fraud team was established in 1995. Its performance in identifying and preventing housing benefit fraud is one of the best in the country. In 2003/04 the following counter-fraud sanctions were issued where fraud was proven:
 - a. Prosecutions
 - b. Administrative Penalties.
 - c. Formal Cautions.

Additional housing benefit subsidy is awarded for each of the formal sanctions listed above.

- 4 The Council's counter-fraud arrangements were judged 'fair to good' by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) during a recent inspection. This is one of the highest scores awarded so far by the BFI. However, over the last two years it has been difficult to devote management time to running Uttlesford's Counter-Fraud team, as both the Head of IT & Anti-Fraud Services and the Principal IT & Anti-Fraud Services, have had to devote the majority of their time to IT-related work. As a consequence, discussions were entered into with East Herts regarding the possibility of establishing a counter-fraud partnership.

Option One - Partnership with East Herts District Council

- 5 It is considered that there would be a number of benefits to establishing an counter-fraud partnership with East Herts. These would include:-

- Adoption of the best counter-fraud practices of each council, for example UDC's proactive investigation techniques & East Herts' success with obtaining referrals from other council departments.
 - Reduction in management costs ~ by having one Counter-Fraud Manager responsible for both councils, management costs at both sites would be reduced.
 - Improved flexibility – the partnership would have the ability to direct staffing resources where they are most needed, for example, for targeted fraud drives.
 - Increasing capacity ~ although no direct cost savings would result from this proposal, it would free up management time to be spend on other Council priorities.
- 6 It is proposed that East Herts would be the lead authority for the partnership. The current Counter-Fraud Manager at East Herts would manage the partnership staff on a day-to-day basis, and would report to the Head of Revenues at East Herts. The current anti-fraud management (Adrian Webb & John Mercer) at Uttlesford would not be involved in the new partnership and their duties would be transferred to East Herts' Counter Fraud Manager.
- 7 Under Uttlesford's new management arrangements, responsibility for counter-fraud matters have been transferred to the Executive Manager – Corporate Governance. Although the Executive Manager would have no line management responsibility for the counter-fraud team, he would act as the client officer for Uttlesford. The role of the client officer would be to:
- Liase with the Counter-Fraud Manager, resolving any problems or issues that might arise.
 - Monitor the performance of the partnership, ensuring that agreed performance targets are being met, etc. It would be necessary to establish a formal Service Level Agreement between Uttlesford and East Herts.
 - Report counter-fraud related issues to Uttlesford's Members & Executive Management Team. It should be noted that it is not proposed to establish any form of 'joint-board' arrangement, as exists for the Internal Audit Partnership.
- 8 It is proposed that the partnership staffing levels should reflect the caseloads of the respective partners and trends in levels of fraud resulting from recent legislative changes. In particular, it is felt that there are opportunities for East Herts to increase subsidy & reduce the level of fraud within its district. Additional staffing would help achieve this and it is therefore proposed that its counter-fraud establishment be increased by one and a half posts. Conversely, it has been concluded that Uttlesford no longer needs two full-time investigators. It has been difficult to generate sufficient work in recent months to keep two full-time investigators occupied. This is mainly due to the

deterrent effect of previous fraud work, and the current high levels of employment in the local economy. Despite this, the team was able to get close to its internal performance targets in 2003/04 (£110,000 compared to a target of £120,000). It is therefore felt that the establishment can be reduced by half a post. It is also felt that current subsidy levels could be maintained, provided there is an increase in the number of referrals received from the Council's benefits team. Such referrals should form the majority of case work of a counter-fraud team. However, at Uttlesford, they account for only 32% of the team's workload (compared to a national benchmark of 70%). If referrals could be increased to these levels, by adopting the working practices of East Herts, it should be possible to retain existing subsidy levels and still reduce the staffing establishment. A proposed staffing structure for the partnership is attached as appendix one, along with details of existing staffing structures at both councils.

- 9 It is proposed that the whole team is based at Bishop's Stortford. This would make management of the team easier, and ensure that staff working on the Uttlesford caseload are not isolated from their colleagues. Consultation is presently taking place with staff on this issue.
- 10 Wherever staff are based, interviews under caution (IUCs) will still need to be carried out at a convenient location for the claimant. The option of using Bishop's Stortford for some of Uttlesford's IUCs may actually increase choice of locations for claimants.
- 11 It is proposed that the partnership is set up for an initial trial period to 31 March 2006. For the trial period, Uttlesford staff would remain on the Uttlesford payroll on their existing terms and conditions. Thereafter, if the partnership is made permanent, staff would transfer on their terms and conditions applying at the time, in accordance with the provisions of TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment Regulations) 1981).
- 12 The loss of internal counter-fraud staff will create one problem. There will no longer be any in-house resource to carry out internal, non-benefit related investigations, such as minor thefts from offices etc. It is recommended that this responsibility is transferred to the Internal Audit partnership.

Computer systems

- 13 The two councils operate different anti-fraud computer systems. As a longer-term objective it would be advisable, for cost, support and integration reasons, to consolidate on one of the systems. A view on the relative merits of the two systems would need to be taken during the trial period before the decision was taken.
- 14 Uttlesford and East Herts use different benefits and Council Tax systems (SX3 and Academy respectively). This is unlikely to change for the foreseeable future and consequently staff would need to receive training in both systems. They will also need training in both the document imaging systems currently in use. It will also be necessary to establish computer links

from the UDC system to East Herts and vice versa (dependent upon the working patterns of investigators).

Legal Issues

- 15 Partnership powers within the Local Government Act can be used to overcome any difficulties with East Herts carrying out work on behalf of Uttlesford. These powers have been used by the London Borough of Greenwich to provide counter-fraud services to the London Borough of Bromley, who do not have their own team. In particular, Greenwich use the LG Act powers to:

- Investigate Bromley's cases.
- Obtain access to Bromley's computer systems, case files, employees etc.
- Interview Bromley's claimants.
- Authorise RIPA requests for surveillance at Bromley.
- Attend court on behalf of Bromley.

It is apparent from discussions with the two councils that the partnership, which has been operational since April 2002, works well.

- 16 It is noted that East Herts use external solicitors for prosecutions. Uttlesford in contrast, use its in-house legal team. Both legal services are extremely professional and effective, with excellent prosecution success rates. Uttlesford would not be prepared to return to using external solicitors during the trial period. However, it is not felt that this should pose a significant problem for the partnership.

Financial Issues

- 17 It is important that there is no overall increase in costs to either Uttlesford or East Herts as a result of establishing the partnership. Furthermore, Uttlesford presently makes a net 'surplus' from fraud investigation i.e. the sanction subsidy received outweighs the direct costs of the Anti-Fraud team. Uttlesford can not afford to be any worse off as a result of the partnership. Consequently, the following is proposed:

- (a) Uttlesford reduce its baseline costs by cutting its establishment by half a post.
- (b) East Herts increase its subsidy income by employing additional staff, which in turn will generate additional caseload & subsidy, in excess of the employment costs. This approach has been used very successful at Uttlesford over a number of years.

- 18 Financial detail are attached as Appendix Two.

- 19 Sanctions subsidy would continue to be paid by the Department of Work & Pensions directly to the respective councils. However, for Uttlesford, there is an element of risk associated with this arrangement. Should the joint counter-

fraud team fail to meet the agreed subsidy targets, Uttlesford could be financially disadvantaged. It is proposed therefore to cap this risk by agreeing a minimum level of subsidy Uttlesford could expect from the partnership. It is proposed that this is set at 75% of the agreed target. If this level was not achieved, East Herts would compensate Uttlesford accordingly. Hopefully the need for such a safeguard would be purely academic. Conversely, should the team exceed Uttlesford pre-agreed target, East Herts would receive 50% of the additional sum.

Option Two – Retain service in-house

- 20 As an alternative, it would be possible to continue to run a team in-house. As previously stated, responsibility for counter-fraud services has been transferred to the Executive Manager – Corporate Governance. Line management responsibility could rest within his section although the amount of time that the postholder could devote to counter-fraud would be considerably less than the dedicated Counter-Fraud Manager under Option One. For this reason, it would not be possible to reduce the number of investigators from the existing level, as more management-type work would have to be carried out by the investigators. As one of the investigator posts is currently vacant, an advertisement would need to be placed for a full-time replacement.
- 21 For the team to continue to meet its targets under this option, additional measures would need to be put into place to ensure a higher level of referrals from the benefits team. Without this higher level of referrals, the counter-fraud team would struggle to meet its financial targets.

Conclusions

- 22 Establishing a counter-fraud partnership with East Herts would help to ensure that the current high quality of counter-fraud work is maintained. It would also enable the two councils to share expertise, use staff resources more flexibly and reduce management costs.
- 23 Alternatively, retaining the function in-house would retain direct control over the performance of the team, helping to minimise risks of financial targets not being achieved. However, the considerable advantages of joint working, as outlined in paragraph 5 would be lost. Also, more senior officer time would need to be devoted to the function than under option one. For these reasons, it is felt that option one, the creation of a counter-fraud partnership, should be pursued.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1 a counter-fraud partnership between East Herts and Uttlesford be pursued, for an initial trial period to 31 March 2006. The trial to start at the earliest possible date after appropriate committee approvals have been obtained.

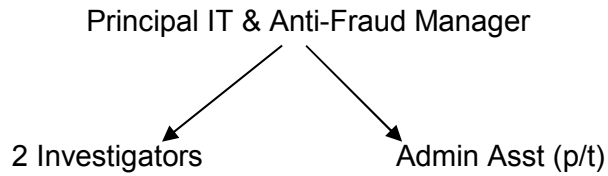
- 2 East Herts provide the management for the partnership.
- 3 the staffing structure in Appendix One be adopted.
- 4 a further report be submitted to the Committee before the end of the trial period, recommending long-term management arrangements.

Background Papers: None

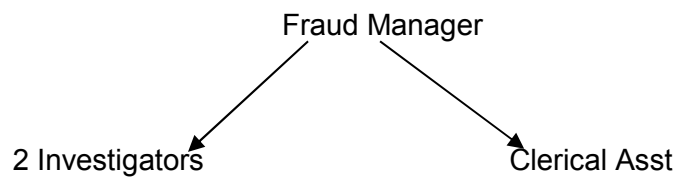
Appendix One

1. Current Staffing Structures

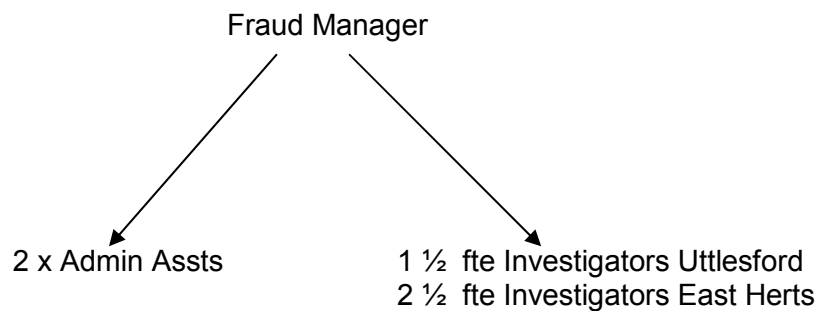
a. Uttlesford District Council



b. East Herts District Council



2. Proposed Staffing Structure



Background Papers: None

Appendix Two – Impact of Proposals on Costs

Option One – Partnership with East Herts District Council

	2004/05 Existing Budget £	2004/05 Revised Budget £	2005/06 Revised Budget £
Costs	0	8,470	14,520
Proportion (38%) of East Herts Counter-Fraud Manager ~ note 1			
Investigators x £30,000 each (maximum) Note 2	55,020	36,680	40,020
Admin Asst (P/T)	13,810	13,810	13,810
Direct Costs Note 3	10,500	10,500	10,500
Total Direct Costs	79,330	69,460	78,850
Subsidy	120,000	110,000	120,000
Counter-Fraud Subsidy			
Net Surplus	-40,670	-40,540	41,150

Notes

- The allocation of the Counter-Fraud Manager's costs is based upon the respective caseloads of the two councils ~ Further details are provided below.
- The costings take account of the current vacancy within the counter-fraud team, and the proposed reduction in the number of investigators by half a post.
- It is assumed, for the purposes of this report, that direct non-staffing expenditure will remain unchanged.

