

CABINET

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held in the Parish Church Hall, Prestatyn on Tuesday 25 February 2003 at 11.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillors P A Dobb, Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing; E C Edwards, Lead Member for Safeguarding our Communities; M A German, Lead Member for Sustainable Development and Environment; R W Hughes, Lead Member for Lifelong Learning; G M Kensler, Lead Member for Promoting Denbighshire; D M Morris, Lead Member for Communications; J A Smith, Lead Member for Social Inclusion; W R Webb, Lead Member for Property and Asset Management and E W Williams, Leader and Member for Economic Wellbeing.

Observers: Councillor M LI Davies; S Drew, I M German and C Halliday, Chair of Standards Committee

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive; Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources; Financial Controller and the County Clerk.

APOLOGIES

E A Owens, Lead Member for Finance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor E W Williams referred to the sudden death of ex Councillor Peter Williams of Prestatyn and asked Members to stand in silent tribute. Councillor Williams also referred to Eira, the wife of Councillor Neville Hughes who was seriously ill in hospital.

Councillor R W Hughes, Deputy Leader welcomed Nicola Francis, Head of Service: Children and Families to Denbighshire and her first Cabinet meeting and also welcomed Keith Watson, Deputy Head of Ysgol Tir Morfa to the meeting.

1 URGENT MATTERS

Part I - Representation on the WLGA -to be taken at item 7.

2 MINUTES OF THE CABINET [CABINET 2002 - 01]

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28 January 2003 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28 January 2003 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Leader.

3 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNTS: CAPITAL AND REVENUE BUDGETS 2002/03 AND 2003/04 [CABINET 2003-20]

Councillor P A Dobb presented the report seeking Members' agreement to set the HRA Budgets and increase Council rents for dwellings and garages from Monday 7 April 2003 as set out in the Appendices to the report. Councillor Dobb referred Members to two typographical errors: the first in Annex 1 where the Basic Credit Approval figure should read £1,146,000 and the second in Annex 2 where the Overall Total should read £2116k.

Councillor Dobb detailed various aspects of the report to Members. The National Housing Strategy requires all Local Authorities and Housing Associations to benchmark their rents and the average rent in Denbighshire was below the £43.48 notional rent. Benchmarking would allow those paying higher than target rents to remain unchanged whilst those below target rents would increase towards the target but with the increase dependent on the property size. Garage rents of £2.80 per week would be increased by £0.10 per week.

Councillor E C Edwards asked the Head of Housing Services whether the Council properties on Rhos Street had been repaired to the required standard. In reply, the Head of Housing Services said the repairs had been carried out to a lesser cost than demolishing the properties and rebuilding.

RESOLVED that Cabinet agree:-

- (a) *the Housing Revenue Accounts, Capital and Revenue be adopted;*
- (b) *the rents for Council dwellings be increased in accordance with the Rent Setting Framework set out in Annex 5 (average 3.8%) from Monday 7 April 2003, and*
- (c) *the rents for Council garages be increased by 10p per week with effect from Monday 7 April 2003.*

4 SCHOOL MEAL PRICES [CABINET 2003 - 21]

Councillor R W Hughes presented the report seeking Members' agreement to an increase in paid school meal prices and an associated increase in free school meal charges. Councillor Hughes informed Members that Denbighshire was in the process of forming a nutrition policy for school meals.

Councillor E W Williams said he agreed with Option 2 in the report but emphasised the need to ensure quality meals were produced. He said only 50% of primary school children had school meals and only 70% of the free school meal allocation was used.

Councillor P A Dobb said she was delighted a nutrition policy was to be provided. Councillor Dobb, as a rural school governor, said she had also received complaints regarding the quality of school meals.

Councillor G M Kensler emphasised the need for good quality food and said in many instances this would be the only meal they would have in the day. Councillor Kensler agreed with Councillor M A German's suggestion of a survey / questionnaire regarding quality of school meals but suggested the children were the customers, not the parents.

Councillor W R Webb suggested that local procurement could both be better and cheaper than bulk buying of produce.

In reply, the Catering Manager said a survey had recently been completed which covered a broad range of schools and this evaluation was available to Members. With regard to formal complaints, only two schools [Betws G G and Pentrecelyn] had made complaints. Whilst agreeing the 50% uptake could be improved upon, she said the national average was 42%.

RESOLVED that Cabinet agree the prices to be charged for paid and free school meals in Denbighshire's Primary and Secondary Schools with effect from 7 April 2003 in accordance with Option 2 of the report and confirm the level of subsidy per meal at 10p.

5 YSGOL TIR MORFA, RHYL [CABINET 2003 - 22]

Councillor R W Hughes presented the report seeking Members' agreement:-

- [i] that a replacement for Tir Morfa be given priority status and that officers identify options for funding the replacement facility as a matter of urgency.
- [ii] that a Member/Officer Task Group be set up initially to report back to Cabinet by April 2003 on the funding options including those which embrace other priority schemes, and subsequently to oversee the development of agreed proposals.

Councillor Hughes said the consultation document was now ready to be sent to schools.

Councillor W R Webb said he was concerned regarding the poor state of the buildings and said Denbighshire needed to work in partnership with outside agencies to develop a new centre, rather than trying to bring the present buildings to standard. The Head of Consultancy Services agreed with Councillor Webb and said both sites had a backlog of maintenance which needed to be carried out.

The Deputy Head of Tir Morfa said a split site was not the ideal and said there were health and safety concerns. Provision of a new centre would allow Denbighshire pupils currently travelling to Chester or Llandudno to be educated in Denbighshire.

The Chief Executive said monies would have to be spent on health and safety whilst the existing buildings were in use.

The Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning said a paper would be available for the next Cabinet meeting detailing where additional money was being sought and the funding sources available to the Authority.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:-

- (a) acknowledge that the immediate remedial works are temporary and endorse work to identify funding for a replacement facility as a matter of urgency, and
- (b) agree that a Member/Officer Task Group be set up initially to report back to Cabinet by April 2003 on the funding option including those which embrace other priority schemes, and subsequently to oversee the development of agreed proposals.

6 REVENUE BUDGET 2002/03 [CABINET 2003 - 23]

The Corporate Director: Resources presented the report seeking Members' support for remedial action to be taken within the Lifelong Learning Directorate to remove the projected overspendings in the light of the latest budget performance figures.

The Corporate Director: Resources said the overall position had improved slightly. However the target figure of £1m in balances would not be met if the overspend within Lifelong Learning continued.

Councillor R W Hughes said difficulties with the core budget had been accepted by the Council and said it was important the language used in reports should be selected with care. The Council had agreed to look at the Directorate budgets.

RESOLVED that Cabinet Members note the projected outturn position and its impact on the strategy to deliver balances of £1.0m by the end of 2002/03 and emphasise the requirement for the Lifelong Learning Directorate to take measures to review service provision and improve budgetary control.

7 URGENT ITEMS [CABINET 2002 - 16]

REPRESENTATION ON WLGA COUNCIL AND VOTING

Councillor R W Hughes informed Members that membership of the WLGA Council had to be renewed at each annual meeting and the Authority had to declare to the WLGA how it would use its votes for the next 12 months. Accordingly, re-nomination of the two Denbighshire Members i.e. Councillor W R Webb and Councillor E W Williams was sought, on the basis of one person one vote.

In reply to a query from Councillor W R Webb, the Chief Executive agreed to check on the membership of the LGA. The County Clerk reminded Members that Cabinet had agreed not to attend the LGA Annual meeting.

RESOLVED that Councillor W R Webb and Councillor E W Williams be the Denbighshire Members on the WLGA Council, on a one person one vote basis.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

No questions had been received by the closing date.

Councillor E W Williams thanked both Members and officers for their participation in the earlier public open session.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 8 and 12 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

8 CHILDREN'S VILLAGE CABINET 2003 - 25]

Councillor G M Kensler presented the report seeking Members' agreement under paragraph 9b of Contract Standing Orders' Exceptions to Tendering Procedures for the reappointment of the existing consultants to provide proposals for improvements to the Children's Village and area west up to the Lifeguard Centre to ensure continuity of design and build upon previous public consultation.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approval is given under paragraph 9b of Contract Standing Orders' Exceptions to Tendering Procedures for the reappointment of the existing consultants to provide proposals for improvements to the Children's Village and area west up to the Lifeguard Centre to ensure continuity of design and build upon previous public consultation.

9 APPOINTMENT OF TREASURY MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS [CABINET 2003 - 26]

The Corporate Director: Resources presented the report seeking Cabinet confirmation of the re-appointment of the existing treasury management consultants whose quotation was not the lowest, for the period 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2006.

The Corporate Director emphasised the quality of advice received from the recommended consultants and their understanding of the Welsh Assembly Government developments.

RESOLVED that Cabinet confirms the re-appointment of the Council's existing consultants as treasury management consultants for the period 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2006, in accordance with paragraph 14.2 of Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

10 WIRRAL AND NORTH WALES PURCHASING CONSORTIUM [CABINET 2003 - 27]

Councillor W R Webb presented the report seeking:-

- [i] Cabinet to confirm its decision to withdraw from the Wirral and North Wales Purchasing Organisation [WNWPO].
- [ii] Cabinet agreement that the Corporate Director: Resources, in consultation with the County Clerk, be given full power to act to mitigate any loss to the County Council, subject to reporting back any recommendation upon any proposal to constitute any future shared purchasing agreement.

The Corporate Director: Resources emphasised that the Board would continue to be involved in the likely winding up of the WNWPO. The purpose of the senior officer group was to facilitate operational activities in relation to interim arrangements. The Corporate Director: Resources also detailed the current position in relation to the winding up, in particular the financial position.

Councillor E W Williams said it was important that a procurement policy be produced within the next 6 months.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *Members reconfirm their original decision to withdraw from the WNWPO Consortium, and*
- (b) *the Corporate Director: Resources, in consultation with the County Clerk, be given full power to act to mitigate any loss to the County Council, subject to reporting back any recommendation upon any proposal to constitute any future shared purchasing agreement.*

The meeting concluded at 12.05 p.m.

CABINET

Minutes of the Urgent Cabinet meeting held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Ruthin on Tuesday 4 March 2003 at 11.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillors P A Dobb, Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing; E C Edwards, Lead Member for Safeguarding our Communities; M A German, Lead Member for Sustainable Development and Environment; R W Hughes, Lead Member for Lifelong Learning; G M Kensler, Lead Member for Promoting Denbighshire; D M Morris, Lead Member for Communications; E A Owens, Lead Member for Finance; J A Smith, Lead Member for Social Inclusion; W R Webb, Lead Member for Property and Asset Management and E W Williams, Leader and Member for Economic Wellbeing.

Observers: Councillor M LI Davies; I M German, N Hugh Jones and M M Jones.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive; Deputy Chief Executive / Corporate Director: Resources; Financial Controller and the County Clerk.

1 INSTALMENT DATES - COUNCIL TAX AND NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES [CABINET 2003 - 28]

The Chief Executive presented the report seeking Members' agreement to the instalment dates for the financial year 2003-04 and delegation to the Chief Executive of decisions on instalment dates for future years.

Councillor E A Owens stressed that the spread of dates was important for the Council's tax and ratepayers since it catered for their individual circumstances and the most advantageous payment date for them. She was concerned that the delegation as suggested would result in the loss of Member input on any changes. The Chief Executive assured Members that any substantive changes would only be made in consultation with the Cabinet.

RESOLVED that Members agree that:-

8.1 *the instalment dates for Council Tax and NNDR payments for the 2003/2004 financial year be as follows :-*

<u>Direct Debit</u>	<u>Other Payment Methods</u>
4th, 15th & 30th	5th & 10th

8.2 *decisions on the instalment dates for Council Tax and NNDR payments for financial years beginning in and after 2004 be delegated to the Chief Executive.*

The meeting concluded at 11.08 p.m.

REPORT TO CABINET

CABINET MEMBER: Councillor D M Morris - Lead Member for Communication

DATE: 25 March 2003

Presentation: Head of Personnel

SUBJECT: HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY

1 DECISION SOUGHT

Adoption of proposed HR Strategy.

2 REASON FOR SEEKING DECISION

As the Council is now moving into a new era where it needs to become more focused through effective performance and improvement. Inevitably 'people issues' will need to be at the very heart of organisational development.

Therefore it is critical that we have a workforce that is skilled, competent, committed and valued.

Accordingly, we will need to ensure that we provide opportunities and recognition for our workforce by ensuring that they are properly supported, as well as fairly rewarded, in delivering improved services to the community. It must not be forgotten that this is our workforce that will provide the key to the success of the Council's strategic aims and priorities.

Consequently, there is a need to define an HR Strategy that sets a framework for the supply and effective management of a workforce to deliver our strategic aspiration.

3 POWER TO MAKE DECISION

Local Government Act 1972 - Sections 111 and 112.

4 COST IMPLICATIONS

Will be contained within HR Budget and considered as part of the future budget setting process.

5 FINANCIAL CONTROLLER STATEMENT

There are no obvious current financial implications resulting from this report. Any future developments that have budget implications will need to be considered as part of the budget setting exercise for future years.

6 CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

Presented to Corporate Directors and Heads of Service. Account taken of employee and management surveys and the whole Authority Analysis.

Presented to Unions 24 February 2002 - Union emphasised need to adopt a common sense and pragmatic approach to working together/in partnership to achieve.

Presented to Resources Scrutiny Committee on 12 March 2003, who resolved that the Strategy be approved.

7 IMPLICATIONS ON OTHER POLICY AREAS INCLUDING CORPORATE

Impact on Policies will be addressed on implementation.

8 RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet adopt the HR Strategy.

DRAFT



PEOPLE IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGY

Denbighshire County Council



1. **INTRODUCTION**

The Council's vision for Denbighshire is :

“Denbighshire: Here for you - together, we will deliver”

The value of people in delivering the vision and priorities of Denbighshire County Council has never been more important. This is emphasised by the fact that the majority of our employees are residents in our area and are therefore also customers.

This document outlines an HR strategy framework which aims to ensure that the individuals we employ directly or in partnership are:

- **The best people for their role.**
- **Developed appropriately to meet business objectives.**
- **Well informed about their role, progress and place in meeting Council priorities.**
- **Empowered to make decisions at the most effective point possible to the service user.**
- **Confident that they are operating in a safe and healthy environment.**
- **Representative of the diverse community they serve.**

This strategy is actioned through the Personnel Business Plan which outlines employment issues facing the Council.

2. **THE EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE**

Local Government is a rapidly changing sector. The White Paper “**Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services**” sets out a clear vision of what the sector will look like in the future. This is characterised by:

- A very strong emphasis on performance both of Councils and individuals.
- Continuous improvement of performance through The Wales Programme for Improvement.
- Increased, and more stringent people related Performance Indicators.

- A greater number of local partnerships, providing joined-up services for the area.
- New Political structures.
- New freedom to be more innovative and adopt an entrepreneurial role in the communities we serve.

Added to the above is the continuing financial constraints on local government, rapidly changing service needs, shortage of skills in certain professions, a move to e-governance and the drive to assist the Council to become an enabler of services more than a direct provider.

THE WORKFORCE WE NEED

Clearly the challenge for Denbighshire County Council is to accelerate our pace of change to create a workforce that is very flexible, equipped to adjust to different tasks and roles, that understands the bigger Council picture and that is guided by managers who are not constrained by heavily prescriptive policies and procedures more suited to traditional Councils.

3. THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

To shape our new workforce the Council has an overriding strategy, the priorities which are captured below.

A. We will focus on our customers and strive to meet their needs in particular for effective basic services.

- We will establish a fully bilingual system to provide customers with a single contact point for the delivery of all services either face to face, via the telephone or electronically via the web site. Target 40% of all Council transactions by April 2004, 80% by 2005.
- We will be an open authority, listening to customer's needs and providing responsive service delivery. Target: area partnerships successfully operating, community strategy to be in place by March 2004.
- We will significantly improve our performance in key services by March 2004: benefits, SEN statements, assessments for children in need.

B. We will maximise resources for Denbighshire and use them wisely

- Maximise resources from European and other funding sources: up to £10 million from bid-based funding for each year of Objective One.

- Maximise opportunities to generate revenue income through fees and charges to provide funding for service improvements, e.g. charging for toilets to increase the number of sustainable service outlets and improve service quality.
- We will identify savings to fund improvements to services
- Generate £3 million a year of capital receipts
- Gradually build reserves to £3 million by March 2005
- Stimulate the local economy by supporting an integrated procurement policy, e.g. joint ventures

C. We will invest in our elected Members and staff

- Increase budget for staff training and member training by at least 50% over 2002-03 levels
- Implement measures to improve recruitment and retention of key staff e.g. social workers by April 2003
- Gradually remove restrictions on mileage and subsistence allowances, with separate mileage allowance for training abolished from 1 April 2003
- Implement measures to recruit more young people from Denbighshire by April 2004, and reduce expenditure on agency staff to £1m by October 2003 and £800k by Oct. 2004
- Implement single status by 2004/05.
- By April 2004, introduce system of appointments to grades rather than jobs - to create a more flexible workforce

D. We will improve the image of Denbighshire

- Prioritise spending in 2003-04 and later years on services which improve the look of the area:
 - Public conveniences
 - Street cleansing
 - Replacement of all sign referring to abolished councils by March 2005
- Removing visible signs of dereliction and deprivation
- Implement extension of registration scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation
- No ward in Denbighshire to be in the top 20 of the Welsh index of multiple deprivation by 2007, with none in the top 50 by 2012
- We will seek to enhance the profile of tourism within Denbighshire and actively seek to attract more visitors to the area. The County will also adopt a more visible presence at Llangollen International Eisteddfod and in other venues/facilities from 2003 onwards.

Running throughout the strategy is our intention to become a true Learning Organisation which progresses by developing people to meet new challenges at all levels. Underpinning this are our key values of:

- Value.
- Fairness.
- Trust.

4. STRATEGIES FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

4.1. Performance Management

Performance will be actively managed at all levels using a common framework. We will work towards the introduction of a performance and career management system to ensure that corporate and service objectives are clearly understood by everyone and that each individual is aware of their contribution to these objectives. Good and poor performance will be recognised and opportunities to improve performance will be offered, resulting in the creation of a performance driven, skilled and flexible workforce with an emphasis on team and partnership working, coupled with focus on the customer.

4.2. Learning & Development

The Council will work towards achieving IIP status by December 2003. A development framework in the form of competencies and behaviours will assist to identify employee's development needs with their manager, linked directly through the business planning process to a Council objective or target. Staff will be developed to be capable of undertaking the broadest range of work available in the Council's Service, instead of working in silos.

4.3. Recruitment and Retention

We will implement measures to recruit, develop and retain a motivated workforce which has the skills and commitment to deliver the Authority's services.

4.3.1. Workforce Planning

With 33% of our employees over 50 years of age and 64% of our employees over 40 years of age, the Council will develop action plans which reflect our aging workforce and anticipated skills shortage areas. Strategies will be developed to ensure that these areas are tackled in a timely manner. We will make use of national schemes such as the National Graduate Development Programme for Local Government, to attract high calibre candidates or use development to grow our own. Career paths will be identified and managed through the Performance and Career Management system.

Opportunities will exist for wider experience to be gained to develop behaviours or skills through use of job swaps, job rotation and secondments to create a more flexible workforce.

We will develop a pay and grading policy which is fair and reflects national agreements ensuring that individuals doing like jobs will be on the same terms and conditions. All activities will reflect diversity and equality standards. We will become an employer whose workforce composition reflects that of our community.

4.4. Employee Relations

We will work with employees and Trade Unions to establish a climate which promotes honesty, openness and constructive working relationships. Aiming to create a more informed, committed and confident workforce which feels valued and trusted.

4.5. Safe Environment

We will work with employees to provide a safe working environment encompassing health matters and training.

Through the achievement of the Corporate Health Standard, we will strive to provide conditions of service and work life balance reflecting modern demands on individual's lives outside employment.

4.6. Communication

All staff will know how they contribute to the Council's priorities and what is expected of them.

Many different forms of communication will be used and with the basic principle that this will be two way.

Employee surveys will be undertaken as a regular basis to understand how staff feel about the organisation.

4.7. Organisational Development

We will aim to create a modern, empowered, flexible and resilient organisation which will deliver continuous improvement, underpinned by a "corporate" culture which also recognises the value of diversity where a different approach is justified.

4.8. Management Information System

We will introduce a HR system capable of collecting and analysing employee and workforce data to support effective and well-informed people management practices and HR Policies, leading to measurable improvements in workforce performance.

5. SUMMARY

This plan is purposely ambitious. The action plan we put in place to achieve will result in many changes to accepted working practices, however, if we are to meet the challenge of the "Modernising Government" White Paper, we must accept and embrace the changes which must happen.

REPORT TO CABINET

CABINET MEMBER: Councillor P Dobb, Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing
DATE: 25 March 2003
SUBJECT: BEST VALUE REVIEW OF RESIDENTIAL HOMES

1 DECISION SOUGHT

A report was brought to Cabinet on the 17th of December 2002 which requested that Cabinet needed to consider and further refine a range of options for further analysis. The purpose of this report is to decide upon the final option.

2 REASON FOR SEEKING DECISION

2.1 Options previously considered. The decision of the Cabinet on the 17th of December 2002 was that the following options should be recommended for further investigation.

	Option	Recommendation
1	Retain homes, do not undertake capital investment, leave terms and conditions and practices unchanged	No
2	Retain the homes and invest where necessary	Yes
3	To put the homes on the open market as a going concern	No
4	To transfer the management arrangements to another body e.g. Housing Associations, Independent Health Provider	Yes
5	Seek partnership arrangements (e.g. With Health and/or Public Sector Housing) to remodel the services	Yes
6	To create a body to manage the homes, e.g. a charitable trust	No
7	Close the homes	No

Members will recall previous papers have identified the need to:

- a) retain the current number of in house beds and safeguard vulnerable residents in a context of uncertainty for the care home sector.
- b) reduce the significant cost difference between in house and purchased provision.
- c) minimise the Council's vulnerability to legal challenge as there is not currently a level playing field with the independent sector.

2.2 Investigation of Option 2 .

2.2.1 Option 2 clearly has advantages, including retaining control over the beds in an increasingly fragile market.

2.2.2 However, the Council would need to invest in the region of £1m to clear a backlog of routine maintenance. So far, the Council has been unable to fund this programme of work given heavy demands upon capital expenditure.

The £1m does not include the costs of possible additional requirements arising from increased Care Standards provisionally scheduled for 2007. Should the proposed standards be implemented then around 75% of the current rooms would not conform, and the Council would then have to consider the future viability of the homes. We understand from WAG that additional funds will become available in 2004-2006 to

support Councils' compliance with the capital costs of the new standards. However, the distribution formula is not clear, nor is the link with the new prudential borrowing scheme.

2.2.3 Funding future developments. Best practice in models of care for older people means that, over time, we will need to alter the range of services provided by the homes. For example, this could include a) provision of nursing beds, b) intermediate care beds including rehabilitation c) extra care (a new form of very sheltered housing). If these new models are pursued, they will require significant additional investment.

2.2.4 Summary. Given the range of demands - maintenance, compliance with new standards, service developments, and demands for capital financing generally - it is not clear that the required investment will be affordable by the Council acting on its own.

