

CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources
LAND ADJACENT TO NO. 19 HAMSTERLEY DRIVE, CROOK

purpose of the report

1. To seek Members' approval to a request to purchase land at the above location.

introduction

2. A request has been received from Mr. & Mrs. Swinhoe of 19 Hamsterley Drive, Crook to purchase the land shown edged black on the plan at Annex 1 for the purpose of extending their garden. The Applicants had previously requested to purchase the land in 1999 but following a site visit the application was refused.

consultations

3. The Director of Regeneration confirms that he could not support the enclosure of the land to the front of the house as shown hatched black but does not object to the remainder of the land being sold. He would recommend that the land to the side and rear be enclosed with a 1 metre high fence. He also confirms that planning permission will be required for change of use from public open space to garden land.
4. The Acting Director of Community Services raises no objections of a technical nature to the sale of the land. He suggests that the applicants be requested to provide and maintain a suitable boundary structure in accordance with planning regulations.

author's comments

5. As this parcel of land is open space a notice, in accordance with Sections 122/123 of the Local Government Act 1972, under which the Council is obliged to give notice and consider any objections to the proposed disposal of land, was inserted in the local press.
6. This exercise resulted in one letter being received and the grounds given for the objection are as follows:-
 - (i) The provision of the open spaces was a policy of the original builders of the estate and should be maintained for all future residents,.
 - (ii) The disposal of a small part of this open space would create a precedent which could be quoted in the future and could result in the loss of all of the open spaces in this area.

- (iii) The disposal of any open space would result in the loss of a visual amenity to the residents and could result in the removing of ancient trees which have been part of the landscape for many years.
 - (iv) Should the disposal of open space be extended due to the reason stated in (ii) above, this could result in the loss of many footpaths, which are extensively used by the public both for leisure and convenience.
7. In response to the points raised in the letter of objection, it is accepted that the original developers exercised care in retaining large areas of open space for the enjoyment of residents and the Council take care to ensure that important areas of open space are protected and do not allow owners to encroach onto these areas.
 8. The parcel of land which the applicants wish to purchase to enable them to extend their garden does not contain any trees and as there is a generous amount of open space in the vicinity through which a footpath passes, it is felt that the loss of this small piece of open space would not be harmful, nor be a loss of visual amenity.
 9. As each request to purchase land is considered on its own merits no precedent would be created for the future if this request was approved.

conclusion

10. If after considering the report Members are of the opinion that the request should be approved I would recommend that the sale to Mr. & Mrs. Swinhoe be approved subject to the following terms and conditions;
 - (a) Valuation to be agreed with, or given by, the District Valuer.
 - (b) Applicant to be responsible for the erection and future maintenance of the boundary structure.
 - (c) Applicant to obtain planning permission for change of use of the land from open space to garden and erection of boundary structure.
 - (d) Applicant to be responsible for the Council's legal and valuation costs.
11. However in line with the Council's policy of public speaking at this Committee the Applicant and the Objector have been invited to attend this meeting to afford them the opportunity to present their respective cases to you.
12. Members' instructions are requested.

background Papers

file no. 80542

<p>Officer responsible for the report Gary Ridley Director of Central Resources Ext. 227</p>	<p>Author of the report Diane Hathaway Legal Executive Ext. 319</p>
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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Asset Management Group
LAND ADJACENT TO 95 PROUDFOOT DRIVE, BISHOP AUCKLAND

purpose of the report

1. Further consideration of the request received from Mr. and Mrs. P. Dobson, the owners of 95 Proudfoot Drive Bishop Auckland, to purchase the above land.

background

2. At the meeting of the Central Resources Committee held on 28 September 2005 (Minute No. 210 refers) it was resolved that the request to purchase the land edged in black on the plan at Annex 2 be deferred to allow for an open space advertisement to be advertised and once the results were known the Committee reconsider the request.

consultations

3. The Director of Regeneration has been reconsulted on this request and he confirms that he has no objection in principle to the change of use of the land to garden land, for which planning permission will be required. He states that the land does not add any significant amenity value to the streetscene. He also advises that the sale should be conditional on the height of any means of enclosure being restricted to no more than 1 metre.
4. Members may recall that the Director of Housing Services and the Acting Director of Community Services offered no objection to the land being sold.

author's comments

5. Following publication of the open space advertisement in the local press no objections have been received to the proposed disposal of the land.

conclusion

6. In view of the revised comments received from the Director of Regeneration it is recommended that the land be sold to Mr. and Mrs. Dobson subject to the following terms and conditions :
 - a) Valuation to be agreed with, or given by, the District Valuer.
 - b) Any means of enclosure to be restricted to no more than 1 metre in height, and the applicants to be responsible for its future maintenance.