Caseload Statistics

	No of Cases	% of Total
East Herts District Council (HB & CTB)	9,000	62
Uttlesford District Council		
• Housing Benefit	2,400	38
• Council Tax Benefit	3,100	
	14,500	100

Therefore allocation of Counter-Fraud Manager's costs: 38% UDC & 62% EHDC

Option Two – Continuation of in-house service

	2004/05 Existing Budget £	2004/05 Revised Budget £	2005/06 Revised Budget £
Costs	0	0	0
Proportion (38%) of East Herts Counter-Fraud Manager			
Investigators Note a	55,020	46,680	55,020
Admin Asst (P/T)	13,810	13,810	13,810
Direct Costs	10,500	10,500	10,500
Total Direct Costs	79,330	70,990	79,330
Subsidy	120,000	112,000	120,000
Counter-Fraud Subsidy			
Net Surplus	-40,670	-41,010	-40,670

Note a. ~ for the purposes of this option, the cost of two full time posts has been included.

Committee: Resources
Date: 18 November 2004
Agenda Item No: 12
Title: Employee Development
Author: Carole C W Hughes (01799) 510407

Part 1

Summary

- 1 The ODPM Pay and Workforce Strategy emphasises the need for authorities to work together on local and regional activities in order to implement comprehensive and cost effective workforce / people strategies. It identified five priority areas critical to developing the local government workforce to secure the delivery of better and more efficient customer focused public services and the key area referred to in this document is:
 - a) **Developing Leadership Capacity** – among both officers and members.
 - b) **Developing the skills and capacity of the workforce** – across the corporate centre of authorities, specific services, management and the frontline workforce.
 - c) **Developing the organisation** – to achieve excellence in people and performance management, partnership working, equality and diversity and the efficient delivery of services.
 - d) **Resourcing local government** – ensuring that authorities recruit, train and retain the staff they need.
 - e) **Pay and Rewards** – Having pay and reward structures that attract, retain and develop a skilled and flexible workforce
- 2 Members are requested to consider the recommendations outlined below in support of developing employees, and leadership in particular on this occasion.
 - a) The purchase of a competency framework from Essex County Council (ECC) for £4000. Details for the framework will be sent out to Members separately to this report and available on a Power Point prior to the meeting.
 - b) If above agreed to purchase up to two days consultancy time from ECC to align the framework to Uttlesford District Council, at £450 per day.
 - c) Consultancy support, at £450 per day for up to 10 days, to the first cohorts of leaders in order to assist them to undertake a skills audit of their teams.

Background

- 3 Members are requested to consider the recommendations in support of developing a competency approach and to leadership development within the organisation.
- 4 The personnel, (now the HR) strategy stated that we will advise our managers and leaders of the behaviours and expertise we expect them to display to meet the current and future needs of the organisation and to reflect the principles outlined in the strategy and that we will offer training and development to our managers to meet these expectations. A competency framework will enable this.
- 5 As a small authority we could pay for external consultants to work with the organisation and develop a competency framework to meet our needs. Such an approach would be time consuming and costly when other options more partnership orientated are available to us.
- 6 We currently work in partnership or undertake joint work with Essex County Council. They currently have a framework that they are willing to sell to UDC, for a relatively small sum of £4000. I have been trying to obtain funding from the Employers Organisation to assist with the purchase but I have not been able to gain any or part support at this time. There may be an update prior to the meeting of Resources however.
- 7 ECC are able to provide consultancy at £450 per day in order to complete any work necessary to align the framework to UDC. This will ensure for example the language is appropriate to our use and issues such as the five themes are threaded through the framework.
- 8 If the framework is purchased it will be used to develop the appraisal scheme. At the same time it is anticipated that the appraisals will become more personal development plans aligned to meet the needs of both the individual and the future of the organisation. The framework will also be used to ensure core competency requirements are recorded and assessed on job descriptions and person specifications. It is anticipated any development of appraisals, personal development plans will have the full involvement of the cohort(s).
- 9 JMT have been consulted on a leadership development programme proposal developed by ECC in conjunction with the Executive Manager (HR). Please see attached for the proposed programme, it is yet to be amended following consultation but the 'flavour' will be the same. The first cohort will also be asked to feedback on the relevance, quality of consultants etc prior to other cohorts beginning their programme and it is anticipated that they will begin the programme very early in the New Year.
- 10 Each employee undertaking the leadership programme will be asked to be part or to lead/co lead on a task and finish group created to develop the organisation. For example Investors in People, Equal Opportunities or Reward.

- 11 In addition the JMT leadership development programme Members may be aware that the Essex group of authorities made a bid to the capacity building fund of the ODPM. The proposal was for a middle manager/future leadership development programme, to include mentoring and involving the Essex authorities as a group. The bid was successful and nearly £100000 obtained. UDC is now able to select two middle managers or leaders of the future who will attend the programme at a heavily subsidised rate of £1000.
- 12 Attendance at both programmes includes an expectation that the learning will be transferred to the work place. Evaluation will take place and is likely to follow Kirkpatrick's four levels model:
- How did the participants react to the programme?
 - What did the participants learn?
 - What are the longer term effects on job performance?
 - What has been the organisational impact?

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) Members approve the purchase of a competency framework from Essex County Council (ECC) for £4000, and if agreed that
- 2) Up to two days consultancy time from ECC be purchased to align the framework to Uttlesford District Council. At £450 per day.
- 3) Members note the success of the ODPM bid and agree an additional £2000 be made available to support to middle managers/future leaders to attend the new Essex wide programme.
- 4) Members approve consultancy support, at £450 per day for up to 10 days, to support the cohorts of leaders undertake a skills audit of their teams.

Part 2

Summary

- 1 Members are requested to consider the creation of an index linked education fund of up to £12,000 per year to support employees gain qualifications and accreditation in professional and technical areas that are relevant to the business and service needs of the Council.
- 2 In support of Life Long Learning Members are also requested to support the offer of interest free loans, under the rules of the Inland Revenue to enable employees to train and attend courses in areas which are not work related but are of interest or importance to them.
- 3 If Members agree to 1 above they are further asked to agree the recommendation that EMT working with JMT identify the areas to be supported, the maximum amount to be supported and to set any policy or procedure that will be followed.

Background

- 4 An unstructured and ad hoc approach currently exists to support employees gain qualifications or accreditation. Some areas such as environmental health have supported team members to gain environmental health qualifications. Planning offered employees the opportunity to apply for a trainee planning officer post and day release to undertake the necessary planning qualification.
- 5 There is no structure or focus to such support and dependent upon which team an employee sits depends on whether there will be a budget large enough to support further education. It is suggested that this is neither equitable nor is it structured towards the meeting the current and more importantly the future needs of the organisation.
- 6 Currently anyone offered supported funding is required to pay the funding back to the Council on a reducing 1/24 amount if they leave UDC within 2 years of completing the course. Anyone failing to complete is also required to repay funding to the Council. It is not suggested that this situation changes.

Proposal

- 7 If members agree to create a fund in support of employees gaining technical and professional qualifications required by the organisation or which will enhance the service delivery of the Council then support is requested for two possible avenues of support:
 - a. 100% funding, up to a yet to be identified amount*, plus supported structured time off, to gain qualifications both professional and technical which are required by the organisation to perform its core functions. This may be for example in especially hard to recruit areas such as planning or training and accreditation toward Corgi gas registration. It should also be in areas senior managers are aware are developing and may be problematic within 3 years.
 - b. 50% funding plus some supported structured time off to gain qualifications the organisation recognises but where the area is not hard to recruit to nor hard to retain employees and there are no future issues identified. Any time off to be offered on a 50/50 basis unless there are service needs which preclude support.

* MBAs could cost up to £15000.

- 8 In addition to the above and in support of Life Long Learning it is recommended that Members agree the use of reserves to provide interest free loans, within the rules of the Inland Revenue to enable employees to gain qualifications and accreditation in areas that are non work related. No time off to be offered in these occasions. It is recommended that the period of repayment be based on the length of the course for example each 12 months toward a degree in astronomy be repaid over 12 months via deduction from payroll.

- 9 Where the Inland Revenue rules prevent an employee accessing an interest free loan it is recommended that Members offer an alternative on the same interest rate as that applied to car loans at any time.
- 10 By taking the above actions the organisation will support employees to develop their careers, gain qualification and accreditation and will support succession planning. It is likely to increase staff retention and may attract future applicants to us too.
- 11 The restructuring and the prioritisation exercise Members are undertaking has and will continue to cause some employees concern over the future. Although Members and the Chief Executive have expressly advised that there is no intention to reduce employee numbers there may be a need in the future to realign the skills and knowledge of employees towards the areas of Members focus. Ensuring that employees have the opportunities to develop the professional and technical expertise the organisation wants for the future may alleviate some concerns employees have.
- 12 Although it is suggested that the fund be called an education fund it is not suggested that any panel allocating the fund assess on the value of the qualification rather it should assess the relevance of the area of qualification or accreditation to the high priority areas of the Council. For example it will be important to ensure that qualifications leading to degrees or diplomas etc do not take priority over funding toward for example an NVQ level 3 in a high priority area.
- 13 Naturally any funding offered will be due to repayment to the Council as is currently the case if the employee leaves within two years of completing the qualification.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) Members support the creation of an £12000 education fund and
- 2) If 1 above is agreed that they task the Chief Executive and the Executive Managers to identify the core areas for 100% funding during 2005/6 and to create an assessment panel, reporting to Members on outcomes.
- 3) Members support the use of Reserves to provide interest free loans, following Inland Revenue rules in support of Life Long Learning and if agreed, that
- 4) Where the Inland Revenue rules prevent an employee accessing an interest free loan Members support the use of Reserves to offer a loan on the same interest rate as car loans

Committee: Resources
Date: November 2004
Agenda Item No: 13
Title: Partnership in Performance Improvement Statement
Author: Carole C W Hughes on behalf of the Local Joint Council
(01799) 510407

Summary

- 1 This report is written on behalf of the Local Joint Council (LJC). The attached statement (Appendix A) is a statement of Partnership in Performance Improvement, which was agreed by the Regional Council, encouraging partnership working in the pursuit of performance improvement. The Statement is recommended to Members by the Local Joint Committee and Members are requested to support the document and recommend adoption by Council.

Background

- 2 At the February 2004 Meeting Unison asked Members of the LJC to consider committing to the Partnership in Performance Improvement statement. The statement was agreed by the Regional Council at the start of the Best Value regime, to endorse the principles and good practice of partnership working throughout the Best Value process. It was subsequently reviewed and broadened to encompass partnership working generally, specifically between employers, employees and trade unions.
- 3 It was agreed that it appeared to be consistent with the aims of the Council. Following further opportunity to consider the statement, it was agreed at the May meeting that the final version of the statement by approved for submission to Members for adoption.

RECOMMENDED that

1. Members agree the attached statement: 'Partnership in Performance Improvement, and if agreed
2. recommend its adoption by Council.

Background Papers:

Attached Appendix A statement: Partnership in Performance Improvement
LJC Minutes

Partnership in Performance Improvement

The importance of engaging the local government workforce and their trade unions as full and equal partners in reviewing and continuously improving local government services is recognised in Government advice and in the NJC. Framework Agreement. Irrespective of national advice, it simply makes sense for the workforce and their trade unions to be fully involved throughout the process of review and change as we seek, in partnership, to achieve higher standards of public service.

The Regional Council is aware of many examples of good practice and effective partnership working in the Region. At times, however, it seems that the full involvement of the workforce and trade unions is patchy, for example commencing too late in the process or being inconsistently maintained during the progress of reviews, procurement exercises etc.

The Regional Council encourages full and consistent partnership working in the pursuit of performance improvement. This should include, for example:-

- discussions with TU reps about training and/or briefing needs before the commencement of significant reviews, procurement exercises or inspections.
- in service reviews, encouraging the full participation of front-line employees and their trade union representatives throughout the process, from the design of terms of reference for the review to the implementation of improvement plans.
- in procurement exercises:- encouraging full participation throughout the process from options appraisal to the application of the "Workforce Code of Practice" in implementation issues.
- in Comprehensive Performance Assessments:- encouraging full participation throughout the process from early preparations for the inspection process to the development and implementation of improvement plans.

