

PRIORITIES
AND
BUDGET
2007/08

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Priorities and Budget 2007/08**Agenda Item 5c.**

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Background Papers:- Review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy report to Cabinet 17th July 2006
Financial Implications:- Addressed in report
Equalities Implications:- None
Legal Implications:- None
Options: Not applicable
Risks: Risks identified in MTFs/Capital Programme with any update to these being provided in the details below

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report contains details of the latest projections of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), together with requests for funding (revenue and capital). These papers were received at the Leadership Workshop, held on 20th October 2006. It is recommended that the contents of this report be used for consultation with stakeholders. The proposed consultation programme builds on that used last year.

The updated MTFs for the General Fund for 2008/09 highlights a projected shortfall of resources (approximately £500,000). In addition the proposed transfer of the housing stock will, if agreed by tenants, have a financial impact on the General Fund. A programme of efficiency reviews is to commence early in January 2007, focussing on (1) support services, (2) services, which are high cost, above average cost or where performance is poor, and (3) corporate costs which cut across a number of services. The aim of the reviews being to achieve a balanced budget for 2008/09 without significant impact on the Council Tax.

DECISION

Members are recommended to:

- a) Note the projected budgetary position of both the General Fund and Housing Revenue account;
- b) Agree that this paper is used in the current budget consultation process; and
- c) Agree to grant delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Assets and Finance, in consultation with the Finance Director, to determine any increases in fees and charges required in advance of 1st April 2007.

Priorities and Budget 2007/08

1. Background

An update of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was agreed by the Cabinet at the meeting on 17th July 2006.

During the intervening months senior officers have been concluding reviews of their services in order to update the business plans for the coming three-year period, 2007/08 to 2009/10. This part of the Business Planning process provides the opportunity to raise requests for additional funding, revenue and/or capital, required to meet priority objectives.

The requests for funding identified in the business plans have been considered by the Management Board and proposals are set out in this paper. Informal discussions have also taken place with the appropriate Cabinet Members.

2. Leadership Workshop

The Leadership workshop, held on 20th October 2006, received the following financial papers:

- General Fund Revenue Profile 2006/07 to 2009/10;
- Bids for Revenue funding;
- Capital Summary 2006/07 to 2009/10;
- Bids for Capital funding;
- Local Ward issues raised by Members;
- Proposed budgetary consultation process for 2007/08;
- Summary of Housing Transfer impact on the General Fund; and
- Proposed process of Business efficiency Reviews

With regard to the bids for capital funding, the Leader of the Council requested that a small working group, Councillors Lager, Harley and Walters, review these and make recommendations as appropriate to the Cabinet meeting. The working group is scheduled to meet on Thursday, 23rd November and the outcome of the group's deliberations will be the subject of a separate report to this meeting, to be circulated after publication of the agenda papers.

3. Updated General Fund Profile 2006/07 to 2009/10

The figures are presented at a summary level and are based on a number of assumptions regarding the effect of items such as changes to the apportionment of support and corporate costs, inflation, salary increments, etc. The detailed work on the budgets for General Fund and Housing Revenue Account for 2007/08 is currently in progress, with the first drafts scheduled for 20th November 2006. Any significant variances from the assumptions made will be reported verbally at the meeting.

The latest update is summarised in the table below:

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	£	£	£
Base Budget	16,471,390	17,161,080	17,633,270
Inflation and Recharges between Funds	647,070	666,070	657,880
New Demands	786,650	275,000	110,000
Savings/Additional Income	-363,000	-7,940	53,290
Savings from underspend in 2006/07	-54,300	54,300	
Customer First Savings	-115,000		
Savings Required		-515,240	-354,590
Net Expenditure	17,161,080	17,633,270	18,099,850
Government Grant	-9,338,422	-9,525,190	-9,715,690
Collection Fund Surplus	-100,000	-50,000	-25,000
BDC Requirement	7,722,658	8,058,080	8,359,160
Tax Base	51,959	52,479	53,003
Council Tax (Band D)	£148.63	£153.55	£157.71
Year on Year percentage increase	3.8%	3.3%	2.7%

A schedule showing the changes to the General Fund Profile since the last update, received by the Cabinet report on 17th July 2006, together with a breakdown of the new demands, additional income and savings is attached as Appendix A.

The Customer First savings required in 2007/08, of £115,000, have been met from changes agreed to the Council's senior management structure, through retirement, secondment and resignation.

The main changes since the last update of the profile are:

- Notification received recently of the Housing Benefits Administration subsidy for 2007/08 shows an increase in subsidy compared to the reduction forecast by the Department for Work and Pensions at this time last year;
- Ongoing expenditure of £324,000 met from the Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) was to be reflected in the budgets for 2008/09. It is now proposed to include the ongoing salary commitments (£199,000) in the base budget from 2007/08 leaving the cost of the local development framework (£125,000) to continue to be met from PDG which is now expected to continue to be received beyond 2008/09;
- Allowances for new responsibilities/demands (£129,900) and one-off demands (£64,930) have been withdrawn as all requests for additional funds are to be met from within existing resources. A schedule of the requests which are to be met from existing resources is attached at Appendix B;
- The anticipated increases in car parking charges income of £25,000 in 2007/08 followed by a further £25,000 in 2008/09 are not now considered achievable based on a review of the current year's income as at 30th September 2006;
- A claim has been received from DC Leisure Ltd. in respect of increased energy costs at the Leisure Centres. A provision of £54,000 has been provided for 2007/08 onwards based on an assessment of the claim by the Finance Department;
- Savings of £50,000 anticipated from the business review of the Street Scene service have been withdrawn, as any savings found from the review are to be diverted to meet priority demands within the service.

In addition to the requests identified in Appendix B, the Leadership Workshop also received details of four requests for which separate reports have been commissioned. A schedule of these requests is provided at Appendix C.

4. Local Ward Issues

As in each of the previous two years, the Leader of the Council invited Members to raise specific issues in their wards. Responses were received from 16 Members representing 12 wards, covering a variety of issues including flood relief measures; playground areas and equipment; park warden; CCTV; pavement sweeping and weed control of kerbsides; provision of a community office; provision of water supply to allotments; provision of adequate fencing, gating and security at a cemetery; landscaping and noticeboard for a proposed wildlife area; cycleways; rail service on Braintree branch line; community and leisure facilities; cross district boundary partnerships; affordable housing; policing; improved recycling sites and activities for youth.

Whilst the Leadership Workshop received details of the issues, the Leader of the Council has asked officers to investigate and provide an assessment on each issue. Consideration of the issues will be given following receipt of this information and included in the budget proposals as appropriate. The Leader will respond individually to each Member by 22nd December 2006.

5. Fees and Charges

It is proposed that the majority of the fees and charges, over which the Council has discretion to set the level, are increased by 3% for 2007/08; a schedule listing the exceptions is attached as Appendix D.

6. Tax Base

The provisional figure included for the Council's taxbase for 2007/08 is 51,959, an increase of 1.5% over the current year. This is based on an assumed increase in properties of 1% and 0.5% for the planned increase in the collection rate from 99% to 99.5%.

The Council's actual figure for 2007/08 has to be calculated as at 30th November. Due to the earlier timing of this Cabinet meeting the taxbase will be agreed at Full Council on 11th December 2006.

7. External Support from Central Government for 2007/08

The amount allowed for 2007/08 is £9,338,422 and represents an increase of 3.86% over the current year's figure of £8,991,435. This was announced by Central Government, in the Local Government Finance Report (England) 2007/08: Draft for 2006/07 Settlement, as part of a new approach to give an indication of support for more than the year ahead in order to assist local authorities in longer term financial planning.

Whilst the provisional figure is not expected to change the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) will issue the Finance Settlement for 2007/08 for consultation in 'mid to late November'.

8. Housing Revenue Account

Guidance on the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy and rent increases for 2007/08 has been received, in the draft Housing Revenue Account Subsidy and Item 8 Determinations from the DCLG in letters dated 30th October and 6th November 2006.

