AGENDA

Please address any general enquiries on this agenda to Geoff Malcolm on Oxford 815904. Media enquiries should be directed to the Press Office on Oxford 815266. This agenda can also be viewed on the Council’s website, oxfordshireonline (www.oxfordshire.gov.uk).

1. Election to Chair (Liberal Democrat Group)

2. Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments

3. Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

4. Minutes

   Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2001 (CS4).

5. Matters arising from the Minutes

6. Petitions and Public Address

MAJOR FINANCIAL AND POLICY ITEMS

7. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT - 2001/02 BUDGET

   Report by the County Treasurer and the Director of Cultural Services (CS7).

   The Quarterly Financial Report sets out the position in relation to the Committee's 2001/02 budget, based on the latest information available. There is estimated slippage of expenditure of £40,000 relating to the disruption to the public rights of way maintenance programme resulting from the Foot and Mouth crisis. This will be carried forward to next financial year in accordance with the Council’s budget management arrangements. A number of other issues are referred to that will continue to be reviewed throughout the year.

   The Committee are RECOMMENDED to receive the report.

8. ANNUAL LIBRARY PLAN 2001

   Report by the Director of Cultural Services (CS8).
The report comments on the draft Annual Library Plan 2001 (circulated separately to Committee members, Group Leaders, relevant officers and available for public inspection). The Plan is a review of the Library Services’ achievements over the past two years, and an overview of both the current year's priorities and those for 2002-03 and 2003-04. These priorities have been formulated against the Guidelines produced by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for Library Services, to identify and evaluate objectives, programmes and performance. This year for the first time DCMS will judge the Library Authority on the quality of its services, rather than as previously solely on the quality of the plan itself.

For the first time the Plan assesses libraries’ performance against the DCMS’s Library Standards. These standards were adopted by Committee in March 2001 and subsequently by the Council, for achievement by April 2004, along with the local space standard for premises, subject to the identification of resource implications. The Plan highlights some preliminary estimates of these cost implications including those for bookfund and opening hours provision in particular. In the case of the Standard for book borrowing entitlement it is proposed that Oxfordshire standardises on ten books per person at any one time, in order to meet the Standard and to encourage more book borrowing.

The report goes on to provide an update on the Best Value Review (BVR) of the library service (as included as a DCMS requirement in the Plan) including details of the agreed four areas for further detailed work. The Plan includes a modified Mission Statement, plus Aims and Values for the Service, and goes on to identify six key objectives over 2001/02 to 2003/04.

The Committee are RECOMMENDED to

(a) note the achievements of the library service over the past two years;

(b) note the current levels of performance against the Library Standards, together with the indicative level of investment required to achieve them by 2004;

(c) approve an increased book borrowing entitlement of ten books at any one time, to be reflected in changed Rules of the Lending Libraries [section 2(a)], to be introduced from 1 January 2002;

(d) agree and adopt the revised Mission Statement and Aims and Values for the service at Section 2.1.1 of the Plan;

(e) agree and adopt the six key objectives for the Library Service over 2001/2 to 2003/4 as listed at Section 6.3.2 of the Plan;

(f) approve the three year strategy and Action Plans 2001-02 to 2003-04 for the Library Service; and

(g) approve the Annual Library Plan 2001 for submission to the Department for Culture Media and Sport.

9. **OXFORDSHIRE’S LOCAL CULTURAL STRATEGY**

Report by the Director of Cultural Services (CS9) (to follow).

In May 2001 the Committee approved the publication of a draft Local Cultural Strategy for the county for consultation with partners. In excess of twenty written responses were received, many of them detailed. The final version of the Strategy (circulated separately to Committee members, Group Leaders, relevant officers and available for public inspection) takes account of the consultation
responses and is presented for approval. It sets out key issues for the cultural life and development of the county, a statement of strategic objectives. Subject to any final amendments requested by Committee, it will be published at the end of October.

The Committee are RECOMMENDED to approve the Local Cultural Strategy for publication in late October.

OPERATIONAL ITEMS

10. **REDEVELOPMENT OF THE KIDLINGTON LIBRARY SITE**

Report by the Director of Cultural Services (CS10).

Detailed Project Appraisal CS1/2 represents a very positive proposal for the library service. The replacement of the current inadequate library of only 154 square metres with a new building offering 310 square metres for libraries at ground floor, at no cost to Cultural Services Committee, is evidently excellent value for money. The £1.61m scheme will be funded from capital receipts from the new partners in the three-storey building, namely Social Services (on part of the ground floor, with an Adult Training Centre) and Highways (on the two upper floors, providing offices for the Northern area staff). Every opportunity will be taken to work closely with partners on the site, particularly with the Social Services clients. Certain parts of the ground floor accommodation will be jointly used on occasion for community learning activities for example. There are also plans to include a piece or pieces of artwork in the building.

The Committee are RECOMMENDED to approve the Detailed Project Appraisal CS1/2 for the joint scheme at Kidlington to provide a replacement library.

11. **PROPOSAL FOR A CONCERT HALL IN OXFORD**

The Council on 17 July 2001 referred the following motion by Councillor Rodney Rose to this Committee to consider and determine:–

"Council notes the probability that Oxford Station will be relocated in the near future to provide for an expanded facility. Given that this will provide an opportunity to review land for development in this general area of the City and being mindful of the interest expressed in building a Concert Hall when the Prison Site was subject to consultations, this Council resolves to use its best endeavours to investigate the feasibility of such a scheme being promoted in partnership with others and asks officers to report back as and when appropriate."

The Committee are asked to determine the motion.

12. **SOCIAL INCLUSION**

Report by Director of Cultural Services (CS12).

Cultural Services' Medium Term Plan identifies social inclusion as one of the eleven key cross-cutting objectives for the department.

The report proposes a social inclusion policy for Cultural Services and describes a number of current and planned projects which aim to meet the needs of target groups in Oxforshire.

The Committee are RECOMMENDED to:
(a) approve the Social Inclusion Policy for Cultural Services (Annex 1); and

(b) note the long-term need for core funding to support programmes of inclusive work.

13. MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Report by the Director of Cultural Services (CS13).

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, Part IV, places a new duty on all local authorities with Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) to prepare and publish a management plan. Government guidance urges local authorities to utilise joint working mechanisms in plan preparation. Of the three AONBs in Oxfordshire there are well established joint arrangements for two, The Cotswolds AONB Partnership and The Chilterns AONB Shadow Conservation Board. In the third, the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners had its inaugural meeting on 31 July 2001.

Each of these AONBs is administratively complex and it would not be effective for each authority to try to produce its own plan for its own portion of an AONB. Both the Cotswolds and Chilterns AONBs have AONB units with professional staff able to take forward the production of management plans and the North Wessex Downs Council of Partners is giving high priority to appointing an AONB Director to begin this work. Although the County Council cannot delegate the responsibility for preparing management plans for the AONBs to the three joint partnerships it can formally request that they undertake this work on its behalf. This is the most effective way of meeting the statutory obligation under the CROW Act.

The Chilterns Shadow Conservation Board has issued a draft Management Plan for consultation. This is the first of the plans for the three AONBs partly within Oxfordshire to be affected by the new CROW Act duty. The key issues in the plan are outlined in Annex 1 to the report. A draft consultation response is being prepared by officers to meet the consultation deadline of 24 September 2001. Following any amendment and approval by Committee a confirmed response will be given.

The Committee are RECOMMENDED to:

(a) agree that The Cotswolds AONB Partnership, The Chilterns AONB Shadow Conservation Board and the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners be asked to carry out the preparation of management plans, in line with Countryside Agency detailed guidance, for their respective areas; and

(b) approve the consultation response to the Draft Chilterns AONB Management Plan.

14. VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY: REVISED HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND APPLICATION

An additional meeting of the VCH Advisory Sub-Committee has been arranged at 11.30 am prior to the commencement of this meeting to consider a revised Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid and a scheme of work for funding of additional staff to work on south-eastern parts of the county in the context of the County Council’s current three-year Medium Term Financial Plan (to March 2004).

The report to be considered by the Sub-Committee (CS14) also looks at the future direction of the VCH, including an invitation to express views to the General Editor as part of the formation of future policy, and considers general progress with the HLF Pilot Project and Oxfordshire VCH Trust Fundraising.
The Sub-Committee’s advice will be reported orally at the meeting.

The Committee are RECOMMENDED to note the advice of the Sub-Committee and determine any action arising therefrom.

PROCEDURE

15. CENTENARY WOOD, CHARLBURY – MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Director of Cultural Services reports as follows:

In March 1990 the Museums, Arts, Libraries & Leisure Committee approved the establishment of the Oxfordshire Centenary Wood on County Council owned land at Charlbury, together with the formation of a Management Committee to manage the facility. The mixed broadleaf woodland was planted between 1990 and 1993, to celebrate the County Council’s Centenary. Local people were involved in all aspects of the design and planting. Most of the trees are now well established and the site is becoming recognisable as woodland. The wide, grassy rides, designed to complement the adjoining nature reserve, provide a number of pleasant walks within the woodland and link with local public rights of way. Many people visit and enjoy the site regularly, some on a daily basis.

The Management Committee is an internal management body of the County Council with membership to reflect County Council and local interests. The County Council (Cultural Services Committee) has the right to appoint three representatives; West Oxfordshire District Council and Charlbury Parish Council have one representative each and up to five representatives are nominated by the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum (ONCF) to represent organisations with interests in the development of the woodland and/or nature conservation. The County Council representatives on the Management Committee, appointed in 1997, are currently Councillor Mrs Dee Bulley, Councillor Brian Hodgson and former County Councillor Brenda Churchill.