A vital part of any of these exercises is communication and the provision of necessary information. The Regional Council recognises that, at times, there can be problems in providing full information - for example, information relating to bids and final negotiations with prospective partners can legitimately be considered to be commercially confidential and trade union representatives are urged to recognise the difficulties faced by authorities in such situations. Equally, where such situations arise, authorities are urged to seek agreement on confidentiality with appropriate trade union representatives rather than automatically to preclude their participation or access to information.

The Regional Council encourages all authorities and their trade union representatives to endorse these basic principles of partnership working.

Committee: Resources
Date: 18 November 2004
Agenda Item No: 14
Title: TUPE transfer due to Highways Local Service Agreement (LSA)
Author: Carole C W Hughes (01799) 510407

For Information

1. For information reports are not normally provided to Resources Committee but due implications of the new Highways LSA it was felt important to brief Members.
2. In February this year UDC was advised by Essex County Council (ECC) that the Highways LSA was being terminated by them as of April 2005. The letter advised of a termination of a Highways Agency agreement and not a Road Safety Agency agreement that we actually hold with them. Unfortunately since February ECC does not appear to have sent anymore correspondence we have not been requested to provide information regarding the implications on how we spend the funding nor how we staff the service. It was therefore not apparent that staff involved in the Road Safety LSA would be affected.
3. In July this year, due to a combination of officers from UDC prompting responses from ECC, UDC was advised that ECC had not realised that two members of staff from UDC were affected and had had been omitted from the list of TUPE transfers and ECC HR had to catch up. Work began involving the two members of staff, the two HR teams and Unison and we believe we are up to date and at the same stages as all of the other authorities similarly affected.
4. The purpose of this report is therefore to advise Members that due to the termination of the Highways Agency LSA funding two members of staff will transfer to Essex County Council on 1 April 2005.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that

1. Members note the above information and
2. Advise the Executive Manager HR if they require further updates in due course.

Background Papers: Highways LSA information, Transport and Highways Committee Minutes

Committee: Resources
Date: 18 November 2004
Agenda Item No: 15
Title: Central and corporate staffing issues
Author: Alasdair Bovaird (01799) 510400

Summary

- 1 This report addresses the instruction given by council on October 19 2004 in relation to the creation of the Strategic Development Advisory Group for a further report on staffing issues in support of that group. It also sets out some issues that have become apparent over the last eleven months in relation to staffing levels at the centre of the organisation.

Background

- 2 At its meeting on October 19, council considered a report recommending the establishment of a Strategic Development Advisory Group with dedicated officer support. While agreeing the proposals, the council also passed a resolution that:

New posts as identified in paragraph 10 of the report be agreed and that the Chief Executive bring a report back to Resources to fully resolve the officer structures.

This report seeks to meet that obligation.

- 3 Additionally, however, there is also a need to ensure that the officer requirements of the Chief Executive's Office and the officer support available to members are identified as issues to be considered during the current budget process.

Strategic Development Advisory Group

- 4 The officer support identified in the SDAG proposal was for two additional posts:
 - A Research Officer (who will be 50% funded by the Uttlesford Primary Care Trust) to ensure that the appropriate level of information and briefing is available to support the work of the group, and
 - An Administrative Officer to assist the Research Officer and the rest of the members and officers involved in the activity to carry out the work of the group smoothly.
- 5 Other officer support would be made available from existing staff on a planned basis. The lead officer for the group would be Roger Harborough.

- 6 The estimated annual cost to the council of the additional posts would be £37,000. A recruitment process is being started for the appointment of these posts, but it is unlikely that either will be in post before 1 January 2005. On the assumption that this is the case, then the cost of these posts in the current financial year would be approximately £9,250 for salaries and on-costs and around £1,200 recruitment costs, giving a total in-year cost of £10,450.
- 7 These posts will be located within the Strategy and Performance Unit and will be managed by the Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance). An appointment panel is meeting on November 17 2004 to appoint the new Executive Manager.
- 8 The costs of the posts in 2004-5 can be met out of the savings that have accrued due to the continued vacancy in the post of Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance), and will be built into the base budget for future years.
- 9 Compensatory savings will be sought from the overall organisational budget for the ongoing costs of these positions. It will not be necessary to draw on reserves to fund these positions. They will form a part of the Strategy and Performance Unit and will be budgeted for within that part of the organisation. As such, they will be able to make a contribution to improving the overall corporate capacity of the council as well as the priority role they will have in relation to the Strategic Development Advisory Group.

Central Support Staff

- 10 In the last eleven months it has become clear that the corporate core of the council is under-resourced for the demands being placed upon it.
- 11 This is evidenced by:
 - Unrealistic scheduling demands being placed on leading officers and members;
 - Difficulties in ensuring that those representing the council in wider forums do so with the appropriate briefing material and advice at hand;
 - Difficulty in getting 'ahead' in terms of communicating with the wider Uttlesford community, but also with the provision of briefing material to members and officers within the council to keep them up to date with developments inside and outside the council.
 - A continual tension between meeting the needs of the organisation itself – responding to queries, dealing with service issues – and being in a position to respond effectively and contribute to the wider agenda – regional planning, national policy development, the Gershon review, the Children's Bill, local area agreements etc.

It is fair to say that this difficulty has been acutely felt by both the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council, but also by other members and Executive Managers.

- 12 If UDC is to operate effectively in the interests of the wider community, then this issue must be addressed. However, the purpose of this report is not to seek specific authorisation or budget for additional support at this stage, but to draw to members' attention that this is an area that will need to be addressed.
- 13 Specific proposals to deal with the issue include:
- That the current arrangement whereby the Chief Executive and leader of the council share a PA be discontinued and that the current PA work full time for the Chief Executive.
 - That resources be identified to appoint a PA to the Leader of the Council on a part-time basis.
 - That a new 'Executive Assistant' post be created (further detail below).
 - That the overall availability of support to members be reviewed – with a view to considering whether the current resource (one part-time officer) is sufficient to meet the current and anticipated needs of members.

Executive Assistant role

- 14 The purpose of this role would be to support the policy and managerial roles of the Chief Executive particularly in relation to the corporate management of the council and support to elected members.
- 15 Particular duties would include: to maintain an overall awareness of the developing external agenda, ensuring that timely briefing material is available to the Chief Executive, managers and members.
- To follow up agreed actions in support of the political and strategic management of the organisation and to ensure that – in the absence of the Chief Executive – members are able to obtain authoritative advice on service or policy queries.
 - To provide a confidential support service to the Chief Executive including external liaison, work with Members and senior officers of UDC
 - To carry out specific projects for the Chief Executive, as necessary, research, writing of briefs, negotiation and liaison to identify options.
- 16 This is a development role and it is expected that it will be filled by secondment from within the organisation. It will provide an opportunity for a staff member to gain exposure to a wide range of corporate issues and might be particularly targeted at those who are considering the step from operationally-focussed roles into more managerial and/or corporate roles.
- 17 The resources required for this post would depend on an evaluation process and would also need to include an amount allocated for supporting personal development within the post.

Next steps

- 18 All of the proposals in this section need to be more fully considered and costed. It is proposed that this be done within the context of the overall budget process, recognising that the provision of effective capacity to deliver corporate and community leadership is an issue that has not received adequate investment in the past.
- 19 It is therefore suggested that the Chief Executive, the Executive Manager (Human Resources), the Executive Manager (Corporate Governance), the Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) and the Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) once appointed, be charged with developing detailed proposals and costings and bringing a detailed report back to the Resources Committee meeting on January 27, 2005.

RECOMMENDED that this Committee:

- 1 Note and agree the arrangements for officer support to the Strategic Development Advisory Group as set out in paragraphs 4 to 8.
- 2 Note the proposals for changed support arrangements in the corporate core, and request the further report detailed in paragraph 17 above.

Committee: Resources
Date: 18 November 2004
Agenda Item No: 16
Title: Staff attitudes and opinions
Author: Alasdair Bovaird (01799) 510400

Summary

- 1 During the late summer and early autumn two parallel exercises were undertaken within the organisation to assess staff opinions and attitudes. These were independent exercises and were not informed by each other. Reports of the results of these two activities follow in this report. A proposed Action Plan has been agreed between management and Unison and was considered by the Local Joint Committee at its meeting on 10 November.

Background

- 2 The two exercises which were carried out were:
 - Staff were invited to attend meetings with the Chief Executive in small groups (approximately 15 invited to each meeting).
 - At the same time, Unison prepared a questionnaire which they distributed to all their members.

Staff group discussions

- 3 Between August 13 and September 16 2004, the Chief Executive met small groups of staff to discuss their current experience of working for Uttlesford District Council, their experience of the restructure and new arrangements over the last few months.
- 4 Altogether 21 such sessions were held with staff being invited to attend by the allocation of invitations so that each session were drawn from a cross-section of services. 228 staff in total attended one of the sessions.
- 5 It was made clear to staff that what was said within the meetings would remain private to those meetings: in the sense that nobody would be quoted by name, though the issues raised would be recorded and reported as part of the exercise.
- 6 The table in Appendix 1 sets out some of the comments made, clustered according to the issue that was being discussed as an attempt to give some flavour of the nature of the discussion. Some of the issues raised were capable of immediate response, and where that was the case, the response is given in the table.

- 7 In the table, the left hand column represent what staff in the meetings said. I don't necessarily agree with all of them – and there are, as you would expect contradictions in the different things that staff said in their meetings. I have not attempted to water down the comments in any way, but unless they are enclosed in quotation marks the comments are a paraphrase of things that have been said – sometimes by more than one person, often by many individuals – rather than a direct quotation.
- 8 The right hand column in the table are the Chief Executive's comments.
- 9 Every member of staff received a copy of this report on or shortly after October 6, and were asked to comment by October 22. In particular, they were asked the following questions.
- Are there things here you don't understand, or recognise?
 - Do you think I have captured accurately what was said?
 - Are the actions suggested right? What more could we do?
 - Is there anything else you want to say?
- 10 The findings were also the subject of a presentation to the Joint Management Team meeting which took place on October 6. In the event only a limited number of comments from staff were received – and where appropriate these comments have been incorporated into the comments in the appendix.
- 11 Staff were also asked what they thought of the exercise – whether it was worthwhile and how it could be done differently/better. The overwhelming response was that the exercise was worthwhile and the intention to repeat it annually was welcomed. Some staff rightly wished to suspend judgement until they could see whether action followed to deal with some of the issues raised.

The Unison questionnaire

- 12 Unison at a meeting of its Executive Committee on 17 August 2004 took the decision to carry out a questionnaire of its members to gauge their concerns following the restructuring in June. This was done because of the perceived general lack of morale amongst staff as well as complaints arising from the restructuring that had been received by various members of the Executive Committee.
- 13 Of 145 questionnaires distributed, 115 were returned – a good response rate – representing the views of approximately one-third of staff in the council.
- 14 The results of the Unison questionnaire are tabulated in Appendix 2 to this report.

Discussions since the exercises

- 15 The Executive Management Team discussed both sets of findings at its meeting on November 1. A Unison representative was present and contributed to the discussion. From this meeting a draft action plan was prepared.

- 16 The Chief Executive and Unison Officials met on November 8 to agree the details of the action plan. The draft plan had been discussed between these two meetings by members of the Unison Branch Executive.
- 17 The Action Plan was reported to the Local Joint Committee at its meeting on 10 November. The LJC endorsed the plan, with particular emphasis on the need for effective communication within the organisation.
- 18 It is therefore the case that the Action Plan in this report has the endorsement of both staff representatives and management. It is now presented to members for endorsement.

Action Plan

- 19 The actions agreed fall into six main sections. These are set out in the table below.