The guidance covers the second year of a two-year subsidy process and continues the overall rent increase limit of 5% on average rents. Changes in the stock composition and the incidence of voids result in an additional payment to DCLG of £205,000 over the previously projected figure, giving a total payment for 2007/08 of £9.1 million.

The rent projections for 2007/08 assume a continuation of the existing policy of applying the maximum guideline increase of RPT + ½% + £2 per week to those properties where actual rents are currently more than £6 below target rents. This is offset by increases of RPI + ½% - 40p for all other properties to ensure that the overall increase is limited to 5%. On this basis the average rent will be £70.19 for 2007/08 compared to £66.81 in the current year.

A summary of the latest financial projections for the Housing Revenue Account for 2007/08 is provided in the table below:

	Estimate 2007/08 £
<u>Expenditure</u>	
Supervision and Management	8,144,690
Repairs	5,096,120
Council Tax, Bad Debts and Other Provisions	256,600
Housing Subsidy	9,113,000
Cost of Capital	5,827,590
Sub Total	28,438,000
<u>Income</u>	
Rents – Dwellings	-27,005,500
Rents – Non-Dwellings	-1,026,600
Other Income	-1,550,690
Sub Total	-29,582,790
Net Cost of Services	-1,144,790
Capital Financing adjustments	1,355,330
Deficit for Year	210,540

9. **Capital Programme**

The resources available for funding the Capital Programme 2007/08 to 2009/10 are summarised as follows:

	2007/08 £'000	2008/09 £'000	2009/10 £'000	Totals
Anticipated Resource available	16,494	689	464	17,647
Schemes already approved	14,636	1,166	1,436	17,238
Resource available for allocation	1,858	-477	-972	409

The figures are based on the following:

- An assumption that the outcome of the ballot on the housing stock transfer is 'yes for transfer' and therefore works to the housing stock for 2008/09 onwards will be undertaken by Greenfields Community Housing (GCH);

- Provisions for private sector Disabled Facility Grants continue to be included for 2008/09 and 2009/10, however no provisions are included for either Social Housing Grant or Housing Repair Grants after 2007/08;
- Receipts from Right to Buy sales, under a sharing agreement with GCH, are invested with the interest earned being required to support revenue costs in the General Fund;
- Anticipated capital receipts from the sale of land at the rear of Spring Lodge, Witham; Riverside Pool and St. Johns Avenue site; freehold of 4 Freebournes, Witham; Land East of High St., Halstead; Forest Road site and land at Springwood Industrial Estate.
- A target of £1million additional capital receipts as yet to be identified;
- Contribution of £2.5 million to Braintree Swimming Pool from the owners of Freeport;
- Major Repairs Allowance of £5.275 million for 2007/08;
- Grant from the Football Foundation of £1 million;
- Revenue contribution to Capital from the HRA of £1.2 million for 2007/08.

Business plan bids for capital expenditure are detailed at Appendix E. The working group of Cabinet Members will consider these bids on Thursday 23rd November 2006. The outcomes from which will be tabled at the Cabinet meeting.

10. Budget Consultation Process

The consultation process for the 2007/08 Budget commenced with the invitation to all Members from the Leader of the Council to identify local ward issues. This was followed by the Scrutiny Panel at the meeting on 1st November receiving copy of the financial papers considered by the Leadership Workshop. A copy of the relevant minute from the Scrutiny Panel meeting is attached at Appendix F.

The process will continue with:

- Public consultation on budget options – by means of an article in the local press and on the Council's website, special edition of the Council's Contact magazine;
- Briefing note on budget proposals produced for PACT members;
- Consultation on budget proposals at Area Committees – Witham (5th December), Braintree (12th December) and Halstead (19th December);
- Business Council – 8th January 2007
- Scrutiny Panel – 24th January 2007
- Series of roadshows for members of the public to meet with Cabinet Members – 5 locations (Braintree, Coggeshall, Halstead, Sible Hedingham and Witham) over three days (6th, 10th and 13th January 2007)

11. Summary of the impact of housing stock transfer on the General Fund

Costs currently recharged to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) from the General Fund amount to £4.35 million, based on 2006/07 estimates.

If the tenants vote in favour of the transfer then these costs will need to be eliminated/covered by:

- Transferring staff under TUPE arrangements to Greenfields Community Housing (GCH);
- Selling services (procurement) or assets (accommodation) to GCH or another third party;
- Agreeing to continue to provide services to GCH under Service Level Agreements;
- Earning additional interest by investing the capital receipts received on Right to Buy sales;
- Entering into a special agreement with GCH enabling GCH to make VAT savings, which will be shared with the Council;
- Efficiencies and savings.

In addition to the above, on transfer it has been agreed that the strategic housing function will remain with the Council. This will mean costs of £250,000 currently in the HRA will need to be met from the General Fund.

12. Proposal to balance the 2008/09 Budget

The combination of the projected savings required in 2008/09 as identified in the updated General Fund Profile and of the impact of housing stock transfer on the General Fund outlined above, totalling a minimum of £2 million, require a fundamental review in order to achieve a balanced budget for 2008/09.

It is therefore proposed to establish a business efficiency review process to be undertaken on all support services and on front line services which are high cost, above average cost or under-performing. Outline proposals of the process are provided at Appendix G.

	MTFS Update - Cabinet 17th July 2006			MTFS Latest Update		
	2007/08 £	2008/09 £	2009/10 £	2007/08 £	2008/09 £	2009/10 £
Base Budget	16,471,390	17,161,080	17,633,270	16,471,390	17,161,080	17,633,270
Inflation and recharges between Funds	647,070	666,070	657,880	647,070	666,070	657,880
<u>New Demands:</u>						
Pension Fund	314,000	100,000	100,000	314,000	100,000	100,000
Vehicle replacement programme	40,000	40,000		40,000	40,000	
Housing Benefits Administration Grant reduction	78,660			3,000	-25,000	
Increased Discretionary Rate Relief	17,500			17,500		
Anticipated contribution for Tourism not receivable	10,000			10,000		
Reduced Market income	20,000			17,000		
Rents payable increases following rent reviews	26,000			26,000		
Extension of alternate recycling/ waste collection		150,000			150,000	
Planning Delivery on-going		324,000		199,000		
Parish Rangers/ Community Wardens	125,000			125,000		
Capital related - reduced property income	35,150	10,000	10,000	25,150		
Phased reduction in use of Special Capital Reserve				10,000	10,000	10,000
Allowance for new responsibilities/ demands	129,900	100,000	100,000			
Allowance for one-off new demands	64,930	-64,930				
Reverse one-off New Demands from previous year	-211,730			-211,730		
<u>Reductions:</u>						
Additional income						
Increased Car Park charges and DPE income	-42,000	-25,000		-17,000	-	
Increased Markets income	-3,000					
Rental income Freebournes Court, Witham	-26,000	-10,000	-10,000	-26,000	-10,000	-10,000
Variations in the return on investments	-100,000	50,000	50,000	-100,000	50,000	50,000
Increased Costs Recovered on local taxation	-110,000			-110,000		
Second home partnership sharing agreement	-17,330			-17,330		
Savings						
Early retirements agreed	-77,200			-80,410		
Leisure Contract changes and additional energy costs	-15,660	-47,940	13,290	38,340	-47,940	13,290
Reduction in ICT contract with SERCO	-30,600			-30,600		
Strategic Housing	-20,000			-20,000		
Street Scene savings - business review	-50,000			-		

	MTFS Update - Cabinet 17th July 2006			MTFS Latest Update		
	2007/08 £	2008/09 £	2009/10 £	2007/08 £	2008/09 £	2009/10 £
Customer First savings	-115,000			-115,000		
Additional savings required		-820,010	-454,590		-515,240	-354,590
Savings from underspends in 2006/07				-54,300	54,300	
Revised Base Budget	17,161,080	17,633,270	18,099,850	17,161,080	17,633,270	18,099,850
add/ deduct balances						
Repayment of Grant						
Net Expenditure for Council Taxpayers	17,161,080	17,633,270	18,099,850	17,161,080	17,633,270	18,099,850
Government Grant	-9,338,422	-9,525,190	-9,715,690	-9,338,422	-9,525,190	-9,715,690
Collection Fund	-100,000	-50,000	-25,000	-100,000	-50,000	-25,000
BDC Requirement	7,722,658	8,058,080	8,359,160	7,722,658	8,058,080	8,359,160
Tax base	51,959	52,479	53,003	51,959	52,479	53,003
Council Tax	£148.63	£153.55	£157.71	£148.63	£153.55	£157.71