The Committee are RECOMMENDED to appoint three members to serve on the Centenary Wood Management Committee.

MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES ETC

16. CULTURAL SERVICES URGENCY SUB-COMMITTEE*

Unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting of the Cultural Services Urgency Sub-Committee held on 5 July 2001.

RICHARD SHAW
Chief Executive
County Hall
Oxford OX1 1ND

24 September 2001
The Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, copies of which agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes, and in relation thereto determined as follows:-

35/01 ELECTION TO CHAIR

RESOLVED: that Councillor Ferriman (Labour) be elected to chair the meeting.

36/01 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 May 2001 were approved and signed.

37/01 APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEES
(Agenda Item 6)

RESOLVED: to appoint a Cultural Services Urgency Sub-Committee with 3 places and to appoint to it the members named below, being the relevant Group Spokespersons:-

Conservative (1)  Labour (1)  Liberal Democrat (1)

Rose  Ferriman  Moley
in the Chair

Date of signing 2001
Introduction

1. This report shows the 2001/02 budget for this Committee, together with the projected year end variation based on the latest information available (see Annex 1).

2. Carry forwards from 2000/01 (Annex 1, Column 7) are provisional until the accounts have been signed off by the District Auditor.

Virements and Supplementary Estimates (Annex 1, Column 5)

3. An inter-committee virement of £30,400 has been processed in relation to the carry forward of non-delegated repair and maintenance budgets from 2000/01. In addition three supplementary estimates have been granted to this Committee to date. As previously reported, Strategy and Resources Committee on 10 April 2001 granted a supplementary estimate of £10,000 for Tourism strategy and support in relation to the Foot and Mouth crisis.

4. Strategy and Resources Committee on 26 June 2001 granted a supplementary estimate of £35,000 to improve security at Cogges Manor Farm and £31,000 to contribute towards the additional cost of the APT&C pay award and Chief Officers pay award. The APT&C pay award was settled at 3.5%, which was 0.5% greater than provided for in the 2001/02 Medium Term Financial Plan. Strategy and Resources Committee confirmed that 50% of the additional costs of both awards in 2001/02 would be funded by a supplementary estimate, leaving the remaining 50% to be met from within committee budgets. In future years it is planned to provide full budget provision for the implications of these awards.

Main Issues

5. Management action is being taken to investigate how the pressure relating to the above pay awards can be accommodated within existing resources. Currently the Committee is only projecting a variation against budget (£40,000 slippage of expenditure) in relation to the impact of Foot and Mouth disease (as indicated below). However, there are a number of other issues that will require review throughout the year.

6. The replacement of the computerised book issuing system is linked to other issues. These include developments relating to the People’s Network, the corporate Broad Band Network, replacement of the County’s Management Information System and the Central Library rewiring in Phase II of the repairs. Consequently the award of the contract for the book issuing system is being delayed until the last quarter of the 2001/02 financial year. This will ensure that the replacement is correctly timed in relation to the above developments and can also be linked to recommendations from the Best Value Review of the Library Service. The financial implications of this deferred award of the contract are continuing to be assessed and will be reported in a subsequent report.
7. As indicated above, the programme for public rights of way maintenance has been severely disrupted by the Foot & Mouth crisis. Although the network was reopened on 9 June, work continued to be affected for much of the rest of the month. In effect, therefore, the service was unable to carry out maintenance work during the first quarter of the year. In addition, there was a carry forward of work not achieved in 2000/01 because the crisis stated in February. The service is now working hard to make up the work. It is difficult to estimate the financial slippage at this stage, as weather conditions for the remainder of the year will have an impact. The best estimate at present is a carry forward of a projected underspend of £40,000, for work delayed until 2002/03. However, management action will be taken to reduce this as far as possible, subject to weather conditions. If it becomes clear that the backlog of work building up within 2001/02 is more significant, management action will be taken to prioritise work and manage the budget accordingly.

8. The Museums Service budget will be closely monitored throughout the year, as an overspend was indicated in the Provisional Revenue Outturn Report. This, however, predominantly relates to projects that span more than one financial year, and for which external funding will be credited to the Service at the end of the projects, in recognition of management and administrative support etc. If a longer-term budget issue is identified this will be reported in a subsequent Quarterly Financial Report.

**Government Grant / New Opportunities Funding (Annex 3)**

9. Details of government grants and New Opportunities funding projected by this Committee in 2001/02 are included in Annex 3 and summarised below.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>£000</th>
<th>% of gross budget</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countryside Agency / Environment Agency</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Opportunities Fund - Libraries ICT Training</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCMS / Wolfson Public Libraries Challenge Fund (&quot;Your House, My House&quot;) - Estimate</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total in Base Budget</strong></td>
<td><strong>302</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.4%</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Council funding required to attract grant</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Grants:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>New Opportunities Fund – People's Network</td>
<td>to be confirmed</td>
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10. The initial allocation from the New Opportunities Fund for the People's Network was £750,000 over the period of the project. However, further allocations have been requested, but have not yet been approved.

**Financial, Staff and Environmental Implications and Implications for People Living in Poverty**

11. The report is solely concerned with finance. There are no staff, environmental implications or implications for people living in poverty arising directly from the report.

**RECOMMENDATION**
12. The Committee are RECOMMENDED to receive the report.

CHRIS GRAY 
County Treasurer

RICHARD MUNRO
Director of Cultural Services

Background Papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Margaret Whitaker, Management Accountant Tel: 01865 815201

24 September 2001
CULTURAL SERVICES COMMITTEE – 1 OCTOBER 2001
AGENDA ITEM CS8

ANNUAL LIBRARY PLAN 2001
Report by the Director of Cultural Services

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Committee's approval for the Annual Library Plan 2001 (circulated separately to Committee members, Group Leaders, relevant officers and available for public inspection) for submission to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This year for the first time the Plan will be assessed on the basis of the quality of services provided, not as previously solely on the plan itself. The DCMS has altered the format of the Plan, which now has to be completed in full each year (instead of one year in three, with an annual update of the action plan). Moreover, the instructions require a greater amount of information than the previous full plan.

Library Standards

2. For the first time the Plan must also assess how services are performing against the DCMS Library Standards. These Standards were adopted in March 2001 by this Committee and subsequently by the Council. Subject to resources being identified, the aim agreed by Council is to achieve the Standards by the stipulated date of April 2004. (In addition a local space standard for premises was adopted, of 23 sq. metres per thousand population for public areas). This assessment against Standards is included at Section 4.2 of the Plan. DCMS also requires library services to assess service delivery against a range of criteria including social inclusion, lifelong learning, reader development, and partnerships

Library Standards – Book Borrowing Entitlement

3. The Standard PLS 8 stipulates eight books as the book borrowing entitlement. In Oxfordshire currently the level is five books at any one time from any one service point, with borrowers able to take out an additional five books from another library or libraries, making a total in such cases of ten books. In order to encourage borrowing and to ensure the Library Service meets the Standard, it is recommended that the distinction between local and county-wide entitlements be removed, and that Oxfordshire library users should be entitled to borrow up to ten books at any time. If agreed, this will entail an amendment to the Council's Rules of the Lending Libraries Section 2(a).

Best Value Review

4. DCMS also requests a summary on the Best Value Review (BVR) process locally. In this regard it has only been possible to provide details of the point the current year's BVR of the whole library service has reached. Following consultation with the public and staff, the BVR Core Group has concluded that the key areas for in-depth investigation and evaluation are:-

(a) the stock of books
(b) information
(c) opening hours and access
5. As this work will take several months to complete, it has not been possible to include the findings and recommendations for this Annual Library Plan. In framing the three-year medium term strategy in the plan, therefore, it has been necessary to anticipate the future direction of the service in some aspects. Clearly some elements (for example the implementation of the People's Network) will remain a constant over the next three years. However the BVR will be aiming to find the best ways of reprofiling and deploying resources to achieve both local and DCMS targets and standards. The BVR examined the vision of the service and, following consultation with the public, staff and senior management, has modified the original Mission Statement and Aims. The revised version of these, together with a new set of Values, is included in the Plan at Section 2.1.1. Committee is recommended to agree and adopt them for the Library Service. The Annual Library Plan goes on to identify the key objectives over 2001-02 – 2003-04 as follows:-

(a) Increase overall use of Oxfordshire libraries
(b) Mainstream social inclusion within the Library Service
(c) Support and encourage lifelong learning
(d) Meet DCMS Standards by 2004 and place Oxfordshire in the remainder of the top quartiles of performance by 2006
(e) Invest in staff
(f) Improve services through the development and expansion of ICT (see section 6.3.2 of attached Plan).

Committee are recommended to agree and adopt these six key objectives.

Conclusion

6. As DCMS requires, these Plans and targets have been carefully related to both Cultural Services' Medium Term Plan (in particular with regard to the current eleven crosscutting priorities) and to the wider County Council strategies (including e-government and community strategies for example). The 2002 Annual Library Plan will be able to fully take into account the outcomes of the BVR, and the updated priorities of both the Oxfordshire Plan and the revised Cultural Services' own Medium Term Plan.