2.3 Investigating Options 4/5

2.3.1 While Options 4 and 5 could be pursued separately, they could also be amalgamated, and this is how the Best Value Group has considered them. Since December the Best Value Group has had further discussions with :

- a) Housing Associations
- b) A representative from BUPA
- c) The North Wales Nursing and Residential Care Homes Association

in relation to both Options 4 and 5.

These groups were identified as representative of possible partners in the event of a formal partner being sought.

2.3.2 Advantages and disadvantages. The advantage of partners is that they can access development funds not available to the Council. In addition, some potential partners have developed expertise in assisting Councils to re-model and develop services. Any partnership, however, incurs costs, e.g. legal costs and initial discussions with potential partners would have to enable a rapid assessment of such costs as well as potential areas of savings. The impact of TUPE would be central to these discussions.

2.3.3 Partnership with the NHS. The Best Value Group are aware that it is difficult for the NHS to access capital funds, as it is for the Council. However, they are still keen to investigate partnership working with the NHS and the recent formation of the Strategic Partnership Board for Health and Well-being, and the establishment of Denbighshire's Local Health Board may well provide a useful context in which these discussions can take place. One possibility therefore would be a three way partnership between the Council, the NHS and external body. This might provide the opportunity to remodel services, e.g. through the provision of some nursing beds or other community based health services.

2.3.4 Criteria for a suitable partner. In discussing possible partnership, the group have been strongly of the opinion that the Council needs to retain control over the provision of some residential places in Denbighshire. The group believes that this would best be achieved by seeking a partner that would be able to bring with it a level of investment that is not attainable by the Council. In developing such a partnership, the Council would need to be assured that measures are in place to improve the quality of care and the quality of life for residents within the homes. At the same time such a partnership would need to bring with it a level of protection for existing staff.

2.3.5 Potential procurement process. Any partnership solution would need to be developed within the Council's Procurement Strategy which would provide the opportunity to secure high quality, cost effective services that meet the needs of

vulnerable older people in Denbighshire. The Procurement requirements would involve further consultation with residents, families, staff and their Unions. Appendix 1 sets out, in outline, the stages in the procurement process, and indicates some of the standards the Best Value Group would recommend should be included in any specification.

2.3.6 It is plain that any procurement process would need to have broad member involvement so as to secure continuing support. It is suggested, therefore, that any procurement process be overseen by a Member/Officer Working Group, of which the member representatives should comprise the Chair of the Personal Services Scrutiny Committee, the Chair of the Resources Scrutiny Committee, the lead members for Health and Wellbeing, Finance and Communications, and the Chair of the Asset Management Committee.

2.3.7 Terms and conditions. Whatever the option pursued, there remains an urgent need to make progress on the revision of Terms and Conditions of staff as they contribute to the significantly higher unit cost of in house provision when compared with the Independent Sector (see Appendix 2). A further negotiating meeting is scheduled with the Trades Unions on March 20th and a verbal update will be available at the Cabinet meeting. Any revision of terms and conditions will result in some savings but will not lead to a unit cost comparable to that of the Independent Sector. Similarly partnering arrangements will bring added value and some potential reduction of current unit costs, but again would not lead to direct comparability with unit costs in the Independent Sector.

3 POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION.

The arranging of residential care is a duty placed upon Local Authorities under Section 21 of the National Assistance Act 1948. The Council is also acting under the Local Government Act 1999 (Best Value Legislation).

4 COST IMPLICATIONS

A project manager will be required to take any partnership work forward, and such provision is within the Directorates budget for 2003/04. It is difficult to cost the full process at this time, but there is additional provision of £25k for 2003/04. Information from the external consultant to the group indicates overall costs of between £60,000 and £100,000 for this type of partnership.

5 FINANCIAL CONTROLLER STATEMENT

There are significant financial implications to the Council if a Judicial Review was successfully brought by the Private Providers within the Independent Sector. In addition, Directorate costs are in the region of £175,000 (this includes Team Manager costs, and apportionment of other staff e.g. Finance Officer, Planning Officer, Staff Development and Training Officers etc.). These costs have been left out of the Best Value equation but will continue to be incurred by the Council.

6 CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

6.1 The options analysis was fully discussed at the Best Value Project Review Group which includes Elected Members and Trade Union representatives. Meetings have been held with staff groups in all four of the homes. Further arrangements will be made to consult with residents and families.

6.2 It is plain that there is considerable interest among all members in this decision. Under the legislation, and Denbighshire's constitution, it is an executive decision.

6.3 However, if there is a desire for all members to express their views, especially on the proposal to enter into a partnership with a party other than the NHS, then

(a) the Personal Services Scrutiny Committee can resolve, at its next meeting after 25 March, that the full Council should exercise its functions under s 21 (2) (a) of the Local Government Act 2000 in respect of the Cabinet's decision. The full Council can then consider the matter at its "business" meeting on 13 May and resolve, if it wishes, to ask the Cabinet to consider its decision again.

(b) pending any consideration by Council, steps would not be taken to implement any partnership arrangement (except in relation to development of partnership work with the NHS).

7 IMPLICATIONS ON OTHER POLICY AREAS INCLUDING CORPORATE

The different options have a range of potential impacts including economic development implications, personnel impacts and opportunities for developing health/social care working.

8 RECOMMENDATION

1. That Members agree that the Council, through its Procurement Strategy, seeks initial expressions of interest from potential partners, including the NHS, to secure the long term and future needs of the residents and staff of the homes (Option 4/5)
2. In the event that potential partners are not acceptable, the Council will further investigate securing the level of investment to safeguard the future of the homes.(Option 2)
3. That urgent progress is made on Terms and Conditions.

OUTLINE PARTNERSHIP PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Below is an outline of what the partnership procurement process might look like:

Stage I

Before entering into the partnership procurement process, Denbighshire would have to be very clear about what it sought to achieve, and the specification of any potential partner. Any decision would then have to be measured against principles and objectives laid out in the specification. Staff, residents and families could be involved in formulating the specification for the potential provider along with the Member/Officer Working Group. Principles and objectives might include

- * provider will have to be willing to work with the Council and the NHS
- * provider will have to have proven track record of high performing service delivery, including quality assurance and staff development systems.
- * provider will have to be willing to enter into flexible contract, enabling renegotiation and development of new facilities
- * all of the homes will be kept to CSIW requirements.
- * the current number of beds will remain
- * Terms & Conditions of existing staff at the time of the transfer will (stating degree of protection required).....

Stage II

Expressions of interest and shortlisting.

- ◆ Specification of interest pack to be sent out, for example including demographic information on an area basis, structural survey on the homes, occupancy rates, staff terms and conditions and profiles, service development interest
- ◆ Providers respond.
- ◆ Long listing process . This could include inviting providers to attend a selection process, potentially involving Central Finance, Personnel, Property Services, with individual interviews.
- ◆ *If no satisfactory expressions of interest were received, the Cabinet could decide to revert to Option 2 at this point*
- ◆ Long shortlist agreed.
- ◆ Member and Officer Group visit establishments run by the shortlisted providers over a defined timescale.
- ◆ Structured feedback collected from the visits. Information collated and put into an overview report.
- ◆ *If the Member and Officer Group felt there were no satisfactory potential partners, the Cabinet could decide to revert to Option 2 at this point*
- ◆ Shortlist of providers identified and invited to tender formally

Stage III

- ◆ Formal tendering process

Stage IV

- ◆ Agreement of contract- including
- ◆ Contract period and breaks, % of beds contracted and over what time period, contract monitoring, standards and quality assurance systems, investment, staff terms and conditions, involvement of elected members

Residential Homes Best Value Review.

Comparison of Unit Costs between our own Part III Homes, and the Purchasing of Care from the Independent Sector 2001/02.

Per Bed per Client Week	All 4 Part III Homes	All 4 Part III Homes	Purchase of Care	Charitable Trust Provider
	(Actual Occupancy)	(including Reserved Beds)	Elderly / Very Dependent Elderly Rate	
Employees	£312	£297		£141
Premises	£27	£26		£40
Transport /Supplies	£20	£19		£18
Direct Costs	£359	£342	£234 or £280	£199
Capital Charges	£21	£20	0	£6
Central Estab. Charges	£8	£7	£10	£0
Accountancy /Audit				3
Total	£388	£369	£244 or £290	£208

CABINET MEMBER: Councillor M A German, Lead Member for the Environment

DATE: 25th March 2003

SUBJECT: Green Spaces Options Appraisal Report

1 Decision Sought

- 1.1 To note the findings of the Green Spaces Best Value team, and to adopt the recommendations identified in the Options Appraisal Report (see Appendix 1 for Executive Summary).
- 1.2 To adopt the Improvement Plan for Green Spaces.
- 1.3 To consider and adopt the revised Aims and Objectives drawn up by the review team for the future management of Green Spaces.
- 1.4 To agree that the current grounds maintenance contracts can be "rolled over" from 31st March 2003 pending the re-tendering of a new contract for the maintenance of Green Spaces no later than the 1st April 2004.

2 Reasons For Seeking Decision

- 2.1 The Best Value Review Team has been considering the management of Green Spaces for some time within the Authority. The internal group of officers, and in an attempt to make progress was making limited progress, external consultants were appointed to undertake a detailed analysis of the information gleaned by the Best Value team, and to assess options for the improvement of the service, and make recommendations for the future. A detailed report has now been received, and is appended to this report as Appendix 1. The report is critical of the way in which the service is provided within the Authority, but sets out a number of key recommendations for implementation, if the quality of the service is to be improved in the future.
- 2.2 The key findings of the report are as follows: -
 - (i) The current arrangements for providing the service are fragmented, with too many officers from various departments involved in overseeing the delivery of Green Spaces maintenance.
 - (ii) The differing methods of providing the service in parts of the county do not ensure a consistent level of provision, for Green Space maintenance in Denbighshire. Evidence suggests that the costs of service provision in the north of the county where Contract Services undertake the work are higher than the industry norm.
 - (iii) The report identifies a significant shortfall in the base information for the service, and if a meaningful process of improvement is to take place this shortfall needs to be addressed as quickly as possible. Resources need to be identified, to tackle the key areas of deficiency, notably land ownership information and information on the service responsible for managing particular Green areas. Although property officers are currently undertaking this work, the timescale needs reducing considerably.
 - (iv) The Review has identified that deficiencies in management information systems and reporting mechanisms within the county council need addressing, to aid, develop and improve the levels of service to meet our customer's aspirations. Increasing use of IT systems and particularly GIS will ensure that all Green Spaces are clearly identified, and can be monitored and managed appropriately.
 - (v) The review has identified that clear objectives and policies governing the provision of the service, needs to be developed as soon as possible. This includes the drawing up of a Green Space Strategy following consultation with users and residents, and the implementation of the actions emerging from that Green Space Strategy.

- (vi) The Review has identified that other services undertaken with the county council overlap that of Green Spaces. The recent District Audit report 'Street Scene', highlights the importance of managing of Green Spaces in co-operation with litter-picking on streets, road sweeping, weed control, sand clearing, etc.
- 2.3 In the light of the findings of the Review, an action plan has been drawn up, to begin the process of tackling the issues, which emerge from the Review, and the action plan is included as Appendix 2 to this report. The key recommendations for improving the service which are contained within the Option Appraisal Report and Improvement Plan, are as set out below: -
- (i) All areas of Green Space maintenance within the county, should be subject to a new Green Spaces Maintenance Contract, which should be tendered as soon as possible, the tender documentation incorporating a mechanism for developing ongoing improvements to the levels of service provided, with incentives for so doing. It is recommended that the new contract be tendered so as to commence no later than the 1st April 2004 and that opportunities for both existing contractors to tender for the new contract be given.
- (ii) The existing Grounds Maintenance Contracts, come to an end on the 31st March 2003. In the light of the fact that the Best Value Inspection will not take place until April, and that significant improvements to the performance management systems and the nature of the contract are required, it is recommended that the existing contracts be "rolled over" to the commencement date of the new contract, no later than the 31st March 2004.
- (iii) It is recommended that the management of Green Space within Denbighshire County Council becomes the remit of a single service within one Directorate. Information on current spend and budget allocations is included as Appendix 3.
- (iv) It is recommended that the Council should commit to the development of a Green Space Strategy, based on the information obtained as a result of consultation within the Authority and with users, with the recommendations from that Green Space Strategy being included in the new Best Value Contract through a system of financial incentives for performance.
- (v) It is recommended that the new contract should include targets for income generation, for the provision of the service.
- (vi) It is recommended that greater use of IT is made in the management of the service in the future, in particular the development of new performance and management information systems, and a countywide use of GIS for managing the activity.
- (vii) Key issues for inclusion within the new Green Spaces Strategy are the crosscutting themes of equality, sustainability, social inclusion and access for all. A program aimed at improving performance in these key areas, will be developed within the Strategy.
- 2.4 The work identified as being required by the Review, and the Implementation Plan has been developed to affect the improvements represent a major challenge to the Authority. Change is necessary however the change must be logical, and capable of being delivered within achievable timescales. Nevertheless with the extent of change required in order to improve the provision of the service, these changes are not going to happen overnight.
- 2.5 The critical element in this report is the tendering for a new Green Spaces Maintenance Contract for the county, to take effect from 1st April 2004. It is considered that this new contract, coupled with changes in the working practices currently adopted, centralisation of the service into a single point within the Authority, and the introduction of a new performance management system will significantly improve the current level of service provision in Denbighshire.
- 2.6 It is considered that the approach suggested will result in the following benefits to the Authority: -

- (i) A consistent approach to grounds maintenance and landscape management throughout Denbighshire. The development of a single policy aimed at securing the highest standards of maintenance but an acceptable level of cost will aim to improve levels of customer satisfaction.
- (ii) A new contract standard through a competitive process will ensure that value for money is obtained by the County Council.
- (iii) The development of a new strategy for managing green spaces together with robust performance management and monitoring systems will enable improvements in the level of service provided to be quantified and measured over the life of the contract.
- (iv) A new contract will allow for flexibility in the service provided so that improvements can be developed over the life of the contract. This includes opportunities for local working and joint commissioning.
- (v) A single directorate having responsibility for green spaces management will increase opportunities for joint service provision with other 'Street Scene' services.

3 Power to Make Decision

- 3.1 This review has been undertaken through the requirements of the Local Government Act 1999.
- 3.2 The Corporate Best Value Review Timetable identified that the Green Spaces Best Value Service Review would be undertaken in year 2 of the 5 year Review Timetable.

4 Cost Implications

- 4.1 The costs associated with delivering all of the recommendations set out above could be significant. It may however be possible for some of these costs to be contained within existing budgets, particularly where staffing resources can be utilised to develop the new framework. A further report will be prepared for Cabinet in the future, detailing the costs associated with implementing the action plan, as the project progresses.

5 Financial Controller Statement

Likely costs from April 2004 will need to be clearly identified and reported further to Cabinet to ensure any cost implications can be considered as part of the budget setting exercise for 2004/5.

6 Consultation Carried Out

- 6.1 Considerable amount of consultation has taken place throughout the Review process, and this is identified in the Option Appraisal Report, together with a further consultation and work undertaken by the consultant. From this consultation, an initial view about the quality of the service has been achieved. Further consultation will be required, as the consultation to date is not fully representative of the county, and a number of key interest groups need to be consulted.
- 6.2 It is recommended that a detailed questionnaire be sent out to some 10% of residents within Denbighshire, a total of 4,100 properties, which will provide the core information from which to develop the new Green Space Strategy.

7 Implications On Other Policy Areas Including Corporate

- 7.1 Documents such as the District Audit Report 'Street Scene', confirm the significant impact that public environment and public realm areas have on the image of a county. The Review has identified that maintenance of Green Spaces, and the benefits that Green Spaces can bring to the population and economy of the county is currently underestimated. A fact, which was recognised by the Authority in its review of priorities last year. The need to improve the

quality of public realm within the County, is therefore clear and the appropriate mechanisms to improve on the level of service currently provided are needed.

- 7.2 Green spaces within Denbighshire are most often the areas on which a first impression of the county is derived; it is imperative therefore that the service is improved and given the standing and priority it deserves in the County's budgeting processes. Both central government and the National Assembly are developing new initiatives, which are raising the political profile of this service, and it is essential that Denbighshire take these on board and ensure that the service is being provided as effectively as possible.

8 Recommendation

- 8.1 The Cabinet is invited to adopt the recommendations outlined within the Option Appraisal Report, and the Improvement Plan, both of which are appended to this report. The Cabinet is invited to note that further investigation works are being undertaken, which will lead to further recommendations for the improvement of this critical area of service.



GREEN SPACES

REPORT &

OPTIONS **APPRAISAL**

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Best Value Review Of Denbighshire County Council's Greenspace

The Objectives of the Review

The objectives of the Review were to challenge the way that the service is currently provided, to ascertain how good the Service is, to determine customer satisfaction and to assess whether or not providing the service in another way would improve it.

A desirable outcome of the Review is to have in place all of the necessary procedures to be able to show continuous improvement annually, to involve the residents in setting and monitoring standards regularly and to be able to produce a method of working that increases quality whilst minimising costs.

Scope of the Review

The scope of the Review covered all greenspaces managed and maintained by Denbighshire County Council.

This included the maintenance of and green space in or around–

- Cemeteries
- Play areas
- Housing Estates
- Highway and Public Rights of Way verges
- Schools, Libraries and Colleges
- Sports Centres and fields
- Industrial Estates
- Country parks and other countryside areas

Greater detail of the areas covered is provided in Appendix 1

Much of the greenspace is maintained under contract, with two contractors providing the service. In the north, the contractor is Contract Services, the in-house contractor. Sodexo Land Technology Ltd, an external contractor, maintains the south of the County.

Some Town Councils maintain some smaller parcels of land and the Social Services' greenspaces are looked after by caretakers who also undertake other duties on the site

whilst volunteers maintain countryside areas; verges and Public Rights of Way are maintained by individual contracts.

The Review Team and the Review Process

The Review Team consisted of representatives from three directorates who have responsibility for providing the Greenspace Service, a Scrutiny Committee member, the Council's Best Value Officer, a finance officer, representatives from the schools, unions and tenants organisations and a Disability representative. The full list is provided in Appendix 2.

In addition, an external consultant was also employed to provide an external and professional overview, and to assist the Council in the more difficult areas of 'challenge' and 'compete'.

The review process consisted of collecting as much data as possible on the areas covered by the scope of the review, analysing it and drawing conclusions from that analysis. At the same time, areas were identified where little information was currently available and efforts were made to collect information in those areas too. Knowledge of users' and non users' views was identified as a weakness early on and efforts were made to address this through the issue of a simple questionnaire.

Links with other Reviews

This is not the first Review that the Council has undertaken, and therefore the lessons learnt from other Reviews were taken on board. Reviews that have already been carried out by the Council include the Library Service, Housing Rents and Information and Communication Technology, which along with other national reviews were identified as being too narrow in focus. As the next section also highlights, the Council was, and is still, very aware that Best Value and national recognition of the importance of greenspace to the quality of life are high on the government agenda, and it therefore ensured that it looked at the national context on as broad a base as possible.

The National and Local context

It has been estimated that in the UK 33 million people make 2.5 billion visits to green spaces every year. Several recent government initiatives in England have focused on parks provision, including the Urban Taskforce Report, the Urban Parks Programme, the Rethinking Open Space Report and the revision of Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17. All of these have, or will have in the near future, a direct impact on what is happening in Wales too.

Given that open spaces, sport and recreation all underpin people's quality of life, certain broad objectives relating to them have been identified nationally. These include:

- ❑ Supporting an urban renaissance – local networks of high quality and well managed and maintained open spaces help to create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe
- ❑ Supporting a rural renewal – the countryside can provide opportunities for recreation and visitors can play an important role in the regeneration of the economies of rural areas contributing to the quality of life and well-being of people who live in rural areas
- ❑ Promoting social inclusion and community cohesion. Well-planned and maintained open spaces can play a major part in improving people's sense of well-being in the place they live. As a focal point for community activities, they can bring together members of deprived communities and provide opportunities for people for social interaction
- ❑ Promoting healthy living and preventing illness, and fostering the social development of children of all ages through play, sporting activity and interaction with others
- ❑ Promoting more sustainable development by ensuring that open spaces, sports and recreational facilities are easily accessible by walking and cycling.

THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES FOR GREENSPACE (the Local Context)

The Council's Statement of Priorities for 2002/3 state:

A. We will focus on our customers and strive to meet their needs in particular for effective basic services

- We will establish a fully bilingual system to provide customers with a single contact point for the delivery of all services either face to face, via the telephone or electronically via the web site.
- We will be an open authority, listening to customer's needs and providing responsive service delivery. Target: area partnerships successfully operating, community strategy to be in place by March 2004
- We will significantly improve our performance in key services by March 2004: benefits, SEN statements, assessments for children in need.

B. We will maximise resources for Denbighshire and use them wisely

- Maximise resources from European and other funding sources: up to £10m from bid-based funding for each year of Objective One.
- Maximise opportunities to generate revenue income through fees and charges to provide funding for service improvements, e.g. charging for toilets to increase the number of sustainable service outlets and improve service quality.
- We will identify savings to fund improvements to services
- Stimulate the local economy by supporting an integrated procurement policy, e.g. joint ventures

C. We will invest in our elected Members and staff

- By April 2004, introduce system of appointments to grades rather than jobs - to create a more flexible workforce

D. We will improve the image of Denbighshire

- Prioritise spending in 2003-04 and later years on services which improve the look of the area:
 - Public conveniences
 - Street cleansing
 - Replacement of all sign referring to abolished councils by March 2005
 - Removing visible signs of dereliction and deprivation
- We will seek to enhance the profile of tourism within Denbighshire and actively seek to attract more visitors to the area. The County will also adopt a more visible presence at Llangollen International Eisteddfod and in other venues/facilities from 2003 onwards.

Aims of the Service

The aims for the Service have been revised in the light of this Review. They are -

- To manage and maintain the environment in harmony with the needs and aspirations of residents and visitors to Denbighshire
- To work in partnership with external organisations, local communities and local labour

- To maximise revenue potential
- To provide, and improve, safe and accessible provision for use by all sectors of the community
- To educate residents and visitors to Denbighshire in their responsibilities for helping to sustain the natural environment and in particular to reduce the amount of fly tipping, vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Strategic Coherence

It is easy to see that the Greenspace Service could, and should, contribute directly to the Council's Statement of Priorities, but this Review has shown that there are a number of weaknesses that need to be overcome before this can happen. The weaknesses are outlined below and discussed in greater detail throughout the remainder of this report.

Weaknesses

- Too many directorates/divisions involved in the running of the service
- No formal consultation strategy
- Poor information base in terms of plans showing what is owned and the areas that require work
- Poor public perception of the work on the ground in many areas, especially highway verges
- High cost for certain aspects of work provided by the in-house team
- A lack of strategic co-ordination and forward planning
- A limited amount of monitoring being carried out
- No set standard to work to in the North of the County
- No Council wide co-ordination in the use of a geographic mapping system

Current Position

Service History - brief description

The current service arose through the reorganisation of four Councils into one. Many of the staff were transferred from three of the four councils and that has led to the number of staff and directorates being involved in the delivery of the greenspace service being more than one would sensibly choose.

