

Division(s): N/A

CABINET – 20 SEPTEMBER 2011

BUSINESS STRATEGY & SERVICE RESOURCE PLANNING 2012/13 TO 2016/17

Report by the Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer

Introduction

1. This report is the first in a series on the Business Strategy and Service & Resource Planning process for 2012/13 to 2016/17, providing councillors with information on budget issues for 2012/13 and the medium term. The report presents the known and potential financial issues for 2012/13 and beyond which impact on the existing Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), the assumptions on which the current MTFP is based and proposes a process for Service & Resource Planning for 2012/13 including a timetable of events.
2. The referencing system used to assist Cabinet and other members in ensuring that they have all relevant papers relating to the process, has been retained. The referencing system is attached for information at Annex 1.

The following annexes are attached:

Annex 1: Referencing system for Service & Resource Planning papers

Annex 2: Summary of the Corporate Plan Proposals

Annex 3a: Local Government Resource Review Consultation

Annex 3b: 2010/11 Review of Education Capital

Annex 4: Review of Assumptions in the Existing MTFP

Annex 5: Service & Resource Planning timetable for 2012/13

The Council's Business Strategy

3. The Council's Business Strategy was launched in June 2010. The Strategy identifies the strands of work that together will deliver the cultural and service changes necessary to meet the challenging and changing strategic and financial landscape. The strategy ensures that there is a single focussed overview. The strands of the Strategy are:
 - (a) Changing the way we work
 - (b) Reshaping Management
 - (c) Oxfordshire Customer Services
 - (d) Asset Management
 - (e) Customer Focus
 - (f) Service & Resource Planning
 - (g) Big Society and Community Self-Help

(h) ICT

4. The Directorate Business Strategies provide the links from the various strands to the MTFP.

Corporate Plan

5. The Business Strategy forms part of the wider vision of what the Council is seeking to achieve as set out in the Corporate Plan. Our overarching goal as a council is to ensure 'a thriving Oxfordshire, by maximising growth, enhancing the environment and sharing the benefits of growth as widely as possible'.
6. The Corporate Plan is approved alongside the budget and MTFP by Council each February. The Corporate Plan for 2012/13 to 2016/17 will be approved by Council in February 2012. It is anticipated that our strategic objectives will remain unchanged but are re-articulated through a visual design which is a mechanism of organising and depicting goals and priorities. The Council's overall goal will be achieved through focusing on outcomes grouped into three key 'pillars' that support the goal:
 - Fulfilled People – that are qualified and skilled, achieving their potential, given choice and treated with dignity.
 - Thriving Communities – that are built on the principles of strength and safety, equality and fairness, responsibility and independence.
 - A Great Place – characterised by a thriving economy, effective infrastructure and high-quality, 'clean and green' natural and built environments.
7. The summary of the Corporate Plan Proposals is attached at Annex 2 and it is proposed that this is used for the development of the Corporate Plan for 2012/13 to 2016/17.

Government Consultations and other announcements

8. A number of consultations which will have implications on the Council were launched ahead of the summer recess. They are summarised below with more details set out in Annex 3a and 3b.

Local Government Resource Review

9. The Government is seeking to replace the current Formula Grant funding system to local authorities by enabling councils to keep a share of the growth in National Non-Domestic Rates (business rates) in their area. One of the main components of Formula Grant is business rates. Business rates are currently collected by district councils and paid into a central pool which is then redistributed as part of Formula Grant.

