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Michael Laing      Chief Executive

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18<sup>th</sup> September 2007

Dear Councillor,

I hereby give you Notice that a Meeting of the **CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE** will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, CROOK** on **WEDNESDAY 26th SEPTEMBER 2007** at **6.00 P.M.**

### AGENDA

	Page No.
1. Apologies for absence.	
2. To consider the Minutes of the last Meeting of the Committee held on 25 <sup>th</sup> July 2007 as a true record.	Copies previously circulated
3. To consider a request to purchase land adjacent to 22 Bladeside, Crook for Mr and Mrs Marshall.	1 - 3
4. To consider a request to purchase land adjacent to 43 Lowther Road, Bishop Auckland for Mr A P Quinn.	4 - 6
5. To consider a request to purchase land to the rear of Nos. 67, 68 and 69 Beckett Close, Etherley Dene, Bishop Auckland for Mrs J Ayre.	7 - 9
6. To consider a request to purchase land adjacent to 21 Bondisle Way, Stanhope for Mr and Mrs Dunnery.	10 - 12
7. To consider a request to purchase land adjacent to 26 Lynndale, Wolsingham for Mr and Mrs M Scott.	13 - 15
8. To consider a request to purchase land at Boltsburn, Rookhope.	16 - 19
9. To consider a Land Disposals policy.	20 - 35
10. To consider providing a benefit fraud investigation service to Teesdale District Council.	36 - 38
11. To consider an updated Capital Strategy.	39 - 52

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| 12. | To consider the Data Quality Strategy 2007 – 2009.  | 53 - 63 |
| 13. | To consider providing a pension guarantee to Dale and Valley Homes.   | 64 - 66 |
| 14. | To consider a request from Durham and Darlington Rape Crisis Centre for a donation from the Community Fund.   | 67 - 68 |
| 15. | To consider the Gender Equality Scheme.   | 69 - 90 |
| 16. | To consider a revised policy for the Authority's levels of reserves and balances.   | 91 - 95 |
| 17. | To consider the 2007/08 allocation of capital resources to Dale and Valley Homes from the Council.  | 96 - 97 |
| 18. | To consider such other items of business which, by reason of special circumstances so specified, the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency. |         |

Yours faithfully



**Chief Executive**

Members of this Committee: Councillors Buckham, Mrs Burn, Harrison, Hayton, Grogan, Kay, Kingston, Mairs, Mowbray, Murphy\*, Miss Ord, Mrs Pinkney, Mrs Seabury\*, Shuttleworth, Stonehouse, Taylor and Zair

\*Ex-officio, non-voting capacity

Chair: Councillor Hayton

Deputy Chair: Councillor Mrs Pinkney

TO: All other Members of the Council for information  
Management Team



## CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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Report of the Asset Management Group  
**LAND ADJACENT TO 22 BLADESIDE CROOK**

### **purpose of the report**

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

### **background**

2. A request to purchase the land hatched black on the plan at Annex A has been received from Mr and Mrs Marshall of 22 Bladeside, Crook, for the purpose of extending their garden as they are experiencing problems with teenagers hanging around leaving bottles and rubbish on the land.

### **consultations**

3. The Strategic Director of Environment and Regeneration objects to the sale of the land for domestic garden purposes. He states that this site is a parcel of open space which is one of a number of other similar parcels of open space in the local area which make an important contribution to the streetscene and area. There is a concern that if this parcel of land were to be enclosed it would have a detrimental impact upon the "open" character of the streetscene.
4. The Strategic Director for the Community offers no objection of a technical nature to the sale of the land.
5. It would also be necessary to invite objections to the disposal of this land in accordance with Section 123(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 should the Council wish to dispose of this land. No such advertisement has been undertaken in view of the Strategic Director of Environment and Regenerations comments.
6. Consultation letters were also sent to the neighbouring properties which would be affected by the proposed sale and no objections have been received.

### **authors comments**

7. It is clear that the Environment and Regeneration Department cannot support the application for change of use and therefore the land should not be sold.

### **financial implications**

8. The sale of this land would produce a capital receipt and a reduced maintenance cost.

### **legal implications**

9. There are no legal implications arising from the recommendation.

### **conclusion**

10. The Strategic Director of Environment and Regeneration cannot support the sale of this land. Therefore it is recommended that the request from Mr and Mrs Marshall be refused.
11. However, in line with the Council's policy of public speaking at this Committee, Mr and Mrs Marshall have been invited to attend this meeting to afford them the opportunity to present their case to you.

**RECOMMENDED** that Mr and Mrs Marshall's request to purchase the land be refused for the reasons stated above.

### **background papers**

File Number 81608

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Gary Ridley  
Strategic Director for Resource Management  
Ext 227

**Author of the report**

Diane Hathaway  
Legal Executive  
Ext 319

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**CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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Report of the Asset Management Group  
**LAND ADJACENT TO 43 LOWTHER ROAD BISHOP AUCKLAND**

**purpose of the report**

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

**background**

2. A request to purchase the land hatched black on the plan at Annex B has been received from Mr A P Quinn of 43 Lowther Road, Bishop Auckland, for the purpose of extending his garden.

**consultations**

3. The Strategic Director of Environment and Regeneration objects to the sale of the land for domestic garden purposes. He states that this site is one of a number of similar areas of open space in the local area which make an important contribution to the streetscene and area. There is a concern that if this parcel of land were to be enclosed it would impact upon the 'open' character of the streetscene and would also impact on local amenity.
4. The Strategic Director for the Community offers no objection of a technical nature to the sale of the land.
5. It would also be necessary to invite objections to the disposal of this land in accordance with Section 123(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 should the Council wish to dispose of this land. No such advertisement has been undertaken in view of the Strategic Director of Environment and Regenerations comments.
6. The usual consultation letters were forwarded to the neighbouring properties and no objections to the sale were received.

**authors comments**

7. It is clear that the Environment and Regeneration Department cannot support the application for change of use and therefore the land should not be sold.

### **financial implications**

8. The sale of this land would produce a capital receipt and a reduced maintenance cost.

### **legal implications**

9. There are no legal implications arising from the recommendation.

### **conclusion**

10. The Strategic Director of Environment and Regeneration cannot support the sale of this land. Therefore it is recommended that the request from Mr Quinn be refused.
11. However in line with the Council's policy of public speaking at this Committee, Mr Quinn has been invited to attend this meeting to afford him the opportunity to present his case to you.

**RECOMMENDED** that Mr Quinn's request to purchase the land be refused for the reasons stated above.

### **background papers**

File Number 81607

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Gary Ridley  
Strategic Director for Resource Management  
Ext 227

**Author of the report**

Diane Hathaway  
Legal Executive  
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## CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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Report of the Asset Management Group  
**LAND TO THE REAR OF NOS. 67. 68 AND 69 BECKETT CLOSE  
ETHERLEY DENE BISHOP AUCKLAND**

### **purpose of the report**

1. To seek Members approval to refuse three requests to purchase land at the above location.

### **background**

2. A request to purchase land at the rear of No. 69 Beckett Close, Etherley Dene, Bishop Auckland has been received from Mrs J Ayre of 69 Beckett Close, for the purpose of extending her garden. The areas of land are shown hatched black on the plan at Annex C. Following the usual consultations with the neighbouring properties two further requests to purchase the land to the rear of their properties from the owners of Nos. 67 and 68 Beckett Close, Mr Sowerby and Mr Reese respectively, have been received. The owners of No. 68 Beckett Close had previously applied to purchase the same piece of land in 2003 and the request was refused, as the Director of Regeneration could not support the application. A previous request from the owner of No. 62 Beckett Close in March 2001, was also refused, as the Director of Regeneration could not support the application. He stated that the land is part of a walkway which links to the footpath network. It was a requirement of the development brief that the walkway was provided. He stated that it was essential that the width of the walkway was not reduced to maintain an attractive and safe route for walkers. He also confirmed that the landscaping alongside the path could become fragmented and the attractiveness of the walkway would be diminished

### **consultations**

3. The Strategic Director of Environment and Regeneration states that the land acts as a buffer zone between the residential properties at Beckett Close and the area of Landscape Value to the north of the estate. The Council does not wish to set a precedent for the loss of this strip of land. Also the development of the land would interrupt the existing fence line.
4. The Strategic Director for the Community confirms that he is not in favour of the sale of the land at this location as the sale of plots on an ad hoc basis will result in a very uneven appearance of the fence line at the rear of Beckett Close. He also believes that it was the intention

of the Planners that this strip of grass be some form of “green corridor” comprising a footpath and an adjacent grassed open space.

5. As stated above consultation letters were also forwarded to neighbouring properties and although no letters of objection to the proposed sale were received, the two further requests to purchase land, as mentioned above were received.

#### **authors comments**

6. It would also be necessary to invite objections to the disposal of this land in accordance with Section 123(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 should the Council wish to dispose of this land. No such advertisement has been undertaken in view of the Strategic Director of Environment and Regeneration and the Strategic Director for the Community's comments.

#### **financial implications**

7. The sales of these three areas of land would produce a capital receipt and a reduced maintenance cost.

#### **legal implications**

8. There are no legal implications arising from the recommendation.

#### **conclusion**

9. The Strategic Directors for the Environment and Regeneration and Community would be unable to support the proposals for the use of the land. Therefore it is recommended that the requests from Mrs Ayre, Mr Sowerby and Mr Reese be refused.
10. However in line with the Council's policy of public speaking at this Committee, Mrs Ayre, Mr Sowerby and Mr Reese, have been invited to attend this meeting to afford them the opportunity to present their cases to you.

**RECOMMENDED** that the three requests to purchase the land be refused for the reasons stated above.

#### **background papers**

File Number 81604

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Gary Ridley  
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**Author of the report**

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## CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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Report of the Asset Management Group

### **LAND ADJACENT TO 21 BONDISLE WAY STANHOPE**

#### **purpose of the report**

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

#### **background**

2. A request to purchase the land edged in black on the plan at Annex D for garden extension purposes has been received from Mr and Mrs M Dunnery of 21 Bondisle Way Stanhope.

#### **consultations**

3. Although the Strategic Director for the Community offers no objection of a technical nature to the sale of the land he states that as a public sewer crosses the land a 'Garden Over' Agreement with Northumbrian Water will be required. Two small drains maintained by Dale and Valley Homes also pass through the land and responsibility for these will need to pass to the purchasers.
4. The Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration advises that planning permission for change of use of the land from open space to garden will be required. However, as the land forms part of an area of other similar small parcels of open space in the local area which make an important contribution to the streetscene there is concern that if this land were to be enclosed it would impact upon the 'open' character of the streetscene. For this reason he would be unable to support a planning application.

#### **financial implications**

5. The sale of the land would produce a capital receipt.

#### **conclusion**

6. As the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration is unable to support the proposal it is recommended that the request be refused.
7. However, in line with the Council's policy of public speaking at this Committee Mr and Mrs Dunnery have been invited to attend to afford them the opportunity to put their case to you.

**RECOMMENDED** that Mr and Mrs Dunnery's request to purchase land adjacent to their property be refused in view of the fact that the Director for Environment and Regeneration would be unable to support a planning application.

**background papers**  
File Number 81591

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Gary Ridley  
Strategic Director for Resource Management  
Ext 227

**Author of the report**

Christine Graham  
Legal Executive  
Ext 318

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## CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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Report of the Asset Management Group  
**LAND ADJACENT TO 26 LYNNDALE WOLSINGHAM**

### **purpose of the report**

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

### **background**

2. A request to purchase the land edged in black on the plan at Annex E for garden extension purposes has been received from Mr and Mrs M. Scott of 26 Lynndale Wolsingham.

### **consultations**

3. The Strategic Director for the Community has no objection of a technical nature to the sale of the land, but advises that there is a drain presently maintained by Dale and Valley Homes which passes through the land, and if it is sold the responsibility for this drain will need to pass to the purchasers.
4. The Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration advises that a planning application for change of use of the land from open space to garden is required. However, as it is considered that the proposal would be unacceptable because the land contributes to the open character of the estate and makes a valuable contribution to the street scene, he would be unable to support a planning application.

### **financial implications**

5. The sale of the land would produce a capital receipt.

### **conclusion**

6. As the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration is unable to support the proposal it is recommended that the request be refused.
7. However, in line with the Council's policy of public speaking at this Committee Mr and Mrs Scott have been invited to attend to afford them the opportunity to put their case to you.

**RECOMMENDED** that the request from Mr and Mrs Scott to purchase land adjacent to their property be refused in view of the fact that the Director for Environment and Regeneration would be unable to support a planning application.

**background papers**  
File Number 81275

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Gary Ridley  
Strategic Director for Resource Management  
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**Author of the report**

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**CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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Report of the Asset Management Group  
**LAND AT BOLTSBURN ROOKHOPE**

**purpose of the report**

1. To seek Members consideration of a request to purchase land at the above location.

**background**

2. Mr G Graham of 3 Front Street Rookhope, who is the owner of the land edged in black on the plan at Annex F submitted a request to purchase the land coloured black on the plan on which the former public toilets were erected. The applicant has obtained planning permission for the conversion of three redundant buildings into dwellings on his land and he would like to purchase the land coloured black for garden/landscaping purposes.
3. As the land shaded black is also in Council ownership the applicant was advised that if he was agreeable, which he confirmed he was, the request would be considered on both areas of land.

**consultations**

4. Whilst offering no objection of a technical nature to the sale of both parcels of land the Strategic Director for the Community advises that there is a seat on the 'shaded' land which would need to be moved to another location.
5. The Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration has no objection to the sale of the Council's land. He advises that a planning application for change of use of the land could be supported.
6. Residents in the vicinity of the land were informed of the request and a response received from one stated that whilst in principle he was in favour of the development he advised that there is a seat, flower tubs and a salt bin on the 'shaded' area. Part of it is also used as a parking area, and because of the shortage of parking in the village he asks for his comments to be taken into account when the request is considered.
7. The Ward Member is of the opinion that the two areas should not be sold in case there is a possibility that funding is available in the future for public toilets.

### **authors comments**

8. As a result of the consultations which have been undertaken it is evident that the land shaded black on the plan, which the Applicant did not ask to buy, serves a useful purpose in the village
9. Although the Ward Member wishes to see both the shaded area, as well as the land coloured black on the plan, retained for the erection of public toilets if funding was found in the future, the Strategic Director for the Community feels it highly unlikely that funding will be available for their construction and future maintenance in the foreseeable future
10. The provision of public toilets and seats is a Parish Council function, and as it seems highly unlikely that funding would be available in the foreseeable future for the District Council to provide public toilets Stanhope Parish Council was asked whether they would like the Council to consider transferring land to it for the provision of public toilets at the time that Mr Graham's request was considered, and the Parish Council has confirmed that it would.

### **legal implications**

11. Local Authorities are given powers under the Local Government Act 1972 to dispose of land in any manner they wish. The only constraint is that a disposal must be for the best consideration reasonably obtainable unless the Secretary of State consents to the disposal.
12. Circular 6/03: Local Government Act 1972 General Disposal Consent (England) 2003 Disposal of Land for Less than the Best Consideration that can Reasonably be Obtained provides that specific consent is not required for the disposal of any interest in land which the Authority considers will help it secure the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well being of its area, subject to a condition that the undervalue does not exceed £2,000,000 (two million pounds).
13. As Stanhope Parish Council wish to use the land for the erection of public toilets and/or a seating area their proposals accords with the environmental well being of the area and falls within Circular 06/03.

### **financial implications**

14. The sale of the land to Mr. Graham would produce a capital receipt.

### **conclusion**

15. If after considering the report Members are of the opinion that the land coloured black should be sold to Mr. Graham I would recommend that the sale to him should be subject to the following terms and conditions:-
  - (a) Valuation to be agreed with, or given by, the District Valuer.

- (b) The land to be used for landscaping purposes only.
  - (c) The applicant to obtain planning permission for change of use.
  - (d) The applicant to be responsible for the Council's legal and valuation fees.
16. However, in the event that Members feel that both the land coloured black and the land shaded black be transferred to Stanhope Parish Council at a nil consideration I recommend that a covenant be included restricting its use to the erection of public toilets and a seating area.
17. In line with the Council's policy of public speaking at this Committee Mr Graham as well as a representative of Stanhope Parish Council have been invited to attend this meeting to afford them the opportunity to present their respective cases to you.

**RECOMMENDED** that Members views be sought.

**background papers**  
File Number 81539

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**Officer responsible for the report**  
Gary Ridley  
Strategic Director for Resource Management  
Ext 227

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**Author of the report**  
Christine Graham  
Legal Executive  
Ext 318

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## CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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### Report of the Assistant Director – Legal and Administration Services **LAND DISPOSALS POLICY**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To propose to Council the adoption of a Land Disposals policy and the confirmation of an amended Scheme of Delegation in relation to land and property disposals.

#### **background**

2. The Council has the power to dispose of land in its' ownership, subject to statutory constraints. It is good practice for the Council to have a formal policy on the exercise of this power.
3. The development of a Land Disposals Policy is a core element in delivering the Council's Asset Management Plan. It also assists the Council in further pursuing the challenge of community ownership of assets, as required by the White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities".

#### **land disposals policy**

4. A draft Land Disposals Policy is attached at appendix G. This is based on the guidance issued by the Local Government Ombudsman – Guidance on Good Practice 5: Disposal of Land (November 1995) and takes into account the terms of the General Disposal Consent (England) 2003 and associated circular 06/03.
5. The purpose of the formal policy document is to make the Council's policies, guidance and procedures transparent and public. It is intended that the policy will be used by Council officers when processing land disposals but also that it will inform members of the public and developers, in their dealings with the Council.
6. It is proposed to append procedure notes to the policy showing the process followed in relation to requests to purchase Council land. Whilst these are appended to the policy, it is not intended that they form part of the policy. As these are operational matters, the procedure notes would be amended by officers as and when required. Any such



amendments would be within the agreed policy framework and delegation scheme.