Requests for Revenue Funding

Business Plan	Project Title	Project Definition	Link to Corporate Objective	Revenue			Comments	Proposal for 2007/08		
				2007/08	2008/09	2009/10		Priority Schemes	Funded from within existing Resources	Schemes Not Supported
Requests for additional Revenue Funding which have been resolved within existing resources										
Corporate Services	Local Democracy Week	Holding a full programme of events as per 2006 programme	Improve performance & deliver better value	2,500	2,500	2,500	Budget to be found from within existing resources.		2,500	
Economic Development and Rural Policy Unit	Parish Communication Events	The project will provide the required funding to: Deliver events, including the very successful Parish Fete, provide for the production and distribution of newsletters to Parish Councils, meet the cost of production and distribution of 'flyers' to Parish meetings, including Cluster meetings, provide for officer subsistence to attend meetings (not currently included in base budget), support a joint project being undertaken by Braintree DC, the ELAC, and ECC for a Parish Pack (This has been included in the Unit's work plan for 2007/8)	Create a better place to live, work and play	6,470	6,640	6,800	Virement to be effected in current year and addressed similarly in future years.		6,470	
Economic Development and Rural Policy Unit	Parish Liaison Officer	The project will enable the Council to maintain and improve its existing strong links with all parish councils by providing a day to day contact, and focal point, for parishes where there can obtain information, voice concerns, provide feedback on local initiatives, and act as a conduit for information to rural communities (including funding opportunities which arise for community projects)	Create a better place to live, work and play	0	11,900	23,800	Post funded until October 2007 therefore no requirement for funds in 2007/08.			-
Environmental Health	Additional Enforcement Staff	ASB3 - Corporate Action Plan "Use our Powers to Take Robust Enforcement Action" - any unanticipated increase in activity will require additional staff resources. The Health Bill - which will introduce the "smoke-free" legislation, will place an additional enforcement burden on the Environmental Health service. The government has made it clear that local authorities will be responsible for enforcement and the expectation seems to be that it will be Environmental Health Officers that will carry out the various enforcement duties. Existing staffing levels will currently prevent us taking on this additional enforcement role without the subsequent loss of service in some other function of the department. Therefore additional resources are required to police the no smoking ban	Help people to feel safe and well, Create a better place to live, work and play	20,000	20,000	20,000	Proposal to combine with bid for 'Planning Enforcement' to provide a single post covering both areas of enforcement. An enforcement post for a two-year contract to be funded from Planning Delivery Grant.			20,000

Requests for Revenue Funding

Business Plan	Project Title	Project Definition	Link to Corporate Objective	Revenue			Comments	Proposal for 2007/08		
				2007/08	2008/09	2009/10		Priority Schemes	Funded from within existing Resources	Schemes Not Supported
Exchequer and Customer Services	Housing & Council Tax Benefit Service Performance standard	Benchmarking and other research has identified that the service provided is in the top quartile regarding costs however, performance is now suffering and the service is no longer in the top quartile. Using 2003/4 as the base, the weighted caseload has increased by 6.9% in 2005/6. Additionally, should Housing options result in a Yes vote then the weighted caseload will further increase as Registered Social Landlord (RSL) tenants claims are more onerous than standard claims 1.9: 1.0 in the weighting calculation. This will need to be addressed prior to 31/12/07. Further, the national roll out of the Local Housing Allowance is programmed for 2007, which will require adequate resourcing, in order to ensure acceptable implementation. The additional member of staff will allow an increase in performance while still remaining in the top quartile regarding costs subject to RSL changes.	Improve performance & deliver better value	25,000	25,000	25,000	Proposed that Post to be one-year contract. To be funded from additional income anticipated within Exchequer Services.	25,000		
Human Resources	Staff Survey and Improvement Plan	To obtain a snapshot of staff opinions and views on the way the organisation is operating and the impact on staff morale particularly post transfer. Crucial information which will influence ways of improving the ways the organisation operates and impact on performance	Help people to feel safe and well, Create a better place to live, work and play, Improve performance and deliver better value	9,500	0	0	Budget Brought Forward from previous year specifically to fund this project.			9,500
Planning Control	Building Control Process Review	This review will enable business processes with Building Control to be thoroughly reviewed. It will also consider the range of work undertaken in Building Control and assess its appropriateness and necessity. On this basis, the review would highlight and identify changes that would ensure that the Council operates the most effective and efficient service possible. This will ensure that business efficiencies are available through process re-engineering.	Improve performance & deliver better value	20,000	0	0	Review to be conducted under Efficiency Review process - funding for consultants (if required) to come from Building Control Reserve.		20,000	

Requests for Revenue Funding

Business Plan	Project Title	Project Definition	Link to Corporate Objective	Revenue			Comments	Proposal for 2007/08		
				2007/08	2008/09	2009/10		Priority Schemes	Funded from within existing Resources	Schemes Not Supported
Planning Control	Planning Enforcement enhancement	In essence, the Council's planning enforcement function is a reactive process. It deals with complaints and breaches of planning control as they come to light and progresses these through the established processes available. What it does not do is systematically check new development for compliance with approved plans, specifications and conditions that have been imposed on planning permissions. When problems are identified, these are often at a late stage when it can be difficult to rectify successfully and speedily. This, in itself, results in a disproportionate amount of officers' time being spent. The Scrutiny Panel understood and accepted that the currently available staffing resources do not allow for a more proactive approach to compliance checking and condition monitoring. If a more proactive enforcement function is to be realised, additional staffing resources are needed	Improve performance & deliver better value	26,330	26,330	26,330	Proposal to combine enforcement requirement with bid for Environmental Health service. An enforcement post for a two-year contract to be funded from Planning Delivery Grant.		26,330	
Strategic Housing	A Rolling Replacement Programme for Carecall Alarms and Pendants	We are advised by the Care Trust that the existing funding by the council and income collected by the Trust for the service is not sufficient for an ongoing programme of replacement of alarm equipment and pendants.	Help people to feel safe and well	7,000	7,000	7,000	Proposal to raise the current alarm charges by 6.4% to meet the funding required.			7,000
Street Scene	Mechanical Sweeping and Litter Picking of the Braintree By-Pass (A120)	To provide Traffic Management to enable two mechanical sweeps and litter picks of the carriageway and central reservation of the Braintree By-Pass to be carried out by our own Staff	Create a cleaner and greener District	24,000	24,000	24,000	More information required e.g. responsibility for cleaning a highway?	24,000		

Requests for Revenue Funding

Business Plan	Project Title	Project Definition	Link to Corporate Objective	Revenue			Comments	Proposal for 2007/08		
				2007/08	2008/09	2009/10		Priority Schemes	Funded from within existing Resources	Schemes Not Supported
Street Scene	Savings/Efficiencies	In the Medium Term Financial Strategy Report to Cabinet on the 17th July 2006 this included savings/efficiencies of £50k within Street Scene that would partly address a budget shortfall following the introduction of the new Community Warden Service. This was an initial sum identified for potential resource switching without any commitment or guarantee being given that it would be achieved depending on the findings and recommendations from the review. This is due to be completed by early October and the report will be considered by the Management Team and Street Scene's Accountant advised accordingly	Create a cleaner and greener District	50,000	50,000	50,000	Anticipated savings from review to be used for meeting other demands within service, therefore General Fund Profile amended to reflect this position.	50,000		
Street Scene	To provide 90 No new Litter Bins	As part of the benchmarking of the Street Care Service this identified that Braintree had the lowest number of litterbins per head of population than the rest of its family Group. The demand for new and additional bins always exceeds the budget available year on year	Create a cleaner and greener District	9,000	9,000	9,000	To be found within existing resources and/or savings expected from review currently in progress.			9,000
Street Scene	Street washing & chewing gum removal	To provide a programmed chewing gum removal and street washing service in our three Town Centres	Create a cleaner and greener District	15,000	15,000	15,000	To be found within existing resources and/or savings expected from review currently in progress.			15,000
Street Scene	Street washing & chewing gum removal	To provide a programmed chewing gum removal and street washing service to the high profile shopping areas within some Parishes	Create a cleaner and greener District	10,000	10,000	10,000	To be found within existing resources and/or savings expected from review currently in progress.			10,000
Street Scene	Street Scene Education & Publicity Programme	Maintain a planned and targeted programme of Environmental Education and Publicity as part of a pro-active approach to encourage the Public to be more aware of their actions in littering, fly tipping etc	Create a cleaner and greener District	20,000	20,000	20,000	To be found within existing resources. External resources received under the WRAP Behavioural Change Local Fund of £230,000 for the period to March 2008.			20,000