Responsibilities

Responsibility for the service is shared among three directorates, Environment, Life-long Learning and Personal Services. Responsibility for monitoring is similarly spread out. The Environment Directorate, since the amalgamation of Environment and Contract Services in January 2003, monitors the grounds maintenance contracts in the north and south. For all other areas, - such as Cemeteries, Play areas, rural highway verges, public rights of way, trees, Social Services sites and countryside areas - operational staff from the relevant Directorate undertake the monitoring. There is no overall co-ordination of the work or the monitoring due to this scatter-gun approach.

Why the service was developed this way

The reason why the service is still in this format is purely historical. When the four authorities combined to form Denbighshire the old methods also came across and have essentially remained the same since the reorganisation.

Resources

Approximately £2.5 million is spent on the Greenspace services. A detailed breakdown is provided in Appendix 3

The total number of staff employed by the service varies seasonally with more staff involved in the summer (seasonal staff numbers increase for the north by 11 and on the Sodexo contracts by 5. In the north of the County, Contract Services employ a maximum of 28 staff in the summer, reducing to 17 over the winter period. Sodexo employ a maximum of ten reducing to 4 in the Denbigh /Ruthin area with 5 operational staff in the Dee Valley dropping to 2.

Current expenditure on the contracts amounts to £932,080, which means that each member of staff is costing approx. £29,500. Overall, this figure is slightly high compared with the average figure in England, and would indicate that each member of staff is earning an average of about £16,000 per annum.

	Summer	Winter	fte	cost of contract	cost per member of staff
Contract Services	28	17	22.5	695,511.00	30,911.60
Sodexo	12	6	9	236,569.00	26,285.44
totals	40	23	31.5	932,080.00	29,589.84

Current contribution to the corporate, local and national agendas

Any contribution at present tends to be by default rather than design. Denbighshire is an area of outstanding natural beauty but the lack of co-ordinated management with regard to its greenspace is not enhancing this natural asset. This must be having an effect on the amount of money being generated through tourism and local businesses.

The way that links could, and will in the longer term, be made to the corporate agenda are provided on the next page.

Links with other Strategies and Objectives

The following table links some very important strategic issues with the Greenspace Service. It will hopefully aid understand how the Service offers substantial lifestyle benefits to all those who use it. It should also assist those who are responsible for such policies. The Review Team feels that there is a need for better communication between the policy formulators and service providers.

<p>'Cross Cutting' Objectives</p>	<p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Pack/CD-ROM. Schools pack to promote desktop and actual work within Greenspace. • "Friends" and clubs to be involved in fund raising and actual involvement in educational/awareness events within Greenspace e.g.history/nature/sport/ walks • Interactive web page to be set up • Greenspace could act as work placement for schools/others and as a training base for 'Friends' and Greenspaces staff • Child development through challenging playground activities. Could be linked to the provision of a supervised play area. • Horticultural/Wildlife education using Greenspaces horticultural fabric as a resource 	<p>POTENTIAL PARTNERS</p> <p>Voluntary Residents Schools Colleges Business</p>
<p>Sustainable Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration and management of Greenspace to Agenda 21 targets, linking with the Council's Environmental Policy • Development of Greenspace to ensure that the future generations also have something to be proud of. • Involvement of the whole community in fundraising, management decisions and physical involvement in running events. • Effective management of the future landscape 	<p>To be developed</p>

Social Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a pricing structure to ensure affordable access to sports provision (e.g. bowls, tennis) for all sectors • Free use of Greenspace facilities for small scale events • Running events that bring accessible and affordable opportunities to deprived areas of the County • Develop policies for the reduction of crime and antisocial behaviour • Low cost hire or free use of equipment 	tbc
Social and Economic Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration and improved management of Greenspace will lead to inward investment and greater usage and income from Greenspace • There must be links with the new Tourism Strategy for the County, which are non-existent at present, indicating the lack of communication at present within the overall organisation. • Greenspace could be used to assist in generating community empowerment and involvement 	tbc
Health and Well being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GP Referral scheme for Green Gyms to be linked in with the Health and Well being strategies that are being developed nationally and locally. 	tbc

Current partnerships, contracts and agreements

This Review has identified that there are too many internal partnerships, leading to many difficulties in terms of monitoring or even setting acceptable standards. There is not any formal contract or agreement with Contract Services, who, until January 2003, had been responsible for monitoring themselves.

There is a formal contract with Sodexo, which expires on 31st March 2003

The existing agreements with these two contractors, and other agreements with clients are included in Appendix 4

The Review found that there were no charters or agreements with the end user, who were also not receiving any information informing them about the standards that they could expect in return for paying for the services. Work is ongoing to improve this.

Current expenditure and income

Details of current expenditure and income are provided in Appendix 5

Current management and structure

The management of the Council's greenspace is spread over three directorates and among many officers. This makes it difficult for officers and the public to know whom to contact, and a lot of officer time is wasted due to the lack of a simple structure and clear ownership. Due to this fragmentation the Review Team have been unable to provide a clear structure or family tree that shows how Greenspace in the County is managed.

THE FOUR C'S

Approach to Challenge

The Review Team considers that the Challenge aspect of the 4 C's is more an attitude of mind than a specific "one off" part of a Review. It should be an in built part of day-to-day management. The way that the Service links with the Corporate Vision, the need for the service and the approach taken in this Review to consultation, comparison, and how competitive the services are, have therefore all been challenged.

Approach to consultation and comparison

The approach to consultation and comparison has been to compare and consult with as many stakeholders and alternative providers as possible. We have objectively measured our performance against that of others, and have sought the views of users and non-users on the performance of the service. This data was then analysed and clear and objective conclusions were drawn from it regarding competitiveness.

Approach to competitiveness

We have assessed the competitiveness of our performance by analysing how we are performing against the best in the public and the private sector. Defining the best was not easy for these services as there are not many specific BVPI's to relate to. We have arranged for a Shadow Bid to be prepared to show how competitive we are.

Challenge

The Challenge to the service has been ongoing throughout the review with the process having taken many forms, these have included:

- A SWOT Analysis (see Appendix 7)
- A Challenge Day where a wide range of interested organisations were invited (see Challenge Day Minutes and analysis of days findings Appendix 7)
- Consultation with service users and providers
- Comparison with other Councils in England and Wales

The Challenge to the service, because of its current situation is also occurring through the ongoing meetings of the review team. Challenge is ongoing and integral to the potential for improvement of the service, the provision of value for money and ongoing service development.

The Review Team recognise that the specific questions about the service are:

1. why is it provided?
2. who should or could provide it?
3. what needs to be done to improve it?

These have been answered in various guises through all the aspects identified above and for the service to improve, the service provider must constantly ask those questions through continued appraisal and Performance Indicators.

The Challenge Day also benefited from the inclusion of Mike Palmer a Best Value Auditor who was present for this part of the process (see comments attached to the above minutes).

The need for the service

Although the service is essentially a non-statutory one, there are certain elements of it that are affected because they are impacted on by legislation.

- **Highways Act** – Which affects the management of vegetation to keep sightlines free, etc
- **Environmental Protection Act** – Which requires the Council to keep areas free of litter and dog mess etc
- **Dog Fouling of Land Act**
- **Local Government Act** – Which requires the Council to provide burial space and cemeteries, etc.

However, much of the above would not be applicable if the Council did not provide the service in the first place. It is therefore important to consider the reasons why the Council ought to be the organisation that is providing this Service.

First, there are economic benefits to providing a good service. An attractive environment will attract inward investment and greater tourist numbers. The

provision of high quality venues is a contributor to the reduction in street crime and anti social behaviour. Investing in the landscape and general infrastructure of the towns is likely to lead to an increase in the number of families with greater spending power wishing to move to the area – thereby improving the local economies and the level of income accessible to the local schools.

Secondly, there are social and aesthetic reasons for investing in and improving the greenspace in the County. The reduction in the fear of crime has already been mentioned, but there is also evidence to suggest that people are less likely to suffer from illness if they live in a clean, green and safe environment. This has a knock-on effect in a reduction in the amount of money spent on surgeries and hospitals.

The Review Team believe that the County Council, as the organisation responsible for schools, transport, hospitals, etc, is in the best position to co-ordinate a joined up approach to the provision of a range of services that will lead to greater social inclusion, better education, and economic regeneration within the County.

Who the Service is for

It is important that those who provide the service are aware of who the service is being provided for. All of the key staff were interviewed by the external consultant to ascertain their views on the current performance and how they thought that the service could be improved. The interviews indicated that the contractors providing the service are well aware of who the end customers are, but that some client officers, whose primary role was not greenspace management, saw the service as an end in itself rather than something to get right for the benefit of the taxpayers and the environment in which they live.

Scrutiny Committee

Members, role and responsibilities

External consultants

The external consultancy that was used to assist with the Review was the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management, one of the strategic partners in the new 'CABE (Commission for Architecture & Built Environment) Space' initiative being set up by the Government in England to co-ordinate the work of greenspace agencies across the country.

Challenge Summary

The challenge aspect of the Review looked at the internal workings of the Council and how the service is currently managed and delivered. The Review Team identified that the work is provided in a very disjointed way, with too many directorates and too many staff having responsibility for Greenspace. It also found that there was no means of identifying the land ownership for all areas, no maps for, or monitoring of, the north of the County and no forward planning for the Service. There is a need for fundamental change.

Consultation

Consultation was undertaken using several different methods.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were sent to four **key groups** –

- The Denbighshire 500 – A Citizen’s Panel who are representative of the County as a whole. 334 responses were received
- Clients – Including Schools, other directorates, sports clubs, other external clients, such as the fire service etc
- Town and Community Councils
- The staff

The response levels were good with the exception of returns from the staff. The responses and detailed analysis are provided in Appendix 6

Analysis of the questionnaires identified the following **key points** –

- A greater need to consult with the end users
- More control needed over expenditure
- Grass cutting gives concern, especially on grass verges
- More and better play areas are required
- Litter needs to be reduced and better managed

The Review Team were clear that there is a need to obtain wide ranging views on the performance of the service and ideas and suggestions for improvement. However, the lack of a strategic approach to consultation and the lack of a mechanism for tying the desired improvements into work and improvement on the ground were seen as issues that could not as yet be dealt with but were issues that needed to be addressed in the Improvement Plan.

In short, there is a need to consult regularly and systematically on an ongoing basis to drive improvement.

Denbighshire 500

The Council received 334 out of 500 responses in relation to the questionnaire that was sent out to the Denbighshire 500 – a group that is intended to be representative of the County as a whole.

Focus Groups

Several focus group style meetings were held during the course of the Review.

- The challenge day
- Feedback information from the library service review,
- Schools Working Party and
- Riverside Park Steering Group.

Information from these meetings is provided in Appendix 7

The Denbighshire Tenants Federation also fed information through the Housing Department regarding their views on Council Housing Estates. The local District Audit Inspector provided valuable information following his attendance during the challenge of the service.

Interviews

The external consultant interviewed and consulted with a wide range of key personnel, and the notes made during the interviews are provided in Appendix 8

Consultation Summary

The results from the consultation have shown the perception of the performance of the service to be relatively poor. But, as the next section shows, although the satisfaction ratings are not particularly good, they sometimes show that people are dissatisfied with the overall appearance rather than the work of the Council. For example, it would not be possible for a member of the public to know who is responsible for the grass verges. They could therefore be passing judgement on a piece of land that is owned and managed by a person or organisation other than the Council. Until the Council is fully aware itself of what it owns, and what it does not, and can explain this to the consultees, it will not be able to get reliable and accurate information about these aspects of the service.

Consultation on aspects of the Service for which the Council knows it is responsible have produced relatively poor results and poor satisfaction ratings in many areas. Once again, this would point to the need for fundamental change.

Comparison

There are no BVPI comparators that provide any meaningful information. Knowing the cost of something without knowing the quality provided for that cost makes comparison meaningless, and the BVPI's that relate to greenspace do not take quality into account. The Review Team has, nonetheless, collected a lot of data but it would be rash to draw any conclusions from the fact that the Council appears to be dearer or cheaper than any other organisation.

The comparative data collected on costs and/or frequency of operation is shown in Appendix 9. Information is provided on most aspects of the service including grasscutting, shrub and flowerbeds, and cemetery maintenance.

One area where direct cost comparison could be considered reasonable, is in the amount charged by the two contractors currently used by the Council to provide a grounds maintenance service. Analysis of some of the costs was undertaken by the in-house audit team and it would appear that the in-house contractor is more expensive than the external contractor, certainly in the areas chosen at random for the mini review. The full internal audit report is provided in Appendix 10

The Review Team therefore believes that a high priority for the Council is to develop some meaningful local performance indicators that are based on cleanliness, grasscutting and safety.

It would be beneficial if these could be based on a system that is already being used by other Councils to allow direct comparison and ongoing benchmarking.

Other Cost comparators

We have had a Shadow Bid carried out which showed that the cost of the Service is slightly high in terms of cost. (Please see Appendix 11)

Quality Comparators

The external consultant has assessed the quality of the work on the ground by spending two days travelling around the area. His conclusion was that the work that is undertaken by the County is done reasonably well. However, the overall appearance of the County is one of untidiness. This is, in the external consultant's opinion, a reflection of the lack of co-ordination and the lack of a strategic approach, (which has already been referred to earlier in this report). There are many pieces of badly or totally un-maintained land adjacent to that which is maintained by the County. Regardless of how good the County's maintenance is, the site will always look unkempt in the eyes of the public and the eyes of anyone else who is visiting the County.

The quality of County verge cutting and the quality of maintenance of the housing estates are regarded by the external consultant to be on a par with many authorities in England. It is not perfect but is not as bad as the satisfaction ratings from the consultation would indicate. (As stated previously, the satisfaction ratings for grasscutting cannot be relied upon until the County are able to get ratings purely based on the work for which they are responsible)

Although this is a very subjective view, the consultant does have six years experience of auditing sites from the customers' perspective and the Review Team consider that his experience and expertise in this area provides reliable qualitative information. (Indeed, it could be argued that the only way to get truly representative information on how one site compares with another on qualitative grounds is either to obtain one person's opinion on both sites or to ask a huge number of people and average out the results. **The Review Team is recommending that both methods be adopted consistently in future and that the results are compared annually to gauge continuous improvement.**)

The result of this comparison exercise is that we are in reality not performing badly in terms of work execution and delivery, but are seen to be performing poorly due to the inability to explain to users and others exactly what we are responsible for, or why we are unable to co-ordinate the work such that the whole County looks clean, green and safe. It is the Review Team's recommendation that this be a key priority in the coming months.

Comparison Summary

The lack of any meaningful BVPI's and the lack of any local performance indicators have made comparison difficult. However, in terms of cost, it is the Review Team's view that the County is no more expensive than any other similar County Council. In terms of quality, Denbighshire is seen by the external consultant as reasonable at doing the work, but as poor in organising it. We are being efficient, but very ineffective, and there is a need for change.

Compete

Procurement Strategy

The Council's procurement strategy is currently being reviewed at the time of writing (Feb 2003).

Current Procurement Methods

The County is currently using three styles of contract–

1. An in house pilot in Rhyl, Prestatyn
2. A frequency based contract in Denbigh and Ruthin
3. An output based contract in the Dee Valley

All three contracts are due to terminate at the end of March 2003. Proposals for what happens then are included in the Improvement Plan.

Other work is secured in a number of ways-

- Public Rights of way is let on an annual input based contract to an external contractor
- Highways verges are let on an open-ended input based contract to Contract Services
- Greenspaces around Social Services sites are maintained by a local caretaker along with other duties
- Countryside areas are maintained by wardens and volunteers
- Cemeteries are maintained by Contract Services in the north and central areas but by Sodexo in the Dee Valley
- Play areas are maintained by Contract Services, the private sector, local community councils and trusts
- Other Council owned land is maintained by Town Councils using a mixture of Contract Services and external contractors
- New schemes on industrial estates are maintained either by Contract Services or by an external contractor.

It is very clear that the Council has no aversion to the use of external contractors, or any preconception about the way a service ought to be delivered. However, it is also clear that there is very little logic in the way that services are currently procured, managed or monitored.

In terms of performance, and linking procurement method with desirable outcomes, the only truly good performers are the social services sites where the tenants are very happy with the work undertaken on their behalf by the caretakers. This use of local

labour, especially in an area that is so large and so rural, and takes so much travelling time, is something that is further considered in the options appraisal

Compete Summary

By pulling together all of the information from the consultation, the comparisons and the shadow bid, and analysing it all objectively, we are able to say that the County is not particularly competitive in some areas but performs better in others.

The key issues are the difficulty in comparing costs, both internally and externally, due to the disparate nature of the way the Service is currently delivered; the inability to ascertain who owns the land that is making the County look untidy, and the need for better consultation to ascertain the needs of the community and to involve them more in setting and monitoring standards

Options for delivery

The Options Appraisal

The Review Team believed that it would be wrong to spend taxpayer's money on looking for alternative options for delivery, until it was known how competitive the service is, and how well those that pay for it, regard it. (If it was perceived to be excellent, then clearly there is little need for step change. If it were perceived to be awful, then radical steps would need to be taken.) This options appraisal was therefore carried out as soon as the Review Team knew the answers to these questions.

Having established that the management and organisation of the Service currently being provided is relatively poor, this would suggest that improvements ought to be brought about by wholesale or radical alteration rather than by incremental change to the existing structures. One radical change has already taken place. Namely the pulling together of Contract Services and the Environment Directorate to make one unit.

However, the Review Team considered it vitally important to look at other options for managing and delivering the service.

Discussions have therefore been held with the following contractors by the external consultant helping with this Review. (Many more contractors were invited to attend or provide information, but they declined the offer)

Grounds Maintenance Operators
Green Leisure
Scion Estates
Contract Services- Denbighshire CC
Sodexo
Brophy

The discussions have shown that there are strong markets within the scope of this Review. Indeed, the Council is already benefiting from the existence of external contractors.

The above-named contractors suggested a number of options for improving the service delivery including -

- Trusts and NFPO's (Not for profit organisations)
- Interim management of the grounds maintenance facility
- Franchising
- Externalisation
- Partnering with existing contractors

Trusts and NFPO's

The Council could effectively begin to lose control of the facilities due to the make up of the Board of Trustees. Trusts also appear to rely heavily on the goodwill and ability of a few to deliver the service and there is no guarantee that these people will always remain within the Trust.

The Review Team also see a potential loss of accountability, regardless of how well the agreement is put together, and this goes against the Corporate Statement of Priorities.

If the Council wishes to retain full control over the services, to be the leader in economic regeneration of the area and to protect the social aspects of service provision (which it clearly does as intimated in the Statement of Priorities) the Review Team does not consider this option feasible.

Comment: Check the terminology

Interim management of the grounds maintenance facility

Suggested by one of the interviewees, this appeared to have some attraction, at first, as an option. The contractor comes into the contracting organisation as a 'bolt on', and runs the services jointly with the existing management. The cost of providing the service and the payment to the managing contractor is met from savings that are made from more efficient results, etc.

If the Contractor is prepared to enter into an agreement whereby he only receives payment if these efficiencies are forthcoming, then it is clearly an attractive option.

In practice, one is talking about an additional set of management staff, which need paying, as well as the profit that the contractor would need to obtain from the operation. The improvement needed to fund this would not, in the Review Teams' opinion, be easy to produce. This option is certainly more viable where there is a lot of room for improvement and the Service is being run badly. This is certainly the case that has been identified through this Review.

There is real commitment from the top to the bottom of the Council to improve matters (as shown by the processes and procedures that have already been put into operation) and the Review Team do not see this as a necessary or desirable option at this stage.

However, if things do not drastically improve as a result of following the preferred option, then this option will be looked at again following an appropriate length of time, say two years, has elapsed. This time is necessary to gauge the success of the preferred option and the other recommendations contained within this report.

Franchising

None of the current service is franchised out, and this is an area for potential development. There are catering concessions, but there is no real franchising.

It would be feasible to franchise out some parts of the Service, such as the running of events. This has positive cost advantages in that it would be possible to negotiate with contractors regarding how the income could be shared. It would also allow the Council to retain full control of the services. However, those areas that are going to be most attractive are the largest income earners, and the Review Team believes that there is just as much scope for the Council to generate the income and retain it in house for inward investment in the service for the benefit of the community. For this to happen, however, the Council needs to reinvest on a regular basis.

The Review Team believes that the options available for franchising events should therefore be investigated as part of the Improvement Plan once the Council's perspective on investment in such areas is clarified

Externalisation

It is possible to externalise the whole of the services, whereas the current position is that approximately 40% is externalised.

One advantage of externalisation is that the contractor would be chosen from among the best in the country (whereas an in house team tends to be chosen from those that live locally). A national contractor has greater access to more facilities and more personnel. For this reason alone the quality would be likely to improve. However, contractors need to make a profit to survive, whereas an in-house team does not, so there is likely to be a cost attached to the increase in quality.

The existence of TUPE also makes externalisation merely a change of management in most cases, and this can lead to frustration when the existing workforce is asked to utilise new working methods, and tends to negate the benefits of a nationally, rather than locally, chosen operator.

One very positive aspect of externalisation is that for many authorities it appears to be the only way to find the desperately needed money for investment into the facilities.

It is estimated that £600,000 would be needed to return to the figures that were available for greenspace management ten years ago. It is feasible that the amount being spent ten years ago was excessive as there is no way of comparing the quality then with the quality now. But it is very likely that the quality is lower nowadays at least partly due to the significantly lower budget available. (See Appendix 12). As an example, to bring Riverside Park, Llangollen up to standard it is estimated that the price of refurbishment is £600k to £1.2m.

Lewisham have recently entered into a PFI type deal with Glendale, whereby Glendale have agreed to lease the land from the Council for a specified period, to only use the land for specified purposes, and to invest relatively large sums of money for

the 10 year contract. This grounds maintenance contract is in effect very similar to the type of contract, which is now almost the norm for leisure centre externalisations. The reason for entering into this type of contract appears to be an inability to fund the necessary programmes of repair and reinvestment. Denbighshire County Council is committed to doing so as shown in the Improvement Plan, but we do not have a very good record in obtaining money from external sources, and -

The Review Team believe that income generation is a key issue that needs to be addressed in the Improvement Plan.

The Comparison of the internal and external contractors would suggest that the external contractor is providing better value for money. However, this comparison was undertaken prior to the in-house team being brought into the Environment Directorate and it is possible that the in-house team could significantly reduce its costs under this new structure.

Partnering

Most of the contractors interviewed expressed an interest in extending the contracts that they have with already existing clients through negotiation thus avoiding the need to go through a competitive process. Most were keen to offer an open book accounting approach, even being prepared to show the amount of profit that they are making.

If one has a good contractor this is an attractive proposition. However, the reason that there are good contractors in existence is very much due to the fact that they were created through competition in the first place. Another point for consideration is that if all of the contractors were to negotiate long term contracts with all of their existing clients then the opportunity for them to take on or find new work would be severely restricted. Status quo and possible stagnation of the Industry could result.

The Review Team does not consider this to be a viable option due to the removal of competition, which is regarded by the Council as necessary to keep improvement and innovation alive.

However, once the Council has worked with its newly introduced Greenspace Performance Management System (outlined in Appendix 13) for a year or two and there is a means of objectively showing that the residents are happy with the service and that the service is improving constantly then there would be sound reason for looking at this option again and possibly staying with the existing contractor because competitiveness would be established annually as part of the overall Performance System.

That concludes the options discussed with the contractors, but the Review Team has considered some further options.

Other options

Status Quo

The Review Team is certain that this is not an option and feels strongly that fundamental change is necessary.