### **land and property delegation scheme**

7. The Council has operated a delegation scheme in relation to land and property disposals for a number of years. This enables routine disposals to be processed quickly and efficiently, freeing up resources to handle larger or more complicated disposals.
8. In order to ensure that the process is as transparent as possible, it is proposed to issue the Land and Property Disposals Scheme of Delegation as a separate document. It will still form part of the Constitution but will also be used as a companion document to the Land Disposals Policy. This will enable officers and members of the public to easily identify the appropriate decision making mechanism. A copy of the proposed Scheme of Delegation is attached as appendix H.
9. The Scheme of Delegation has been amended slightly from that operated in the past, in order to bring it in line with the Delegation Scheme for Development Control applications. The following amendments to the scheme are proposed :
  - (i) the current scheme requires all applications to purchase to be referred to Committee where there has been 1 objection. This is amended to give a Strategic Director power to determine an application to purchase where there have been no more than 3 objections.
  - (ii) the current scheme does not allow a Strategic Director to refuse an application to purchase. This is amended to allow a refusal where the proposal is either contrary to Council policy or to the advice of the Council's professional officers. The applicant will have a right of appeal to Committee.

### **conclusion**

10. The adoption of a formal Land Disposals Policy will enable the Council to demonstrate transparency and fairness in its' property dealings and will comply with good practice. The amendments to the Scheme of Delegation will achieve consistency of approach across the Council and will clarify the lines of responsibility.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Committee recommend to Council that

- (a) the Land Disposals Policy be adopted with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2007.
- (b) the Scheme of Delegation in relation to Land and Property Disposals be amended with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2007.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Gary Ridley  
Strategic Director for Resource  
Management  
Ext 227

**Author of the report**

Anna Barker  
Assistant Director – Legal & Admin.  
Services  
Ext 310

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## CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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### Report of the Strategic Director for Resource Management **BENEFIT FRAUD INVESTIGATION**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To seek Member agreement to provide a benefit fraud investigation service to Teesdale District Council (TDC) and appoint an additional Benefit Fraud Investigation Officer.

#### **background**

2. The Benefit fraud section investigate allegations of housing and council tax benefit fraud, and seek legal sanction against offenders as appropriate. They currently investigate around 800 cases per year and legal sanctions (prosecutions etc.) are applied in approximately 50 cases.

#### **service delivery proposal**

3. Teesdale District Council (TDC) has recently lost their sole member of staff dedicated to carrying out benefit fraud investigations. WVDC are currently providing some unpaid support to TDC in this area on a limited basis. However, TDC have now approached the Council to carry out their entire benefit fraud function on their behalf.
4. WVDC currently provides a benefits administration service to residents of TDC through an agreed partnership mechanism, Teesdale and Wear Valley Shared Services (TWSS). WVDC provide the management and staffing of this service and in return receive a fee from TDC. This has proven advantageous to both Councils. Consequently, there already exists a high level of partnership working between the two authorities within the benefits area.

#### **staffing proposals**

5. The estimated number of investigations to be carried out per annum on behalf of TDC would be around 150. This would require additional staffing resource estimated at about 0.7 full time equivalents.
6. Appointment of an additional full time investigation officer post would cover the services to TDC. It would also provide some additional capacity to the Wear Valley service which has improved in recent years but is still not amongst the top 25% performing authorities in the country.

## **financial implications**

7. A fee of £21,500 (uprated annually by inflation) has been negotiated between TDC and WVDC for provision of this service. There is provision within the current staffing budget for a part time post of Benefit Investigation Officer at scale 4-5. This money is currently being used to fund a part time Clerical Assistant at scale 1-2. It is intended to use the saving from that appointment to assist in the funding of the new benefit investigation officer post.
8. The costs of the staffing changes are set out below.

### **Proposed Costs**

Benefit Investigation Officer (scale 4-5) (including travel costs)	£22,500
Clerical Assistant - Scale 1 (22.5 hours)	£8,800
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>£31,300</b>

### **Proposed Funding**

Benefit Investigation Officer (scale 4-5) (including travel costs) – 22.5 hours	£14,500
Payment from TDC	£21,500
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>£36,000</b>

## **advantages to wvdc**

9. Undertaking the benefit fraud function on behalf of TDC has the following advantages:
  - Enhances staffing capacity at WVDC
  - Improves value for money through a saving of £4,700 per annum
  - Compliments existing arrangements re benefits partnership

## **human resources implications**

10. The proposals involve the appointment of an additional member of staff.

## **legal implications**

11. The existing service level agreement covering the benefits partnership will be extended to cover this new arrangement.

- RECOMMENDED** that
- i) the Council provide a benefit fraud investigation service to Teesdale District Council for a fee of £21,500 per annum, uprated annually by inflation
  - ii) an additional post of Benefit Investigation Officer is appointed at grade scale 4-5.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Gary Ridley  
Strategic Director for Resource Management  
Ext 227

**Author of the report**

Stuart Reid  
AD – Finance and I.T.  
Ext 258

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## CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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### Report of the Strategic Director of Resource Management **UPDATED CAPITAL STRATEGY**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To consider a revised capital strategy for the Authority.

#### **background**

2. Members will recall that they agreed a capital strategy in September 2006. This strategy serves a number of purposes including:
  - (i) Acting as a overarching tool for directing capital investment.
  - (ii) Setting out the basis for bidding for capital resources.
  - (iii) Acting as a monitoring mechanism.
  - (iv) Providing explicit links to the Council Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy.
  - (v) Setting out the Council's approach to both partnership working and obtaining external funding.
3. As part of the Use of Resources Assessment, there is a requirement to keep the Capital Strategy updated so that it becomes embedded within the Authority. This latest strategy will be submitted as part of the evidence base for the Council's latest Use of Resources assessment in the coming weeks.

#### **changes from previous strategy**

4. The main changes in the strategy are:
  - (i) The table in key priorities of Annex I has been changed to reflect the updated Council Plan.
  - (ii) Annex J to the strategy contains the capital financial implications of the Council Plan for the period 2007 to 2010.

### **financial implications**

5. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The budget process will be used as a tool for deciding the allocation of resources between competing capital demands and their affordability.

### **hr implications**

6. There are no direct HR implications arising from this report. The HR implications of delivering the council's capital programme are considered as part of the budget process.

### **equality implications**

7. The Council has carried out an impact assessment on this strategy. The main issue from this review relates to the need to ensure that the strategy is available in alternative formats. Any capital schemes which arise out of this strategy will be considered for equality issues at that time.

### **conclusion**

8. It is important that the Council not only has a current capital strategy but also that it is linked to the Council Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy to demonstrate joined up thinking.

**RECOMMENDED** that Members agree the attached strategy.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Gary Ridley  
Strategic Director of Resource  
Management  
Ext 227

**Author of the report**

Gary Ridley  
Strategic Director of Resource  
Management  
Ext 227

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## CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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### Report of the Chief Officer, Corporate Development Unit **DATA QUALITY STRATEGY**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To seek Members endorsement of the Data Quality Strategy 2007 – 2009.

#### **introduction**

2. The purpose of the Data Quality Strategy is to formally outline a co-ordinated approach to ensure that the highest standards of data quality are being met across the Council.
3. In July 2006 the Audit Commission introduced a Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE) covering the quality of all data that is used for decision making in Local Authorities. This is used to assess the Council's capacity and commitment to this area of activity.
4. The KLOE is a set of questions that are designed to establish the level of capacity and commitment in an organisation for ensuring that information used in management decision making is relevant, timely and accurate.
5. The Data Quality Strategy is influenced by the Audit Commission audit approach to data quality, built on the KLOE approach. Taking a strategic approach to addressing the criteria within the KLOE will establish a higher level of capacity and commitment within the authority.

#### **human resources implications**

6. The main implications for human resource relate to:
  - raising awareness and provide data quality training;
  - change job descriptions to reflect roles and responsibilities for data quality,
  - responsibility for data quality identified during PDPs.



### **legal implications**

7. An objective of the Data Quality Strategy is to ensure that data is stored, used and shared in accordance with the law, including the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act.
8. All future contracts should include a standard clause which defines data quality and how it should be embedded into the contractor's processes.

### **financial implications**

9. There are no anticipated financial implications.

### **health and safety implications**

10. There are no health and safety implications.

### **it implications**

11. There are no IT implications.

### **risk assessment**

12. Risk assessment is considered within the Strategy.

### **timescale**

13. Data quality is an ongoing process that will be reviewed on a six monthly basis.

### **conclusion**

14. Implementation of the Data Quality Strategy will ensure the Council is provided with complete, accurate and timely data on which to base its decision-making.

**RECOMMENDED** that Members endorse the Data Quality Strategy 2007 – 2010 at Annex K.

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**Officer responsible for the report**  
John Docherty  
Chief Officer Corporate Development  
Ext 306

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**Author of the report**  
Judith Grayson  
Organisation Improvement Manager  
Ext 313

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**CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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Report of the Strategic Director for Resource Management  
**PENSION GUARANTEE – DALE AND VALLEY HOMES**

**purpose of report**

1. To seek Members agreement for the Council to provide a pension guarantee to Dale and Valley Homes (D & VH).

**background**

2. Upon its formation on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2006, a number of employees were transferred from the Council's employment to D&VH under TUPE regulations. An appropriate share of the Council's pension deficit was also transferred to D&VH with their agreement. This was in line with the practice adopted by many other Councils such as Blyth Valley, Easington and Gateshead.
3. The value of the deficit transferred was calculated by an independent actuary as £810,000. Failure to transfer that deficit would have resulted in higher contribution rate by the Council in the future.

**d&vh accounts**

4. As a Company, D&VH are required to treat the cost of pensions differently in their accounts compared to a local authority. On the advice of the external auditors of D&VH (Baker Tilly), the pension deficit transferred valued at £810,000 was charged as a cost in D&VH's income and expenditure account. This resulted in the accounts showing a significant paper loss for the first year of trading although it did achieve an operating surplus.
5. Due to the loss shown in the accounts, Baker Tilly has requested a letter of guarantee from the Council in respect of D&VH's pension deficit as per the Annex. Whilst the absence of a guarantee would not in itself invalidate the accounts, it provides assurance to Baker Tilly about the ongoing financial viability of D&VH and also to the board of D&VH who are required to sign off the accounts.

**financial implications**

6. Government guidance states that in the event of D&VH ceasing to trade, all assets and liabilities of the company would be transferred back to the Council. Consequently, the letter of guarantee merely

formalises the position in practice and results in no financial implications to the Council.

**legal implications**

7. The Council has the statutory powers to provide such a guarantee.

**RECOMMENDED** that Members agree for the Council to provide a pension guarantee to the external auditors of D&VH (Baker Tilly) as set out in Annex L.

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<b>Officer responsible for the report</b>	<b>Author of the report</b>
Gary Ridley Strategic Director for Resource Management Ext 227	Stuart Reid Assistant Director – Finance & I.T. Ext 258

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## CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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### Report of the Strategic Director for Resource Management **DURHAM AND DARLINGTON RAPE CRISIS CENTRE**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To seek Member agreement to a contribution from the Community Fund in respect of the above.

#### **background**

2. Members will recall at meetings of this Committee on 19 March 2007 and 20 June that a request was considered for funding from the above organisation of £2,500 p.a.
3. The matter was deferred pending receipt of further information on funding provided by other authorities to the Centre and the services provided to residents of Wear Valley.

#### **funding from other authorities**

4. Information received from the Centre indicates that despite contacting all local authorities within the area, no funding commitments have been received to date.
5. The financial deficit facing the Centre is currently estimated at £69,000 in total over the next three year period. A substantial proportion of their funding is provided by the Northern Rock Foundation.

#### **service to wear valley residents**

6. Face to face counselling is provided by the Centre. Appointments are available both during day and evening. As an alternative to travelling to Darlington, the Centre has started a pilot scheme in which clients may see a counsellor at a location in Bishop Auckland. Records indicate that 19% of clients receiving face to face counselling are from Wear Valley amounting to approximately 200 hours of support in total.
7. The Centre also provides counselling via a telephone support line that is available as a minimum of 2.5 hours, 5 evenings a week and often at other times of the day. Messages left when the lines are closed are always followed up. The location of residents calling is difficult to ascertain as many calls are anonymous. Consequently, the Centre has no records of the proportion of these calls that emanate from the Wear Valley area.

8. The Centre has provided some awareness training to the Wear Valley Domestic Abuse Service based at Proudfoot Drive, Bishop Auckland. This training was to enable the Domestic Abuse Service to deal with disclosure of rape or sexual abuse, including childhood sexual abuse, in an appropriate way to support and sign post clients effectively towards more specialist counselling services.
9. The Centre estimates that over a 12 month period, 1,364 individuals make use of its services. This figure includes face to face and telephone support. Assuming telephone support to Wear Valley residents are in the same proportion as those receiving face to face counselling (19%), this would equate to the Centre supporting 259 residents from the Wear Valley area each year.

### **financial implications**

10. The cost of support either one off or ongoing would be met from the Community Fund. The Council's Community Fund is £40,000 p.a., the majority of which is spent on supporting local individuals and organisations. Only a small number of organisations, based in Wear Valley receive ongoing funding payable from the Community Fund. No ongoing funding is given to organisations outside of Wear Valley.
11. There is currently £15,000 available within the Community Fund budget after taking into account payments and commitments made this financial year.

### **legal implications**

12. The Authority is allowed to part fund such organisations as described above.

**RECOMMENDED** that Members views are sought.

---

**Officer responsible for the report**

Gary Ridley  
Strategic Director for Resource Management  
Ext 227

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**Author of the report**

Stuart Reid  
AD – Finance and I.T.  
Ext 258

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## CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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Report of the Head of Personnel and Training  
**GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME**

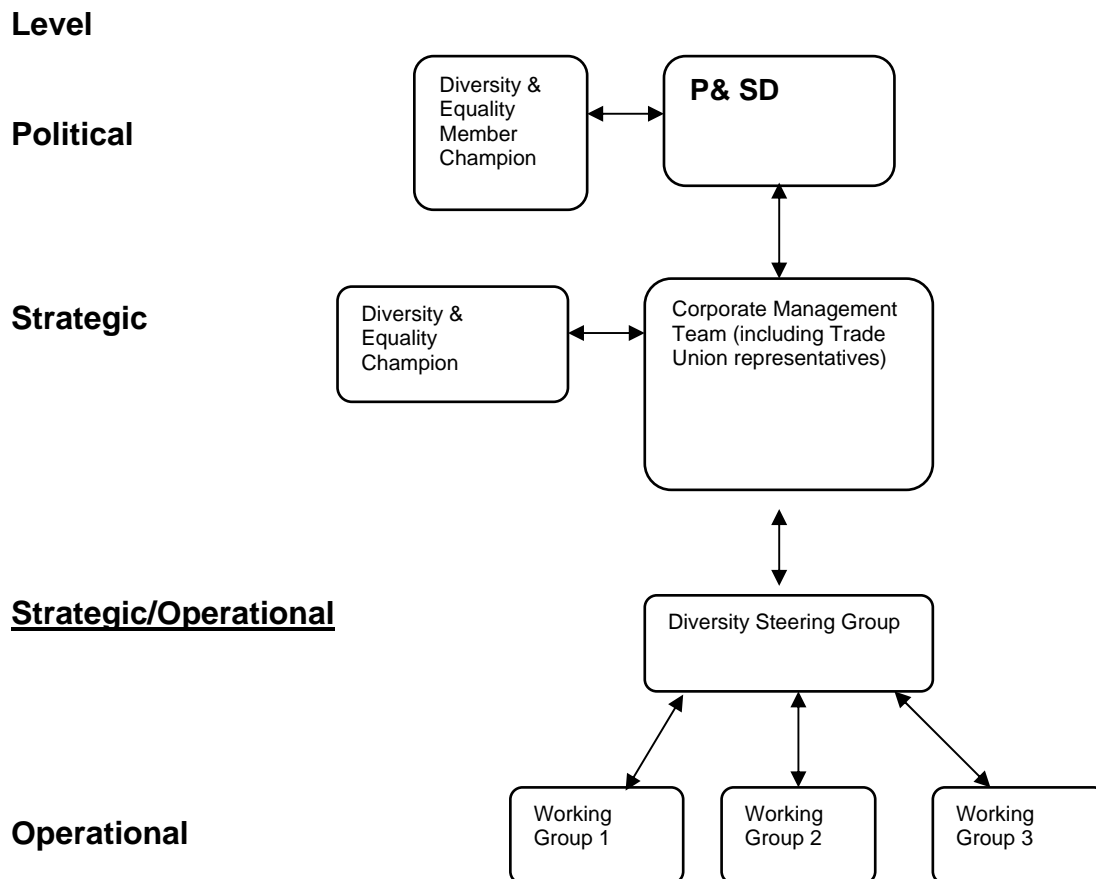
### **purpose of the report**

1. To review and approve the Council's Gender Equality Scheme (GES) at Annex M.
2. To consider a corporate structure for overseeing development of the Equality Standard for Local Government (as outlined in GES).
3. To consider a diversity and equality staff survey, to be undertaken in partnership with the University of Durham (as outlined in GES).