Requests for Revenue Funding

Business Plan	Project Title	Project Definition	Link to Corporate Objective	Revenue			Comments
				2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	
				Requests for additional Revenue Funding on which a report has been commissioned			
Environmental Health	Continuation of Care & Repair Service	Care and Repair is a key agency in helping to improve living conditions for (mainly) older people who want to stay in their own home and maintain their independence. They provide a vital role in supporting and advising older people on the housing options and financial assistance available to them. They help in securing funding, from various sources, to assist low-income occupiers improve their homes and offer advice on benefits and other financial matters.	Help people to feel safe and well, Create a better place to live, work and play	27,530	27,530	27,530	Full report on service requested as other contributors to scheme are withdrawing funds.
Human Resources	Employment Assistance Programme	Objective is to provide employees with access to on line counselling and support to reduce sickness levels. Will be measured through usage indicators and sickness absence levels. External company provides an employee assistance programme. Costs are based on number of employees - 780 assumed.	Help people to feel safe and well	9,400	9,400	9,400	
Street Scene	Off-street car parks review	When car parking charges were increased in April 2006 the overall increase in the actual income was projected at £100,000 in 2006/7 with an increase of a further £25,000 in 2007/8 and 2008/9. There has been a net migration from the car parks as a result of the increases and as such there is a projected under-recovery for the current year. A gradual repopulation of the car parks by users is hoped to achieve the £100,000 target during 2007/8 but any further increase in income is considered unlikely. On top of this, 2007/8 estimates include an additional £17,000 of income projected from migration into car parks from the streets as a result of decriminalised parking enforcement. This migration happened very quickly following the introduction of DPE in 2004 and there is no further scope for it in 2007/8.		42,000	67,000	67,000	Awaiting details of half-year performance figures for 2006/07 to assess level of shortfall Figures at the half-year for 2006/07 indicate that income continues to be below expectations and therefore the £25,000 provisional increases for 2007/08 and 2008/09 are withdrawn.
Sustainable Development	Green Travel Plan	Project currently at scoping and feasibility stage, due to report to Cabinet in February 2007. To be effective the plan will require a part time co-ordinator and seed funding for travel initiatives. Details of initiatives will not be known until February following analysis of best practice, consultation with staff and review by Management Board	Create a cleaner and greener District	25,000	25,000	25,000	Await report. Any funding requirements for 2007/08 will be found from existing resources and requirements for future years form part of business planning process at the appropriate time.

Fees and Charges 2007/08 – Services where increases are either not currently known or vary from 3% inflationary increase

Service	Reason	Proposal
Electoral Services	Charges specified under Representation of the People Regulations 2001	No change for 2007/08
Land Charges – Part 2 question and individual personal searches	Fee set by Central Government	
Building Control	External guidance awaited	
Development Control	Fee set by Central Government	
Community Transport		No change for 2007/08
Local Tax Collection	Charges reviewed by consortia of Essex Authorities – next review 2008/09	No change for 2007/08
Allotments		No change for 2007/08
Car parks	Comprehensive review undertaken for 2006/07	No change for 2007/08
Markets stalls	To remain competitive	No change for 2007/08
Concessionary Fares – Travel tokens	Allocation of travel tokens is under review	
Environmental Protection – Application fees	Charges determined by DEFRA	
Pest Control	To remain competitive	No change for 2007/08
Town Hall Centre – Room hire	To align charges with other venues	Increases for 2007/08 exceed 3%

Requests for Capital Funding

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				2007/08	2008/09	2009/10					
Asset Management	Regulatory Reform, Fire Safety Order, Fire Risk Assessments	The project will provide Fire Risk Assessments (Legally required) for properties not previously required to have Assessments carried out and will also provide updated Risk Assessments for property previously assessed in 2003	Help people to feel safe and well	15,000	0	0	1	Budget for consultants to undertake assessments. Works identified during assessments to be met from suggested provision.	15,000		
Asset Management	Asbestos Removal and encapsulation, various properties in Braintree District & completion of Asbestos Management Plan	Asbestos removal and encapsulation identified in Asbestos Surveys, monitoring inspections and updating of data base and preparation of Asbestos Management Plan for General Fund Property	Help people to feel safe and well	15,000	0	0	1	Essential that works identified are completed as soon as possible.	15,000		
Asset Management	Planned Maintenance Causeway House 07-08 Unavoidable	Unavoidable repairs and maintenance - £25,000 replace/recondition air conditioning units (meetings rooms) £1,500 redecoration of external timber doors, and £400 works identified in asbestos survey.	Create a better place to live, work and play	26,900	75,000	0	1	Report on air conditioning units throughout Causeway House currently in progress. Pending outcome of report and the uncertainty over the future use of the building, post housing transfer- suggest a provision be established for unforeseen plant and equipment breakdowns of £100,000.	100,000		26,900
Environmental Health	Kennelling of stray dogs	Capital - Funding improvements to RSPCA kennels at Wethersfield - providing greater capacity and will guarantee kennelling for the dogs handed in to the wardwen. Revenue - Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 will require the Local Authority to take over the responsibility currently held by the Police, to accept stray dogs at any time handed in by the public	Help people to feel safe and well	20,000	0	0	1	Need to increase kennelling capacity - currently have to take stray dogs to Cambridge for kennelling. Suggestion to offer £10,000. Some funding may come from the Home Office when the function is removed from Police responsibility. Revenue bid not supported at this time.	10,000		
Environmental Health	On-line Licensing	Purchasing a software solution that enables the online submission, processing, consultation and publication of various regulatory approvals, licenses and registration (including all those covered by the Licensing Act 2003). The software will allow businesses to apply for a license, renew a license and track the progress of their application online. Members of the public can see lists of new applications, be notified of applications of interest to them, make representations about them, track their progress and view public registers. Statutory consultees may be notified of new consultations, make representations online and download application data to their back-office systems	Create a better place to live, work and play	20,000	7,000	7,000	1	To be funded from a combination of revenue and Planning Delivery Grant.		20,000	