Financial Implications

7. There are undoubtedly going to be significant resource issues arising from the achievement of the Library Standards by 2004. At this stage it has only been possible to undertake preliminary work on these targets, largely because the Best Value Review will be assessing resource allocation between the various priorities of the service, and aiming to achieve optimum use of existing resources to deliver services as efficiently and effectively as possible. Against this major caveat, the Annual Library Plan attached (as required by DCMS) provides some indicative figures of the likely extra funding required. These include the following:-

(a) The sum required for reaching the requisite bookfund level is estimated to be £136,000. Committee will recall its previous aspiration to restore the buying power of the bookfund to 1990-91 levels: this remains an option at an estimated cost of £217,000, and indeed this figure was included earlier this summer in the draft Medium Term Financial Forecast for Cultural Services reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee on 25 September. However, given now the emerging overall information regarding the costs of achieving all of the Library Standards (particularly reaching the opening hours standard as set out below) it is judged that for bookfund provision the DCMS Standard is now confirmed as Oxfordshire's target to be achieved by 2004.

(b) The opening hours Standards are estimated to require an extra investment of about
£574,000 pa for staffing and running costs.

(c) The remaining two years of the four year programme to meet the access standards of the Disability Discrimination Act will require about £25,000 pa (Minor Works Capital Programme).

(d) The achievement of the number of electronic workstations for the public will need about £94,000 over 2003-04 and 2004-05. These expenditure pressures will continue to be refined and will be incorporated into the overall pressures identified by Cultural Services in the ongoing Medium Term Financial Plan process.

Staff Implications

8. The BVR has identified significant staffing shortfalls against the top quartile of library authorities (50 full time equivalent posts). The four BVR areas for further investigation will analyse efficiency and effectiveness measures to maximise outputs. However, as seen above with regard to opening hours standards, there will need to be significant staff increases if all the Library Standards are to be achieved. It is also necessary to report that library senior management has been at full stretch over the past six months particularly in the delivery of both BVR and Annual Library Plan requirements. The BVR study on management and resources will address the optimum deployment of all staff, so that the library service is better able to address vital priorities such as increasing usage, social inclusion and reader development. This study will run in parallel with the Council’s current job evaluation exercise.

Environmental Implications

9. None arising directly from this report.

Implications for People Living In Poverty

10. The Annual Library Plan as required by DCMS addresses social inclusion issues and future plans of the library service in this important area. This aspect will also be integrated in the four areas of investigation to be undertaken in the BVR.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. The Committee are RECOMMENDED to

(a) note the achievements of the library service over the past two years;

(b) note the current levels of performance against the Library Standards, together with the indicative level of investment required to achieve them by 2004;

(c) approve an increased book borrowing entitlement of ten books at any one time, to be reflected in changed Rules of the Lending Libraries [section 2(a)], to be introduced from 1 January 2002;

(d) agree and adopt the revised Mission Statement and Aims and Values for the service at Section 2.1.1 of the Plan;

(e) agree and adopt the six key objectives for the Library Service over 2001/2 to 2003/4 as listed at Section 6.3.2 of the Plan;
(f) approve the three year strategy and Action Plans 2001-02 to 2003-04 for the Library Service; and

(g) approve the Annual Library Plan 2001 for submission to the Department for Culture Media and Sport.

RICHARD MUNRO
Director of Cultural Services

Background Papers: Annual Library Plan 2001;

Contact Officers: Andrew Coggins, County Librarian  Tel: (01865) 810212
Charles Pettit, Assistant County Librarian  Tel: (01865) 810221

October 2001

24 September 2001
Introduction

1. The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) expects all local authorities to have produced a Local Cultural Strategy by March 2002. Completion of this task is a Best Value Performance Indicator nationally. The DCMS has published general guidance on the nature and content of Local Cultural Strategies but is not prescriptive about the format.

2. The purpose of a Local Cultural Strategy is to establish priorities for cultural development in the place concerned. It is not a strategy for the local authority alone, but should express shared priorities based upon consultation with the cultural sector and the public. The DCMS guidance suggests that the process of completing the Strategy should typically take between twelve and eighteen months.

3. Cultural Services Committee have been kept informed of progress on the compilation of the Strategy since work started in July 2000, and have had an opportunity at key stages in its production to comment upon and shape it.

4. The process has involved a good deal of intensive consultative work with the cultural sector, summarised in section 1 of the Strategy. Arguably it would have benefited from even more, and it is certainly true that wider public consultation would have been desirable. The major limiting factor was the resources available to undertake the work (see note on staffing implications, below). Public consultation should be a starting point for future reviews of the Strategy.

5. The last stage of the process was the publication of a draft document in June 2001. This elicited a large number of written submissions from organisations and individuals working in the cultural sector, as well as verbal comment. The feedback was in many cases quite detailed. In general it was supportive of the strategic vision for cultural development portrayed in the draft Strategy with suggestions for changes of emphasis and illustrative examples.

6. The Strategy has now been finalised on the basis of comments received and is brought to Cultural Services Committee (Annex 1) for approval before publication in late October.

Action plan

7. The draft Strategy included an initial attempt at a action plan describing some of the detailed actions which would contribute to the achievement of the strategic objectives. From the comments received on the draft action plan, it is clear that further work will have to be done to verify the detail of a plan which accurately reflects the commitment organisations can and will make. It is estimated that this work, which in the case of local authorities depends to some extent on political and budgetary priorities, will require at least a further three months, and will be ready for publication early in 2002.
8. The Strategy contains nine key strategic themes, and under each is stated a number of broad objectives. These objectives will form the basis for the action plan.

Financial and Staff Implications

9. There are no direct financial or staff implications arising from the Local Cultural Strategy. Although it is not a statement of County Council cultural policy or strategy, it obviously contains significant elements of work which the County Council either leads or is at least involved in. It does therefore reflect some established key priorities from Cultural Services' Medium Term Plan, which are already funded or have been logged as important pressures (e.g. the achievement of national library standards).

10. It should be noted in passing that no specific budget was set aside for the creation of the Strategy and, in the absence of available staff to develop cultural policy, it has been led personally by the Director.

Environmental Implications And Implications For People Living In Poverty

11. One important aspect of the cultural life of the county is the enjoyment and understanding of the countryside by residents and visitors. Protection and conservation issues are crucial to the management, promotion and interpretation of the countryside. Any future tourism strategy for Oxfordshire will have to take account of issues of sustainability: that is, making sure that deriving benefits from present day tourism does not jeopardise future generations' enjoyment.

12. An objective of the Strategy is to ensure that barriers to participating in the cultural life of the community are overcome. In some cases poverty can be such a barrier and this is addressed in a number of ways (e.g. through concessionary pricing policies).

RECOMMENDATION

13. The Committee are RECOMMENDED to approve the Local Cultural Strategy (Annex 1) for publication in late October.

RICHARD MUNRO
Director of Cultural Services

Background papers: DCMS guidance on producing Local Cultural Strategies

Contact Officer: Richard Munro, Director of Cultural Services (Tel: (1865) 810191)

25 September 2001
CULTURAL SERVICES COMMITTEE - 1 OCTOBER 2001
AGENDA ITEM CS9

A LOCAL CULTURAL STRATEGY FOR OXFORDSHIRE
ANNEX 1

1. Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this Local Cultural Strategy is to create a vision for culture in Oxfordshire which will

- ensure that a healthy cultural life is recognised as central to the well-being of the county's communities; and
- set broad objectives for cultural provision and development over the next five years upon which a
detailed action plan can be based.

The strategy has been drawn up by Oxfordshire County Council, in accordance with the expectation which
the Department for Culture Media and Sport has of all local authorities. However, a Local Cultural Strategy is
intended to contain more than just the Council's own plans. It must reflect the intentions of many others
working in the cultural sector – other local authorities, voluntary and not-for-profit organisations, commercial
enterprises, large and small. Only some of the cultural opportunities in Oxfordshire are directly provided by
the County Council, or supported by it through funding and partnerships. Many activities rely primarily on the
efforts of others. This strategy's usefulness will depend heavily on the degree to which all are willing and able
to play their part in its achievement.

Scope: defining culture

The culture which enriches the lives of people in Oxfordshire takes many forms, as diverse as the
population of the county itself.

Enjoyment of the arts, the built environment, the countryside, crafts and creative industries, dance,
drama, festivals, film, learning, libraries, museums and heritage, music, new media, parks, poetry,
play, pubbing and clubbing, religious participation, sport, tourism ....

All these come within the scope of a cultural strategy, but any attempt to define culture by making
lists is bound to fail either through some crucial omission, or through being so extensive as to be
meaningless.

For the purpose of this strategy, culture has a broad, inclusive meaning.

Culture consists of activities people freely choose to enjoy individually and collectively: activities through
which they participate in the world around them, and may better understand that world and their relationship
to it. Culture also embraces things which people have created and which may be experienced and enjoyed
by others now and in the future.

This strategy takes a positive view of culture's essential contribution to personal and community development
and well-being. Some of the specific benefits of culture are described in Section 2.

Although the focus for this strategy is the development of a range of opportunities and activities identified
as cultural, it is rooted in the unique identity of the county: answers to the question "What is it like to live in, work in or visit Oxfordshire?"

Process: creating the strategy

This strategy has been created by means of a debate conducted over a period of more than a year and involving many people and organisations. A launch in July 2000, which attracted some fifty people involved in cultural provision in the county, began to identify important issues for Oxfordshire. A brief document published in September of that year summarised the views expressed at that meeting and was used in order to stimulate debate at a series of consultative meetings with specific interested groups (County and District Councillors and officers, those working in the arts, heritage, education, sport, etc).