- c) Applicants to obtain planning permission for change of use of the land from open space to garden and erection of any boundary fence.
- d) The applicants to be responsible for the precast concrete kerbs which are laid on the boundary of the land.
- e) Applicants to be responsible for the Council's legal and valuation fees.

RECOMMENDED that the land be sold to Mr. and Mrs. Dobson in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined in paragraph 6.

background documents
file number 32881

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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources **BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT**

purpose of the report

1. To seek Member agreement on a Business Continuity Action Plan for Authority.

background

2. The Civil Contingency Act 2004 requires the Authority to have in place plans to increase resilience and improve effectiveness of risk management arrangements in response to an emergency. The attached plan has been produced in conjunction with the Emergency Planning Unit and outlines a number of actions to improve the business continuity activity already carried out to date.

action plan

3. The Action Plan sets out, inter alia, a business continuity policy, roles and responsibilities and audit programme. It will be necessary to provide departmental support to ensure that the Action Plan is introduced and becomes effective. The Action Plan which is set out at Annex 3 builds upon the work done to date in this area.

financial implications

4. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, there may be a need to allocate a small resource to develop the plan further. Any resource requirement can be met from the risk management fund.

human resources implications

5. The staff who are already involved in business continuity management will continue to be involved in taking the action plan forward. The staff who are already involved are representatives from all departments of the Council. Training may need to be provided to other staff as deemed necessary.
6. Page 7 of the Annex recommends that business continuity management requirements be reflected in staff job descriptions. This will be considered further by the Authority.
7. Business continuity management will also form part of the induction procedure for new staff.

i.t./legal/community safety implications

8. In relation to I.T., an internal facility will be established in order to communicate business continuity management activities e.g. minutes of meetings. In relation to legal, there is a requirement upon the Council to move this issue forward in line with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. In relation to community safety, there are no direct implications arising from this report.

other issues

9. One of the key issues is that of communication. There is a need to raise the profile of business continuity management within the Authority. There are a number of ways that this can be done e.g.
- (i) Posters
 - (ii) Attachments to payslips
 - (iii) Via Teamtalk
 - (iv) Staff briefings.
10. This issue will be considered and progressed in the coming months.

RECOMMENDED that Members agree the report and Action Plan.

Officer responsible for the report

Gary Ridley
Director of Central Resources
Ext 227

Author of the report

Gary Ridley
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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources
RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

purpose of the report

1. To consider amendments to the risk management strategy.

background

2. Members will recall that the risk management strategy was approved in December 2002. This report seeks to amend the strategy to bring it in line with the requirements under the Use of Resources CPA assessment.

use of resources assessment

3. Risk management is formally considered as part of the Use of Resources assessment. Set out below are the requirements:

Level 2 (adequate performance)

- The organisation has adopted a risk management strategy/policy that has been approved by Members.
- The risk management strategy/policy requires the Council to:
 - (i) Identify corporate and operational risks.
 - (ii) Assess the risks for likelihood and impact.
 - (iii) Identify mitigating controls.
 - (iv) Allocate responsibility for the mitigating controls.
- The Council maintains and reviews a register of its corporate business risks linking them to strategic business objectives and assigning ownership for each risk.
- There is a member committee with specific responsibility included in its terms of reference to consider risk management.
- Reports to support strategic policy decisions, and project initiation documents include a risk assessment.

Level 3 (performing well)

- The risk management process is reviewed and updated at least annually.

- The risk management process specifically identifies risks in relation to partnerships and provides for assurances to be obtained about the management of those risks.
- Staff have been given appropriate training and guidance to enable them to take responsibility for managing risk within the own working environment.
- The members with specific responsibility for risk management have received risk management awareness training.
- The member committee with responsibility for risk management receives reports at least quarterly and takes appropriate action to ensure that corporate business risks are being actively managed, including reporting to full council at least annually.

Level 4 (performing strongly)

- A senior officer and member jointly champion and take overall responsibility for embedding risk management throughout the council.
- The Council can demonstrate that it has embedded risk management in its corporate business processes, including:
 - (i) Strategic planning
 - (ii) Financial planning
 - (iii) Policy making and review
 - (iv) Performance management.
- All members have received risk management awareness training.
- The Council considers positive risks (opportunities) as well as negative risks (threats).

amendments to strategy

4. Annex 4 shows the risk management strategy with changes highlighted in bold. These changes if agreed, will further strengthen risk management as measured under the Use of Resources assessment.
5. An annual review of the risk management strategy will be undertaken as identified in Level 3 above.

conclusion

6. The Council's risk management strategy is in need of updating to reflect the Use of Resources assessment. The changes outlined in Annex 4 if agreed, will result in an improved score for risk management as measured in the CPA process. This will be subject to annual review by the Authority's external auditors.

