

South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

t: 08450 450 500
f: 01954 713149
dx: DX 729500 Cambridge 15
minicom: 01480 376743
www.scambs.gov.uk

2 April 2007



South
Cambridgeshire
District Council

To: The Leader – Councillor RMA Manning
Deputy Leader – Councillor SM Edwards
Members of the Cabinet – Councillors Mrs DSK Spink MBE, Dr DR Bard,
Mrs VG Ford, JA Hockney and MP Howell

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **CABINET**, which will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, FIRST FLOOR** at South Cambridgeshire Hall on **THURSDAY, 12 APRIL 2007** at **10.00 a.m.**

Yours faithfully
GJ HARLOCK
Chief Executive

Requests for a large print agenda must be received at least 48 hours before the meeting.

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RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL		
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INFORMATION ITEMS

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13. **Quarterly Monitoring Report including Budgetary Control and Prudential Indicators: Fourth Quarter 2006/07**
The report will be tabled at the meeting

STANDING ITEMS

14. **Matters Referred by Scrutiny and Overview Committee**

15. **Updates from Cabinet Members Appointed to Outside Bodies**

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SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 8 March 2007

PRESENT: Councillor RMA Manning (Leader of the Council)
Councillor SM Edwards (Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services
Portfolio Holder / Deputy Leader of the Council)

Councillors: Mrs DSK Spink MBE Housing Portfolio Holder
Dr DR Bard Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder
Mrs VG Ford Community Development Portfolio Holder
JA Hockney Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning
Portfolio Holder
MP Howell Environmental Health Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Holly Adams	Democratic Services Officer
Steve Hampson	Executive Director
Greg Harlock	Chief Executive
Denise Lewis	Head of Housing Strategic Services
Simon McIntosh	Corporate Manager (Policy, Performance and Partnerships)
Kelly Quigley	Communications Officer
Dale Robinson	Corporate Manager (Health & Environmental Services)

Councillors JD Batchelor, RF Bryant, EW Bullman, R Hall, Mrs CAED Murfitt, CR Nightingale, Mrs HM Smith, RT Summerfield and Dr SEK van de Ven were in attendance, by invitation.

Procedural Items

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Leader was authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2007.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following personal interests were declared:

Councillor MP Howell	As a smoker (minute 9)
Councillor RT Summerfield	As a member of Milton Parish Council and Milton Community Centre (minute 8)

**Recommendation to
Council**

3. INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Council's current investment strategy continued to prove successful and the authority remained debt-free. Cabinet congratulated officers for their excellent work

managing finances.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that the Investment Strategy be approved.

Decisions made by Cabinet

4. ARBURY PARK: SUSTAINABLE LETTINGS POLICY

A nominations and management agreement, setting out how affordable homes would be let or sold to qualifying households, was essential to meet the aims and objections of the joint housing strategy for Arbury Park, and would take into account lessons learned at Cambourne. The design of homes meeting a minimum Eco-homes standard of "Very Good" and the water conservation measures were welcomed and could serve as best practice for future developments. A new Youth Bus was being organised specifically for growth areas before other facilities were in place.

Cabinet **AGREED** that the Nominations and Management Agreement *Building a Sustainable Community at Arbury Park* be approved as the associated local lettings policy.

5. 9-MONTH (APRIL TO DECEMBER 2006) CORPORATE MILESTONES

The nine-month report on progress towards achievement of the 2006/07 corporate milestones was received and the Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder drew attention to the move from critical to non-critical a delay for the improvement of customer service. This had been caused by external circumstances surrounding integration of the CRM software at the contact centre, which now was being progressed with a go-live date of 7 June 2007: CRM integration would allow contact centre agents to have all customer information from back office programmes available on one screen, improving the opportunity for customers to have all their issues dealt with at the first point of contact.

The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder noted that the Local Development Framework had been formally adopted in January 2007. Today was the final day for receipt of objections to the Core Strategy; no objections had been received so far.

Cabinet **AGREED** that:

- (a) the remaining 13 (48%) of the 2006/07 milestones be included in the appropriate 2007/08 Service Plans and be monitored in quarterly reports in 2007/08; and
- (b) officers give high priority to recruitment to posts to avoid prolonged vacancies, where the vacancy would have adverse implications for the achievement of council priorities.

Cabinet **NOTED** that 14 (52%) of the 27 2006/07 milestones would be completed within the 2006/07 period.

6. 9-MONTH (APRIL TO DECEMBER 2006) CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Council was on schedule to achieve 76% of its performance indicator targets, an improvement since the six-month report at which time it had been assumed that only

71% of targets would be met. Portfolio Holders explained that:

- BV111 (Planning Satisfaction Survey) – an action plan was in place to address the downward direction of travel within the next six months;
- BV12 (Working days / shifts lost to sickness absence) – the figures from 2004/05 were higher than usual in light of the impact on staff morale of the capping decision, and it was expected that there could be a similar impact from the Corporate Governance Inspection, although the situation was being actively managed. Long-term sickness did affect the figures, but could not be separated from the overall totals;
- BV199b (% of land / highways with visible graffiti) – the Council had employed an independent investigator to report on this target, which had resulted in a higher amount of graffiti reported than was the case with local authorities using internal resources, but at the same time was a procedure now being examined by the Audit Commission as an example of best practice which could be recommended for use country-wide;
- BV218b (% abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours) – officers were investigating using other staff to help meet this target;
- BV79a (% of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due was correct) – although some authorities did not include payments of under £1 difference from the correct amount as an error, the Council counted every error no matter how small, which did have an effect on this PI, but which also gave a more accurate and honest picture;
- BV82ai (% waste sent for recycling) and BV82aii (tonnage of waste sent for recycling) – the improvement in these areas was due largely to the publicity from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste and Environment Forum. There was an anomaly that the Council was to promote home composting, but then was not allowed to include the levels of home composting in its totals;
- SE203 (% of Environmental Health complaints responded to within 3 working days) – this referred to the main contact with the complainant to begin the investigation process. There were other targets for resolving specific types of complaint, depending on their severity;
- SF731 (% Contact Centre calls abandoned by the caller) – a system failure had prevented the information from being obtained, but the disaster recovery procedures in place had worked properly and it was not anticipated that there would be any impact on the targets. When compared with the private sector, the Contact Centre performance was excellent;
- SH311 (Number of affordable housing of all types and tenures completed) – this target would be revised in the coming year to reflect what the Council was doing rather than measuring external performance over which the Council had little control;
- The Scrutiny and Overview Committee would be reviewing the Complaints and Compliments Process on 15 March;
- The existing performance management system (PIMMS) would be replaced shortly with a system which would allow Portfolio Holders to manage actively targets earlier in the year.

Members were reminded of a Service First workshop on 28 March 2007.

Cabinet congratulated the collection service for excellent results.

Cabinet **AGREED** that:

- (a) targets for 2007/08 remain at the level of government minimum standards;
- (b) Portfolio Holders use their meetings to monitor implementation of the improvement measures in the various Service Plans;
- (c) Portfolio Holders work with the service planning managers to ensure that plans

- are robust and clearly set out to help achieve the Council's 2007/08 priorities;
and
- (d) lessons learnt be accepted as a means of helping ensure that appropriate plans be set and successfully implemented for 2007/08.

Cabinet **REQUESTED** that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitor progress, at least annually, to ensure that the three-year targets be achieved.

Cabinet **NOTED** the progress on performance indicators after the first nine months of 2006/07, with 76% projected to be on target.

7. COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2007-2010

The forthcoming Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2010 took account of the Local Government White Paper and the recommendations from the Corporate Governance Inspection. The current strategy, 2003-2006, had six aims, but the forthcoming strategy would reduce this to four to better focus resources. The Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder confirmed that the process had begun to create a post for a dedicated officer to support the community strategy, a report on which would be coming to Cabinet in April 2007.

Cabinet **AGREED** that the emerging priorities for the Sustainable Community Strategy be taken into account in developing new priorities for the Council.

Cabinet **REQUESTED** that all members take advantage of opportunities to take part in the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Cabinet **NOTED** the progress on the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the timetable to complete the strategy in time to influence the Local Area Agreement from April 2008.

8. MILTON COUNTRY PARK - LAND OWNERSHIP

In order for a new manager to run the park, Cabinet approval, in principle, was required for the transfer of the Council's land to another agency. Cambridgeshire County Council would have to undertake a legal process to ensure that transfer of their land ownership at the Park was the best outcome for a public asset. There would be a workshop on 29 March 2007 for a number of bodies who were keen to take forward management of Milton Country Park.

The Leader emphasised that the Council had never suggested that any part of Milton Country Park be released for development.

Cabinet thanked the Corporate Manager (Policy, Performance and Partnerships) and his team for their work on Milton Country Park and dealing with public concerns.

Cabinet would **SUPPORT** the principle of transferring the Council's land within Milton Country Park to a new agency, to enable that agency to take on the park's management, subject to a full consideration of the nature of such a disposal bring brought to a future Cabinet for decision, taking into account the views of other agencies.

9. STAFF TO IMPLEMENT THE HEALTH ACT 2006 (SMOKE FREE REGULATIONS)

The proposal to employ two additional members of staff temporarily to implement the requirements of the Health Act 2006 (Smoke Free legislation) would be cost-neutral as

the funding would be covered by government grant. Learning from experience in Scotland and Ireland, the Council intended to implement the requirements initially through raising awareness of the new legislation.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) an increase in the Staffing Establishment by one full-time equivalent (FTE) for a twelve-month period and one FTE for a six-month period; and
- (b) that, in order that appointments not be delayed, delegated authority be given to Senior Management Team to agree the salary scale and post titles to be applied with the Human Resources Manager following the outcome of job evaluations.

10. PRIVATE HIRE AND HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLES: AMENDMENTS TO LICENSING CONDITIONS

The Licensing Committee had considered thoroughly the proposed licensing conditions for private hire and hackney carriage vehicles at its meeting on 20 February 2007.

Cabinet **AGREED** to adopt the Vehicle Licensing Conditions with effect from 1 April 2007.

11. PRIVATE HIRE AND HACKNEY CARRIAGE DRIVERS: ADOPTION OF DRIVING TEST

The proposals for adoption of the driving test were in line with those of other authorities and would demonstrate that the driver had met more than just the minimum standards required. Almost all private hire and taxi firms consulted supported the recommendations.

Cabinet **AGREED** that, with effect from 23 April 2007, all new applicants or existing drivers who have allowed their licences to lapse in any manner be required to undertake and pass the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) test for Private Hire and Hackney Carriages before being granted a licence by South Cambridgeshire District Council, except:

- (a) where an applicant for a Private Hire or Hackney Carriage driver's licence has successfully completed all the Go Skills vocational qualification modules; and / or
- (b) where an applicant already holds the Institute of Advanced Motoring qualification or RoSPA advanced driving test, the DSA driving test shall be waived.

12. PRIVATE HIRE AND HACKNEY CARRIAGE APPLICATIONS: DRIVER GUIDELINES

The Environmental Health Portfolio Holder explained that the Council intended to take the toughest stance possible with regards to applicants previously convicted of indecency offences. The Council could not ban applicants for life, but instead would recommend that applications should not be considered until three years from the end of the period of any sentence awarded by a court, whether that sentence had been served in full or not. This would not guarantee that the applicant would automatically be approved, just that such a person would be able to apply for a licence; other policies and procedures were in place governing the application process and an unsuccessful applicant could appeal to a sub-committee of the Licensing Committee and / or to Magistrates' Court.

The Corporate Manager (Health and Environmental Services) agreed to amend the list of indecency offences to include indecent exposure with intent to insult a male and indecent assault on a male, if such offences were recognised legally.

Cabinet **AGREED** to adopt the Private Hire / Hackney Carriage Driver Application Guidelines with effect from 1 April 2007, with delegated authority granted to the Environmental Health Portfolio Holder and Corporate Manager (Health and Environmental Services) to make any relevant amendments to the list of indecency offences.

13. PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER: LICENSING CONDITIONS

A private hire driver would not be required to disclose any on-the-spot fines for driving offences via the CRB check, although these could be noted when the Council received updated licence information from the DVLA if such a fine resulted in points being taken from a licence.

Cabinet thanked the licensing team for their work preparing all the private hire and hackney carriage reports.

Cabinet **AGREED** to adopt the Private Hire Driver Licensing Conditions with effect from 1 April 2007.

Information Items

14. CAPITAL POOLING RECEIPTS - UPDATE

Since April 2004 Local Authorities have been required to send part of the receipts from the sale of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets to the government, where the funds were redistributed for housing purposes across the country on the basis of need, a process known as "pooling". It had been expected that receipts from equity share sales would be exempt from pooling from October 2006, but it now was unlikely that these exemptions would come into force until 1 April 2008. A robust and prudent strategy, intended to minimise the impact on the capital reserves, would be devised and brought to full Council for decision.

The Chief Executive explained that there was not any guidance on what was considered an appropriate balance for the capital reserves, nor any firm guidance on reserves in general: the target figure of £1.5 million in revenue reserves had been calculated by officers and external auditors as the appropriate level based on the income and expenditure of the authority.

Cabinet **NOTED** the update on capital receipts pooling.

Standing Items

15. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE INSPECTION

The Chief Executive updated members on progress:

- Officers continued to work towards the achievement of an Improvement Plan, with two meetings held so far and completion of the stakeholder analysis. Areas of work had been allocated over eight workstreams which would be led by senior officers and aggregated to form the Improvement Plan;
- The eight service leads were consulting with members about particular areas and

there would be opportunities for members and officers to participate at workshops before the Improvement Board meeting on 29 March. The Improvement Board, membership of which had been agreed by Council on 22 February, would then consider the Improvement Plan, for consideration by Cabinet on 12 April and approval by Council on 26 April;

- The officer-level team was keen to agree any new posts identified as urgent for progression of the Plan: already identified was the Local Strategic Partnership Officer and a Scrutiny Support Officer, the latter of which could be seconded from IDeA or Building Capacity East;
- Negotiations were underway with a neighbouring authority for secondment of an officer to serve as Improvement Manager;
- The Audit Commission had written to confirm that it did not intend to refer the Council to the Secretary of State, but this was conditional upon the Improvement Plan being submitted by 30 April with the endorsement of the Improvement Monitoring Board;
- A follow-up Corporate Governance Inspection would take place later in 2007/08; and
- Scrutiny and Overview training and analysis of the scrutiny function would begin on 15 March.

16. MATTERS REFERRED BY SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Nothing to report.

17. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Nothing to report.

**The Meeting ended at 11.39
a.m.**

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SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Leader and Cabinet	12 April 2007
AUTHOR/S:	Chief Executive and Improvement Team	

AUDIT COMMISSION CORPORATE GOVERNANCE INSPECTION (CGI) UPDATE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to request the Cabinet to:-
 - Recommend the draft Improvement Plan for approval by the Council
 - Establish three new posts to be financed from the £300,000 approved by the Council to strengthen the Council's capacity to address CGI findings.
 - Report on the first meeting of the Improvement Board on 29 April

The Draft Improvement Plan

2. The Council is required to submit an Improvement Plan to the Audit Commission by the end of April. An Improvement team has been assembled and a draft plan has been prepared and is attached as **Appendix 1**. This plan is still under development to ensure that it is fit for purpose and is substantially similar to the draft considered by Members after Council on 22 March. Some additional activities have been added to Workstream A; and some revisions have been made to the timings of activities.
3. The main features of the Improvement Plan are:-
 - (a) It has been prepared on a project management basis following the principles (but not the exact documentation) of the Council's Project Management Toolkit
 - (b) It contains 7 workstreams, each with a separate leader and team, in order to spread workload and ownership.
 - (c) It represents a phased approach. The first phase is the period up to October 2007. In this phase the emphasis is on getting the building blocks in place – eg
 - Developing and gaining agreement to a Council Vision, Objectives and Values
 - Maximising resources and building capacity
 - Member development

The second phase is seen as starting in October 2007, when the main bulk of the change and development work will take place – enabling congruence with the Council's vision and values and ensuring that the project is adequately resourced. It will also be possible to take advantage of emerging guidance on the Local Government White Paper and, possibly, the results of the Audit Commission's autumn follow up inspection.
 - (d) The Improvement Plan takes a holistic approach to the issues facing the Council, starting with the development of a vision, values and objectives. The aim is to build on firm foundations and address the culture of the organisation.
 - (e) There are certain key events that the project plan works around – for example, the elections, audit commission deadlines, the White Paper legislation and guidance. One of the major constraints is the timetable for the development of the

Sustainable Community Strategy. All five Cambridgeshire Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are planning to complete their strategies by October, which will then be used to input into the development of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) from April 2008.

- (f) The scope of the plan is broad. This causes the improvement team some concern. It reflects the breadth of the Audit Commission's findings and our concern to ensure that all corporate change processes are co-ordinated. We recognise that management of the change process is going to be difficult and resource intensive. We will need good project management arrangements to maintain control.
 - (g) At present the objectives in the plan are also broad and not as SMART as the Improvement team would like. One of the next steps in project planning will be to prepare project initiation documents (PIDs) for each area of activity in the workstreams (A1, B5, F6 etc) and this will enable clearer objectives to be defined for each activity. It is also intended to review the overall project objectives when the Council has agreed the Vision, Objectives and Values.
4. There is still a good deal of work to be done before the Improvement Plan is submitted to the Audit Commission
- (a) Preparing PIDs for each area of activity in the workstreams – to set out milestones, resource needs, outputs, outturns etc
 - (b) Review the overall resources, timings and dependencies for the project in the light of the PIDs
 - (c) Have in place effective arrangements for project managing the project.