### **background**

4. The Council has a statutory obligation to publish a Gender Equality Scheme by 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007 under the Equalities Act 2006.
5. The Equality Act 2006 places a duty on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity between men and women and to prohibit sex discrimination in the workplace.
6. The Council also has a requirement, under the Equality Standard for Local Government to develop a Corporate Equality Scheme indicating how equality policy will be implemented.
7. The Equality Standard for Local Government is linked to Best Value Performance Indicator 2a.
8. Carrying out a staff survey will gauge current awareness of diversity and equality issues, levels of implementation and identify any priority areas for action. A second, shorter survey will then be distributed in 2008. This will determine the success of planned diversity interventions
9. The Gender Equality Scheme outlines the Council's commitment to the above.
10. Achieve high levels in the Equality Standard the Council must create a corporate structure (See figure 1) to oversee, scrutinise and co-ordinate all equality objectives and a Corporate Equality Scheme.

**Figure 1.**



11. This structure will fulfil the Council’s requirement, under the Equality Standard, to:

- Develop a corporate framework for equality consultation and guidance on consultation methods to be adopted within the authority
- Create a corporate structure for overseeing development of information and monitoring systems
- Demonstrate corporate engagement in the equality impact assessment process.

12. To implement a ‘diversity in the workplace’ staff training programme. This will fulfil the Council’s obligation, under the Equality Standard, to:

- Develop a programme of equality training to support the CES and department service level objectives.

13. To engage in a full staff survey to judge the levels of perceived discrimination and the impact this is having on areas such as group cohesion, work effort, organisational justice, organisational commitment and so on

#### **legal implications/i.t.**

14. The Council will fulfil its legal requirement to publish a Gender Equality scheme as outlined by the Equality Act 2006.
15. The Diversity in the Workplace training has been accepted by employment tribunals as evidence of reasonably practicable steps to prevent harassment and discrimination. This may assist the Council, should a claim be brought in the future.

#### **equality Implications**

16. The Council can demonstrate a corporate commitment to diversity and equality issues.
17. The nature of the Gender Equality Scheme is very much in line with the criteria for the Equality Standard for Local Government and the Equalities Act 2006, as both require the Council 'embed' equality objectives through corporate commitment, scrutiny, self-assessment and consultation.
18. The Diversity in the Workplace online training should increase staff awareness of diversity equality issues.
19. The Council will obtain a full equalities report from the University of Durham. The 2007 survey data will be benchmarked against survey results from 80 organisations in the North East. The Council will then have an accurate record of how it is performing in relation to similar organisations.

#### **financial implications**

20. The cost of implementing the survey will be met by external sources.
21. The Council has already purchased the training package but there will be a cost in terms of individual time for completing the training. It is expected that most individuals will be able to complete the online programme in less than one and a half hours.

#### **human resources**

22. The changes will be implemented in accordance with the Council's personnel policies and procedures.



- RECOMMENDED**
- i) To review and approve the Council's Gender Equality Scheme (GES).
  - ii) To consider for approval a corporate structure for overseeing development of the Equality Standard for Local Government (as outlined in GES).
  - iii) To consider for approval a diversity and equality staff survey, to be undertaken in partnership with the University of Durham (as outlined in GES).

---

**Officer responsible for the report**

Angela Foster  
Principal Personnel Officer  
Ext 339

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**Author of the report**

Jennifer Hay  
Equalities and Diversity Officer  
Ext 445

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## CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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### Report of the Strategic Director for Resource Management **RESERVES AND BALANCES**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To agree a revised policy for the Authority's levels of reserves and balances.

#### **background**

2. The Authority's current approach to reserves and balances was agreed by Corporate Management Team in April 2003. It is based around the requirement for financial reserves as acknowledged in statute. Sections 32 and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 require billing and precepting authorities in England and Wales to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement. This requirement is reinforced by section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which gives the Chief Financial Officer powers to convene an emergency Council meeting to deal with instances where the Authority's reserves are severely depleted. Finally, the Council is also required to include within the budget report a statement from the Chief Finance Officer regarding the adequacy of the Council's financial reserves.
3. As part of the Use of Reserves Assessment the Authority's reserves and balances policy is required to be kept under review.
4. Within the existing framework, it is the responsibility of the Strategic Director for Resource Management to advise the Authority about the level of reserves that it should hold and to ensure that there are clear protocols relating to their establishment and use. This is maintained within the Policy at Annex N. The policy seeks to ensure that the Council has a soundly based approach to its reserves and balances which is reflected in its Medium Term Financial Strategy. It also seeks to ensure that it is risk based and that prudent financial standing is maintained as a means of supporting long term objectives.

#### **monitoring**

5. The Policy will be monitored during each financial year by the Resource Management Department.

### **financial implications**

6. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The indirect financial implications are that Members may agree to a higher or lower level of reserves than at present which may affect the financial position of the General Fund or Housing Revenue Account in any one year. The overall position in relation to reserves will be considered at budget time.

### **legal implications**

7. As mentioned in paragraph 2 above, Sections 32 and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires authorities to have regard to levels of reserves needed for future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement.

### **human resource implications**

8. None.

### **information technology**

9. None.

**RECOMMENDED** that Members agree the report and annex.

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---

**Officer responsible for the report**

Gary Ridley  
Strategic Director for Resource  
Management  
Ext 227

**Author of the report**

Gary Ridley  
Strategic Director for Resource  
Management  
Ext 227

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## CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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### Report of the Strategic Director of Resource Management **CAPITAL RESOURCES – DALE AND VALLEY HOMES**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To consider the 2007/08 allocation of capital resources to Dale and Valley Homes (D&VH) from the Council.

#### **background**

2. Following the award of a two star rating by the Audit Commission for delivery of its housing services, the Council were awarded an additional £27m in capital resources to fund the decent homes programme.
3. The Section 27 Application Delivery Plan provides a framework for the relationship between D&VH and the Council. The Plan requires approval of WVDC members to make available capital resources to D&VH.

#### **capital resources 2007/08**

4. The approved Council capital programme includes an amount of £2.65m for refurbishment of the housing stock. This is funded from the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA), a grant received annually as part of the housing subsidy settlement.
5. The Council has also received permission to borrow a further £5m (part of the £27m mentioned in paragraph 2) during 2007/08. This borrowing approval is subject to these funds being used to meet the decent homes standard.
6. The management of the Decent Homes programme has been delegated to D&VH. Consequently, use of the resources available to meet that programme should also be delegated to D&VH. This amounts in 2007/08 to £7.65m.
7. The sum of £7.65m still remains part of the Council's finances even if it made available to D&VH, and any expenditure is shown as part of the Council's accounts. D&VH has reported an anticipated spend this year of £6.77m to the Council.
8. If the programme were to underspend in 2007/08 based upon the available finance, the balance would be attributed to the MRA and

carried forward into the following year. The Council would then have to formally approve delegation of those funds to D&VH in 2008/09. If the level of underspend is greater than the value of the MRA, and therefore some of the £5m supported borrowing remains unused, permission would be sought from Government to also carry that forward. Receipt of that permission would not be guaranteed.

### **financial implications**

9. The interest due on sums borrowed by the Council up to the £5m supported borrowing limit is covered by housing subsidy. Consequently, there is no financial cost to the Council from this arrangement.

### **legal implications**

10. There are no additional legal implications. It has been agreed that all decent homes contracts placed by D&VH be in the name of the Council and must follow Council standing orders irrespective of which organisation is spending the money.

**RECOMMENDED** that colleagues approve the delegation of £7.65m to Dale and Valley Homes to fund the decent homes programme in 2007/08.

---

**Officer responsible for the report**

Gary Ridley  
Strategic Director for Resource Management  
Ext 227

---

**Author of the report**

Stuart Reid  
AD – Finance and I.T.  
Ext 258

---

## CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2007

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### Report of the Strategic Director of Resource Management **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT 2006/07**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To consider the Council's Draft Annual Governance report for 2006/07

#### **background**

2. The Council's auditors are required by the Audit Commission's statutory Code of Audit Practice for Local Government bodies (the Code) to issue a report to those charged with governance summarising the conclusions from their audit work. For the purposes of this report, the Authority's Central Resources Committee is considered to fulfil the role of those charged with governance and references to the Central Resources Committee should be read as such. A full copy of the draft report is shown at Annex 1.
3. They are also required by professional auditing standards to report to the Committee certain matters before the Auditors can give their opinion on the Council's financial statements.
4. The principle purposes of the report are:
  - To reach a mutual understanding of the scope of the audit and the respective responsibilities of the auditor and the Central Resources Committee;
  - To share information to assist both the auditor and those charged with governance to fulfil their respective responsibilities; and
  - To provide the Central Resources Committee with recommendations for improvement arising from the audit process.

#### **key messages**

5. The key messages contained within the report are set out below:
  - Work on the financial statements is now complete. The auditors anticipate being able to issue an unqualified.

- The statement of internal control has been prepared in accordance with proper practice specified by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.
- Work on the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources is now complete. The auditors anticipate being able to issue an unqualified conclusion on the use of resources by 30 September 2007.

**commentary**

6. In relation to the financial statements of the Council it is pleasing to note that the auditors have given us an unqualified audit report as in previous years. Appendix 6 shows that there were no misstatements in the accounts.
7. In relation to the Value for Money conclusion, this is shown in appendix 8. All 12 criteria have been assessed as adequate which is an improvement on the 2005/06 assessment.

**conclusion**

8. As mentioned above, the key messages are that of a clean bill of health in relation to the annual Accounts and an unqualified conclusion on the Use of Resources. These are positive messages for the Council.

**RECOMMENDED** that Members note the report and annex.

<b>Officer responsible for the report</b>	<b>Author of the report</b>
Gary Ridley Strategic Director of Resource Management Ext 227	Gary Ridley Strategic Director of Resource Management Ext 227





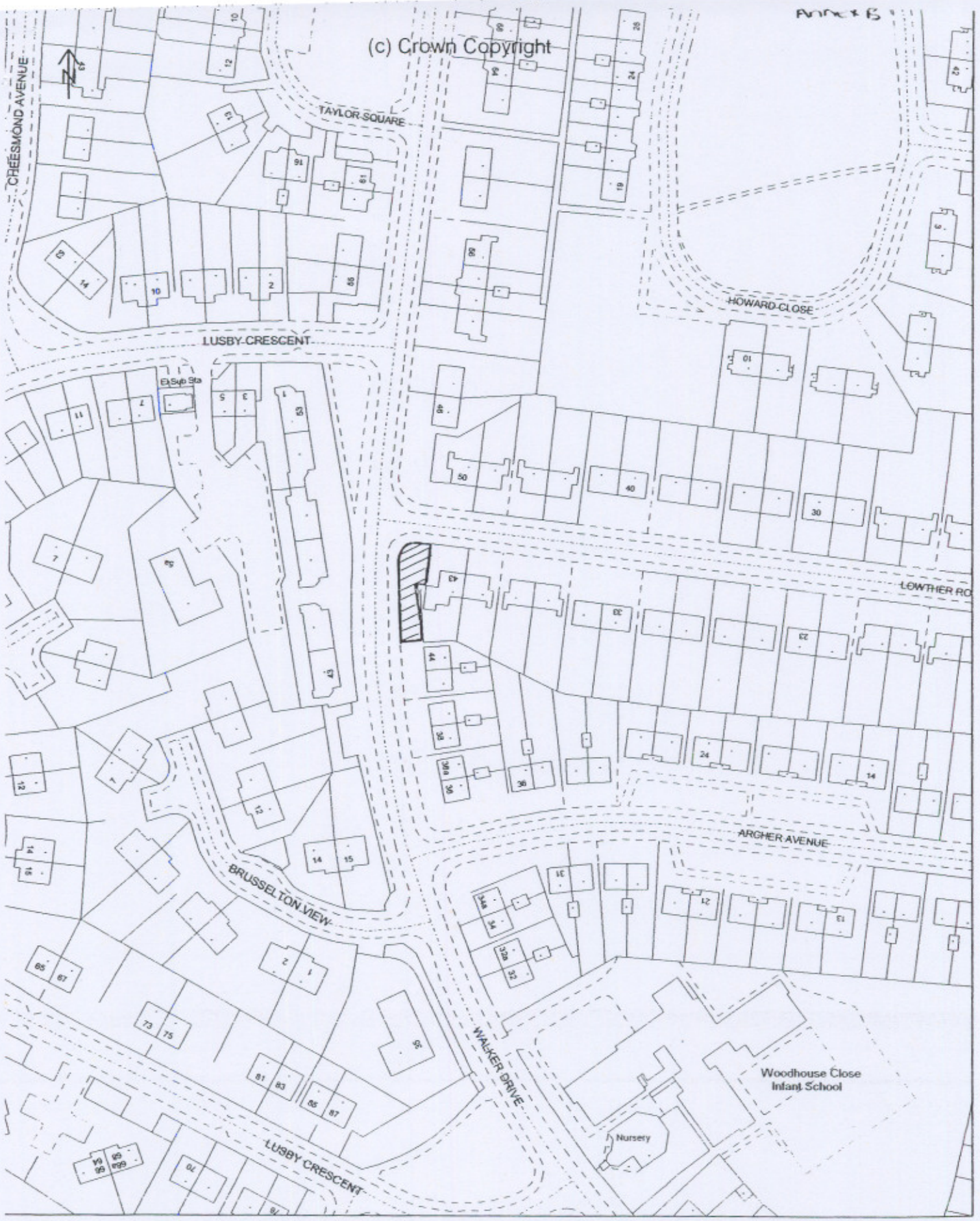
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Land adjacent to 43 Lowther Road, Bishop Auckland

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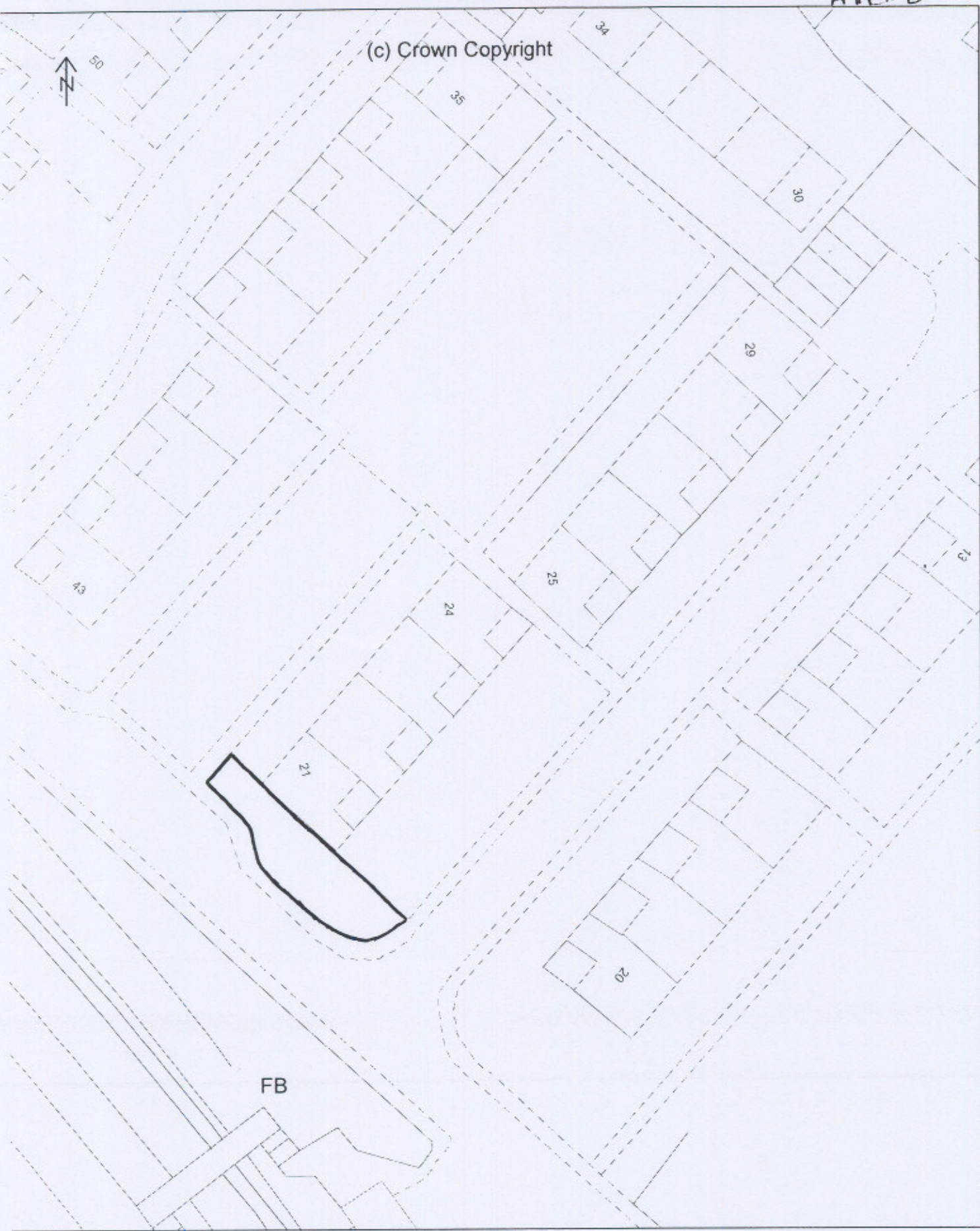
Land to the rear of Beckett Close, Etherley Dene, Bishop Auckland