RECOMMENDED that Members agree the amendments to the strategy.

Officer responsible for the report

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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources
TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY

purpose of the report

1. To inform Members of the treasury management activity of the first 6 months of 2005/06.

background

2. It is regarded as best practice to inform Members of the Council's treasury management activity on a 6 monthly basis. This report at Annex 8 sets out the treasury management activity for the period 1 April 2005 to 30 September 2005. It has been produced in line with the Authority's treasury management policy.

conclusion

3. The treasury management activity has been conducted as outlined in the Authority's treasury management strategy.
4. The Council's treasury management position remains stable in terms of:
 - i) It's levels of external debt
 - ii) It's maturity profile of it's debt
 - iii) It's investment levels
 - iv) The security of it's investment levels

RECOMMENDED that Members note the report.

Officer responsible for the report

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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources
SERVICE PLAN PROGRESS 2005/06

purpose of the report

1. To consider the departmental service plan for the first six months of 2005/06.

background

2. Members will recall that when the service plan was agreed, a six monthly report would be produced and given to Committee for consideration. The remainder of this report is in three parts as follows:
 - (i) Performance indicators, actual against target.
 - (ii) Progress of the section action plans.
 - (iii) Council Plan.

performance indicators

3. The following table shows actual against target with comments:

	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	6 month actual	On Target
8	Invoice Payments	100	97.18	N
11a	Senior Women in post	16%	18.75%	Y
11b	Senior Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) in post	4.2%	3.1%	N
12	Sickness days	9	5.6	N
14	Early Retirement	1%	0.18%	Y
15	Ill Health	0.55%	0%	Y
16a	Disabled staff	2.5%	2.2%	N
16b	Active Disabled Population	-	-	-
17x	BME staff	1%	0.4%	N
17y	Active BME Population	-	-	-
177	Legal Advice	50		Y
78a	Process Days – benefit	30	19.19	Y
78b	Change in Circs – benefit	8	7.47	Y
79a	Accuracy – benefit	98	98.8	Y
178	Local Land Searches	95%	97.95%	Y
76a	No of benefit claimants visited/1000	210	105	Y
76b	No of fraud staff/1000	0.3	0.24	N
76c	No of fraud investigations/1000	24	12.38	Y
76d	No of prosecutions/sanctions/1000	1.4	1.28	Y
80a	Access – satisfaction	-	-	N/A
80b	Benefits Office satisfaction	-	-	-

Performance Indicator		2005/06 Target	6 month actual	On Target
80c	Telephone service - satisfaction	-	-	-
80d	Staff – satisfaction	-	-	-
80e	Forms – satisfaction	-	-	-
80f	Speed of service – satisfaction	-	-	-
80g	Overall satisfaction	-	-	-
9	Council Tax collection	98.1	60.05	Y
10	NNDR collection	99	63.42	Y
157	E-government	100%	44%	Y
2a	Equality Standard	2	1	N
2b	Equality Race Relations	-	41%	Y

4. Of the above 21 indicators, 15 are on target and 6 are not on target. Of these 6, 4 are of a corporate human resource nature which are proving difficult to change. However, efforts are being made to improve recruitment procedures to improve these indicators.
5. Overall, performance is generally improving as measured by BVPI'S in relation to benefit administration and benefit fraud.

progress of the section action plans

6. The following tables show the section action plans with comments.

Accountancy Action Plan 2005/06

No.	Objective	Action	Progress to Date
1	Issue Budgetary Control Reports to Committee and CMT as per protocol agreed April 2003	Quarterly budget report to each policy committee by department plus quarterly report to CMT by service.	Completed
2	Develop new budget virement scheme to monitor budget transfers	Review financial regulations and provide training to budget holders	Completed – financial regulations reviewed in April 2005 and all budget holders given training
3	Completion and reporting of Final Accounts by end of July 2005	Close down on high level estimates	Completed
4	Conduct benchmarking exercise for accountancy and exchequer services	Complete questionnaire and analyse results with other authorities	Results received and undergoing analysis

No.	Objective	Action	Progress to Date
5	Develop Agresso functionality	Integrate system with cash receipting	Order placed with Agresso for additional work - to be completed by consultant on 18 November. Order placed with Civica for additional work - date awaited for consultant to complete work
6	To improve auditor scored judgements (CPA process)	To be agreed with external auditors	Self assessment submitted to external auditors. Action plan agreed by Management Team on 2 August to achieve score of "good"
7	Electronic notification of remittances to suppliers	Assess cost from Agresso	Completed
8	Electronic distribution of orders to suppliers/ electronic receipt of invoices	Investigate Agresso functionality and consult with suppliers	Initial consultation with top 200 suppliers. Continuing to consult with others.
9	Introduce automated telephone payments	Assess cost and process requirements	Facility to go "live" by end of November allowing payments 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
10	Increase financial management awareness of members	Conduct training and provide written guidance	Session on financial management took place on 7 November and a briefing on the "Use of Resources" is to be rescheduled.