Consideration of the Improvement Plan by Council and the Improvement Board

5. A Member workshop took place immediately after the Council meeting on 22 March to discuss the draft Improvement Plan. Members were supportive of the plan. A number of issues were raised – for example relating to:-
- Developing the role of non Executive Members
 - Managing risks effectively
 - The challenge of the Improvement Plan and the importance of focusing on it.
 - Scrutiny support and development
 - The fact that the change to all out elections every four years would require Council approval
6. At the meeting Members were invited to give their comments subsequently to the officers and to come forward if they wish to be involved in the work of any of the work streams.
7. The Improvement Board met on the 29 March and its members acknowledged that the Council had already undertaken considerable work and felt the plan was heading in the right direction. They did suggest improvements including:-
- a) The need for the improvement plan to make more explicit reference to actions already taken and progress already made in securing improvements.
 - b) The need to ensure the work surrounding the development of the Growth Agenda was properly integrated within the improvement plan.
 - c) The need to reflect the substantial corporate work stream that may evolve through consideration of the Council's housing finances.
 - d) The need for greater integration of the interfaces between work stream B (Vision & Culture Change) and work stream E (Political priorities & Decision

making) in order to recognise that a clear statement of political priorities should drive resource allocation and the corporate agenda.

- e) The need to make the proposals for the involvement of Members much more specific within the document.
8. The Improvement Board also considered that it was important for the Council to take a phased approach as suggested but in phase one i.e. before October 2007, concentrate on:
 - Developing and gaining agreement to a Council Vision, Objectives and Values.
 - Maximising resources and building capacity
 9. The Officer improvement team met on 30 April following the Improvement Board and agreed that the Improvement Plan will need to be updated to reflect the views of the Improvement Board, and of Cabinet following consideration on 12 April before the plan is submitted to Council on 26 April for approval and submission to the Audit Commission (by the end of April).
 10. The changes to the improvement plan proposed, in addition to those mentioned in Paragraph 4 above, are: -
 - a. The inclusion of an Executive Summary, which highlights the Council's acceptance of the CGI report findings; identifies the successes and progress to date, the phased approach with important milestones, and outcomes, especially those issues to be given priority in Phase 1 (paragraph 3c).
 - b. The joining up of the 'Council vision and cultural change' and 'Political priorities and decision making' work streams.
 - c. The addition of two work streams (as already planned but not currently included in the Improvement plan) concerning the Growth agenda and future housing options.
 - d. More explicit references to the role and involvement of Members in the Improvement journey.

Strengthening Capacity

11. As Members will be aware, Cecilia Tredget, Deputy Chief Executive at East Cambridgeshire District Council, has joined the Council in the post of Improvement Manager on a one year secondment. An application for the costs of the secondment is being made to Building Capacity East.
12. Discussions are also taking place with IDeA and Building Capacity East on other potential areas for external support – these include support with Member training, ongoing mentoring and leadership; manager mentoring; performance management; equalities; and revision of the constitution.
13. The Council has approved an additional sum of £300,000 pa to strengthen the Council's capacity to address the findings in the CGI report. The use of that sum has been delegated to Cabinet. The Improvement team has identified an urgent requirement for the establishment of the following three new posts to build corporate capacity in priority areas for improvement:-
 - a) **Scrutiny Support Officer** (Salary grade pts 22 to 29, £22,805 to £28,575)
Members have been aware of the need to improve and develop the scrutiny function to enable the committee to play a more effective role in enabling the Council to achieve its objectives. These concerns were confirmed in the CGI report. It is proposed that an officer be appointed whose role would be to support the development of scrutiny skills and processes and who would assist the committee to focus more effectively and add value. The officer would provide

advice, research and enable the scrutiny function to be more outward looking and contribute to other CGI themes such as community focus and partnership.

A review of the scrutiny function and its relationship to Cabinet, advisory groups and other council structures is included in the draft Improvement Plan. This will need to take into account the Council's vision, values and objectives and be part of an overall approach to Corporate Governance. However, it is recommended that the appointment of a Scrutiny Support officer should not be delayed for the review, as the role and skills required will be generic and adaptable to any scrutiny function. Consideration is also being given to the appointment of a temporary officer with external funding to assist in developing scrutiny before the appointment of the new officer.

- b) **Strategic Partnerships Officer** (Salary grade 34 to 41, £33,795 to £41,763). For some time it has been a concern that the effectiveness of the LSP has been hindered by a lack of officer support. The need will become even more acute as the role of the LAA and LSP develop as a result of the recent White Paper. The CGI report identified this area and the Council's engagement with strategic partnerships as a weakness. The role of the post would be to develop the Community Strategy; to support the involvement of the Council and LSP in the LAA; and support the LSP and its links with topic groups.
- c) **Equalities and Diversity Co-ordinator.** (Salary grade 28 to 35, £27,751 to £34,894) One of the three main recommendations in the CGI report is to address the Council's equalities responsibilities. It is envisaged that the role of this post would include working with HR to develop the Council's policies and processes to ensure a diverse workforce and comply with legislation. The main role of the job would be to work with services to help them ensure that the service they provide to the public reflects the diversity and needs of the residents we serve. A key responsibility of the post would be to enable the Council to increase its scores against the CRE standard and Race Equality Scheme checklist. Action to fill this post will proceed expeditiously to enable the Council to raise its baseline position as quickly as possible.

Recommendations

- 14. The Cabinet is recommended to:-
 - a) Recommend the Council to approve the Improvement Plan (with any changes requested by the Cabinet and the Improvement Board);
 - b) Note the secondment of Cecilia Tredget as Improvement Manager and thank East Cambridgeshire District Council for releasing her;
 - c) Approve the establishment of the three new posts of Equalities Co-ordinator, Strategic Partnerships Officer and Scrutiny Support Officer. These posts to be funded from the £300,000 allocation approved by Council for its response to the CGI report.

Background Papers: Papers to the Improvement Board on 29 March 2007
Job descriptions for the three posts

Contact Officers: Paul Swift, Policy and Performance Manager, 01954 713017
Steve Hampson, Executive Director, 01954 713021

CGI IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

[Strap line to be added]

1. BUSINESS CASE/WHY ARE WE UNDERTAKING THIS PROJECT?

1.1 The immediate purpose of the project is to enable the Council to make a vigorous response to the findings and recommendations in the Audit Commission CGI report dated January 2007. However, project scope goes beyond responding to the points in the report. It aims to achieve a broader and sustainable change in the cultures and systems of the Council to enable the Council to improve the provision of services and develop its community leadership role on behalf of the residents of South Cambridgeshire. Many of the issues raised by the Audit Commission report had already been identified in the “State of the Nation” report to the Cabinet in September 2006.

1.2 The intended benefits/outcomes to be achieved by the project will include:-

By October 2007

- (a) The adoption of Council Objectives, Vision and Values which command support within the Council and will enable the Council to support the Community Strategy.
- (b) The development of capacity to tackle the Improvement Plan through –
 - the appointment of an Improvement Manager;
 - completion of the second, third and fourth tier review;
 - the appointment to new posts funded through the £300,000 made available by the Council to strengthen capacity;
 - the maximisation of external resources; and
 - the release of resources through internal changes of processes.
- (c) The development of Member and political group capacity through the adoption of a Member Contract and job description; Member mentoring; and training.
- (d) The avoidance of intervention by the Audit Commission through the development of an Improvement Plan and the timely achievement of phase 1 of the plan.

By April 2009

- (e) The vision, values and objectives for the Council embedded in the culture and systems of the Council.
- (f) A Council seen as outward looking and engaging with the public and partners to achieve real change in the district and taking the lead in responding to district wide issues.
- (g) Consistently improving services to the public of South Cambridgeshire as measured through performance indicators and public satisfaction.

- (h) A highly motivated and skilled workforce.
 - (i) A Council recognised as representing the needs of all sections of the community
 - (j) The “normalisation” of the Audit Commission’s relationship with the Council.
- 1.3 These benefits will be achieved through a wide ranging and multi-faceted work programme divided into a number of workstreams. The programme will be based on sound principles of organisational transformation and change management. It will seek to put the fundamentals in place (ie a clear vision, values and objectives for the Council) and to embed those fundamentals through communication, training, development, and changed systems.
- 1.4 The Council has already agreed to allocate a further £300,000 pa to address weaknesses identified by the Audit Commission. Further assistance has been given and is being sought from agencies such as IDeA and Building Capacity East (BCE). The major input of resources will be the time of existing officers and Members.
- 1.5 The project has the potential to repay the energy and resources put into it many fold. However, it will be essential for Members and officers to remain focused on this project and to minimise other demands if the project and the resources put into it are to repay the investment.

2. PROJECT INITIATION

Project Objectives

- 2.1 The immediate objectives of the project are as follows:-
- a) To enable the Council to meet the requirements of the Audit Commission following the Corporate Governance Inspection, in particular to:-
 - Prepare a draft Improvement Plan which meets the Audit Commission’s expectations, with appropriate involvement of identified stakeholders, for approval and submission to the Audit Commission by the end of April 2007
 - To enable the Council to demonstrate sufficient progress on its Improvement Plan to satisfy the Audit Commission in its review in Autumn 2007
 - To enable the Council to continue to improve its standing with the Audit Commission and to be strongly placed for the new CPA arrangements from 2009.
 - b) To enable the Council to generate a clear vision and as to how it wants to work and to embed that vision in the culture, structures and working relationships within the Council.

- c) To enable the Council to set clear future objectives, which reflect the revised Community Strategy, and to develop the capacity to achieve those objectives
- 2.2 It is envisaged that more specific and quantified objectives will be developed early in the project (by July 2007), when a clear vision and objectives have been adopted by the Council

Scope

2.3 The project will be divided into the following workstreams.

- A Project Set up, Management and Resourcing
- B Council Vision and Cultural Change
- C Communications
- D Standards, Equalities and Diversity
- E Political Priorities and Decision Making
- F Community Focus and Partnerships
- G Systems and Process Improvements

2.4 The attached project plan and objectives for each workstream defines the scope of the project.

2.5 There are a number of corporate issues which have been deliberately omitted from the direct scope of the project, although they may benefit from the improved working and capacity resulting from the project. These include:-

- a) Achieving Gershon savings and procurement
- b) Improving the Council's use of resources score
- c) Shared services
- d) White paper implementation
- e) ICT/web site development
- f) Others ???

2.6 The project will subsume the Transformation Project.

2.7 It is intended that the project should ensure links with any other relevant change processes taking place within the Council. In particular the Growth Agenda facing the Council is a non-negotiable high priority. It is proposed that the growth areas project will not be included as a separate workstream in the Improvement Plan. The Project Team will ensure that a Project Plan and effective project management arrangements are established for the growth areas and will keep progress under review, ensuring progress and co-ordination with other

improvement plans. As other corporate initiatives arise (for example the response to the recent White Paper) the project team will decide whether they should be included in the project or whether a similar linkage mechanism should be adopted.

Project Team and Roles

2.8 The following major roles will apply:-

Project Sponsor (the persons for whom the project is undertaken): Leader of the Council
Project Leader (the person with overall responsibility for delivering the project objectives) The Chief Executive
Project Manager (the person responsible for day to day management of the project) The Improvement Manager*
Project Co-ordinator Paul Swift

* Project Management to be undertaken by Dale Robinson and Paul Swift until the appointment of the Improvement Manager.

2.9 The Project Team consists of:-

	Job Title	Project Team Role
Geoff Bridgeman	Project Manager	Leader, Workstream G
Susan Gardner Craig	Human Resources Manager	Support to a number of workstreams
Catrina Dunnett	Principal Solicitor	Leader, Workstream D
Steve Hampson	Executive Director	Leader, Workstream C
Greg Harlock	Chief Executive	Project Leader and Leader Workstream E
Gareth Jones	Corporate Manager	Growth Area project liason
Richard May	Democratic Services Manager	Business Support and support to workstreams
Simon McIntosh	Corporate Manager	Leader, Workstream F
Dale Robinson	Corporate Manager	Leader, Workstream B
Paul Swift	Policy and Review Manager	Project co-ordinator, support to project manager and various workstreams
	Improvement Manager	Project Manager

2.10 Workstream Leaders will be responsible for:-

- Selecting their team, subject to approval by the main project team.
- Drawing up the workstream plan and project identification documents for the individual areas of activity within the workstream plan for approval of the main project team. Any variations also need to be approved by the main project team.

- Project managing their workstream and drawing to the attention of the main project team any delay or other problem which might affect the delivery of the project.
- 2.11 Team members will also support individual workstreams and will also contribute to and share responsibility for decisions made by the project team and will represent the views of the project team within their services, to partners etc.

Reporting Lines

2.12 The Project Team will report to **Cabinet** which holds overall Council responsibility for the development and implementation of the Improvement Plan, subject to Council approval of the Improvement Plan itself. The Council has established an **Improvement Board** with the remit to advise the Council and provide external stimulus and support. It may be appropriate on some occasions for the Project Team to report directly to this Board.

Project Timescale

- 2.13 It is envisaged that the project will have an 18 month to 2 year timescale. This will be defined more clearly in the project plan and will be reviewed after a year. Immediate key milestones are:-
- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 29 th March 2007 | The first meeting of the Improvement Board which will give a steer on the Improvement Plan and other arrangements for achieving the Council's improvement journey |
| 30 th April 2007 | Deadline for submission of Improvement Plan to the Audit Commission |
| July 2007 | Approval of the Council Vision, Values and objectives by the Council |
| September 2007 | First major review of progress, with reports to the Improvement Board, Cabinet and Council. Approval of Community Strategy |
| Autumn 2007 | Audit Commission review of progress/potential re-inspection |
| Autumn 2007 | Review of the Improvement Plan in the light of the Audit Commission review and the Vision, Values and Objectives adopted by the Council. |
| November 2007 | Approval of Council Corporate Strategy, MTFS and Workforce Plan |
| March 2008 | Annual Review of project by Improvement Board and Council |

Arrangements for Project Management

- 2.14 The following approach to project management will be adopted:-
- a) A **Top Level Project Plan** (attached) will be prepared and maintained setting out workstreams and corresponding objectives, areas of activity, activity leads and start/finish dates.
 - b) For each Area of Activity in the Top Level Project Plan an **Area of Activity Project Initiation Document** (PID) will be prepared which will show for each area of activity:- milestones, resources, outputs and outcomes.
 - c) On a monthly basis each Workstream Leader will report to the project team showing the progress on each area of activity, including the milestones for that area of activity using a traffic light system and highlighting in particular delays affecting the critical path.
 - d) The project team will review the Risk and Issue logs on a monthly basis. And will evaluate success against the Critical Success Factors every three months.
 - e) A high level monthly report will be made to the project sponsor, indicating any major problems, who may refer the report to Cabinet.
 - f) A three monthly report will be made to Cabinet and the Improvement Board.

Risk Management

- 2.15 The Project Manager will maintain a Risk Log (attached) and an Issue Log (attached) which will be reviewed monthly by the project team

Resources

- 2.16 The following resources are available to the project.

- 2.17 **Available budgets.** The Council has approved a sum of £300,000 pa to provide capacity to address the findings of the CGI Report. It is envisaged that this sum will be used as follows:-

2007/08:	£200,000	Employment costs for new posts
	£100,000	One off costs for the development and implementation of the Improvement Plan
2008/09 onwards:	£300,000	Employment costs for new posts

- 2.18 Provision of £125,000 as part of the Transformation Project to strengthen senior management capacity.

- 2.19 **External support.** IDeA and Building Capacity East (BCE) have already provided or given commitments to financial assistance and advice in areas such as Leadership Academy places; Member mentoring; top team development; communications consultancy; equalities consultancy; scrutiny support; Member training; and the employment of an Improvement Manager. Further requests are being prepared and discussed with these agencies. Support may well also be available from other sources.
- 2.20 The most significant resource available to the project team is the time and energy of existing staff. In order to maximise that capacity:-
- a) Portfolio holders and other members are requested to reduce other expectations on Project Team leaders to allow for the time they will need to put into the project.
 - b) The project plan will be phased and realistic.
 - c) External support will be utilised as much as possible.
 - d) Involvement in the project will be spread to as many officers as possible in order to spread the load and achieve wider engagement
 - e) The requirements of the project will be taken into account in service plans and appraisals
 - f) Opportunities to reduce meetings and other pressures on senior officer time will be reviewed.
- 2.21 Nevertheless, pressure on staff time remains as one of the key risk factors in the delivery of the Improvement Plan.
- 2.22 **Administrative Support:** Adequate administrative support will be provided through use of resources within the Council and the use of the £300,000 provision.