Combined Client and Contractor Roles

The historic split between Client and Contractor established under CCT has undoubtedly led to some duplication of work and to some inefficiency, as well as creating some friction between the two parties. There was scope to reduce these inefficiencies by bringing the existing in house contractor back into the same Department as the Client and rationalising the work output. This took place in January 2003.

The need to link the booking of pitches with their maintenance, and to make things simpler for those that use or wish to use the service has also been identified and will be considered in Year One of the Improvement Plan.

Likewise, there is a need to ensure that there is greater liaison between the Sports Development Officers and other Council clients that use the sites, those that manage and maintain the sites and the public at large that wish to use the pitches, etc.

It is also possible to consider the overall ‘Streetscene’, which would necessitate investigating links between existing contracts for street sweeping, weed control and litter collection as well as looking at the way that other organisations including Town Councils organise such work.

The Council is aware that other authorities, such as Southampton City Council, have co-ordinated their work in this way, and it is an option that is worthy of further consideration. It will be considered as part of the contract management options in the future tendering procedures.

The Use of Local Labour

The most effective working method currently used by the Council appears to be the caretakers at the Social Services sites. The reason for their effectiveness can be attributed to the fact -

- That they are local
- That they do not have to travel to get to the site
- That they have access to their own machinery
- That they are well known to the tenants

It is not yet clear if the cost of each person having their own machinery is something that is not being taken into account when looking at the costs, but that aside, the end result is happy tenants, happy clients and a good standard on the ground.

This methodology is transferable on a larger scale to items such as playground inspections and the opening and closing of gates.

It could also possibly work when it comes to the management of smaller pieces of land. And, even where it would make sense to employ larger organisations to obtain economies of scale - on highway verge cutting for example - it may still make sense to ensure that staff are assigned to patch based working to instil a sense of pride in the work and to let them become known locally.

More time is needed to fully evaluate the pros and cons of this particular option which certainly has some merit, and it will be assessed further as part of the Improvement Plan.

It will have an impact on the way that any future contract documentation is put together, but as the preferred option is to put together a new contract, trial it for six months with a full tendering exercise taking place at the end of 2003, there is time to investigate the 'local working' options properly.

Joint Commissioning

This Review has not considered the possibility of joint commissioning with other neighbouring local authorities, essentially due to lack of time. However, this option is seen as a real possibility for obtaining economies of scale and for all parties to benefit. There appears to be little by way of precedent at the moment, but throughout 2003 the Council is committed to investigating this option further.

Options for Improving the Service other than mere Service Delivery Change

Apart from the alternative forms of service delivery already discussed there are many options available for improving the service. **The Review Team have considered as many as practical in some detail and propose the following solutions-**

- New performance management system (being adopted Feb 03)
- New style specifications (already written)
- Better marketing to raise awareness
- More partnerships
- Improved training Scheme
- Better two way communication with the public and the staff
- More member involvement
- Clearer focus on strategic issues.

A further issue is how to address the required change and the lack of investment in certain areas such as play areas and sports grounds.

For example, as we are not providing the service to the sports teams that they require, would it be more appropriate to lump all of the resources into Centres of Excellence, and close down all of the other 'satellite' pitches that are scattered around the County? Provided this is tied in with the Council's transport strategy so that people can get to this new location it may be a better way of providing the service.

Comment: Is this an appropriate statement or are the pitches already located in one central location.

Clearly, this issue would require at least a year's major consultation and feasibility study in its own right. It provides a good example of how this Best Value Review is merely a snap shot in time. (If this idea had been thought of six months after the Review, it would not make it any less worthy or important.)

It is crucial that if someone has a good idea, either immediately after the Review is undertaken, or at any other time, that the Council is able to accommodate it.

This Review is therefore seen as extremely important, but it is also vital that it is recognised as just a Position Statement that heralds the beginning of some major work over the next five years and beyond.

The Review Team believes that decisions that would have major strategic consequences (such as the Centre of Excellence example mentioned above) should be made carefully and thoughtfully to ensure that the best possible solution is found.

It is therefore recommended that the search for the best alternatives to improve the weaker areas of delivery are not made as knee jerk reactions and that they be the key focus of year one of the Improvement Plan.

Conclusion from the Options Appraisal

The Review Team's conclusion is that the Council should continue to provide the service essentially through the existing contractors but that there should be a **fundamental change** in the way that the service is provided and the way that the contractors are working.

The proposal is therefore to operate to a new contract specification and to adopt a performance management system that will enable improvement to be measured.

This situation will be monitored over the next six months and a new contract will be tendered to commence January 2004, using the new contract documentation, which allows the residents a much greater involvement in the setting and monitoring of standards.

Local working and Joint Commissioning will be investigated with a conclusion being reached by August 2003.

Work will be undertaken using the funds that have been identified, but franchising will be investigated for events, and the Council will investigate means of generating more income from the services.

Income generation will form a requirement of the new contract specification and the Council will therefore be receiving suggestions for this as part of the tendering exercise to be carried out in the latter months of 2003.

The introduction of new systems and methods will lead to the necessary improvements that have been identified.

The Team has also concluded, however, that it is necessary to have a flexible approach to the Improvement Plan so that strategically important ideas and other fundamental changes not yet identified are capable of being dealt with as part of the ongoing management of the Service.

Conclusions and Recommendations on Service Delivery

Although the Review Team is certain that change and improvement are necessary it does not feel that any decision should be made in a short timescale as the pros and cons for the various options are legally, and practically, complicated. **Hence it is proposed that the new contract be let to the Best Value contractor in Jan 2004 utilising the performance management system and a financially incentivised contract.**

This call for caution and common sense in decision-making does not mean that targets cannot be set for improvement, and SMART targets have still been inserted into the Improvement Plan. The Review Team would consider that these targets, and how they would be achieved, would form part of the further discussions with any potential partners.

The greater use of technology, and the development of a Council wide GIS System, is recommended to improve the information available to the public and to get the service in line with e-government targets.

Issues around equality and sustainability, access and social inclusion will also need to be addressed when developing actions for improvement.

Problems to be overcome and how they will be overcome

The key issue is one of culture. The past ten years have taken their toll on budgets and staff morale, and have moved the focus away from service delivery and value for money.

The proposals in the Improvement Plan will address this and bring attention back to the need for a customer driven service that can demonstrate continuous improvement.

We propose to restore the balance by using -

1. New systems
2. New partnerships
3. New approaches

One of the major challenges is the lack of any integration between the work of the County and the other organisations that are responsible for Greenspace Management within Denbighshire.

Another issue is the current separation of the County's work into far too many directorates and among far too many officers.

The Review Team recommends that the management of greenspace becomes the remit of just one division in one directorate.

Customer involvement and commitment

The consultation and comparison performance management system, as described in Appendix 14, will be used annually to seek the views of the public and to compare Denbighshire's sites with those of others.

Links with all the other consultees will be continued and improved upon.

The Review Team recommends that the Council should also be committed to the development of a Greenspace Strategy but believes that this should be developed on the information obtained through the proposed consultation and comparison system. The production of the Strategy will not therefore take place until the Council has at least two years worth of detailed information from the residents and professionals on which to base its future plans.

Conclusions

Current performance

With the exception of the work carried out in the Social Services housing areas, the work is relatively poor in terms of value for money. However, this is due to the lack of integrated management rather than an inability on the part of the workforce to be able to produce reasonable work.

The satisfaction ratings are inevitably low in some areas due to the fact that there are many areas that the public is assessing that are not in the control of the County Council. However, that does not mean that the Council should not take the responsibility for trying to pull all of the landowners together to improve the situation in the whole of the County in order to try to attract more inward investment, more businesses and more tourists.

Required performance

It is very difficult to establish what the top 25% would be for a service of this kind. The Review Team fully accepts however, that, whatever it would be, Denbighshire County Council would be some way off that.

Improvement needed

Step change is required but it must be based on sensible decisions made within sensible timescales. It must be recognised that this Review is only a snap shot in time and that the improvements that have been identified, and which are detailed in the Improvement Plan, are not going to happen overnight.

Nonetheless, with the commitment and financial backing of the Council, the Review Team is confident that the necessary changes can and will be made and that from January 2004 the Council can look forward to having a contract and procedures in place that will be a drastic improvement on the current situation.

Improvement Plan and New Targets for 2003 - 2004

The Improvement Plan has been provided as a spreadsheet rather than a word document as this makes it a more flexible and usable document, with simple reporting and analytical capabilities.

Due to the fact that such a fundamental change is required the Plan has only been put together up to the point where the recommended new style contract is let. To attempt to take on any more work than this in Year One would be totally unrealistic, and an attempt to predict what is required thereafter would be futile, as it will depend very much on the success of the new contract, possibly a new contractor, new systems and new procedures.

SCOPE OF GREEN SPACES BEST VALUE REVIEW

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As a result of new guidance by the Best Value Inspectorate Denbighshire County Council has taken an objective view to looking at how and why the authority maintains its public land which does not include any of its agricultural holdings.
- 1.2 This review is a cross directorate review of grounds maintenance, which incorporates work undertaken through an amalgamation of grounds maintenance contracts and other methods of Procurement, which now cover the county of Denbighshire.

2 DEFINITION OF WORKS COVERED

- 2.1 Grounds maintenance **includes** all works relating to the existing annual maintenance of grass, shrubs, roses, seasonal displays, trees, hedges, play equipment, cemeteries and parks inclusive of litter picking in the identified areas only. This involves both general/routine maintenance and “one off/temporary” works which by their very nature are classed as green space maintenance operations.
- 2.2 The Green Spaces Review **does not include:**
 - 2.2.1 the administration, bookings and external or internal use of sports and leisure facilities
 - 2.2.2 the administration of cemeteries, burials and other interments
 - 2.2.3 the maintenance of any buildings or fence lines but this exclusion does not apply to play equipment or areas.

3 AREA OF REVIEW

- 3.1 The review is looking at the maintenance of land which is owned by or the responsibility of Denbighshire County Council solely, throughout the county and provides open access for all throughout the year.
- 3.2 Grounds maintenance is undertaken in Directorates across the authority which are:
 - 3.2.1 Environment - this includes open spaces, ornamental parks, cemeteries, outdoor play areas, highway verges, Public Rights of Way, countryside parks, outdoor leisure facilities, housing and industrial estates.

- 3.2.2 Life Long Learning - schools, libraries, countryside, and outdoor leisure facilities.
- 3.2.3 Social Services - day centres, training establishments, care centres.
- 3.3 The review will incorporate works outside these contracts but are maintained by external contractors, voluntary labour or internal staff for the authority.

4 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS

- 4.1 The current contracted grounds maintenance operation is such that there are 3 distinct contract areas within the county:
 - 4.1.1 The northern area of the county incorporating Rhyl, Prestatyn, Rhuddlan, Bodelwyddan, Dyserth, Meliden, St Asaph and the surrounding hinterland down to Trefnant and Bodfari maintained currently by Denbighshire Contract Services until 31st March 02. Due to the Green Spaces Review this will be rolled over to enable completion of the Review and allow any new works to be procured under any new guidance resulting from the final report.
 - 4.1.2 The central Vale of Clwyd area, which incorporates Denbigh, Ruthin and the surrounding hinterland. This contract maintained by the private sector was due to terminate on 31st December 01 but due to the Green Spaces Review this is hoped to be rolled over to enable completion of the Review and allow any new works to be let under any new guidance resulting from the report.
 - 4.1.3 The Dee Valley area incorporating Llangollen, Corwen and the surrounding hinterland down the Dee Valley. The contract also maintained by the private sector, was let from the 1st April 2000 to 31st March 2003.
- 4.2 The grounds maintenance contracts cover most of the urban grounds maintenance operation in the county with some exceptions. A definition of the area covered by these contracts primarily is in the main within the 30 mph speed restriction zones. Where these exceptions exist particularly on highway verges and Rights of Way, these anomalies are being reduced when budgets permit.
- 4.3 Other areas which are not included within these contracts but lie within the urban boundaries are either dealt with by:
 - 4.3.1 Internal staff i.e. caretakers (Social Services), Wardens (Countryside, Leisure & Tourism)
 - 4.3.2 Volunteers (Countryside, Leisure & Tourism),
 - 4.3.3 Town Councils i.e. Prestatyn T.C., Bodelwyddan T.C., Ruthin T.C., Denbigh T.C.,

5 OTHER CONTRACTED WORKS

- 5.1 Denbighshire County Council also maintains open access land that does not fall within the general grounds maintenance contracts but is also tendered for under differing timescales.
- 5.2 Rural highway verge maintenance is undertaken solely for the purposes of highway safety i.e. to maintain sight lines and pedestrian convenience. Only hedge bases/grass bank may be cut otherwise they are the responsibility of the landowner. At the present time the maintenance is carried out by Contract Services. The policy is to cut one swathe width twice/annum except visibility splays. In exceptional circumstances, additional cutting may be undertaken where a fire risk is present or in order to control large areas of noxious weeds or bramble growth. Generally trees on rural verges form part of an established hedge boundary and are the responsibility of the landowner. In exceptional circumstances where a tree is obviously outside an established hedge but within a highway verge, then the Highway Authority would assume “responsibility” purely on the grounds of its location.
- 5.3 For “Rights of Way” Denbighshire CC has a statutory duty to keep bridleway/footpath clear of vegetation growing out of the surface that causes a nuisance to users. In sites of particular intense tourist/visitor activity, cutting may take place to improve visual amenity rather than user safety, however these may be passed onto the countryside service.
- 5.4 Denbighshire CC is responsible for 1300km of rights of way, a small amount are tarmacadamed and many cross grazed pasture or farmland where farming operations usually keeps vegetation in control. The schedule collated for these takes into account those paths that Denbighshire CC received complaints for, and in addition any other enclosed urban and rural paths that were considered sufficiently important to keep clear and where the path was excluded from access by grazing animals. Frequency of maintenance is set at 2 times a year in May/June and August/September.
- 5.5 Denbighshire CC also operates a contact with an external contractor.
- 5.6 Rights of Way Inspectors monitor the cutting, which for BVPI is an annual survey of 5% of its network.
- 5.7 New landscaping schemes on industrial estates areas owned by Denbighshire CC are let through individual contracts.
- 5.8 In the Llangollen, a local undertaker undertakes interments in Fron Bache Cemetery the counties only cemetery in the Dee Valley.

- 5.9 Tree and some play area maintenance within the towns and villages are undertaken on an individual basis, as and when required.
- 5.10 Under Fair Funding for Schools 8 schools have opted out from the grounds maintenance contracts and sought individual contracts with a number of contractors on an annual basis.
- 5.11 The major area of grounds maintenance within the Countryside Service is the contract for Loggerheads Country Park.

6 NON CONTRACTED MAINTENANCE

- 6.1 The Social Services Department and Countryside, Tourism and Leisure Services Division undertake non-contracted maintenance of grounds.
- 6.2 The Countryside Service has a Warden Service that performs a number of roles in the County including:
 - 6.2.1 Managing County owned countryside sites
 - 6.2.2 Access management including Offa's Dyke
 - 6.2.3 Biodiversity work
 - 6.2.4 Community Projects
 - 6.2.5 Managing the AONB
 - 6.2.6 Working with and providing opportunities for volunteering
- 6.3 Other areas receive grounds maintenance on a must need or ad-hoc basis, this is normally strimming and no more than a couple of times per year.
- 6.4 Leisure Services is responsible and provides the budget for the grounds maintenance of the following key areas and facilities, which fall within the grounds maintenance contracts.
 - 6.4.1 Seven leisure centres located at Corwen, Denbigh, Llangollen, Prestatyn, St.Asaph, Ruthin and Rhyl; the coastal attractions of Marine Lake, Ffrith Festival Gardens, Barkby Beach Pitch and Putt, East Parade Bowls Complex and the Botanical Gardens, Rhyl.
 - 6.4.2 Leisure Services also manage the sports/recreational facilities located within the following parks but only provides minimal budgets for grounds maintenance work, the bulk of which comes from the open spaces budget-
 - 6.4.2.1 Coronation Gardens, Prestatyn
 - 6.4.2.2 Lower Park, Denbigh
 - 6.4.2.3 Riverside Park, Llangollen
 - 6.4.2.4 Cae Ddol, Ruthin.

- 6.5 The procurement of other works by leisure is undertaken on a non-contract basis for all works relating to repair and/or replacement of walls, fencing, gates, pathways etc; along with a range of related equipment (Goals etc:).

Project Team Members**Core Officer Project Team**

Chair & Project Team Leader	Ken Ewing	6929
Objective Assessor	Martin Roberts	6351
BV Officer	Janette Ogden	6161
GM/Cemeteries Officer	Mike Hall	6786
Housing Rep	Chris Morris	6051
Countryside and Leisure	Dave Lloyd	6461
	Saira Evans	
Countryside	Howard Sutcliffe	01352 810614
	David Shiel	
Finance Officer	Mike Russell	6190
Lifelong Learning Representative	John Williams	6712
Highways Representative	Ted Painter	6944
Contract Services	Ken Carter	01745 536423
Social Services	Roberta Hayes	6552

Full Project Team

Chair & Project Team Leader	Ken Ewing	6929
Objective Assessor	Martin Roberts	6351
BV Scrutiny Committee Member -	Cllr F D Jones	01745
590600		m 0585 298616
Environment Member	Cllr M German	01745 856615
BV Officer	Janette Ogden	6161
GM/Cemeteries Officer	Mike Hall	6786
Housing Rep	Chris Morris	8476
Countryside and Leisure	Dave Lloyd	6461
	David Shiel	
Finance Officer	Mike Russell	6190
Contract Services	Ken Carter	01745 536423
Union Representative	John Drummond	m 07771 647540
Lifelong Learning Representative	John Williams	6712
Schools Heads Fed Rep	Martin Edwards	01745 583370
Highways Representative	Ted Painter	6944
Social Services	Roberta Hayes	6552
Denbighshire Tenants Assoc.	John Patterson	01745 336828
Disability Representative	Karen Beatty	01745 354445
	Hilary Smith	01745 591898

Since the formation of the group Karen Beatty has joined Denbighshire CC and can be contacted on 8052

Dave Cliff Regional Organiser, GMB, 12 Wynnstay Road, Colwyn Bay, Conwy
LL29 8NB dave.cliff@gmb.org.uk 01492 535313
John Drummond, 28 Holland Park Drive, Rhyl LL18 4SG

IMPROVEMENT PLAN for GREENSPACE IN DENBIGHSHIRE

The Plan has been prepared in Excel to allow easy reporting and analysis on dates, responsibilities, achievements, etc, as well as to allow easy summation of costs.

This is the master copy and the person responsible for its review on a six monthly basis is Mike Hall

Date of last review = Jan 03

The Plan is based on the Council's Statement of Priorities and the Review's consultation and comparison and the Key Issues that were identified within it. An alternative or possible addition to make the Plan more SMART would be to use the results from the consultation and comparison to baseline the standards for cleanliness, safety, grasscutting etc and to set targets for % improvement as measured by the residents and the profession through annual consultation and audit.

The tasks and measures identified are merely a starting point based on information supplied. The Council will need to develop them and provide more specific detail.

Source	Key Issues/Aims	Task	Priority	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Measure	Target	Achieved by Date	Reporting Arrangements	Cost
Statement of Priorities	Focus on customers and strive to meet their needs	Conduct an annual survey of residents' views	High	Mike Hall	Feb-03	Survey undertaken on time. Number of respondents increases annually.	Satisfaction ratings increase by 5% in year one, 4% in year two, and 3% in years three and four			£2,500 pa
Best Value Report	Improve strategic direction	Review relevant Policies/Strategies to ensure their terminology and targets are consistent and that the contribution of greenspace is fully recognised throughout the Council	Medium	Policy Officer		Consistent targets and terminology				Officer time
		Produce Policies/Strategies for:	Medium			Strategies produced and operational				Officer time
		? Provision of information								
		? Open Space Management								
		? Play Areas								
		? Trees								
		Develop local Performance Indicators	Medium	Mike Hall	Mar-03	P.I's in place that are of importance to the public to be based on findings of Performance Management System (PMS).	Proposed P.I's identified	26/02/2003		Officer time

Source	Key Issues/Aims	Task	Priority	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Measure	Target	Achieved by Date	Reporting Arrangements	Cost
Statement of Priorities	Maximise resources for Denbighshire and use them wisely	Create one division in one directorate and ensure that the staff currently charged with delivering greenspace are communicating better and more freely	High	Director of Environment	Sep-03					Officer time
		Hold and charge for events	Low			events held	3 events per annum			Officer time
		Produce a new contract that provides an incentive for the contractors to improve the service on the ground for the same level of expenditure	High	Mike Hall	Mar-03	Contract produced				Officer time
		Develop a fully integrated Council wide GIS system that would enable all officers to access greenspace information quickly and effectively	High		Dec-03	GIS System operational				Officer time but may require external consultants to come in to help achieve target.
Statement of Priorities	Improve the image of Denbighshire	Establish the extent of concern about dog fouling, litter, grass clippings & toilets	High	Mike Hall	Jul-03	Audits undertaken and objective scores produced as targets for improvement	SMART targets to be produced once the results of the consultation are known			Officer time
		Identify all of the land owned by DCC and put it into the GIS system	High	Property/Legal	Sep-03	All land identified				Officer time but may require external consultants to come in to help achieve target.
		Increase the scores for cleanliness, dog fouling and litter by 5% annually		Mike Hall	Every March	Consultation and performance management system (PMS)	5% increase in scores			Officer time
Best Value Report	Increase Access, Health and Social Inclusion	Build on focus group work to establish needs	Low			Needs established	5% increase in users per annum			Officer time

Source	Key Issues/Aims	Task	Priority	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Measure	Target	Achieved by Date	Reporting Arrangements	Cost
		Develop a communications strategy which will allow information to be widely disseminated through a variety of means e.g. internet, Council buildings, noticeboards, using a partnership approach where possible	High		Dec-03	Strategy in place and operational	x internet hits. 5% increase in usage			Officer time with the development of an integrated software package for budget control and analysis for approximately £50,000
		Improve signage in Greenspaces	Low			Signage improved	5% increase in score for signage			£30,000
		Investigate the potential to operate Green gyms, Health walks and GP referral scheme	Low	Mike Hall	Dec-03	Report prepared				Officer time
		Review pricing structure			Sep-03	Review undertaken				Officer time
Best Value Report	Increase perception of safety	Consider introducing improved lighting	Low			Increase in the score for safety.	5% increase			Officer time
		Review the maintenance frequencies/timings of shrubbery/hedge cutting	Low	Mike Hall	Sep-03	Review undertaken				Officer time
		Implement a corporate workplan on the Council's role in Crime and Disorder (with a focus on young people and providing leisure opportunities as a diversion)	Low	Policy Officer	Dec-03					Officer time
		? 'Designing out crime' as far as possible when working on new schemes	Low				5% increase in safety score			Officer time
		? Considering a joint publicity drive with the police, promoting the fact that parks and open spaces are safe to use	Low			Regular meetings held	5% increase in safety score			Officer time
		? Continuing to work with local community police officers to incorporate sites into routine patrols	Low			Regular meetings held	5% increase in safety score			Officer time

Source	Key Issues/Aims	Task	Priority	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Measure	Target	Achieved by Date	Reporting Arrangements	Cost
		Carrying out a prioritised risk assessment of sites, actioning findings	Low			Risk assessment carried out	5% increase in safety score			Officer time
		? A change in the role of the contract worker to a 'ranger' type role, able to react and interact with all users to educate, advise etc. The long term aim is to set up a formal ranger service	Medium			New ranger service in place	5% increase in safety score			Officer time
		? Prioritisation of sites for cleansing and maintenance e.g. more litter picking on more used sites	Medium			Sites prioritised based on public consultation and PMS	5% increase in cleanliness score			Officer time
		? A review of the provision of toilet facilities, given the actual time spent on site by most visitors; money saved here could be used elsewhere to improve the service	Low				5% increase in score for toilets			Officer time

Priority Ranking

- High Most urgent requires commitment on which to base further Improvements
- Medium Work which is required to guide the service forward but needs to be based on commitment for proposals
- Low Work either already undertaken or is dependent on the findings of the Performance Management System (PMS) which is annually distributed

Green Spaces - Total Cost Calculation (Budget)								
			2002/03					
		Countryside Services	Community Services	Rights of Way	Highways Maintenance	Charges by Contractors	Total	
		£	£	£	£	£	£	
Employees (0000-0999)		399,140	70,267	7,659	16,286	11,894	505,247	
Premises (1000-1999)		2,182			1,661	1,054,510	1,058,353	
Transport (2000-2999)		44,326	6,448	523	1,761		53,059	
Supplies & services (3000-4999)		125,418	16,322	47	2,362	217,078	361,227	
Third party payments (5000-5999)			1,273	1	2	155,040	156,316	
Transfer payments (6000-6999)								
Support services (7000-7999)		49,954	47,999	2,063	6,340		106,356	
Capital charges		5,834	86,560				92,394	
Total		626,854	228,869	10,294	28,413	1,438,522	2,332,952	

REPORT TO CABINET

AUTHOR: COUNCILLOR R E JONES, CHAIR OF RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 25 March 2003

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF DECISION BY CABINET - TRANSPORT (FLEET MANAGEMENT / MAINTENANCE) BEST VALUE REVIEW

1 DECISION SOUGHT

To request the Cabinet to review its previous decision with regard to the Best Value Review (Fleet Management / Maintenance) and in particular its decision not to pursue the recommendation of seeking to establish a central depot. Members may wish to consult the original report which is on the Cabinet database.