Section	What was the issue?	What will be done about it?
Attitudes	We don't have enough systematic or regular information about the views of staff about working for Uttlesford.	We will circulate to all staff a brief questionnaire every six months so that we can establish an authoritative baseline of staff views and track the movements in those views. This would be actioned by the Chief Executive with the support of Carole Hughes and a representative from Unison.
Bullying	There were some figures which gave cause for concern in the Unison questionnaire about bullying. Although these figures were suggesting that the problem was reducing it is alarming that it appears as an issue at all.	UDC must have a zero tolerance approach to bullying and this approach will be advertised widely to all staff, together with how those affected can access help. Meanwhile, Unison will be asked to advise on any other information they can provide on the issue consistent with their duty of confidentiality to their members.

Section	What was the issue?	What will be done about it?
Communication	Both exercises, in common with other sources, identified communication as an issue of concern. Actions have been identified to address these issues, but there is clearly much work to do on this front.	<p>Get out more – the Chief Executive and EMT should be more visible in the organisation</p> <p>Get some basic documentation in place – structure charts, phone books etc.</p> <p>Properly structured newsletters – let’s do them like we mean it: regular, informative and readable</p> <p>Ensure that there is an effective and consistent system of team meetings to ensure good two-way communication.</p> <p>A clearer sense of purpose – communicate the goals of the organisation through the corporate plan, face to face sessions with staff, individual objective setting</p> <p>Listen – create more opportunities to hear what staff’s concerns are, and how they feel. I will continue to have open door sessions, will repeat this exercise next year, will have staff meetings, but I would like to emphasise that anyone should feel able to make an appointment to come and see me if there is anything (anything!) that you would like to discuss or bring to my attention.</p> <p>Make EMT more accessible – individually we could all get out more, collectively we do already circulate minutes so you can see what we are up to, but we will also be setting aside one meeting every six months for the staff to set the agenda. Announcements will follow soon.</p>

Section	What was the issue?	What will be done about it?
Communication (cont.)		<p>It should also be made clear that if Unison wish to have an item discussed by EMT then they have the right to get that issue on the agenda, and that a Unison representative will be invited to join EMT for the discussion of the issue.</p>
Development	<p>The organisation's approach to development, appraisal, promotion and reward is fragmented and in some cases under-resourced. This needs to change and proposals are being developed.</p>	<p>The Executive Manager (Human Resources) is reporting to Resources Committee on November 18 with proposals on these issues.</p> <p>We will continue to discuss this issue widely and seriously over the next three months, the aim being to develop a serious programme of action by the new year. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new understanding around reward and recognition that ensures transparency and equality of treatment of all staff; • A more flexible system for recruitment and promotion; • Increased opportunities for training; • A structured approach to development, appraisal and objective setting, which will offer opportunities to staff to develop their own capabilities and careers in a positive way and will include the proactive management of performance at a team and individual level by management.

Section	What was the issue?	What will be done about it?
Employment	Staff reported a number of concerns about the terms and nature of their employment: an over-reliance on bureaucracy, concerns about security, lack of flexibility available to managers.	<p>Staff at the council need to be given reassurances about the security of their employment. There are roughly 340 staff employed by UDC – it is expected that these numbers will remain broadly static over the medium term, though there will of course need to be changes in the nature of the jobs required and the way in which they are organised.</p> <p>Security will depend on the ability of individuals to develop in ways that allow them to continue to contribute to the changing agenda.</p> <p>We will produce a revised staff handbook which will present a concise summary of the guideline within which staff and managers operate – this will replace the Personnel Policy Notes with a more accessible form of guidance, together with clarifying the scope of managers to apply their discretion in dealing with staff issues.</p> <p>There are two specific pieces of research which we need to carry out, and HR will be asked to lead this work in conjunction with Unison:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking the size and nature of our workforce against similar authorities in other parts of the country (there is strong anecdotal evidence that we are under resourced in comparison to similar authorities).

Section	What was the issue?	What will be done about it?
Employment (cont.)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="973 291 1418 694">• We need to conduct an across-the-board review of our pay strategy. Again, there is anecdotal evidence that we are underpaying in relation to our peer group but we need to have clear evidence of where we stand to enable a future policy to be determined., <p data-bbox="957 716 1418 940">Within that context, it is also important that the concluding stages of the Single Status agreement and subsequent national agreements are driven through to completion locally.</p>
Fixing the small things	There are a number of issues which – small in themselves – left unaddressed leave staff with the impression that their needs are being ignored.	<p data-bbox="957 952 1418 1064">EMT will compile a list of such issues and the fixes that have been applied to them.</p> <p data-bbox="957 1075 1418 1187">Where issues cannot be resolved EMT will give a clear indication as to the reasons.</p>

Acknowledgement

20 On a personal note, I want to thank all the staff for taking part in both exercises. It wasn't always a comfortable experience, but their willingness to contribute in all the meetings has resulted in a mass of material to be digested and acted upon and will be to the benefit of the organisation in the coming months.

RECOMMENDED that this Committee:

- 1 Note and agree the action plan set out in paragraph 19 of this report.
- 2 Ask that the Chief Executive bring regular reports updating the committee on the progress of the actions and the impact they are having on staff opinions.

Appendix 1: Staff group discussions

The organisation as a whole	
Purpose and direction	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of pressure on Uttlesford area • All we ever talk about is the airport • Need to bring housing and planning closer together • Need for more support on sustainability issues 	<p><i>We are dealing with major issues on all sides – particularly in the planning and housing functions. There will be a report going to the Council meeting in October which will set out proposals for tackling the issues in a more co-ordinated way, and to ensure that resources are available to do so.</i></p>
Restructure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morale is low – especially where restructure had greatest impact. • We don't know where to pass things onto • Change seems to be unrelenting and constant: management style has become more distant when it used to be small and friendly. • New system is bedding in: staff are likely to be upset during this process. • Restructure has not freed up resources: just led to more pressure • Need organisational continuity: some people have been here a long time. • Still not clear exactly who is responsible for what in all cases 	<p><i>It is always unsettling for all involved when an organisation is going through major changes. We (management) need to do better at keeping people informed, and in particular the need for a simple summary of the new structure and 'who does what' is well overdue.</i></p> <p><i>On the whole, people do not seem to be in doubt about what is expected of them, but do feel that they do not now understand the new set-up and where help is likely to be found on a given issue.</i></p> <p><i>In some cases I think that the restructure has merely identified longstanding issues that were not being dealt with. Once we sort these out, with the help of staff, there should be some relative 'stability', but ongoing changes are inevitable.</i></p>
Workloads and pressure	
Morale	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morale is low and falling • Turnover is high just now • Lots of people under stress and pressure – managers should know who they are. • We are starting to lose the goodwill of staff by asking them to do more (e.g. training their own supervisor). • "Soul-destroying to feel that we aren't doing well" 	<p><i>Turnover has marginally increased over last year. We need to be aware of these issues but the rise is not catastrophic. Of course it is not just a question of numbers but also of quality and ensuring that we have staff who are capable of delivering excellence for Uttlesford. We will continue to track turnover on a monthly basis, but the solution lies in effective development and reward structures for staff.</i></p> <p><i>It is also worth saying that we deliver good services and that my commitment to improve things should not be taken as saying that we aren't doing well already – just that we can do better.</i></p> <p><i>We don't have a direct way to measure staff morale, but many people were of the view that it was low – so I take that seriously. We will be doing some work over the next few months to tackle this – and putting in place measures to assess progress</i></p>

<u>Resources</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are resources to do the job always a priority? 	<p><i>Yes – but there are also severe, and increasing, pressures on resources so we can't just throw money at problems. We will have less money next year than we do this – and probably less still the year after.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front-desk staff find it increasingly the case that phones are not answered: difficult then to deal with the member of the public making an enquiry. 	<p><i>This is why we are looking at changing the way we deal with customer enquiries. A more co-ordinated front desk approach, with the right investment in information systems, will enable more enquiries to be dealt with at the front desk and in one call than is currently the case.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public pressure is huge: continuous phone calls etc. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We don't feel that we are giving as good a service as we used to. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We know that someone is leaving (e.g. retiring) but we don't recruit a replacement until they have left – we lose knowledge, experience and a chance to work alongside outgoing postholder 	<p><i>Agreed – but managers need to balance the opportunity to have someone learning alongside an outgoing postholder and the need to ensure that budgets are not overspent. It is not an easy task. Equally, a vacancy which arises can be an opportunity to reconsider how the job is being done – we should not automatically assume that the first thing to do is replace the outgoing postholder. I expect managers to work with staff to ensure that the job is being done effectively and efficiently – but also with flexibility and goodwill on all sides.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to take flexi because there's nobody to cover the absence 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending a lot of time just trying to catch up 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of single person roles – no backup. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased demands, but no increase in staff 	
<u>Examples</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in Licensing will lead to increased pressure without the necessary resources 	<p><i>I have asked the relevant Executive Managers to note these comments and address them.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stewarding is not as secure as it used to be: not enough assistant stewards on the books. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have four phones and two staff – how can we serve the public effectively? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't cope with street cleaning needs because we are always asked to help out with recycling. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT has been under a lot of pressure and change in structure has not helped. Difficult to know who to go to if you want something fixed. 	
Executive Management Team	
<u>Overall</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is too much pressure on EMs 	<p><i>EMs have been asked to take on an increased</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a more broadly based management structure – which is good. 	<p><i>role: and the reason that there are more rather than less of them is to balance their professional workload with their need to take on more of the corporate governance role. But they, like all of us have much to learn, are human beings and need the support and advice of colleagues.</i></p>
<u>Knowledge</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lost some experienced staff at restructure – loss of knowledge in some areas 	<p><i>We need to focus on what we have not on what we have lost. Under the previous structure there were significant gaps in knowledge at the top table too – the key is to ensure that we develop effective management practice and that there is a good relationship between EMs, their managers and their staff.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EMs don't know the technical side of things 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't have professional representation or knowledge on EMT or in the management structure (e.g. environmental health; revenues manager etc) 	
<u>Communication</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Managers have distanced themselves from the staff 	<p><i>We could all communicate more and be more visible. I intend to do that (and have been trying). All of us will.</i></p> <p><i>Not everyone thought these criticisms were accurate – and as can be seen there were some contradictions.</i></p> <p><i>Just as you never meet a bad driver, you never hear anyone say they are a bad communicator. It is a two-way issue, and I would hope that staff could initiate more communication up the organisation. My preference, as evidenced by the suggestions emails and these meetings is to let everyone contribute to the agenda and use their abilities. EMs have a key role, but cannot know as much as 300 other staff!</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haven't seen our new EM since restructure/New EM much more accessible (said in the same meeting about the same person) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would like to see the Chief Executive around the building more (“You've never seen what I do!”) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do EMT know what CICs do? They can't since they never tell us when changes are made. 	
Keeping people in the picture	
<u>Communication</u>	
<u>Comments and suggestions</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There seems to be some sort of blockage in communication 	<p><i>This was a common theme and we are trying to address it – this is an example. There will be more.</i></p> <p><i>We will also look at the tone of e-mails (particularly) to see if we can avoid giving offence.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There has been an increase in communication compared to the old structure 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tone of communication sometimes offensive 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could do with Grapevine coming back 	<p><i>A sub-group of JMT is working on it.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to blow our own trumpet more 	<p><i>Agreed</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JMT – another group that meet and talk but don't do anything 	<p><i>Sub-groups of JMT are working on change management, the corporate plan and other actions. If we are to move the organisation forward, we need the fifty or so people who are 'middle managers' to understand and work for the</i></p>

	<i>corporate agenda. JMT will continue to meet regularly.</i>
<u>E-mails</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many e-mails • But no screens for remote workers • Danger of overload (e.g. distribution of EMT minutes, the ice cream van, Duffy's are here) • Proliferation of e-mails to 'everyone' is unprofessional: smacks of trying to cover your back. 	<i>E-mail is an easy means of communication, but not always the best one. We all need to be more disciplined in its use.</i>
<u>Website</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website is hard to navigate – not obvious where to find things. • Could we put some other languages on the website to enable people to find the info they want 	<i>I will ask IT to look at these questions.</i>