Stakeholder Analysis/Communications Plan

- 2.23 The project team has already carried out an initial stakeholder analysis. This will be refined and taken into account in the development of a Communications Strategy (Workstream C)

Principles

- 2.24 The Improvement Plan will be developed and implemented on the basis of clear change management principles, summarised as follows:-
- a) The approach taken will depend on time and situational factors i.e. complexity and resistance to change.
 - b) It is a common mistake to move to quickly, involve too few people particularly if some of the information to design the change is unknown
 - c) Communication, participation, education, involvement and facilitation and support are essential
 - d) Set Clear SMART Objectives (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed)
 - e) Identify Critical Success Factors/Processes
 - f) Identify early those likely to experience loss or uncertainty

- g) Identify Resistance to Change
- h) Identify and have clearly ring-fenced Change Budget;
- i) Communicate Opportunities created by Change
- j) Evaluate and learn from progress.
- k) Analyse and manage risk
- l) Remove artefacts (symbols, routines, myths etc) that do not convey vision
- m) Build trust -deliver on promises

3. DOCUMENTS MAKING UP THE PROJECT PLAN

- a) Top Level Project Plan (attached)
- b) Risk Log (attached)
- c) Issues Log (attached)
- d) Stakeholder Analysis (to be added)
- e) Communication Plan (to be added)
- f) Project Initiation Documents (PIDs) for all Workstream areas of activity (to be prepared)
- g) Templates for Project Management process (to be added)
- h) Actions already completed post inspection and prior to the project (attached)
- i) Analysis of workstream activity against 9 change management principles (to follow)

4. ACTIONS CARRIED OUT BETWEEN JANUARY 2007 AND THE AGREEMENT OF THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The following are actions carried out or in progress up to the beginning of the period of the Project Plan (end April 2007) which have contributed to addressing the CGI report:-

1. Council has approved changes in constitution for strong leadership model (ie the ability of the leader to appoint the Cabinet and allocate portfolios)
2. The number of Council meetings has been reduced from May 2007
3. Council meetings now only receive minutes for adoption and other measures to improve efficiency and effectiveness of full Council meetings.
4. Audit Panel reconstituted as a committee reporting direct to Council
5. Arrangements for portfolio holder meetings reviewed – stronger links to forward planning and attendance of Scrutiny monitors and opposition spokespersons
6. Whistleblowing arrangements for reporting poor conduct direct to Chief Exec or Monitoring Officer revised and strengthened. Publicity to be given to the new arrangements by end of March 2007.
7. A revised Workforce Plan adopted.
8. A decision to trial evening meetings for Cabinet

9. The holding of leaders' meetings (informal cabinet)

5. TOP LEVEL PROJECT PLAN

The following pages set out a top level project plan for the 7 workstreams. Each project plan sets out a number of areas of activity for the workstream. For each area of activity there is:-

- **An Activity Area Code** (A1, B3 etc). For each code an Activity Area Project Initiation Document (PID) will be prepared showing in more detail the milestones, outputs, outcomes, resources required etc for the area of activity.
- **Links to suggestions**. These are references to the suggestions received from Members and Officers listed under each workstream, which will be taken into account in the workstream activity.
- **Lead** - the Member or officer/s who will be responsible for the delivery of the Area of Activity. Abbreviations are given below.
- **Objectives/Outcomes** – a brief summary of the outcomes for each area of activity - which will be given in more detail in the PID
- **Links with other workstreams** - references to related areas of activity in other workstreams.

WORKSTREAM A: Project Set up, Management and Resources

Objectives: *To ensure that the project is successful by having clear objectives, clear roles, sufficient resources and effective project management arrangements.*

Team: The whole project team

	Area of Activity	Links to suggestions	Lead	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links to other workstreams
For Completion by October 2007							
A1	Project Set Up. Project management roles, methodology, workstreams, name, reporting arrangements (including Improvement Board) etc		PS	Feb 07	April 07	Clear and supportive project management arrangements. Successful delivery of project	Supports all workstreams
A2	Complete PIDs for workstreams and reassess timing and resource requirements of the project		PS/GB/DR	March 07	April 07	A realistic project plan	Supports all workstreams
A3	Draft and gain approval to the Project Plan and submit to Audit Commission by end April.		PS/GB	Feb 07	April 07	Support and input of AC	Supports all workstreams
A4	Develop common information base for use by workstreams		PS	April 2007	April 2007	Common data; efficiency; support for workstreams	Supports all workstreams
A5	Provision and financing of Administrative back up		GB	April 2007	June 2007	Administrative support to workstreams and project – efficient use of resources	Supports all workstreams
A6	Complete appointments of Corporate Managers and agree 3 rd and 4 th tier structures		GJH + Corporate Managers	Sept 06	Sept 07	Provision of effective management capacity	Supports all workstreams
A7	Appoint an Improvement Manager		GJH	Jan 07	Apr 07	Provision of effective management capacity	Supports all workstreams
A8	Agree the use of the £300,000 made available by the Council and make appointments	k	GJH + Corporate Managers	Mar 07	Oct 07	Provide Council with capacity in key areas to address CGI findings	Supports all workstreams

Area of Activity	Links to suggestions	Lead	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links to other workstreams
A9	Identify, maximise and direct resources from external agencies.	PS	Feb 07	July 07	Maximise resources from external agencies and effective use.	Supports all workstreams
A10	Maximise capacity by reviewing options to free up officer time (including options suggested at member workshops)	Leader/ Chief Executive	April 07	Oct 07	Maximise officer capacity and focus on the improvement plan.	Supports all workstreams
A11	Major review of progress prior to AC review in Autumn 2007	Improvement Manager/PS	Sept 07	Sept 07	To ensure that any major problem areas are addressed before AC re-inspection	Supports all workstreams
A12	Complete Growth Area Project Plan and establish arrangements to enable the CGI Project Team to overview progress	Steve Hampson/ Gareth Jones	In progress	July 07	Effective project management and delivery of the growth area plan	Political Priorities and Decision Making Community Focus and Partnerships
For completion post October 2007						
A13	Review of the Improvement Plan in the light of AC review and Council Vision, Objectives, Values and Community Strategy	Improvement Manager	Mid Oct 07	Nov 07	An Improvement Plan which remains relevant.	Supports all workstreams
A14	Review Government guidance following enactment of the Local Government and Health Bill and decide how to be addressed by workstreams	Improvement Manager/PS	Mid Oct 07	Mid Oct 07	A co-ordinated response to the requirements of the new guidance.	Supports all workstreams

Relevant suggestions made by Members and officers

- a) Reduce meetings (A9)
- b) Improve time management; drop processes (A9)
- c) Prioritise (A7)
- d) Prioritise staff (A9)
- e) Better use of ICT – eg interactive web site – Workstream G
- f) Reduce Member meetings – enable Democratic services to undertake a new role of Member Services focal point for all their enquiries – as Contact Centre does for the public (A9)
- g) Cannot avoid shared services – need to start planning now how services will be provided in 3-5 years time – particularly in the context of the White Paper. (not in scope of project)

- h) We need to strengthen our approach to procurement – needs higher profile/clout. Need comprehensive list of contracts and renewals.(not in scope of project)
- i) Proceed as soon as possible with the implementation of the joint development agency for the growth areas (in Growth Areas project)
- j) Develop a strategy database which includes the corporate actions arising from all corporate strategies etc – eg Community strategy; service strategies; LAA etc – put onto new PIMMS (this is planned as part of PIMMS replacement)
- k) Need to strengthen capacity at Corporate core – eg Community Planning Officer; Policy and Performance Co-ordinator; Scrutiny Officer; Equalities/Community Engagement role (A7)
- l) Discuss with AC as soon as possible the breadth of issues they want us to address (in progress)
- m) Don't neglect risk management and internal controls (Workstream G)**

WORKSTREAM B:

Council Vision and Cultural Change

Objectives:

To enable the Council to generate a clear vision and as to how it wants to work and to embed that vision in the culture, structures and working relationships within the Council

To improve performance management through new systems and culture

Team:

Dale Robinson, Cllr Stewart, Susan Gardner-Graig, Someone from either North Lincs, Kettering (David Cooke) IdeA or Peer from Wafford, Sally Smart, Staff Champion (volunteer)

Administration Support:

Project management - Geoff Bridgeman; admin support requirements to be assessed.

External Assistance:

IDeA , Consultants in facilitation of workshops etc

Budget requirements:

Room hire, consultation documents etc, facilitators' external help

	Area of Activity	Lead	Links to suggestions	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links to other Workstreams
For completion by October 2007							
B1	<p>Devise and implement inclusive programme to create and agree Council Vision;(Long Term timeframe)</p> <p>Whole Council, Partners and links to community strategy (using evidence base) Use Analysis and Assessment of current evidence on new external environment, current Culture and obstacles to change within SCDC. I.e. Existing Cultural web; Review and build on OCCA survey; Force field analysis and that vision/culture aspired to.</p>	Cllr Manning DSR	a	May 2007	End of July 2007 (Possibly excluding formal approval process)	A Council future vision which commands support from Members and officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Priorities and decision making (links to the Community Strategy) and to B2 and B3 • Community Focus and Partnerships • Communications

	Area of Activity	Lead	Links to suggestions h,j,u,y	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links to other Workstreams
B2	Devise and implement inclusive programme to create and agree Council values. Staff and Members (using evidence base)	Cllr Stewart DSR		May 2007	End of July 2007 (Possibly excluding formal approval process)	Council values which command support from Members and officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Standards, Equalities and Diversity (Member Contract, Member development, diversity) • Political Priorities and decision making (eg approval of political priorities, Corporate Strategy)
B3	Devise and agree new Council Objectives with an Annual Focus for 2008/09 and future years. (See Political Priorities and Decision Making workstream – E3)						
B4	Identification of Critical success factors in achieving those goals	Improvement Manager		Aug 2007	Aug 2007	CSFs that can be used to ensure the vision, objectives, and values are embedded.	
B5	Improve delegation within the organisation via cultural change and include new scheme of delegation	DSR		In progress	April 2007 (Officers) July 2007 (Members)	Delegations which reflect Council values of empowerment and make efficient use of officer time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project set up and Resources • Political Priorities and Decision Making (Member delegation)
For Completion post October 2007							

Area of Activity	Lead	Links to suggestions	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links to other Workstreams
B6 Review corporate systems, policies, etc including those relating to customer/community engagement to ensure the programme is commensurate with new vision and values and critical success factors. (Scope to be more closely defined in PID) Customer complaints system revision	Improvement manager J Mitchell	c,d,e, g, k, q,r,s,w, z	Aug 2007 In progress	April 2008 April 2007	New vision and values are embedded in Council's systems and delivering improved services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement Plan reviewed under Workstream A. Communications Standards, Equalities and Diversity Community Focus and Partnerships Process & Systems Improvement G5
B7 Implement workforce and management leadership matters included within new workforce plan to re-enforce the Vision and Values and ensure Council objectives/vision can be achieved i.e. Management Development programme, flexible working, annual service plan/budget planning approach	Various	b, f, i, m, n, x,	Various from agreement of Vision and Values Beginning in Aug 07	Dec 2008	New vision and values are embedded in the Council's leadership and management culture and approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Standards, Equalities and Diversity (Member Contract and development) Political Priorities and decision making (Member championing of priorities E6) Process & Systems Improvement
B8 Agree and embed new performance management approach/style and installation of system to support approach – to include all performance management related systems such as service planning; appraisals; and monitoring.	Ian Salter DSR	l,p,t	In progress (new software procurement)	April 2008	New vision and values are embedded into performance management leading to improved customer service and service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political Priorities and Decision Making (ensuring performance management is linked to priorities) Process & Systems Improvement G20

Suggestions from staff and members:-

- a) Increase member awareness of pressure on staff
- b) Rewards for good ideas/exceptional performance

- c) Open door management
- d) Establish a Staff Council
- e) Members to be involved in staff briefings on change
- f) Member champion for staff matters
- g) Joint induction for staff and members
- h) Councillors to listen to staff on the ground
- i) Officer/Member relations – rebuild confidence – but slow process.
- j) Develop a “can do; will do; want to do” culture
- k) More attention to HR matters
- l) Need to consider how to involve Members more in performance management.
- m) More active and visible leadership – Cabinet members should be more visible within the district – attending local events, media interviews etc
- n) Leader and Cabinet should hold sessions for staff at least once a year to give their vision/sense of direction
- o) Possibly extend Member contract to all staff (with some differences)
- p) Develop the appraisal process – including personal commitments to actions to “live out” the corporate values
- q) Need to challenge the “sad dog” mentality among a few vocal staff.
- r) A more consistent and centralised approach to training and development.
- s) Need to open up staff to experience other councils – eg benchmarking visits; secondments; exchanges etc
- t) Strengthen appraisals – with milestones and targets for all staff so that staff can see how they are contributing to Council aims
- u) Develop a culture of internal customer care – eg staff respond to internal emails
- v) Accelerate review of delegations and allow managers delegated authority to manage
- w) Need clearer corporate approach and training on use of ICT to make better use of the systems we have – eg use of electronic diaries
- x) Improve leadership in the Council - at all levels.
- y) Need to change the culture so that managers and their teams are working ON their service rather than IN their service.
- z) Greater expectations on managers to improve their services – with support of BPRs and shared learning.

WORKSTREAM C: Communications

Objectives: To develop and implement a Communications Strategy which supports the other workstreams and in particular to support cultural change and a substantially enhanced reputation among the public and our partners.

Team: Steve Hampson, Susan Gardner-Craig, Kelly Quigley, Iain Green

Area of Activity	Lead	Links to suggestions	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links to other workstreams
For completion by October 2007						
C1	KQ		13/3	20/3	Motivating and distinctive strapline for the project	Links to all other workstreams
C2	KQ		13/3	End April 07	Understanding of progress being made; maintain general support for the project	Links to all other workstreams
C3	KQ		20/3	May 07	Effective Communications Strategy for the Council	Links to all other workstreams
C3 (a)	SH KQ SGC IG		13/3	April 07	Communications Strategy which is well founded in needs.	Work to be incorporated in A3
C3 (b)	KQ		20/3	May 07	Effectively resourced communications strategy	Links to all other workstreams

Area of Activity	Lead	Links to suggestions	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links to other workstreams
C4 Re-inforce corporate policy on external media engagement	KQ		17/3	June 07		Links to all other workstreams
For completion post October 2007						
C5 Continue to review and update the strategy and implementation plan as the project progresses.	KQ		Ongoing	Ongoing	Updated, relevant Strategy	Links to all other workstreams
C6 Review the strategy in the light of the Vision and Values and review of the Improvement Plan	KQ		Oct 2007	Nov 2007	Updated, relevant Strategy	Links to all other workstreams

WORKSTREAM D: Standards, Equalities and Diversity

Objectives:

To achieve a high level of Member conduct, with Members playing an active, positive role in the work of the Council and promoting the Values of the Council both in connection with their role at the Council and in their local communities.

To ensure that the Council is addressing and reflecting the needs of all sections of the community as an employer, service provider and community leader.

Team: Catriona Dunnett, Fiona McMillan, Simon McIntosh, Holly Adams, Cllr Mrs Murfitt, representative from CRE, Charles Clay, Jill Mellors

Area of Activity	Lead	Links to Suggestions	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links to other workstreams
For completion by October 2007						
D1 Member Contract and Job Description (Members will receive a Member Toolkit with all keys codes and protocols relating to being a councillor in one file – rewriting Member ICT protocol & media relations along with Idea Ethical Governance toolkit & Councillor’s Guide)	Fiona McMillan	a,b	January 2007	End April 2007	Clear and positive roles for Members which contribute to Council objectives and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Council Vision and Cultural Change (new Council values B7) • Political Priorities and Decision Making (eg championing priorities E6) • Community Focus and Partnerships (role in relation to partnerships)
D2 Develop the roles of political groups in conduct through mentoring programme	Catriona Dunnett		May 2007	Dec 2007	High standards of Member conduct, with political groups playing a part.	
D3 Revised induction for Councillors	Fiona McMillan & Richard May	e	In progress	July 2007 (?)	To enable new Members to quickly become effective contributors to the objectives of the Council and existing Members to have an appropriate skills refresh	

	Area of Activity	Lead	Links to Suggestions	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links to other workstreams
D4	Identify scope for greater emphasis on community cohesion and equalities issues in Council priorities and Community Strategy	Catriona Dunnett & Simon McIntosh		March 2007	July 07	The Council taking a lead on community cohesion and equalities through the Community Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political Priorities and Decision Making (development of the Community Strategy)
For completion post October 2007							
D5	Identify political responsibility for governance issues, investigating good practice models from other authorities	Catriona Dunnett and Fiona McMillan	c	Jan 08	June 08	Clear overall responsibility within the Council at officer and Member level for ensuring that issues in the CGI report do not recur.	
D6	Member training – to include:- structured training programme, standards, equalities, chairing meetings and conditions requiring membership of committees etc to be subject to undertaking the relevant training.	Fiona McMillan & Richard May	e	March 07	May 08	A continuing commitment and progress towards a high level of Member skills and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Vision and Culture (new values) Political Priorities and Decision Making - various aspects
D7	Enhanced Member understanding of their role in a “modernised Council” - through mentoring, visits/contact with other councils; identification of role models etc	Fiona McMillan		Nov 07	Oct 2009	A better understanding of current expectations on local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political Priorities and Decision Making - various aspects
D8	Following appointment of additional Council officer with equalities responsibility, carry out a review of Council policies and provision for equalities – with a view to a phased implementation of a programme to achieve initially baseline standards and then improving standards. The programme to include proposals for strengthened governance of equalities; improved awareness; and partnership with BME groups.	Simon McIntosh	d,f	Nov 2007	July 2008	To achieve baseline standards on equalities and diversity and then to move forward to integrate awareness of equalities issues in the culture and systems of the council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Workstream A – required staff to be in place
D9	Enhance opportunities for more Members and officers from BME communities	Jill Mellors		Ongoing	Ongoing	To achieve a workforce and Council membership representative of the population of the district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Values and Vision

	Area of Activity	Lead	Links to Suggestions	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links to other workstreams
D10	Adopt a Gender Equality Strategy	Jill Mellors		Feb 08	August 2008	Meet statutory requirement. Improve Council performance through diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Values and Vision

Suggestions from staff and members:-

- a Member job description – bring to attention of candidates before election covered
- b Member/staff relations need to be clarified and channelled more formally through the democratic process – rather than informal and disruptive contacts. Covered through member contract ?
- c Give EMT a specific role in overseeing corporate governance issues – eg oversee risk management; impact assessments (equalities and sustainability); comment on reports/new policy proposals; hold quarterly “shared learning” sessions.
- d Higher profile for equalities issues within the council – eg presentations for Members and staff; training for Members; new Equalities lead officer when TW goes.
- e Minimum hours of Member training compulsory. Member Contract and Job Description to be communicated to staff - so they know the requirements on them to respond to Members etc.
- f Make the composition of the South Cambs population better communicated to managers – so that they are better aware of the profile of the workforce they should be aiming towards. Will be covered in training

WORKSTREAM E:

Political Priorities and Decision Making

Objectives:

To set a clear and challenging direction for the Council for the next three years, ensuring clear links with the Community Strategy, LAA etc

Cabinet taking the lead in championing and communicating the priorities and ensuring that they are converted into realistic resourced plans and strategies and are delivered through effective performance management.