2 REASON FOR SEEKING DECISION

The Cabinet at its meeting on the 28 January 2003 agreed to approve the implementation of the Transport Operations (Fleet Management / Maintenance) Best Value Review as part of the continued service improvement process of Denbighshire County Council.

A key recommendation of this review, dated January 2003, was that the Council should amalgamate its two primary maintenance workshops onto a single site. The SWOT analysis which formed part of the report indicated that in the quest for a new depot among the weaknesses would be diverse locations and operating centres and among the opportunities was the centralisation of workshops / economy of scale. In particular the report stated that the Council should amalgamate its two primary workshops (Prestatyn and Ruthin) on to a single site and that the ideal location for a new depot was Denbigh on the basis that 60% of Vehicle activities are carried out to the North of this location and 40% to the South.

However the proviso was made within the review that if a suitable site cannot be found at Denbigh within the next three months, the next best option would be to build the new vehicle maintenance at Bodelwyddan by extending the old vehicle maintenance garage (now used as a sign shop) and provide a sub-inspection, minor maintenance depot at Ruthin. The Minutes of the meeting held on the 28 January within the preamble refers to a statement by Councillor M A German, as lead member stating that no site in Denbigh had been identified.

In view of the decision not to pursue the single site option at such an early stage, against the original recommendation of pursuing such a site for a three month period, the Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 12 March 2003 considered the following issues:-

- (i) the report did not indicate the area of land required for the centralised depot
- (ii) whether the review team were looking for an existing building which could be capable of being extended
- (iii) whether the review teams search included sites which are in private ownership which might have been bought or leased by the county
- (iv) whether enquiries were made of local Estate Agents

The Committee also expressed surprise, that from the original report, there was apparently no input at all from the Planning Department. The Committee also suggested that Cabinet when reviewing its original decision should be provided with additional written information covering the issues highlighted in (i) to (iv) above; an indication of the number of potential sites / buildings which were considered in Denbigh (and district); and the comments of the Planning Department.

The Lead Member's response is attached at Appendix 1.

3 POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION

Under the Local Government Act 2000 Section 21(3), Scrutiny Committees have powers to recommend that the decision be reconsidered by the person who made it / where a decision has not been implemented.

4 COST IMPLICATIONS

The review of the decision could lead to the Cabinet implementing the preferred option of the Best Value review.

5 FINANCIAL CONTROLLER STATEMENT

In reviewing the previous decision Members will need to be mindful of the potential financial implications which are described in the Best Value Review report as 'to be evaluated'. If the decision is to be varied a further, fully costed report to Members will be necessary.

6 CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

This report is based upon the discussions by the Resources Scrutiny Committee. The Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Committee has been consulted about the proposed course of action.

7 IMPLICATIONS ON OTHER POLICY AREAS INCLUDING CORPORATE

The robust challenge of Cabinet decisions illustrates the development of the Scrutiny function in Denbighshire, in accordance with the Modernising Agenda.

8 RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet reconsiders its previous decision, based on the concerns of the Resources Scrutiny Committee as detailed in paragraph 2 above.

APPENDIX

Evaluations of Possible Locations for Highways Vehicle Maintenance Workshops within Denbigh and Locality

Generally, only sites allocated an appropriate use class B2 within the UDP were considered. The optimum site area is 2,000sqm or 0.2ha. The build quality required for such a development is low and the nature of the operations has the potential to make it a 'bad neighbour'.

The following is a list of possible sites within and around Denbigh, compiled following consultation with:

Contract Services
Corporate Property Unit
Economic Regeneration
Valuation and Estates
Forward Planning
Conservation
Highways and Transportation

Existing buildings / Land in County Ownership

Highways Depot, Barkers Well Lane, Denbigh

This is located adjacent to Eirianfa and is too small to consider for expansion

Colomendy Industrial Estate, Denbigh

- All vacant plots are believed to be either sold or the subject of Objective One bids
- The locating of vehicle maintenance workshops here, by virtue of the operations and appearance, would undermine the attempt being made to upgrade the estate
- The Wales Assembly Government, who have recently supported a medical business on the estate, could regard the locating of workshops in the vicinity as being incompatible

Allotments, Lon Llewelyn, Denbigh

- A change of use on this site would require a parliamentary act
- The site is close to the Castle and such a development would have a detrimental effect on its setting

Vacant land, Lon Llewelyn, Denbigh

- There is another site further down the road to the allotments, on the way to Brenning, but it is outside the development boundary

Existing Buildings / Land outside County Ownership

Crossville Depot, Lenten Pool, Denbigh

- There is potential for private sector development on this site.
- The site is within a conservation area which would almost certainly preclude development for vehicle maintenance workshops
- It is understood that private sector interest already exists

Former North Wales Hospital, Denbigh

- This is in private ownership. The owner is looking for employment uses but these have to be compatible with protecting the setting of important listed buildings. Vehicle maintenance workshops would not seem to fit this category

Colomendy Industrial Estate Expansion, Denbigh

- There is potential to expand the estate on the Northern boundary but any road access would be prohibitively expensive bearing in mind it would only be serving one side of the road
- Manweb are quoting a substantial figure to service the site

Kwiksave, Old Station Yard, Denbigh

- Land here is in diverse ownership, requires tidying up and is the subject of a major review
- It is unlikely that consent would be granted for this use

Land at rear of New Police Station, Ffordd y Graig, Denbigh

- This has been designated for recreational use and would require a departure from the UDP

Denbigh Rugby Club, Ffordd y Graig

- It is understood that the Rugby Club have recently received a Sportlot Grant to expand

Denbigh Quarry, Ffordd y Graig

- There is a possibility that spare land might be available but an approach to the quarry and subsequent purchase could take time

Estate Agent Enquiries

The following estate agents were contacted but none were able to suggest suitable properties or sites:

Jones Peckover
Dodds Property World
Beresford Adams Countryside
Clough and Co

AGENDA ITEM NO: 7 [CABINET 2003 - 34]

REPORT TO CABINET

CABINET MEMBER: Cllr John A Smith, Lead Member for Social Inclusion

DATE: 25 March 2003

SUBJECT: CORPORATE PARENTING STATEMENT AND CHECKLIST FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

1 DECISION SOUGHT

- (i) For Cabinet to approve the Statement of Corporate Parenting and the corporate parent checklist
- (ii) For Cabinet to agree the principle of a Council launch for the Statement and checklist, to ensure appropriate status is given to it, and to support corporate delivery.

2 REASON FOR SEEKING DECISION

- 2.1 Following submission of a report to both Personal Services and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committees, and attendance at a national conference on corporate parenting in May 2002, Personal Services Scrutiny Committee considered a number of policies and models adopted by other authorities in Wales. After discussion, it was agreed that a Denbighshire document should be brought forward for consideration so as to clarify expectations of the Authority, both officers and elected members, in this important area.
- 2.2 Attached as Appendix 1 is a proposed Statement of Corporate Parenting and at Appendix 2 a checklist for elected members. The Statement sets out beliefs and principles guiding the authority's delivery of services to looked after children and their carers. It aims to be quite short and to be written in plain language.
- 2.3 The corporate parent checklist describes itself as a kind of "job description" for elected members in relation to these responsibilities. Whatever an elected member's role in the Council, the checklist indicates how they can champion children in care and make sure that services they have responsibility for, or scrutinise, are responsive to these children and their carers. It also tries to address the roles that elected members may play on other bodies eg as school governors. The checklist proposes that an annual survey of elected members should look at relevant initiatives undertaken during the year.
- 2.4 Although intended for elected members, the nature of the checklist is such that it will require officers to make improvements in policy and practice so as to enable the requirements of the checklist to be met. An example is the development of protocols between key Departments and agencies, outlining relative roles and responsibilities, so as to ensure a comprehensive service is provided to looked after children, with steadily improving outcomes. A protocol between Education and Social Services is in advanced draft; a range of protocols are being developed between health and Social Services (eg with adult mental health services), and between Housing and Social Services (information sharing in relation to vulnerable tenants, responding to homeless 16/17 year olds- including careleavers- as part of the Single Homeless Strategy). In addition, agreement has been reached to add children in care, and foster carers, to the list of those eligible for the concessionary Passport to Leisure card.
- 2.5 In terms of providing learning opportunities for elected members on corporate parenting responsibilities, Syniad have offered to provide a seminar on corporate parenting responsibilities for Denbighshire's members and possible dates are being identified. In addition, Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee proposed that there should be a formal launch of the Statement

and checklist in Denbighshire, if adopted, so as to raise officer and member awareness and support implementation.

3 POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION

s 22 of Part III of the Children Act 1989

4 COST IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific cost implications arising from this report, except in relation to the launch, which can be contained within existing budgets. The broader cost implications of providing adequate services to children in the care of the local authority and their carers will continue to form part of normal budget setting processes.

5 FINANCIAL CONTROLLER STATEMENT

Costs of the service will need to continue to be contained within the service budget concerned.

6 CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

* Looked After Children- Children's Rights Group- facilitated by Tros Gynnal. No response to date, but every effort will be made to respond to any suggestions made by looked after children as to how the authority can support them.

* The Looked After Children Development Group, a multi-agency planning group. No response received to the Statement and checklist- but active involvement in drafting the joint protocol between Education and Social Services.

* Personal Services Scrutiny- supported both the Statement and the Checklist. Wished to see members of Scrutiny involved in direct meetings with looked after children on an annual basis.

* Lifelong Learning Scrutiny- supported both the Statement and the Checklist. Keen to see the following issues highlighted:

- * need for Council launch (evening) to support awareness and implementation including address by foster carer
- * rota visits. Elected Members should be named and shamed if visits are not undertaken. CRB forms need to be available in Welsh
- * some special needs governors do receive information about eg the numbers of looked after children in schools, but unclear if this information is routinely made available for example when exclusion decisions are made

7 IMPLICATIONS ON OTHER AREAS INCLUDING CORPORATE

It is in the nature of corporate parenting that virtually all aspects of the authority's functioning may be touched. Apart from the obvious Social Services, Education and Housing responsibilities, the transport procurement function could be used to support foster carers' transport needs; human resources policies could provide work placements and modern apprenticeships for care leavers; debt write-off powers could be used to support individuals particularly vulnerable because of their care history.

8 RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet

- i) approves the Statement of Corporate Parenting and the corporate parent checklist
- ii) agrees the principle of a Council launch for the Statement and checklist, to ensure appropriate status is given to it, and to support corporate delivery.

Statement of Corporate Parenting

In Denbighshire, we believe that ensuring the effective care and protection for children who are looked after by the local authority is one of the most important responsibilities held by councillors, officers and professional agencies working with children. In order to provide high quality services, we must all work together to meet the needs of this most vulnerable group.

We know that research has demonstrated that children who are looked after are more likely than others to be disadvantaged, especially in the areas of health, housing and education.

As “corporate parents” we must improve the situation for children who are looked after. All Departments are expected to work in partnership with those people who have key roles in the life of the child or young person. Similarly, we expect to work with the Local Health Board and Trust to ensure that looked after children have access to the universal and specialist health care services available to other children.

Our principles are to raise the quality of care and to improve the life chances of children looked after by local authorities, so that they may expect to do at least as well as their peers who are able to remain at home with caring and loving parents. We will praise them when they do well and advocate for them if in trouble.

We will consider all aspects of children’s lives, not only those parts which have led to a period of separation from home. We will make sure that appropriate plans are made for looked after children and that there are rigorously recorded and acted upon. We will promote continuity in the lives of children who are being looked after, and reduce or where possible eliminate, disruption. We will help prepare young people to leave care and support them into independence, recognising that most young people do not leave home until they are in their 20s and continue to return frequently.

The corporate parent checklist (for elected members)

The corporate parent checklist has been produced to help make clear connections between your role as an individual councillor and being a “corporate parent”. It is designed to help you think about how all Council services impact on children in public care, and to help you probe if the Council is doing all it can to support these vulnerable children and young people - who are a key part of Denbighshire’s future. Whatever role you have in the Council, the checklist gives you a kind of “job description” for promoting the needs of looked after children and monitoring if they are being met.

The corporate parent checklist assumes that officers will put in place a number of key mechanisms to ensure looked after children are nurtured. These include Departmental procedures and protocols between key departments and agencies so that roles and responsibilities for supporting looked after children are clear. They also include performance management arrangements to track how our children/young people are faring against a range of performance indicators.

Elected members can enhance the value of these arrangements by championing the cause of looked after children in many settings as well as monitoring performance. The corporate parent checklist is designed to help focus this effort and its effectiveness will itself be monitored through annual survey.

(Denbighshire Corporate Logo to be put here)

**THE ROLE OF A CORPORATE PARENT
A Checklist for members**

ACTIVITY	METHOD	FREQUENCY
<p>1. Policy setting and political leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lead Members for Social Inclusion and Lifelong Learning encourage Cabinet to consider how <u>policies</u> impact on children and young people; ● Lead Members know about and celebrate the achievements of looked after children and their carers; ● Corporate parenting responsibilities included in all policy setting and service development; ● Participation in developing, approving and reviewing plans affecting children and young people – Children First / Children’s Services Plans / Children and Young People’s Framework / ESP / Behaviour Support Plan etc. – ask “how do these affect and support looked after children?” ● Approval of protocols between key Departments and agencies – specifying roles and responsibilities to support looked after children. 	<p>All Cabinet meetings</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>Specific programme to cover Education, Housing, Health, Culture & Leisure Careers</p>
<p>2. Budget Setting</p>	<p>Services for children are adequately resourced through comparison with budget levels in other Welsh authorities and analysis of this information (Waterhouse recommendation), effective budget setting and prioritisation.</p>	<p>At least annually</p>
<p>3. Scrutiny (Personal Services) - general</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planned series of reports in Scrutiny Work Programme examine different aspects of services to looked after children and their carers; ● Quarterly reports against statutory performance indicators and annual reports against Children First indicators enable members to monitor trends and focus on required improvements. 	<p>Throughout year</p> <p>Quarterly and annually</p>
<p>4. Scrutiny (Personal Services) – individual cases</p>	<p>Three anonymised case examples reported to Scrutiny for illustrative purposes on progress and outcomes of individual children/young people.</p>	<p>Six monthly progress report on each of the three cases</p>
<p>5. Scrutiny role (other Scrutiny Committees and joint activity with Personal Services)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Periodic reports to other Scrutiny Committees encouraging good practice eg. work placements and employment opportunities for care-leavers, transport procurement for foster carers; ● Joint Scrutiny meetings on issues of common concern (eg. development of Framework for Children and Young People). 	<p>Periodically</p> <p>Periodically</p>

APPENDIX 2

6. Roles on other bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As Town and Community Councillors; • As school governors; • As representatives on voluntary organisations, Boards and Partnerships associated with the County Council. <p>Consider – how do policies or developments impact on children looked after or leaving care?</p>	Ongoing
7. Rota visits to children's homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected members on the rota receive training and guidance; • Elected members undertake and report on visits conscientiously as a key safeguard for looked after children. <p><i>“The willingness of councillors to visit children's homes should be a pre-condition of appointment to the committee responsible for the homes Elected members should be provided with appropriate guidance, including reference to the need to be vigilant in protecting the interests of child residents as well as to be supportive of the staff.”</i> (Waterhouse Recommendation 61)</p>	Periodically Monthly
8. Listening to children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation by lead member in meetings with children and young people through Children's Rights project; • Annual reports of Children's Rights project considered at Scrutiny; • Reports considered on outcomes of consultation events, surveys and research of young people's views in Denbighshire eg. Youth Forums, Speak Out sessions for looked after children, programme evaluations which report the views of children and young people. 	At least annually Annually Periodically
9. Review programme	Engaging with the process of external statutory review (eg. Social Services Inspectorate Wales, Joint Review) including receiving reports of findings and monitoring the implementation of action plans.	Periodically
10. Increasing knowledge	Participation in appropriate seminars, briefings, conferences etc aimed at improving / developing services for children and young people.	Ongoing
11. Performance Management	Annual survey of elected members' awareness of corporate parenting responsibilities and activity.	Annually

REPORT TO CABINET

CABINET MEMBER: Councillor J A Smith Lead Member for Social Inclusion.

DATE: 4 March 2003

SUBJECT: COMMUNITIES FIRST (West and South West Rhyl)

1 DECISION SOUGHT

- (i) To continue to support the creation of a Communities First Partnership.
- (ii) To approve the progress report.

2 REASON FOR SEEKING DECISION

2.1 Communities First is the W.A.G's "flagship" programme for improving the most disadvantaged communities in Wales.

2.2 All statutory bodies and particularly Local Authorities are expected by the Assembly to support the creations of the local Communities First Partnership and programme.

2.3 In Denbighshire the Local Authority have led on this process and, following a challenging development period, are nearing agreement on the establishment of the required "Communities First Partnership".

2.4 In July 2002 a Communities First Shadow Steering Group of 6 persons (following the 1/2 principles outlined in Communities First guidance) was established. That group agreed to an application for funds for "Preparatory Activities" to be sent to the Assembly. This funding was for the second half of 2002/03 and 2003/04 and would provide funding for 2 Co-ordinators (a necessity under this scheme), 2 Administrators and related office and other costs including some capacity building funds.

The Shadow Steering Group has met approximately monthly since its formation and considered how to create a fuller partnership, appropriate to this scheme and what needs to/could be undertaken using Communities First resources.

2.5 It became increasingly apparent that there would be some overlap between any new Communities First Partnership for the two wards, and the existing West and South West Rhyl Community Strategy Partnership which already was community led, and had various projects and schemes in the area and beyond having drawn down funding from various sources (eg the Assembly, Objective 1, the Sports Council, New Opportunities Foundation, the Arts Council, N.I.A.C.E., etc). However, the existing Strategy Partnership's contribution was not totally compatible with the model for Communities First Partnerships. In October 2002, Norma Barry, Head of the Assembly's Communities and Social Inclusion Unit, came to Rhyl to meet with the Communities First Shadow Steering Groups and at that meeting it was decided that:-

"(i) In the long term, the Communities First Programme in Denbighshire will be managed by the Rhyl West & South West Community Strategy Partnership.

(ii) The Constitution of the Community Strategy Partnership will be amended to come more into line with the principles of Communities First.

(iii) The present 6 person Shadow Steering Group will remain in place for approximately six months to assist the Strategy Partnership in its reforms. They will pay particular attention to ensuring the full participation of all stakeholders, the expectations that members can have of each other, the protocols for information sharing and decision making, the methods to be used

to ensure community consultation and participation, the evaluation and monitoring of the Partnership and its projects and all other issues that might be regarded as “memoranda of understanding” and/or “rules of engagement” .”

- 2.6 In November the Assembly agreed to the full funding package applied for. Advertisements for Co-ordinators (externally) and Administrators (internally) were placed in December and interviews for Co-ordinators took place in January (the selection process included members of the Communities First Shadow Steering Group and the Community Strategy Partnership). The panel felt able to offer a post to one of the applicants but he subsequently declined. Insufficient response internally has led to external advertisements being placed for the Administrators post, and the Co-ordinators posts have been re-advertised. Interviews for Co-ordinators will take place on 13th March and the last date for return of application for the Administrators post is 7th March 2003.
- 2.7 The Assembly have agreed that the underspend on salaries can be principally spent on refurbishing the Unit in Rhyl Railway Station Buildings next to the one presently occupied by the Rhyl Community Agency, Community Strategy and associated staff. The buildings are to be combined to house all the dedicated Community Development staff, the Environmental Directorate’s Regeneration staff and others concentrating on community matters in Rhyl.
- 2.8 Following extensive discussion and informal consultations with the Communities First Shadow Steering Group and the Community Strategy Partnership, and the groups which they represent a facilitated consultation day was held in January. 80 people were invited and 41 attended. The day highlighted some common themes on how a Communities First Partnership should work in Denbighshire. A report from that day is presently in draft form and will be made available in the next fortnight.
- 2.9 A joint meeting of the Communities First Shadow Steering Groups and the Community Strategy was held on 3rd March 2003, when the draft report was commented upon and generally accepted and a model for creating the property Communities First Partnership was accepted in principle.
- 2.10 Community Development Staff will be writing up that model in detail and submitting it for further consultation and it is hoped, approval by the next joint meeting in April.

3 POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION

Section 40 of the Government of Wales Act 1998, in conjunction with powers under Section 126 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

4 COST IMPLICATIONS

In this financial year £85,000 will be drawn down from the W.A.G. under this scheme.

The £160,000 funding recently agreed for the Skateboard Development in Rhyl came because of the area’s Communities First Status.

Next year funding of £128,000 has already been agreed. Once Capacity Building Plans have been finalised and costed, Community Action Plans have been agreed, several millions of pounds will be available to be applied for.

5 FINANCIAL CONTROLLER STATEMENT

Schemes arising from this initiative which have cost implications for the Council will continue to need to be carefully monitored to ensure resulting costs can be funded.

6 CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

The West and South West Rhyl Community Strategy Partnership, with multi-agency and multi-sector representation, have been fully involved in progressing the work on Communities First alongside the Shadow Partnership.

7 IMPLICATIONS ON OTHER POLICY AREAS INCLUDING CORPORATE

Over 10% of the population of the county live in these two wards and these two wards are the only ones in Denbighshire in the 100 most deprived wards in Wales. The Authority is already committed to rectifying that situation. Communities First funding, initiatives and other resources should be a major contribution to improving these wards.