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Exchequer and Customer Services	IBS Open Revenues computer system - Essential	Significant sums have been invested in the replacement of the old computer system and we now have a modern, cheaper to run and more efficient system. It will also allow us to take advantage of the national schemes for interfacing and data exchange that either we were unable to access or have been recently developed under the Governments drive towards technology improvements, mainly under BVPI 158 and Gershon. Unless the system is maintained and maintained to the latest minimum requirement our supplier could refuse to support our investment . Essential.	Improve performance & deliver better value	44,000	0	0	1	Essential to keep system up-to-date and introduce efficient and effective developments.	44,000		
Finance Services	Upgrading of existing Financial computer software packages and new software providing additional functionality to existing systems	Insurance Claims Recording system - version upgrade available - support for existing system version to be withdrawn. EFinancials system - version upgrade available - support for existing system version to be withdrawn. EFinancials system - Purchase Ordering module being developed to enable integration between Marketplace and EFinancials systems (providing commitment accounting and eliminating requirement to punch invoice details. EFinancials system - report distribution module enabling customised reports to be run and dispatched to managers automatically.	Improve performance & deliver better value	80,000	0	0	1	Expenditure to be limited to £54,000 currently held in reserve for Finance system upgrades.		54,000	26,000
Public Protection & Healthy Living	Planned Maintenance Braintree Leisure Centre - Unavoidable	Unavoidable repairs and maintenance - £7,500 external lighting replacement and £1,500 car park relining.	Create a better place to live, work and play, Improve performance and deliver better value, Help people feel safe and well	9,000	0	0	1	External lighting replacement supported but with 50% contribution to be agreed with the School - propose Council's 50% is met from revenue.		7,500	1,500
Public Protection & Healthy Living	Spinks Lane Sports Ground - replacement football pitch and fencing	£50,000 providing replacement football pitch on site of former pavilion and £15,000 for additional fence improvements.	Create a cleaner and greener District, Create a better place to live, work and play	65,000	0	0	1	Football pitch replacement is requirement of Football Foundation funding. Initial provision of £60,000 for replacement understated. Fencing important to provide protection for substantial investment made on site.	65,000		
Public Protection & Healthy Living	Planned Maintenance Bramston Sports Centre - Unavoidable	Unavoidable repairs and maintenance - £150,000 replace ECU to main pool hall, £100,000 retilling to pool surround, £300,000 repairs to concrete columns, £30,000 replace areas of pool pipework in plant room, £20,500 various other works.	Create a better place to live, work and play, Improve performance and deliver better value, Help people feel safe and well	600,500	3,000	1,500	1	Draft report on future of Bramston Sports Centre expected in November 2006. Refrain from committing to any expenditure, other than urgent, ahead of decision on future of facility. Suggest provision of £100,000 set-aside for Bramston SC.	100,000		600,500

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Strategic Housing	Choice Based Lettings	The project will enable all social housing providers the opportunity to advertise properties as they become vacant and for applicants to choose which homes they apply for. All councils are required to offer some form of choice by 2010. The principle benefit is improved satisfaction for people moving into or between rented homes. This is measured through survey data. However, pilot schemes elsewhere claim reduced complaints to members, faster void turnaround, reduced long term voids and ultimately more settled communities. The first 3 points are easily measured, the last is more difficult, takes a lot longer to take effect and may not be measurable.	Improve performance & deliver better value	56,000	0	0	1	Costs are net of a bid for grant aid from Central Government (£22,000) toward set-up costs. Ongoing revenue costs matched by payments received from RSL's.	56,000		
Street Scene	Bocking Cemetery - repair of boundary walls & footpaths	The existing boundary walls and pathways around the cemetery currently in poor condition will be re-surfaced and repaired. This needs to be done before the poor condition of the walls and paths become a health & safety risk to the public, this work is identified as "essential" in the planned maintenance schedule compiled by the Council's Architects & Building Services department. The scheme will result in a better and safer environment to visitors to the site. This can be measured by an increase in customer satisfaction levels and a decrease in insurance claims and complaints made against the Council.	Help people to feel safe and well	17,500	17,500	0	1	Suggest a provision of £50,000 established each year for works to Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards	50,000		17,500
Street Scene	Play Area Refurbishment	6 existing play areas containing old & obsolete equipment are to be replaced with new equipment complete with safety surfacing, dog-proof fencing & self-closing gates. The sites in question are Glebe Ave and Milton Ave in Braintree, Spa Rd and Bramble Rd in Witham, Mill Chase, Halstead and Hillie Bunnies, Earls Colne. This needs to be done before the old equipment becomes a safety risk to the users of the play areas. The scheme will result in a better play experience for local children & will be measured by the results of our annual independent safety inspection of our play areas.	A better place to live, work and play	240,000	0	0	1	More information required on number of sites remaining to be refurbished and update on progress of current year's programme. Suggest a reduced provision of £120,000 for 2007/08 increasing back up to £240,000 for 2008/09.	120,000		120,000

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Street Scene	Parks & open spaces - repair paths & hard standings	Existing pathways at 3 of our public open spaces (Sauls Bridge Sports Ground, Witham, Kings Rd Park, Halstead & King George V Playing field, Braintree) currently in poor condition will be re-surfaced This needs to be done before the poor condition of the paths become a health & safety risk to the public. The scheme will result in a better and safer environment to visitors to our open spaces This can be measured by an increase in customer satisfaction levels and a decrease in insurance claims made against the Council.	Help people to feel safe and well	50,000	0	0	1	Essential to have an annual programme of repair and maintenance.	50,000		
Sustainable Development	Purchase of Replacement Minibus	To replace a 7 year old minibus which has every increasing maintenance costs, is not reliable, is not as comfortable or as aesthetically pleasing as the other buses in the fleet. Measure by maintenance of and increase in passenger journeys	Create a better place to live, work and play	38,000	0	0	1		38,000		
Sustainable Development	St. Michael's Fountain, Braintree	Provide new ramp to CAB entrance to facilitate wheelchair access and carry out paving repairs around St. Michael's fountain all in natural stone with high quality detailing	Create a cleaner and greener District, Create a better place to live, work and play	15,000	0	0	1	DDA requirement - assuming CAB to remain in property.	15,000		
Sustainable Development	Street Furniture Maintenance	This funding is for the maintenance and redecoration of street furniture in conservation areas and the maintenance of cycleways which were originally implemented with BDC capital funding. Whilst arrangements are in place for the continued maintenance of some aspects these schemes (e.g. through ECC Highways) there are some aspects where there is no clear responsibility and no specific budget. Examples include seats, bus shelters, fingerposts and information boards. Funding was available in 2005/6 and 2006/7 and all this funding has been committed. There remains much to do and continued funding is necessary if the high standards achieved by the original schemes are to be maintained	Create a cleaner and greener District, Create a better place to live, work and play	30,000	30,000	30,000	1	Essential to maintain appearance of investment made in street furniture over recent years.	30,000		

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Waste and Energy Management	Cordons Farm Security Fence	There is only fencing to the front of the site at present. The remaining boundaries have natural protection in the form of earth bunding, a ditch and hedgerow. During the past year the number of break-ins by intruders has increased dramatically. Most of the break ins have resulted in minor vandalism and petty theft that have been absorbed within existing budgets as they were below the insurance excess limit. Recently there has been two break ins that has resulted in mindless vandalism and major theft that has disrupted the service. Our mechanical loading shovel had all its windows smashed, all the aluminium health safety and directional signs have been stolen and the door operating system on the new waste storage building was smashed and the ventilation system vandalised. This is presently in the process of being an insurance claim. There is nothing of any great value on the site apart from our plant, infrastructure and equipment. The site is readily accessible by a determined intruder through or over the natural boundaries. These boundaries need to be protected	Help people to feel safe and well	20,000	0	0	1	Important waste transfer site.	20,000		
Waste and Energy Management	Millennium Tower, MRF and Lakes Road Yard Infrastructure repairs	Resurfacing of yard - the existing surface is potholed concrete that has been patched and mended several times. Repairing the surface will reduce the risk of accidents, insurance claims, possible prosecution by regulators and make it easier to keep clean. Repairs and Improvements to the Yard Drainage System - the present system as installed by BDC in 1999 and existing is not appropriate for the use of the site. Unless these are rectified we are at risk of accidents, insurance claims and possible prosecution by the Environment Agency. Signage and Dedicated Pathways for Pedestrians - This is a requirement under the Management of Health and Safety Regulations and was of concern to the HSE during their last inspection. Unless this is rectified we are at risk of accidents, insurance claims and possible prosecution by the HSE. Security Fencing - the existing fencing on the façade of the MRF gate needs to be replaced. If this work is not done it leaves us open to action by the Environment Agency as well as the risk of access by intruders.	Help people to feel safe and well. Create a better place to live, work and play	150,000	50,000	0	1	More information requested on priorities of works required.	150,000		