10. There will be 'tariffs' to remove the surpluses from areas which collect more business rates than they get in Formula Grant (such as Oxfordshire). The income from tariffs will be fed back as 'top-ups' to areas that don't collect enough business rates to replace their Formula Grant.
11. A levy on disproportionate benefits is also proposed. Some areas may experience significant increases in business rates and some of this additional income will be used to compensate areas which experience 'shocks to the system'. For example Oxfordshire could experience a dip in income with the proposed closure of Didcot A power station in 2015.
12. The whole system will be subject to amendment as the total business rates collected exceeds the amount planned for formula grant, and this along with business rate revaluation will mean that there will be a 'reset' after a number of years. Another factor which may require a reset is if the income from business rates is no longer considered to relate to core service costs or needs.
13. The new system will be more volatile. At present we know exactly how much Formula Grant we will get when we fix our budget. Under the new system funding will be harder to predict. It is likely therefore that councils will need to increase their levels of reserves or balances to be able to manage both in-year and year on year fluctuations from planning assumptions.
14. The consultation proposes that different authorities might voluntarily group together to pool their business rate income, tariffs and top-ups and levies. Levies might be reduced by 'pooling' with other authorities. The Districts in a county area and the County might agree to set up a pool together for example.
15. There are a number of implications of operating the system in a two tier area (District and County councils). Districts have most planning powers and so have more control over local development than Counties. Districts are the billing and collection authority for business rates and so have more knowledge of the amounts likely to be collected and their volatility. There will also need to be a mechanism to enable funding to be passed from the Districts to Counties and options are included in the technical papers.
16. The Localism Bill provides a power to reduce business rate bills, funded by the local authority. District councils will have the power to reduce business rates to encourage development. A 1p reduction in business rates across all districts would reduce the amount collected in Oxfordshire by around £6m. Depending on assumptions about the share of losses across councils, this could impact on services such as Older People or the provision of Libraries.
17. Eight technical papers setting out a number of options for each element were published on 19 August 2011, with a closing date of 24 October 2011 for comments. Until the outcome of this latest consultation is known it will

not be possible to fully assess the impact. More details are set out in Annex 3a.

Draft National Planning Policy Framework

18. The draft framework emphasises that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system. Each local planning authority (district councils) will be required to produce a Local Plan for its area setting out strategic priorities.
19. In two tier areas, county and district authorities should cooperate with each other on relevant issues such as the provision of infrastructure for transport, minerals and waste. Local planning authorities will be required to demonstrate that cooperation through for example a joint committee or memorandum of understanding.

Localising Support for Council Tax in England

20. This consultation sets out proposals to localise council tax benefit. Currently district councils pay council tax benefit and precise details of the scheme are set by central government. The proposals are for district councils to set up their own schemes and save 10% of expenditure (£480m). Grant funding from central government will continue to pay the costs, but this will reduce to find the savings. The government expects authorities to protect the position of pensioners and vulnerable people which leaves savings being focused onto people of working age.
21. The consultation also states that billing authorities should be able to share any financial pressure as a result of unexpectedly high increases in demand for support with precept authorities. This could have an implication for the County Council.

Pensions

22. The Government has recently begun the consultation process in respect of changes to the public sector pension schemes. These changes are in two parts. Part one is to address the target reductions in Government expenditure included in the 2010 Spending Review, which were based on an average increase of 3.2% in employee contributions. Part two will address the wider issues covered in the report of the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission chaired by Lord Hutton.
23. In terms of employee contributions, the consultation proposals are focussed on the 2012/13 savings, allowing time for alternatives to increasing employee contributions to be identified to deliver the savings required from April 2013 onwards. The Government has recognised the funded nature of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), and as such will allow alternatives to increases in employee contributions from April 2012.

24. At the time of writing this report, the consultation proposals for the teacher's scheme have been published, but we are still awaiting proposals for the firefighter's and LGPS. The proposed increases in teacher's contributions, effective from April 2012 range from 0% on salaries up to £15,000 to 2.4% on salaries over £112,000. If alternative savings are not identified, the contribution rate for the most senior teachers will rise to 12.4%, an increase of 6%. Nationally, 40% of teachers are paid £32,000 to £40,000, and they will see an increase in their contributions of 1.2% from April 2012, and potentially 3% if alternative savings are not identified.
25. The key risk to the Council's financial planning from these potential increases will be the impact of any widespread opting out from the public sector schemes. If the net contribution from scheme members falls, and the Government seeks to remain within the limits set in the Spending Review, the balance of costs will fall to the Council by way of increased employer contributions. The Council will need to carefully monitor the position going forward.
26. For the LGPS it is not clear whether the Government will legislate to allow an additional Fund Valuation and adjustment of employer rates from April 2012. If not, any changes in the LGPS (whether through employee contributions or otherwise) will not feed through to the Council's budget until April 2014.
27. The wider scheme changes are not expected to be implemented until April 2015. Whilst in principle, these changes should reduce the cost to the Council as an employer; there is a risk that significant levels of opting out could in fact increase costs.