<u>Team communication</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “No team meeting since the restructure” 	<p><i>There should be regular meetings – not always easy to do. I know however that Building Control – despite spending a lot of their time out in the field – do have regular and effective meetings. If you want to know how they do it, why not ask Ernie Spencer?</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We’re not a team, because we don’t get a chance to be a team” – said by a member of a team which works in the field visiting customers. 	
<u>Recycling changes</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling staff were not told that there was going to be a change in their arrangements 	<p><i>This was not said by a member of the Recycling Staff team, who did in fact receive a face to face briefing at the time the changes were first proposed.</i></p>
<u>Logo</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are we changing the logo? Is that the right way to spend money? 	<p><i>We have been exploring a new logo for Uttlesford – to change it would not be expensive – but no decision to do so has been taken. In fact, in recent weeks (since these meetings) it has been decided not to proceed with any proposals to change the logo.</i></p>
Information, documentation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone book is out of date (ditto map book, tick lists, A-Z of services etc) 	<p><i>James Sadler is looking at a new district map book; and arrangements are in place for a revised phone book – using the Intranet so you can have a new one whenever you want. Equally, since the meetings a facility has been added to the Staff Information Database to allow individual staff members to provide information about their own role within the organisation. A more systematic version of this will be necessary to ensure full coverage..</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be good if the phone book, staff database said something about what people are responsible for as well as what their job title is. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff photos are awful in the database – looks amateur. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about new structure is not readily available. 	<p><i>See comment above.</i></p>
Consultation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nobody listens to what we have to say 	<p><i>Consultation is difficult to time properly but we can do better on this – we need to strike the balance between consulting too early and not having enough detail to make the exercise meaningful and consulting too late and giving the impression that minds are made up. Sometimes of course the reality is that the decision has been made, and if that is the case we should be clear on the position.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often we are only consulted after the decision has been made 	

Members and officers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should work together – respecting each others’ roles 	<p><i>Again, mixed views here – probably reflecting the different experiences that folk have had, and the fact that many members of staff have no real contact with members on a day to day basis. However, I agree with the first point – we need to respect each others’ roles – and I think it is true to say that demands on UDC – from whatever source – are increasing.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some members (only 4 or 5) interfere. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very active political administration with increased demands on the organisation. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship is more positive than in the past. 	
Getting things done	
Getting things done	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers might have degrees but they don’t know how to organise anything – make assumption about staff being available to, for example, staff skips on Saturdays and Sundays. 	<p><i>If you think there are better ways to do things than the way they are being done, then say so – we are always in the market for improvements. We have had good public feedback for the weekend skip service, so I think we can expect it to continue. It is often difficult to set up new schemes, but things should settle down once they become established.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We don’t have the tools to do the job – have to look for them in skips. 	<p><i>If you don’t have the tools to do the job, ask for them. If your supervisor won’t provide them – let your EM know (or me).</i></p>
Bureaucracy/Style	
<u>Corporate approach</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of corporate identity: no agreed style of operation 	<p><i>On this one I think the solution is here as well as the problem. It is in how we all behave with each other. Unless we all recognise the need to work across boundaries, then we won’t get better. We are looking at ways to resolve some of these issues: look out for the Strategic Development Advisory Group that is being considered by Council this month, and the changes in IT which are designed to remove some barriers. In the end it is about how we behave, not the structures.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to recognise role of middle management and their ability to pass on experience and knowledge 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walls are getting thicker – not much working between departments (others thought differently) 	
<u>Human Resource issues</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of paperwork that has to be completed to recruit a member of staff is excessive; 	<p><i>We will look at both these questions – and let everyone know what is being done.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we really need so many PPNs? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We used to take new staff around the building and introduce them (mixed views on whether this was a good thing) 	<p><i>Different views on the same issue: many people believed that UDC used to be a friendly place where everybody knew everyone else. Not all staff shared that view. We could however do more to ensure that people are introduced and familiarised with the place.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I have been here twelve years and people still ask ‘Are you new?’” 	

<u>Process management</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We don't review our processes thoroughly: for example the allowance for decorating a house is no longer means-tested, but we still have to ask questions about income etc when dealing with the client. 	<p><i>All good examples of how we can do things better – and the key to achieving improvements will be when we all act upon the problems we see coming without waiting for someone's permission to do something about it.</i></p> <p><i>I agree that we can sometimes focus on the process at the expense of results, but we live in a world where process matters (it's a bit like having to show your working when you learned maths at school).</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We see problems coming, but don't do anything about them until they have happened (e.g. sheltered housing staff changes, licensing resources) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often focus on process not results (e.g. audit report on council tax collection) 	
Personnel issues	
Flexitime	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be applied equally across the organisation 	<p><i>Well, treating people fairly doesn't always mean treating them the same – but the point is well made. Within the constraints of delivering a good reliable service, people should be able to use flexitime to the full. I think we are too cautious on this, and would encourage managers to take a more relaxed view on timekeeping etc.</i></p>
Accommodation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possibility of an office move is unsettling 	<p><i>There were lots of other comments along these lines too: you should all have seen the latest from Julian Sayer and his working group – and proposals for changes will begin to emerge soon.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not bad where we are – new furniture and getting more. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lodge is forgotten about (e.g. during the fire drill) 	<p><i>There are real problems with accommodation – not everyone is happy where they are and not everyone can be effective within the current setup. If you look at the results of the consultation exercise then you will be able to see some of the tensions.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning is getting more staff but where will they sit? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the hold-up on air-conditioning units on the top floor? 	<p><i>The problem was identifying the resources necessary to buy the equipment. I believe that has now been done and we should be able to sort it out well in advance of next summer.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who looks after things like replacing the dishcloths in the staff room etc (answer: at the moment, staff have to do it themselves). 	<p><i>This is part of the cleaning contract and should be referred to Office Services if there is a problem.</i></p>
Reward and recognition	
<u>Recruitment problems</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is difficult to employ people here: too expensive to live here, and policies are too rigid. 	<p><i>This is a real challenge for us: we are a very rules-bound organisation (and need to be less so) but there is comfort in the rules. I think we should be prepared to take more risks, but recognise that that would mean relying on our own judgement</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are we relying on inertia rather than reward to retain people? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When I was offered the job (recently) HR were not very flexible in their dealings with me – it was as though I was doing you a favour by coming to work here. 	<p><i>not a set of rules, and that sometimes the application of that judgement would be seen as being unfair or biased.</i></p> <p><i>What do others think?</i></p>
<u>Recognition</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition is 'not there' 	<p><i>Agreed – this is one of the major issues we need to 'do something' about ...</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to be more visibly appreciative of staff (e.g. lack of management presence at recent leaving do) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want to feel that good ideas can be implemented 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We log complaints, why not compliments? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A job being done well becomes invisible – no recognition. 	
<u>Reward</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UDC doesn't pay as well as its neighbours 	<p><i>... and so is this.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't get as much leave as other places 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could we look at a scheme of benefits: Lord Butler membership; BUPA; more holiday? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some people get paid overtime, others don't – not consistent 	
<u>Staff safety</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern about staff safety – e.g. when being called out at night as a single member of staff, especially in areas where mobile phone coverage is poor. 	<p><i>This was raised in the context of a specific group of staff. I have asked the relevant manager to consider the issue and suggest improvements.</i></p>
<u>Career structure</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part-time staff could be better used 	<p><i>As with the two issues above, this is something we need to 'do something' with. We don't want to 'get rid' of anybody. We find recruitment difficult in some fields so we need to grow our own more, and we need to be able to deploy people flexibly. But doing that depends on staff and management trusting each other to work for the overall good of the council and the district while protecting individuals' long term interests. Not easy, nor quick. We will talk more about this.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexibility is good in making appointments, but secondments have not been properly thought through – particularly in respect of back-filling vacancies left by those seconded elsewhere. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for secondments, but they might not work out – what happens then? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why does the council want to 'get rid of everybody on the labour side?' 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are not getting staff development right – need to grow our own more 	
<u>Training and Development</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need more access to training – and managers who will support it. 	<p><i>Again, a need for a programmed approach to solving these issues. Some recent returns suggest</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We seem to be happy to let people learn by mistakes 	<p><i>that appraisals are worse than patchy. This will not continue.</i></p> <p><i>And we need a properly resourced and structured training and development programme for staff at all levels in the organisation.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need more info about training programme, its structure etc. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraisals are very patchy – should be ongoing and constant. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraisals are not good – not properly linked to training needs. 	
Building, facilities etc	
Dunmow	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problems with Dunmow security system (when last person in building is left alone) 	<p><i>We will be making some suggestions on how to address these issues over the next two months. Stewarding has been a problem for some time, particularly since David Noble's accident.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated and neglected (both accommodation and communication). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stewarding in Dunmow haphazard. 	
Parking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Database issue very badly done – poorly communicated 	<p><i>Understood – but it is done now. We will try to avoid the same mistake in the future.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why do members need spaces reserved on DC days? 	<p><i>The spaces are reserved since members are required to be in attendance at site visits in the morning and the committee in the afternoon. If spaces were not reserved then members would need to double park behind staff cars before boarding the coach for site visits. So, reserving spaces for members prevents staff from being blocked in when they wish to leave the car park. No one is prevented from finding a space as a result of the reservation of spaces for members.</i></p>
Oakroyd House	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific issue about Oakroyd House – we still look after residents but training/policies are different. 	<p><i>The relevant manager will discuss this with the staff concerned.</i></p>

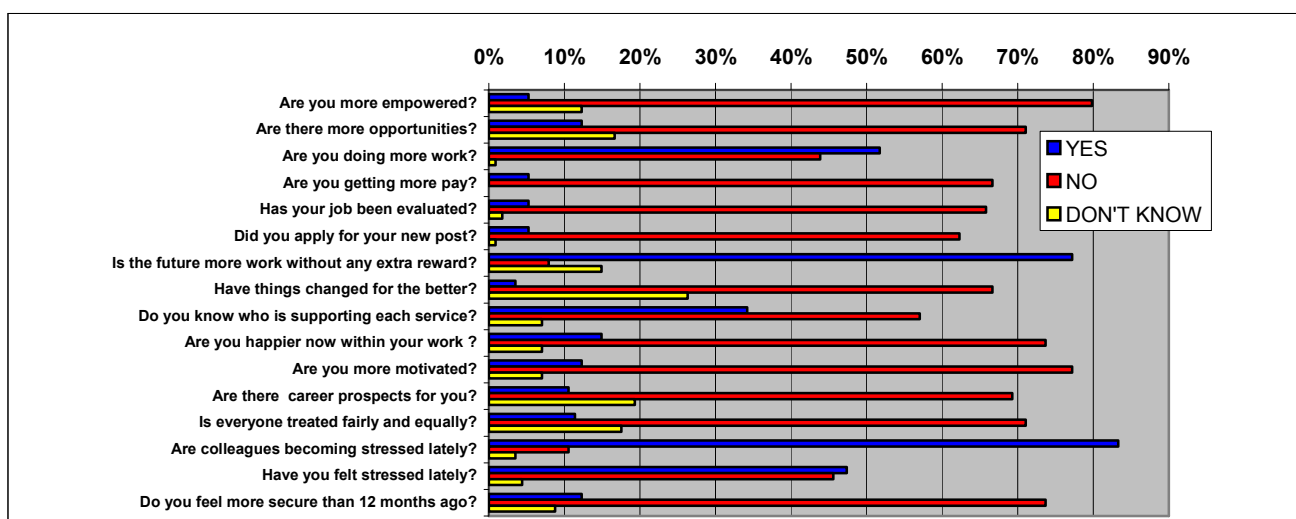
Appendix 2: Unison questionnaire

Question	Less	Same	More	Yes	No	Don't Know	Left Blank
A Do you feel more empowered to carry out your work since the restructure?				5%	80%	12%	3%
B Do you feel there are more personal/professional development opportunities as a result of the restructure?				12%	71%	17%	0%
C Have you been asked to take on more work or responsibilities or change jobs as a result of the restructure? If so;				52%	44%	1%	4%
C/a Have you received any additional pay?				5%	67%	0%	28%
C/b Have you had your job evaluated?				5%	66%	2%	27%
C/c Have you had to apply for your new post?				5%	62%	1%	32%
D Do you feel that the future as an employee at Uttlesford could involve being asked to do more work without any extra reward?				77%	8%	15%	0%
E Do you think that the restructure has changed things for the better?				4%	67%	26%	4%
F Since the restructure have you had sufficient information regarding who is responsible for supporting each service?				34%	57%	7%	2%
F/a Are you happy with the level of support you are now receiving?				31%	46%	16%	7%
G Do you feel that there is sufficient support from your executive manager?				48%	33%	15%	4%
H Do you feel that the Executive Management Team is working together for the good of the authority and the staff?				19%	41%	39%	0%
I Since the restructure do you feel that you are being over managed i.e. being told what to do, how to behave more than is necessary?				20%	76%	3%	1%
J Since the restructure do you feel that there are more forms to complete and more obstacles put in the way of achieving the work that you need to do?				38%	50%	11%	2%
K Are you happier within your work than you were 12 months ago?				15%	74%	7%	4%
L Are you more motivated to do the best possible job than you were 12 months ago?				12%	77%	7%	4%