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Corporate Services	Multimedia for Causeway House Meetings Area	Purchase of two electronic screens for Council Chamber(1) 2m x 1.8m across corner where audio equipment currently installed(2) 1.8 x 1.5m in the rear half of the ChamberPurchase of two video projectors located in ceilingConnection to Council network, to the sound system enabling the same image on both screens or to be used independently when used as separate rooms	Improve performance & deliver better value	16,350	0	0	2	Although desirable not considered a priority when compared against other bids for funding in 2007/08.			16,350
Public Protection & Healthy Living	Planned maintenance Town Hall Centre	Repairs to roof of Town Hall Centre in 2007/08. Rebuilding perimeter wall at Museum in 2008/09. Exterior redecoration of Town Hall Centre in 2009/10	Help people to feel safe and well. Create a better place to live, work and play	30,000	25,000	10,000	2	Budget for roof repairs to be slipped to 2008/09. Museum not owned by Council - Trustees of the Museum to be encouraged to seek external funding for wall replacement.			30,000
Public Protection & Healthy Living	Refurbish first floor Silver End Village Hall	Refurbish first floor following departure of caretaker who retires in November 2006. Community hall is currently being refurbished. The refurbished first floor (4,000 sq. ft.) can then be let on a commercial basis.	Help people to feel safe and well. Create a better place to live, work and play	150,000	0	0	2	Further details of proposal required including indication of rental income receivable.			150,000
Street Scene	Silver End Sports Ground - Tennis Court Fencing	The existing fencing around the tennis courts at the above site is in a very poor condition and does not secure the site when the gates are locked so that access can be gained at all times by unauthorised users This has resulted in an increase in anti-social behaviour and customer complaints from the Tennis Club that manages the site for the Council. Allowing access to the site both by authorised and unauthorised users is now considered to have become a health & safety risk to the public. The scheme will result in a better and safer environment for tennis players and visitors to the sports ground This can be measured by an increase in customer satisfaction levels and a decrease in customer complaints received by the Council	Help people to feel safe and well. Create a better place to live, work and play	20,000	0	0	2	Further information required on state of tennis playing surface and usage of facility.			20,000
Sustainable Development	Purchase of a single wheelchair accessible vehicle	To meet the increasing demands of individual wheelchair users more cost effectively	Create a better place to live, work and play	14,000	0	0	2	Whilst essential cannot be regarded as unavoidable.			14,000
Sustainable Development	Halstead River Walk Improvement	Improvements to Halstead River Walk between Town Bridge and Chapel Street. There 11 project zones which have been prioritised by a Steering Group. The major problems are the condition of the pedestrian bridge (which requires a structural survey) and the access to the bridge	Create a cleaner and greener District. Create a better place to live, work and play	10,000	0	0	2	Match funding required to support scheme.			10,000

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Sustainable Development	Parks for People	Match funding for a 'Parks for People' bid - for Maldon Road Park, Witham. The Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund announced an initiative in January 2006 to provide funding for the restoration and regeneration of public parks and gardens. This funding is available from 1.1.06 to 31.12.08. The minimum grant is £250,000 and at least 25% match funding is required	Create a cleaner and greener District, Create a better place to live, work and play	10,000	25,000	25,000	2	25% Match funding to be established over three years - start on site if bid successful is expected to be 2010. Consider if and when bid for external funding is successful.			10,000
Asset Management	Repair & Resurfacing of Causeway House access road and car park	The project will repair the road and car park paved areas and will resurface to give a lasting safe smooth surfacing for both vehicles and pedestrians. The work can be done as one phase or two with the rear leased car park left to year two. It will improve pedestrian and vehicular safety and give better accessibility including updated disabled parking for DDA and new road lining to be included	Create a better place to live, work and play	60,000	40,000	0	3	Uncertainty over future use of building, post housing transfer, suggests resurfacing requirement is slipped 1 to 2 years. Patching repairs when necessary - funded from repair and maintenance budget in revenue. Provision suggested (see bid ref. 9) could meet any urgent need experienced during the year.			60,000
Asset Management	Planned Maintenance Causeway House 07-08 Essential	Essential repairs and maintenance - £75,000 replacement roof covering (part), £90,000 replacement windows, £80,000 replacement suspended ceilings, £20,000 replacement light fittings, £75,000 first floor floor covering replacement, £25,500 various other repairs.	Create a better place to live, work and play	365,500	250,000	175,000	3	Provision suggested (see bid ref. 9) could meet any urgent need experienced during the year. Otherwise bids are slipped pending decision on future use of building.			365,500
Asset Management	Planned Maintenance Causeway House 07-08 Desirable	Desirable repairs and maintenance - £30,000 heating system and controls upgrade and £10,000 access improvements.	Create a better place to live, work and play	40,000	17,500	89,500	3				40,000
Asset Management	Works to renew wiring and lighting circuits at Enterprise House, Rippers Court, Sible Hedingham.	Keep a commercial property asset in a good state of repair to sustain and improve future rental income streams	Create a better place to live, work and play, Improve performance and deliver better value	20,000	0	0	3	Budget required when works complete future responsibility to be passed to tenants. Budget to be found from revenue between 2006/07 and 2007/08.		20,000	
Asset Management	Resurfacing works - public car park, Springwood Industrial Estate, Braintree	Keep a public car park used by Springwood Industrial Estate in good state of repair	Create a better place to live, work and play	5,000	0	0	3	Budget required to be met from Revenue in current year.		5,000	
Corporate Services	Infrared Hard of Hearing Loops for Cttee Rooms 1 and 2 for Causeway House Meetings Area	Purchase of two loop systems that will work independently and with greater confidentiality of use.	Improve performance & deliver better value	3,730	0	0	3	Under capital threshold - replacement system to be purchased if existing system fails.			3,730
Corporate Services	Video Camera for Causeway House Meetings Area - enabling improved access and Web Casting	Purchase of two auto dome cameras discretely in the meetings area and connecting these to the conference system and database	Improve performance & deliver better value	7,550	0	0	3				7,550

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Corporate Services	Extension of Sound System for Causeway House Meetings Area	Purchase of 28 Mics, 28 Batteries for Wireless Bosch Sound System and 6 Battery Chargers to maximise use of the Sound System, enable one mic per Councillor at Council meetings, seminars etc and fully utilise voting capability.	Improve performance & deliver better value	27,000	0	0	3			27,000	
Corporate Services	Replacement of Guillotine	The existing guillotine cannot be used after April 2007 as the maintenance for it is being withdrawn by current provider. Under Health and Safety requirements the guillotine must be regularly maintained. A guillotine is essential to the efficient running of the reprographic service.	Improve performance & deliver better value	14,000	0	0	3	Purchase essential for continued viability of service - budget to be found from current projected surplus of Graphic Design Unit in 2006/07.	14,000		
Environmental Health	Renew Ambient Air Monitoring Equipment	The current ambient air monitoring equipment is over 10 years old and is needs replacing with more modern up to date equipment which is more reliable and less prone to breakdown. The Council is required by statute to complete an Air Quality Review and Assessment or Updating Screening and Assessment every year to ensure that the air quality in the district is likely to meet the national AQ objectives.	Help people to feel safe and well	30,000	0	0	3			30,000	
Exchequer and Customer Services	IBS Open Revenues computer system - Desirable	Significant sums have been invested in the replacement of the old computer system and we now have a modern, cheaper to run and more efficient system. It will also allow us to take advantage of the national schemes for interfacing and data exchange that either we were unable to access or have been recently developed under the Governments drive towards technology improvements, mainly under BVPI 158 and Gershon. Unless the system is maintained and maintained to the latest minimum requirement our supplier could refuse to support our investment . Desirable .	Improve performance & deliver better value	103,500	0	0	3			103,500	
Public Protection & Healthy Living	Planned Maintenance Braintree Leisure Centre - Essential	Essential repairs and maintenance - £10,000 retille slate roof over stores to main hall. £100,000 to renew synthetic pitch surface in 2008/09.	Create a better place to live, work and play, Improve performance and deliver better value, Help people feel safe and well	10,000	100,000	0	3	Not supported in 2007/08. Budget to slip to following year.		10,000	
Public Protection & Healthy Living	Planned Maintenance Bramston Sports Centre - Essential	Essential repairs and maintenance - £75,000 flat roof coverings, £45,000 refurbish gents/ladies wetside changing rooms, £25,000 replacement glazing in gymnasium, £6,000 other various works.	Create a better place to live, work and play, Improve performance and deliver better value, Help people feel safe and well	151,000	40,000	150,000	3	Draft report on future of Bramston Sports Centre expected in November 2006. Refrain from committing to any expenditure, other than urgent, ahead of decision on future of facility. Suggest provision of £100,000 set-aside for Bramston SC (see bid ref. 22).		151,000	