To implement and embed robust and inclusive annual processes to enable the Council's priorities to be agreed and reviewed.

Clearer, open, transparent decision making.

Team: Greg Harlock (Lead), Councillor Manning (RMAM), Councillor Edwards (SME), Richard May (RM), Paul Swift (PS), John Garnham (JG)

Other officer leads: Gemma Webb (GW), Improvement Manager (IM)

	Area of Activity)	Lead	Links to suggestions	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links to other workstreams
For completion by October 2007							
E1	Complete leadership training for Cabinet Members and build on "top team" development to enable Cabinet to work effectively	GH	p, q	In progress	Oct 07	Cabinet and SMT working effectively as a team to develop and deliver Council objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision and Cultural Change (leadership of Vision and Values and enhanced performance management) Standards, Equalities and Diversity (Member training and understanding of a modernised council) Community Focus and Partnerships (improvements in strategic partnership working and LSP/LAA)
E2	Through mentoring and the provision of evidence such as Community Strategy research and consultation, enable political groups to determine political priorities for input into the Council process to determine its Objectives and priorities.	GH	a,b	In progress	May 07	All political groups having clear political priorities	

	Area of Activity)	Lead	Links to suggestions	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links to other workstreams
E3	Devise and agree new Council Objectives with an Annual Focus for 2008/09 and future years.	Leader and GW		March 07	July 2007 (Possibly excluding formal approval process)	A new Vision, Objectives, Values and Annual Focus which have support from Members and officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision and Cultural Change (Coordinate with Workstream B (B3))
E4	Use Council Objectives to influence the development of the Community Strategy	GW		Mar 07	Sept 07	A Community Strategy and Council Objectives which are as aligned as possible within the context of partnership working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision and Cultural Change (agree Council Vision, Values and Objectives)
For completion post October 2007							
E5	Use Council Objectives and Community Strategy to develop a Corporate Strategy with clear programmes to go into MTFS, Workforce Plan ; Growth Area strategy; and other strategies.	GH/IM		Aug 07	Nov 07	A Corporate Strategy and MTFS/Workforce Plan with clear actions to deliver the Council's Objectives and the Community Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision and Cultural Change (actions to embed Vision etc)
E6	Cabinet to champion priorities – consider aligning portfolios and other aspects of decision making structures behind priorities.	RMAM/IM	n	Oct 07	April 08	Council resources, portfolios, agendas and other aspects of decision making aligned behind and contributing to Council Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision and Cultural Change (actions to embed the Vision etc)
E7	Identify and develop officer support for forward planning (a forward planning group) to lead the process of developing Council programmes to deliver the priorities; and provide advice on longer term planning.	GH/IM		Jan 08	Mar 08	A forward planning group contributing to the long term and future issues affecting the Council and supporting the development and rolling forward of the Corporate Strategy	

	Area of Activity)	Lead	Links to suggestions	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links to other workstreams
E8	<p>Amend Council decision making processes, using best practice from other authorities, to respond to CGI report concerns by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • including a business planning mechanism to initiate and plan major issues going before members • making decision making more transparent, open and accessible • giving clearer roles to advisory groups and Scrutiny • drawing up an annual budget and policy planning process, based on the stages in this project plan, to provide processes which are clear, consistent from year to year and accessible by the public and partners. 	SME/ RM/JG	All relevant suggestions c – g, h – m, o,q	Aug 2007	April 2008	Decision making processes which are open, transparent, accessible and develop the role and involvement of non-executive Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards, Diversity and Equalities (Member training, Member Contract etc)
E9	Review constitution – recognise opposition, schemes of delegation etc	RM		Ongoing	April 2008	A constitution which reflects changes in processes and values.	
E10	Move to all out elections every four years to give greater direction.	RMAM/GH		Ongoing	Affected by LG White Paper	To improve Council planning, accountability and efficiency.	

Suggestions from staff and members

- (a) Political groups to have manifestos
- (b) Groups to communicate their priorities more effectively
- (c) Cabinet, scrutiny or other meetings to review time and place of meetings to become more accessible
- (d) Reduce length of reports and meetings.
- (e) Reports to have clearer choices
- (f) Eliminate confidential meetings as much as possible
- (g) Reduce advisory groups and clarify their role in relation to Scrutiny. Reduce meetings of Council, Cabinet and scrutiny
- (h) Through mentoring etc, challenge members' reluctance to hold pre-meetings and informal meetings. This ensures that formal meetings are more focused and considered – it is common practice elsewhere.
- (i) Scrutiny – regular meetings between Leader and Chair of Scrutiny to develop trust and co-operative approach

- (j) Cabinet members to be discouraged from attending Scrutiny unless requested by the committee for a specific issue. The relevant PFH should be “in the spotlight” when issues relating to their portfolio are considered.
- (k) Main consideration of performance management reports should be at Scrutiny
- (l) Scrutiny Members should be more externally focused – seeing how other councils do scrutiny, going to Beacon events etc
- (m) Consider including external co-options onto Scrutiny to make more outward facing
- (n) Performance Management – need clear corporate lead – eg agree priority PIs; set targets to get to top quartile; adequate resources to achieve those targets; urgent corporate involvement in agreeing spec for PIMMS 2.
- (o) Indicate in minutes where Members make a decision contrary to officer recommendations.
- (p) Members (esp Cabinet) need to be trained on political leadership etc and “kept on the straight and narrow” by SMT;
- (q) Clarify decision making and delegation schemes;
- (r) Cabinet and SMT need to focus on strategy and partnerships (also relevant to Workstream F).

WORKSTREAM F: Community Focus and Partnerships

Objectives:

*The Council to play an active and influential role in the LSP and the LAA process
To work with partners to develop better, focused, and more effective partnerships to deliver better services and quality of life to residents*

To increase the engagement between the Council and the community. (NB change)

Team: Cllr Ray Manning, Cllr James Hockney, Simon McIntosh, Improvement Manager, Tricia Pope, Denise Lewis, Gemma Webb

External Assistance: Sara Rodriguez-Jimenez (County), also some input expected from others

Administration Support: To be determined

Area of Activity	Ideas below	Lead	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links with Other Workstreams
For completion by October 2007						
F1	Improve officer support to the LSP	Simon McIntosh	March 07	Mid July	Sufficient capacity to coordinate and support LSP and LAA work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project set up and resourcing Political priorities and decision making (development of Community Strategy)
F2	Review the LSP and partnership roles of Cabinet members	Cllr Manning	May 07	July 07	Improved leadership of the LSP by the district council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards, Equality and Diversity (Member training) Political Priorities and Decision Making (Review of Constitution)
For completion post October 2007						
F3	Improve members and senior officers understanding of partners, partnership working, obstacles and possible improvements, including the Community Strategy, LSP and LAA	Cllr Hockney/ Simon McIntosh	Sept 07	July 08	Enhanced understanding of and commitment to strategic partnership working within the Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards, Equality and Diversity (Member training and understanding of role in modernised Council) Political Priorities and Decision Making (development of Community Strategy)
F4	With LSP partners to review the	Gemma	Aug 07	Dec 07	Better fit between the theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political Priorities and Decision

	Area of Activity	Ideas below	Lead	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links with Other Workstreams
	structure of LSP and theme groups to reflect objectives in the Community Strategy and LAA, and whether it is 'White Paper ready'.		Webb/Tricia Pope			groups and the Community Strategy and better links between the groups and the LSP in delivering the LAA	Making (development of Community Strategy and review of Council decision making processes)
F5	Review and improve briefing and reporting back arrangements when members/officers attend partnership meetings	j)	Cllr Hockney/ Gemma Webb	Jan 08	July 08		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political Priorities and Decision Making (reviewing decision making processes)
F6	Review and strengthen Council involvement in the LAA – in response to White Paper	c)	Cllr Manning/ Denise Lewis	Aug 07	April 08	The Council recognised as playing a significant part in the development and delivery of the LAA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Vision and Cultural Change (Improvements to Performance Management) Standards, Equality and Diversity (Enhanced understanding of roles of Councillors in modernised council) Political Priorities and Decision Making (More open and accessible budget process)
F7	Carry out a review of all partnerships to identify those which are most important to our priorities; work towards partnership agreements setting out objectives and respective contributions		Tricia Pope	Jan 08	Oct 08	Clearer, stronger partnerships delivering improved services relevant to the Council's objectives and the Community Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political Priorities and Decision Making (More open and accessible budget process)
F8	Review how the Council can better work with parish councils – develop Charter		Gemma Webb	April 07	Dec 07	Improved working with parish councils to enhance the contribution that can be made to the Community Strategy engagement with partners and the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards, Equality and Diversity (Enhanced understanding of roles of Councillors in modernised council) Political Priorities and Decision Making (review of Scrutiny)
F9	Review how the Council can respond to broader issues of engagement and devolution in the	k)	Simon McIntosh	Jan 08	Oct 08	Enhanced working and engagement with the public; improvements in the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards, Equality and Diversity (Enhanced understanding of roles of

Area of Activity	Ideas below	Lead	Start	Finish	Objectives/Outturns	Links with Other Workstreams
White and provide a clearer purpose and support for back bench Members in representing their local communities.					proportion of the public satisfied with means of participating in decision making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillors in modernised council) Standards, Equality and Diversity (Identify scope for greater emphasis on community cohesion and equalities issues in Council priorities and Community Strategy) Political Priorities and Decision Making (improved decision making processes and more accessible budget process)

Suggestions from staff and members which are incorporated into above:-

- a) More officer resources for partnership work in view of benefits/importance
- b) Cabinet member for partnerships
- c) Role for scrutiny in developing partnerships
- d) See how other LSP's work
- e) Raise profile of partnership work
- j) A monthly bulletin from Leader/Chief Exec to all key partners
- k) Cabinet/Scrutiny and Planning committees to meet in different venues around the district

Suggestions from staff and members, which are not incorporated:

- f) Review consultation strategy – setting out plans for surveys etc in the year ahead. Increase budget so that consultation can be done properly. – Very desirable development; will review in the light of resources made available.
- g) Experiment with live Q&A sessions with the Leader on the website
- h) Have slot on Cabinet agenda to feedback on surveys or other consultation, views from parishes etc -same as (f) above
- i) The outcomes of all public consultation exercises should be on website or in South Cambs magazine - same as (f) above

WORKSTREAM G: Process and Systems Improvement

Objectives:

To implement process improvements in such a way as to maximise performance and customer service, while meeting financial targets.

Team: S Rayment, A McCaughtrie, I Salter, D Newbigging

Area of Activity	Lead	Link to suggestions	Start	Finish	Objectives	Links to Other Workstreams
For completion by October 2007						
G1 BPR Finance	D Newbigging	d,e (for all BPRs)	May 2007	Sept 2007	See workstream objective	All BPRs affected by Council Vision and Cultural Change Workstream – particularly development and embedding of vision
G2 BPR Development Control	A McCaughtrie		In Progress	Sept 2007	See workstream objective	
G3 BPR Building Control	A McCaughtrie		July 2007	Sep 2007	See workstream objective	
G4 BPR Revenues	D Newbigging		In Progress	May 2007	See workstream objective	
G5 BPR Conservation	A McCaughtrie		July 2007	Sept 2007	See workstream objective	
G6 BPR Land Charges	D Newbigging		March 2007	May 2007	See workstream objective	
G7 BPR Environmental Services	D Newbigging		July 2007	Sep 2007	See workstream objective	
G8 Reception	G Bridgeman		March 2007	May 2007	See workstream objective	
G9 BPR HR/Payroll MI (21/61)	D Newbigging		Aug 2007	Nov 2007	See workstream objective	
G10 MI ICT Systems/ Customer Views (26/81)	J Mitchell		July 2007	Sep 2007	See workstream objective	
For completion post October 2007						
G11 BPR Housing Voids	B O'Halloran		In Progress	June 2008	See workstream objective	
G12 BPR DLO	B O'Halloran		In Progress	Apr 2008	See workstream objective	
G13 Contact Centre Management (20/59)	S Rayment	a,b,c	In Progress	Ongoing/Oct 2007	See workstream objective	
G14 Website Interactivity (21/61)	S Rayment		Ongoing	Mar 2008	See workstream objective	
G15 CRM (22/66)	S Rayment		In Progress	Mar 2008		
G15 Corp and Service Planning Process - See Workstream B (B6 + B8)						
G17 Financial/Performance Reporting - See Workstream B (B6 + B8)						
G18 Project Management (details to be added)						

Suggestions from staff and members:-

- (a) All Members to visit the Contact Centre (G11)
- (b) Complete the CRM (G14)
- (c) Improve Contact Centre/service through improved training and emphasis on returning calls (G11)
- (d) Communicate purpose and methodology of the BPRs to staff.
- (e) BPRs – need more support from the top and to be extended throughout the Council.

RISK LOG

PROJECT NAME: CGI Improvement Plan

Version No: 1

Date Issued: 18th March 2007

Risk No	Risk Description	Probability H/M/L	Impact H / M / L	Owner	Countermeasures	Action Date	Status (Open/Closed)
01	Project does not achieve objectives because other initiatives distract focus	H	H	GJH	Effective project management	Continuing	Open
02	Community Strategy not approved by September/October	M	H	SMC	Effective project plan; focus on this key part of critical path	Up to Sept 07	Open
03	Lack of progress because lack of officer time	H	H	GJH	Effective use of the Resources available to the project and prioritise the Improvement Plan	Continuing	Open
04	Vision does not take hold because of resistance to change.	M	H	DR	Effective communication and change management techniques	At least up to end of 2007	Open
05	Audit Commission does not approve Improvement Plan	L	H	GJH	Work with relationship manager in production of Improvement Plan	Up to end April 2007	Open
06	Unsuccessful review of progress by Audit Commission in Autumn 2007	M	H	Improve ment Manager	Effective management of improvement plan	Up to Oct 07	Open
07							
08							
09							
10							

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ISSUE LOG

PROJECT NAME:

Version No: 1

Date Issued: 18th March 2007

Issue No	Description	Date Identified	Author	Resolution	Last Updated	Status (Open/Closed)
01						
02						
03						
04						
05						
06						
07						
08						
09						

10.

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Leader and Cabinet	12 April 2007
AUTHOR/S:	Chief Executive / Head of Revenues	

POLICY FOR THE AWARD OF DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS**Purpose**

1. To request that Cabinet formally recommend to Council the adoption of a policy for the award of discretionary housing payments (DHP) in order to formalise existing practices, and to facilitate fair and consistent awards.

Background

2. The Council has a discretionary power to 'top-up' awards of Housing or Council Tax Benefit under the Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 and the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001. This discretion applies where claimants qualify for Housing or Council Tax Benefit but that benefit does not fully cover the cost of their Council Tax or rent and, in the Council's opinion, they are in need of additional help with their housing costs.
3. The Department for Works and Pensions provides the Council with an annual ring-fenced grant for these awards, worth £25,000 in 2006/07. The Council may make awards in excess of this grant, but the excess must be funded directly from the Council's General Fund. Any unspent grant must be returned to the Government at the end of the financial year.

Considerations

4. Awards of DHP represent an important method of providing the more vulnerable members of the local community with financial assistance to meet housing costs. Awards can contribute towards reducing homelessness and improving social inclusion by assisting residents with financial difficulties in retaining their current tenancies.
5. The Council does not currently formally endorse a policy for the award of DHP, however, there is good practice in place with robust procedures to ensure applications are evaluated fairly and consistently.
6. It is, however, generally accepted best practice for council's to adopt formal policies governing the award of DHP to ensure awards are made in a fair, consistent and transparent manner. This proposed policy incorporates the current good practice in making awards into a formal policy for adoption by the Council.

Options

7. Adopt a formal policy as recommended in this report for awards of DHP.
 - (a) This option will ensure future fairness, transparency and consistency in awards.

8. Continue to make awards based on existing custom and practice.
 (a) The lack of a formal policy increases the risk of inconsistencies in awards.

Implications

9. Financial	Where the total amount awarded in any financial year is below the value of the ring fenced Government grant there is no cost to the Council. Any awards in excess of the grant must be met from the Council's General Fund and cannot exceed a statutory amount (approximately £49,000 for 2006/07). It is not anticipated that the adoption of this policy will result in awards exceeding the grant and therefore the policy will be cost neutral to the Council.
Legal	The Council has a legal obligation to consider each request for an award and must come to a reasonable decision in each case having given consideration to the individual circumstances.
Staffing	None
Risk Management	The policy will ensure that these limited funds are used in a manner that is beneficial to those residents most in need of assistance with their housing costs. The policy will minimise the risk of payments exceeding the amount provided through the Government grant.
Equal Opportunities	Adoption of a formal policy will ensure awards are made consistently and transparently and therefore guard against the possibility of any bias in the awards process.