The Assembly's expectation is that all policy areas will take into consideration the particular circumstances in these, clearly, most deprived areas and that there will be clear links between the Communities First Partnership and the policy areas and appropriate working parties and committees. Indeed in the Assembly's monitoring of Communities First information must be provided on how the Partnership has linked into various policy areas and how policy and service provision has been "bent" to accommodate the dire needs of the areas. Appropriate areas of policy work include:-

Crime and Disorder
L.A. 21
Children and Youth Partnership/Cymouth
Health and Well Being in Wales
The Housing Strategy
Objective One
Interreg
Equal
Denbighshire Community Plan
Policing Priority Areas
Etc, etc

8 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended:

- (a) That the progress report be accepted and
- (b) That Denbighshire County Council continues to play a major role in creating and participating in the Communities First Partnership.

REPORT TO CABINET

CABINET MEMBER: LEAD MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 25 MARCH 2003

SUBJECT: TAITH CONSTITUTION

1 DECISION SOUGHT

To approve in principle the setting up of a TAITH Board comprising an elected Member from each of the six North Wales Authorities, and subsidiary groups.

2 REASON FOR SEEKING DECISION

In December, 2001 a report was presented to the National Assembly for Wales by the Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on Policy Review of Public Transport in Wales. The report highlighted the importance of regional consortia in delivering the vision for public transport in Wales. A number of key recommendations were made by the Committee and these included:

- that Local Authorities consider how they would establish more robust regional consortia, building on existing arrangements so that the National Assembly's vision and regional transport strategies can be implemented, taking account of local needs and availability of resources;
- that the consortia raise their profile amongst passengers by developing their own "branding" linked to quality services.

The need for a regional approach on all transport matters together with an identity which would be readily recognisable, was also appreciated by the North Wales Economic Forum's Transportation Group and in 2001 the Group adopted the logo TAITH under which all its initiatives are now branded.

TAITH brings together member and officer representatives from North Wales local authorities and other organisations such as the Welsh Development Agency, Freight Transport Association and the Rail Passenger Committee. It also works closely with the North Wales Integrated Transport Group which was established by officers to co-ordinate the preparation of the Regional Transport Strategy to be incorporated into the Authorities' Local Transport Plans.

In April, 2002 a meeting was arranged with the Minister for Environment, Planning and Transport, Ms Sue Essex, to discuss the future of TAITH. It was suggested to the Minister that the way forward was to establish a formal partnership between the 6 Local Transport Authorities in North Wales. The partnership would have its own constitution but would retain links to the Economic Forum. Its remit would cover all forms of transport and not solely on public transport. A constituted partnership would facilitate access to Assembly Government funding and be responsible for implementing regional transport projects.

TAITH is now in the process of developing a constitution which introduces a Local Authority partnership arrangement. It is intended that the partnership will have executive authority and be accountable for the spending of public funds. TAITH has already been successful in securing Transport Grant funding from the Welsh Assembly Government.

The draft constitution proposes:

- TAITH is a partnership between the six Local Transport Authorities in North Wales - Denbighshire, Conwy, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham and Ynys Môn;
- **TAITH is directed by a Board of elected Members of the six Authorities on the basis of one Member nominee or substitute from each elected Authority under the Chairmanship of one Member elected by the Board from within its membership;**
- chairmanship rotates on an annual basis;

- the Board is supported by a Management Group of one officer or substitute nominated by each Authority;
- preparation and implementation of Business Plan is the responsibility of an Operational Team of at least one officer selected from each Authority by the Management Group;
- each of the constituent Authorities is responsible for the provision of the staff and resources necessary to discharge their contribution to the overall direction and management of the Partnership together with the resources to implement regional and local projects;
- one of the constituent Authorities as agreed from time to time, will provide the Secretariat and the financial management of the Partnership. The necessary staff and resources for the discharge of these functions will be provided by that Authority, funded on an agreed basis by all the constituent Authorities;
- close links and liaison with other stakeholders will be achieved through the establishment of the North Wales Transportation Forum. The Forum will include the Board and Management Group members. The Co-ordinator of the North Wales Economic Forum will be invited to become a member of the Transportation Forum.

The draft constitution still requires further consideration of issues such as:

- financial contributions from Authorities;
- risks/liabilities on Authorities;
- financial control and audit arrangements;
- links with other organisations/partnerships.

There is scope for the TAIH Board to manage other partnership arrangements, for example, the future Trunk Road Agency (the current trunk and agency arrangements are being reviewed with the possibility of reducing in number the current eight agencies).

A Regional Board and Management Group will provide a platform for cross boundary working and will enable further opportunities to avoid duplication and share expertise.

N.B. Further consideration with the other Councils involved will need to be given as to the exact institutional arrangement to progress the Taith concept. At this stage Members are being asked to agree the principle for there to be an arrangement.

3. POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION.

The Council has powers under Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 to enter into agreements and incur expenditure to promote the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area.

4 COST IMPLICATIONS

Further consideration will be given to the financial contributions to TAIH as the constitution is formalised, this will be the subject of a further report to Cabinet.

5 FINANCIAL CONTROLLER STATEMENT

Costs in connection with the support of this group will need to be contained within the service budgets concerned.

6 CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

The County Clerk points out the need for clarity as to the source of funds being expended and ensuing issues of accountability.

Consultation on development of the TAIH constitution has been undertaken with the other local authorities in North Wales.

7 IMPLICATIONS ON OTHER POLICY AREAS INCLUDING CORPORATE

The future development of TAITH will support the Council's efforts to reduce social exclusion through improved accessibility for non-car owners and to support Local Agenda 21 aims.

8 RECOMMENDATION

That Members:

- (i) approve in principle to the setting up of a TAITH Board and subsidiary groups as detailed in Section 2 of this report;
- (ii) authorise the County Clerk, Corporate Director Resources and other relevant officers to contribute to the formalising of the constitution;
- (iii) receive a further report to seek approval for the final version of the constitution.

REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT BY: Chief Executive
DATE: 25 March 2003
SUBJECT: FURTHER DELEGATIONS

1 DECISION SOUGHT

That members approve the following delegations:

A. That the decision to determine whether to award Hardship Relief, if any, to taxpayers is delegated to the Lead Member for Finance, to a limit of £20k.

B. That the approval of fee increases paid by the authority to providers (e.g. Nursing Homes and Residential Homes) are, if within budget, delegated to the Lead Member for Health and Well being.

C. Subject to D, that Cabinet delegate the appointment of the Fostering Panel under regulation 24 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 to the Chief Executive.

D That the appointment of a local authority member under regulation 24(3)(c) of the 2003 Regulations should be delegated to the Lead Member for Social Inclusion.

2 REASON FOR SEEKING DECISION

A Hardship Relief

2.1 The Council is statutorily obliged to consider all claims made by taxpayers in respect of Hardship Relief, and determine amounts, if any, accordingly.

2.2 In 1997 Council adopted a scheme as per the attached appendix.

2.3 It is clear that decisions on hardship relief are similar to decisions on other forms of relief e.g. Waiver of full grant conditions and write off of debts as per previously agreed delegations of 1 October 2002.

1.6 *To determine whether repayment of a grant may be waived, subject to the agreement of the Lead Member for Finance where the amount of repayment waived in an individual case exceeds £10,000.*

1.7 *To write off individual debts in excess of £1,000, subject to the agreement of the Lead Member for Finance. This delegation does not apply where the individual debt to be written off exceeds £20,000.*

2.4 It should be noted that hardship relief is generally small amounts and the Authority has to make only a 25% contribution.

B. Fees

2.5. From time to time the independent sector negotiates fee increases with the Authority for residential or nursing home provision. It is felt that this could be appropriately delegated to the relevant Lead Member with the proviso that a approval must be capable of being met within current budgetary resources.

C/D Fostering Panel

- 2.6 New fostering regulations come into force on 1st April 2003. Under the new executive arrangements fostering is an executive function. There is an urgent need to appoint a chair for the April meeting of the Panel.
- 2.7 A delegation to me for the appointment of the Panel would be consistent with current arrangements for appointments to the Panel.
- 2.8 However it would be wrong for the delegation of the member representative on the panel to be delegated to myself. This should be a Lead Cabinet Member responsibility in tune with other member appointments. Currently the existing scheme of delegation permits appointments by Cabinet members to external bodies only.

3 POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION

Local Government Act 2000 transfers the responsibility to Cabinet.

4 COST IMPLICATIONS

None for this discussion.

5 FINANCIAL CONTROLLER STATEMENT

The proposal will help improve the operational efficiency of the process.

6 CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

Leader and Lead Member for Finance.

7 IMPLICATIONS ON OTHER POLICY AREAS INCLUDING CORPORATE

Delegation to Members is in the spirit of the Modernising Agenda.

8 RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet delegates the decision to determine the amount of Hardship Relief, if any, to taxpayers to the Lead Member for Finance, to a limit of £20k.

That Members agree that approval for fee increases, within budgetary resources, for residential and nursing home provision be delegated the Lead Member for Health and Well Being.

That Members agree that appointments to the Fostering Panel be delegated to the Chief Executive except that the Lead Member for Social Inclusion be given delegated power to appoint an Elected Member to the panel.

SYNOPSIS OF HARDSHIP SCHEME

- The scheme allows an award of upto 100% provided that the Council are satisfied that:

- * the ratepayer is suffering hardship **and**
- * the Council believes it's reasonable to award relief having regard to the interests of local council tax payers.

- Guidance has been provided by The Welsh Office (now the Welsh Assembly) to assist Councils in their deliberations;

- * Councils should not adopt a blanket policy
- * Each case should be considered on its own merits
- * Reduction or remission on the grounds of hardship should be the exception rather than the rule.
- * Hardship may not necessarily be financial; all factors affecting a business's ability to meet its liability to pay rates should be considered.
- * "Interests of the local council tax payer" are not purely financial , e.g. A factory may close causing a local unemployment issue , the loss of an amenity in an area.

- On 25th November 1997, a scheme was adopted by this Council (Policy, Finance and Resources Committee) as follows:

- * an application for relief must be received in writing from the applicant,
- * each application to be considered by Cabinet on its merits, and if appropriate relief may be awarded in a range of 1% to 100%,
- * relief will only apply to accrued liabilities , i.e. No future liabilities to be considered unless a separate application is received in the future. There is no guarantee that relief will be awarded in the future if a ratepayer is currently receiving hardship relief. The discretion of the Council cannot be fettered in any way.

REPORT TO CABINET

CABINET MEMBER: LEAD MEMBER FOR PROMOTING DENBIGHSHIRE

DATE: 25 MARCH 2003

SUBJECT: URDD NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD 2006

1 DECISION SOUGHT

- 1.1 To agree to earmark funding of £300k as a contribution to the 2006 Urdd National Eisteddfod at the Royal International Pavilion site, Llangollen following Cabinet's previous decision to agree in principle to invite the Urdd Eisteddfod to Denbighshire.
- 1.2 For this funding to be built up annually at a rate of £60k per year.
- 1.3 To note possible other expenditure which may arise from housing this event provided by the preliminary details in section 4.

2 REASON FOR SEEKING DECISION

- 2.1 Cabinet on 6 February 2001 agreed in principle to support the proposal by Urdd Gobaith Cymru to hold its 2006 National Eisteddfod at the Royal International Pavilion, Llangollen and authorised further discussions on behalf of the Council with the Urdd. Following a presentation in December 2001, it agreed that it should receive a further report spelling out the financial implications.
- 2.2 As part of the 2002/2003 budget, Council agreed that there should be an annual contribution to major events. The major events budget set aside was £60k. It was unclear of how much of this was to be earmarked for the Urdd Eisteddfod.
- 2.3 As discussions with Urdd Gobaith Cymru are now entering a more exact phase, it is necessary for Cabinet to agree more precisely the funding contribution of the Authority.
- 2.4 The Council's involvement with management and ownership of the site and pavilion will need be accounted for in any support package. And the exact terms of any future negotiations must be the subject of further reports. The Urdd is keen to use purpose built permanent sites such as Llangollen as they are more viable than the traditional moveable pavilion alternating between North and South Wales. Members are asked to note the cost implications in Para. 4 and the Financial Controller's statement in Para. 5 and agree to earmark the total of each annual instalment as the basis for supporting the 2006 Urdd National Eisteddfod.

3 POWER TO MAKE DECISION

- 3.1 Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 : Promotion of Economic, Social and Environmental Well Being.

4 COST IMPLICATIONS

Previous negotiations with the Urdd have indicated the need for a County Council grant of £300k to enable them to stage the event. There will, however, be other costs associated with the event [as detailed below] and it is necessary for Members to indicate whether these costs should be covered by grant or whether an additional contribution should be made. At this stage no detailed costs are available.

- Preparation and reinstatement of the Pavilion grounds and playing fields (used for parking) which in itself could amount to £50k
- Assistance in any planning applications
- Assistance with traffic management and signage
- Free use of Ysgol Dinas Bran and Dinas Bran Leisure Centre (displacement of regular bookings)
- Assistance with translations and translator
- Provision of Public Entertainment Licence
- Refuse Collection
- Free use of Town Hall and Plas Newydd gardens - itemised cost
- Youth sports and arts development programmes from 2004 up to the event

All the foregoing are achievable but at significant cost in some cases. Also, as the event approaches, staff time will also have to be taken into account.

5 FINANCIAL CONTROLLER STATEMENT

- 5.1 Funding has previously been provided for similar events by budgeting for an annual contribution for a number of years in advance of the year when costs are incurred. A sum of £60k pa for 5 years, having been set aside annually from 2002/03 until 2006/07, (the year of the Eisteddfod), would provide the necessary total of £300k.

6 CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 6.1 Initial consultations were carried out with the Royal International Eisteddfod Committee and Llangollen Town Council who both indicated support in principle.

7 IMPLICATIONS ON OTHER POLICY AREAS INCLUDING CORPORATE

- 7.1 Would comply with Council policy on support for the Welsh Language and Culture and the Arts and promoting Denbighshire.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 To approve expenditure of £300,000, having been set aside annually in equal instalments from 2002/2003 until 2006/2007, to grant aid Urdd Gobaith Cymru to stage the 2006 Urdd National Eisteddfod on the Royal International Pavilion site at Llangollen.

REPORT TO CABINET

CABINET MEMBER: Mike German, Lead Member for Sustainable Development & the Environment

DATE: 25 March 2003

SUBJECT: Approval of Supplementary Planning Guidance

1 DECISION SOUGHT

1.1 To seek approval of the attached Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes (SPGs) for use in development control.

1.2 SPGs attached in Appendix 1:

- No 2 - Landscaping New Developments
- No.15 - Archaeology
- No.16 - Rural Conversions

2 REASON FOR SEEKING DECISION

2.1 The Denbighshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP) is now adopted and existing SPG's will be updated where necessary. The revised SPGs attached to this report will supplement various policies of the Denbighshire UDP, which will provide further guidance to members, officers and developers in the submission and assessment of development proposals. The revised SPGs have been updated to include the following key changes:

- Changes in National Planning Guidance ie Planning Policy Wales 2002
- New and amended Technical Advice Notes, TANs
- Creation of the Welsh Assembly Government
- Policy changes in the UDP following the Plan Inquiry
- Representations received during the public consultation period.

2.2 The revised SPGs have been subject to public consultation. Once adopted by Council, they can be taken into account as a material consideration in determining applications for planning permission.

3. POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION

3.1 Section 54a of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 affords special status to the UDP in determining planning applications and adopted SPG may also be taken into account as a material consideration.

The adoption of Supplementary Planning Guidance as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications is recommended in 'Unitary Development Plans Wales' 2001 issued by the Welsh Assembly Government.

4. COST IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no additional cost implications.

5 FINANCIAL CONTROLLER STATEMENT

5.1 There are no immediate financial implications apparent in the report.

6. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 6.1 The attached SPGs were either issued for public consultation alongside the Unitary Development Plan Deposit version, or have been the subject of a separate consultation exercise as they have raised new issues or cover topics not previously covered. The representations relevant to the SPGs which are the subject of this report are set out in the table attached as Appendix 2. The table also contains the suggested response to each representation along with any amendments made.

7 IMPLICATIONS ON OTHER POLICY AREAS INCLUDING CORPORATE

- 7.1 Improve the quality of the environment and the quality of life for residents of Denbighshire.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 That the attached SPGs as amended be approved by Cabinet and recommended for adoption by the Council.

DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

LANDSCAPING NEW DEVELOPMENTS**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Note is one of a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes (SPGs), amplifying the development plan policies and other issues in a clear and concise format with the aim of improving the design and quality of new development. The Notes are intended to offer broad guidance which will assist members of the public and officers in discussions prior to the submission of planning applications and assist officers in handling and members in determining planning applications.

2 STATUS AND STAGES IN PREPARATION

- 2.1 The Council's SPG Notes are not part of the adopted plan. However, they have been the subject of both a formal Council resolution and public consultation. The Welsh Assembly Government (The Assembly), has confirmed that following public consultation and subsequent Local Planning Authority (LPAs) approval, SPG can be treated as a material planning consideration when LPAs, Planning Inspectors and the Assembly determine planning applications and appeals. This Note was approved by xxxxxxxx on xxxxxxxx for use in development control. A statement of the consultation undertaken, the representations received and the Council's response to these representations is available as a separate document.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Landscaping is a vital component of any new development, and should be considered at the earliest opportunity when considering making a planning application. The retention of the existing features and the addition of new landscaping can enhance the quality and improve the value of the development. Landscaping is often seen as an afterthought to a development scheme; however it is important that this is avoided and that the landscaping is considered within the design process and as an integral part of the development.

4 POLICY

- 4.1 The broad objective of the Council is to retain existing features which contribute to the landscape wherever possible, and to encourage the incorporation of additional landscaping as an integral part of new developments. This is promoted through policy **GEN 6 (General Development Considerations)** and **ENV 7 (Landscape / Townscape Features)**.
- 4.2 The aims of these policies are to ensure that the proposed development is designed to make the best use of the topography, site features and local conditions, with appropriate siting of buildings, roads, paths, open areas, planting etc. This should result from an analysis of the natural features, views etc. A scheme should be designed which fits into the local surroundings as well as satisfying the functional requirements of the development. Buildings, particularly large structures, should where possible be

positioned where they will be least intrusive in the overall landscape and space for any large trees and necessary screen planting should be left free of obstructions and services.

5 PREPARATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

5.1 As part of the submissions for new developments the planning application should be accompanied by a site survey and detailed landscape proposals plan. In the case of detailed applications it is preferable that planting plans are submitted with the proposals rather than dealt with by condition. Failure to submit these details may cause delays to the processing of the application.

6 SITE SURVEY

6.1 In order to investigate the landscape potential of a site and adjacent area, a detailed physical survey should be undertaken prior to the design of the development and the overall landscape setting of the site noted. The site survey should include -

- the topography i.e. ground levels, slopes;
- drainage i.e. ponds, ditches, wet areas;
- soil type e.g. clay, sand, loam, acid or calcareous soils;
- vegetation i.e. the species, height and condition of trees, shrubs and hedges on or adjacent to the site. The accurate position and extent of the vegetation, including overhanging trees, should be plotted.
- boundaries i.e. walls and fences, indicating materials and building style;
- existing underground and overhead services;
- site features e.g. buildings, paths, steps;
- views i.e. good and poor views within the site, from the site outwards and from outside viewpoints into the site;
- climatic conditions i.e. prevailing winds, sheltered areas, areas in sun or shade;
- wildlife interest and the presence of protected species.

6.2 If trees on the site would be affected by the development the applicant should check with the Planning Authority that these are not covered by a Tree Preservation Order. Guidance on this subject and general tree protection is given in **Supplementary Planning Guidance Note No. 6., 'Trees and Development'**.

6.3 Generally speaking, all hedgerows should be retained as an integral part of the development. Removal of most hedgerows in the countryside without permission is an offence under the **1997 Hedgerow Regulations**.

7 THE LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS PLAN

7.1 The approach to landscaping will depend on the scale and nature of the development and whether the site is rural, within a village, in an urban or urban fringe location. The landscape treatment around new buildings and residential extension areas in the countryside, particularly within the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, should be in keeping with the surroundings and generally bounded by stone walls or mixed hedges. Large agricultural buildings should preferably be positioned where these will not be prominent in the landscape and sited where existing trees and

hedges supplemented with new planting will help screen the buildings and integrate them into the surrounding countryside. (see Fig 1)

7.2 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The landscape scheme for residential areas should include space for large growing trees in public open spaces, beside roads, footpaths or on the edges of the development. Small trees and shrubs are usually most appropriate for the confined space of small gardens. Planting is particularly valuable on the edge of urban areas or villages to break up views of new developments from the surrounding countryside. The design of the landscape should take crime prevention into account, particularly in areas of open space and on footpaths to avoid creating enclosed or isolated spaces away from public view.

Further details can be found in **Supplementary Planning Guidance Note No. 1., 'Standards for New Residential Development'**.

7.3 INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

The landscape scheme for large scale industrial or commercial developments should include a framework of planting linked to the existing vegetation of the area. The unrelieved outline of buildings should be broken up with tall growing trees and space should be made available in the layout for such trees to grow to maturity. Mass planting of mainly native trees and shrubs would normally be appropriate particularly on the perimeter of the site. Dense planting of small trees and shrubs will usually make more rapid growth and be more effective than planting a small number of larger trees, although some planting of large trees is often required for early impact. Car parks associated with commercial and industrial premises generally provide opportunity for planting large growing trees. Existing walls and hedges, particularly along site boundaries, should be retained to screen vehicles from outside the site.

7.4 The design of the landscape should take crime prevention into account, particularly in areas of open space and on footpaths to avoid creating enclosed or isolated spaces away from public view.

7.5 In large sites with phased development of buildings, structure planting, particularly on site boundaries, would normally be required in advance or concurrent with the first phase of the development of the site. The detailed landscaping of areas within this framework may take place in later phases as the site is developed.

8 RETENTION OF EXISTING FEATURES

8.1 Features such as ponds, ditches, trees, hedges and banks should be retained where possible, particularly if these have wildlife value. Information on protected species can be found in the **Supplementary Planning Guidance Note No. 18., 'Nature Conservation and Species Protection'**.

Trees, shrubs and hedges should generally be retained where they -

- are sound and in good condition;
- are a feature of the site or part of an important group;
- form an important part of the site boundary;
- are important within the overall landscape of the area or contribute to the street scene;
- screen unsightly views;
- would usefully screen the proposed development;

- help maintain wildlife corridors and biodiversity.

Trees to be retained require special consideration to ensure -

- there will be space available to grow to mature size;
- they will not cause excessive shading of properties;
- that the roots, which extend beyond the spread of the branches and are usually located very close to the surface of the soil, will not be severed by building operations, path construction, etc.;
- the trees roots would not be cut by proposed underground services.

8.2 It may be more appropriate to remove one tree from a group to give space for development than damage several trees in an attempt to retain all of them.

8.3 Trees and hedges to be retained within a development area should be shown on the landscape scheme. These will generally require substantial fencing. Fences should be positioned to the outside of the crown spread of the trees to be protected before any site development is begun in order to prevent compaction or damage to the tree roots. Trees, shrubs and hedges to be removed should also be indicated on the landscape drawing.