Implementation of the 2010/11 Review of Education Capital

28. Following the cessation of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) scheme, Sebastian James was commissioned to conduct an independent review into education capital funding, specifically how the DfE could achieve better value for money and improve efficiency in capital investment. The government has provided its initial response to the review, and as a result announced:
29. That an extra £500 million of capital funding will be available during 2011/12 for those local authorities where rising pupil numbers are putting severe pressure on school capacity. Details of how allocations will be made will be provided over the summer and finalised in the autumn.
30. A new privately financed school rebuilding programme has been launched with the aim of rebuilding schools in the very worst state of disrepair. The programme is open to all publicly funded schools. Local authorities, schools, and organisations with responsibility for schools will be able to submit applications for the programme. Applications can be submitted between 3 and 14 October.

31. The launch of a consultation seeking views on the key recommendations from the Independent Review of Education Capital by Sebastian James. Details are set out in Annex 3b.

School Funding Reform: Proposals for a Fairer System

32. This second consultation on School Funding reform follows a consultation on the high level principles of school funding reform which closed in May 2011.
33. The consultation sets out proposals to reform the system so that it is simpler and more transparent. This includes proposals to introduce a new national formula so that money is allocated more consistently across the country, and whether the reforms should be implemented from 2013/14 or in the next spending period. A shadow 2012/13 settlement showing the potential impact of the reforms is expected to be published in spring 2012.
34. The consultation reflects largely what we expected after the initial consultation. Broadly we welcome the intention to address the inequity of similar schools in different areas receiving very different levels of funding, and hope that this will address the very low level of funding per pupil in Oxfordshire. The intention to simplify funding formulae both nationally and locally and increase funding transparency is consistent with the approach taken by our Strategic Review Project, with the caveat that schools are given sufficient transitional protection. The recognition of the need to retain some local flexibility to address local pressures and specific needs is also important.
35. There is still much work to be done considering the detail. There are a number of areas which could potentially cause concern for Oxfordshire including, among many others: the methodology for calculation of an Area Cost Adjustment; how DfE will make their judgement on the right balance between funding for the basic entitlement and funding to support pupils from deprived backgrounds; the costing of the high needs block of funding generally and suggested threshold of £10,000 cost for high needs pupils; and retention of the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) as the means of transitional protection for schools.
36. Due to the range and quality of medical services, Oxfordshire is one of a small minority of authorities which attracts the families of children with pronounced medical difficulties to move to the area. There is no indication in the consultation that Government has yet considered this issue.

Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG)

37. The DfE pays an additional grant, (Local Authorities Central Services Equivalent Grant (LACSEG)) to Academies because there are some central services which maintained schools receive from local authorities which

Academies may either provide themselves or buy back from the local authority. Many of these services are within the Schools Budget and are funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant. Some however are funded through Formula Grant which is general funding for the local authority. The local government finance settlement for 2011/12 and 2012/13 transfers funding out of Formula Grant to reflect that local authorities would no longer be required to provide these services for Academies. The overall transfer nationally is £148m in 2011/12 and £265m in 2012/13. For Oxfordshire the reduction in Formula Grant is £1.470m in 2011/12 and £2.528m in 2012/13. This reduction has been built into our Medium Term Plan.

38. The calculations were based on DfE estimates of 200 schools converting to become Academies each year. These estimates have proven to be far too low and as such the DfE are now consulting on increasing the transfer from local authorities to help meet their additional costs of providing LACSEG to a greater number of Academies.
39. The current transfer is calculated on a pro-rata basis and as such, does not follow the pattern of Academies opening. The consultation is also asking for opinions on how this transfer should be made.
40. The consultation asks whether authorities think the transfer from Formula Grant should be at the same level as the cost to DfE (approx £360-365m in 2011/12 and £580-£680m in 2012/13) or some other level. For Oxfordshire this could equate to a further £2.155m reduction in Formula Grant in 2011/12 and £3.959m in 2012/13.
41. It also asks whether it is more important to have stability of funding (through a pro-rata calculation as above) or to have a transfer based on the pattern of Academies opening. This would require in-year flexibility with the transfer amounts changing throughout the year. The impact for Oxfordshire of transferring funding from Formula Grant based on the methodology in the consultation and actual number of Academies converting in 2011/12 is estimated to be in the region of £1.0m compared to the £1.470m deducted originally and the estimate of £3.625m based on this consultation.
42. Irrespective of the amount the DfE gives to Academies as additional grant for LACSEG, the transfer out of Formula Grant does not reflect the savings to local authorities for ceasing to provide some services to these pupils. Savings to local authorities are likely to be in the region of £15-20per pupil rather than the £220per pupil given to Academies for LACSEG.