Consultations

10. The Council's Housing Advice and Options manager has been consulted in the development of this policy.
11. It is proposed to carry out wider consultation with stakeholders such as advice agencies and landlords during 2007/08 and to give consideration to revising the policy, if appropriate, from 2008/09

Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

12. Affordable Homes	DHP awards can help residents to afford housing costs.
Customer Service	Customers will have access to a published policy that sets out the process by which awards will be evaluated.
Northstowe and other growth areas	None
Quality, Accessible Services	Publication of a formal policy will ensure applicants have a clear understanding of the awards process
Village Life	DHP awards can help residents remain in their current property when they may otherwise have to move because they cannot afford the shortfall in rent. This may enable residents to remain in a particular village.
Sustainability	None
Partnership	None

Conclusions/Summary

13. The Council does not currently have a formal policy for awards of discretionary housing payments, but it is generally accepted best practice for such a policy to be adopted in order to ensure awards are made in a consistent, fair and transparent manner.
14. Current practices are considered to be sound and facilitate awards to people most in need of assistance. The proposed policy set out in **Appendix A** will ensure the current practices are formally adopted as policy.

Recommendation

15. Cabinet is recommended to formally recommend to Council that the policy for award of discretionary housing payments as set out in the appendix to this report be adopted in order to facilitate future awards from the financial year 2007/08 onwards.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

1. The Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000,
2. The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001
3. Department For Works And Pensions: Guidance For Local Authorities On The Operation Of Discretionary Housing Payments

Contact Officer: Lee Phanco – Head of Revenues
Telephone: (01954) 713110

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Appendix A

South Cambridgeshire District Council



Policy for the Award of Discretionary Housing Payments

In accordance with the Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000, and the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001.

Overview

This policy has been agreed by the South Cambridgeshire District Council to ensure all persons making applications for this payment are treated in a fair, consistent and equal manner.

This policy;

- Is intended to facilitate awards to those residents most in need of assistance with their housing costs
- Sets criteria for the factors that should be considered when making a decision to award or refuse a discretionary payment
- Establishes a transparent process for evaluating applications for awards against established criteria
- Shall be publicised and made freely available

Application of Policy

1. Awards of discretionary housing payments should normally only be made where there is sufficient Government grant to meet the cost of the award. Awards exceeding the amount of the grant may only be made in exceptional circumstances in accordance with item 9 below.
2. Individuals applying for an award shall normally be required to complete the Council's Application Form and supply sufficient evidence, to the Council's satisfaction, to support their application. The Council will provide help and assistance, including home visits, to assist those who may have difficulty, for any reason, in completing the application.
3. Translation services will be made available and provided on request, or where it appears to the Council that the applicant will benefit from this service.
4. Applications will only be considered where signed by the applicant, or a suitable advocate such as a social worker or a welfare benefits advisor.
5. Applicants aggrieved with an initial decision made in respect of an application may appeal against the decision. Appeals must be made in writing (subject to item 2 above) and will only be considered if received within one month of the Council notifying the applicant of the decision.

6. Determination of awards and appeals shall be processed in accordance with the Council's Constitution.
7. Awards shall be limited to a maximum of 26 weeks or for the period to 31st March of the year in respect of which the application is made, whichever is the sooner. New applications may be submitted once the current award ends.
8. The allocation of any award between Council Tax and rent liability shall be as determined by the Council and shall not be subject to appeal.
9. In exceptional circumstances where an application is considered to be particularly deserving, (for example to prevent immediate homelessness), but falls outside the scope of this policy, the Council may choose to make an exception and allow an award. Such awards will be determined in accordance with the Council's Constitution, will be strictly at the discretion of the Council and not subject to any right of appeal.
10. All applications shall be evaluated against the following factors weighing in favour of, and against, an award.
11. Where those factors in favour of an award outweigh those against, an award shall be made, and vice versa.
12. The amount of the award shall be determined at the discretion of the Chief Financial Officer processing the application, taking into consideration the weight of factors in favour of and against an award. Higher awards shall therefore be made where factors weigh strongly in favour, and lower awards where the opposite applies.
13. The duration of an award shall be determined with regard to the particular circumstances of the case and item 7 above.
14. Requests will be considered as quickly as possible and decisions shall be made within no more than four weeks of the Council receiving all the information it requires.
15. A written record shall be kept of all awards and applicants shall be notified in writing of the outcome.
16. In the event that it is discovered that incorrect or false information was supplied with the application the Council will seek to recover the discretionary housing payment and will take legal action where necessary.

Discretionary Housing Payment – Factors to be considered in evaluating awards

	Factors supporting a discretionary housing payment	Yes	No	N/k
1	The applicant is proactive in addressing the circumstances that have led to a need for a discretionary award.			
2	The applicant is at risk of becoming homeless and an award would help to prevent homelessness.			
3	The applicant has fled domestic violence.			
4	The applicant or a resident family member has a disability, serious illness or other special circumstances (these may include recent bereavement, drug or alcohol dependency, domestic violence etc).			
5	An award may prevent the applicant incurring further costs in connection with recovery proceeding for unpaid Council Tax of rent.			
6	The applicant's disposable income, after reasonable expenses, does not cover the shortfall in rent.			
7	No other suitable accommodation is available in the locality.			
8	It is not reasonable to expect the applicant to move due to strong links with the local community (i.e. family, employment, schools, health care, etc).			Page 53
9	The Council's Housing Advice and Options service consider the applicant a priority need housing case.			
10	The applicant has applied for social housing with the Council or a recognised social landlord.			
11	The applicant is receiving advice from the Council's Housing Advice and Options Service.			
12	The shortfall is due entirely to a difference between the current rent and the rent agreed by the Rent Service and it is likely that the Rent Service will increase the reference rent when the claim is able to be referred for re-evaluation.			
13	The applicant could afford the rent when they took the tenancy but their financial or personal circumstances have changed unexpectedly.			
14	The landlord terminated their previous tenancy with short notice limiting their ability to find alternative accommodation.			
15	The applicant has a regular access arrangement with non-resident children and therefore requires a larger property.			
16	The circumstances leading to a claim are of a short-term nature and are expected to change within no more than 52 weeks.			
17	The accommodation has an extra bedroom which is required due to the special circumstances of the household (i.e. due to health problems)			

	Factors weighing against a discretionary housing payment	Yes	No	N/k
1	The applicant has not supplied the information requested to support the award, or there is good reason to believe the information supplied is inaccurate.			
2	The shortfall against liability is entirely due to the excess income taper reduction of benefit entitlement.			
3	Sanctions have previously been imposed against the applicant for fraudulently claiming benefits.			
4	Their income exceeds reasonable expenditure and there is a disposable income with which to meet the shortfall.			
5	The applicant has other debts or financial commitments that could be renegotiated to reduce outgoings.			
6	There is a reduction in benefit as a result of the 'two-strikes' fraud overpayment reduction.			
7	The rent on property is expensive compared to others in the area.			
8	The applicant applied for a pre-tenancy determination, or received advice from the Council's Housing Advice service or other reputable advice agency, but still entered into an agreement knowing that the full rent would not be met by housing benefit.			Page 54
9	The applicant gave up a tenancy at a lower rent without good reason.			
11	The applicant has refused an offer of social housing in the last 12 months.			
12	The applicant has an interest in another property.			
13	The applicant has received an award within the previous 52 weeks and the circumstances remain the same.			
14	Previous awards in excess of £500 have been made within the current financial year.			
15	The applicant has failed to advise the Council of a change in circumstances that may have affected a previous award.			
16	The shortfall is due to the property being larger than required for the applicant's circumstances.			
17	The applicant has a record of being abusive or violent towards Council employees.			

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Leader and Cabinet	12 April 2007
AUTHOR/S:	Executive Director/Head of Housing Strategic Services	

HOUSING STOCK OPTIONS APPRAISAL**Purpose**

1. To outline a process and appropriate project management arrangements, with an indicative timescale, in order to complete a stock options appraisal in respect of the Council's housing stock.

Executive Summary

2. Of the four options considered as part of the 2005 stock options appraisal only Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) offered a potential alternative to deliver a sustainable solution for the future of the housing stock.
3. The financial modelling, based on the stock condition survey of 2002, carried out as part of the options appraisal suggested that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was viable in the medium term as long as savings in the order of £437,000 per annum could be achieved within the next 18 months and sustained thereafter. In terms of meeting the basic requirement of the DHS the financial modelling indicated that the investment needs of the stock could be met until 2013/2014.
4. The overwhelming majority of tenants (82%) who responded to the test of opinion in 2005 indicated that they wished to retain the Council as their landlord. However, the response rate was low with only 23.5% of tenants expressing an opinion and the result, therefore, may not necessarily be representative of the views of the majority of tenants.
5. On 28 July 2005 Full Council voted in favour of stock retention as the preferred option for the future of the housing stock and the Council's stock options appraisal was subsequently 'signed off' by GO-East
6. Since the completion and 'sign off' of the housing stock options appraisal in 2005 a number of issues have emerged which suggests that the Council needs to review the viability of the stock retention option through a further options appraisal in full consultation with and the involvement of tenants (and leaseholders).

Background

7. In July 2005 Full Council considered a report on the housing stock options appraisal that had been conducted in order to meet the government deadline of 31 July of that year for stock retention local authorities to demonstrate how they would be able to meet the investment needs of their housing stock in order to achieve the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) by December 2010.
8. The stock options appraisal was carried out in accordance with *Delivering Decent Homes – Option Appraisal: Guidance for Local Authorities* issued by the Office of the

Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) - now Communities and Local Government (CLG) - in June 2003.

9. In summary the requirements were as follows:
 - Early contact with usual Government Office contact to discuss process and timetable
 - Robust information on stock condition and on demand and supply on which to base the appraisal
 - Tenants/leaseholders involved from the outset with a central role in decision-making and access to good independent advice from the start. The first stage of the option appraisal to involve developing their capacity to engage in the process and exploring their aspirations
 - Consideration given to mixed-model solutions within a clear overarching strategy for the whole stock particularly for authorities with large or heterogeneous stock.
 - A preliminary assessment of issues around choice of landlord, including community-based models, under stock transfer.
 - Consideration of the potential for improvements to service delivery as well as capital investment as part of the options appraisal
10. Of the four options considered as part of the appraisal only Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) offered a potential alternative to stock retention that would deliver a sustainable solution for the future of the housing stock. Of the other options explored Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) was ruled out because the Council could achieve the DHS by 2010 within existing resources and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) route would not offer a whole stock solution as was more appropriate for smaller regeneration or, increasingly, non-HRA housing projects.
11. The financial modelling, based on the stock condition survey of 2002, carried out by Tribal who were appointed as the Council's independent lead consultant suggested that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was viable in the medium term as long as savings in the order of £437,000 per annum could be achieved within the next 18 months and sustained thereafter.
12. The savings identified in 2005/06 made a significant contribution towards this target and subsequent savings as a result of restructuring the management of the landlord function and most recently the sheltered housing service have enabled the required level of savings identified at that time to be met.
13. In terms of the capital investment needs of the housing stock it was clear that the tenants aspirational standard, developed with the involvement of the tenants as part of the options appraisal process, was not deliverable within available resources given the full impact of capital receipts pooling applying from 2007/08 and competing priorities for the Council's capital receipts from Right to Buy (RTB) sales, as a result of capping in 2005/06.
14. In terms of meeting the more basic requirement of the DHS the financial modelling indicated that the investment needs of the stock could be met until 2013/2014. A stock retention strategy would, however, require a review of how available capital resources were spent to ensure delivery in the short to medium term.
15. The overwhelming majority of tenants (82%) who responded to the test of opinion indicated that they wished to retain the Council as their landlord despite the financial

pressures that had been outlined in information provided as part of the consultation process and the potential for cuts in services and/or in levels of investment in the housing stock.

16. However, the response rate was low with only 23.5% of tenants expressing an opinion and the result, therefore, may not necessarily be representative of the views of the majority of tenants. Of those who expressed an interest in stock transfer to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) option it would appear that younger tenants favoured this option more than older tenants.
17. The conclusion of Management Team was that LSVT offered the greatest long term benefits for the Council and its tenants for the following reasons:
 - Negative housing subsidy accounts for approximately 50% of the rental income which combined with capital receipts pooling requirements means that stock retention is only a viable option in the short term
 - Stock retention is not able to support the broader aims and objectives as set out in the Community Strategy and corporate objectives and priorities eg increase the supply of affordable housing
18. The advantage of LSVT, in addition to the positive benefits for tenants and leaseholders in terms of improved services and investment to deliver the 'aspirational' rather than the basic DHS as illustrated by the financial modelling is that there could be a net positive cumulative effect on the General Fund (GF) of around £7m over five years. This would be reduced should the Council decide to invest some of the net disposal proceeds to deliver objectives and priorities in relation to the Sustainable Community Strategy.
19. However, it was also made clear that an LSVT proposal is more likely to succeed if there is broad support amongst Members and strong political leadership in its delivery. The LSVT process would take around 18 months to complete and require sustained commitment from Members and Officers leading the project and the support and involvement of Members and staff more generally across the Council.
20. Further, the level of resources required to pursue LSVT are significant and could be in the region of £750k according to indicative costs outlined by Tribal. This investment would need to be made 'at risk' with strict rules applying to how this could be accounted for within the GF, HRA and/or recovered from any capital receipt accruing from the disposal of the stock in the event of a positive or negative ballot result.
21. It was also noted that the stock condition survey completed in 2002 did not provide a robust and up to date source of information in line with the options appraisal guidance and would not satisfy requirements for any LSVT proposal. It was therefore proposed to commission a new survey regardless of the outcome of the stock options appraisal to ensure that the Council had adequate information on the condition of the housing stock which could be updated in-house in order to inform future investment needs
22. Having considered the report from Management Team and a copy of the Housing Options Working Group (HOWG) report to the Housing Portfolio Holder Members of Full Council voted in favour of stock retention as the preferred option for the future of the housing stock.
23. The Council's stock options appraisal was subsequently 'signed off' by GO-East.

Considerations

24. Since the completion and 'sign off' of the housing stock options appraisal in 2005 a number of issues have emerged which suggest that the Council needs to review the viability of the stock retention option through a further options appraisal in full consultation and with the involvement of tenants (and leaseholders) which are summarised in the following paragraphs.
25. An overview of the HRA as presented to the Executive on 14 December 2006 highlighted the following issues:

Revenue Expenditure

- There is uncertainty in terms of revenue expenditure forecasts that could have a significant impact on the viability of the HRA including the level of negative housing subsidy payable into the central pool and the cost of repairs and maintenance of the housing stock which could be affected by the latest stock condition survey with work on financial modelling the results nearing completion
- Whilst the reorganisation of the housing service (including sheltered housing) has achieved significant savings and further cost savings relating to corporate expenditure have been attributed to the HRA as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the Transformation Project the need to identify further savings in net revenue expenditure may be required to maintain the minimum acceptable working balance on the HRA of £1m from 2011/12.
- The financial forecasts illustrated that from 2009/10 annual expenditure will exceed income with consequent reliance on balances. It is also expected that expenditure will continue to increase at a greater rate than income due to various factors such as staffing costs rising at more than inflation, reduction in stock numbers, limits on rent rises imposed by CLG and uncertainty around future levels of Supporting People grant
- An expectation that service users will pay for cost of services they receive rather than being subsidised through rents more generally
- The current HRA Business Plan was produced in 2004 and is consequently nearly 3 years old and in view of the current issues facing the landlord service needs to be reviewed

Capital Expenditure

- Projected HRA related capital expenditure means that there will be a problem in maintaining the current level of investment in the housing stock by 2009/10 and by 2010/11 there is likely to be a funding shortfall in the region of £4-£5m a year
 - The preliminary results of the latest stock condition survey indicate that the existing level of investment in the stock will be required to maintain the DHS and other essential and/or mandatory capital works eg Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's)
 - Any cut in capital expenditure could have an adverse impact on HRA revenue expenditure in relation to responsive repairs and staffing costs
26. More recently in a report to the Cabinet in March the implications of the following on the Housing Capital Programme were outlined:

- A further delay in the amendments to the capital receipts pooling regulations which currently affect sales under the Council's equity share scheme as well as RTB receipts
- The effect of a lower than anticipated housing capital grant allocation for 2007/08 of £180,818 and projections for future years

The overall effect is to increase the projected shortfall in funding for the Housing Capital Programme to £2.6m by 2009/10 assuming that the capital receipts pooling requirements do not apply to equity share sales beyond 2007/08 or £4m if they continue into future years.