Question	Less	Same	More	Yes	No	Don't Know	Left Blank
M Do you feel that there are career prospects for you at Uttlesford?				11%	69%	19%	1%
N Do you think that everyone is treated fairly and equally?				11%	71%	18%	0%
O Have you noticed colleagues becoming stressed lately?				83%	11%	4%	3%
P Have you felt stressed at work lately?				47%	46%	4%	3%
Q Have you needed time off sick through stress or a stress related illness lately?				8%	89%	2%	1%
R Do you feel more secure in your employment than you did 12 months ago?				12%	74%	9%	5%
S Is your team having difficulties recruiting/retaining staff since the restructure?				42%	23%	31%	4%
T/a Do you feel this is due to; Salary levels?				43%	10%	14%	33%
T/b Do you feel this is due to; Working conditions?				27%	22%	18%	33%
T/c Do you feel this is due to; Morale?				44%	12%	13%	31%
U/a If you are experiencing problems at work is this due to; Your line manager?				11%	60%	2%	27%
U/b If you are experiencing problems at work is this due to; Your Executive Manager?				17%	54%	7%	23%
U/c If you are experiencing problems at work is this due to; Personnel?				27%	39%	8%	25%
U/d If you are experiencing problems at work is this due to; Colleagues?				18%	53%	3%	26%
U/e If you are experiencing problems at work is this due to; Other?				24%	41%	5%	30%
V/a Since the restructure do you feel; Valued?	48%	30%	7%	22%	60%	13%	5%
V/b Since the restructure do you feel; Empowered?	54%	21%	7%	17%	66%	11%	7%
V/c Since the restructure do you feel; Happy?	44%	32%	8%	32%	52%	8%	9%
V/d Since the restructure do you feel; Supported?	51%	30%	4%	35%	46%	11%	8%
V/e Since the restructure do you feel; Trusted?	54%	25%	7%	46%	32%	14%	8%
V/f Since the restructure do you feel; Motivated?	45%	35%	5%	24%	57%	10%	10%

Question	Less	Same	More	Yes	No	Don't Know	Left Blank
V/g Since the restructure do you feel; Bullied?	56%	3%	13%	17%	70%	6%	7%
V/h Since the restructure do you feel; Stressed?	47%	1%	29%	37%	51%	4%	8%
V/i Since the restructure do you feel; Insecure?	46%	2%	32%	39%	45%	9%	7%
V/j Since the restructure do you feel; Victimised	59%	2%	12%	16%	70%	7%	7%
V/k Since the restructure do you feel; Threatened?	52%	2%	19%	22%	66%	4%	8%
W/a Car parking database; Are you happy for your details to be included?				71%	16%	9%	4%
W/b Car parking database; Do you feel the proposed system will work?				22%	28%	47%	3%
W/c Car parking database; Did you view the tone of the information and form sent out by Personnel as threatening?				61%	27%	7%	5%
W/d Car parking database; Do you feel that your consent was given freely?				42%	42%	10%	6%
W/e Car parking database; Do you believe that it is necessary to remove a privilege if someone is unwilling to give consent?				16%	62%	17%	5%
W/f Car parking database; Do you feel that this is a sign of things to come?				66%	10%	19%	5%
X Do you feel there is enough consultation by Personnel with the Union?				8%	55%	37%	0%
Y Do you feel that there is a 'Blame Culture' at Uttlesford?				49%	19%	30%	2%
Z Do you feel that the Executive Management Team trust staff to behave responsibly?				23%	41%	34%	2%
AA Do you feel there is mutual respect and trust between the Executive Management Team and staff?				17%	62%	18%	3%

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Left Blank
Are you more empowered?	5%	80%	12%	3%
Are there more opportunities?	12%	71%	17%	0%
Are you doing more work?	52%	44%	1%	4%
Are you getting more pay?	5%	67%	0%	28%
Has your job been evaluated?	5%	66%	2%	27%
Did you apply for your new post?	5%	62%	1%	32%
Is the future more work without any extra reward?	77%	8%	15%	0%
Have things changed for the better?	4%	67%	26%	4%
Do you know who is supporting each service?	34%	57%	7%	2%
Are you happier now within your work ?	15%	74%	7%	4%
Are you more motivated?	12%	77%	7%	4%
Are there career prospects for you?	11%	69%	19%	1%
Is everyone treated fairly and equally?	11%	71%	18%	0%
Are colleagues becoming stressed lately?	83%	11%	4%	3%
Have you felt stressed lately?	47%	46%	4%	3%
Do you feel more secure than 12 months ago?	12%	74%	9%	5%



Additional Comments

- Too many chiefs not enough Indians! Staff not trusted to take on responsibility - no motivation! Managers not prepared to let go off work - want to be indispensable but cannot get it all done! Lack of consistency through council flexi time. Has the restructure really affected any bottom line staff???

- Benefit Fraud has had proposed changes since January 2004. The benefits team was five people now one. So much for team, the job is therefore almost impossible to continue. The last member of the team has been working alone since May 10th 2004. Not suitable, this does not make for a safe working environment.
- Restructuring Questionnaire – Additional Comments Question (g) & (i) With the exception of him putting his head round the door and asking me to distribute a Team Brief and taking a message from him for a colleague, since 1st June I have not had any contact with my Executive Manager, either formal or informal. So in response to (g) – I haven't had any support at all from my EM (i) – I have been grossly under managed as far as my EM is concerned. I have not personally been involved in any 'dispute' with personnel, but my two senior colleagues are. It is very noticeable the effects their problems are having on them, the lack of support/assistance they are getting from the EM and the subsequent effects the remainder of our team. It is very unsettling when one's two senior colleagues are feeling undervalued and that their positions are threatened and leads to speculation that there may be some hidden agenda and that the team could be under threat. Communication is being heralded as unpinning the whole 'jigsaw', but there are huge gaps in the communication between staff and management.
- IT support for packages used. Now no GGP officer + no Ocella support except once per month - could lead to a fail in service to the public.
- Answers to this questionnaire will reflect the individuals own perceptions/views but may not reflect what is seen to be happening within groups/departments overall.
- Haven't answered S and T because my department has difficulty in recruiting staff, but not because of restructure. Working conditions cramped. Morale sometimes low because of pressure of work, lack of staff. Salary not good enough in grade when compared with amount of responsibility of work done. Answer to U. -e. My concern is that I have no proper desk space; I am cramped up in a small corner, with no facilities - telephone, or computer screen. I can manage but sometimes it is difficult and I have worked in the department much longer than most of my colleagues. I think people who do more work within certain departments should receive praise and more pay - perhaps in the form of a bonus? People work hard but are not always appreciated.
- I am unhappy that I am still working the toil system, under duress for the last 12 months. I have asked for updates but it appears that personnel haven't done anything, thinking that if they keep their head down that the issue will go away. I don't think this is a responsible way to deal with this. It is similar to the way I have been treated over TA leave. Originally I was given two weeks leave then this was hacked around to be less leave than any other council in Essex. This is typical of how personnel appears to be working "for" the officers of Uttlesford and is I would suggest in direct conflict with the intentions of the leader of the council as set out in his paper; 'Finding the Balance Work-Life Policies in Practice, National Joint Council for Local Government Services, September 2001'. Please see quote below;
- "Leave for other reasons
There are other reasons why employers might be required, or wish to provide leave. These include: - Domestic emergencies, such as plumbing, gas escapes or dealing with the aftermath of a crime at home. - Relationship breakdown. - Domestic violence. - Moving house. - Study leave to enable an employee to attend a part-time course, or prepare for and take an examination. - Attending a job interview. - Undertaking a public duty or a public service such as jury service. - Volunteering for the non-regular forces. - Participating in a high level sporting event. - Going on a 'trip of a lifetime' Why is it important? Some of the reasons for this type of leave can support the personal development of employees, and have consequent benefits for the employer. Recognition of the time required to deal with personal crises like relationship breakdown can mitigate on the impact these have upon work, and help the employee to deal with them. In some instances, there is a legal duty to allow leave. Extending the possibilities of paid or unpaid leave beyond the strict legal entitlement may enhance productivity, improve morale, and assist in recruitment and retention. Current experience - According to the DETR survey, 90% of local authorities provide paid study leave. Just over 20% of all

employers provided study leave, paid or unpaid. 71% of local authorities provide for paid territorial leave.”

Committee: Resources
Date: 18 November 2004
Agenda Item No: 17
Title: Home Computing Initiative (HCI)
Author: Adrian Webb (01799) 510661 & Carole Hughes (01799 510407)

Summary

- 1 This report recommends the approval of a Home Computing Initiative scheme for Uttlesford District Council employees.

Background

- 2 A HCI scheme involves the Council purchasing computing equipment, be it a personal computer, laptop, printer or some other form of peripheral device, on behalf of the employee, for personal use at home. The equipment is leased by the Council to the employee who pays the Council, via salary deduction over a set period of time, a sum equal to the cost. At the end of the lease period the employee has the choice of either buying the equipment for a nominal sum, usually around £50 for a computer, or returning it to the Council.
- 3 HCI schemes are enabled by the Government's 1999 tax exemption on loaned computers, which allows employers to implement a tax-exempt loan scheme for computer equipment for their employees to use at home.
- 4 The benefits for the employee are numerous:
 - a. Using the purchasing power of the Council, high specification equipment can be purchased at relatively low cost.
 - b. The tax exemption means that combining tax and National Insurance Contribution (NIC) savings could effectively reduce the cost of obtaining computer equipment by up to 33% for basic rate taxpayers and up to 41% for higher rate tax payers.
 - c. HCI schemes help simplify choice for those employees who might need extra support in acquiring a computer.
 - d. All computers will come with a 3 year next day home support contract.
- 5 There are also significant benefits for the employer:
 - a. HCI schemes strengthen relationships with employees by making their salaries go further, which may assist staff retention.
 - b. Home computer users typically have a wider range of IT skills which are of benefit in any modern work place. Equally training provided by the employer may be transferable to the home environment.

- c. There will be reduced employer NIC costs relating to those employees who take part in the scheme.
 - d. A HCI scheme would be an addition to the existing staff benefits package with little actual cost to the Council.
- 6 In order for the HCI to be established it is necessary for the Council to work in partnership with one or more IT related suppliers. The Council is currently in negotiation with two suppliers who offer a HCI scheme:
- a. Dell Computers Ltd
 - b. Stone Computers Ltd

Both of these companies are longstanding suppliers of IT equipment to the Council.

- 7 The maximum value of equipment that can be purchased without a taxable benefit being incurred is £2,500 with the lease period being set by the Council. It is felt that the lease period should be no more than 3 years.
- 8 In the event of an employee leaving the Council before the end of the lease period all outstanding payments would become due. A maximum payment of 50% of final salary towards the outstanding lease will be made. Any remaining lease costs will usually be spread over a period of 6 months following the employee's last day of service.
- 9 The initial cost of setting up the scheme will depend upon the number of employees wishing to participate. A similar sized organisation had 30 staff join the scheme as soon as it was launched.

RECOMMENDED that the Council introduce a Home Computing Initiative Scheme with the initial cost being met from reserves.

Background Papers: None

Committee: **Resources**

Date: **November 2004**

Agenda Item No: **18**

Title: **Amended Travel Plan**

Author: **Bronwen Stacey (01799) 510363, on behalf of the Travel Plan Working Group members: Cllr W Bowker, Denise Greenwood, Jeremy Pine, Mary Rowe, Jan Sanders, Bronwen Stacey, Alex Stewart.**

Summary

- 1 The initial findings and Report of June 2004 of the Travel Plan Working Group (TPWG) have been separated into two Reports, this and a Report to Transport and Highways Committee

Please refer to the Report to Resources Committee of June 2004, for details of the initiating surveys and their findings, and the related issues identified therefrom.