Running in parallel, a County Council review of its support for the arts, sport, recreation and tourism in 2000 also raised relevant issues.

By January 2001 a considerable response had been elicited which led to the publication of a more detailed consultative document designed to test the degree to which perceptions were shared about the scope of the strategy and the key issues, as well as tentatively proposing some underlying values and outline objectives. This prompted more written submissions and was used for further consultative forums, including two with broad cross-sections of the cultural sector, one with the county’s ethnic minorities consultative committee, one with schools advisors from the Education Service and one within the County Council's Cultural Services Department.

During that time, two of the county’s District Councils published their first Local Cultural Strategies, and the South East England Cultural Consortium worked on a Regional Cultural Strategy which it launched in July 2001.

The results of wider public consultation exercises, whilst not specific to this strategy, were used to feed in views relevant to the cultural sphere, including the consultations carried out by Cherwell and Vale of White Horse for their Local Cultural Strategies. Further public consultation has taken place in the first questionnaire circulated to the County Council's newly formed Citizens' Panel. Longer term consultation is planned using focus groups.

Baseline data on existing provision, activity, venues etc is available but currently physically dispersed and disparate in form. Work has been done during the drawing up of the strategy to identify the various sources of cultural information, and one of the outcomes of this strategy will be simplified access to such information, both for public use and for the purposes of planning.

The strategy presents the picture this process has revealed of Oxfordshire culture, its strengths and weaknesses and issues to be addressed. It sets strategic themes and broad objectives for the next five years. It will be complemented by a more detailed action plan which lays out how the objectives are to be achieved. It became clear from the feedback on the draft strategy that, although there was broad consensus about key issues, strategic themes and broad objectives, the detail of actions to be undertaken requires, in many cases, greater clarification especially regarding available resources and respective roles.

The action plan will be published by March 2002, and it will be used to assess progress and updated annually. The strategy itself will be reviewed in 2005, for a new version in 2006.

2. The benefits of culture

A coherent Local Cultural Strategy to which Oxfordshire’s cultural sector can sign up needs to be based
upon some shared understanding of the benefits it is trying to achieve.

Cultural activity affects people's lives individually and collectively in ways which can be far reaching, and the benefits often go beyond the immediate pleasure or satisfaction derived from the activity itself. For example many social, health-related and economic benefits are all outcomes to be legitimately expected from a rich and life-affirming cultural life.

**The primary benefit however is in the intrinsic stimulus, fulfilment, inspiration and sheer enjoyment which come from cultural activity.**

Allied to this primary benefit, the following are all benefits which the Local Cultural Strategy recognises and seeks to secure for Oxfordshire.

**Creativity**

The culture promoted in Oxfordshire should be positive and life-affirming. Communities with opportunities to explore, celebrate and extend their creative abilities are more likely to enjoy life, and less likely to suffer the ill effects of negative, anti-social behaviour. Applied to the world of work, creative ideas and skills can bring economic benefit.

**Participation and pride in the community**

Cultural activity is one of the strongest ties that bind people together in communities (whether geographical or based common interests). The shared culture of a place, an ethnic grouping or an age group is something through which those people define themselves, at least in part. It engenders a sense of belonging and pride in their community, which in turn promotes self-respect.

**Respect for diversity**

Pride in one's own culture is complemented by understanding and respecting the culture of others, who may be near or far in location or time. Enjoyment of cultural activity by one section of the community should not unduly interfere with the legitimate cultural activities and aspirations of others. Oxfordshire has long benefited culturally from welcoming people who visit the county, and those who choose to make their home here.

**Learning for life**

Everyone has the capacity to go on acquiring useful knowledge, skills and insights throughout their lives. A culture which provides opportunities for people of all ages to fulfil their personal potential will benefit both the individuals and their communities. In particular helping young people to acquire skills, knowledge and confidence is an investment in their future and that of the community. Formal education has a key role in helping young people acquire positive values, knowledge and skills, including learning skills themselves. Informal learning opportunities can be especially important for people who have not got the best from their experience of formal education.

**Inclusiveness and choice**

Everyone is entitled to access to participation, and to choice from among available opportunities. Some people experience barriers to some forms of participation as a result of attitudes to disability, age, ethnic background, gender or relative poverty. Those planning or providing cultural services need to be aware of intellectual, physical, social and economic factors which may exclude potential users. This cultural strategy aims to help overcome such barriers.

**Healthy lives**

People's physical, mental and spiritual health is maintained by constructive exercise of their faculties.
Caring for our heritage

The natural and cultural resources which we have inherited and to which we add are not just for us to enjoy now. Whilst accepting that life brings change, we have a duty to act as trustees who ensure that later generations will be able to know and benefit from an equally rich heritage.

Economic benefit

Some cultural activities bring direct or indirect economic as well as social benefits. The cultural sector is an important employer, and one which is growing in significance. Many parts of the sector – for example tourism – bring income and investment into the county. The quality of life enjoyed in both urban and rural parts of the county can be an important factor for businesses deciding to locate here.

Partnership

In order to deliver and develop cultural provision to best effect, organisations need to work together, sharing information, creativity and other resources. Whilst cultural providers must be competitive in the sense of giving good value for money, the sector is one which thrives on co-operation.

Spirituality

For many people of different faiths, participation in religious activity is an important part of their cultural life, and indeed they may regard participation in cultural activity generally as an expression of their spirituality. It is also recognised that religious organisations play an important role in many aspects of the cultural life of the county.

3. The external context

International

Oxfordshire is internationally known as a place of culture. This is based largely, but by no means exclusively, on Oxford's historic built environment, its standing as a centre of learning and the world-class reputation of cultural institutions like the Museum of Modern Art and the Ashmolean.

Towns such as Henley, Woodstock, Banbury and Burford have international reputations, each for its own reason. Even villages such as Adderbury, Garsington and Cropredy boast cultural events known abroad.

Oxfordshire towns and villages enjoy vigorous twinning relationships with communities around the world, usually with a cultural dimension. Other partnerships based on cultural projects have grown between the county and locations on every continent. Schools play a central role in many international links, as do several young people's cultural organisations (e.g. the County Music Service and Oxford Youth Theatre) through their participation in festivals and joint projects.

Cultural organisations in Oxfordshire, including the County Council's Cultural Services department, have made imaginative and successful use of opportunities to access European funding - particularly for heritage projects with European partners - despite the general unavailability to the county of EU structural funds.

The creation of a partnership led by the City and County Councils, Oxford's two universities and Southern Arts to bid for the title of European Capital of Culture 2008 will further the international profile of Oxfordshire.

Regional
Oxfordshire's relative proximity to London presents both advantages and disadvantages. Good commuter links offer not only Oxfordshire residents easy access to the capital for work and leisure, but also the option for many people live in London to work in the county (particularly in Oxford).

For most strategic regional planning purposes the county forms part of the South East of England. The county contributes fully to the regional agenda and makes its voice heard, either in its own right or through sub-regional alliance with its Thames Valley neighbours (the geographical counties of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire).

4. The internal context: what is Oxfordshire like?

Oxfordshire presents a variety of landscapes, settlements and ways of life. At the hub of what is effectively a city-region, lies Oxford. The other urban centres are country market towns, of which Abingdon, Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney have experienced considerable population growth in recent years, and most are due to grow further. Elsewhere the nature of the county is predominantly rural.

Oxfordshire is relatively wealthy, but there are extremes within the overall picture. Indicators of poverty, crime and social exclusion in some parts of Oxford are high in national terms, and some other towns have similar localised problems. In the rural parts of the county it is often harder to see the evidence of relative poverty and social exclusion, but nevertheless these exist, arising from unemployment, depression in the farming sector, poor transport links and vanishing local facilities. For communities which have lost village shops, post offices and other facilities, the remaining centres of activity - the village hall, school, church or library for example - have increased their significance, both as physical facilities and as symbols of community life. Location of, and access to cultural facilities and activities are therefore major issues.

The different tiers of local government in Oxfordshire have distinct roles and responsibilities in cultural provision, with a strong record of partnership working. The County Council - with direct responsibility for public libraries, countryside and public rights of way, important aspects of museums and heritage services, and for education - works closely with the City Council and four Districts, who are the prime movers locally in matters such as sports and arts development and promoting tourism. All these local authorities are producing Local Cultural Strategies (Cherwell DC and the Vale of White Horse DC have already published theirs). Every effort is being made to ensure that these are complementary and consistent, and processes are being developed which will ensure that future revisions will mesh effectively with each other.

Organisations at the local tier - Town and Parish Councils, or village hall and playing field committees – generally bear responsibility for the provision of local recreational facilities.

The process of forming a Local Strategic Partnership to produce a Community Strategy for the improvement of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the county is in its early stages. All the local authorities in Oxfordshire have now adopted Best Value Performance Plans which give a framework to their medium term planning. These set out policies and strategic goals, many of which are relevant to cultural provision, particularly those relating to lifelong learning, social inclusion, support for young people and Better Government for Older People. Local authority strategies for tourism, arts development, sports and recreation, rural issues, conservation and similar matters all have an impact on cultural provision and development in the county.