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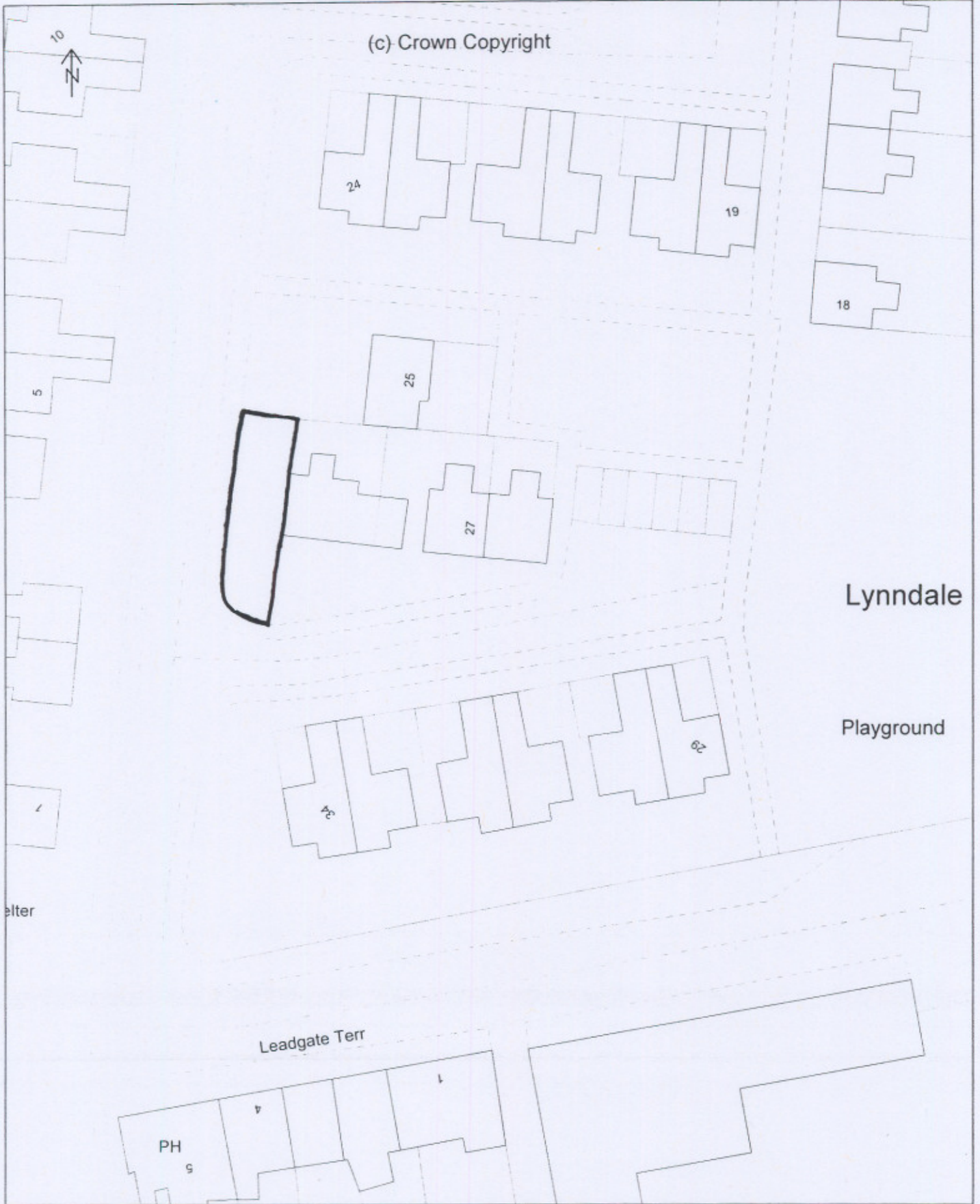


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## WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

### LAND AND PROPERTY DISPOSALS SCHEME OF DELEGATION

#### 1. Introduction

This document sets out the Council's Scheme of Delegation in relation to the disposal of Council owned land and property ("Council land"). The Council has a Land Disposals Policy which sets out the principles that the Council will follow when disposing of Council land. The Land Disposals Policy is a companion document to this Scheme of Delegation.

In this document, "disposal" shall mean either freehold sale, the grant of a leasehold of any length, the grant of a licence or the grant of an easement or other interest in land.

#### 2. Delegations

The Council has the authority to dispose of any Council land, subject to statutory restrictions. The Council will delegate that authority in the following circumstances.

##### 2.1 Delegation to Policy Committees

Each policy committee may authorise the disposal of any Council land, provided that:

- (a) such disposal is in accordance with Council policy, and
- (b) the committee has considered a report on the disposal from the Asset Management Group
- (c) the advice of the District Valuer or independent valuer appointed on behalf of the Council is obtained in relation to the terms of any such disposal.

##### 2.2 Delegation to Officers

Strategic Directors may authorise the disposal of Council land in accordance with paragraphs 2.3 - 2.6 of this Policy, provided that –

- (a) such disposal is in accordance with Council policy, **and** (where the disposal is a freehold sale or the grant of a lease for more than 7 years)
- (b) the relevant Ward Members and the public are consulted on the proposed disposal, and
- (c) the Strategic Director has considered a report on the disposal from the Asset Management Group, and

- (d) the advice of the District Valuer or independent valuer appointed on behalf of the Council is obtained in relation to the terms of any such disposal

However, the Strategic Director may decide in any case to refer a matter to the relevant policy committee for consideration. (For the avoidance of doubt, a Strategic Director may grant short leases, licences, easements and minor interests in land (e.g. rights of way) without complying with 2.2 (b), (c) and (d).)

### **2.3 Delegation to the Strategic Director for Resource Management**

The Strategic Director for Resource Management may authorise the disposal of any assets, land and buildings with an aggregate value of under £25,000.

### **2.4 Delegation to the Strategic Director for Communities**

The Strategic Director of Communities may authorise the sale of up to ten Council dwellings per ward at any one time. The decision is to be made in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of Housing Services Committee and subject to any relevant Residents' Association being consulted prior to the decision to sell.

### **2.5 Exceptions**

Strategic Directors may not authorise the disposal of Council land where either :

- (a) the disposal is contrary to the views of any Ward Member and the Member has notified the Strategic Director in writing within 21 days of being notified of the proposal, giving reasons for their objection, and/or
- (b) the Council has received 3 or more written objections to the disposal, and/or
- (c) the proposal involves disposal to an officer or Member of the Council.

In these circumstances, the matter shall be reported to the relevant policy committee for a decision.

### **2.6 Refusals**

Strategic Directors may refuse a request for the Council to dispose of land, where the disposal would be contrary to Council policy or to the views of the Council's professional officers. In such circumstances, the applicant will be entitled to appeal the decision of the Strategic Director to the relevant policy committee. The applicant and any members of the public who wish to comment on the application may speak at the meeting of the policy committee. There shall be no right of appeal to the refusal to grant a licence.

# **WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL**



WEAR  
VALLEY  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

# **LAND DISPOSALS POLICY**

**WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL**



## LAND DISPOSALS POLICY

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## 1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 It is good practice for local authorities to have a document describing their policy when disposing of land. This policy document details Wear Valley District Council's policies and internal guidance relating to disposals of land. For the purposes of this policy, a disposal of land means any freehold disposal, by sale or exchange, of Council owned land or buildings and any disposal by the granting of a lease for a period greater than 7 years. Other disposals (such as the granting of an easement) will be considered with regard to this policy. Leases of 7 years or less and licences are not covered by the main part of this policy document but are dealt with separately in appendix 1. This policy does not apply to the letting of Council houses, which is carried out in accordance with the Allocations Policy or to the sale to existing tenants under the right to buy.
- 1.2 The purpose of this document is to make the Council's policies, guidance and procedures transparent and public. It is intended for use by Council officers and to inform developers and members of the public.
- 1.3 It is important that each land disposal is treated on its own merits and nothing in this document will bind the Council to a particular course of action in respect of a land disposal. Alternative methods of disposal, not specifically mentioned in this policy, may be used where appropriate, subject to obtaining proper authority, (see section [4.2](#) below). The Council's actions in disposing of land are subject to statutory provisions, in particular, to the overriding duty on the Council, under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, to obtain the best consideration that can be reasonably obtained for the disposal of land. This duty is subject to certain exceptions that are set out in government documents, referred to in this policy as 'the General Disposal Consent' and the 'General Housing Consents' – see below.
- 1.4 In this Policy and Guidance document –
- “the General Disposal Consent” means the “Local Government Act 1972 : General Disposal Consent (England) 2003” and the accompanying circular 6/03, where relevant
- “the General Housing Consents” means the “General Housing Consents 2005 - S32 of Housing Act, S25 of Local Govt Act” and/or “the General Housing Consents 2005 - S133 Housing Act 1988 (Subsequent disposals)”

## 2. SUMMARY OF LAND DISPOSAL TYPES

- 2.1 The Council will usually use one of five means to dispose of land. Further guidance upon when it will be appropriate to use any particular means of disposal are contained in paragraphs 5-9 below. The means of disposal are:-
- **Private Sale** -a sale of land negotiated with one or a small number of purchasers. The land may or may not have been marketed as available for sale. A binding legal agreement is created on 'exchange of contracts' between the Council and the purchaser.
  - **Public Auction** -a sale of land by open auction available to anyone. The sale will be publicly advertised in advance. A binding legal agreement is created upon the acceptance of a bid by the auctioneer.
  - **Formal Tender** - a sale of land by a process of public advert and tenders submitted by a given date in accordance with a strict procedure. A binding legal agreement is created upon the acceptance of a tender by the Council.
  - **Exchange of Land** -a transaction involving the exchange of Council owned land with another land owner. The land acquired by the Council will meet at least one of its corporate objectives and will be 'equal' to the land exchanged.
  - **Informal Negotiated Tender** -a sale of land after a public advert that requests

informal offers or bids that meet a given specification or set of objectives. The Council may then negotiate further or more detailed terms with one or more individuals submitting the most advantageous bid or bids. A binding legal agreement is not created until the exchange of contracts between the authority and the chosen bidder.

### **3. POLICY STATEMENTS**

3.1 The Council will dispose of land in accordance with:

- statutory provisions;
- Corporate and Community Plan objectives;
- the policies and procedures recorded in its Constitution, this policy document and the Council's asset management plan;
- the proper council authority having been obtained

3.2 Land will not be disposed of at less than the best consideration than can be reasonably obtained, unless the transaction is covered by one of the exceptions detailed in the General Disposal Consent or the General Housing Consents or specific consent has been obtained from the Secretary of State.

### **4. COUNCIL PROCEDURES**

4.1 The following Council procedures apply to the disposal of land:

- Contract Procedure Rules - govern offers to tender sought by the authority. They will be used in the case of land disposals by formal tender. In respect of land disposals by informal or negotiated tender, only the Rules relating to the submission and opening of tenders will be followed. The Rules are contained in the Council's Constitution and can be inspected on the Council's internet website [www.wearvalley.gov.uk](http://www.wearvalley.gov.uk).
- This Land Disposals Policy and Guidance - will be followed in disposing of land. It can also be inspected on the Council's internet website.

4.2 All decisions to dispose of land are made either by one of the Council's committees or by officers under the 'Land and Property Scheme of Delegation' which is a companion document to this policy. Decisions taken by a committee are recorded in the minutes of the meeting and may be inspected on the Council's website. Decisions taken by officers under delegated powers are recorded by means of a formal delegated decision report to the appropriate Strategic Director of the Council. Copies of the delegated decision report is available on request from the Assistant Director – Legal and Administration Services.

### **5. DISPOSAL BY PRIVATE SALE**

5.1 A disposal by Private Sale may take place after a period during which the land is marketed for sale, including advertising that it is available for sale. In this case, the Council will be able to consider the highest bid as representing the best consideration that can be reasonably obtained.

5.2 If land is to be sold by Private Sale without being marketed, then the reasons justifying a private sale must be recorded in writing. In some circumstances the Council may seek an independent valuation to verify that 'best consideration' is being obtained. A private sale without the land being marketed may be justified where:

- (a) the land to be disposed of is relatively small in size and an adjoining or closely located landowner is the only potential or likely purchaser.
- (b) the nature of the Council's land ownership and that of the surrounding land

ownership is such that the land must be sold to adjoining or surrounding landowners if best consideration is to be obtained.

- (c) the Council's land is part of a larger area of land that is proposed for development, redevelopment or regeneration. Also, the nature and complexity of the proposed development of the overall site is such that the Council's corporate objectives and best consideration can only be achieved by a sale to a purchaser with an existing interest in land in the area.

5.3 A legally binding agreement will not be reached until either contracts for the lease or sale of land are exchanged or a development agreement is signed.

## **6. DISPOSAL BY PUBLIC AUCTION**

6.1 Sale by public auction may be appropriate where there is no obvious potential purchaser and where speed and the best price can be obtained by auction.

6.2 The authority from Council's committee or the delegated decision report must record in writing

- (a) the reasons justifying a sale by public auction;
- (b) reserve price, if any, for the auction;
- (c) the authority for a Council officer to attend the auction and to act on behalf of the Council on the sale.

6.3 The contract for sale or lease must be ready for exchange at the auction.

6.4 The binding contract will be made on the acceptance of the highest bid providing it has reached the reserve price. Contracts for the sale or lease will immediately be signed and exchanged.

## **7. DISPOSAL BY FORMAL TENDER**

7.1 A sale of land by formal tender may be appropriate where the land ownership is not complex and the Council is seeking obligations to be placed on the successful tenderer which are clear and capable of specification in advance. For example; the disposal of land to a developer with an obligation to build industrial units for lease. Or, for example; the conservation of a listed building. In such instances, a process of formal tender may be appropriate in gaining best consideration.

7.2 Formal tenders will not be appropriate where the land ownership position is complex or the development proposals for the land are insufficiently identified or otherwise incapable of detailed specification at the pretender stage.

7.3 Authority for the sale will be by either committee minute or delegated decision report. In either case, the reasons justifying a sale by formal tender must be recorded in writing. The Council's rules for tender offers contained in the Contract Procedure Rules will be followed. Any exceptions to the usual tendering process must be authorised and recorded in accordance with those Rules.

7.4 The nature of the formal tender process is that a legally binding relationship is formed when the Council accepts a tender in writing. It is essential therefore, that every aspect of the disposal is specified in the tender documents. The tender documents should include a contract for sale or lease which should be completed with the

tenderer's details, the tender price and be signed by the tenderer. It will be released unconditionally to the Council on submission of the tender.

- 7.5 Sale of land by formal tender will require a detailed specification to be drawn up. This needs to specify the land to be sold, any requirements to be met by the tenderer and any obligations that must be met.
- 7.6 The Council will place a public advertisement seeking expressions of interest and publicise the selection criteria by which it will assess tenders. Those individuals selected will then be invited to submit their tender bids.

## **8. DISPOSAL BY EXCHANGE OF LAND**

- 8.1 Disposal by exchange of land will be appropriate when it is advantageous to the Council and other parties to exchange land in their ownerships and will achieve best consideration for the Authority.
- 8.2 Authority for a disposal of land by exchange with another land owner for alternative land will be by either committee minute or delegated decision report. In either case, reasons for justifying this manner of disposal must be recorded in writing. A binding legal agreement will be created when a contract is exchanged for the exchange.
- 8.3 The exchange will usually be equal in value. However, an inequality in land value may be compensated for by other means where appropriate. For example, where the Council in exchange for a larger piece of land receives a smaller piece of land but the recipient of the larger plot agrees to build industrial units on the Council's smaller area to equalise the consideration. In such circumstances the Council may seek an independent valuation to verify that 'best consideration' will be obtained.

## **9. DISPOSAL BY INFORMAL / NEGOTIATED TENDER**

- 9.1 A disposal by informal/negotiated tender differs from a formal tender in that neither the Council nor the successful bidder is legally obliged to enter into a contract for the disposal of the land. The informal/negotiated tender process allows the Council to identify one preferred bidder with whom it may then negotiate further detailed terms or proposals for the development of the land concerned.
- 9.2 The Council uses a public advert to request informal development proposals for land that meet a given specification. This process is particularly useful for large or complex development or regeneration sites requiring development and where the proposals may need to be developed in co-operation with the preferred bidder to meet the Council's corporate objectives and to achieve the best consideration that can be reasonably obtained.
- 9.3 Authority for the sale will be by either committee minute or delegated decision report. In either case, the reasons justifying a sale by informal or negotiated tender must be recorded in writing. The Council's rules for tender offers contained in the Contract Procedure Rules will be followed in respect of the receipt of tenders. Any exceptions to that process must be authorised and recorded in accordance with these Rules.
- 9.4 A binding legal agreement is not created until the exchange of contracts for sale or lease or the signing of a development agreement.

## **10. EXCEPTIONS**

Other methods of disposal may be used where circumstances warrant see Para 1.3 above.

Authority needs to be obtained in accordance with Para 4 above.

## **11. LATE BIDS AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

11.1 The Guidance from the Local Government Ombudsman<sup>1</sup> recognises the problem caused to local authorities by 'late bids'. The Guidance says that difficulties are less likely if Councils ensure that exchange of contracts take place as quickly as possible after the decision to sell (or lease) is made. It suggests that local authorities should be allowed to sell at an agreed price within a reasonable period of reaching a 'subject to contract' agreement.

11.2 In the context of the methods of land disposal dealt with in this document, a late bid may occur:

- (a) in the case of a private sale, after a sale or lease has been agreed, but before exchange of contracts
- (b) in the case of a public auction, after the auction has been closed, but the reserved price not having been met.
- (c) in the case of a formal tender, after the closing date for tenders, but before selection of the successful tender.
- (d) in the case of an informal or negotiated tender, after receipt of bids, but before exchange of contracts or signing of a development agreement.
- (e) in the case of disposal by exchange after, a sale or lease has been agreed, but before exchange of contracts.