Revenues and Benefits Action Plan 2005/06

No	Objective	Action	Progress to Date
1	To meet 80% of Performance Standards Enablers by June 2006	Monthly reviews of performance	We have met 88% up to end of September
2	To increase take up of HB and CTB of those eligible in the District	To participate in County Durham Partnership against Poverty and work with other agencies	Joint partnership working. Awareness events ongoing
3	To implement Document Image Processing and Workflow technology	To procure software and re-engineer processes	IBS system purchased. 1st stage of training undertaken. Testing and set up of IBS system due to commence 31 Oct 2005

No	Objective	Action	Progress to Date
4	To increase the number of prosecutions and administrative penalties levied for benefit fraud	Further improve Interview under Caution skills and participate in national data matching exercises	2 prosecutions pending and further prosecutions expected
5	To improve mobile working for visiting officers	To examine capture of data and evidence and process claim	Laptops now in use. Work with digital cameras ongoing
6	To attain above average performance in all benefit PI's	Monthly reviews of performance/staff training/process re-engineering	Currently achieving and on target for all PIs
7	To streamline direct debit processing	Introduction of AUDDIS, ADDACS and Bacstel –IP	Bacstel IP now live. AUDDIS live on 1 December 2005
8	To improve recovery process for council tax and NNDR collection	To review processes and compare with best practice	Recovery schedule reviewed, documentation reviewed. Processes remain under review
9	To improve recovery process for overpaid housing benefit	To review processes and compare with best practice	Performance meetings being held to improve recovery. Neighbouring authorities surveyed on their recovery methods

I.T. Action Plan 2005/06

No.	Objective	Action	Progress to Date
1	Further develop CRM system	Rollout CRM to agreed timetable	Progress has been made and is dependent upon the e-government partnership
2	Further develop IT security/disaster recovery	As outlined in external audit reports	IT Security – 81% complete Disaster Recovery – 38% complete

Internal Audit Action Plan 2005/06

No.	Objective	Action	Progress to Date
1	Key Controls of all major systems audited	Scheduled within annual audit plan	Half completed, rest programmed 2 nd half of year
2	Review Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy	Review and brief relevant officers	Review to be completed by end of October
3	Completion of 90% of audit plan	Quarterly monitoring, rescheduling of activities where necessary, minimise report turnarounds	42% of plan completed in half year. 90% completion forecast
4	Review whistle blowing policy	Review and brief relevant officers	To be completed by the end of November
5	Compliance with Code	Check continued	Only areas not compliant are

No.	Objective	Action	Progress to Date
	of Practice	compliance	computer audit and the level of recommendations not implemented
6	Improve Computer Audit	Further external training plus feedback from IT auditees	Some training received plus growth bid in budget process for sharing computer auditor with districts due to lack of in house resource
7	Widen audit plan remit	Incorporate corporate risks identified in corporate risk registers	To be started in November with audit planning

Human Resources/Training Action Plan 2005/06

No.	Objective	Action	Progress to Date
1	Achieve IIP	Co-ordinate the corporate move to attain the Investors in People Standard	This is on-going
2	Improve sickness absence within the Authority	Raise staff and manager awareness and set departmental targets	Awareness raising sessions carried out. Departmental targets to be set in service plans

7. The above shows that progress has been made across all service areas within the Department which is in line with actions agreed within the Service Plan.

council plan

Action	What we said we would do in 2005/06	Comments
2f – Map transport issues (to inform the 2006 Transport Plan)	Review community appraisal work and work with the Primary Care Trust on access to services	This remains a priority objective and much work has been undertaken. Transport in rural areas has been given an even greater profile through the Community Plan and Local Public Service Agreement 2 strategy
5a – Money Advice Campaigns	Develop and begin implementation of campaign	We have undertaken much work on this priority with an additional 300 people now claiming benefit. We have developed an outreach programme to access the hard to reach groups