27. In order to inform a further stock options appraisal the results of the stock condition survey and the financial modelling work on the investment needs of the housing stock need to be completed alongside the development of a new HRA Business Plan. The consultants engaged on these activities advise that outputs should be available in May as planned. It is also essential that tenants can help to develop the new HRA Business Plan as well as be fully involved in the stock options appraisal process.
28. Whilst the guidance on stock options appraisals was primarily to assist local authorities to determine how to deliver the Decent Homes agenda by the target date of July 2005 it is suggested that it is used as a framework for any new process. However, Officers will be liaising with GO-East to seek their advice and input in order that any options appraisal will meet with any government expectations. This will be particularly important should the outcome be different to the current stock retention strategy.
29. In addition to the basic requirements set out in the guidance it is recommended that there is a review of the previous options appraisal to identify new and/or improved ways of engaging key stakeholders particularly tenants, staff and Members but also partner organisations and other local representatives eg Parish Councils who could have strong and influential views on any debate about the future of the housing stock in order that there is a wider understanding of the issues and buy-in to any agreed solution.
30. Further, it is important that the project is well resourced and managed in order that it can be delivered in accordance with any agreed timescale and budget. There is some degree of urgency to get the project underway and completed because of the increased financial pressures, particularly with regards to the forecasted HRA capital position in April 2009 but the revenue position could also be put under further pressure because of the uncertainties highlighted earlier in the report around certain elements of expenditure/income.
31. It is estimated that any stock options appraisal process would take a number of months to complete in a proper and meaningful way and assuming it can be commenced in May 2007 the outcome could be available in September/October 2007. If the preferred option at that time is LSVT then the transfer process would take around 18-24 months although this timescale would be subject to there being a new transfer programme announced either later this year or in early 2008 following the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 2007 and that the Council secures a place on that programme.
32. In order to oversee the project it is suggested that a Joint member and tenant working group is established for this purpose with the following aims and objectives:

- A. To assess the investment needs of the Council's housing into the medium/long term and to project the resources available to meet those needs with particular reference to the Council's ability to achieve and sustain the Decent Homes Standard for its homes.
 - B. To assess the viability of the Housing Revenue Account in the short, medium and long term.
 - C. To gather information about tenants' views on the current housing service and their priorities for future investment/development.
 - D. To set out the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy (and LAA) implications of the stock retention and stock transfer options to deliver against these priorities.
 - E. To ensure that all tenants have the opportunity to express their views on the options available for the housing service.
 - F. To ensure that all the Council's staff are well informed and involved in the housing options project and able to answer questions or signpost people to appropriate sources of information.
 - G. To present to the Housing Portfolio Holder by December 2007 a sound and robust evaluation for decision, based on the above objectives, and the relevant guidance on Option Appraisals and/or updated advice from the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East)
33. In terms of tenant involvement it will be a key requirement that the Tenant Compact is honoured and built on during this period. Tenants will need access to independent advice and support through the options appraisal. An Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA) will need to be appointed for this purpose and any selection process will need to be in conformance with relevant good practice guidance.
34. A communications strategy will be essential to manage communications not only with tenants but staff, Members and other key stakeholders and the local media.
35. The largest single age group within the Council's housing stock are people aged over 60 - it is estimated that around 60%+ are within this age group. However, the recent Tenant Survey and the Council's existing databases can be used to help build an up to date tenant profile which can be used to help target consultation methods and information that addresses specific issues that are likely to be of concern to particular groups.

Staffing Implications:

- 36. In order to manage the options appraisal effectively it is recommended that adequate project management arrangements are established as soon as possible.
- 37. It is essential that staff from both within and outside of the housing service are fully involved as members of an Officer Project Team that will support the proposed Member/Tenant Working Group that will oversee the project and should include representatives from the following service areas:

Housing Services
Property Services

Sheltered Housing
Housing Strategic Services
Finance
Communications

38. In addition a project manager/lead officer should be identified to drive the project forward and ensure that it meets the stated aims and objectives within the agreed timeframe. It is also recommended that the role should be held by a senior Officer with relevant experience and expertise who can engage effectively with staff, Members and tenants as well as external stakeholders and consultants. However, if there is no suitable internal candidate then alternative project management arrangements would need to be put in place which would need to be funded from within existing HRA revenue budgets.
39. This level of investment in the stock options appraisal is critical as this project will determine the preferred option for securing a sustainable future for the housing stock and it is important that the outcome is able to deliver this objective. Should stock transfer then be pursued as a result of the options appraisal, this will lay the foundations for the successful delivery of this option.
40. The person appointed into this key role could also be responsible for taking forward a stock transfer proposal in terms of project management and acting as lead negotiator for the Council with any prospective new landlord. The person would, therefore, need to be recognised as a senior non-transferring Officer with the ability to influence as well as negotiate, with sound financial management as well as project management, leadership and staff/relationship management skills with appropriate reporting lines in order to confer the status required to lead the project.
41. In addition appropriate project support should be made available as follows:
- 1) Project Co-ordinator (Part-time) – this could be through a secondment opportunity
 - 2) Tenant/ITA Liaison Officer – this could be offered as a secondment but also a new post either on a permanent or a 2 year fixed term contract. The cost of this post is estimated at around £35k per annum.
42. The impact of the stock options appraisal process on staff within the organisation, not just within housing, cannot be underestimated. For staff within housing there will be a significant increase in their workload as they will be involved in the consultation/engagement with tenants and leaseholders. For staff in other services there may be knock-on effects of the workload issues within housing and also concerns/anxieties about the future depending on the outcome.

Other Implications

43.	Financial	A budget for the stock options appraisal will need to be identified and will need to take account of costs incurred in the previous stock options appraisal eg appointment of ITA, production of consultation material as well as the staffing requirements to ensure that the project is well resourced. These costs will need to be accounted for within the HRA.
	Legal	None.

Risk Management	<p>A sustainable option for the future of the housing stock needs to be identified and agreed in order that the Council can meet and sustain the Decent Homes Standard and provide a high quality services to our tenants (and leaseholders).</p> <p>The current financial position of the HRA in terms of capital expenditure indicates that if the current level of investment in the housing stock needs to be sustained that by 2010/11 there is likely to be a funding shortfall in the region of £4-£5m a year. The financial forecasts illustrate that from 2009/10 annual revenue expenditure will exceed income with consequent reliance on balances. A stock retention strategy would, therefore require significant cuts in current levels of expenditure and services in order to be viable. Any stock transfer option would require significant investment 'at risk'.</p> <p>The options available are stock retention and LSVT and these will be evaluated as part of the proposed options appraisal. However, whatever the outcome the preferred option would require support from tenants (and leaseholders), Members and other stakeholders in order to be successfully delivered.</p>
Equal Opportunities	<p>The consultation process and methods will need to ensure that all groups can be effectively engaged. A equality impact assessment will be carried out as part of the development, implementation of strategies that need to be in place to take forward a stock transfer option eg in respect of consultation, communications and resident involvement.</p>

Consultations

44. As part of any stock options appraisal there will be an extensive consultation exercise with tenants and leaseholders through the development and implementation of a resident involvement strategy.
45. Other key stakeholders including staff and Members as well as other external organisations and partners eg Parish Councils, LSP, GO-East will be consulted as part of the options appraisal process.

Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

46.	Affordable Homes	The Council has a housing stock of around 6,000 properties and is therefore the largest provider of affordable homes in the district.
	Customer Service	Identifying aspirations of tenants and leaseholders for the future of the housing service and preferred option to deliver them should help meet our aim to provide excellent services.
	Northstowe and other growth areas	The transfer of the housing stock would enable the Council to make its contribution to delivery of a new Sustainable Community Strategy and the growth agenda.
	Quality, Accessible Services	The Council's housing service carries out many thousands of transactions with tenants, leaseholders and those seeking housing every week and is therefore one of our most significant front line services.
	Village Life	The Council has housing stock within 94 of its 102 villages in the district and so makes a major contribution to village life.

Sustainability	The promotion of energy efficiency and the procurement of sustainable materials in relation to maintenance and improvement of the housing stock is dependent on adequate resources into the future for this purpose. The housing stock may become more marginalised in the future as a result in the increase in supply of affordable housing. This is because if people have a choice of more modern and energy efficient homes in sustainable locations such as Cambourne, Northstowe and other planned major developments this could impact on sustainability of the Council's housing stock in the longer term.
Partnership	The Council will need to consult with partners on the LSP and LAA boards regarding the future of the Council's housing stock in order to ensure any preferred option will help achieve common objectives and priorities as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA.

Recommendations

47. It is recommended that
- (a) a new stock options appraisal be carried out to evaluate the options to deliver a sustainable future for the Council's housing stock in full consultation with/involvement of tenants, staff, Members and other key stakeholders.
 - (b) the stock options appraisal process to commence as soon as possible, taking into account receipt of stock condition survey and financial modelling information, with a view to presenting the outcome to the Cabinet and Council later this year.
 - (c) a Member/Tenant Working Group be established to oversee the project supported by a corporate officer project team and to agree the size and membership of the Working Group in accordance with the political proportionality rules.
 - (d) the initial project management and staffing proposals outlined in this report be implemented and that other costs associated with the stock options appraisal eg consultancy fees be from within the HRA Estimates for 2007/08 in order that the project can be well managed and adequately resourced.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Delivering Decent Homes – Options Appraisal: Guidance for Local Authorities
ODPM June 2003
- From Decent Homes to Sustainable Communities
DCLG June 2006
- Housing Options Appraisal: Report to Cabinet 9 June 2005 and Full Council 28 July 2005
- HRA – A Forward Look 2007/08 to 2011/12: Report to Cabinet 14 December 2006
- Capital Receipts Pooling – Update: Report to Cabinet 8 March 2007

Contact Officer: Denise Lewis – Head of Housing Strategic Services
Telephone: (01954) 713351
Steve Hampson – Executive Director
Telephone: (01954) 713021

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SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet 12 April 2007
AUTHOR: Chief Executive / Community Development Manager

CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAUX

Purpose

1. To make a decision on the level of grant aid to be awarded to Cambridge and District CAB for the financial year 2007/08 and to note proposed awards to North Hertfordshire and District, Uttlesford and Haverhill CABx and also to Cambridge Independent Advice Centre, now known as Advice for Life. The total recommended budget available for 2007/08 is £87,770 (This allows for a 2.5% cost of living increase on last years grant allocations to CABx).

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	These grants support the advice organisations which operate in South Cambridgeshire, providing direct services to some of our most vulnerable residents.
Village Life	These organisations all prioritise the need to provide services through a variety of means eg telephone, e-mail, face-to-face appointments system and outreach in order to reach as wide a population as possible in rural areas.
Sustainability	The benefits and debt advice provided by the CAB's, contributes to village sustainability and the sustainability of this organisation as they prioritise council tax and rent arrears debts.
Partnership	Community Services continues to work closely with Cambridge City CAB both in terms of the service it provides for South Cambs residents and through consultations with, and involvement by, the CAB on service requirements for growth areas.

Background

3. Funding of Citizens Advice Bureaux forms a major part of the Council's commitment to working with the Voluntary Sector in South Cambridgeshire.
4. Regular annual meetings are held with all five of these agencies and their annual Service Level Agreements are reviewed. The SLA includes how their services to South Cambridgeshire residents will be monitored in the coming year; this information helps to inform decisions about funding allocation in future years.

Considerations

5. The SLA meetings with the advice agencies enable this organisation to build a picture of the level of advice and support that is provided to its residents.

6. The ongoing benefits take up work that CAB has been providing for South Cambs residents has proven to be particularly successful in targeting benefit take-up in older people.
7. The core funding CABx receive from local authorities enables them to secure additional external funding. For example, specialist funding has been secured to provide services to their most disadvantaged clients and additional funding was also secured last year to increase access to CAB services in Cambridge City and in North Herts. This has resulted in a new single portal phone system being installed in both organisations and, in the case of Cambridge City, a new website at the beginning of this year.

Options

8. As part of the Government drive for Compacts between the voluntary and statutory sectors South Cambridgeshire is working with the County Council and Cambridgeshire Funders Group to look at joint funding arrangements for the voluntary sector.
9. Part of this is the need to agree three year funding terms with the organisations that we have Service Level Agreements with to deliver specific services on our behalf.
10. Three year agreements would give voluntary organisations providing direct services more stability in terms of how they plan their services and employ their staff.
11. The Service Level agreements are a statement of intent and not legally binding. SCDC would not be legally bound to provide agreed funding for three years, simply give an undertaking that this is what we plan to do if present circumstances do not change.
12. Additionally the SLA's have a six month notice period written into them which means the agreement can be terminated by either side if circumstances bring about a reduction in available funding.

Financial Implications

	Grant Approved 2006/07	Proposed Grant 2007/08	Approved by Portfolio Holder 07/08
Cambridge CAB	52,060	53,360	
North Hertfordshire and District	16,275	16,682	
Uttlesford CAB	5,380	5,515	
Haverhill CAB	5,380	5,515	
Cambridge Independent Advice Centre (now Advice for Life)	6,535	6,698	
	85,630	87,770	

Legal Implications

13. All five organisations detailed in this report have gained and work to the Community Legal Services Partnership Quality Mark for advice giving. This enables their workers to access quality advice and information at Level 4 on behalf of clients they are working with. A primary objective of CLSP is to prevent as many cases as possible going to court by the provision of this quality advice as early in proceedings as possible.
There are no legal implications attached to extending this SLA to three years as SLA's are not legally binding documents, merely statements of intent.

Staffing Implications

14. None.

Risk Management Implications

15. The risk management factors are the responsibility of the organisations concerned.

Consultations

16. Consultation meetings to review the annual Service Level Agreement have taken place with each of the five organisations concerned and have resulted in agreement about the service priorities the organisations will work to.
17. The capping situation in 2006/07, which resulted in a 25% reduction in the grants made to the CABx last year, has resulted in the need to streamline service delivery.
18. This has been addressed through examining how clients access the services (single telephone portal is an example of service change) and the development of a triage system which grades the type of inquiry the client is making.

Conclusions/Summary

19. South Cambridgeshire funds Cambridge and District CAB on an annual basis.
20. Regular monitoring takes place of the individual benefits delivered by the CABx to South Cambridgeshire clients.
21. Monitoring this year has included assessment of the impact of the 25% grant reduction in grants to the CAB.

Recommendations

20. It is recommended that Cabinet
- (a) approves a grant of £53,360 to Cambridge CAB for 2007/08,
 - (b) notes the grants awarded by the Portfolio Holder for Community Development to the other CAB's and Advice for Life for their work in South Cambridgeshire, and

- (c) as part of its commitment to the Cambridgeshire Compact, that SCDC increase its funding agreements with CABx from one year to three years. These agreements will be statements of intent rather than legally binding commitments and that this three year agreements be extended to other voluntary organisations that SCDC funds for over £3000 and with whom we have Service Level Agreements.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Service Level Agreements with the organisations concerned.

Contact Officer: Tricia Pope – Community Development Manager
Telephone: (01954) 713290

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet 12 April 2007
AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive/Principal Accountant (General Fund and Costing)

**UNCOMMITTED GRANT BALANCES AND OTHER EARMARKED
RESERVES OVER TWO YEARS OLD AS AT 31 MARCH 2007**

Purpose

1. To seek the approval of Cabinet to carry forward uncommitted balances on earmarked reserves that are over two years old.

Background

2. The current budget and policy framework rules allow that any uncommitted reserve balance that is unused at the end of a financial year can be carried forward into the following year with the approval of the relevant Portfolio Holder, unless the balance is more than two years old, in which case the approval of Cabinet as a whole is required. This unused sum carried forward is then available in the new financial year in addition to the approved budget estimate.
3. It should be appreciated that, in addition to the presented uncommitted balances, the Council's reserves also include amounts necessary to meet the payment of commitments already approved but not yet paid over. The period between approval of grant and final payments can be years in some cases. These amounts will be carried forward except where it is established that the grant is no longer required.

Considerations

4. All uncommitted balances over two years old as at 31 March 2007 that are requested to be carried forward are summarised as follows:

Portfolio	Description	Balance Total £	Balance over 2 years £
Community Development	Dual Use Capital Grants	770,977	458,477
Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning	Heritage Initiatives Historic Buildings Preservation Fund (estimated balance)	9,511 54,968	9,511 54,968
Total		835,456	522,956

5. Dual Use Capital Grants: the total uncommitted balance of £770,977 at 31 March 2007 has been built up over a number of years by making annual contributions to the "fund" and carrying forward the balance to meet requirements into the future. The Dual Use Sports Facility Strategy for upgrading all village college sports facilities was approved in 1999. Subsequently, in 2001, Cabinet confirmed that the updated programme be completed. This required that all the remaining reserve balance be

carried forward for the rest of the planned programme, which was likely to continue until 2007/08. During 2006-7, Cabinet agreed grants of £12,318 to Gamlingay and £265,000 to Cottenham Village Colleges. In previous years, grants of £150,000 to Swavesey, £350,000 to Bassingbourn, £313,000 to Sawston, £300,000 to Comberton, £310,000 to Linton and £275,000 to Melbourn Village Colleges had been approved. The latest updated programme was presented to Cabinet at the meeting in March last year. It indicated that the intended grant level of 40% for all schemes could be met, provided that the reserve and the annual budget provision in the capital programme was accumulated to the year 2007-08. The remaining schemes are for Impington and Gamlingay Village Colleges. It is recommended that the £458,477 figure that is over two years old be carried forward into 2007-08. The £312,500 balance under two years is subject to approval by the Community Development Portfolio Holder.

6. Heritage Initiatives (£9,511, which is over two years old): This reserve was set up in 1996/97 with a one-off contribution of £200,000, for use over a number of years. The balance has reduced from £135,290 to the above in the last five years. The Conservation and Design Manager has indicated that the balance is intended to help fund Green Infrastructure Strategy projects. When this balance is used up, it will be necessary to seek virement from Historic Building Grants, or other funds, as appropriate, if such projects are to be assisted in the future. Therefore, it is recommended that the balance be carried forward.

7. Historic Buildings Preservation Fund (estimated at £54,968, which is over two years old): This was first established in 1982 to provide the means, in the last resort, to save buildings at risk. It has enabled the Council to use its statutory powers, which could lead to compulsory purchase, repair and resale of such property. More recently, most of the reserve has been used to carry out work at St. Denis Church, which is owned by the Council. Following the approval last June by Cabinet to carry out re-roofing and general repair works to arrest the deterioration of the former church, the works are all completed, but the finalisation of the contract is still outstanding, so that further expenditure could fall in the next financial year. Grants from English Heritage and Hatley Parish Council funded part of this expenditure. The Conservation and Design Manager considers that the remainder of the fund would continue to enable the Conservation and Design Section to initiate action to secure the future of other key listed buildings at risk, encouraged in many cases by community led initiatives; its retention would make a substantial contribution to both securing the historic fabric of the district and support action to save cherished landmarks. Therefore, it is recommended that the estimated balance (which has not yet been finalised due to the outstanding expenditure) be carried forward.