11.3 Each 'late bid' must be considered in the context of the individual circumstances at the time. The Council's approach to 'late bids' will vary depending upon the method of land disposal used. In each case, its overriding duty will be to obtain best consideration that it can reasonably obtain (subject to any exceptions in the General Disposal Consent). The Council's approach to late bids is as follows:

- (a) The Council discourages the submission of late bids in all cases when it is disposing of land. It will attempt to minimise problems by aiming for early exchange of contracts.
- (b) Where land is being disposed of by way of formal tender, bids received after the deadline for tenders, will not be considered.
- (c) Late bids cannot be considered where land is being disposed of by public auction after a successful bid has been accepted.
- (d) Except as provided in 11.3.2 and 11.3.3 above, until the Council has entered a legally binding contract or agreement with another person it will consider late bids unless there are good commercial reasons for not doing so. This should be explained to any purchaser when a disposal of land by private sale or negotiated/informal tender is agreed.
- (e) Consideration of a late bid does not mean that it will necessarily be accepted even if it is the 'highest' bid. The Council will take into account the likelihood of the late bid proceeding to completion in a timely manner and the possibility of late bids

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<sup>1</sup> Local Government Ombudsman's Guidance on Good Practice 5: Disposal of Land (November 1995)

being used as a spoiling or delaying tactic.

- (f) Subject to the above, the Council may, in appropriate circumstances, ask both the late bidder and the person to whom the land was previously to have been sold, to submit their last and final bids in a sealed envelope by a set deadline.
  - (g) A decision on whether to accept a late bid for a private sale, informal tender or by exchange are to be made either by the appropriate Council committee or in accordance with the Land and Property Scheme of Delegation by the Strategic Director for Resource Management.
- 11.4 A last minute bid may be rejected for sound commercial reasons. For example; if there is no real certainty of it leading speedily to a contract or is suspected as a spoiling bid.
- 11.5 The Council cannot be concerned with the issue of “gazumping” – the overriding duty, with certain exceptions as mentioned in the General Disposal Consent, is to obtain best consideration.
- 11.6 In considering what amounts to ‘monetary value’ in terms of best consideration to be obtained, the creation of jobs or desirable social outcomes, although desirable, cannot be considered by the Council.

## **12. DISPOSING OF LAND FOR LESS THAN FULL MARKET VALUE**

- 12.1 In certain circumstances, the Council may dispose of land for less than the full market value. Those circumstances are clearly defined by law and consent is needed from the Secretary of State. General Disposal Consents have been given by the Secretary of State for certain transactions. In any other cases, the specific consent of the Secretary of State will be needed.
- 12.2 The General Disposal Consent makes provision for the Council to dispose of non-housing land at less than full market value, known as an ‘under-value’. Specified circumstances must apply as follows:-
- (a) The Council considers that the purpose for which the land is to be disposed of is likely to contribute to the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the whole or part of its area, or any person resident or present in its area.
  - (b) The difference between the unrestricted or market value of the land to be disposed of and the consideration for the disposal does not exceed £2 million. For example; land may be sold at an under-value for only affordable housing rather than all residential types, as long as the difference between the consideration obtained for development for affordable housing and the land’s unrestricted value for all residential types, is less than £2 million.
- 12.3 The Council must still comply with its duty to obtain best consideration for the restricted value. So, using the above example, the Council must ensure that it achieves the best consideration that may be reasonably obtained for land restricted to development for only affordable housing.
- 12.4 The Council must also comply with normal and prudent commercial practices including obtaining the view of a professionally qualified valuer as to the likely amount of any under-value.

12.5 The Housing Consents<sup>2</sup> set out the circumstances in which the Council may dispose of housing land. They also set out the provisions in relation to discounts which may be offered. The Council will follow the principles set out in this policy document when disposing of land under the Housing Consents.

### **Appendix 1 - Procedure note for granting short leases and licences**

The Council's Land Disposal Policy sets out the policy and procedure in relation to the freehold disposal of land or the granting of a lease for more than 7 years. This procedure note relates to the granting of short leases (i.e. those less than 7 years) and licences. Regard should be had to the Land Disposal Policy, where appropriate. In particular, paragraphs 1.1 – 1.3 are of relevance to this procedure note.

The Council will consider the grant of a short lease or a licence of land when –

- (a) the land is surplus to the Council's current requirements and it would be an appropriate short-term use for the land, and
- (b) the granting of a lease or licence would be within the Council's current policy and objectives, and
- (c) the terms of the lease or licence are the best that can reasonably be obtained and are value for money, or
- (d) where the granting of the lease or licence on terms that are less than would be commercially available, would further one of the Council's strategic objectives.

The Council will usually grant short leases or licences after negotiations with one or a small number of prospective occupiers. The land may or may not have been marketed as available for let. A binding legal agreement is created on grant of the lease or licence by the Council. This method will be often be used when negotiating the renewal of existing short leases and licences (particularly grazing licences).

The grant of a short-term lease or licence will be in accordance with the Council's Land and Property Delegation Scheme. Usually, a short-term lease or licences will be granted by officers under delegated authority.

### **Appendix 2 – Procedure note for considering requests to purchase land**

The Council receives a number of requests each year from persons wishing to purchase Council land. In general, these requests relate to small parcels of land for private use (e.g. garden extensions). This procedure note sets out the process that will be followed, where requests are received to purchase Council land. Applicants will be invited to complete a standard request form, which is shown on page 10. Following receipt of a completed application form, the Council will follow the procedure set out on the flow chart on page 11.

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<sup>2</sup> A copy of the Housing Consents is available from the Department of Local Government and the Communities website – [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)





Civic Centre,  
Crook,  
County Durham.  
DL15 9ES  
Tel: 01388 765555 Fax: 01388 766660  
Minicom: 01388 761515

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Resource Management Department

Strategic Director - Gary Ridley

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Our Ref: RMD/ /ND/Pending Requests

This matter is being dealt with \_\_\_\_\_

Your Ref:

Direct Line 01388 7616\_\_\_\_

e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_ @wearvalley.gov.uk

24 September 2007

**Please address all correspondence to the LEGAL SECTION**

### **Without Prejudice**

Dear

### **Request to Purchase Land**

Thank you for your enquiry in respect of the above.

I would inform you that the Council charges a non-refundable fee of [ ] ([ ] + VAT) for considering such matters and I enclose an application form for completion and return. Upon receipt of your application and fee the application will be processed and, if the Council agrees in principle to disposal, you will be sent a detailed offer letter setting out the main terms and conditions for the sale.

Alternatively, if your application is refused you will be sent a detailed letter explaining the reasons for the refusal.

In addition to the above mentioned fee you will also be responsible for the following (approximate) costs;

1. The price of land (which cannot be provided at this stage)
2. Advertising costs for 'Notice on Intention to dispose of public open space' (in the region of [£500], where applicable.
3. Council's Legal and Surveyors fees (in the region of [ ])
4. Planning application fee [ ]
5. Your own Solicitors fees.

There may also be other costs involved specific to your sale and these can only be confirmed and clarified once your application has been assessed.

Yours sincerely

# LAND PURCHASE APPLICATION



Name	
Address	
Post Code	
Location of Land	
Area of Land	
Proposed Use	

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

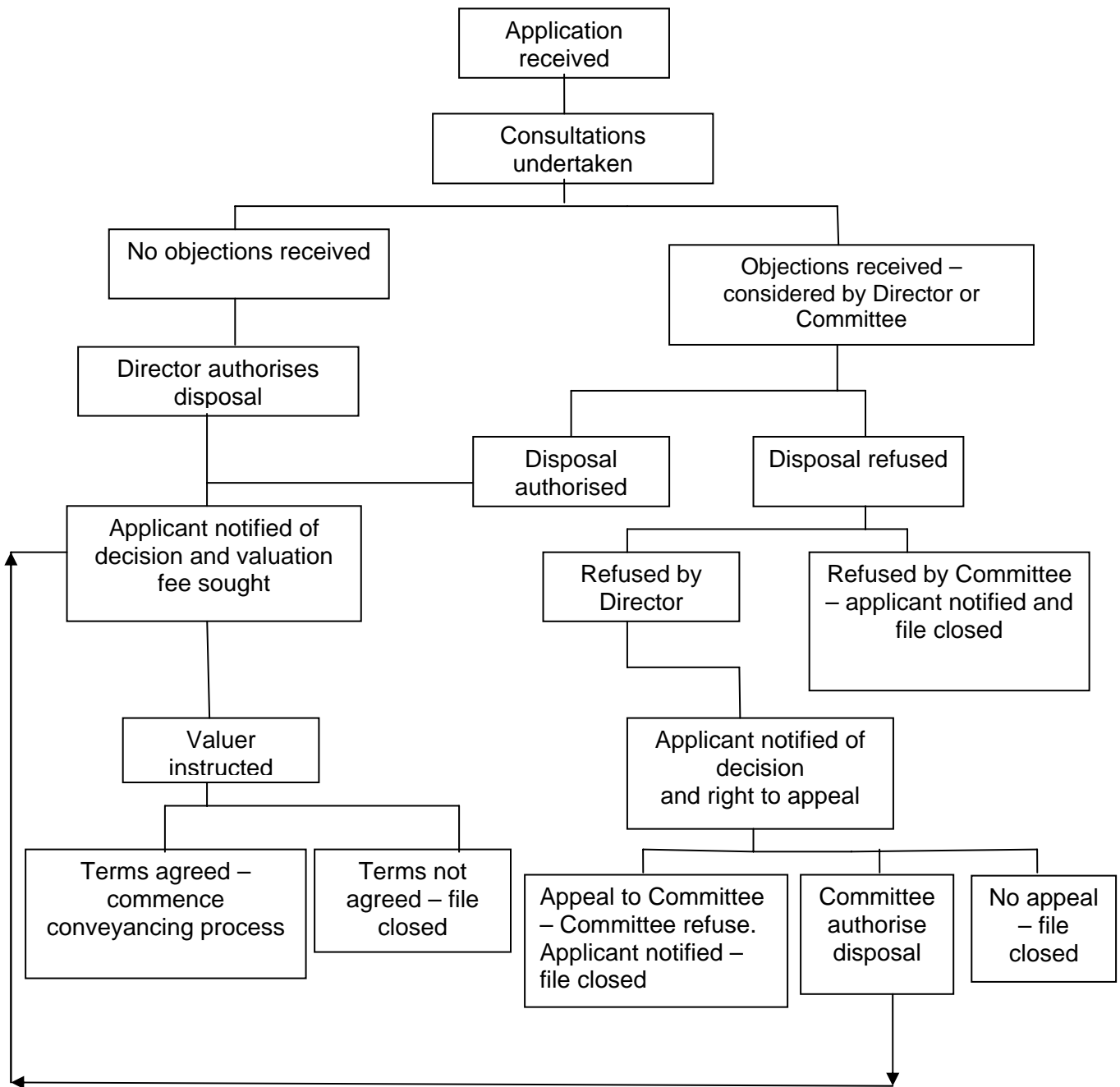
## THIS APPLICATION MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SKETCH/PLAN TO ILLUSTRATE THE LAND REQUIRED

Plans must include the following;

- 1) a clear representational drawing of the area including **exact measurements** for the proposal in metric (width & depth)
- 2) an accurate site/location plan showing the property within its plot with the area of land clearly indicated

The fee of [            ] ([            ] + VAT) must be enclosed with the application (**this fee is non-refundable**).

Please return this application to:  
Legal Section, Wear Valley District Council, Civic Centre, Crook, County Durham, DL15 9ES.



**WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL****CAPITAL STRATEGY****1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

- 1.1. Wear Valley is an area of severe, multiple economic and social deprivation and is one of the most deprived rural districts in England. To effectively tackle the wide range of social and economic issues facing the District, the Council must use its resources as effectively as possible to improve conditions and opportunities for everyone in Wear Valley. The Capital Strategy is a key element of the drive to use resources effectively to focus on our priorities.
- 1.2. Wear Valley's Capital Strategy will:
- Provide a framework for directing capital resources in the pursuit of its corporate objectives.
  - Act as a control mechanism in the development of the capital programme.
  - Establish a process for managing and monitoring the use of capital resources.
  - Identify how consultation will take place on capital investment.
  - Provide a framework for tackling cross cutting issues.
- 1.3. With finite capital resources, the Capital Strategy ensures that they are deployed to maximum effect so that the budgeted capital programme is fully aligned with corporate priorities and integrated into the PM framework. This is achieved by linking capital expenditure to output targets and outcomes as well as providing a framework in which competing requirements for funds can be evaluated. The Strategy also encompasses the strategic capital requirements emerging from service strategies and places emphasis upon cross-cutting, joined up investment through internal co-operation and, wherever possible with external partners.
- 1.4. The Wear Valley Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) drives the Community Strategy and thereby the Council's corporate priorities through development of its Council Plan.
- 1.5. The Council Plan specifies a number of broad objectives and sub objectives covering the next three years. There are six, cross-cutting key priorities in the Plan that have been recently approved. These mirror and support the long-term community priorities developed by the LSP.
- 1.6. The Council has developed a method of service and financial planning to ensure that capital investment requirements associated with service needs are explicitly stated. Capital budget bids arising from service plans must support the key objectives of the community and the Council. This is reflected in the scoring system through which capital bids are ranked.

1.7. In effect the Community Strategy informs the Council's investment priorities over the next few years and has links to annual service plans that each Department in the Council compiles. The Capital Strategy will play a key role in reinforcing the Council's corporate objectives by its use of capital resources.

## 2. KEY PRIORITIES

2.1. The key priorities of the Council flow from the LSP's long term objectives, and more widely the Government's shared objectives for local government. Corporate objective links to Capital Strategy objectives are as below. The table also shows current significant capital schemes and their links to the Council Plan.

<b>NATIONAL OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>CORPORATE OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>CAPITAL STRATEGY OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>MAJOR CAPITAL PLANS</b>	<b>COUNCIL PLAN REFERENCE</b>
Improving the quality of life	Working for a slowly growing and balanced population	To provide an appropriate infrastructure thereby creating and maintaining vibrant and energetic communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crook urban renaissance</li> <li>• Dene Valley renewal area</li> <li>• Enhancements to villages</li> </ul>	<p>P3</p> <p>P3</p> <p>P3</p>
Promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities	Working to reduce health inequalities and to improve the quality of life for residents in Wear Valley	To provide quality leisure facilities, where possible, in conjunction with other organisations such as key health agencies and to achieve the decent homes standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decent Homes Standard and Re-provision of leisure facilities</li> <li>• Disabled facility /other grants</li> </ul>	H2, H1 and H3
Promoting the economic vitality of localities	Working for a significant increase in employment and business activity	To establish an adequate supply of industrial land and property to meet the needs of new and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eastgate Project/ Weardale Strategy</li> <li>• Bishop Auckland Town Centre</li> </ul>	<p>EC4</p> <p>EC1 and P3</p>

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE	CORPORATE OBJECTIVE	CAPITAL STRATEGY OBJECTIVE	MAJOR CAPITAL PLANS	COUNCIL PLAN REFERENCE
		established businesses including working with other agencies to maximise external investment in projects in the District.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation House</li> <li>• Building enhancement scheme</li> </ul>	EC4  EC1
Creating safer and stronger communities	Working towards a safe community with a reduced level of fear	To provide accessible facilities with appropriate lighting and external security through private sector renewal, area regeneration and capital investment to design out crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building conversion to co-locate tenancy enforcement with other community safety partners</li> </ul>	C1
Transforming our local environment	Working towards significant improvements in the built environment	To ensure all new developments are of a high quality and sympathetic to their setting and that the character and appearance of towns and villages is both protected and enhanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop proposals for implementation in the Durham Coalfields Regeneration programme</li> <li>• Develop capital schemes in the Weardale strategy</li> <li>• Twin bin refuse collection</li> <li>• Street cleansing fleet               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy efficiency</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	EN3  EN2  EN1  EN1 EN2
Raising	Support life	To provide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance with</li> </ul>	P3

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE	CORPORATE OBJECTIVE	CAPITAL STRATEGY OBJECTIVE	MAJOR CAPITAL PLANS	COUNCIL PLAN REFERENCE
standards across our schools	long learning	facilities and grants which support life long learning objectives within the Authority	DDA to enhance access to public buildings which are used by community groups	

- 2.2. Pursuit of these objectives dictates our Housing Strategy and Asset Management Plan. Our corporate objectives are reflected in this strategy, which sets priority investment, needs and feeds these into the budget setting process. In order to meet corporate objectives, investment will be directed into priority schemes, which clearly contribute both to specific Council Plan actions and broader corporate objectives.
- 2.3. The Council's policy on procurement is being revised to mirror the National strategy for Local Government Procurement, in conjunction with NECE. Procurement practice is already developing along the lines of Egan principles through the long-term partnership with a grounds maintenance service provider which replaces the previous formal contractual relationship.
- 2.4. Council housing is the major asset of the Council and a significant proportion of the Capital programme is devoted to housing issues. In accordance with Government direction, the Council has set an objective of meeting the decent homes standard by 2011/12 and has achieved 2 star status following creation of an ALMO which is expected to lever in £27m of investment over 5 years.
- 2.5. An independent stock condition survey has been undertaken to determine the level of investment need and a housing needs survey carried out to assess supply and demand. This is a fundamental part of the option appraisal exercise detailed within the Council's Housing Strategy and Business Plan.