The move towards the use of modern information and communication technology to improve public services - and the quality of cultural provision in particular - has already begun and will accelerate in the next few years. All public libraries now have public access to at least one computer linked to the Internet. In adopting such separate national initiatives as the National Grid for Learning in schools and the People's Network in libraries, the County Council is seeking to create a county-wide Broadband network, capable of meeting a wide variety of cultural, social and commercial needs. The creative use of new technologies is being enthusiastically explored by many people. The OX1 website, recently developed by Oxford Brookes
University, provides an on-line forum for cultural debate and information exchange.

**Some cultural strengths and weaknesses**

Oxfordshire’s natural heritage is a key feature in making the county an especially attractive place to live, work and visit, with three designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a World Heritage Site, a National Nature Reserve and many Sites of Special Scientific Interest. There are no public country parks, but there is an extensive network of rural public rights of way which includes the Thames Path and Ridgeway National Trails. Oxfordshire is partly shaped by its waterways - particularly the Rivers Thames and Cherwell and the Oxford Canal – and by its woodlands, the management of which has been enhanced in recent years by successful public-private sector cooperation.

Having figured prominently in many ways throughout the nation's history, the county's cultural inheritance is also rich, diverse and well looked after. Oxford itself can boast four nationally Designated Museums (formally recognised as being of national or international significance), while other museums and collections throughout the county are important nationally (e.g. Christ Church Picture Gallery, Henley River and Rowing Museum, Kelmscott Manor. Oxfordshire County Museums Service). Smaller independent museums in market towns and villages have strong community value. Between them Oxfordshire museums attract some 900,000 visitors a year, as well as significant inward investment (e.g. Heritage Lottery Fund, Designated Museums Challenge Fund, EU grant programmes). Many independent museums and historic houses are staffed solely or largely by volunteers.

Historically Oxfordshire has been home to an unusually high number of creative people of national and international reputation, and this continues to be the case. Oxford, for example, can lay claim today to more living published writers per head of population than any other city. This is to some extent linked to the presence of an unusually good range of publishing houses in both traditional print and new media.

The presence of two universities and a vigorous further education sector generates significant year-round cultural activity of all types, including creative unions between the arts, science and technology. Many well qualified, well motivated and creative young people emerge from the universities and colleges in need of resources and outlets for them to advance their work: perceiving these to be lacking in the county, particularly in the visual arts, they tend to move away.

Oxfordshire's public library network is extensive but uneven, and the service has historically been under-resourced. A commitment by the County Council to bring the library service up to national standards by 2004 has been reflected recently in a partial restoration of lost opening hours and some growth in the bookfund.

There are good examples of recent capital investment in cultural buildings, often with National Lottery or other external support, whether major improvements (e.g. Oxford Playhouse, the Oxfordshire, Vale and Downland, River and Rowing, and Oxford University Museums), conversions of existing buildings (e.g. Bicester Courtyard Youth Arts and Media Centre, a new Oxfordshire Record Office) or new build (e.g. Abingdon sports centre, Banbury Museum). In general however many of the county's cultural buildings are inadequate for purpose and severely limited in their ability to develop what they do. Almost all existing facilities have development needs, and aspirations for new facilities include a major concert venue, new exhibition facilities for the visual arts and crafts, and a wide range of local cultural facilities in towns throughout the county.

Imaginative partnerships and joint use of facilities (for example in improving the public library network) are going some way to getting best value out of the limited resources available. The County Council has a policy of including appropriate cultural provision in its negotiations with developers for funding to address pressures on services and facilities caused by new development.

Formal and informal partnerships are an established hallmark of museums in the county, whether
operated by County, District or Town Councils, by independent trusts or by Oxford University.

Opportunities for young people to engage in cultural activity are provided by educational bodies (e.g. schools, colleges, the County Music Service, Oxfordshire Active Schools), and by a developing network of facility-based organisations (e.g. the Mill, Pegasus Theatre, Bicester Courtyard, Banbury Animation Station), and outreach activity (e.g. Oxfordshire Youth Arts Partnership, Oxfordshire Active Sports). There is a strong and shared sense of commitment to build upon this network.

Oxfordshire is rich in festivals, some internationally known (e.g. Cropredy, Henley Regatta), some extending county-wide (e.g. Artweeks, OOMF!, Thames Valley Youth Games), and numerous locally based events of various sizes and ambitiousness, including some relatively recent arrivals which have begun to have more than a local impact (e.g. Oxford Literature Festival, Thame Festival).

Performing arts venues vary in size and nature from the Oxford Apollo and Oxford Playhouse, to smaller scale theatres (such as at Chipping Norton, Witney and Thame). Flexible use is made of village halls and similar spaces both for professional touring companies and amateur performance. There is a comparable range of drama and dance companies, both professional and amateur.

Oxford has a particular variety of music venues, including many of the colleges and other University buildings.

Some fields of cultural activity have been identified as being relatively lacking in county-wide strategic overview and support for their development - in at least some of their aspects - notably sport, tourism, play and recreation.

Each District Council is responsible for a range of sports facilities and development activity. A sports development network and Active Sports partnership help to promote opportunities in the community. Sport in schools currently benefits from an Active Schools programme, which is unfunded beyond March 2002. The county now has its first accredited sports colleges at Wantage and Thame. Some informal sports opportunities are provided by the Oxfordshire Active Youth Partnership and by the County Council’s Lifelong Learning Service. The lack of a long term county-wide sports strategy limits opportunities for benefiting from national funding initiatives. There is clearly a need for such a strategy, involving local authorities, schools, the voluntary sector, individual sports governing bodies and Sport England.

Tourism is promoted vigorously in some parts of the county but without much coordination. Oxford is of course a major attraction for international visitors, whose numbers and concentration in certain parts of the city and at certain times of the year bring problems as well as benefits. The rest of the county seems to get little advantage from this phenomenon. The recent adverse impact of foot and mouth restrictions on access to the countryside has resulted in a particular sense of the need to promote the county as a whole in a planned and sustained fashion. Given the nature of Oxfordshire, it is inevitable that “cultural tourism” will play a key role in such a strategy, including promotion not only of the landscape and historic built environment but also of country market towns, the work of local artists and craftspeople, and other local produce. Some of the county’s religious buildings (e.g. Christ Church Cathedral, Dorchester Abbey) are already significant destinations with development plans; the potential for local churches to attract visitors is also recognised.

Support for the development of play and recreational activities, for all ages, depends mainly on the efforts of Parish Councils and a relatively small number of voluntary organisations, operating on limited resources.
5. Strategic themes and objectives

In order to achieve the benefits of cultural activity (section 2) in ways most suited to Oxfordshire’s particular circumstances (sections 3 and 4), nine strategic themes have been identified. Under each are listed “high level” objectives, which will be the outcomes from a detailed five-year action plan.

The draft version of the Local Cultural Strategy which was circulated as part of the consultation process included an outline action plan. It was clear from the responses received that, whilst there was something approaching consensus about the broad strategy, more work is required to identify the resources, time scales and partnerships needed to achieve the strategic objectives. That work is continuing and will lead to an action plan by March 2002.

**Strategic theme 1: contribute to the well-being of people in Oxfordshire by helping them enjoy a rich, healthy and creative cultural life**

- access to sports opportunities and facilities for all
- increase in public art, including a "percentage for art" in new development
- attainment of national public library standards by 2004
- promotion of walking and cycling in the countryside for recreation
- a five-year development and resource plan for play and recreation

**Strategic theme 2: support individuals in their lifelong development through participation in a wide range of learning experiences**

- a "cultural entitlement" for all Oxfordshire schoolchildren (guaranteed introductions to a range of cultural facilities)
- access to the People’s Network (fast public internet) in public libraries and other community locations
- Learning Centres in at least four heritage facilities
- schools supporting learning communities, providing a focus for local community education, social and cultural activity
- creative links between science, technology and the arts
- promotion of a lifelong reading habit
- maintenance of traditional countryside skills through training of volunteers

**Strategic theme 3: celebrate and develop local cultural identities and activities**

- a festival culture in Oxfordshire which celebrates local creativity
- improved village cultural and recreational facilities
- a development and resource plan to promote local cultural activity

**Strategic theme 4: ensure a sustainable future for Oxfordshire’s culture**

- sustainable access to the countryside
• investment in cultural education and training of young people
• a capital development plan for the county’s existing cultural buildings and facilities, and possible new ones

**Strategic theme 5: take positive action to overcome exclusion from cultural activity**
• better access to cultural activity through improved rural transport, outreach and development of local facilities
• reduced barriers to participation in cultural activity through targeted initiatives

**Strategic theme 6: foster pride in and respect for all cultures**
• promotion of multiculturalism in all cultural services
• development of existing and new international cultural partnerships

**Strategic theme 7: work collaboratively to develop the cultural activities of the county**
• Oxford European Capital of Culture 2008
• existing successful partnerships maintained and new ones developed in all cultural sectors
• coordinated delivery and review of Local Cultural Strategies

**Strategic theme 8: provide choices and access to information about cultural opportunities**
- a county-wide Broadband network, with public access in all communities
- easy access to information about cultural organisations and activities
- cooperative marketing and audience development initiatives
- regular public consultation on cultural activity

**Strategic theme 9: recognise the economic benefit for the county from cultural activity**
• opportunities for young people to acquire skills and employment in cultural industries
• a shared strategic plan for sustainable tourism
CULTURAL SERVICES COMMITTEE - 1 OCTOBER 2001
AGENDA ITEM CS10

DETAILED PROJECT APPRAISAL

NAME OF SCHEME: REDEVELOPMENT OF KIDLINGTON LIBRARY INCLUDING PROVISION OF AREA HIGHWAYS OFFICE AND ADULT TRAINING CENTRE

COMMITTEE(S): Cultural Services, Environmental, Social Services

BASIS OF ESTIMATE: Detailed Design START YEAR: 2001/02

1. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The project includes the demolition of the existing Library and the construction of a new combined Library, Northern Area Highways Office and Social Services Adult Training Centre. The Highways Office will combine the existing offices at Witney and Bicester. The Adult Training Centre will replace the facilities at Blenheim Road.

2. JUSTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The existing library in Kidlington is too small for its catchment population. Its floor area of 154m² falls well short of a target 430m² based on the county standard of 23m² per thousand population. The lack of space means there is inadequate open shelf capacity for books and insufficient public space for reader development facilities for both adults and children. It would also be difficult to house the internet terminals required as part of the People’s Network programme within the existing building.

The Northern Area Engineer's staff are accommodated in a main office at Bicester and a sub-office at Witney. Both depots are poorly located in residential areas. Isis Accord uses them in only a limited way for the Combined Maintenance Contract and this use could be ended giving surplus land at both sites. The Witney depot will need to be vacated as it is allocated for redevelopment in accordance with the West Oxfordshire Local Plan. The proposed West End Link Road is expected to pass through the depot. Combining the two offices on a single site will have benefits in terms of improved communications, operational efficiency and reduced revenue costs.

Social Services’ New Directions Strategy aims to improve the provision of access to local community resources for clients with learning disabilities. The Blenheim Centre forms a core facility for two satellites, one in Bicester and the other in Oxford City Centre. There has been an ongoing search for a new core facility closer to the centre of Kidlington, but it has been impossible to find a suitable site. The provision of the facility alongside the library is considered to be an exciting opportunity to assist in integrating clients into the community.

3. OTHER OPTIONS

The other option for provision of the three new facilities would be to demolish the existing library and build a new larger one in its place without incorporation of the new highways offices and a
social services centre, which would be built individually on separate sites. It is estimated that the combined capital cost of this approach would be at least £300k higher than the joint scheme. No other suitable site was found for the highways office after a prolonged search. (This process was described in outline project appraisal H156/1 approved by the Environmental Committee in December 2000.)

4. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

A resource appraisal submitted to the Cultural Services Committee in December 2000 estimated the total cost of the scheme at £1.3 million including professional fees, and capital receipts totalling £1.21 million. Following detailed design work the cost has risen to £1.61 million. The balance will be funded from anticipated capital receipts which have not yet been taken into account in the financing available to the capital programme.

5. **STAFF IMPLICATIONS**

The provision of a quality modern working environment will be very good for staff morale. The highways administrative staff at the small Witney office can be left isolated and under pressure at times (particularly when phones are busy during bad weather) and will benefit from the support available in a new, larger office. There may be some relocation payments due to highways staff which will be absorbed within departmental budgets, and some expected efficiency savings from elimination of duplication in administration.

6. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

The disposal of land at the two highways sites will allow for development more appropriate to their surroundings.

The design of the new building has been developed in consultation with the Council's planning officers. This has produced a high quality design which when built will enhance the overall appearance of Kidlington High Street.

New Council buildings are constructed to high environmental standards: this should produce a 30% reduction in energy consumption (from the level of the existing buildings) and assist in meeting corporate targets for reduced CO2 emissions. Working conditions for staff will also be greatly improved.

RICHARD MUNRO DAVID YOUNG
Director of Cultural Services  Director of Environmental Services

MARY ROBERTSON CHRIS GRAY
Director of Social Services  County Treasurer

Contact Officer:  Marcus Tunaley, Tel Oxford 5890

September 2001
Introduction

1. Cultural Services Medium Term Plan (April 2001) identifies social inclusion as one of eleven key cross-cutting objectives for the department. The objective, to promote social inclusion through outreach and audience development, aims to ensure that Cultural Services contribute to the quality of life of all citizens of Oxfordshire. Social inclusion is integral to the Local Cultural Strategy for Oxfordshire. This report proposes a social inclusion policy for Cultural Services and reports on the Department's specific service objectives and plans.

2. Although much effective social inclusion work has been carried out in Cultural Services over many years, much of it has been piecemeal and dependent on the interests and activities of individual members of staff. In order to coordinate and plan social inclusion work more effectively across the department a Social Inclusion Policy (Annex 1) has been drafted. The draft policy follows guidance from the Department for Culture Media and Sport, Libraries, Museums, Galleries and Archives for All: co-operating across the sectors to tackle social exclusion (January 2001). The draft policy was prepared through a consultative process with all sections of the department and has been agreed at a forum of the department's managers. Social inclusion is seen as integral to all activities within Cultural Services and a responsibility for all staff. All sections are reviewing their activities in terms of both their positive contribution (access to knowledge, communication) and overcoming negative factors (physical access, cultural barriers).

3. The Cultural Services Medium Term Plan lists a number of service objectives for social inclusion. These have been achieved as follows:

Library Services

(a) Implement the People’s Network in Oxfordshire:
All static libraries now have access to the Internet and it is intended to install many more terminals and link all libraries to an Oxfordshire Community Network by April 2003.

(b) Increase the borrowing of books
Measures such as a return anywhere policy have been introduced and it is planned to increase entitlement from 5 to 10 books per reader; opening hours are being increased from October 2001; stock purchasing policies are being examined as part of the Best Value Review.

(c) Improve the physical access to libraries and mobiles
All premises have been audited and the recommendations from that work should be implemented in the majority of the static libraries by 2004 in compliance with DDA; the exceptions are libraries such as Headington, housed in a listed building, where adaptations are not possible. Full access to all mobile libraries will also be achieved by 2004 as the fleet is updated.
(d) **Improve opening hours to meet local need**
Opening hours of all static libraries were the subject of public consultation this year or last year. Changes in line with the results of the consultation are currently being implemented.

(e) **Reduce charges for Internet access**
Charges were reduced to 50% of the initial charge in April 2001 and will be removed entirely in April 2002 subject to approval by the Council.

(f) **Develop libraries as Local Learning Centres**
Central Library, Abingdon, Thame and Didcot are being evaluated as officially designated UfI (University for Industry) learndirect centres, in association with the Lifelong Learning branch of the Education Department.

(g) **Review price concessions for categories of users/potential users as part of the Best Value review**
This is being addressed as part of the current Best Value review.

**Heritage Services**

(h) **Complete Access to Oxfordshire project**
The project continues successfully working with 15 museums countywide. It has concentrated on encouraging family use of museums. Additional external funding of £20,000 has recently been awarded from the Government's Museums and Galleries Life Long Learning initiative to allow an extension of the project working with older people on reminiscence.

(i) **Deliver museums outreach programme targeted at (eg) geographical areas, age groups, ethnic minority communities**
A virtual exhibition 'Culture and Minority Communities' has been published on the County Council's web site (funded by the European Commission)
A project with teenagers from Witney has taken place over the Summer holidays aiming to promote a positive interest in local heritage.
Curators have supported the Blackbird Leys oral history project and contributed to exhibitions planned for Black History Month (October 2001)
Asian women from Oxford are making a number of traditional costumes for a fashion show to be held at the Oxfordshire Museum; the costumes will be added to the museum textile collections.

(j) **Propose concessionary charges to promote participation in heritage activities**
The Medium Term Financial Forecast identifies a budget need of £15,000 to allow the reduction of charges for heritage services – particularly the charge of £30 per hour for conservation and technical support which is prohibitive for community groups.

(k) **Promote use of new Oxfordshire Record Office by low-use groups (eg ethnic minority communities)**
The Open Days at the Record Office have been outstanding successes attracting large numbers of people both from the locality and further afield. Evening bookings to visit the building have also exceeded expectations. Archivists are working with a number of excluded groups to encourage their use of the Record Office. The Record Office leaflet is to be translated into a number of minority group languages.

(l) **Use libraries to promote interest in local history**
The local studies sections of the principal branch libraries, supported by the Centre
for Oxfordshire Studies, provide access to the most commonly used local history sources in each locality. Small museum exhibitions in a number of libraries around the county continue to attract significant interest.

Arts development

(m) Promote attendance at and participation in arts by low-use groups (eg young people, those with mobility/transport difficulties, older people). Participation by young people – particularly those experiencing greatest exclusion - has been supported through grant aiding programmes of activity at the Mill and Pegasus, and core funding for the Oxfordshire Youth Arts Partnership. Oxford Playhouse has been assisted in its encouragement of attendance by older people from locations outside the city. Involvement of disabled people in the arts has been promoted through funding Ithaca Arts.

Play and recreation

(n) Promote take-up of play and recreation activities by young people, particularly those disadvantaged by disability, poverty or location. Key organisations funded are Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and the county’s Playing Fields and Play Associations, all of which have a strong emphasis in their work on overcoming rural isolation and other aspects of social inclusion. The Playbus prioritises its work in locations and with groups of users experiencing social exclusion. Oxrad offers disabled people opportunities to engage in recreational and sporting activities.

4. All services:

(a) Training: continues to be a priority with courses on social inclusion work generally (25 managers, 20 librarians, archivists and curators), cultural awareness (42), race and service delivery (20), deaf awareness (levels 1&2: 66; levels 3&4: 30) and visual awareness (11). Numbers in brackets refer to staff participating in training in the last twelve months.