Further details can be found in **Supplementary Planning Guidance Note No. 6., 'Trees and Development'**.

8.4 Where trees are shown to be retained and protected, planning conditions will be used to prevent works and storage of materials within the fenced areas. Conditions on site will be monitored during development and enforced as necessary.

8.5 Ponds, ditches and other water features should also be shown on the landscape scheme and carefully protected and fenced prior to development.

8.6 Walls and hedges on the site frontage should be retained or extended where typical of the area, or repositioned if required to improve sight lines. Care should be taken to use the same building techniques for replacement walls and to replace hedges with similar species to those removed, including any associated ground flora of interest, which should be set aside and reinstated.

8.7 Areas of traditional paving and historic materials should be retained where possible and extended where appropriate.

9 PLANTING PLANS

9.1 The planting of native trees and shrubs typical of the locality is encouraged as these are most likely to be suitable for the soil and climatic conditions and grow well, helping to integrate the site into the surrounding landscape. In rural areas the planting of hedge species typical of the area is preferred and the use of rapid growing conifers, for instance, is not favoured in prominent locations. Ornamental planting is generally more appropriate within gardens and in urban and industrial areas.

Trees and shrub species should be carefully selected to ensure -

- the ultimate size of the plant is appropriate for the position;
- the plant is suitable for the soil type;
- the plant is sufficiently hardy for the location;

- tree roots will not damage underground services;
n.b. poplars and willows should be kept well clear of water pipes and sewers;
- tree branches will be clear of overhead wires.

Detailed planting plans should show

- the species or variety of trees or shrubs in each planting area;
- the form and size of the plants i.e. height, girth, spread or container size;
- the density of planting i.e. the number of plants in each planting area;
- the proposed protection from vandalism, grazing stock or rabbits, i.e. fencing, rabbit guards.

A typical planting plan for a rural location is shown in Fig 3

10 MAINTENANCE

- 10.1 Details of proposed maintenance of planting will be required in the form of weed control, watering and the replacement of any failures for a period of five years following planting.
- 10.2 The level of proposed maintenance should be considered and where low maintenance is required, such as in industrial estates and on road sides, reflected in the selection of species and density of planting. Species diversity can be encouraged in amenity areas and verges where a low level of maintenance is proposed.
- 10.3 The management of existing site features of wildlife value such as water areas, species rich grassland coppice and woodland, as well as newly created habitats, should be detailed. Larger schemes such as areas of open space will require management schemes for long term maintenance and these should be detailed as part of any submission.

11 PLANTING SEASON

- 11.1 The planting of bare-rooted stock should generally be carried out when plants are dormant from November to March. Evergreen plants establish more readily if planted in early autumn or late spring providing watering is carried out in periods of dry weather. Container-grown plants may be planted throughout the year in appropriate weather conditions provided that they are regularly watered.

12 HARD LANDSCAPE

- 12.1 The hard landscape, should contribute to a scheme if properly located and designed with the use of appropriate materials which relate to the surroundings. A landscape scheme should indicate proposed roads, parking and paved areas, paths, steps and ramps (refer to **Supplementary Planning Guidance Note No. 8, 'Access for all'**), showing materials and levels. The materials selected for surfacing should be in keeping with the character of the area and with the existing or proposed buildings. The traditional materials of the area and local stone should be used where appropriate. Surfacing should be kept simple and the colour range controlled as over elaborate schemes are unlikely to be aesthetically pleasing.
- 12.2 In schemes such as farm outbuilding conversions, simple surfacing materials such as crushed aggregate, hoggin or tarmac with an exposed aggregate is generally preferable to more modern elaborate concrete paving. In town centres traditional materials using traditional techniques for laying should be used in most instances.

- 12.3 Consideration should be given to the future repair and maintenance of surfaces to ensure materials are chosen which can be replaced if damaged or if access to underground services is required. The landscape scheme should show the position, materials and construction of any new walls, fences, structures, lighting and street furniture which should be in character with the area, and differ in rural and urban situations. Any furniture that is introduced should be appropriate to the development and its surroundings as a whole.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

BS 5837:1991 - Guide for Trees in relation to development
Technical Advice Note 10 - Tree Preservation Orders

CONTACTS

A list of standard contacts can be found at the end of this document.

DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

ARCHAEOLOGY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Note is one of a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes (SPGs), amplifying the development plan policies and other issues in a clear and concise format with the aim of improving the design and quality of new development. The Notes are intended to offer broad guidance which will assist members of the public and officers in discussions prior to the submission of planning applications and assist officers in handling and members in determining planning applications.

2 . STATUS AND STAGES IN PREPARATION

- 2.1 The Council's SPG Notes are not part of the adopted plan. However, they have been the subject of both a formal Council resolution and public consultation. The Welsh Assembly Government (The Assembly) has confirmed that following public consultation and subsequent Local Planning Authority (LPAs) approval, SPG can be treated as a material planning consideration when LPAs, Planning Inspectors and the Assembly determine planning applications and appeals. This Note was approved by xxxxxxxx on xxxxxxxx for use in development control. A statement of the consultation undertaken, the representations received and the Council's response to these representations is available as a separate document.
- 2.2 These Notes have been prepared in accordance with guidance contained in Planning Policy Wales; Unitary Development Plans (Wales); Technical Advice Notes.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Denbighshire contains an extremely rich resource of archaeological and historic features. In an area such as this there is nowhere which has been unaffected by human influence at some time. The County holds, jointly with the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, a database, the Sites and Monuments Record, of all known archaeological sites in the County. Access to this record is available. Much information about the County's archaeology is unknown, still preserved beneath our countryside, towns and villages. This archaeological resource is finite and vulnerable to damage and change. Recent work has identified a series of important Historic Parks and Gardens within Denbighshire and the area of the Vale of Clwyd and the western slopes of the Clwydian Hills have been identified as an Historic Landscape.

4. PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 In 1991 Planning Guidance (**PPG16**) was introduced in Wales relating particularly to Archaeology. This recognised the importance and finite nature of archaeology and accepted that archaeological considerations played a material role in the planning process. This legislation was superseded in 2002 by **Planning Policy (Wales)** and the associated **Welsh Office Circular 60/96**. This guidance note acts as a supplement to the Adopted Unitary Development Plan Policies relating to archaeology.

5. Scheduled Ancient Monuments

- 5.1 Amongst those sites listed on the Sites and Monuments Record are some which are scheduled. A site can be scheduled under the terms of the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979* as being of National importance. Scheduling confers a degree of protection. Any work which affects the scheduled site or its setting requires consent from Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, who hold the schedule. Scheduled Monument Consent is separate from planning permission. The granting of planning permission does not confer scheduled monument consent nor vice versa. For a site which is both scheduled and listed, scheduled monument legislation takes precedence. In most cases the planning authority would expect a planning application which affects a scheduled monument to be accompanied by the necessary scheduled monument consent agreement from Cadw. In certain circumstances Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments will enter into Management Agreements with owners of scheduled ancient monuments in order to better safeguard their future.

6. Planning Applications

- 6.1 *The desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its setting is a material consideration in determining a planning application whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled* (Welsh Office Circular 60/96). Applicants should take into account archaeological considerations and should discuss preliminary plans with the planning authority at an early stage. The first step is to consult the local Sites and Monuments Record. This will provide information about where archaeological remains are known or thought likely to exist and will provide an early warning of the archaeological sensitivity of a site. As a result of this applicants may wish to commission their own archaeological assessment. This normally involves desk-based evaluation of existing information. In some instances a formal Environmental Assessment, which includes archaeological assessment, will be a requirement.
- 6.2 Where such early discussions and research relating to an application indicate that important archaeological remains may exist Denbighshire Planning Authority will request the prospective developer to arrange for a field evaluation to be carried out at their own expense before any decision on the planning application is taken. Such an evaluation, based on a brief drawn up by the County Archaeologist, is normally a rapid operation which involves ground survey and/or small-scale trial trenching, carried out by a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or archaeologist. Work such as this helps to define the character and extent of any archaeological remains which exist in the application area, the weight which ought to be attached to their preservation and potential options for avoiding or minimising damage.
- 6.3 The Local planning authority will expect the results of such archaeological appraisals, assessments and evaluations to be submitted as part of the planning application.
- 6.4 Should planning applications be made without previous discussions with the Authority and it is identified that the application will have or is likely to have archaeological implications, the applicant will be asked to provide more details relating to the scheme - for example relating to foundations - or they may be asked to carry out an evaluation based on a brief drawn up by Denbighshire's Archaeologist, before the application can be considered. Once again, in this way, an informed decision can be made relating to the planning application.

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- 6.5 Once sufficient information has been gathered by a variety of means ranging from desk-top studies, through field survey to trial trenching the Authority is in a position to determine the application.
- 6.6 Where Nationally important archaeological remains and their settings, whether scheduled or not, are affected by development there is a presumption in favour of preservation of the remains *in situ*. In some circumstances it may be possible to preserve remains by the use of sympathetic designs.
- 6.7 There will be occasions where the Planning Authority may decide that the significance of the archaeological remains is not sufficient to justify preservation in situ. In such cases Denbighshire will need to satisfy themselves that the applicant has made adequate arrangements for the excavation and recording or other investigation of the archaeological remains and the publication of the results. In many instances planning permission will be granted with associated conditions which provide for several situations from the recording by complete excavation through to a watching brief carried out during ground disturbance. These works are carried out at the developer's expense.
- 6.8 The above process and advice is hoped to minimise the occasions when totally unexpected archaeological problems arise during the course of development work. However there will be times when remains are only located once development has started. In most cases it will be possible to resolve issues through voluntary discussion, however developers may wish to consider insuring themselves against the risk of loss whilst safeguarding the interest of unexpectedly discovered historic or archaeological remains.

7. Further Information

- 7.1 Welsh Office Circular 60/96 and The Ancient Monument and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
- 7.2 For advice and guidance relating to archaeology applicants are strongly advised to contact the County Archaeologist or alternatively the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust prior to submitting an application. Information relating to Scheduled sites can also be obtained from Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, National Assembly for Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ

8. CONTACTS

- 8.1 A list of standard contacts can be found at the end of this document

Further Contacts

Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
 7a Church Street
 Welshpool
 Powys
 SY21 7DL
 01938 553670

DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CONVERSION OF RURAL BUILDINGS

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Note is one of a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes (SPGs), amplifying the development plan policies and other issues in a clear and concise format with the aim of improving the design and quality of new development. The Notes are intended to offer broad guidance which will assist members of the public and officers in discussions prior to the submission of planning applications and assist officers in handling and members in determining planning applications.

2 STATUS AND STAGES IN PREPARATION

- 2.1 The Council's SPG Notes are not part of the adopted plan. However, they have been the subject of both a formal Council resolution and public consultation. The Welsh Assembly Government (The Assembly), has confirmed that following public consultation and subsequent Local Planning Authority (LPAs) approval, SPG can be treated as a material planning consideration when LPAs, Planning Inspectors and the Assembly determine planning applications and appeals. This Note was approved by xxxxxxxx on xxxxxxxx for use in development control. A statement of the consultation undertaken, the representations received and the Council's response to these representations is available in Annex A of this document.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Rural buildings are an integral part of Denbighshire's attractive countryside and are also important to its rural heritage. However, changes in the rural economy, particularly to farming, have resulted in many of these buildings becoming economically redundant and it is vital to preserve them and find suitable new uses.
- 3.2 Residential conversions are the most common and financially attractive option but they can be difficult to achieve sympathetically without harming the character of the building and do not make a positive contribution towards sustainable rural diversification and the local economy. Employment uses both contribute to the local economy and help retain the character of the building.
- 3.3 Where conversion for commercial uses is not feasible, residential conversions will be considered only where the character and features of the building are retained. This can be difficult to achieve successfully and will require a sympathetic approach combined with considerable design skills, often necessitating the services of a qualified architect. Furthermore, due to the design, construction methods and materials of such buildings, specialist craftsmen may be required.
- 3.4 Much of the guidance, set out in this note, is aimed at rural buildings lying outside development boundaries. However, many of the considerations relating to design, materials, features etc., will be equally applicable to rural buildings within settlement boundaries.

4. PLANNING POLICY

The broad thrust of national planning and UDP policy is as follows:

- conversion of rural buildings to a business re-use will be encouraged, provided that they are suitable for the specific re-use;
- residential re-use will, in general, not be allowed unless the applicant has made every reasonable attempt to secure a suitable business re-use (or where the residential use is a subordinate part of a scheme for business use);
- if the building is in open countryside, it must be capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction;
- conversion should not result in unacceptable impacts upon the structure, form, character or setting where the building is of historic and/or architectural interest;
- the form, bulk and general design of the conversion scheme is in keeping with their surroundings;
- the proposal does not create traffic or access problems nor require the provision of public services at unacceptable cost.

4.1 Conversion of Rural Buildings to Employment Uses:

4.2 The conversion of rural buildings to business or commercial uses will make a positive contribution to the local economy and to rural diversification. Employment uses include B1, B2, B8, as well tourism or other employment generating uses, including farm diversification plans. This type of development will both retain and/or create local employment opportunities in rural areas – where it is normally difficult to secure planning permission for 'new build' development. Denbighshire County Council will adopt a *positive* approach to the conversion of rural buildings for business re-use and this will be the favoured use of rural buildings, provided that;

- In the open countryside they are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction (refer to section 3.4, below);
- They are suitable for the specific re-use;
- Conversion does not lead to a dispersal of activity on such a scale as to prejudice town and village vitality;
- Their form, bulk and general design are in keeping with their surroundings;
- Any external requirements such as parking, servicing or storage can be accommodated without detracting from the building group or its rural setting;
- Imposing conditions on a planning permission overcomes any planning objections, for example on environmental or traffic grounds, which would otherwise outweigh the advantage of the re-use;
- Conversion does not result in unacceptable impacts upon the structure, form, character or setting where the building is of historic and/or architectural interest.

4.3 Conversion of Rural Buildings to Residential Uses:

4.4 Residential conversion of rural buildings which have ceased to be used for industrial or commercial purposes, including agriculture may:

- have a minimal economic impact and therefore not be in the best long term economic interests of the farm and the locality; and
- be detrimental to the fabric and character of historic buildings.

4.5 **Employment Test**

Denbighshire County Council is committed to the creation of local employment and rural diversification. The Local Planning Authority, in accordance with policy HSG 9 of the UDP and national planning guidance, will not allow conversion of such buildings to residential uses, unless sufficient and reasonable attempts have been made to:

- secure a business use for the building; or
- secure a residential use where it is a subordinate part of a scheme for business use, and that these options are unfeasible, unsuitable and unacceptable.

4.6 Obviously, in instances where an employment use is proposed for the conversion scheme, no marketing exercise is required.

4.7 **'The Employment Test' - Defining Sufficient and Reasonable Attempts to Secure a Business Use:**

4.8 Sufficient and reasonable attempts at securing a business use for a rural building will require a "marketing exercise". It is difficult to be prescriptive about the definition of the marketing exercise as each case will be different. However the planning authority will expect a marketing exercise to comprise:

- bi-monthly advertisement in a regional newspaper
- advertising with a commercial property agent;
- notifying other organisations who may have an interest in promoting the site.

4.9 The marketing exercise should last a minimum of 6 months. The planning authority will determine at its own discretion what timescale is "sufficient and reasonable", following an assessment of the merits of each individual case. The example cited below is an example of the general requirements that the planning authority would expect:

- The rural building must be *actively* advertised for employment uses for a continuous period of at least 6 months starting from the date of the first advert;
- The rural building should be *actively* marketed through a recognised and independent commercial property agent and should cover the *North Wales, Cheshire and Merseyside* area.
- The rural building should be advertised for employment uses in an advert in the Daily Post on a bi-monthly basis during the marketing period;
- The applicant must, at the start of the marketing period, notify the availability of the land/buildings for employment uses to the following (please contact the planning authority for relevant contact names):
 - Denbighshire County Council's Economic Regeneration Unit;
 - Welsh Development Agency; and
 - Any relevant local business associations or interest groups.
- The Local Planning Authority will require evidence of the extent of the marketing including copies of all adverts (with dates), when and for how long the advert was in the agent's window, websites etc;
- The relevant contact name at the commercial property agent must also be provided in order for the Local Planning Authority to discuss the extent of their marketing.

Details of any queries received with regard to the property must be reported back to the planning authority.

- At the end of the marketing period, the planning authority will require a report setting out the enquiries received, including any firm offers (conditional or unconditional) – with evidence where necessary - and the commercial property agent's view as to the commercial viability of the site.

4.10 The Local Planning Authority must be satisfied that genuine attempts have been made to both:

- Actively market the property;
- Market the property at a reasonable price for employment uses.

4.11 The Local Planning Authority will require evidence of the marketing exercise to accompany the submission of any planning application for residential conversion.

5. OTHER PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 In addition to the guidance set out above, there will be further criteria which must be taken into consideration when determining a planning application for conversion. Some of the criteria will relate to residential conversions only and others will refer to both residential and employment conversions:

5.2 In all instances the objective is to ensure that buildings to be converted are adapted sympathetically having regard to their surroundings. In the case of traditional buildings, the scheme of conversion should ensure that the original character of the building is retained.

5.3. Redundancy

Where an agricultural building is proposed to be replaced through conversion, the proposal should not lead to the need for further agricultural buildings elsewhere.

5.4 Quality/Condition of Building

In the open countryside, buildings should be of permanent and substantial construction and should not be so derelict that they could only be brought back into use by substantial rebuilding, tantamount to the erection of a new dwelling.

5.5 In order to establish the condition and physical suitability of a building, an independent structural engineer's report will be required. This should clearly demonstrate the structural capability of the building to accommodate the scheme proposed and be submitted with the planning application. This will benefit both the Council and applicant since if a building collapses during alteration the planning permission may be rendered unimplementable.

5.6 Quality of Conversion

Once the suitability of a building for conversion is established, then the actual details of the scheme need to be assessed. The following considerations are put forward as generally reflecting good practice. There may be individual buildings wherein the guidance may not be appropriate depending on its unique character, design, materials and construction. In such cases advice should be sought from appropriate Council officers.

(a) Extension/alteration

Generally, the building should be capable of conversion without the need for extensions and alterations. The roof line should not be altered or raised and

dormers will almost always be inappropriate, unless they are traditional to other buildings in the locality.

(b) Internal sub-division

By the nature of their intended purposes, many buildings are open plan internally. It is inevitable, particularly for residential uses, that internal sub-division is necessary e.g. to separate kitchen, bathroom and living space or to separate office space/storage. Internal sub-division should be kept to a minimum so as to respect the internal features, space or roof structures.

(c) Elevational changes

(i) Windows and Doors:

A difficulty experienced in conversion schemes is to enable sufficient natural light into a building, without the creation of a considerable amount of new openings (fenestration) which would seriously damage its existing character. Wherever possible, existing openings should be retained and new openings should be kept to a minimum. Where new windows and doors are unavoidable, they should be sympathetic in design, proportions and materials. The use of UPVC will generally be unacceptable and all external timber should be painted rather than stained. Additional light may be achieved by the glazing of ventilation slits and sparing use on less visible roof lines of flush fitting conservation rooflights.

(ii) Details:

Existing features such as fixed machinery, arches, lintels ventilation slits etc., should be retained and incorporated into the scheme. Where openings need to be blocked up a sympathetic material should be used and recessed to emphasise the original opening. The use of timber boarding or glass may be appropriate for large openings with glazing helping to ensure sufficient natural light is available. The introduction of chimney stacks and modern or over-ornate details should be avoided. External rainwater goods should be kept to a minimum and be black finished cast-iron or aluminium.

(iii) External materials:

Existing stone/brickwork should be repointed using traditional lime based mortars and methods, and roof slates/tiles should be repaired and re-used wherever possible. In instances where new materials are necessary, these should match the existing in terms of size, colour, texture etc. Only when the existing building features rendering and/or paint/whitewash will this form of treatment be appropriate.

5.7. External Areas

Notwithstanding the quality of the actual conversion scheme, considerable care must be taken with the external surroundings. The creation of a residential curtilage, boundary treatment and the introduction of residential and domestic features and materials can have a damaging effect on the character of the building and its surroundings.

(a) Curtilages

The curtilage of a rural building should **generally** remain open and uncluttered. **Where there is** ~~There may be~~ scope for private areas in residential conversions ~~but~~ these should be screened with hedging and walls of old brick or stone and should follow existing natural or manmade boundaries such as hedge lines or farmyard boundary walls. The treatment of boundaries should reflect the building's rural character with simple post and rail fences stone / brick walls and timber gates being acceptable. The planning application should include plans clearly defining the extent of the curtilage areas and showing detailed boundary treatments.

In residential conversions, conservatories, pools, sheds, interwoven fences and ornate entrances etc., ~~will often~~ **may** detract from the character of the building and its setting. The incorporation of agricultural land into a building's curtilage constitutes a change of use and will require planning permission but will normally be discouraged. **Please refer to policy HSG 16 of the UDP for further guidance.**

(b) Surfaces

Modern ground surface materials such as tarmac and concrete are sometimes out of keeping with the character of traditional rural buildings, **although there are instances when tarmac may be suitable**. Wherever possible, existing stone sets, cobbles or other suitable/sympathetic materials should be retained or re-used and supplemented where necessary. ~~These materials include gravel, and crushed slate or aggregate.~~

(c) Landscaping

Generally, hard landscaping will be appropriate to courtyards and soft landscaping appropriate elsewhere. Existing landscape features should be retained where possible. Planning applications should be accompanied by a fully detailed landscaping scheme.

(d) Parking

Parking should be in accordance with the Local Planning Authority's guidelines. Careful consideration should be given to the sensitive siting and design of car parking, in both employment and residential schemes.

Wherever possible in a residential conversion scheme, garaged cars should be incorporated within the conversion scheme, especially in buildings with former loading bays and barn doors. ~~Alternatively, other buildings or structures on site may be utilised for garaging. Open car parking may be screened either through existing or new walls or through landscaping measures.~~

(e) Services

Particular care needs to be given to services which can have a damaging visual effect. LP gas tanks, septic tanks etc. should be sensitively sited and well screened so as to be unobtrusive whilst electricity control boxes, alarm boxes, satellite dishes and flues etc., should be positioned on less prominent elevations.

(f) Storage

Some employment conversion schemes may need space for the storage of goods and materials. As with car parking, careful consideration should be given to the siting and screening of any storage areas, ensuring that there is a minimal impact upon the building and its surroundings by utilising screening through existing or new walls or through landscaping measures.

(g) Access for Disabled People

An inclusive design approach is recommended to incorporate facilities for disabled people in compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, in particular Part III – adjustments in relations to physical features. Access should be in accordance with the Local Planning Authority's guidelines, Access Strategy and Approved document Part M of Building Regulations in conjunction with BSI 8300:2001.

5.8 Amenity/Setting of Other Buildings

The relationship of the conversion scheme to other buildings needs to be assessed. Often there will be dwellings nearby and both these and the conversion scheme must

take account of privacy and overlooking issues. Agricultural or other operations, either on the site or nearby must not result in inadequate amenity standards.

5.9 Wildlife

Some buildings may contain roosts for bats and owls which are protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. In such cases, the applicant will need to undertake a pre-determination survey and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) will be consulted on the results of the survey and mitigation required. Applicants are advised to contact the County Ecologist and refer to the Note on "Nature Conservation and Species Protection". It is an offence to damage or destroy a bat breeding site or resting place and an offence can be committed even if the actions were unintentional. Steps can be taken in the detailed designs of roofs to provide suitable habitats and access for bats and owls and these will need to be incorporated within any scheme where the presence of these species is evident or likely.