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				2007/08	2008/09	2009/10					
Public Protection & Healthy Living	Planned Maintenance for Notley Sports Centre	Essential repairs and maintenance - £50,000 replace external metal wall cladding, £5,250 replace roof lights and £4,500 other various works	Create a better place to live, work and play, Improve performance and deliver better value, Help people to feel safe and well	59,750	0	0	3	Not supported in 2007/08. Budget to slip to following year.			59,750
Street Scene	Cut Throat Lane Allotments - Perimeter fencing & site security	The existing allotment site is not securely fenced and access can be gained at all times by unauthorised visitors. This has resulted in an increase in anti-social behaviour and customer complaints at the site such as children playing on the allotment plots and theft and damage to the crops and equipment. Allowing free access to the site during the hours of darkness is now considered to have become a health & safety risk to the public. The scheme will result in a better and safer growing environment for our allotment tenants who are a source of income to the Council This can be measured by an increase in customer satisfaction levels and a decrease in customer complaints received by the Council	Help people to feel safe and well, Create a better place to live, work and play	24,000	0	0	3				24,000
Street Scene	Silver Street Allotments - Perimeter fencing & site security	The existing allotment site is not securely fenced and access can be gained at all times by unauthorised visitors. This has resulted in an increase in anti-social behaviour and customer complaints at the site such as children playing on the allotment plots and theft and damage to the crops and equipment. Allowing free access to the site during the hours of darkness is now considered to have become a health & safety risk to the public. The scheme will result in a better and safer growing environment for our allotment tenants who are a source of income to the Council This can be measured by an increase in customer satisfaction levels and a decrease in customer complaints received by the Council	Help people to feel safe and well, Create a better place to live, work and play	20,000	0	0	3				20,000

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Street Scene	Station Field Allotments Water supply & site security	The existing allotment site is not securely gated and access can be gained at all times by unauthorised visitors, also there is no water supply to the site and plot holders have to collect unclean water from the nearby river. This has resulted in an increase in customer complaints from tenants concerning the lack of water and the loss of crops due to drought conditions and children playing on the allotment plots and theft and damage to the crops and equipment. Expecting the tenants to use water from the river is now considered to have become a health & safety risk. The scheme will result in a better and safer growing environment for our allotment tenants who are a source of income to the Council. This can be measured by an increase in customer satisfaction levels and a decrease in customer complaints received by the Council.	Help people to feel safe and well. Create a better place to live, work and play.	4,500	0	0	3	Under capital threshold suggest budget found from revenue.		4,500	
Street Scene	Braintree Cemetery - Repair of paths	The existing pathways around the cemetery currently in poor condition will be re-surfaced. This needs to be done before the poor condition of the paths become a health & safety risk to the public, this work is identified as "essential" in the planned maintenance schedule compiled by the Council's Architects & Building Services department. The scheme will result in a better and safer environment to visitors to the site. This can be measured by an increase in customer satisfaction levels and a decrease in insurance claims and complaints made against the Council.	Help people to feel safe and well.	9,000	9,000	0	3	Suggest a provision of £50,000 established each year for works to Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards (See bid ref. 29)			9,000
Street Scene	Halstead Cemetery - repair of footpaths	The existing pathways around the cemetery currently in poor condition will be re-surfaced. This needs to be done before the poor condition of the paths become a health & safety risk to the public, this work is identified as "essential" in the planned maintenance schedule compiled by the Council's Architects & Building Services department. The scheme will result in a better and safer environment to visitors to the site. This can be measured by an increase in customer satisfaction levels and a decrease in insurance claims and complaints made against the Council.	Help people to feel safe and well.	15,000	7,500	0	3	Suggest a provision of £50,000 established each year for works to Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards (See bid ref. 29)			15,000

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Business Plan	Project Title	Project Definition	Link to Corporate Objective	Financial costs/ benefits			Officers' Priority Rating	Comments	Proposal for 2007/08		
				Capital					Priority Schemes	Schemes to be funded from other sources	Schemes Not Supported
				2007/08	2008/09	2009/10					
Street Scene	Witham Cemetery - repair access roads, fencing & paths	The existing roads & pathways around the cemetery currently in poor condition will be re-surfaced This needs to be done before the poor condition of the paths become a health & safety risk to the public, this work is identified as "unavoidable" in the planned maintenance schedule compiled by the Council's Architects & Building Services department The scheme will result in a better and safer environment to visitors to the site. This can be measured by an increase in customer satisfaction levels and a decrease in insurance claims and complaints made against the Council	Help people to feel safe and well	20,000	0	0	3	Suggest a provision of £50,000 established each year for works to Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards (See bid ref. 29)			20,000
Street Scene	St Mary's Church Yard, Boundary Walls (closed church yard)	It will provide restraint and repairs to the 20 metre length of wall previously under pinned as part of the 06-07 capital programme	Create a better place to live, work and play	17,000	66,000	0	3	Suggest a provision of £50,000 established each year for works to Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards (See bid ref. 29)			17,000
Sustainable Development	Tree Management System	The system will enable for the first time the recording of all trees on council land and their condition. This will enable a more systematic maintenance regime to be implemented giving greater value for money. It should also identify trees that are likely to become dangerous before the event resulting in fewer insurance claims and therefore resulting in savings	Create a cleaner and greener District, Improve performance and deliver better value	25,000	0	0	3	Put purchase of system back one year. Further work required as to how the data is to be collected.			25,000
Sustainable Development	Sustainability Officers Group	To implement internal energy, waste and water conservation projects and provide sustainability training to managers and staff. Project will achieve measurable improvements in corporate environmental performance, funding to cover smart metering for ongoing monitoring and evaluation.	Create a cleaner and greener District, Create a better place to live, work and play, Improve performance and deliver better value, Help people to feel safe and well	10,000	0	0	3	Consideration to be given of a change to the policy of allocating the corporate training budget to enable corporate-wide training as suggested to be met centrally.			10,000
TOTAL CAPITAL BIDS				2,788,780	762,500	488,000			878,000	125,000	2,040,780

Extract from Minutes



Scrutiny Panel

1st November 2006

37 BUDGET CONSULTATION

INFORMATION: The Chair welcomed Councillor M C M Lager, Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets and Mr C Fleetham, Finance Director to the meeting.

In making his presentation, Councillor Lager referred to the various reports circulated with the Agenda which set out the latest financial position with regard to next year's budget. Councillor Lager outlined the budget process and he referred to the priorities which had been identified. It was anticipated that information on the Council's provisional financial settlement would be received later in the month, with the final position being confirmed in January 2007. It was hoped that this would be as envisaged. Councillor Lager indicated that inflation continued to be an on-going factor particularly in terms of staff and energy costs. Customer expectations continued to rise and the Council would seek to meet these through modernisation and investment and by trying to emulate the services which the public had come to expect from some private companies. Councillor Lager indicated that a 'joined-up' approach would be required in the provision of services and that the Council would be working closely with partners. This had also been highlighted in the Government's recently published White paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities'. A flexible budget was therefore required. The Medium Term Financial Strategy showed that a balanced budget could be met and it was proposed that there should be lower Council-tax increases. It was anticipated that most of the bids for revenue funding could be met, but it was anticipated that there could be a shortfall in capital funding. Steps were being taken to identify alternative assets for disposal and a Sub Group of the Cabinet had been established to carry out this task. Councillor Lager stated that a study with respect to Bramston Sports Centre was on-going and that investment in the housing stock would continue. Councillor Lager referred to the local Ward priorities/ issues raised by Members. These would be investigated to determine whether they could be achieved. Public consultation on the budget options would commence in November 2006 followed by 'Meet the Cabinet' road-shows at five locations across the District in January 2007. The Area Committees and the Business Council would also be consulted.