(b) Information and communication technology: all services are aiming to use new technology to provide the widest possible access to the information, collections and resources held by the department. Some good progress has been made, but it has been limited by the lack of resources.

Financial and Staff Implications

5. There is a real commitment amongst all the staff to work towards social inclusion and much outreach activity takes place outside normal working hours in the evenings and at weekends. Cultural Services has a reputation for innovative and interesting projects and this has had an impact locally of what has been achieved. However most of the more significant projects rely on time-limited external funding. Few of these projects are sustainable in the longer term. This has a damaging impact on both those people with whom the department is trying to work, and on staff who see valuable projects come to an end when funding is no longer available. Many other projects rely on staff working unpaid overtime. Although every effort will be made to continue to attract external funding, core funding is needed and has been identified as a pressure in the department's Medium Term Financial Forecast.

Environmental Implications
6. There are none arising from this report

Implications for People Living In Poverty

7. Poverty or low income is just one of the criteria used to define social exclusion. This report and the proposed policy for social inclusion aim to develop Cultural Services’ future work in overcoming all forms of exclusion.

RECOMMENDATION

8. The Committee are RECOMMENDED to:

(a) approve the social inclusion policy for Cultural Services (Annex 1); and

(b) note the long-term need for core funding to support programmes of inclusive work.

RICHARD MUNRO
Director of Cultural Services

Background Papers: Libraries, Museums, Galleries and Archives for All: co-operating across the sectors to tackle social exclusion, DCMS, January 2001.

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24 September 2001
CULTURAL SERVICES COMMITTEE – 1 OCTOBER 2001
AGENDA ITEM CS12

SOCIAL INCLUSION

ANNEX 1
Oxfordshire County Council
Cultural Services

Social Inclusion Policy

Cultural Services works to achieve the County Council’s objective to promote the cultural life of the county.

All people in Oxfordshire are entitled to enjoy a choice of high quality cultural opportunities which encourage creativity, learning for life, healthy lifestyles and participation, and which celebrate cultural diversity.

Cultural Services promotes access to choice by caring for the county’s cultural resources, by providing information, by offering services directly and in partnership, and by leading the county’s cultural development.

Cultural Services aims to be socially inclusive, effective, accessible and appropriate to the needs of everyone in the county.

1. Cultural Services is committed to reflecting the diversity of the county’s community in its workforce, stock, collections and its services.
2. Social inclusion is an integral part of the role of all staff.
3. All departmental policies, including charges, will reflect the needs of social inclusion.
4. Cultural Services aims to achieve the widest possible access by identifying and removing social, cultural, physical and intellectual barriers.
5. Cultural Services will engage with all sections of the community to understand and meet their needs better.
6. Cultural Services partners in social inclusion work will be encouraged to accept this Social Inclusion Policy.

Methodology

Cultural Services adopt the DCMS (Department for Culture Media and Sport) recommended methodology for developing a strategic approach to social inclusion work by following the six point plan:

1. Identify the people who are socially excluded and their distribution. Engage them and establish their needs.
2. Assess and review current practice.
3. Develop strategic objectives and prioritise resources.
4. Develop the services, and train the staff to provide them.
5. Implement the services and publicise them.
6. Evaluate success, review and improve.

Action Plan

1. Actively investigate ways of attracting and supporting a more diverse workforce.
2. Induction process to include social inclusion awareness and recognition of the social inclusion needs of staff.
3. Core training programme to be established for all staff.
4. Consult staff on implementation of the policy.
5. Provide a central resource of information and examples of good practice.
6. Promote a mentoring and support system for staff.
7. All departmental policies and initiatives must be rigorously assessed against the social inclusion policy.
8. All reviews of charges should be carried out with reference to this Social Inclusion policy and opportunities for free access and discounts should be explored.
9. Produce checklist for peer reviews of access to all existing premises and services.
10. Each service to identify barriers to social, cultural, physical & intellectual access, including analysis of existing information, and produce action plan for improvement, including any budget needs.
11. Contact key workers and community representatives to establish the needs and views of excluded groups.
12. Ensure that department's Consultation Group addresses the needs of socially excluded groups.

Definitions

I. Social exclusion is the result of a number of factors which combine to prevent individuals from benefiting from the opportunities which most of us take for granted. These factors include low income, poor health, inadequate housing, lack of education and training, difficulties reaching services and no involvement in decisions which affect their future.

II. Social exclusion is a short hand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.

In the past, governments have had policies which have tried to deal with each of these problems individually, but there has been little success at tackling the complicated links between them, or preventing them from arising in the first place.

Ref: Social Exclusion Unit, 2000

Social exclusion may result from association or lack of association with groups and places in society. These can include: families and friends; neighbours and neighbourhood; the workplace; age; gender; culture; religion; language; accent; class; appearance; sexuality; lifestyle and (dis)ability. In addition, educational attainment, employment status, economic status and the degree of stratification between groups in a particular community can contribute to social exclusion. Individuals may feel that they are excluded because they are a member of a group that they perceive to be excluded from society.
Nationally accepted examples of socially excluded groups include:

- housebound people
- children and young people
- disabled people
- elderly people
- racial & ethnic minorities
- unemployed people
- prisoners & ex-offenders and their families
- lesbian, gay and transsexual people
- refugees
- asylum seekers
- people in mobile homes
- travellers
- low paid unqualified workers and their families
- people living in rural isolation
- homeless people
- people with mental health needs
- people with English as a second language

* this list is not exhaustive

Martyn Brown
County Museums & Heritage Officer
August 2001
CULTURAL SERVICES COMMITTEE - 1 OCTOBER 2001
AGENDA ITEM CS13

MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
Report by the Director of Cultural Services

Introduction

1. The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, Part IV, places a new duty on all local authorities with Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) to prepare and publish a management plan.

2. AONBs often cross county boundaries and Government guidance urges local authorities to utilise joint working mechanisms in plan preparation. However, it has recently become clear that it is necessary for all constituent local authorities in each joint arrangement to formally agree to such an approach and request the appropriate joint body to carry out this work on their behalf. This report briefly sets out the context of this issue and seeks the approval required.

3. The Chilterns Shadow Conservation Board, of which the County Council is a constituent member, has issued a draft Management Plan for consultation. This is the first of the plans for the three AONBs partly within Oxfordshire to be affected by the new CROW Act duty. This report outlines the key issues in the plan (Annex 1) and explains the arrangements in place to provide a consultation response.

Duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act

4. There are three large and complex AONBs that fall partly within Oxfordshire: The Cotswolds, The Chilterns and The North Wessex Downs. For each, section 89(2b) of the CROW Act 2000 places a statutory duty on the County Council to prepare and publish a management plan that 'formulates the policies of the local authority for the management of the AONB and the carrying out of their functions in relation to it'.

5. The DETR Circular 04/2001 on the CROW Act includes the following additional points on AONB management plans:

(a) A management plan must be in place for each AONB by 31 March 2004 and local authorities are advised to utilise joint working mechanisms in plan preparation.

(b) The Government intends the statutorily required management plans to raise the profile of AONB management issues and to demonstrate the commitment of local authorities and other stakeholders to AONB management.

(c) Published plans must be reviewed at intervals of no more that 5 years.

(d) The Countryside Agency will issue detailed guidance on the content of plans in 2001.
6. Clearly, where joint arrangements exist for AONB management, it would not be effective for each authority to try to produce its own plan for its own portion of an AONB. AONB units set up to support joint management arrangements are in the best place to co-ordinate the drafting of such plans, and will receive Countryside Agency support for doing so.

7. Of the three AONBs in Oxfordshire there are well established joint arrangements for two, The Cotswolds AONB Partnership and The Chilterns AONB Shadow Conservation Board. New arrangements for the North Wessex Downs were approved by the Committee at its meeting on 30 May 2001 and the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners had its inaugural meeting on 31 July 2001. Both the Cotswolds and Chilterns AONBs have AONB units with professional staff able to take forward the production of management plans and the North Wessex Downs Council of Partners is giving high priority to appointing an AONB Director to begin this work.

8. The County Council cannot delegate the responsibility for preparing management plans for the AONBs to the three joint partnerships. However, it can formally request that they undertake this work on its behalf, preparing a draft plan for consultation and a final plan for approval. This is the most effective way of meeting the statutory obligation under the CROW Act.

The Chilterns AONB Management Plan Consultation Draft

9. The current management plan for the Chilterns AONB was produced in 1994. Much has happened since then and many of the objectives have been met or overtaken by changing policies and priorities. A fundamental review of the old plan has been undertaken by the Shadow Chilterns Conservation Board on behalf of the local authorities of the Chilterns. A draft new plan has now been published for consultation.

10. The new plan will meet the statutory obligation referred to in the first half of this report. It will provide a framework for co-ordinating and directing management activity towards the conservation and enhancement of this nationally important landscape and the promotion of acceptable social and economic development. A summary of the draft plan, taken from the consultation document, is provided at Annex 1.

11. The consultation period ends on 24 September 2001. At the time of writing this report a detailed consultation response is being drafted by officers from Cultural Services in liaison with colleagues in Environmental Services and The Chief Executive's Office. To meet the deadline a copy of the draft response will be despatched to the Chilterns AONB office explaining that it has still to be considered by the Committee, as is normal practice in such circumstances. Copies of the draft response will be sent to Group Leaders, Cultural Services Spokespersons and Committee Members, and local Members. Following any amendment and approval a confirmed response will be submitted. The Chilterns AONB Officer has been made aware of this timing issue and is able to accommodate this arrangement.