5.10 Listed Buildings and Conversion Areas

Some buildings may be listed as being of special architectural or historic interest or may fall within the curtilage of a listed building. Others may fall within conservation areas. In both cases conversions will require very careful consideration to ensure that the character, appearance and features of the buildings are retained. A separate application for listed building consent will be required where works are proposed to a listed building or building within the curtilage of a listed building.

5.11 Removal of Permitted Development Rights

In granting planning permission for residential conversions permitted development rights will be removed by the imposition of a planning condition. All subsequent alterations i.e. garages, extensions, outbuildings, sheds, alterations to the roof etc., which would normally be permitted development, will require specific planning permission. This is to avoid the loss of the building's character through a series of small changes which cumulatively have an adverse effect.

6. MAKING AN APPLICATION

6.1 Applicants are advised to consult with Planning Officers before submitting planning applications. For this particular SPG applicants should provide the following (specific) information:

Plans:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elevational and plan drawings (existing and proposed); • cross sectional drawings where necessary (plans should clearly show what elements of the original building will remain and what elements of the scheme are new) • landscaping details showing existing and proposed hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatments;
Structural Survey	Submission of a report prepared by a structural engineer/surveyor.
Marketing Criteria: (for residential schemes only):	Submission of evidence that sufficient and reasonable attempts have been made to secure a business/commercial re-use for the building.

6.2 In all cases a Building Regulation application will be required and applicants are advised to contact the Building Control Section or an approved Inspector to obtain further information and the necessary application forms and fee guidance.

Annex A

Statement of Consultation, Representations Received and Council Response

Statement of Consultation

1. As part of the public consultation process, the SPG was:
 - (a) Made available in all of the County's libraries and one stop shops;
 - (b) Made available on Denbighshire County Council's website;
 - (c) Sent to all town and community councils in the County;
 - (d) Sent to all county councillors;
 - (e) Sent to the following consultees: ADAS; Carter Jonas; Country Landowners Association; Clough & Co; Countryside Council for Wales; Jan Bargiel Architectural Services; John Miles Architectural Services; Jones Peckover; Mel Herman Associates; National Farmers Union; Parry Davies Partners; Planscape; R Logan (planning consultant); Rhug Estate Office; Richard Broun Associates; Welsh Assembly Government; Welsh Development Agency.
2. The consultees under section (d) were selected due to either a previous representation on a related topic on the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) or because it was considered they may be interested in the content of the document.
3. Responses were received from the following:
 - (a) Trefnant Community Council;
 - (b) Llandyrnog Community Council;
 - (c) Welsh Assembly Government.
4. A summary of their representation including the Council's response and any amendments is shown in the table on the following page.

REPRESENTOR	REPRESENTATION	RESPONSE AND RECOMMENDATION
Trefnant Community Council	Regard domestic dwellings as the most appropriate use for such rural buildings as they are not usually in suitable areas for business use and would otherwise be left derelict.	Disagree. National planning guidance now states that: “[especially in areas where the creation of local employment is a priority], local planning authorities may include policies within the UDP which do not allow residential re-use unless the applicant has made every reasonable attempt to secure suitable business re-use and the application is supported by a statement of the efforts which have been made” (Para 7.6.10, PPW 2002). This is reflected in the adopted Denbighshire UDP and subsequently this SPG. The policy does not preclude residential development altogether. However, it does allow market conditions to be ‘tested’ to determine the demand for suitable and feasible buildings for employment generating uses prior to granting permission for residential uses. RECOMMENDATION: No change
Llandyrnog Community Council	Para 3.6 (c): Phrasing relating to use of UPVC is too prescriptive and there will be situations where this material is acceptable.	Disagree. Whilst it is accepted that there may be cases where the use of UPVC will be acceptable, these instances will be rare and the SPG should encourage the use of timber framed windows. RECOMMENDATION: No change.
Welsh Assembly Government	Para 2.2 – the reference in the first bullet point should be to Section 3.4	Agree. RECOMMENDATION: amend end of bullet point 1 in Para 2.2 as follows “...(refer to Section 3.4, below).”
Welsh Assembly Government	Para 3.3 Redundancy: Guidance is too restrictive. There may be sound technical reasons for wanting to replace an existing building with a more suitable modern one. Proposals to convert the old building should not prejudice erection of a new one e.g. a traditional lofted range may be too low for tractor access – it is sensible to consider such a range for alternative uses and erect a modern replacement. There may also be sound economic reasons for converting a traditional range to a diversified use and erecting a replacement. It is recommended that the paragraph be amended with the addition of: “ <i>unless there are sound technical or commercial reasons to do so.</i> ”	Agree. RECOMMENDATION: Amend the end of para 3.3 as follows: “...the proposal should not lead to the need for further agricultural buildings elsewhere, unless there are sound technical or commercial reasons to do so. ”
Welsh Assembly Government	Para 3.6 and 3.7: If there is a case for granting residential planning permission, then the financial return could make a significant difference to the viability of farms and especially small and medium enterprises.	Noted. However, the policy does not preclude residential development altogether – the marketing exercise will explore whether economic opportunities exist for the building, resulting in a more sustainable contribution to the local economy than would be provided by residential development. RECOMMENDATION: No change.
Welsh Assembly Government	Para 3.7 may be too onerous. In practice there may be problems in interpretation, monitoring and enforcement.	Agree in part. Some sections of Para 3.7 may be considered too onerous – RECOMMENDATION: Insert minor amendments to Para 3.7 as follows:

RECOMMENDATIONS: Amend sections of Para 3.7 as follows:

“(a) Curtilages

The curtilage of a rural building should **generally** remain open and uncluttered. ~~Where there is~~ ~~There may be~~ scope for private areas in residential conversions ~~but~~ these should be screened with hedging and walls of old brick or stone and should follow existing natural or manmade boundaries such as hedge lines or farmyard boundary walls. The treatment of boundaries should reflect the building’s rural character with simple post and rail fences stone / brick walls and timber gates being acceptable. The planning application should include plans clearly defining the extent of the curtilage areas and showing detailed boundary treatments.

In residential conversions, conservatories, pools, sheds, interwoven fences and ornate entrances etc., ~~will often~~ **may** detract from the character of the building and its setting. The incorporation of agricultural land into a building’s curtilage constitutes a change of use and will require planning permission but will normally be discouraged. **Please refer to policy HSG 16 of the UDP for further guidance.**

(b) Surfaces

Modern ground surface materials such as tarmac and concrete are sometimes out of keeping with the character of traditional rural buildings, **although there are instances when tarmac may be suitable**. Wherever possible, existing stone sets, cobbles or other suitable/sympathetic materials should be retained or re-used and supplemented where necessary. ~~These materials include gravel, and crushed slate or aggregate.~~

(c) Landscaping

Generally, hard landscaping will be appropriate to courtyards and soft landscaping appropriate elsewhere. Existing landscape features should be retained where possible. Planning applications should be accompanied by a fully detailed landscaping scheme.

(d) Parking

Parking should be in accordance with the Local Planning Authority’s guidelines. Careful consideration should be given to the sensitive siting and design of car parking, in both employment and residential schemes.

		<p>Wherever possible in a residential conversion scheme, garaged cars should be incorporated within the conversion scheme, especially in buildings with former loading bays and barn doors. Alternatively, other buildings or structures on site may be utilised for garaging. Open car parking may be screened either through existing or new walls or through landscaping measures.</p>
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**DCC - TOPIC BASED SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE
REPRESENTATIONS SUBMITTED AT CONSULTATION STAGE**

SPG No. & TITLE	REPRESENTOR	REPRESENTATION	RESPONSE & RECOMMENDATION
2 Landscaping new developments	No representation received.	-	-
15 Archaeology	Council for British Archaeology	Needs to be a stronger note or policy of caution for increased car parking , wider access facilities etc to the sites of Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Historic Gardens and Parks open to the public. The Council's Archaeologist, Conservation Architect and Landscape Architect should always be contacted for advice.	Disagree. The SPG provides general guidance on protecting Ancient Monuments and other archaeological sites. It is beyond the scope of this guidance to comment on particular types of development such as car parking and access facilities. Recommendation: No Change Para 7.2 already advises consultation with the County Archaeologist or Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust. Recommendation: No Change
16 Conversion of Rural Buildings	Refer to Annex A of the SPG.	Refer to Annex A of the SPG.	Refer to Annex A of the SPG.

REPORT TO CABINET

CABINET MEMBER: Councillor E.A. Owens - Cabinet Lead Member for Finance.

DATE: 25 March 2003

SUBJECT: Revenue Budget 2002/03

1 DECISION SOUGHT

That in the light of the latest budget performance figures for the current financial year Members support the requirement for:

- i) the Lifelong Learning Directorate to take appropriate measures to review service provision.
- ii) the appointment of a qualified accountant within the Management Accounting Unit in the Resources Directorate to provide the capacity required within the Lifelong Learning Directorate to enable it to discharge its Management Accounting responsibilities across all its services.

2 REASON FOR SEEKING DECISION

The need to deliver the Council's agreed budget strategies.

3 POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION

Local Authorities are required under section 151 of the Local Government Act (1972) to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs.

4 COST IMPLICATIONS

The projections undertaken for 2002/03 at the end of the February accounting period identify a potential net overspend by the year end of £268k (£266k at the end of January). After making allowances for projected Directorate underspends of £153k, which will potentially be carried forward at the year end, and the projected NNDR savings of £120k, the gross overspend amounts to £541k (£445k at the end of January).

5 FINANCIAL CONTROLLER STATEMENT

The Council's financial strategy for the year requires balances to be built up to £1.0m by the end of 2002/03. Cabinet at its meeting of 10 September agreed that Directorates will be expected to achieve their budget expenditure figures. The latest projection indicates that spending remains in excess of budget within the Lifelong Learning Directorate (£541k projected overspend - an increase of £96k over the projection undertaken at the end of January). This position demonstrates the urgent need to appoint a qualified accountant to strengthen the level of financial management within the Lifelong Learning Directorate.

6 CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

Lead Cabinet Members consult on an ongoing basis with Heads of Service to agree necessary remedial action to prevent overspends in 2002/03.

7 IMPLICATIONS ON OTHER POLICY AREAS INCLUDING CORPORATE

The level of funding available to services together with budgetary performance impacts upon all services of the Council.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- i) That Cabinet Members note the projected outturn position and its impact on the strategy to deliver balances of £1.0m by the end of 2002/03 and emphasise the requirement for the Lifelong Learning Directorate to take appropriate measures to review service provision and improve budgetary control.
- ii) That Cabinet Members support the proposal to appoint a qualified accountant to the Management Accounting Unit within the Resources Directorate, to be engaged for the purposes of improving the quality and accuracy of the management accounting information currently produced and improve budgetary control within the Lifelong Learning Directorate.

MONTHLY BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - FINANCIAL YEAR 2002/03
Summary of Pressures
PERIOD ENDING FEB 2003

Directorate	- Year to Date -		
	Budget Profile	Actual to end Feb 2003 Plus Commitments	Variance (Increase/ - Saving)
	£000s	£000s	£000s
Lifelong Learning (excluding schools delegated)	12,822	12,237	-585
Environment	14,479	14,371	-108
Personal Services	21,963	21,851	-112
Chief Executive	2,220	2,025	-195
Resources	5,723	5,540	-183
Corporate, Miscellaneous & Benefits	12,165	12,922	757
	69,372	68,946	-426

Non - Service Items:

Contingency
 Capital Financing Charges/Investment Income
 Precepts & Levies
 Contribution to Balances
 NNDR Savings

- 2002/03 Totals -				Projected Variance (Previous Report) £000s
Budget As per Budget Book	Budget As at end Feb 2003	Projected Outturn	Variance (Increase/ - Saving)	
£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	
15,065	15,591	16,132	541	445
16,768	16,990	16,978	-12	0
23,297	23,614	23,532	-82	0
2,244	2,312	2,268	-44	-44
4,543	4,637	4,637	0	0
3,097	4,262	4,247	-15	-15
65,014	67,406	67,794	388	386
1,720	0	0	0	0
11,144	10,573	10,573	0	0
4,130	4,130	4,130	0	0
1,000	875	875	0	0
			-120	-120
83,008	82,984	83,372		
Total Variance			268	266

Summary

Overspends	541	445
NNDR Savings	-120	-120
Net Overspend	421	325
Underspends	-153	-59
Total Variance	268	266

Note: The Management Accounting rules of the Council require debtor account entries to be reversed in respect of amounts outstanding for more 30 days after the due date. In the event that debts cannot be collected Services will be required to meet the cost of the debt write-off. This may impact on the actual outturn achieved by Services at the year end.

**MONTHLY BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - FINANCIAL YEAR 2002/03
LIFELONG LEARNING
PERIOD ENDING FEB 2003**

	- Year to Date -			- 2002/03 Totals -				Projected Variance (Previous Report)
	Budget Profile	Actual to end Feb 2003 Plus Commitments	Variance (Increase/ - Saving)	Budget As per Budget Book	Budget As at end Feb 2003	Projected Outturn	Variance (Increase/ - Saving)	
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	
Individual Schools Budget	35,915	32,257	-3,658	35,527	35,552	35,592	40	-60
School Funds Held Centrally	6,907	7,256	349	9,004	9,202	9,733	531	439
Non school Funding	289	-92	-381	172	385	383	-2	-2
Leisure Services	2,854	2,328	-526	2,701	2,819	2,849	30	8
Culture	1,801	1,851	50	2,245	2,257	2,257	0	0
Countryside	529	463	-66	405	404	404	0	0
Youth	442	431	-11	538	524	506	-18	0
	12,822	12,237	-585	15,065	15,591	16,132	541	445
Total Lifelong Learning	48,737	44,494	-4,243	50,592	51,143	51,724	581	385

Notes:

Non school funding actual and variance to date is distorted by receipt of Early Years Provision Grant £385k

Non school funding now includes College transport budget and expenditure moved from School Funds held Centrally

Increased expenditure on Individual Schools Budget relates to exoenditure on Capitation and Repairs and Maintenance. This will be contained within overall balances.

Comments	Current Month £ 000s	Previous Month £ 000s
Education		
Individual Schools Budgets		
This is based on the latest outturn projections for each school.	40	-60
Pressures		
School Funds Held Centrally		
SEN specialist provision to compensate for capacity issues at Tir Morf	65	65
SEN significant pressure currently at the same level as this point last y	264	264
N.B. Total potential central funding of £123k to meet demand led element		
Joint Use Leisure Centres	18	18
Transport increase identified following receipt of information from transportation in January - retendering & leasing	225	246
Insurance premia	9	9
Savings		
School Funds Held Centrally		
Management and administration - various	-20	-20
Delay in appointment of SEN Lead Officer and other staff	-69	-69
Reduction in Free Meal numbers	-45	-45
Equipment Leasing	-15	-15
Boarding Grants	-2	-2
Remissions	-10	-10
Travelling	-2	-2
<i>Discussions ongoing to seek compensatory savings</i>	418	439
Non-School Funding		
Student Awards Support	-2	-2
Culture and Leisure		
Current pressures include:		
Costs associated with hosting the Blue Peter Event	5	5
Loss of income from the Apollo profitshare agreement	23	23
Funding of Supernumary post	18	18
Pavilion Theatre - increased costs and underachievement on producti	19	20
Resolution of decasualisation claim	2	2
Bad Debt re coastal property	23	0
Offset by internal delayed appointments and increased income	-60	-60
	30	8

**MONTHLY BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - FINANCIAL YEAR 2002/03
ENVIRONMENT
PERIOD ENDING FEB 2003**

	- Year to Date -		
	Budget Profile	Actual to end Feb 2003 Plus Commitments	Variance (Increase/ - Saving)
	£000s	£000s	£000s
Consultancy Services	1,524	1,773	249
Economic Regeneration	862	936	74
Highways and Transportation	4,416	4,383	-33
Planning Services	800	635	-165
Public Protection & Regulatory Services	6,301	6,118	-183
Support Services	576	526	-50
Total Environment	14,479	14,371	-108

- 2002/03 Totals -			
Budget As per Budget Book	Budget As at end Feb 2003	Projected Outturn	Variance (Increase/ - Saving)
£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
995	1,048	1,048	0
798	847	867	20
5,929	5,997	5,997	0
889	894	874	-20
7,540	7,555	7,567	12
617	649	625	-24
16,768	16,990	16,978	-12

Projected Variance (Previous Report)
£000s
0
0
0
-21
36
-15
0

Reasons for Variance Against Budget Profile

Consultancy Services - does not include substantial income since September.

Economic Regeneration - awaiting receipt of Objective 1 grant.

Planning Services - further commitments of £131k, increased/earlier receipt of Building Control.

PP & RS - late payment of contracts and rates invoices.

Support Services - further commitments of £25k, incorrectly profiled project based expenditure budgets.

**MONTHLY BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - FINANCIAL YEAR 2002/03
PERSONAL SERVICES
PERIOD ENDING FEB 2003**

	- Year to Date -			- 2002/03 Totals -				Projected Variance (Previous Report) £000s
	Budget Profile	Actual to end Feb 2003 Plus Commitments	Variance (Increase/ - Saving)	Budget As per Budget Book	Budget As at end Feb 2003	Projected Outturn	Variance (Increase/ - Saving)	
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	
Children Services:								
Children and Families	3,620	4,077	457	3,805	3,883	4,364	481	454
Community Agency	217	193	-24		249	233	-16	
Performance Management & Support	151	154	3		182	173	-9	
Adult Services:								
Intake A & C M (North)	4,423	5,033	610	8,011	4,949	5,681	732	788
Preserved Rights/RCA	2,824	2,558	-266		3,081	2,782	-299	-343
Intake A & C M (South)	2,735	2,647	-88	3,046	3,033	2,919	-114	-133
Adult Services (Provider)	5,313	5,222	-91	5,442	5,425	5,462	37	-1
Performance Management & Support	942	40	-902		1,016	-67	-1,083	-938
Business Support & Development	1,669	1,795	126	2,910	1,713	1,902	189	173
Non HRA Housing	69	132	63	83	83	83	0	0
Total Personal Services	21,963	21,851	-112	23,297	23,614	23,532	-82	0

Children and Families

As previously reported Fostering will be the major drain on the 2002/03 budget. Overspend of £571k. The NCH Residential establishment (Bryn Y Wal) is expected to overspend by £77k. This is due to both a high inflationary increase by NCH and insufficient budget within Children's Services.

Intake A & C M (North & South)

Increase in spend in both Community Care Older People, Physically Disabled & Learning Disabilities due to THB removed from the service.

Adult Services - Provider

Elderly Residential Services - estimated overspend year end - £200K
Mental Illness - Llys Marchan Residential Home overspend estimated to be £69K

Adult Services - Performance Management & Support

The full year projection in respect of Transitional Housing Benefit (THB) income is estimated at £1,150k.

MONTHLY BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - FINANCIAL YEAR 2002/03
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES, CORPORATE & MISCELLANEOUS
 PERIOD ENDING FEB 2003

	- Year to Date -		
	Budget Profile	Actual to end Feb 2003 Plus Commitments	Variance (Increase/ - Saving)
	£000s	£000s	£000s
Chief Executive's Dept	2,220	2,025	-195
Resources Directorate:			
Finance	3,332	3,419	87
Audit	275	286	11
I.T	1,554	1,276	-278
Personnel	562	559	-3
Total	5,723	5,540	-183
Corporate & Miscellaneous Benefits			
	2,357	1,686	-671
	9,808	11,236	1,428
Total	12,165	12,922	757
Total Chief Executive's, Resources, Corporate & Misc. and Benefits	20,108	20,487	379

- 2002/03 Totals -			
Budget As per Budget Book	Budget As at end Feb 2003	Projected Outturn	Variance (Increase/ - Saving)
£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
2,244	2,312	2,268	-44
2,155	2,213	2,213	0
308	300	300	0
1,492	1,497	1,497	0
588	627	627	0
4,543	4,637	4,637	0
2,622	3,787	3,772	-15
475	475	475	0
3,097	4,262	4,247	-15
9,884	11,211	11,152	-59

Projected Variance (Previous Report)
£000s
-44
0
0
0
0
0
-15
0
-15
-59

Contract Services Memorandum	Actual Income	Actual Expenditure	Actual Surplus / - Deficit
	£000s	£000s	£000s
	10,725	10,535	190

Projected Income	Projected Expenditure	Projected Surplus / - Deficit
£000s	£000s	£000s
11,750	11,550	200

REPORT TO CABINET

CABINET MEMBER: COUNCILLOR M A GERMAN, LEAD MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 25 MARCH 2003

SUBJECT: AUTHORISATION OF SINGLE TENDER ACTION

1 DECISION SOUGHT

To record that the Head of Planning Services has authorised a single tender procedure in relation to works urgently required to the former Gwasg Gee buildings, Chapel Street, Denbigh.

2 REASON FOR SEEKING DECISION

Gwasg Gee on Chapel Street, Denbigh is a Grade II* Listed Building within the Denbigh town centre Conservation Area. Until 18 months ago it was occupied and still operating as printing press and had been since 1830. Unfortunately the building had not been maintained for many years and since closure the condition of the building as a result of the increasing dilapidation has suffered considerably from the ingress of water causing so much concern to the Principal Planning Enforcement Officer and Project Manager of the Denbigh Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) that a report was put to Planning Committee on the 26th February requesting an Urgent Works Notice be served which allows the authority in not less than 7 days after service upon the owner to execute the works itself. Without the works occurring in the very near future there is a likely danger of collapse and or loss of important historic fabric as a result of the accelerating decay caused by the ingress of water and structural problems resulting from this ingress.

The urgent need to execute works to prevent imminent collapse or further loss of important historic fabric, precludes the preparation of detailed specifications, tender documents and a period seeking tenders normal for Council executed works, which would have normally taken up to 8 weeks. Through authorising the single tender action this period is considerably shortened thereby precluding further damage and in the longer term reducing the likely costs of repair and reuse.

3 POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION

The Head of Service on the 5 March 2003, exercised his powers under Section 9 (3)(c) of the Council's Standing Orders.

4 COST IMPLICATIONS

The cost of these works will not be borne by the authority but by the Denbigh THI. The THI is a scheme for the repair and reuse of historic buildings within the town which is supported by funding from various sources. In this particular case as the building has been identified as a critical project, the Heritage Lottery Fund have given specific approval to expend up to £20,000 from their contribution on the urgent works, as detailed in the attached correspondence. The rates provided by the contractor are considered reasonable by Design Services, Principal Construction Manager for the type and complexity of the work involved.

5 FINANCIAL CONTROLLER STATEMENT

This proposal is in accordance with the Council's contract standing orders. Costs incurred will need to be contained within the external funding available.

6 CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

Local Member for Denbigh Central Ward - Cllr Gwyneth Kensler

7 IMPLICATIONS ON OTHER POLICY AREAS INCLUDING CORPORATE

It supports the Council's long term committment to the regeneration of Denbigh.

8 RECOMMENDATION

To record the authorisation by the Head of Service on the 5 March 2003, for the single tender procedure for undertaking the urgent works to Gwasg Gee, Chapel Street, Denbigh up to £20,000 in value.