8. The unique reserve balance below has previously been treated as committed, but it is now clear that it will never be used under its current description:

Portfolio	Description	Balance Total £	Balance over 2 years £
None	Millennium Working Party Grants	16,320	16,320

The Millennium Working Party was set up to consider the allocation of £100,000 for woodland grants. After it was disbanded, an uncommitted balance of £47,830 was returned to central balances. However, a further balance of £16,320, which had been earmarked for the Woodland Trust for future woodland maintenance remained in the

reserve. Nevertheless, the officer who dealt with the grants was satisfied that all grants had been paid and there were no outstanding payments. It has therefore been concluded that this sum is not committed, so it could be returned to general balances. However, as the reserve was held for a conservation related project, its transfer to Heritage Initiatives could be an alternative option (see below).

Options

9. For the Millennium Working Party balance in paragraph 9, there appear to be two main options:
 - a. Return the balance to the overall General Fund Reserve. The balance would increase the Council’s balances, although the effect would be insignificant.
 - b. Transfer the balance to the Heritage Initiative Reserve and carry the total balance forward. This would help to preserve the reserve, where relatively small amounts could be used to support Green Infrastructure Strategy projects.

10. For those items in paragraph 5, the decision is simply whether or not to carry forward the balance over two years old in each case. The current Medium Term Financial Plan assumes that all uncommitted balances are carried forward until used for grant expenditure. The recommendations follow the wishes of the relevant cost centre managers, whose plans would be compromised by the loss of funds for anticipated future grants. In general, the recommendation is to carry forward the balances to ensure that current plans can continue. The outstanding balances brought forward could then be reviewed at any stage in the future, should the financial circumstances of the Council change.

Implications

11. Financial	Balances carried forward overall will have nil effect on Council expenditure, in accordance with the Medium Term Financial Plan. However, the balances available towards grant approvals or relevant expenditure in the new financial year will be enhanced by the sums brought forward. Any balances not carried forward will result in an under-spending in the old year and will add to the overall General Fund Reserve.
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Risk Management	Failure to carry forward grant reserves would have a detrimental effect on the stated objectives of the Council. For example, the Dual Use Strategy could not be achieved and the village colleges’ provision of facilities to the public would be affected.
Equal Opportunities	None

Consultations

12. The comments and recommendations of the relevant spending officers have been incorporated into the considerations reported above.

Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

13.	Affordable Homes	The proposals in the report seek to ensure the continued availability of funding to support the spending plans of the Council.
	Customer Service	
	Northstowe and other growth areas	
	Quality, Accessible Services	
	Village Life	
	Sustainability	
	Partnership	

Recommendations

14. It is recommended that Cabinet
- (a) resolve that the following uncommitted reserve **balances that are over two years old be carried forward** into the 2007/08 financial year:
- | | |
|--|----------|
| Dual Use Capital Grants (£770,977 in total) | £458,477 |
| Heritage Initiatives Grants | £9,511 |
| Historic Buildings Preservation Fund (estimated) | £54,968 |
- (b) determine whether the balance of £16,320 be returned to the overall General Fund Reserve or transferred to Heritage Initiatives Grants and carried forward with the above balance.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Schedules of Grants 2006/07
 S.C.D.C. Budget Booklet 2007/08
 Previous minutes and agenda

Contact Officer: Peter Harris, Principal Accountant (General Fund and Costing)
 Telephone: (01954) 713073

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Leader and Cabinet	12 April 2007
AUTHOR/S:	Executive Director / Lands Officer	

PUBLIC CAR PARK OFF HIGH STREET, HISTON**Purpose**

1. To seek the decision of Cabinet on the future of the public car park off High Street, Histon (as shown on **attached plan**), following the decision of the Housing Portfolio Holder on 3 April 2007.

Executive Summary

2. The Council has agreed to the disposal of its four public car parks and the Histon site remains the only one where a sale or lease is not imminent. Histon Parish Council declined an offer of a lease of the site at nominal rent as they were unable to make such a commitment but agreed to discuss options with the Council. Their report on the results of their subsequent survey of parking use indicates that charging for parking is unfeasible. Interest to purchase or lease the site has been sought from a major retail outlet in the village centre but declined.

Background

3. The disposal of all the Council's public car parks was agreed by Cabinet and ratified by Full Council as part of the budget savings exercise following council tax capping.
4. The public car park sites at Linton and Sawston are to be leased by the respective Parish Councils at nominal rent, subject to the sites offering free parking. The freehold interest of the site in Melbourn is being transferred to Melbourn Parish Council for use as offices, community facilities and free public parking.
5. Background information regarding disposal of the site in Histon is as follows:
 - a) Based on a sale subject to a covenant restricting its future use to car parking only but not precluding the purchaser from charging for car parking use, the market value of the freehold interest of the Histon site with vacant possession has been assessed by the District Valuer at £95,000.
 - b) Maintenance costs of the car park over the last 10 years and current National Non-Domestic Rates are shown in **Background Paper 1**.
 - c) Planning have confirmed that they would strongly oppose any change of use of this car park.
 - d) Telereal (BT property who own the access road) confirm that the car park site was conveyed to the Council and the Council's successors in Title, with the inclusion of a right of way over the access road. The same right would therefore be conveyed to any new owner.
6. The following decision was made by the Housing Portfolio Holder on 8 March 2006:

To seek interest from Histon Parish Council in a long-term lease of the car park site off High Street, Histon at nominal rent, subject to the leaseholder being responsible for ongoing maintenance and payment of NNDR (rates). This offer was subject to the site remaining a free public car park.

7. Histon Parish Council's response to this proposal was that they could not commit to an undertaking to lease the car park at this time but that they wished to discuss and review the options for the site with SCDC.
8. A meeting was held with the Parish Chairman and Councillor Mason on 22 May 2006 to discuss options and it was agreed that the Parish Council would carry out a survey of car park use and consider whether it would be feasible to charge local businesses for parking use. The results of their survey are shown in **Background Paper 2**.
9. In October 2006 interest was sought from Tesco who own the main retail outlet in Histon centre, to purchase or lease the site subject to it remaining a free public car park.
10. No written response has been received from Tesco despite requests/reminders from the Lands Officer but it has now been verbally indicated by the Store Manager that the company is unlikely to be interested in the site as it is not immediately adjacent the store.

Considerations

11. The car park is well used by local shoppers and business people and is a valuable asset to the village centre.
12. The Parish Council's report indicates that it would not be feasible to charge local businesses for parking use. There may also be considerable opposition from local residents if charges were introduced and traffic congestion and street parking would increase in the centre.
13. An open market sale of the site would not preclude a purchaser from introducing parking charges.
14. Various options aimed at relieving the Council of the costs of car park maintenance and payment of rates, including disposal of the site with use being retained as a free public car park, have been explored but appear to be unfeasible at the present time.

Options

15. Retain the site off High Street, Histon in Council ownership until an opportunity arises for its disposal or lease as a free public car park.
16. Place the site for sale on the open market, for car parking use only.

Implications

Financial	By disposing of this site on the open market, a capital receipt could accrue to the Council. Ongoing maintenance costs and rates to be borne by the Council if the site is retained.
Legal	The sale of this site is not subject to the Right to Buy legislation.
Staffing	None

Risk Management	None
Equal Opportunities	None

Consultations

17. Histon Parish Council's views regarding the site are expressed in their report (Background Paper 2).
18. Councillors Mason, Chatfield and Davies have been consulted since the verbal response was received from Tesco and they all agree that the site should be retained by the Council until an opportunity arises for its disposal or lease as a free public car park.

Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

Affordable Homes	None
Customer Service	None
Northstowe and other growth areas	None
Quality, Accessible Services	None
Village Life	The car park is a valuable asset to the village centre
Sustainability	Provision of a free public parking area in Histon centre helps to relieve traffic congestion and prevent street parking
Partnership	None

Recommendations

19. Retain the site off High Street, Histon in Council ownership until an opportunity arises for its disposal or lease as a free public car park.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

1. Maintenance costs and National Non-domestic Rates
2. Results of survey and report of Histon Parish Council, September 2006

Contact Officer: **Jenny Clark, Lands Officer**
Telephone (01954) 713336

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PUBLIC CAR PARK, HIGH STREET, HISTON



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SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL LICENCE NO 100022500 2006

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BACKGROUND PAPER 1**SCDC EXPENDITURE CODED TO HISTON CAR PARK****REPAIRS & GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

FINANCIAL YEAR	£
1995/96	58
1996/97	60
1997/98	62
1998/99	196
1999/00	68
2000/01	72
2001/02	75
2002/03	77
2003/04	804
2004/05	53
TOTAL	1,525

NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATE

2004/05	1,915
2006/07	2,325

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BACKGROUND PAPER 2

REPORT FROM HISTON PARISH COUNCIL ON THE HIGH STREET CAR PARK

On 22nd May 2006 Councillor Max Parish, accompanied by District local member Councillor Mason, attended a meeting with Housing Portfolio Holder, Councillor Liz Heazell, at SCDC offices at Cambourne. The purpose of the meeting was to consider various options for the future operation and maintenance of the Car Park in Histon High Street.

Ownership

It was suggested by the District Council that, as the Parish Council were reluctant to purchase the Car Park, on the basis of the SCDC valuation, they should consider the option of a long term lease on a peppercorn rental and take on the cost of the maintenance of the Car Park. In order to defray these costs the Parish Council should consider charging local businesses to use part of the area on a regular basis. It was emphasised that the car park must remain free to ordinary members of the public.

Planning

The District Council were asked at the meeting to clarify the legal situation regarding the conditions attached to the recent granting of planning permission for a dwelling to the rear of 28 High Street, with vehicular access onto the car park access road, in the ownership of British Telecom. In particular there were queries as to potential re-siting of lighting columns, ownership issues and legal access to a widened verge on the west side of the road. It would appear from the email dated 22nd September 2006, received from Mrs. Clarke, that little progress has been made to resolve these legal issues.

History

A good number of years ago the County Council installed a finger post notice attached to a lamp standard in the High Street opposite, pointing to the Free Car Park and referring to time limits. This disappeared recently when the lampposts in the High Street were replaced.

A physical height limit barrier was installed a few years ago to prevent commercial vehicle parking but this has twice been vandalised. The Parish Council sees no easy answer to the problem of controlling the use of the Car Park with ever increasing demand coming from nearby settlements. Traffic and turning movements in the vicinity have increased dramatically in the past few years particularly after the arrival of Tesco.

Survey

In order to gauge the feasibility of this option on Monday 17th July 2006 three members of Histon Parish Council carried out a survey, to try and ascertain answers to the following questions:

- Who parks in the car park?
- How long they were likely to stay?
- Whether the purpose was for work or personal reasons?

- If for work, which firm they worked for?
- Whether they were residents of Histon; if not, where they lived?
- How regularly they parked there?

The Car Park currently has 32 marked parking spaces. On that morning 6 cars were already parked when the survey started at 7.40am. It has been established since that 4 of these belonged to employees of local firms (i.e. firms in or closely adjacent to the High Street).

During the survey period, up to 9.15a.m., a further 20 cars were parked. All 18 cars parked before 9.00a.m. belonged to employees of local firms. They were parked for the whole, or most of the day. 16 were parked on a daily basis and 2 for 2 or 3 days during a working week. The 4 cars we have traced which were parked earlier, were parked for the whole day on a daily basis, during the working week. The two cars parked after 9.00a.m. belonged to people making short visits. Both expected to leave within an hour.

On that day the breakdown of employees is as follows:

D. & T. Holmes – 6

Resolve – 4

Buckingham and Stanley – 2 (However, it has subsequently been established that the more usual number is 5)

Post Office -2 (3 who regularly park there were on holiday)

NatWest – 1

Barkers -1

Tucker and Gardner -1

Cambridge Building Society – 1

Thompson, Webb and Corfield – 1

Kitchen Smiths – 1

QMP – 1

Unknown employer – 1

Details unknown of two early parked cars. These are likely to be local employees as they were still in the car park at 3.00p.m. and gone by 5.15p.m.

All but one of the cars parked for the day came from outside the village. The Car Park is normally full during a working weekday and it was felt that the reason why the survey day was different was probably accounted for by being carried out during the school holiday period.

Follow up

The Parish Council sent a letter to the businesses mentioned above, to ascertain their reaction to the SCDC suggestion of a payment contribution. Only four written replies were received, all implying that they would be unwilling to consider paying for designated parking for their employees. One firm pointed out that this would be regarded as a taxable benefit. If it was decided to charge everyone for parking then most would accede to this but it was pointed out that this could drive parking out onto already congested streets. Only one company indicated that they might be prepared, as a local company, to make a contribution to costs.

Conclusions

The car park is predominantly used during the week by employees of local businesses and who live outside of the villages of Histon and Impington. This is in contrast to the original concept and provision by South Cambs. DC. as a “shoppers car park” in an expanding Rural Growth Village.

The businesses are unwilling to pay towards the suggested cost of enabling their employees to park safely close to the centre of the village and their businesses. In fact, such a payment would be considered as a taxable benefit and attract a tax charge as a benefit in kind. If a charge were levied on parking in this manner, drivers would park their vehicles on the road instead. Most likely on Station Road, which is already congested and the subject of concerns as a link road to the three local junior schools. Alternatively, vehicles are likely to park on the Green, next to the Junior School or utilise the Private Shoppers car park at the rear and side of Tesco's store. At both locations parked vehicles are already a problem. Safety of children travelling to and from the Schools is a major concern in the village.

The businesses contribute towards a thriving local community and anything done to force them to consider relocating is considered unhelpful to the future prosperity of the village. However it should also be borne in mind that if spaces are not available for their customers to park, some loss of trade might also be inevitable.

Taking in account all of the many factors outlined in the above paragraphs it appears that the Parish Council would be unable to recoup the annual cost of maintaining the car itself. Although the District Council has spent less than £50 on average over the years, apart from barrier maintenance, when the cost of the rates and running and maintenance of 6 lights are added we estimate that the Parish Council would have to set aside approximately £2,800 per year (Rates £2,400 lights £240 and weeding/tidying £160) and forfeit rate reduction of £600 on the Parish Office as currently sole property owned. We would also have to set aside a sum for barrier repairs, marking and replacement of tarmac, which the District Council has let get into very poor condition. The cost of these we estimate to be in the region of £10,000, which if done every ten years would add an extra £1,000. Unfortunately, in cash flow terms, it is likely to be required sooner rather later. This latter maintenance also highlights the need to increase the Council's Public Liability Insurance and the cost of notices ensuring that users understand the risks they incur by parking there. There will also inevitably be legal costs once the access situation is resolved.

In short, the District Council so far has been unable to convince the Parish Council that the necessary increase in Council Tax funding for residents of Histon that will be required to fund the handover, of 5.2% increase on the 2006-7 precept, is in their interest. We appreciate that the District Council has tried to come up with innovative ways that might minimise the extra costs involved but so far all we see are substantial downsides in the future. The costs that the District Council is asking the Parish Council to find over the next twenty years are equivalent to the current value the District Valuer has put on the property, with its (necessary) restrictions on use.

Histon Parish Council
September 2006

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SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Leader and Cabinet	12 April 2007
AUTHOR/S:	Chief Executive / Corporate Manager, Policy Performance and Partnerships	

FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF MILTON COUNTRY PARK**Purpose**

1. This report sets out the current position on establishing an alternative manager for Milton Country Park, and seeks cabinet's guidance on the way to proceed.

Background

2. Officers have been preparing documentation to enable a tender process to be undertaken, to seek an alternative manager for the park. The timetable for this work has been constrained by the requirement to achieve an outcome by the deadline set by Cabinet, to have an alternative manager identified by 31 August this year. Cabinet considered a previous report in March. Following the support expressed by Cabinet at this meeting, officers were developing the tender on the basis of the new organisation taking on a long lease of the Council's land, and negotiating a similar lease of the County Council's land.
3. In order to ensure that the process was robust, a workshop for all interested parties was arranged, working with Cambridge Preservation Society and Cambridgeshire Horizons. This workshop took place on 29 March at Wandlebury, and was well attended.

Considerations

4. The key aims of the workshop were to scrutinise and advise on the options and process being pursued by the Council, and to provide guidance on the way forward and the tendering process. Peter Studdert of Horizons chaired the workshop, as they are involved in the issues of strategic open spaces management as part of the growth to the sub-region. The format included a presentation by the Portfolio Holder, Cllr Vicky Ford, and the Corporate Manager, Simon McIntosh, followed by questions and discussion; there was then further discussion in groups and a plenary.
5. Participants were given a copy of the draft tender specification document prepared over recent weeks by officers. The documents were not in a finalised state, with further work continuing to enable them to be used for a tender process beginning on 30 April. Officers originally expected to be attaching the documents to this report, requesting approval to proceed.
6. A number of key messages emerged, with apparent widespread support from the organisations represented, which have altered the approach being recommended. These were:
 - (a) There was strong support from all parties for the need for Milton Country Park to continue to provide access to the countryside. It was essential that the park

remain open, and the majority of the participant's felt that a way could be found to ensure that this is achieved.