- 2 This Report addresses the following issues:
 - a. To attempt to increase other modes of travel.
 - b. To decrease/reduce personal travel and work-related travel,

and makes recommendations for immediate implementation and others for subsequent review on a six-monthly basis.

Background

The rural nature of the district means that the average travel-to-work distance (one way) for Council employees is 12.5 miles, but of even greater significance is the finding that the two largest groups of respondents, totalling 48%, live between 10 and 30 miles away from their work-base, and most of whom, of necessity, travel by car. In addition, many employees are Essential Car Users who need to travel around the District frequently in the course of their work.

Similarly, the majority of Members live several miles away from the Council Offices, and their methods of travel are dictated by personal circumstances and the time available. In addition the times of meetings are a factor to be considered in relation to public transport services.

In addition, although over 40% of visitors to the Council live locally in Saffron Walden, only 11% currently walk to the Council Offices. Members of the public who do not drive to the Council Offices tend to be older people who have time to walk, or perhaps who do not have a car. Those who drive are likely to be busy people who are time-impooverished.

3 TO INCREASE MORE SUSTAINABLE MODES OF TRAVEL

3.1 Employees

Walking and cycling (even occasionally) for staff who live within practical proximity is being encouraged in the following ways:

- A cycle stand, positioned in the grounds, has recently being provided by Essex County Council.
- A hairdryer has now been provided in the staff shower, for staff who cycle to work.

A further initiative which could help to encourage alternative modes of travel to work would be to provide secure clothes lockers for walkers and cyclists.

3.2 Members

Survey responses indicate that those Members who live close enough to walk or cycle to meetings already do so when possible. Bus routes and timetables are not conducive to increasing the incidence of travel to meetings by public transport;

An increase in other sustainable forms of travel may be achieved by initiating a “Green Target Mileage Scheme”, which could be a variation of the proposed Service-related scheme, to a Committee-related version (see below). There would be no cost attached to implementation of this scheme.

4 TO DECREASE/REDUCE CURRENT LEVELS OF MILEAGE

4.1 Employees

Reductions in the current levels of mileage undertaken by staff to get to work may be achieved by one or more of the following:

- **Car Share Register:** The Car-Share Register has been radically overhauled by an IT specialist, and been relaunched. It is accessible on Desktop, on all Citrix servers. The facility allows access to either view or enter a wide range of information, to facilitate as wide a usage as possible. Although currently only a small proportion of the workforce have registered, employees are now being encouraged to consider registering even if they may only wish or be willing to share transport very occasionally, or for emergencies. If most employees only car-share on occasions, the saved miles will be beneficial, and it may be that a greater frequency of car-sharing grows over a longer period of time, through growing familiarity and possibly the use of incentives/targets (see below).
- **9-day working fortnight and Homeworking:** Although these are examples of interventions which relate to general Service Improvements, flexibility and Family Friendly policies, there will be environmental benefits, as they are introduced.
- **Video Conferencing:** The active promotion of Video and Audio Conferencing could reduce the mileage of both employees and Members, although obviously dependent upon the availability of appropriate resources, venue and interest by relevant parties.
- **‘Hotdesking’:** the practice of employees using more conveniently-situated bases, other than in the Saffron Walden Office, could be increased in appropriate situations. This could help to reduce current levels of mileage, where the ‘hotdesk’ was situated nearer to home or the day’s visits. ‘Hotdesks’ could be set up at CICs, or other Council-owned properties.
- **Working practices may be modified** in order to reduce the overall mileage between home and the first, and/or last visit of the day, where this is not happening currently.
- **‘Green’ Vehicles:** Subject to appropriate negotiations/agreements by officer groups through Single Status etc, ‘green’ vehicles, which both are more economical, and more environmentally-friendly, with maximum CO₂ emissions of 145, could be inbuilt as part of formal Council Vehicle policy and practice. Essential Users, the UDC Car Purchase scheme, and

Council-owned vehicles could all be considered. Research could also be undertaken into the viability of a pool car system

- **Car Travel and related payments:**The Single Status group has begun to review and agree guidelines for car travel and related payments
- **Green Service Target Scheme:** All Services be asked to reduce miles travelled, relating to personal, “Essential” and “Casual” mileage, to meet a specified “Service Target”. “Service Targets” could be set and calculated as follows.
 - Each Service be asked to calculate (in fairly rounded terms), a total of usual weekly (or monthly or annual) mileage (both home to work and work-related) for all members of staff. This information to be ‘publicised’, as the starting point, for measured improvements.
 - A Target of saving on total miles travelled by all employees in the Service, to be set by a Green Travel panel. The Target could be eg 5% saving during the first 12 months. How savings are made has purposefully been left open, (subject to the guidance below on what may be counted), for decision at Service level. Targets could be modified in relation to:
 - the actual % saving to be made
 - The length of the period of time given for the improvement.The targets could be tailored to each Service to recognise or require greater savings to be made by Services where the nature of their work entails regular travel around the District.

Targets could have (eg) a 10 year time span with annual increments.

- Savings made through **homeworking** and **car sharing** as well as flexidays (whole days only) and other whole days off work (TOIL etc), may be counted. Annual leave days should NOT be counted in the savings, as all employees currently do not travel to work on a/l days. Car-sharing miles saved may be calculated as follows: where two people car-share, the total number of miles saved by one person be divided between the two, and each person claims to have ‘saved’ half the total miles saved. Where three people car-share, add the total number of miles saved by person B to those saved by person C, and each of the three car-sharers may claim a third of the total miles saved.
- Each week, the total of miles saved per week should be recorded, and compared against the starting point total.
- Services could be asked to produce a total “Miles Saved” Report quarterly, six-monthly or annually, along with Best Value Performance Indicators.
- If tighter restrictions were considered desirable, at some stage, limits could be placed on the % of times per month each Essential Car User starts journeys from the Office, and/or ends work-related journeys at

the office.

- Further Guidance would be provided on implementation and application of this Scheme, prior to its commencement.
- **Green Bank Scheme:** Alternatively, or additionally at a later stage (it is not proposed that this be implemented initially, but rather, as an incentive to individuals to improve their personal mileage savings, when other reductions have reached a plateau):
 - For each return home to work journey walked, cycled, or where public transport used:
Each employee claim 1 x credit.
 - For each return home to work car-share journey, (whether sharing with a colleague or getting a lift with someone outside the Council), 1 x credit to be claimed by each UDC employee involved.
 - Credits: each credit may be entered into a draw every 6 months, the prize being a (holiday) voucher to the value of (eg)£100. There would be no limit to the number of credits each employee could enter into the draw – the more credits a person enters, the more likelihood they have of winning.
 - Credits may require validation, the method of validation to be agreed.

4.2 Visitors

It is difficult to suggest ways in which members of the public may be encouraged to **reduce Council-related mileage**; on-line payments are already encouraged, and it is acknowledged that payments made in person are linked to demographics, and will in time decrease naturally. However, this process could potentially be speeded up by reviewing the existing arrangements and improving where possible:

- Renewed/greater publicity for on-line payments of all council services, and the simplification of explanations for payments remotely. This could be undertaken simultaneously with the provision of an incentive (eg:one-off reduced charge) to encourage conversion to paying remotely.
- Improve on-line access to Council Services such as Planning applications;
A telephone help line for general enquiries and a familiarisation training session for members of the public in how to use the internet to access information and pay bills.
However, from an equal opportunities perspective we must accept that some members of the public will always require alternatives to on-line information and payments.
- Consider providing an incentive (eg: one-off reduced charge) to encourage conversion to paying remotely.

a. Members

- **Initiate a Member Car-Share Register:** In order for each Committee/group of Members to maximise the opportunities for car sharing, it could be useful to have a version of the new Car Share Register (currently an icon on the Citrix Desktops, for staff) adapted specifically for Members, and placed on Members laptops; they could then access details of other members who travel the same route as themselves, and could liaise directly by phone with the individual(s) to arrange travel to the meetings.

In addition, the Car-Share idea could be enhanced to improve the % car-sharing, by, for example,

- Appointing a Member on each Committee or Working Group as a **Travel-co-ordinator**, to 'chase' and organise the transport arrangements of Members.
 - agreeing a **target for Car-sharing for each Committee** or Group, to improve the % of car sharing. Possibly having an incentive for the most improved Group of Members or those reaching the target first, etc.
- Where/if appropriate, for full committee meetings or those where sufficient Members attend scheduled meetings, a minibus could be organised to run from/return to major communities along travel corridors, picking up/dropping off Members en route. The drawbacks of this suggestion are acknowledged:
 - as Members live all over the District, there is no 'main' travel corridor;
 - individuals' journey time will take longer if undertaken in this manner.
 - there would be a cost associated with a 'communal' mini bus.
 - As a result of poor mail services recently, a twice-weekly Courier Service to Members has been introduced to ensure their timely receipt of Council information. This entails approximately 1000 miles per month. It is recommended that this service be reviewed, on a six-monthly basis, for potential to save/reduce current mileage, as the continuation of this service may not be compatible with a Green Travel Policy.
 - Greater use of IT and on-line facilities could be made, and consideration could be given to implementation of Video Conferencing between Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow, to increase alternatives to travel, and to decrease current levels of mileage undertaken by/on behalf of Members.
 - Members may wish to recommend to the remuneration panel that some consideration be given to a **travel expenses incentive**, whereby mileage allowance is biased towards car-sharing, and away from single-occupancy journeys.

5 DISSEMINATION AND ACCESSIBILITY OF INFORMATION ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Consideration be given to the identification of a Lead Member and a Lead Officer, for co-ordination/lobbying of an integrated transport resolution.

6 CAR PARKING

6.1 Employees:

Car-parking for employees works satisfactorily at present. However, any car-park overcrowding for day-time users will be eased by the following proposals: homeworking, hotdesking at other bases, modifications to existing working practices, car-sharing, and the use of alternative modes of travel to work.

- If a problem does arise in the medium term, for staff parking, a 'staff car-park waiting list' for all new employees could be considered. This would operate by informing all candidates at interview, that there would not be a parking place available immediately, but that their name would be put on a waiting list, for a space in the London Road Offices car park, and when their name reached the top they would be offered a parking pass. It is acknowledged that this suggestion may make recruitment even more difficult.

6.2 Visitors:

Visitors should be divided into two categories:

- residents of Uttlesford, who visit the Council offices to use Council services. On average, 32% stay less than 5 minutes, 67% stay less than 20 minutes.
- visitors who have been invited to meetings in the course of council business. Only 14 % of visitors stayed longer than one hour. In the survey undertaken, no distinction was made between residents using Planning Services, requiring a longer stay, and visitors who were on council business.
- As the majority of visitors require only short-stay parking, we should endeavour to meet their requirements, and be more stringent in implementation of suitable arrangements for work-related visitors.
- **Short stay time limits?** Following implementation of the visitors overflow car park after 10.30am and improved parking around the circle, it is difficult at this time to determine whether there will still be a need to consider indicating a short-stay time limit (eg 15 minutes) for visitor parking. There will always be a small risk of abuse of our car-parking facilities by visitors who leave their vehicle for long periods whilst going down into the town, who would be unlikely to be deterred by anything other than parking enforcement. As enforcement is not recommended during the week; any limitations would be purely 'advisory requests'.

If future monitoring of the situation reveals continuing difficulty for the short-stay visitors, it may be necessary to consider posting signs and/or time limits. It is recognised that this would not be an ideal solution, if it penalised users of the Planning Services and enquiries, however, advanced technology and on-line planning services facilities should reduce the need for personal visits of this nature.

- **Visitors on Council Business:** Although there is already guidance and requirements in place (reminders are issued by the room-booking facility) for officers to notify their clients/customers/colleagues etc that

they should park at one of the alternative town car parks, and maps may be printed off to send to all visitors, this requirement is not consistently adhered to by staff. New guidance should be prepared, and all employees made fully aware of the requirements for visitor-parking: for meetings involving more than one vehicle, all visitors must be told that there is no on-site parking, and asked to use a town car park. Visitors for meetings should not park in the 'designated' short-stay spaces.