Commission on the Funding of Care and Support

43. On 4 July 2011, the Commission, chaired by Andrew Dilnot, published its proposals for the funding of adult social care. The proposals would involve a very radical change in the funding of adult social care. The key recommendations are as follows:

- Individuals' lifetime contributions towards their social care costs – which are currently potentially unlimited – should be capped. After the cap is reached, individuals would be eligible for full state support. This cap should be between £25,000 and £50,000. The Commission considered that £35,000 is the most appropriate and fair figure;
 - The means-tested threshold, above which people are liable for their full care costs, should be increased from £23,250 to £100,000;
 - National eligibility criteria and portable assessments should be introduced to ensure greater consistency; and
 - All those who enter adulthood with a care and support need should be eligible for free state support immediately rather than being subjected to a means test.
42. The Commission estimate that the cost of its proposals - based on a cap of £35,000 - would cost about £1.7 billion nationally.
43. There was widespread support for the proposals. It is understood that the Department of Health is planning to carry out widespread consultation on the proposals during the Autumn. Their response will be reflected in a White Paper on Adult Social Care which will be published next Spring.
44. If the proposals were to go ahead they would have a major impact on the funding of the County Council. Additional resources would need to be made available to meet the additional public costs that will arise.

Public Health

45. The public health function will transfer from PCT's to local authorities in 2013/14, paid as a specific grant based on a 'fair share' formula. Ahead of that, shadow budgets are being published for 2012/13 before the end of the year. The shadow allocations will be important in allowing local authorities to plan for the responsibilities they will take on from April 2013. In addition, responsibility for commissioning all local alcohol and drug misuse services will transfer to local authorities as part of the public health function.
46. The Department of Health are collating information on the baseline spend on public health activity for 2010/11 covering spend from all sources. This will be the first step in determining future public health budgets. To facilitate this we are currently working with the PCT to finalise this information which needs to be submitted by 16 September 2011.

Service & Resource Planning Process

47. Directorate Business Strategies for 2011/12 to 2014/15 were approved by Council in February 2011. Monitoring progress against the delivery of the strategies during 2011/12 has taken place regularly through the Business Strategy Group and quarterly through the business management reporting to CCMT and Cabinet. The quarterly cycle picks up corporate issues not only relating to the business strategies but also relating to the Corporate

Plan, performance management, risk management and project management. Furthermore, the financial aspects are also being reported on a monthly basis through the Financial Monitoring & Business Strategy Delivery reports to Cabinet.

48. As with last year, capital proposals form an integral part of Business Strategy and therefore integral to the Service & Resource Planning process. In addition, this year as part of a corporate landlord approach agreed through last year's process, Property & Facilities will become responsible for all property issues from 2012/13. Property issues including countywide facilities management will therefore need to form an integral part of each Business Strategy.
49. Star Chambers are planned for late September and October. Directorates will be required to set out:
 - An overview of what the Directorate's business will look like by 2014/15 (this may be no different from the current Directorate Business Strategy);
 - Delivery against planned savings and outcomes in the Directorate Business Strategies;
 - How to manage any new external pressures arising (on the basis these will need to be managed within the directorate).
50. An overarching Star Chamber will focus on delivery of the Council's Business Strategy and cross cutting policy issues.
51. Scrutiny Committees will meet to consider detailed budget proposals in December 2011. All Members will be able to observe all of the Scrutiny Committees. Briefing sessions will be held prior the meetings to provide Members with an overview of the latest financial position and the progress to date in relation to the Service & Resource Planning process.
52. The draft Local Government Finance Settlement is expected to be announced in late November. It is anticipated that this will confirm the figures announced alongside the 2011/12 settlement in January 2011.
53. Annex 4 sets out the assumptions in the existing Medium Term Financial Plan.
54. A timetable for Service & Resource Planning is attached at Annex 5.