- (b) The workshop participants understood the difficult financial position in which the Council finds itself, and the squeeze from the demands of a growing area within constrained budgets.
 - (c) The financial position of the park is one where expenditure still exceeds income, with a considerable funding gap. This presents a very considerable risk to any organisation considering taking on the management.
 - (d) All those present were charitable organisations and they have to act prudently. In order to make the park sustainable they would need to secure income-generating potential from land or property assets, subsidy from the Council, or endowment.
 - (e) Creative solutions are needed to find a way to bridge the funding gap in a way that is likely to present a manageable level of risk.
 - (f) Long-term security for holding all the land in the park would be essential to allow organisations to raise funds to develop the park.
 - (g) The conclusion was that a formal tender process was not appropriate in these circumstances, as organisations would be unlikely to bid. Some form of collaborative process, rather than a competitive one, was suggested.
 - (h) A process allowing organisations to put forward expressions of interest, based on guidance of what was required rather than a strict specification, would be a better way forward. This would allow each organisation to put forward what freedoms or financial support they would require.
7. Discussions with county council officers have been progressing on the basis of preparing a legal agreement between the County and this Council for them to lease the land to us for a period approaching 99 years, so that we could then join the land to our holdings and grant a 99 year lease to the organisation taking over. The county will require any disposal at less than best consideration to be justified on the grounds of the public benefit to be achieved.
8. The District Council will also need to agree the principle of leasing its land in the park for 99 years to the new managers of the park, and to sub-lease the Stokes land to the new manager, in order to secure the public benefit of the park for local residents. This disposal needs confirmation by the Council; in order to ensure that potential managers can have confidence in the process, a decision in principle at this stage would increase the certainty.

Options

9. The option to continue with the tender specification as prepared could be pursued, with a 52 day tender period in May and June, with tender analysis scheduled in late June/early July. However, after the workshop there is a great risk that this process would not produce many, if any, tender returns. If this happened, it would be most unlikely that we could meet the deadline to find a new organisation to take on the park by the end of August.

10. The alternative is to adapt the prepared documentation to be used as guidance for a process of inviting Expressions of Interest. This process could follow a similar timetable to that prepared for the tender process and use some of the same criteria in assessing the offers, but the assessment process would need to be different. In order to allow a decision to be made on the basis of the offers, the standing orders for contracts would have to be waived.
11. A panel would need to assess the Expressions of Interest in order to select a preferred partner. The recommendation of the panel would need to be considered by cabinet, with a final recommendation to Council for a decision.

Implications

12. Financial	The successful transfer of the park should reduce the Council's financial support for the park, but it may not end it entirely, depending on the outcome of the process undertaken. Park closure would also involve significant continuing costs.
Legal	The Standing Orders for contracts requires a competitive tender process, and waiving this requires a Council decision. Any sub-lease granted to a new managing organisation will need to match the lease terms of the land of which the Stokes family are the freeholder that the land is to be used as a country park.
Staffing	Discussions are continuing to take place with the Ranger staff about their possible employment by a new organisation, in line with the TUPE regulations.
Risk Management	Any transfer will need to address the risks from the park's environment, including the lakes. If the park were to close, considerable work would still be required to reduce risks to an acceptable level.
Equal Opportunities	The country park needs to provide equal access to all sections of the population.

Consultations

13. The workshop enabled all interested parties to be consulted.

Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

14. Affordable Homes	The park offers a high quality, accessible countryside environment to the residents of South Cambs and Cambridge. With sustainable woodland and a programme of events it is an important resource for the village and surrounding area at a time when major growth pressures face the district. Partnership arrangements are in place to help maintain and run the park and these will need to continue if a solution to the management of the park is to develop.
Customer Service	
Northstowe and other growth areas	
Quality, Accessible Services	
Village Life	
Sustainability	
Partnership	

Conclusions/Summary

15. Flexibility is required to meet members' requirement of finding a new manager for the park within the agreed deadline. The tender process would not provide sufficient flexibility and would reduce the chances of a successful outcome; the Expressions of Interest process, on the other hand, should allow organisations to put forward

proposals on a basis they could sustain, and allow the Council to assess the relative merits of such proposals. The appropriate members of the assessment panel are suggested as being: the Leader, Deputy Leader, Community Development Portfolio Holder, a Local Member for Milton and the Chief Executive.

16. A recommendation to Council is needed at this stage to dispose of the Council's land to a new manager, subject to agreement being reached on who that manager will be, on a 99-year lease for a peppercorn. This will provide an additional degree of certainty to partner organisations, and encourage them that they could expect to have good security if selected by South Cambs as a preferred partner. At the same time we need to formally request the County Council to confirm that we can include their land in our negotiations, and that they are willing to dispose of it on a term just less than 99 years for a peppercorn. This will then allow us to join up the different parcels of land in the park into a single parcel for the new manager to take on.

Recommendations

16. Cabinet is requested to agree:
 - (a) To waive standing orders in order for a negotiated expression of interest procedure to take place.
 - (b) The establishment of a review/interview panel in order to select the best option for the Council, in line with paragraph 15.
 - (c) To recommend to Council that it approves in principle the disposal of the SCDC land in the park, and the land on a 999 year lease from the Stokes, on the basis of a 99 year lease on a peppercorn basis to the organisation who are selected to take on the management.
 - (d) To request the County Council to confirm its willingness to dispose of its land in the park on a similar basis to South Cambs to enable the public benefit of the park to be secured.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Milton country Park Cabinet Report of March 2007
Information pack for the Workshop held on 29 March 07.
Draft specification for tender to lease and run Milton Country Park.

Contact Officer: Simon McIntosh – Corporate Manager
Telephone: (01954) 713350

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Leader and Cabinet	12 April 2007
AUTHOR/S:	Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer / Finance Project Officer	

GERSHON FORWARD LOOK 2007/08**Purpose**

1. The purposes of this report are:
 - (a) to set out the continuing progress being made in both implementing planned efficiencies in 2006/07 and identifying additional efficiencies to be made in 2007/08 and beyond;
 - (b) to ask Cabinet to delegate authority for finalising the 2007/08 Forward Look Annual Efficiency Statement to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the Resources, Staffing, Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder.

Background

2. Following recommendations by Sir Peter Gershon on the scope for efficiency savings in the public sector, the Government required councils, from 2005/06, to make annual efficiency savings worth 2.5% of their 2004/05 budgets for each of the following three years. For SCDC, this equated to £513,000 in 2005/06 and additional savings of £415,000 in both 2006/07 and 2007/08.
3. Progress reports on our efficiency savings were reported to Cabinet in February, March and May 2005 and in March and July 2006. The projected savings were built in to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved by Council in November 2006 and the 2007/08 Budget approved by Council in February 2007.
4. For each of the previous two years, Cabinet has delegated authority for finalising the Forward Look and Backward Look Annual Efficiency Statements (AES) to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the then Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder.

Update

5. The Council appears to be on course to achieve the target for £415k of efficiencies in 2006/07, as well as continuing to meet the on-going target of £513k from 2005/06, albeit that the expected level of efficiencies in 2006/07 is lower than previously estimated, mainly due to some anticipated efficiencies not being fully realised. However, the Council should still meet the 2006/07 target, not least because the target for 2005/06 was exceeded (although this has not yet been externally audited in detail) and the excess can count towards the targets for future years.
6. Officers are reviewing the efficiency savings previously identified for 2007/08 in preparation for producing the Council's detailed 2007/08 Forward Look, which needs to be submitted this month. It is not yet clear whether all the 2007/08 savings previously anticipated will be fully achieved, for example: it appears that some savings previously identified may not now count when compared to the official

Gershon definition of efficiencies; timescales for business process re-engineering reviews may affect other savings.

Implications

- 7. **Financial:** Any previously identified savings that are not fully realised will affect the MTFS; conversely, any savings achieved above the levels already incorporated into the MTFS could help to offset the costs of meeting service and growth demands.
- 8. **Legal:** Gershon savings build on the principles of Best Value and the Local Government Act 1999. The extent to which the Council delivers planned efficiencies is taken into account in the Audit Commission’s ‘Use of Resources’ assessment.
- 9. **Risk Management:** The implications of not meeting the Gershon targets are considered in the Council’s corporate strategic risk register.

Consultations

- 10. Managers and Portfolio Holders have been involved in detailed consideration of possible efficiencies and savings, as part of the approval of the MTFS.

Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

11.	Affordable Homes	Efficiency savings particularly relate to the objective of ‘high quality, value-for-money, accessible services’. By using the Gershon initiative to deliver more outputs from the same inputs, or the same outputs for less inputs, the other three objectives and the three priorities should also benefit.
	Customer Service	
	Northstowe and other growth areas	
	Quality, Accessible Services	
	Village Life	
	Sustainability	
	Partnership	

Conclusions/Summary

- 12. The Council continues to progress in making efficiencies and savings and meeting Gershon targets. The Forward Look 2007/08 AES needs to be submitted this month.

Recommendations

- 13. Cabinet is asked to:
 - (a) note the progress outlined in this report; and
 - (b) delegate authority to the Chief Executive, with the Leader and Resources, Staffing, Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder, for finalising the Council’s Forward Look 2007/08 AES – the finalised statement will be copied to all Members, as in previous years, and a report will be presented to the following meeting of Cabinet

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: None

Contact Officer: John Garnham – Finance Project Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713101

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SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet 12 April 2007
AUTHORS: Chief Executive / Policy, Performance & Partnerships
and Planning & Sustainable Communities Corporate Managers

PLANNING SERVICE – 3-YEARLY CONSULTATION RESULTS






Purpose

- To report the results of the statutory 3-yearly Planning Service consultation survey.


Executive Summary

- The responses identify a lower level of customer satisfaction than in the two previous surveys in 2000 and 2003.

Your Experience with the Planning Service



Question Number 5	Question Detail	Strongly agree/Agree			Direction of Travel
		2000	2003	2006	
5a	I was given the advice and help I needed to submit my application correctly.	75 %	70 %	63 %	
5b	The Council kept me informed about the progress of my application.	53 %	49 %	40 %	
5c	The Council dealt promptly with my queries.	64 %	53 %	44 %	
5d	I understand the reasons for the decision made on my application (s).	84 %	73 %	70 %	
5e	I felt I was treated fairly and that my viewpoint was listened to.	67 %	59 %	51 %	

- The only question with a national best value number (**BV111**) is question 6, which is used for national comparative purposes.

Question Number 6	Question Detail	Strongly agree/Agree			Direction of Travel
		2000	2003	2006	
BV111	Setting aside whether any individual application was successful or not, how satisfied are you with the service provided by the Council in processing your applications?	73 % (4 th)	63 % (4 th)	56 % (?)	

- This authority was in the bottom quartile (i.e. 4th) in 2000 and 2003. The 2006 national comparative data will not be available for some months but as our performance has dropped from 63% to 56% it would be reasonable to assume that our quartile position will not have improved.

5. This question asks applicants to 'set aside whether any application had been successful'. The contractor was therefore asked to provide separate results for the successful and unsuccessful applicants and these are illustrated below.

Question Number 6	Question Detail	Strongly agree/Agree			Direction of Travel
		2000	2003	2006	
BV111	% satisfaction of <u>successful applicants</u>	78%	68%	60%	
BV111	% satisfaction of <u>unsuccessful applicants</u>	56%	32%	36%	

6. There are significantly different levels of satisfaction between the two groups. However the unsuccessful group indicated a slightly increased level of satisfaction in 2006 than in 2003, whilst the successful group were less satisfied than in 2003.

7. Action will be taken to set and achieve annual BV111 targets to improve our quartile position and move towards the top quartile as soon as possible.

ICT Systems (Figures in brackets are from the 2003 survey)

8. There were positive responses about the experience of using the Council's planning service related ICT systems.



9. There is clear evidence of increased interest in and use of the website. 91 % (86 %) of applicants had access to a computer and of these 74 % (34 %) used it to find information about applying for planning information. 69 % (22 %) reported they had downloaded a planning information form in the previous 12 months.

10. Website users levels of satisfaction have increased and there is clear support for further developing the accessibility of information through the website. One example of this enthusiasm involved applicants interest in 'Finding information about progress of the application' where 90 % (77%) expressed an interest.

11. Further developing web based access for planning applications is likely to improve customer satisfaction.

Comparison with other authorities (figures in brackets from 2003 survey)

12. 54% (49 %) of applicants had applied to at least one other Council in the previous 12 months. Those applicants (invariably agents) were asked the following questions:

Question Number 21	Question	2003	2006	Direction of Travel
21	How does South Cambs compare to other authorities in processing applications (not asked in 2000).			
21a	Much Better/Better than others	24%	19%	
21b	Worse/Much worse	13%	27%	

13. Satisfaction levels have therefore slipped in comparison with our neighbours.

Other Ideas/Comments

14. Applicants were also asked to 'suggest areas for improvement' and to indicate if they had 'anything to add'. There are many useful ideas and comments and the authority could look to use these to identify ways to improve the service.
15. One comment was "I would like to find out the response of this survey to find out if others are of same opinion as myself, please post on website". It would be good practice to publicise the results of such surveys but in the past we have tended to simply put a simplified summary in the South Cambs magazine. It would be appropriate to continue to use the South Cambs magazine in this way but it would also be appropriate to publish the full consultants report on the website, complete with a copy of our response i.e. the improvement plan.
16. Agents would like to be more involved in assisting the Council to improve its service. The use of an Agents Forum would facilitate this. It is recognised that increased staff involvement would also ensure that we maximise our capacity to improve.

Background

17. South Cambs DC had a statutory duty to conduct 3-yearly surveys among those who had submitted planning applications.
18. Government guidance prescribes postal surveys. The target population is 'all planning applicants or agents of applicants who have received a decision letter on their application between April 3rd 2006 and September 29th 2006.

Considerations

19. **BV111** (para: 3 refers) is one of the PIs in the Audit Commission's 'basket of PIs', which is used to identify the authorities 'direction of travel'. The December 2005 'Direction of Travel' report identified that for this PI the authority was in the 'worst quartile' and that we are 'not improving'.
20. Paragraph 1 of the CGI report states that "Service performance as measured by annual performance indicators (PIs) deteriorated". It will therefore be particularly important to demonstrate that the authority recognises this trend in the performance of any PI that is in the basket of PIs. To do this we need to take appropriate actions to demonstrate that this trend will be reversed (para: 7 refers).
21. Cabinet has already made three decisions (Cabinet 8th March 2007), which directly affect our response to the findings in these 3-yearly surveys. Cabinet decided that:
 - a. Portfolio Holders should use their PFH meetings to monitor implementation of the improvement measures in the various service plans.
 - b. Portfolio Holders should work with service planning managers to ensure that appropriate plans be set and successfully implemented for 2007/08.
 - c. Cabinet requested that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitor progress, at least annually, to ensure that the three-targets be achieved.

Options

22. The Planning & Sustainable Communities Service will include 'Customer Satisfaction Improvement Plans', in the 07/08 and 08/09 Service Plans. The improvement plans will include actions, which will be designed to significantly improve customer satisfaction in time for the 2009 survey. Actions will include:
- i. Annual targets will be set for BV111, to improve the quartile position and move towards the top quartile as soon as possible (para: 7 refers).
 - ii. The planning service ICT web based access arrangements will be further improved (para: 11 refers).
 - iii. Measures to respond positively to the 'suggested areas for improvement' (para: 14 refers).
 - iv. The full consultants report will be put on the website, complete with a copy of the improvement plan (para: 15 refers).
 - v. An Agents Forum will be set up early in 2007/08. (Para 16 refers).
 - vi. Regular planning service staff customer satisfaction improvement workshops will be set up. (Para 16 refers).
 - vii. More regular consultation surveys to provide annual evidence of improved customer satisfaction to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee (para: 21c refers). These surveys will go wider than just seeking the views of applicants as they will also look to seek the views of the wider resident customer base.
23. The Portfolio Holder has also indicated that:
- i. Staff retention should be a priority and succession planning is essential.
 - ii. It would be useful to ascertain Parish Councils' satisfaction levels.
 - iii. A letter explaining the parameters within which applications had to be considered should accompany decision Notices, as this would help indicate the level of service provided.
24. SMT viewed with some concern the deterioration in customer satisfaction, however they are satisfied that actions to deal with all the issues will be contained in the Planning Services Service Plans for 2007/08 and 2008/09.

Implications

25. Failure to develop and effectively monitor a clear focussed improvement plan, which results in an improved level of customer satisfaction, will result in the Council's direction of travel being adversely affected.

26.

Financial	Introducing more regular (i.e. at least annual) consultation exercises could involve additional staff resource and funding. However effective use of an ICT solution and Agents Forum would mitigate against this.
Legal	
Staffing	Retention issues could involve additional costs

Risk Management	Increasing customer satisfaction levels will reduce the risk of failing to demonstrate an awareness of effective performance management (CGI). Failure to improve customer satisfaction is likely to result in adverse publicity.
Equal Opportunities	Addressing inequalities will ensure the authority continues to operate in an accordance with its statutory obligations.

Consultations

- 27. The findings have been presented to Planning Managers and copies of the full report were sent to the PFH and the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Committee.
- 28. Staff workshops have already taken place to assist in the development of the improvement plan.

Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

29.	Affordable Homes	
	Customer Service	Low customer satisfaction has a direct impact on our customer relationship and also an adverse impact on staff morale.
	Northstowe and other growth areas	
	Quality, Accessible Services	Higher levels of customer satisfaction will be achieved through the provision of high quality and accessible services.
	Village Life	
	Sustainability	
	Partnership	Many applicants are professional agents who are key partners in the development of a well-planned community.

Conclusions/Summary

- 30. The results of the Planning Service 3-yearly survey are not good and actions need to be taken to improve the corresponding results in 2009.
- 31. Proactive actions need to be taken, which are effectively monitored, to provide evidence that customer satisfaction is increasing annually.

Recommendations

- 32. Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (a) Note the disappointing findings from this survey.
 - (b) Require the PFH to ensure that the implementation of the actions in the improvement plan (para; 22 refers) are monitored regularly at PFH meetings (para; 21a and 21b refer).

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: BVPI 3-Yearly Planning Survey 2007

Contact Officer: Ian Salter – Performance Improvement Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713018