### **3. LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

- 3.1. The Council is using a variety of partners to assist in the delivery of schemes financed from its own capital resources as well as accessing additional funding. The major area of partnership working is through its membership of the LSP which brings together public, private voluntary and community bodies.
- 3.2. The LSP has a key strategic role in cross cutting activities such as regeneration, social exclusion and sustainable development with the objective of developing a single co-ordinated approach. It is a multi-agency partnership involving the Council, Police, Primary Care Trust, Durham County Council, Durham Rural Community Council, employment agencies, education and training providers, the Regional Development Agency and Government Office, business, voluntary and community sectors.

- 3.3 The Community Network for the district also supports the LSP, and this organisation provides a strong voice for many community and voluntary groups and organisations.
- 3.4 The LSP has adopted a vision and a set of strategic objectives, which will guide future development and service provision in the district to the year 2020. The Council has formally adopted the LSP's vision and objectives and invited all other partner organisations to do the same.
- 3.5 The success of the LSP will be gauged by its contribution towards meeting a variety of targets aimed at tackling deprivation.
- 3.6 The Regional Economic Strategy and the County Durham strategy Single Programme Investment Plan also provides a reference point for the identification of economic development capital schemes. The work of the LSP and the Council's role within it is reflected in the Capital Strategy as delivery programmes arising from the work of the LSP will be translated into a series of capital schemes. These will then be considered as part of the Council's own capital programme. Our "scoring" for capital budget proposals includes strong reference to supporting corporate objectives and hence LSP priorities so that funding is directed to specific policy areas that will effectively support progress towards our Council objectives.

#### **4. LINKS TO OTHER PARTNERS AND THE COMMUNITY**

- 4.1. In addition to its work through the LSP, the Council is working closely together with a range of organisations to maximise investment and benefit from the knowledge of others. It seeks to use its capital resources to influence external partners and take a pro-active role in obtaining financing for capital projects.
- 4.2. We have facilitated a number of other partnerships to help regenerate parts of the District and we have been successful in obtaining funding through Single Regeneration Budget rounds 3, 5 and 6 that has formed Community-based partnerships to help develop and implement programmes of regeneration.
- 4.3. Industrial development at Willington, retail and commercial business building grants, and major town centre environmental improvement schemes have been implemented through such partnership arrangements. Many of the schemes implemented through this mechanism have involved partnership arrangements with Durham County Council, Bishop Auckland College and Groundwork West Durham.
- 4.4. Other examples of partnership working include the provision of a grant scheme to assist business in renovation of shop fronts, the enhancement of important buildings within the conservation area of Bishop Auckland town centre and pedestrianisation around the main shopping area. The latter scheme is an integral part of the town centre strategy that is aimed at regenerating the area for business and residents to facilitate increased private sector investment. The scheme has been supported financially by the Heritage Lottery Fund as well as SRB resources and carried out in partnership with Durham County Council, English Heritage and the Town Centre Forum.



- 4.5. Consequently, every effort is made to harness wider organizational interests and sympathies and exploit the opportunity for joined-up investment. Capital investment on this scheme assists the Council to make progress towards achieving its corporate objectives such as improving community safety and maximising external investment.
- 4.6. Further examples of effective partnership working includes the conversion of work space to office units and the creation of a reception area within a local business centre that seeks to develop the growth of small businesses within the locale and improve business start up and survival rates. This clearly links to economic objectives.
- 4.7. Enhancements to commercial property within the town of Crook and Stanhope are also being undertaken through the Market Towns initiative and the community partnership. The current year's capital programme also provides for environmental enhancements with the support of Durham County Council and the English Heritage.
- 4.8. It also includes the development of the Bracks Farm Business Park in conjunction with Church Commissioners and Priority Sites and Easter Developments with the intention of establishing high quality office accommodation, identified as a priority.
- 4.9. The Council is also driving ahead with partnership working with neighbouring District Councils. Examples include a successful joint bid for external funding to acquire a Customer Relationship Management computer system to facilitate the "one stop shop" entrepreneurial/business contacts in deprived communities through the LEGI initiative which could lead to the development of community business incubator space.

## **5. LINKS TO OTHER PLANS**

- 5.1. A number of links are made to other partners via corporate plans such as the Council Plan and the MTFs. The Council Plan details the Council's vision and priorities and demonstrates how these relate to other plans and strategies. Capital linkages are shown in section 2.
- 5.2. Recommendations arising from Best Value reviews will be incorporated into capital schemes for potential inclusion within the capital programme. The Council's Capital Strategy has already been influenced by the outcome of previous Best Value reviews. For example, a review into leisure services identified the need to renew / improve leisure assets through a joint approach to service delivery with other stakeholders.
- 5.3. Progress in implementation is monitored through the Asset Management Plan which in turn links to Departmental Service Plans. These service plans consider capital issues for their services and are the basis for identifying capital programme bids.

5.4. The Council recognizes the importance of ensuring that it has adequate resources to deliver its aims and objectives. In relation to this strategy the Council considers that its resource requirements are being met as follows:

- Capacity: there is sufficient staff capacity to deliver the capital programme. This is monitored at senior officer and member level on a quarterly basis through the capital budget monitoring process.
- Assets : the condition of assets is monitored through the Asset Management Plan to ensure that they are fit for purpose. This is monitored annually by Members and a reserve is held to fund repairs to buildings to ensure that they are held in a reasonable condition.
- Capital resources: the council holds adequate capital resources to meet its capital needs over the medium term. This is shown in the annex.

5.5 The Council has carried out an impact assessment on this strategy. The main issue from this review relates to the need to ensure that the strategy is available in alternative formats. Any capital schemes which arise out of this strategy will be considered for equality issues at that time.

## **6. IDENTIFICATION OF RESOURCES**

6.1. The Council has officers who submit bids for funding to a number of sources. These include the Heritage Lottery Fund, European Regional Assistance, One North-East Single Programme and English Heritage Conservation Grants and NRF. The framework for prioritising capital programmes encourages scheme sponsors to explore all means of funding so that capital resources are maximized as weighting is given to the degree of external funding received and the involvement of other organisations.

6.2. The Council acknowledges that desired outcomes cannot be met solely from the resources of the Authority. Therefore, it seeks to draw funds from alternative channels where possible. In this regard the Council has been highly successful in attracting external capital funding in recent years. Departmental service plans such as the Regeneration Department establish targets for resource bidding and outcome targets linked to that expenditure.

6.3. Due to the scale of the projects with which the Council is involved, the option of funding through the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) is not appropriate. This is acknowledged by external consultants in evaluating housing management options.

6.4. The Council has relatively few assets with which to generate capital receipts. The main on-going source of capital receipts is sale of Council houses to sitting tenants. These are used to fund the capital programme as a whole and are earmarked for particular services. However, the Council holds surplus assets that have been prioritised into a disposal programme. These are identified through the asset management planning process. During 2007/08 to 2009/10 the Council expects to receive approximately £6m from the sale of assets. This reflects the prudent management of assets in terms of identifying options for underused/surplus assets. The available capital resources of the Authority are currently sufficient to meet expenditure needs over the medium term. Th longer

term needs of the Authority will be considered as part of Local Governemtn Review.

- 6.5. In relation to the disposal of assets the Authority has a structured programme for rationalising its number of council houses as a means of balancing supply and demand. With regard to non-council housing, the Local Development framework has a priority within it to identify potential sites for development.
- 6.6. Non housing assets are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure their best possible use in supporting the delivery of services. This is carried out by the Asset Management Group. The value of surplus assets that are planned for sale in the next financial year is assessed as part of the capital resources available to the Authority.

## **7. BIDDING FOR CAPITAL RESOURCES**

- 7.1. An integral part of the Capital Strategy is establishing a framework for prioritising capital resources to support corporate objectives. Each capital scheme will have to demonstrate how it contributes towards the achievement of specified service outcomes that will be linked to the attainment of corporate objectives.
- 7.2. Each scheme for the forthcoming financial year will be submitted, as part of the budget process, with costings covering the period of the scheme and sufficient explanation through a completed pro-forma to permit assessment against a number of criteria. Schemes that demonstrate linkages with corporate objectives, customer demand, smart targets, partnership working and the application of external funding will be prioritised.
- 7.3. The lowest scored schemes will not be included in the approved programme where the level of resources available is less than required to fund the proposed schemes in totality. The revenue implications of each capital scheme will be reflected in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. As part of the ongoing budget monitoring process, the revenue costs of capital schemes are carefully scrutinised and anticipated revenue savings compared with those achieved.

## **8. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

- 8.1 The Council has developed a Medium Term Financial Strategy which links together the priorities of the Council (as set out in the Council Plan) and available capital and revenue resources. At a strategic level, the Council does not expect to make any revenue contributions to capital in the short term or take on any unsupported borrowing as permitted by the prudential code.
- 8.2 Section 6 of the strategy outlines the Council's approach to the identification of capital resources. Given the Councils ambitions it is clear a rigorous approach to capital investment is necessary to ensure that objectives are met with finite resources.
- 8.3 The assessment of future revenue implications of capital schemes includes option appraisals on proposed schemes. For example, the costs of demolishing difficult to let housing properties are weighed against the reduced costs of

screening to deter vandalism. Similarly, a proposal to construct industrial units with the associated management costs and income stream could be compared with leasing land to a developer to provide similar facilities. Consequently, the revenue implications assessed include consideration of opportunity costs associated with a course of action.

## **9. PROCUREMENT**

9.1 The Council has developed a procurement strategy and appointed a procurement officer to drive forward this agenda. To increase procurement capacity the Authority is working with the North East Centre of Excellence. Priorities include the introduction of purchasing cards and review of goods and services suppliers, both of which are designed to increase efficiency.

9.2 External assessors have identified procurement as an area of action and the Council is currently developing its procurement approach to ensure that:

- Procurement is used effectively to deliver the Council's vision and strategic priorities.
- Procurement underpins the Council's service objectives while achieving Best Value.
- The approach is communicated to all stakeholders.
- A corporate framework is followed by the Council and its partners.

## **10. PROJECT APPRAISAL, MANAGEMENT & DELIVERY**

10.1 The delivery of management arrangements is detailed in the Council's Asset Management Plan. All externally funded projects are subject to rigorous external appraisal and evaluation. The key elements of internally funded schemes are set out below.

10.2 An inter-departmental group evaluates all proposed capital schemes to ensure their "fit" with corporate objectives and other criteria set out in the Council's Asset Management Plan.

10.3 The progress of the capital programme is evaluated quarterly by the production of monitoring reports to the CMT and Elected Members.

10.4 The contents include expenditure against budget, expected outturn, anticipated funding from borrowing, capital receipts and government grants, outputs to date against key milestones, and estimated date of scheme completion. A composite report is submitted to the Council's Central Resources Committee.

10.5 A post evaluation process is to be undertaken on schemes above £100,000. Performance measures such as cost and time predictability as outlined in the Asset Management Plan are used to assist in the evaluation and targets set for improvement.

- 10.6 The post evaluation process will also consider the delivery mechanism for the capital scheme, its programming, tendering processes and the adoption of Egan principles. A report will be submitted to the CMT and the relevant spending committee indicating:
- (i) Budget versus actual outturn.
  - (ii) Anticipated start date against actual start date.
  - (iii) Anticipated end date against actual end date.
  - (iv) Assessment of actual benefits against anticipated benefits.
- 10.7 The process and timetable for formulating, monitoring and appraising the capital programme has been agreed with Members and is shown below:
- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| August – September | (i) Following year potential schemes identified for appraisal against pre-set criteria .           |
|                    | (ii) Review of previous year schemes against pre-set objectives carried out                        |
| October – December | (i) Capital Allocations Received   |
|                    | (ii) Draft capital programme prepared for members and CMT and options prioritised for consultation |
| February           | (i) Capital programme approved by members and set by Council                                       |
- 10.8 As the Council operates a revised committee system model, all members are able to contribute fully to the development and monitoring of the capital programme. The capital programme will cover a three-year period and be updated annually on a rolling basis when the annual programme is approved in February.
- 10.9 Capital schemes are monitored monthly by each department from information contained in the financial information system and supported by advice from the accountancy function of the Council. The Council's draft three year capital programme is shown as per Annex J and links to corporate objectives specified for each scheme.
- 10.10 Departmental service plans also include performance on capital projects in areas of cost and time predictability and post evaluation reviews of schemes to determine whether corporate objectives have been met.
- 10.11 As part of asset management the generation and reporting of performance indicators such as profitability of non operational assets, running costs and backlog maintenance will challenge asset holdings that may subsequently be declared surplus (see Section 5 of AMP for more detail).

10.12 Capital schemes often straddle more than one financial year and the council is moving towards a more structured approach to developing its capital programme based around the three separate stages of:

- Commissioning of the scheme including option appraisal.
- Designing of the scheme including funding package.
- Acceptance of the scheme into the Authorities capital programme.

This specially relates to externally funded economic development schemes which rely on funding packages being co-ordinated before contractual commitments are entered into.

## **11. CONSULTATION**

11.1 The Council uses a variety of consultation processes to harness the views of stakeholders. The SIMALTO element of the budget process seeks to identify the public's views in relation to Council expenditure where appropriate and their attitude towards changes to local tax levels.

11.2 In relation to NRF, resources are allocated through the LSP on which a variety of organisations are represented. The LSP is outlined in section 3.

## **12. CONCLUSION**

12.1. The Capital Strategy provides a set of policies, systems and procedures for management of the Council's capital resources in order to attain its corporate objectives. It is an integral part of a comprehensive performance management framework that is designed to inform and drive continuous improvement across all council departments.

12.2. It details the process for targeting capital resources and utilising these to maximum effect. The Strategy is under continuous review by senior management and it will be further developed and updated upon completion of the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan.

12.3. The strengthening of these links will also be achieved by the introduction of the new performance management framework. The Strategy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its continuing relevance and role in determining the Council's approach to capital investment.

12.4. These measures will ensure that the Capital Strategy makes a significant contribution towards the achievement of the Council's objectives, the long term vision of the LSP and ultimately, towards improving the well being of the citizens of Wear Valley.

## Capital Forecasts 2007/08 - 2009/10

Annex J

	<u>2007/08</u>	<u>2008/09</u>	<u>2009/10</u>
	<u>Value (£)</u>	<u>Value (£)</u>	<u>Value (£)</u>
Renovation of Housing Stock	8,458,860	8,718,800	9,133,360
Asset Management	179,000	170,000	170,000
Public Realm Enhancements	3,423,000	307,000	200,000
Private Sector Housing	334,000	434,000	434,000
Liveability	590,000	376,000	50,000
Fleet Replacement	430,000	700,000	580,000
IT Systems	100,000	73,000	73,000
Economic Regeneration	512,000	523,000	200,000
Leisure Facilities	50,000	6,050,000	50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,076,860</b>	<b>17,351,800</b>	<b>10,890,360</b>
<b>Funding:</b>			
Supported Borrowing	5,800,000	5,800,000	6,300,000
Major Repairs Allowance	2,650,000	2,650,000	2,650,000
Specified Capital Grants	140,000	140,000	140,000
Capital Receipts Applied	4,926,860	8,761,800	1,800,360
Revenue Contributions	560,000	0	0
Total Resources	14,076,860	17,351,800	10,890,360
<b>Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Land / Property Sales:</b>			
Sale of Council Houses	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
General Fund Land / Property Sales	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
<b>Application of Usable Capital Receipts:</b>			
Usable Receipts Brought Forward	13,089,000	10,162,140	3,400,340
Receipts in Year	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000
Receipts Applied in Year	4,926,860	8,761,800	1,800,360
Usable Receipts Carried Forward	10,162,140	3,400,340	3,599,980

# WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

## DATA QUALITY STRATEGY

### 2007 – 2010

“aiming to be the best district council in England”

Last updated by:	Judith Grayson	19 June 2007
	Judith Grayson	1 August 2007
	Judith Grayson	6 September 2007
	Judith Grayson	10 September 2007
Approved by:		
Contact for more information	Corporate Development Unit (Ext 313)	



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## **purpose of the strategy**

1. High quality information and data is critical to enable the monitoring and improvement of services.
2. The Council recognises the importance of reliable information to the delivery of services and the management of those services. The quality of information will determine the capability to make operational decisions about the way a service is planned, managed and undertaken. Poor quality of information leads to poor decision making.
3. The purpose of this strategy is to outline a co-ordinated approach to ensure that the highest standards are being met across the Council.
4. This document is influenced by the Audit Commission audit approach to Data Quality, built on the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) approach. Taking a strategic approach to addressing the criteria within the KLOE will establish a higher level of capacity and commitment within the authority.

## **the Council's commitment**

5. Our vision is "to be the best District Council in England". Data quality is crucial to this. The availability of complete, accurate and timely data is important in supporting not only excellence in customer service but also corporate governance, service planning, accountability and achieving value for money.
6. The Council is therefore committed to ensuring it maintains the highest standards of data quality and as a result gets its information right first time.

## **objectives**

7. Our vision for data quality is that we get things right first time. This will enable us to have the right information at the right time at the right cost. In order to achieve this, our data quality objectives are as follows:
  - ensure that the information we use is of a high quality, consistent, timely, comprehensive and held securely and confidentially;
  - to be able to have confidence in the data we use to manage our services and demonstrate our performance;
  - make clear what we expect from our staff and Members in terms of the standards of data quality;
  - put in place systems, policies and procedures to ensure the highest possible data quality;
  - ensure that we put in place the right resources, and in particular have the right people with the right skills, to ensure we have timely and accurate performance information;

- ensure that we have the right controls in place to ensure we manage data quality effectively;
- ensure that data is stored, used and shared in accordance with the law including the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act.

### scope of the Data Quality Strategy

8. All Council systems and processes that produce performance information are in the scope of this strategy, in order to ensure that accurate and dependable information is available for all Council functions.
9. New initiatives, in relation to data quality, will come under the remit of this strategy.