The Scrutiny Panel considered the reports page by page and Members were invited to comment.

With respect to the General Fund Revenue Profile 2007/08 to 2009/10 (page 5), the Chair queried if there was a reason for reduced market income. The Finance Director indicated that income had reduced some time ago and that the budget always exceeded income. A

Member queried the reference to the agreed 2% additional Government grant in 2008/09 and 2009/10 (page 6). Mr C Fleetham clarified this and he indicated that, whilst an increase had been built into the budget for 2007/08 based on last year's provisional settlement, the figures for the two subsequent financial years were estimates only and they had not been agreed as stated.

Regarding the Requests for Revenue Funding, the Chair referred to the post of Parish Liaison Officer being funded until October 2007 (page 7). It was noted that this was an error and that it should read October 2008. The Chair queried also the bid for additional Environmental Health enforcement staff (page 8). It was reported that this bid was linked to a similar one put forward for Planning (page 9) and that it was proposed to appoint one person who would be responsible for enforcement in both Service Areas.

With reference to Street Scene (pages 10 and 11) a Member asked whether provision was being made in the budget to enforce against the parking of vehicles on grass verges. It was reported that trial 'no waiting on verges' schemes were due to commence across the District shortly, but it was not known if on-going funding was available. The Finance Director agreed to investigate this. A Member referred to the proposal to increase Carecall Alarm charges by 6.4%. He considered this to be quite a large increase which would fall on a few, vulnerable people. Regarding sweeping and litter picking of the A120 Braintree Bypass, a Member questioned whether this was the responsibility of the Highways Agency rather than the District Council, or if the cost could be transferred. The Finance Director agreed to clarify this. Attention was drawn to the bids for street washing and chewing gum removal. A Member considered this to be a very important issue and it was hoped that funding could be provided from within existing resources as envisaged. A Member referred to the bid to provide new litter bins and she queried whether this included the cost of emptying them also and, if not, whether there would be an additional cost. The Finance Director indicated that the bid related to the bins only. He agreed to check that provision was already in place for the emptying of them.

A Member indicated that some entries included on the Capital Programme 2006 to 2010 Update (page 14) did not have financial information entered against them. The Finance Director stated that in most cases these schemes had been completed and the entries should have been removed from the report.

With respect to Requests for Capital Funding, the Chair asked when more information would be available on play area refurbishments (page 17) as it was noted that there was much work still to be done and that this was a popular issue with the public. A Member suggested that it would be more appropriate to allocate £240,000 to this in 2007/08 and £120,000 in 2008/09 rather than as proposed. Councillor Lager stated that further investigation was required. It was possible that the information would be available for the Cabinet meeting later in the month. Regarding the bids for repairs to Braintree, Halstead and Witham cemeteries and St Mary's Churchyard, a Member suggested that the proposed £50,000 annual allocation for works to all cemeteries and closed churchyards was inadequate and he requested that a more generous allocation be made. The Chair asked whether the works envisaged for Witham cemetery included improved security measures which the Leader of the Council had undertaken to investigate following a statement made at the Council meeting in July 2006. The Finance Director confirmed that the matter was being considered as part of the budget consultation.

In concluding their discussions, Members considered the budget consultation timetable. It was suggested that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel should determine whether an additional meeting of the Panel would be required in December 2006 and if the meeting scheduled for 10th January 2007 should be postponed to enable Members to consider feedback from the Cabinet's public road-shows being held in January.

The Chair thanked Councillor Lager and Mr Fleetham for attending the meeting.

DECISION:

- (1) That the report on the latest position regarding the 2007/08 budget be received and noted.
- (2) That the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel be authorised to determine whether an additional meeting of the Scrutiny Panel should be called for December 2006 and if the Panel's meeting in January 2007 should be postponed.

(Post Meeting Note: The January meeting has been re-scheduled from 10th to 24th January 2007).

ACTION POINTS:-

- (1) *That the Finance Director makes the necessary enquiries to establish whether provision has been made in the budget for the enforcement of vehicles parked on grass verges and that he reports back in writing to the Scrutiny Panel.*
- (2) *That the Finance Director makes the necessary enquiries to establish if the Highways Agency is responsible for sweeping and litter picking on the A120 Braintree Bypass, or if the cost could be transferred and that he reports back in writing to the Scrutiny Panel.*
- (3) *That the Finance Director makes the necessary enquiries to establish if resources are available to empty the proposed litter bins and that he reports back in writing to the Scrutiny Panel.*

Business Efficiency Reviews

Background

Braintree District Council has over the past two years invested time and money to bring about organisational change to improve its ability to deliver against the Government's e-government initiatives. This has included the establishment of a customer contact centre and changes to front offices at the Council's headquarters and area offices. The focus now is to ensure that efficiencies and/or cost reductions are realised.

In addition, the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy identifies an expected shortfall in General Fund revenue from 2008/09 onwards as a result of additional costs (including the expansion of recycling throughout the district, inflation and increased pension contributions) and reduced income from Government and interest earned on investments.

Thirdly and most significantly, will be the result of the impending ballot of the Council's housing tenants on the proposed transfer of its housing stock, of over 8,000 houses, to a newly formed Registered Social Landlord. This will raise significant staffing, accommodation and cost issues for the Council and will impact from the date of transfer, probably December 2007.

The culmination of all of the above is the requirement of a reduction in costs of a minimum of £2million and to ensure the rationalised authority continues to be 'fit for purpose'.

Objectives

The proposal to address this major task is to establish a small group of senior officers that will: -

1. Drive through transformational change that will reduce costs whilst maintaining/ improving performance as a result of improving the Council's overall efficiency and effectiveness.
2. To support the organisation to make the change.
3. To ensure the Council is able to address the implications of the Housing Stock Transfer and the MTFs, whilst maintaining performance, leading to the setting up of a balanced budget in 2008/09, without significant impact on the Council Tax.

The Project

- Develop and drive forward a change process which meets both the efficiency needs of the organisation and the service delivery needs of our customers to create an effective organisation
- Commission Business Efficiency reviews to recommend the most effective and efficient ways of delivering services, taking into consideration alternative methods of service delivery, opportunities for sharing services, etc
- Review current processes and procedures to identify opportunities for further improvements, leading to greater efficiency and effectiveness

- Identify the level of discretionary services that could be considered for reducing/ceasing to address further financial shortfalls
- Identify any other options for reducing costs/increasing income whilst maintaining performance

Whilst some of the above will be undertaken by the project team itself the majority of the tasks will be performed by Senior Managers and Service Unit Managers.

Resources

The Team

Trevor Wilson – Deputy Finance Director
Helen Krischock – HR Manager
Cherie Root – ICT Manager
Greta Irving – Organisational Development Manager
John Wickes – Procurement Manager

The team will be supported, as required, by other key officers with specialist skills or knowledge including Performance Manager, Solicitor to the Council, Asset Manager, Payroll Manager, etc.

Funding

Invest to Save Fund - £100,000 to be used to employ specialist resources in selected areas.

Approach

To facilitate and enable Service Unit Managers to review their services to identify efficiencies, including alternative methods of service provision, and where the transfer of housing affects services to ensure that the services are 'fit for purpose' in meeting the need of the new smaller leaner Council.

The Team's work will concentrate on three areas:

- Services currently charging the Housing Revenue Account, predominantly central and corporate services. The aim to eliminate as much of the charges from General Fund to HRA, £4.35 million for 2006/07, as possible. By transfer of staff (under TUPE arrangements), service level agreements, transferring costs of accommodation to a third party and changed ways of working (shared services – internally or externally), etc.;
- Front line services identified as high cost and/or above average cost when compared to comparative authorities or under-performing, to include: Waste Management, Street Scene, Revenues and Housing Benefits, Environmental Health, Leisure and Culture, Building Control;
- Corporate costs that impact across all services and budgets, which are not consistent across services, for example, repairs and maintenance, training and computer costs.

Timetable

Proposals to be completed by 30th September 2007 to feed into the 2008/09 budgetary process.