Setting the Medium Term Framework

55. The Service & Resource Planning process and the MTFP cover a five-year period. It is rolled forward one year each year. This year, there is an additional year added to include 2016/17. This planning period is consistent

with all other relevant plans, including the Corporate Plan and the Capital Programme.

56. The Council is legally required to set a budget for 2012/13 in February 2012. However, whilst it is good practice to set a MTFP, there is no legal requirement to do so. Given the significant changes that are being proposed for 2013/14 and in the absence of any information beyond the Spending Review period into 2015/16 it is proposed that the MTFP for 2015/16 and 2016/17 is draft.

Capital Programme Planning

The New Asset Strategy

57. The Council approved the Asset Strategy which is an important component of the Council's business strategy in February 2011. An implementation programme is currently underway with an aim to
- Reduce the cost of the council's non-schools portfolio by 25%
 - Support and enable working with partners at a local level to reduce the overall size of the public sector estate in Oxfordshire
 - Increase the amount of property that is Fit for Purpose
 - Reduce energy consumption
58. Work is also ongoing to link the strategy with the Locality Reviews and to link with the asset or service strategies for partners and should help to achieve increased co-location and sharing.
59. An updated asset strategy will be reported to the Cabinet in December 2011 and subsequently to the Strategy and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee in January 2012.

The Capital Strategy

60. The Council has a 10 year Capital Strategy which sets out the County Council's capital investment plans and explains how capital investment contributes to the Council's Vision and Priorities. It shows how the Council prioritises, targets and measures the performance of its capital programme. It provides the framework for determining capital spending plans and the effective use of the Council's limited capital resources.
61. This Strategy will be also be reviewed and updated in light of the changing financial and business strategy environments and will be reported to the Scrutiny Committee. The updated Strategy, along with any comments from the Scrutiny Committee, will be reported back to Cabinet in January 2012 and form part of the budget proposals for onward recommendation to Council in February 2012.

Capital Programme

62. The capital programme currently shows a balanced position with sufficient level of contingency across the 5 year period. The first capital programme update in July 2011 confirmed a further £4m of capital resources which are set aside as earmarked reserves to be used as part of the capital budget setting process. This is a comfortable position to start the new service and resource planning period, though the capital budget setting process for 2012/13 is still likely to be challenging.
63. One of the main reasons for this is that the capital funding envelope beyond 2012/13 is still uncertain with ongoing issues about economic prospect in the UK and across the world. There is currently a 10% risk adjustment is applied to the future years' funding estimates as part of the programme planning process. While this approach is prudent and effective in general, some of the ongoing changes to the policy and planning environment within the UK represent a fundamental shift from the present system in terms of determination of capital allocations and priorities.
64. New capital investment pressures, which are linked to these changes to the funding and planning environment and arising from revised business strategies and operational or statutory requirements, are currently emerging. Outline business cases are likely to be brought forward during the coming months to inform the Capital Star Chamber discussion in October 2011.
65. In August 2011, the Capital Investment Board confirmed that the prioritisation principles set out in the Council's Capital Strategy provides a robust framework for debating the relative importance of each proposal and making decisions about the investment priorities in this new environment. These are:
 - Priority 1: projects which enable compliance with our legal/ statutory duties including projects which address any infrastructure deficits related to statutory compliance.
 - Priority 2: projects that generate revenue savings through the delivery of the new business strategy or service transformation proposals.
 - Priority 3: projects where a major proportion of the capital from external sources which will be lost if the project fails to go ahead but subject to consideration of future revenue requirements.
 - Priority 4: projects that contribute to the delivery of a smaller property portfolio through increased co-location or space utilisation or adaptation of new ways of working.

- Priority 5: projects that facilitate economic development and housing growth - in particular in priority localities (Banbury, Bicester, Abingdon, Oxford City, Didcot and Carterton).
- Priority 6: projects that address cross-cutting issues, facilitate joint-working with partners or generate new/additional income.