Action	What we said we would do in 2005/06	Comments
6b – Modern Apprenticeships	<p>Work with the Learning and Skills Council to identify skills gaps.</p> <p>Assess department requirements.</p> <p>Use results of both exercises to develop additional opportunities across departments</p>	Work is progressing on this priority. It is now the intention to expand the programme beyond craft apprenticeships and into other areas
7b – Human Resources Strategy	<p>Develop HR strategy</p> <p>By February 2005 – develop a parallel approach to member development and review effectiveness of Leadership Academy</p>	A consultant has been employed to develop this and a good start has been made but there is still much to do on this priority outcome
7e – Financial Management	<p>Ongoing Work to stabilise the Housing Revenue Account according to the action plan developed with the Audit Commission.</p> <p>Tighten the link between priorities and budget setting.</p> <p>Develop three year forecasts and useage targets for assets. Use the budget process to mainstream proven activities that reduce exclusion and deprivation</p>	Although much work has been undertaken there is still scope to improve the Council's financial management and align strategies further
7i – E-government	Deliver all outcomes by December 2005	We are on track to achieve 100% by March 2006

conclusion

8. The above shows that:

- (i) Progress has been made on improving certain performance indicators. However, certain BVPI'S will prove more difficult to improve due to their nature.
- (ii) Progress has been made in terms of the agreed actions as outlined above in the action plans for each service area. Again this is due to staff dedication and commitment.
- (iii) Progress has been made in those areas of the Council Plan for which the Department is responsible.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the report.

Officer responsible for the report

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Director of Central Resources
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Author of the report

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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources
FORMER TENANT ARREARS/COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION

purpose of the report

1. To provide to members the policies on collection of former tenants arrears and council tax.

background

2. As its meeting on 8th September 2005, members of this committee requested that a joint report be prepared from the Directors of Housing and Central Resources on the procedures followed for the collection of council tax and former tenants arrears.

former tenant arrears

3. The procedures followed for collection of former tenants arrears are attached as Annex 9. This is carried out in-house primarily by one member of the housing department. A collection service is used where in-house actions have been unsuccessful. The volume of debt to be collected per annum is approximately £235,000.

council tax collection

4. The procedures followed for collection of council tax are attached as Annex 10. This is carried out by the council tax and recovery sections within the Central Resources Department. A bailiff service is used where appropriate if there is continuous non-payment. The volume of debt collected per annum is £19m.

comparison

5. The table below indicates the main differences in procedures. These arise mainly due to the different legal powers available.

Procedure	Former tenants arrears	Council Tax
Notification of amount due	Letter issued after 7 days from tenancy terminating	14 days notice provided on annual bill before 1 st instalment due
First reminder notice	7 days since initial contact	14 days from instalment due date (1 st of month)
Second reminder notice	7 days after first reminder with warning that debt will be handed to collection service	Issued 14 days after any further instalment is due
Third	Letter issued after 7 days advising	Cancellation of right to pay by

Procedure	Former tenants arrears	Council Tax
reminder notice	that debt passed to collection service	instalments issued 14 days after reminder notice. If customer reaches second reminder notice stage on a second occasion during financial year then proceeds automatically to third reminder notice stage. Full amount due within 7 days failing which a summons will be issued
Legal Remedy	Judgement via County Court. Agreement to pay at agreed intervals failing which can request attachment of earnings, charging order (only if > £1,000), referral to County Court bailiff etc.	Issue of summons seeking liability order from Magistrates Court. Can result in referral to external bailiffs, attachment of earnings, deductions from state benefits, charging order (only if > £1,000), committal to prison etc.
Write Off	Amounts > £1,000 referred to Committee. Debts < £30 written off automatically prior to referral to collection service. Debt written off if uneconomical to pursue if returned from collection service	Amounts > £1,000 referred to Committee. Debts < £40 written off automatically prior to seeking summons.
Insolvency	Can be initiated by Council or other creditors but debt must be greater than £750 under law.	Can be initiated by Council or other creditors but debt must be greater than £750 under law.
Legal Power	Debt pursued through the County Courts	Recovery governed by Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992

RECOMMENDED that Members note the procedure guides attached as Annexes 9 and 10.

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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources

E-GOVERNMENT RETURN 5.0

purpose of the report

1. To seek member approval for the Authority's latest Implementing E-government (IEG) submission.

background

2. The Authority is required to submit its Implementing E-government return by 30 November 2005. This is attached at Annex 11.
3. Colleagues will be aware from previous reports that the Authority is required to achieve "green" status of 54 priority service outcomes. Of those outcomes 29 are "required" and need to be achieved by 31 December 2005, and 25 are "good" and need to be achieved by 31 March 2006.
4. In addition to the above, the return also includes sections on:

- (i) Change management

Section 2 of the submission relates to change management. Although this section does not form part of the December 2005 target, information supplied here will be used as part of development of national policy relating to e-government. This section relates to the internal organisation and management processes within the Council.