- **Swan Meadow Parking Passes:**

In order to further encourage visitors for 'bulk' meetings to park off-site, whilst not causing annoyance to local residents by parking on local streets, the TPWG proposed that free passes for Swan Meadow parking be allocated in advance for specific events or meetings. However, pre-Resource meetings with some Members have indicated that such a recommendation will not be supported.

RECOMMENDED that the following proposals be implemented as soon as is practicable:

- Green Service Targets
 - A car-share register for Members
 - A Green Target Mileage Scheme for Members
 - To agree that further work be undertaken to identify the cost/effect of an incentive payment to encourage conversion to remote payments
 - Greater publicity for on-line payments of Council Services.
 - Short-stay parking time-limit notices be posted in the visitors parking area if further problems arise.
 - Lockers for use by cyclists, walkers, bikers, be installed.
 - Allocate a Lead Member and a Lead Officer, for co-ordination/lobbying of an integrated transport resolution.
- 2 That the following, plus any of the above not implemented at this stage, be reviewed on a six-monthly basis, with a view to considering its implementation:
- A Green Bank Scheme
 - For major meetings, a mini bus collection of Members along major routes.
 - Implement a 'staff car-park waiting list' for newly-recruited employees
 - Green Vehicles with specified CO2 emissions to be inbuilt as part of formal Council Policy, as described
 - A review of current courier services for Members.
 - Travel Expenses Incentives, for Members, to bias towards car-sharing and away from single occupancy.

Background Papers:

Report to Resources Committee, 24 June 2004 ref RE21

Committee **Resources Committee**

Date **18 November 2004**

Agenda Item No: **19 (to be proposed under Chairman's business)**

Title: **Financial Strategy and Service Planning Process**

Author: **Philip O'Dell (01799) 510670**

Summary

- 1 This report provides the latest position on the Council's General Fund budget for 2005/06 and beyond. It includes figures and issues considered by policy committees in this committee cycle, with the exception of the Development Control Committee, who will consider their budget on 22 November. The report proposes a strategy for agreeing the budget and council tax level via use of the results of the recently undertaken service prioritisation process.

The appendices to the report are as follows:

Appendix 1 Revised 2004/05 and draft 2005/06 Base Budgets and variations
Appendix 2 Summary of new spending pressures
Appendix 3 Overall Budget and Council Tax Level Summary
Appendix 4 Results of Prioritisation Process
Appendix 5 Proposed use of Prioritisation Process

Because policy committees have already seen draft Service Plans, and the financial effects are contained in Appendix 2, the full Service Plans are not included with this report.

Background

- 2 This Committee's 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. At your September meeting, this Committee was informed that, based on forecasts at that time and anticipated government funding, this would necessitate budget reductions and/or increased income from charging for services totalling approximately £150,000. This figure assumed no provision for new spending pressures, including known increases in statutory costs, which have now been quantified as £740,000 per annum. Other variations in the base budget, totalling approximately £115,000 more than initially forecast, mean that, including all the spending pressures, savings or additional income of £1,005,000 are required to achieve a 3% council tax increase for 2005/06.
- 3 The meeting 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. This will involve use of the public magazine Uttlesford Life, the Citizens Panel, and the Council's website. The results of this consultation will be brought back to this Committee at the meeting on 27 January 2005.

National Context

- 6 The government continues to indicate that council tax percentage increases of 'low single figures' will be the norm for 2005/06, with most commentators interpreting this as 3%.
- 7 Information from the government recently had indicated that this week, commencing 15 November, was when an announcement would be made concerning the local government finance settlement. This has now been amended to the 30th November, more in line with previous years. All Members of the Council will be notified of the settlement for this Council, and its implications as soon as possible after receipt of the figures.
- 8 This Committee may recall that for planning purposes, and based on the figures for district councils contained in the Chancellor's Public Spending Review of July this year, no increased government funding has been assumed in previous projections. This report indicates the possible budget scenarios for the Council assuming that council tax increases of 3%, 4% or 5% are permissible and assuming no increase in government funding.

Revised Budgets 2004/05

- 9 Committee revised General Fund Budgets for 2004/05 are contained in Appendix 1 along with a variance analysis. The summarised position for all Committees is shown in Appendix 3. This indicates an increase in the revised budget at service level (Net Expenditure on Services) of approximately £69,000.
- 10 Individual committees have received details of their revised budgets and variance analysis. This Committee may wish to comment on the revised budgets of committees, or issue instructions for amending those budgets.

Draft Base Budget 2005/06

- 11 The draft General Fund Base Budget for 2005/06 is detailed in Appendix 1 and summarised in Appendix 3. The budget totals approximately £7,466,000 at General Fund Net Expenditure Level.

- 12 From this base budget position, the savings or additional income required to limit any council tax increase for 2005/06 to 3% is now approximately £265,000. This compares to the figure of £150,000 previously reported. There are many variations detailed in Appendix 1 (a), but the main factors in causing the increase are waste disposal and recycling cost increases not matched fully by additional income (£37,000), additional expenditure on planning application advertising (£20,000), loss of income from border inspection (£14,000), and the additional spending pressures arising from the review of the Corporate Plan (£24,000).

Spending Pressures

- 13 Pressures for new spending have arisen from the Service Planning process, the review of the Corporate Plan, and the preparation of a revised Capital Programme. Additional ongoing spending pressures arising from the review of the Corporate Plan have been included in the budget summary in Appendix 3. A summary of the spending pressures arising from Service Plans analysed over ongoing and one-off spending is attached as Appendix 2. The total for ongoing pressures from Service Plans commencing in 2005/06 is £740,000, although this does include a provision of £100,000 for implementation of the Access to Services Review, where final decisions have yet to be made.
- 14 Each of the spending pressures identified in Appendix 2 has been considered and given initial support by the appropriate policy committee.

Base Budget and Spending Pressures compared to overall resources

- 15 Appendix 3 provides an overview of the base budget and spending pressures combined, based on scenarios of 3%, 4% and 5 % council tax rises for 2005/06, with no increase in government support.
- 16 The most likely scenario is a permissible council tax increase of 3% and continuation of the current level of government support. If these assumptions are correct, savings or additional income of approximately £1,005,000 will be required. It is proposed to achieve this sum, or any other figure that may eventually be required following notification of government support and other figures which may change, by use of the prioritisation process outcomes.
- 17 The 4% and 5% council tax increase scenarios would involve savings of £229,000 and £193,000 respectively on the base budget, which, allowing for the spending pressures of £740,000 mean total savings/additional income of £969,000 and £933,000 respectively.
- 18 The one-off or reserve funded spending pressures of £756,000 summarised in Appendix 2 merit special consideration, as the Financial Management Reserve is now at a level of approximately £250,000. This means that prioritisation needs to be used to determine which of the one-off pressures can be met.

Prioritisation Process

- 19 The results of the prioritisation process are contained in Appendix 4. It is proposed to use these results to address the budget shortfall for 2005/06 and to provide a basis for longer term planning of the Council's finances. In particular, for 2005/06, it is proposed to:
- Use the prioritisation table to determine which new ongoing and one-off spending pressures can be met, should overall resources permit
 - Use the prioritisation table to set savings/additional income targets for individual services
- 20 Several key issues need to be pointed out in this approach to using the prioritisation table:
- The prioritisation table is constructed based on contributions of services to the Corporate Plan, and takes no account of the statutory basis of services, or other factors which make new spending essential, or necessitate protecting a service from unacceptable budget reductions. Such instances should however be rare, and decisions can be clearly made for explicit reasons
 - There is a growing recognition that the Council's corporate capacity is inadequate to cope with the increasing internal and external demands on it. The Chief Executive's report elsewhere on this agenda gives more details on this, but the key issue here is that it may necessitate a refinement to the prioritisation process and the approach to spending pressures and budget savings
 - Decisions on spending pressures and savings or additional income will relate to individual services, meaning committees will not be given an overall savings target which they can find from within their total budget. This approach recognises that Council priorities as expressed in the Corporate Plan cut across committee services, and require a corporate focus in resources terms
 - Savings or additional income required from individual services can only be worked out based on consideration of where each service currently is regarding cost and quality. Using prioritisation in tandem with cost and quality factors produces 27 different prescriptions for proposed changes in cost and quality of services. These are shown in Appendix 5.
- 21 Work is in hand to assess cost and quality for all Council services, and officers will be completing this shortly. The outcome of this exercise can then be combined with the emerging financial scenario to allow savings/additional income targets to be set for each service. Work will then take place to identify ways to achieve those targets, with proposals being taken to policy committees in the January committee cycle. There are clearly numerous combinations of percentage savings figures which can be used to achieve the total saving requirement and until the work has progressed it is difficult to estimate what the percentages and therefore cash amounts to be saved will be. However, savings of up to 15% are envisaged in some areas, where low priority services have high costs and higher than necessary quality. Similarly, high priority services may also need to contribute to the corporate savings, even at a low rate, if their costs are comparatively high.

- 22 Some staff and Members, as well as the public and service users may find the concept of consciously reducing the quality of a service rather unsettling, if not perverse. The concept is however an essential requirement of a prioritisation process occurring at a time of tightly limited resources, and is not really different from the traditional concepts of 'cuts' in services which councils have had to face over recent years. The major difference with the approach being proposed here is that action on the quality (or level of service, if Members prefer that term) will be more explicitly stated.
- 23 In order to keep all Members of the Council fully informed of progress, it is proposed to take a report to the Council meeting on 14 December presenting the savings targets required from individual services. This report will also propose a methodology for determining which spending pressures can be met, using the prioritisation table as a basis, but also allowing for the need to consider the statutory nature of services and corporate capacity within the Council.

Other Budget Uncertainties

- 24 The figures in this report contain assumptions about several items where budgeting is particularly uncertain. These include interest on balances from the Council's reserves and cash flow, the continuation of the surplus from the former Contract Services operation, the Business Growth Incentive Scheme due to be finalised by the Government, rounds one and two of the Public Service Agreement with the County Council, the tax base for 2005/06, and the income due from the County Council regarding council tax on second homes. Any refinement to the figures for these issues will be brought back to this Committee's January meeting in time to inform final decision making on the budget.

Four Year Financial Strategy

- 25 At the meeting on 24 June this year, this Committee resolved to develop a four year financial strategy. The Council has always made preliminary projections for years two and three of the budget. The new Prudential Code has strengthened the requirement to address this issue by requiring forecasts of council tax levels for two years beyond the budget year. During 2005, the Government will be consulting on three year financial settlements. This is one of the key ingredients to a multi-year approach.
- 26 The Financial Strategy report presented to the next meeting of this Committee in January will pay particular emphasis to developing a multi-year budget. A particular constraint on this approach is the continuing difficulty in identifying, via the Service Planning process, new spending pressures beyond the immediate budget year being considered. An examination of the list of spending pressures contained in Appendix 2 confirms that this is the case. To be fair, much of this uncertainty and inability to plan longer term is due to external factors beyond the Council's control. Nevertheless, greater emphasis needs to be placed on estimating future budget issues via the Service Planning process. Without this, any attempts at longer term budget planning will be subject to such uncertainty as to render them relatively meaningless.

Recommended that this Committee

- 1 Approves the revised 2004/05 base budgets for committees
- 2 Approves the financial consequences of the Corporate Plan
- 3 Agrees the Service Prioritisation contained in Appendix 4
- 4 Agrees the strategy outlined in paragraphs 19-23 as the basis for determining which spending pressures can be met and how budget reductions are to be made, and instructs officers, in consultation with the Prioritisation Working Group of Members, to take reports to policy committees in January giving options to achieve the overall budget required.
- 5 Instructs officer to take a report to the Council meeting on 14 December notifying Members of the savings targets for individual services
- 6 Considers whether it wishes to lobby the government for additional funding, dependent on the outcome of the local government finance settlement due to be announced on 30 November

Background Papers: Budget working papers, draft Service Plans, reports to policy committees, November 2004, reports to Resources Committee 24 June and 23 September 2004