### definition of 'quality data'?

10. Data will be regarded as being of high quality if it is:
  - **Accurate:** it truly reflects the event or activity that it purports (has integrity), the condition or quality is correct or exact, free from error or defect
  - **Valid:** well grounded in logic or truth; it is fitting or suitable; being sound of fact and logic
  - **Reliable:** may be relied on; dependable in accuracy, honesty
  - **Timely:** it is available when needed; occurring at a suitable time; in time
  - **Relevant:** bearing upon or connected with the matter in hand; pertinent
  - **Complete:** having all parts or elements; lacking nothing; whole, entire, full.
11. The importance of quality performance data is essential for:
  - **Customer care:** delivering a relevant and responsive service to the customer
  - **Keeping stakeholders informed:** through central data collection mechanisms;
  - **Efficient administration** and compliance with the law.
  - **Operational management and strategic planning** to provide appropriate allocation of resources and future service delivery;
  - **Corporate governance:** which depends on detailed, accurate performance data for the identification of areas where services can be improved.

### setting and meeting of Standards

12. We are committed to collecting and processing data according to national and locally defined standards.
13. Where national standards are not available or are not sufficient, local standards will be developed and implemented. Standards are essential to ensure that:
  - Data collection is accurate and consistent throughout the Council.

- Customer records are accurately completed and processed.
  - Data is kept securely and confidentially.
  - Data outputs can be compared both internally and externally.
14. Standards will relate to key areas of data quality as described above.
15. Where problems are identified, corrective action and any recommendations for change will be identified.

### **risk assessment**

16. Data quality is embedded in the Council's Corporate Risk Register.
17. Areas that are classified as 'high risk' conditions include:
- A high volume of data transactions.
  - Technically complex performance information definition/guidance.
  - Problems identified in previous years.
  - Inexperienced staff involved in data processing/performance information production
  - A system being used to produce new performance information.
  - Known gaps in the control environment.

### **roles and responsibilities**

18. The roles and responsibility for Data Quality are as follows:-
- the Deputy Leader of the Council has been nominated to be Member lead for data quality;
  - the Chief Officer, Corporate Development has been nominated to take lead responsibility for Corporate Data Quality, reporting to the Policy and Strategic Development Committee;
  - the Assistant Directors in each Department have been nominated to take responsibility for Departmental Data Quality, ensuring that adequate, safe systems holding an acceptable standard of information are developed and maintained and that performance information they provide is accurate, timely and meets relevant guidance. They are also responsible for ensuring the implementation of corporate policy and procedures and the development of service-based policies and procedures;
  - the Data Quality Working Group (DQWG), a cross-departmental working group, has been established to develop a Data Quality Strategy, policy and procedures and drive improvement within individual teams;
  - it is the responsibility of all staff who input, store, retrieve or otherwise manage data to ensure that it is of the highest quality;

- everyone in the organisation will be responsible for complying with the Data Quality policy;
  - all staff will be responsible for following policies and procedures, and all line managers for ensuring that this is the case in their respective service teams.
19. Commitment to data quality will be clearly stated in job descriptions for all relevant roles within the Council, ensuring that directors, managers, administrative staff and others recognise their responsibilities as an integral part of their role and profession.

### **contracts**

20. The Council recognises that data quality is an important part of any contract that is outsourced to a third party to manage. This is of particular importance to public-facing service contracts where large amounts of performance data are requested by the Council from which to judge a contractor's performance.
21. We will ensure that all appropriate contracts where data collection and data quality are instrumental to the delivery of the service will have a standard clause inserted into the contract which defines data quality and how it should be embedded into the contractor's processes. This will apply to contracts tendered after November 2007. This clause will layout our requirement for the contractor to provide timely and accurate information and that responsibilities for data quality and checking information are clearly set out.
22. Responsibility for the verification of data lies within the department managing the contract.

### **partnership working**

23. We will ensure that a formal framework for data sharing with partners is put in place.
24. The Council is committed to working with partners to achieve the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Local Area Agreement and to deliver joined up public services. Information sharing is crucial to partnership working. A formal set of quality requirement will be applied to all data used by the organisation which is shared externally, or which is provided by partner or third party organisations. These quality requirements could be in the form of a data sharing protocol, contract or service level agreement. The Council must continue to ensure data complies with all relevant legal, data protection and confidentiality standards. A validation process will be established for all data provided by partners or other third parties.

### **people development and communication**

25. The Council is committed to ensuring that it has the right people with the right skills to deliver services.

26. Training and development of staff is key to the achievement of high levels of data quality. The following principles will be met to achieve this:
- (i) All new staff who use Information Systems will receive training in the use of the respective systems as part of their induction.
  - (ii) Policies, procedures and guidance will be developed in association with relevant staff and made available to all staff engaged in data quality work.
  - (iii) Policies, procedures and guidance will be made available on Lotus Notes
  - (iv) Awareness workshops or briefings will be held to develop awareness in the Council of the importance of Data Quality.
  - (v) An on-going awareness campaign will be undertaken, led by the Data Quality Working Group, to ensure that all members of staff are aware of the importance of accurate and timely data collection and recording

### **monitoring and review**

27. The Council's overall approach to data quality will be monitored by the Council's Chief Officer Management Team. The Chief Officer, Corporate Development will take the lead role on data quality issues. Internal Audit will provide internal assurance controls. A formal reporting structure will be developed.
28. Data quality will be regularly monitored by the Corporate Development Unit and Internal Audit. This will involve:
- Regular meetings with PI originators and Heads of Service to ensure that the correct systems and procedures are in place.
  - Six monthly reports
  - Routine checks
  - Spot checks
  - Follow up of any data quality queries from members of staff.
  - Liaising with Internal Audit and External Audit regarding any data quality issues they have come across as part of their review/inspection programme.
29. Procedures for data capture, processing and storage must be reviewed and updated regularly, normally annually. These procedures will include specific arrangements for ensuring data quality at the point of data capture, during the processing of that data, and appropriate data quality checks before data/information is released. Responsibility for this will rest with the nominated 'data collector', ie.the departmental manager or person responsible for the data capture.
30. The Council recognises the need to achieve a balance between the resources required to set and meet data quality standards and the relative benefits that flow. We will take this into account in developing our approach to monitoring and review. It will be necessary to focus resources on data that the Council regards as critical to its overall business objectives. Equally, the right balance must be achieved and justified between the dimensions of data quality, for example a balance needs to be struck between accuracy and timeliness. The purpose of the quality reporting process is to ensure that the Council supports a learning culture so that future mistakes can be avoided.

## **the Council's approach to data quality improvement**

31. The Council understands the importance of data quality and is committed to improving its management within the organisation and in partnership with others.
32. We have responded well previously to issues identified through external audits, and can evidence some aspects of the criteria within the KLOE. By putting in place formal arrangements, supported by policies, procedures, resources and systems, the authority will be better able to ensure the quality of its data.
33. We have already made progress in developing data quality over the past few years:
  - a Data Quality Protocol has been approved;
  - monitoring and review of data quality has been undertaken using validation check sheets that are signed off at Head of Service level;
  - arrangements are in place to monitor and review the quality and accuracy of BVPIs;
  - there are some departmental procedures and guidance in place, although these do not provide comprehensive coverage for all areas or aspect, where guidance is in place it is accessible and staff generally comply with it.
  - There are regular updates to guidance in relation to BVPIs and these are supplied to staff responsible for data. Also staff comply where procedural notes are in existence.
  - generally, systems are in place for the collection, recording, analysis and reporting of data;
  - internal audit do random assessments on data collection systems for their accuracy as part of the audit function.
  - Managers with specific responsibilities for data collection have the appropriate skills and are supported through training, development and access to guidance;
  - Arrangements are in place to ensure that data collected is used to manage and improve services and focus on priorities.
34. We now need to sustain the improvements made. Our approach to Data Quality management, shown below, will help us to continuously improve the quality of the data we hold as well as its subsequent use.

### **action plan**

35. Implementation of the Data Quality Strategy is through an ongoing improvement action plan that will be formally approved, reviewed and reported to Corporate Management Team on a six monthly basis.

### **anticipated outcomes**

36. The main anticipated outcomes of delivering the Data Quality Action Plan are:-
- improved accountability for data quality issues.
  - an increased awareness of data quality and its importance.
  - an increased commitment to data quality by the Council.
  - a strengthened performance management framework.

### **action plan monitoring**

37. The delivery of this Data Quality Action Plan will be monitored on a six monthly basis by the Data Quality Working Group and reported to the Corporate Management Team (CMT).





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Resource Management Department

Director Gary Ridley

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Our Ref: DRM/GR

This matter is being dealt with by Gary Ridley

Direct Line 01388 761521

e.mail address: [g.ridley@wearvalley.gov.uk](mailto:g.ridley@wearvalley.gov.uk)

Baker Tilly UK Audit LLP  
1 St James' Gate  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 4AD

24 September 2007

Dear Sir / Madam,

**Dale and Valley Homes Accounts 2006/07 –**  
**FRS 17 Pension Liability**

With reference to the above, I hereby confirm that in the event that Dale and Valley Homes were to cease operating, their FRS 17 pension liabilities would be taken over by Wear Valley District Council.

Yours faithfully,

**GARY RIDLEY**  
**STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

# **Wear Valley District Council Draft Gender Equality Scheme Contents**

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## **Appendix Gender Equality Action Plan**

## 1. Foreword

By the Leader and Chief Executive of Wear Valley District Council

Wear Valley District Council is committed to setting excellent standards, as a provider of services and facilities, to all members of the public, and as an employer of people. However, we acknowledge that, at the present time, women and men do not always have the same opportunities or choices.

This Gender Equality Scheme for the period 2007-10 outlines how we will work towards standards which will meet the hopes and aspirations of women and men. It seeks to ensure that we not only meet our statutory obligations, but that our plans and methods of working promote gender equality.

We believe the benefits of this Scheme and its Action Plan will be reflected in improvements and innovation in service delivery. It will enable the Council to provide more responsive services to meet the needs of women and men.

## 2. Introduction

Wear Valley District Council is committed to the principle of equal opportunities in employment and ensuring equality of access in service delivery.

No individual or group of people will be treated less favourably than anyone else in applying for services, for a job, or a contract with the Council because of their age, colour, disability, ethnic origin, marital status, nationality, race, religious or political beliefs, responsibilities for dependents, gender, sexual orientation, trade union activity, unrelated criminal convictions or involvement in public service.

The Council is committed to working with the community to identify and seek out ways of overcoming barriers which prevent them from using Council Services. The Council has Policy on Equal Opportunity and in Service Delivery as well as a Comprehensive Dignity at Work Policy.

As part of our continual commitment to ensure issues surrounding gender equality are central to the way we operate and the services we provide, the Council has developed this Gender Equality Scheme, which uses the core principles of guidance issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission in relation to the Gender Equality Duty

To promote gender equality, as required by the Equality Act 2006, so that women and men who live and/or work in Wear Valley can enjoy Council services free from discrimination we are committed to:

- Challenging and eradicating sex discrimination
- Providing responsive and accessible services
- Ensuring our workforce reflects the population of Wear Valley and ensuing exemplary employment practices

A Gender Equality Scheme is our public declaration of how we currently promote gender equality and what we intend to do to ensure we are a model of gender equality best practice. The Gender Equality Scheme is a living document and will be subject to annual review and adaptation to meet the needs and demands of everyone.

### **3. Context**

#### **3.1 The Equality Act 2006 – a duty to promote gender equality**

The Gender Equality Duty, created by the Equalities Act 2006, is the most important and significant change in gender legislation since the implementation of the Sex Discrimination Act 1974. The Gender Equality Duty is a 'proactive duty' as it places the responsibility on public authorities to 'actively' promote gender equality. Instead of depending on individuals to make complaints about sex discrimination, the duty gives public authorities legal responsibility for demonstrating that they treat women and men fairly in policy making, services and employment. The Gender Equality Duty places 'general' and 'specific' duties on public authorities:

#### **3.2 General Duty:**

Under the General Duty, through all relevant functions, the council is required to have a due regard for the need to;

- Eliminate discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act, and discrimination which is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act.
- Promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

#### **3.3 Specific Duty:**

The help meet its general duty, the Council has a specific duty to:

- Prepare and publish a Gender Equality Scheme identifying its gender equality goals and actions to meet them in consultation with employers and stakeholders.
- Review the scheme every three years and gather information on the effect of its policies and practices on men and women in employment, services and performance of its functions.
- Gather and use information on how the Council's policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services.
- Conduct and publish gender impact assessments of all major policy developments, and publish its criteria for conducting impact assessments.

### **3.4 Equality Standard for Local Government**

The Equality Standard for Local Government is a national standard set by the Government to ensure local authorities improve local services and employment opportunities for everyone. We have adopted the Equality Standard to mainstream diversity and equality into our service delivery, policy making and employment processes to ensure that they are appropriate and accessible to all regardless of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief.

The Equality Standard for Local Government contains five levels:

- Level 1 – Commitment to a Comprehensive Equality Policy
- Level 2 – Assessment and consultation/participation
- Level 3 – Setting equality objectives and targets
- Level 4 – Information systems and monitoring against targets
- Level 5 – Achieving and reviewing outcomes

The Council is currently at level one and intends to achieve every level. Our Diversity and Equality policies are continually reviewed to ensure we continue to meet our duties.

### **3.5 Equal Opportunities in Service Delivery.**

The Council's policy on Equal Opportunities in Service Delivery outlines our commitment to Gender Equality through a Strategy Statement. The key aims of the strategy are:

- To take into account the requirements of all service users, irrespective of gender, by taking informed advice on organisational arrangements.
- To evaluate all Council published material to check for unnecessary gender bias.
- Work with other agencies and community groups to promote gender equality and eliminate disadvantage.

### **3.6 Mainstreaming Gender Equality**

The Council aims to take concerns of women and men into account at all stages of policy development and implementation.

Treating women and men the same may not lead to equal outcomes; well targeted policy takes into account the different ways women and men may organise their time. Women and men often have access to different social and economic resources.

Wear Valley District Council  
Gender Equality Scheme

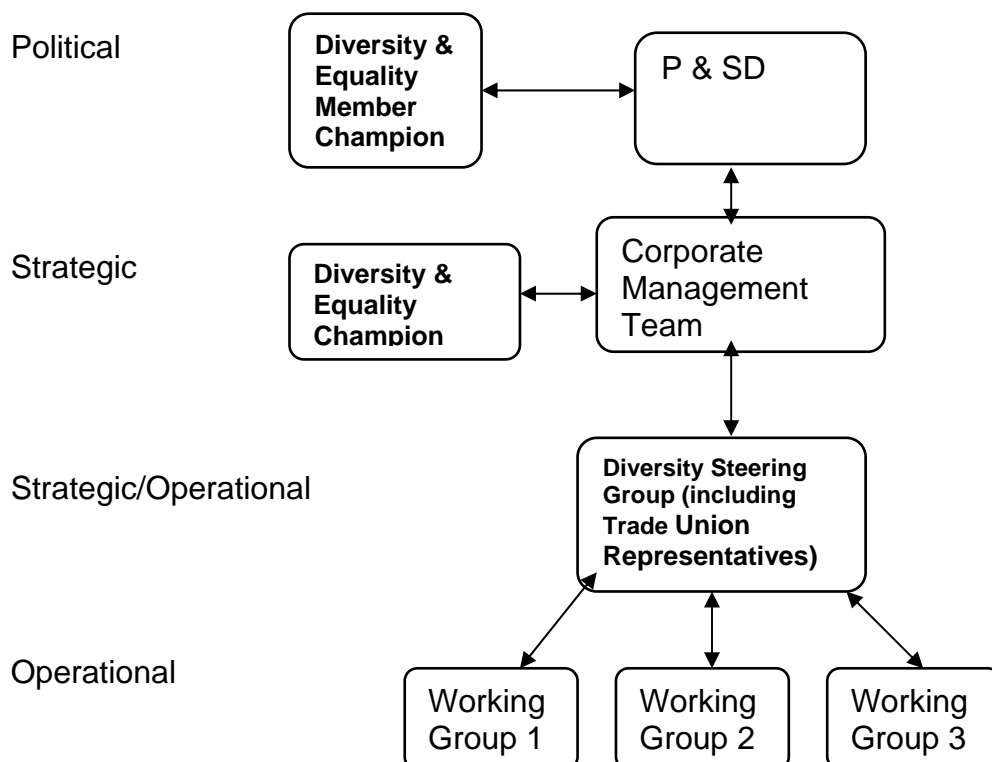
A gender mainstreaming approach to putting equality into action involves systematically examining all policies and procedures and assessing their potential differential impact on men and women.

## 4. Meeting the Duty

### 4.1 Responsibilities for the Scheme

Wear Valley District Council will ensure that all gender equality objectives and all other diversity and equality issues are embedded in all levels of the Council's decision making processes and organisational procedures (see below).

#### Level



- Each level of the diversity and equality corporate structure will consider all of the equality strands to ensure effective compliance to the gender duty and all other equality laws.
- The Council will ensure that an Elected Member will champion diversity and equality at a political level.

## Wear Valley District Council Gender Equality Scheme

- All Diversity and Equality policies and procedures will be presented by a diversity and equality champion to the Corporate Management team. The Corporate Management team will then ensure that diversity and equality decisions are passed to P&SD to be ratified.
- The Diversity Steering Group will consist of managers and/ or directors from every service area and trade union representatives. The Steering Group will set the diversity and equality agenda for the Diversity and Equality Subgroups.
- The Subgroups will consist of staff members and supervisors from every service area. The nature of the Subgroups will depend on the diversity and equality agenda; for example, when the Council conducts its equality impact assessments; a Sub group will focus on conducting them and providing feedback to the diversity steering group.
- Individual champions will ensure that each unit within the structure is functioning to full effect.