- (ii) BVPI 157

This best value indicator relates to the electronic enablement of local authority services in line with a national developed electronic service delivery toolkit. This performance indicator is now 100% and has been achieved over 2 months ahead of schedule.

- (iii) Resources

Section 5 of the return shows the expenditure which has been, and is to be, spent on achieving electronic government. It includes both internal and external resources, which are both revenue and capital in nature.

- (iv) Efficiencies

The Government expects local authorities to generate efficiencies as a result of investment in electronic government. Section 6 of the return

shows expected efficiencies. Whilst the figures here are relatively small, it is important that the Authority develops a marketing strategy to migrate service users to more cost effective methods of service delivery. Furthermore, the most significant savings will be generated by improvements in procurement and streamlining back office systems through for example, joint working and improved use of I.T.

(v) Take up

Section 4 of the submission shows estimated take up of electronically enabled services over the following access channels:

- (a) Website
- (b) Telephone
- (c) Face to Face
- (d) Other electronic media
- (e) Non electronic media.

The figures show an increase in the delivery of services electronically especially through telephone and website delivery, with a reduction in non electronic methods i.e. face to face delivery.

priority service outcome progress

- 5. Red status means that the PSO is at a primary/research stage, being piloted before wider rollout across the Authority or planned but not yet approved for funding.
- 6. Amber status means that the PSO has funding in place and is being actively implemented.
- 7. Green status means that the PSO has been actioned and implemented or particular standards achieved with plans for extended rollout on an enterprise wide basis i.e. across the Authority/Partnership.
- 8. The following overall position as of now is:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Green	39	72
Amber	11	20
Red	<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>
	<u>54</u>	<u>100</u>

- 9. Work is ongoing to ensure that all targets are met.
- 10. The ongoing revenue costs will need to be accommodated within existing budgets. This will require the identification of efficiency gains and a programme of actions to migrate to more cost effective methods of payments.

change management issues

- 11. Achievement of Priority Service Outcomes only represents the first step of e-government. Beyond the Priority Service Outcomes, there is a need to:

- (i) Re-engineer processes to achieve efficiencies.
- (ii) Raise awareness of the public as to the benefits of e-enabled service delivery.
- (iii) Educate the public where possible to enable them to make use of new methods of service delivery.
- (iv) Engage service heads in embracing the opportunities which e-government offers. In this regard IDeA has offered to help facilitate workshops with service heads and staff to raise awareness of e-government within the Authority.

- RECOMMENDED**
- 1. That Members note the contents of the report.
 - 2. That Members agree the IEG submission subject to further minor amendments to be agreed by the Chair and Director of Central Resources.

Officer responsible for the report

Gary Ridley
Director of Central Resources
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Author of the report

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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources **CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL**

purpose of the report

1. To consider the introduction of free bus travel within the district and to seek Member approval for the introduction of a statutory scheme.

background

2. Members will be aware that the Transport Act 2000 requires an authority to provide a minimum half fare travel for elderly and disabled persons on local buses within their area post 0930 Mondays to Fridays, all day weekends and Bank Holidays.
3. All districts within Durham introduced a scheme, as a result of the above legislation which offers half fare travel for elderly and disabled on local buses at any time within the whole of the county, which exceeds the statutory scheme. This scheme offers half fare bus travel across a wide area including County Durham and Darlington and journeys to Cumbria, Northumberland Teeside and Tyne and Wear. There are no time restrictions and it also covers rail journeys on a limited basis.

proposals

4. It was announced in the 2005 budget that free travel on local bus services for the elderly and disabled would be introduced from the 1st of April 2006. It is a requirement on the council to agree and publicise before the 1st of December 2005 how this statutory scheme will operate locally.
5. The new scheme will be available to the same individuals as is currently the case. Free travel will be allowed after 0930 Monday to Friday, all day weekends and Bank Holidays.

financial implications

6. At present the half price scheme costs the council approximately £315,000 per annum. At present it is difficult to accurately quantify the additional costs which will fall upon the council following the introduction of a free travel scheme. It is likely that costs will approximately double i.e. cost a further £315,000 per annum. The government is in the process of looking to reimburse this additional cost through revenue support grant. It is therefore assumed at present that the additional costs falling upon the authority will be met by additional government grant.

legal implications

7. The introduction of the free travel scheme for elderly and disabled will be in accordance with the Transport Act 2000.

other issues

8. The main issue to consider is whether the authority in conjunction with the other Durham districts, wish to introduce a discretionary element e.g. free travel across the whole county or further afield. This will be the subject of meetings between all authorities in the coming months.

conclusion

9. The introduction of a free travel scheme will promote social inclusion by making it easier for elderly/disadvantaged groups to travel around the area. Research commissioned has shown the concessionary travel scheme to be popular amongst service users and the public in general. It is expected that the additional costs falling upon the council will be offset by additional revenue support grant.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the report.