The Integrated Planning Approach

66. The Council considers the capital investment and programming activity as an integral part of the Council's Service & Resource Planning process. In line with this approach, capital implications of service strategies are reviewed in Star Chambers before decisions are made on either revenue or capital. This ensures that the creation of a new asset or investment in the existing assets and infrastructure network is justified through detailed business strategies and delivery models for the service.
67. In addition, each year the Capital Investment Board determines the actions that will be taken as part of the Capital Planning process. The following actions were considered and agreed by the Board to support the 2012/13 financial year:
 - a) The process will focus on controlling the size of the existing capital programme portfolio within an affordable envelope. "Conditional approvals" will be used where there are significant risks around deliverability or cost of the proposals coming forward.
 - b) Directorates are advised to focus on strategic and high-level issues underpinning their service delivery in the medium term and creating large demands on capital resources. They are also given an opportunity to report key operational bottlenecks that could be removed through capital investment.
 - c) Corporately led asset management or transformation programmes will be fully communicated to services to ensure strategic and delivery alignment, in particular there will be a room to support cross-organisational opportunities in the medium term;
 - d) The services continue to review their existing allocations (including the level of investment required for annual programmes) and declare them (or a part of them) as surplus where the capital investment need no longer exist or is reduced, or the business cases are no longer valid;
 - e) Services will identify programme of works to utilise unallocated sums where they exist due to late announcements by government departments. Where they are not needed, they will be returned back to the capital programme to fund the emerging capital investment priorities or pressures. Where possible, their use will be reviewed in the context of utilising them for agreed priorities based on the assessed need;

68. Councillors will also have further opportunities to contribute to capital prioritisation decisions through the Scrutiny Meetings which will be held in December as part of the Service & Resource Planning process.
69. Some decisions on the capital programme may need to be made before February 2012, due to time constraints applied to some of the funding streams or other urgent matters that may affect some projects. All these decisions will be made in accordance with the revised financial procedure rules (agreed by the Council on 14th August 2011) and will be reported to councillors on a monthly basis as part of the Financial Monitoring Report.

Consultation

70. Consultation with residents is part of our budget setting process and we take account the views expressed in residents' surveys (Oxfordshire Voice Panel Survey) as well as feedback provided in our budget consultation programme.
71. In addition to high level feedback to inform budget setting the council also carries out detailed consultation exercises to support service change policy decisions, where it is considered appropriate to do so. Examples of these include consultation about proposed changes to services for children and young people and the current consultation on the library service proposals which closes on 30 September 2011.
72. Information about the consultation exercises used to support budget setting and individual policy decisions can be found on the council's [eConsult portal](#) on our website.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

73. The Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty on local authorities that when making decisions of a strategic nature decision makers must exercise 'due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination... advance equality of opportunity... and foster good relations.'
74. As part of the Service & Resource Planning process for 2011/12, the Council produced a general assessment of the impact of the budget on customers ahead of the budget being set in February 2011. This document set out the principles that were being followed, identified the main risks to vulnerable groups and established what actions would be taken to prevent these risks. All significant saving proposals received at least an initial assessment to identify potential risk in advance of the budget being set. Further work has since been undertaken on a number of these assessments as the details of how proposals will be implemented becomes clearer and as feedback is received from consultations. These assessments have been renamed Service & Community Impact Assessments to reflect the view that the Council should be aware of all possible risks and not just those that impact on statutory equality groups.

75. Where any new savings are proposed as part of the Service & Resource Planning process for 2012/13, equality issues will need to be considered from the outset. Services will need to undertake Service and Community Impact Assessments in consideration of their proposals along with the impact on the community.

Financial and Legal Implications

76. This report sets out the Service and Resource Planning process for 2012/13, although it is mostly concerned with finance and the implications are set out in the main body of the report. The Council is required under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to set a budget requirement for the authority and an amount of Council Tax. This report provides information which when taken together with the future reports up to January 2012 will lead to the budget requirement and Council Tax being agreed in February 2012.

RECOMMENDATION

77. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**
- (a) Note the report;**
 - (b) adopt the Summary of the Corporate Plan Proposals at Annex 2 to inform preparation of the Corporate Plan; and**
 - (c) approve the Service and Resource Planning process for 2012/13;**

SUE SCANE
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