Feedback mechanisms will be in place to ensure that each level of the organisation has a fully co-ordinated agenda. The above structure it is not intended to be hierarchical by nature, for example, the working groups will have the ability to set the diversity and equality agenda for Corporate Management Team.

### **4.2 Gender Equality Impact Assessments**

Gender equality considerations are built into the Council's equality impact assessments, as required by the Gender Equality Duty. Each department in the Council will conduct initial equality impact assessments. This process will enable the Council to review all policies and procedures and identify any 'actual' or 'potential' adverse impact on service users and staff. The impact assessments cover race, gender, age, caring responsibilities, religion/belief and sexual orientation. Each department will identify policies which require full equality impact assessments. The initial screening process includes:

- Identifying all aims of the policy and practice.
- Considering the evidence – based on existing knowledge of data, each service area judges if the policy or practice has a differential impact on any of the equality strands.
- Deciding whether to take remedial action based on available evidence, or to proceed to a full impact assessment.

An internal audit of all our initial equality impact assessment will be completed to ensure consistency of approach. Through this process, each



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department will identify equality objectives, and areas in need of a full equality impact assessment. Full impact assessments and equality objectives will be timetabled into an overarching equality plan. Impact assessments will be applied to all new policies and practices.

### **4.3 Engaging with the Community**

National census data shows Wear Valley's population to be 48% male and 52% female. The Council believes that everyone should be able to make choices without limitations set by strict gender roles and that the different behaviours and needs of women and men are considered and valued equally. The Council is committed to taking into account any different views and requirements of men and women into the consultation and decision-making processes.

We will consult with and inform local communities about the Council's progress on gender equality. The Gender Equality Action plan will be incorporated into an overarching Equality Plan. Consultation with the general public on the Council's Equality Plan will involve:

- Consulting the public through various mechanisms (listed below), to ensure all sections of our communities are consulted and informed.
- Reporting back information to the public through the Corporate Plan or Annual Report.
- Developing more collaborative and innovative community consultation/engagement strategies.
- Independent Advisory Groups. We will ask for advice and support from Independent Advisory Groups, particularly in relation to policy development and planning.

Current Consultation Procedures:

- Town Centre Forums
- Residents Associations
- Customer Panels
- Community Networks
- Focus Groups

## **5. Employment**

Currently the Council employs:

- 241 female employees and 208 male employees
- Of our full-time workers, 46% are women and 54% are men
- Of our part-time workers, 86% are women and 14% are men

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This data follows national trends; in Spring 2004, 44% of women in employment aged 16 and over worked part-time in Britain and women comprised 78% of all part-time workers. The Equal Opportunities Commission estimates that women part-time workers are earning 40% less per hour than men working full time – about the same pay gap as 30 years ago<sup>1</sup>. The Council profiles all staff data by gender, including grade and occupation and reports this annually to committee. This enables us to review the full extent of the occupational division of labour by gender and to identify an appropriate strategy to reduce this division. We are committed to closing the wage gap between women and men through an Equal Pay Review

### 5.1 Equal Pay Review

In 2005 the national public sector full-time wage gap was 13% in favour of men<sup>2</sup>. Wear Valley District Council is currently undertaking an equal pay review to help us ensure we have pay structures which are fair and therefore greatly reduce the likelihood of pay gaps between jobs of equal value. The review will identify and inform us of the possible risks and our responsibilities relating to equal pay. The Trade Unions will be involved throughout the review, to ensure that all aspects of equal pay are properly examined. Progress will be monitored to ensure that opportunities are given for discussion and concerns to be raised.

### 5.2 Work Life Balance

Wear Valley District Council recognises that there are a number of factors that have historically disadvantaged women in the workplace and consequently they are under represented in senior roles in the Council and other organisations. Through work life balance policies and fair recruitment and selection procedures we aim to remove disadvantage in the workplace. The Council has the following work life balance policies:

- Part-time working
- Job sharing
- Home working
- Maternity leave and pay
- Paid paternity leave
- Flexible working scheme
- Adoption leave
- Dependency/bereavement leave

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<sup>1</sup> Grant, L, Yeandler, S, & Buckner, L. (2005). 'Working below potential: women and part-time work'. Equal Opportunities Commission Working Paper Series No.40

<sup>2</sup> Thornley, C. (2006). Unequal and Low Pay in the Public Sector. Industrial Relations Journal. 37 (4), pp.344-358

### **5.3 Recruitment and Selection**

The Council has a well-established recruitment process that is applied consistently with policies and procedures produced to support good practice and meet equality requirements. Recruitment documentation is co-ordinated by the personnel section with new employees being provided with a copy of the Council's procedures on appointment.

Vacancies are advertised internally and externally simultaneously. Adverts are emailed to staff, placed on the Council's website and are sent to the Employment Service Call Centre. Depending upon the nature of the vacancy, adverts are placed in the local and national press as well as the professional publications.

Copies of job descriptions and person specifications are supplied to all candidates and the language and content of such documentation is audited by the personnel section to ensure that non-discriminatory language and criteria is used.

All job applicants are asked to complete an equal opportunities monitoring form covering gender, marital status, ethnic origin, disability and age. Completed forms are separated from the application form before it is sent to the short listing panel. Monitoring of applicants and workforce enables the Council to ensure that its equal opportunities policies are effective. As far as possible, the Council monitors the recruitment, development and retention of its employees in terms of:

- Staff in post
- Applicants for employment, training and promotion
- Staff receiving training
- Staff involved in grievance procedures
- Staff subject to disciplinary procedures
- Staff who leave the Council's employment.

The results of this monitoring are published annually.

### **5.4 Training and Development**

The Council has a generic equal opportunities policy that is issued to all new employees. Information in the recruitment pack and the induction programme is also supplied that highlights the Council's commitment to equality of opportunity in relation to employment and service delivery.

All new and existing staff will be required to complete a 'diversity in the workplace' online training programme. This programme outlines the key equality legislation and contains comprehensive definitions of harassment, bullying, direct and indirect discrimination and stereotypes and has links to the

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Council's Equal Opportunity policies. The programme is regularly updated to reflect changes in the law.

A full staff survey by the University of Durham will then be undertaken to establish the level of 'perceived discrimination' faced by staff on a daily basis. The results of the survey will provide impetus to further diversity and equality training.

New employees and managers are supplied with a copy of a leaflet regarding dignity at work and what the Council expects of them and what it will provide for them

### **5.5 Dignity at work**

Wear Valley District Council believes that all employees are entitled, in accordance with its Equal Opportunities Policy, to receive equal treatment in an anti discriminatory environment. The Policy applies to all employees and entitles them to conduct their work without harassment, bullying or victimisation in the workplace and generally to be treated with dignity and respect

The Council has a duty to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and harassment on the grounds of gender reassignment. Wear Valley District Council will review its dignity at work policy and procedures to ensure they protect the rights of transgender and transsexual people.

All managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that all employees are aware of their responsibilities under the dignity at work policy.

## **6. Increasing Community Safety**

Domestic violence has devastating consequences for both the individual victim and wider society. The results of the British Crime Survey of 2001 suggest that one in four women and one in six men will be a victim of domestic violence in their lifetime<sup>3</sup>.

The Council works in partnership with regional agencies to develop an appropriate strategy to reduce crime and disorder throughout Wear Valley. The 'Wear Valley and Teesdale Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership' contains a commitment to:

- *To remove the 'hidden crime' status of domestic abuse*
- *To reduce repeat victims by 10% by 2008.*

Wear Valley District Council, in partnership with Sedgefield Borough Council and Teesdale Council, is working together through their Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships to reduce the suffering of individuals living or have lived with domestic violence or abuse.

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<sup>3</sup> Walby, S. (2004). 'The Cost of Domestic Violence'. Women and Equality Unit.

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A poster campaign has been launched to raise women and children's awareness in the three Districts. Posters have also been placed throughout Wear Valley District Council to ensure that staff are aware that help is available for those who suffer domestic abuse. The campaign will then progress to help male and elderly victims.

Support is provided to victims through various schemes in the region and is available through No 75 Domestic Abuse Support Service in Wear Valley.

### **7. Procurement**

The Gender Equality Duty applies to all those functions which are carried out through procurement as well as those which are carried out directly by the Council itself. Since the introduction of the Local Government Act 1988 the Council has a duty to ask questions about equality of opportunity of applicants to tender for Council Contracts.

The Council's procurement strategy 2006-2009 contains a commitment to 'Ensure that principles of sustainability, economic development and **equality** are promoted, as appropriate, in all procurement activities'.

Potential contractors will be required to supply their equal opportunity policies to the Council for auditing. Managers will ensure that all staff involved in procurement work, understand provisions of the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975

### **8. External Validation/Inspection**

The Council will publicise the activities it is undertaking to monitor and develop gender equality initiatives in relation to its statutory provision. It is intended that the following publications be used:-

- Wear Valley Matters
- Best Value Reports
- Annual report upon the Councils Gender Equality Scheme
- Web Site

In September 2007 the Council will publish a Single Equality Scheme. This scheme will demonstrate the Council's commitment to all of the equality strands, and will serve as a means of reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of all of the Council's equality and diversity policies.

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**Appendix** Three Year Gender Equality Action Plan.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Time scale</b>	<b>Lead Department</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Policy Development</b>			
Agree the Gender Equality Scheme, an action plan and review every three years.	September 2007	Corporate Development	Meet requirements of the Gender Equality Duty.
Ensure that Diversity and Equality issues are added agenda at every extended management committee. Elected Member to add diversity and equality to their portfolio Establish Diversity and Equality Steering Group Establish Diversity and Equality Working Groups	October 2007	Corporate Development	Co-ordinated effort to achieve higher level in the equality standard  Greater staff ownership of diversity and equality issues.
Carry out Initial Equality Impact assessments on core services	March 2008	Service Managers	Policies and procedures assessed. Existing or potential discrimination and inequality identified.
Assess the likely consequences of all planned projects and policies on all of the equality stands.	September onwards	Service Managers	To ensure policies do not have discriminatory impacts on any group
Generic equality and diversity plan that covers the 6 equality strands	October 2007	Corporate Development	Action plan to resolve discriminatory policies, procedures and unequal outcomes produced.

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<b>Task</b>	<b>Time scale</b>	<b>Lead Department</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
Full equality impact assessments and action plans produced on policies and procedures which have been identified through initial equality impact assessments	March 2008	Service Managers	A single diversity and equality action plan and scheme produced.
<b>Service Design and Delivery</b>			
Continue multi-agency approach towards community safety as outlined in the Wear Valley and Teesdale Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership	Ongoing	Department for the Community	Key targets of strategy met
Continue poster campaign that has been launched to raise women and children's awareness of domestic violence.  Progress campaign to help male and elderly victims.	Ongoing	Department for the Community	Support and advice available for staff and community members who fall victim to domestic abuse
Profile complaints and grievances lodged by the general public by gender	November 2007	Corporate Development	Identifies any council functions and procedures which have and adverse effect on men or women.  Remedial action to be taken when identified.

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<b>Task</b>	<b>Time scale</b>	<b>Lead Department</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Employment</b>			
Continue to report to members on equality issues surrounding the recruitment process and other general employment matters	Ongoing	Corporate Development	Issues and actions to remedy any inequalities identified when they occur.
Equal Pay Review: Women and men receive equal pay for equal work as outlined in the Equal Pay Act 1970, Article 141 of the Treaty of Amsterdam, and in line with the National Joint Council Single Status Agreement 1997	During 2007/08	Resource Management	Equal pay audit is completed
Conduct staff survey to gauge the level of perceived discrimination faced on a day to day basis by council staff.	October 2007	Corporate Development	Develop action plan based upon outcomes and feedback from survey
Review employment policies and procedures through impact assessment process to ensure they adequately cover transsexual employees.	December 2008	Corporate Development	Initial assessment completed Action plan built into service plan if required



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<b>Task</b>	<b>Time scale</b>	<b>Lead Department</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<p>Implement a 'diversity in the workplace' staff training programme.</p> <p>Train Councillors with programme.</p> <p>Build 'diversity in the workplace' training into staff induction process.</p>	<p>December 2007</p> <p>December 2007</p> <p>December 2007</p>	<p>Corporate Development</p>	<p>All staff and Councillors are trained on equality and diversity legislation and understand how it applies to the workplace and service provision.</p>
<p>Managers to ensure that all staff involved in procurement work, understand provisions of the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Act 1970.</p>	<p>October 2007</p>	<p>All service managers</p>	<p>The council's functions meet the requirements of statutory law, regardless of who is carrying them out.</p>

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<b>Task</b>	<b>Time scale</b>	<b>Lead Department</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
Continue to profile; Council employee data by gender Grievances lodged by gender Complaints by gender Staff Training opportunities by gender	Ongoing	Corporate Development	Identifies any council functions and procedures which have and adverse effect on men or women.  Remedial action to be taken when identified.
Conduct a second staff survey to gauge success of 'diversity in the workplace training' and any other 'equality and diversity' interventions implemented on the level of perceived discrimination faced by staff	Dec 2008	Corporate Development	Measured improvement in staff perceptions
Review policy options for supporting working parents explore best practice in other agencies	Dec 2008	Corporate Development	Best practice identified and publicised on Council Website.
<b>Community Engagement</b>			
Transgender community to be consulted in collaboration with Durham Diversity Officers Group	Jan 2008	Corporate Development	Meaningful information about the Transgender community acquired that will drive forward service improvement throughout the Council

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<b>Task</b>	<b>Time scale</b>	<b>Lead Department</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
Establish a citizens panel			Meaningful feedback from service users on Council policies.
Hold several formal and informal gender consultations events. Include discussions of the impact of policies on men and women at <i>all</i> diversity and equality consultation events.	2007, 2008	All Departments	Greater ownership and understanding of gender equality objectives.
<b>Communications</b>			
Review communication plans to ensure gender-inclusive language, symbols, and examples been used in the materials.	Dec 2007	All Departments	Effective communications to men and women.

## **WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Policy on Reserves and Balances**

#### **Introduction**

The Council recognises that in order to achieve its short, medium and long term objectives it needs to ensure that it holds an adequate level of reserves and balances to protect its financial standing.

This policy sets out:-

- The types of reserves held
- Working balances
- Principles to assess the adequacy of reserves
- Protocol of managing reserves

#### **Types of Reserves Held**

The Council will hold the following types of reserves.

<b>Category of earmarked reserve</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Sums set aside for major schemes, such as capital developments or asset purchases, or to fund major reorganisations	Where expenditure is planned in future accounting periods, it is prudent to build up resources in advance
Insurance Reserves	Self – insurance is common amongst local authorities to reduce exposure to changes in premiums charged by insurers. In the absence of any statutory basis sums held to meet potential and contingent liabilities are reported as earmarked reserves
Reserves retained by service departments, to fund future service improvements.	Increasingly authorities have internal protocols that permit year-end underspendings at departmental level to be carried forward

These will be held for 3 main purposes, as follows:-

- A working balance to cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing
- A contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies
- A means of building up funds often referred to as earmarked reserves, to meet known or predicted liabilities.

## Working Balances

The Council will take into account the following when considering the levels of working balances to be held.

<b>Budget Assumptions</b>	<b>Financial Standing &amp; Management</b>
The treatment of inflation and interest rates	The overall financial standing of the Authority (level of borrowing, debt outstanding, council tax collection rates etc.)
Estimates of the level and timing of capital receipts including the affordability of subsequent revenue costs arising from capital expenditure	The Authority's track record in budget and financial management
The treatment of demand led pressures	The Authority's capacity to manage in-year budget pressures
The treatment of efficiency savings/productivity gains	The strength of the financial information and reporting arrangements
The financial risks inherent in any significant new funding partnerships, major outsourcing deals or major capital developments	The Authority's virement and end of year procedures in relation to budget under/overspends at authority and departmental level
The availability of other funds to deal with major contingencies	The adequacy of the Authority's insurance arrangements to cover major unforeseen risks.
Future financial forecasts covering a 3 year period.	The level of reserves needed to support the budget.
Council Plan targets and priorities.	Likely timing of achievement of Council Plan priorities and their financial impact.

## Principles to Assess the Adequacy of Reserves

The following principles will be used to assess the adequacy of reserves:-

- The purpose for each reserve and its likely timing.
- The strategic, operational and financial risks facing the Authority.
- Consideration of the Council's overall approach to risk management.
- The overall financial position of the Authority over the medium term, as outlined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- The opportunity cost of holding reserves as compared to spending them in furtherance of the Council's aims and objectives.

## **Protocol for Managing Reserves**

The level and utilisation of balances will be determined formally by the Council, informed by the advice and judgement of the Strategic Director for Resource Management. The Strategic Director for Resource Management should report the factors that influenced the judgement to the appropriate Committee, to record formally the advice given to Councillors. Where the Strategic Director for Resource Management advice is not accepted this should be formally recorded in the minutes of the council meeting.

As part of the budget setting process a report should be produced by the Strategic Director for Resource Management in relation to the above which includes a statement showing, the additions to/withdrawals from reserves and balances, and the estimated end of year balance. Reference should be made of the extent to which such reserves are to be used to finance recurrent expenditure. This will have regard to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan that will outline the planned level of reserves to be held in the next three years.

During the year, if reserves and balances are used which exceed that planned a report shall be made in advance to the relevant committee by the Strategic Director for Resource Management.

The levels of reserves and balances held will be monitored during the year by the Resource Management Department.