Officer responsible for the report

Gary Ridley
Director of Central Resources
Ext 227

Author of the report

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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources

NON DOMESTIC RATES – DISCRETIONARY AND MANDATORY RATE RELIEF

purpose of the report

1. To amend the Council's policy for awarding Discretionary Rate Relief due to legislative changes affecting Mandatory Rate Relief in respect of National Non Domestic Rates.

background

2. Rate Relief for Charities and Non-Profit Making organisations

Under Sections 43, 45 and 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, Mandatory Rate Relief is paid at 80% to registered charities and financed by the National Non-Domestic Rate Pool. Consequently, there is no cost to the Council. Local Authorities also have powers to award additional discretionary relief, but 75% of such costs must be met by Council Taxpayers.

Non-profit making organisations can be awarded Discretionary Rate Relief up to 100% with 75% being borne by the National Pool and the balance of 25% by Council Taxpayers.

3. The policy of this Council at present is as follows:

Charitable Organisations eligible for Mandatory Relief

- (1) That only Mandatory Relief prescribed at 80% be awarded and not topped up by a further award of Discretionary Rate Relief.
- (2) That the two organisations below presently receiving 100% relief (i.e. also receive discretionary rate relief) continue to attract such relief on the same basis.
 - (i) St. Johns Ambulance, St. Hadrian's Hall, High Street, Willington.
 - (ii) The British Red Cross Society, 72 Hope Street, Crook.

Discretionary Rate Relief

That only 80% relief be awarded to rate payers who satisfy the **majority** of the agreed criteria as listed:

- Established as a non-profit making organisation, and is it still run as such.

- The organisation is directly liable for the rates on the property.
- The property on which rate relief is claimed is wholly or partly occupied, by one or more organisations, whose objectives are charitable, philanthropic, religious or concerned with recreation, education, social welfare, science, literature or the fine arts.
- The organisation has applied to be registered for Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) status if a sporting organisation.
- The objectives of the organisation.
- Membership is non-restrictive by cost, open to all sections of the community, and concessions available.
- The organisation encourages membership from minority groups (e.g. persons with a disability or persons of ethnic origin).
- Facilities available to non-members.
- The organisation provides training /coaching facilities which relieves the Authority of having to do so.

Other factors taken into consideration include:

- Is the organisation affiliated to any other organisation, and does it receive any grant aid or financial assistance?
 - Does the organisation run a bar?
 - Are the premises used solely by the organisation; and if not, are charges applied and if so, what is the tariff?
4. This list is not exhaustive, and financial accounts are normally requested. Further information may be also requested before a determination is made.
 5. The Government has recognised the fact that local sports clubs require guaranteed financial security to continue to operate and have therefore introduced a new 80% Mandatory Rate Relief for all clubs who register with the Inland Revenue as a Registered Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC).
 6. As the NNDR Rate Pool funds the total 80% Mandatory Rate Relief for CASC registered sports clubs, this prevents local taxpayers having to meet the cost of any of the 80% relief.
 7. After contacting all of the sporting clubs and organisations in the District, the majority have applied and following such applications have been successful in registering under CASC and now receive 80% Mandatory Rate Relief, which cannot be withdrawn providing they remain registered.
 8. All sporting organisations in the district were advised to apply for CASC status. It is therefore proposed that future applications for Discretionary Rate Relief for sporting organisations be refused, and they be encouraged to make

an application for CASC status which would make them eligible for 80% Mandatory Rate Relief.

financial implications

9. Adoption of this policy would result in a saving of up to £3,000 per annum to the Council.

RECOMMENDED that future applications for Discretionary Rate Relief for sports clubs and organisations be refused.

Officer responsible for the report

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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources **CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING**

purpose of the report

1. To consider the capital expenditure of the Authority for the 2005/06 year to date against budget.

background

2. This report is in 6 parts shown at Annex 12. Each part considers a different service as follows:

- Part 1 – Housing Services
- Part 2 – Community Services
- Part 3 – Central Resources
- Part 4 – Regeneration
- Part 5 – Management Support Unit
- Part 6 – Summary

3. Each part provides details of each capital scheme, spend to 30 September 2005, projected outturn and comments on each scheme.
4. The budgets for externally funded schemes managed by the Regeneration Department are split between income and expenditure to provide a more useful analysis. Several of these schemes have net income credited against them due to the award of advance funding.

conclusion

5. Part 6 of the report shows the projected capital outturn as being £6,448,000 compared to an original budget of £6,729,000. This is a difference of £281,000.
6. Overall, the 2005/06 projected outturn is affordable. The figures are subject to considerable change as they are based on six months expenditure within the financial year. The outturn is based upon figures submitted by budget holders. It is important that these are accurate so that funds forecast to be unspent by the end of the financial year have the potential to be re-allocated as part of the decision making process in forming the 2006/07 capital programme.
7. The Council has received significant receipts during 2005/06 and consequently will not be required to use any contributions from its revenue budgets to meet its expenditure on the capital programme. This will assist in ensuring that the levels of balances held on its General Fund and Housing Revenue Account are in accordance with its stated policy.

8. It is common amongst externally funded schemes for monies to be due to the Council at any point in time. It is important that action is taken promptly to recover such monies either through grant claims or invoicing. In addition, any discrepancies between such claims and the official accounting records should be resolved swiftly to avoid these being carried forward in future years and delaying the production of the annual accounts.
9. Expenditure against the agreed capital budgets will be monitored closely and further reports brought to members.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the report.

Officer responsible for the report

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Author of the report

Stuart Reid
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Ext 258

CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources **REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING**

purpose of the report

1. To compare the revenue expenditure of the Authority for the period 1 April 2005 to 30 September 2005, against budget.

background

2. This report covers the revenue expenditure of the Authority financed by the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
3. The summary revenue position for financial year 2005/06 as at the end of 30 September 2005 for the General Fund is shown in Annex 13. The figures for the HRA are shown in Annex 14. The annexes compare the approved budget for each department against forecasted outturn for 2005/06. Major over and under spends within each departmental budget are noted and some indication given of reasons for the variance.

conclusion

4. The forecasted outturn for the General fund indicates an underspend of £12,000 for 2005/06 against budget at this stage although this represents only a snapshot in time and may alter significantly during the remainder of the financial year. This underspend does not include approximately £300,000 of investment income generated from the sale of assets. This revenue resource will have to be built into the structure of future revenue budgets in order to support existing resource commitments.
5. At the time of writing, the forecasts for the current year were being refined to present the most accurate position of resources available to support the 2006/07 budget. Members should bear in mind that almost £0.5m of reserves is planned to be used in 2005/06 to support the General Fund revenue budget.
6. The forecasted outturn for the HRA is £15,000 worse than budget. Additional expenditure on repairs and maintenance due to backlog work being carried out in response to the storm damage that occurred in the early part of the year has been offset by increased rental income, reduced security costs and rent collection which is better than anticipated.
7. Revenue budgets continue to be closely monitored and further reports will be brought to Committee.

8. The projected spend on the General Fund for the year will not impact upon the Council's policy of maintaining a minimum reserve balance of £850,000. Similarly, the projected spend on the HRA for the year will not impact upon achieving a desired minimum balance of £1m.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the report.

Officer responsible for the report

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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources **ESCOMB AMENITY HALL**

purpose of the report

1. To consider a request to gift the above Hall and land.

background

2. A request has been received from Escomb Amenity Hall and George Pit Community Association requesting the Council to gift the hall, land and playground to the Association so that they can move forward and either plan for a new hall or start fundraising for repairs. Requests for funds have in the past been rejected because of the short term lease. With regard to the playground the National Playing Fields Association have surveyed the playground on behalf of the community association with a view to taking over its management.
3. The hall is currently let to the trustees of Escomb Amenity Association under a lease from year to year dated 8 June 1987 at a yearly rental of £150. The playground is let to the trustees of George Pit Recreation Scheme by a lease dated 30 April 1991 at a yearly rental of £100. The latter lease expired in 1994 and the trustees are currently holding over. Some of the trustees of the two leases have since died.
4. In February 2004 a report was placed before this Committee following a request from the current community association for a 28 years lease of both the hall and the playground. However this request was subsequently held in abeyance pending a condition survey detailing the condition of the hall. A condition survey was subsequently undertaken which concluded that £103,000 was needed to carry out repairs to the roof of the hall. It is unlikely at present that the Council has the resources to carry out the repairs.
5. It is proposed that in order for the Association to be able to access external funding, that the Council either grant a long term lease or transfer the freehold subject to any relevant consents being obtained

conclusion

6. The Council is unlikely to be able to fund the repairs needed to the amenity hall in the near future. An alternative needs to be considered to allow the potential for funding to be identified. However it is important that the Council does not simply give up an asset which it owns.

RECOMMENDED that Members in principle, agree to either a long term lease being granted or the transfer of the freehold subject to relevant consents being obtained to the association. It is further recommended that a subsequent report be brought back to this Committee for a final decision.

Officer responsible for the report

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