12. The final version of the Management Plan will be adopted by the Chilterns Shadow Conservation Board by March 2002, before being brought back to the County Council for approval in line with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 statutory responsibility.

Financial and Staff Implications

13. There are no financial or staffing implications arising directly from this report.
Environmental Implications

14. AONBs are nationally important landscapes of equal status to the National Parks. The development and implementation of appropriate Management Plans, produced in co-operation with the other constituent local authorities, will assist in ensuring a clear framework for action from a wide range of authorities, bodies and organisations.

Implications for People Living In Poverty

15. There are no implications for people living in poverty arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. The Committee are RECOMMENDED to:

(a) agree that The Cotswolds AONB Partnership, The Chilterns AONB Shadow Conservation Board and the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners be asked to carry out the preparation of management plans, in line with Countryside Agency detailed guidance, for their respective areas;

(b) approve the consultation response to the Draft Chilterns AONB Management Plan.

RICHARD MUNRO
Director of Cultural Services

DETR Circular 04/2001
The Chilterns AONB Management Plan Consultation Draft

Contact Officer: Keith Wheal, Countryside Services Manager. Tel: 01865 810202

24 September 2001
MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

ANNEX 1

The Chilterns AONB Management Plan Consultation Draft

Format of the draft Management Plan

The new Plan sets out, in the Introduction, a Vision for the Future of the Chiltern Hills. It then describes what needs to be done to move towards the achievement of this Vision. The need for integrated thinking and cross-sectoral action is emphasised. For presentational convenience, however, the Plan is arranged in a series of thematic chapters. In each chapter, broad thematic aims are defined; a series of management objectives set out and for each objective, a number of necessary strategic actions. For each of these actions, one or more of the partner agencies or bodies is identified to take the lead in securing implementation. This Plan is a framework for action over the next five years. It is not in itself a costed work programme. A three-year work programme will be published to complement the Management Plan. This work programme will shape and bring together the relevant parts of the partner bodies' own work programmes, complementing them with Chilterns-wide initiatives and projects. It will be rolled forward each year.

The Framework for Action

The conservation and enhancement of natural beauty is the cornerstone of the Plan and this embraces not only the outstanding scenic qualities of the landscape, but also its wildlife and cultural heritage. The Plan recognises that the Chilterns is a living landscape, continuing to be shaped by human activity and providing a home for 100,000 people. Accordingly, the core of the Plan is arranged in two parts: Chapters 4-8 deal with the physical fabric and Chapters 9-13 with life and work in the Chilterns. The main thrust of the framework is summarised briefly as follows:

**Landscape**

Conservation of the distinctive character and aesthetic appeal of the landscape will be helped by a clearer understanding of what makes the area so special. The characteristic elements of chalk scenery (the open chalk downland in particular); the well-wooded character of the plateau; the elements of ancient countryside which give the landscape such a sense of permanence and history; landscape diversity and local distinctiveness; and the unspoilt, rural character of the countryside, are identified as the most important attributes which should be conserved and strengthened. The emphasis of the Plan is therefore on reinforcing and re-establishing these characteristics across the AONB, while increasing public awareness and appreciation of the landscape.

**Nature Conservation**

The wildlife heritage of the AONB is an integral part of its natural beauty and contributes greatly to its 'sense of place'. The AONB contains a rich mosaic of habitats, including numerous sites formally designated for their importance at the national or local level, but also those of the wider countryside. The range of key habitats and management issues is discussed. The Plan promotes strategic management of the nature conservation resource on both protected sites and the wider countryside and proposes a range of actions in support of local, regional and national Biodiversity Action Plan targets for key Chilterns
habitats and species. Other important proposals are for improving the collection, collation, sharing and dissemination of information on the wildlife resource and for establishing a monitoring programme for key sites and species in the Chilterns. Identifying and canvassing for resources for nature conservation management will be a priority.

The Historic Environment

The Plan’s strategy for the conservation of the historic environment of the Chilterns is similarly to support the protection of the most important individual features and the broad “cultural landscape” whilst developing a better understanding of the extent and condition of the historic resource. There are proposed new initiatives to characterise historic landscapes across the AONB, identifying locally distinctive historic landscape patterns and features, and to assess risks, opportunities and limits to acceptable change involved in enhanced access to historic sites. The importance of increasing appreciation and understanding of the historic environment amongst local communities and visitors, and the benefits this could bring, is stressed.

The Built Environment

The towns and villages of the Chilterns have, through history, been important in shaping the character of this nationally important landscape. The scale and nature of development over the last one hundred years has threatened or damaged the distinctive character of many Chilterns villages and of the wider landscape. It is acknowledged that development must be allowed to continue, to meet social and economic needs, but this development must be managed carefully. The Plan seeks to complement the statutory planning process by identifying positive ways in which new development can contribute to the improvement of the built environment. It puts forward proposals for maintaining and improving local distinctiveness through implementing Chilterns design guidance, managing isolated developments in the wider countryside and ameliorating the impact of intrusive development.

The Water Environment

The chalk streams of the Chilterns are examples of a globally rare habitat and among the most attractive parts of the AONB. Increases in the demand for water have meant increased groundwater abstraction leading to reduced and irregular flows in many Chilterns rivers. Rectifying these problems has been a major focus for action in recent years and the Management Plan puts forward measures in support of the Environment Agency’s successful programmes of work. Proposals are also made for integrated habitat conservation and landscape enhancement programmes centred on the chalk streams. Close working will be maintained in implementing this Plan and the two Local Environment Agency Plans for Chilterns river catchments.

People, Jobs and Services

This chapter has been introduced into the Review in recognition of the increased weight the Conservation Board accords to social and economic considerations. The Chilterns is, generally, a very prosperous area. This does not make it immune from many of the social and economic problems which beset rural communities throughout the country: indeed, it can make matters more difficult. Access to affordable housing is particularly difficult for many local people. The continuing decline of local services, the limited nature of rural public transport and the need to diversify away from traditional local sources of employment are all issues which are being addressed by a variety of agencies in the Chilterns. The Plan helps to identify ways in which the work of conserving the AONB and raising understanding and enjoyment of the Chilterns can potentially benefit local communities and the economy.

Agriculture and Forestry

The Plan recognises the importance of farming in maintaining the rural character of the countryside and the
urgent need to help farmers to stay on the land and manage it in an environmentally sensitive way. Existing incentives and sources of practical help and advice are promoted, but it is acknowledged that these may not be sufficient to maintain farm incomes in the foreseeable future. The Plan therefore promotes a sympathetic attitude towards the development of alternative enterprises and uses of farm buildings, subject to over-riding environmental considerations. It also promotes the local branding and marketing of produce and calls for the development of a Chilterns-wide agri-environment scheme to support the sensitive and economically viable management, restoration and public enjoyment the countryside. The Chilterns woodlands are a determining feature in the landscape of the AONB and principles for woodland management are well-established. The Management Plan does not replace the guidance contained within the revised Woodland Policy statement (1992), but reaffirms and proposes to extend in the light of current circumstances, promoting sound practice to ensure the long-term viability of the woodland resource. Continued emphasis is given to bringing all woodland areas into sustainable management and for researching and promoting markets for woodland products. Woods designated for their wildlife importance must be managed so as to meet targets in biodiversity and habitat action plans. The Plan calls for the planting of new woodlands in selected areas to strengthen existing landscape character.

**Minerals and Waste Disposal**

Chalk quarries on the plateau top and set in the scarp, have had a dramatic impact on the landscape of the AONB. Kensworth in Bedfordshire is the only large quarry still active and new major mineral extraction schemes seem unlikely. The issue is how best to restore the landscape. The Plan discusses the various methods that have used, including landfill. It pledges support to the County Councils in their efforts to secure appropriate restoration measures and encourages, where appropriate, the management of redundant quarries for nature conservation and/or recreational purposes. It also encourages the continuation of the local small-scale brick making industry, to ensure a continued supply of high quality traditional building materials.

**Recreation and Access**

The Chiltern Hills are one of the largest and most popular rural areas for informal recreation in England. The Plan seeks the provision of high quality recreation and access opportunities for visitors and local people alike that are compatible with the over-riding aim of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area. This will require enhanced awareness, understanding and concern for the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Chilterns among those using the area for recreation, and the Plan provides for this. The Plan proposes to develop and maintain a strategic understanding of recreation activity, management needs and priorities across the AONB; to promote environmentally sustainable management of recreation sites; to foster improved links between town and country and to maintain and enhance the Rights of Way network. The intention is to develop and promote a "Countryside for All" strategy and to promote non-car-borne access to minimise the deleterious impact of recreation or tourism activity within the wider countryside.

**Travel and Transport**

Major transport routes pass through and very close to the Chilterns, and the area has a complex internal pattern of movement and transport needs to manage. Movement of people, goods and information is the lifeblood of the area, but must be managed with great sensitivity. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a new duty on those involved in developing and managing transport infrastructure and networks in AONBs to have regard to the natural beauty of such areas: the Plan helps to establish how the relevant authorities can comply with the Act. The adverse impacts of vehicular movement - noise, pollution, danger and disruption - on landscape quality and rural character are becoming ever more serious. The Plan proposes a range of policy initiatives, to be undertaken in partnership with the appropriate authorities to promote options which reduce the need to travel by car; promote the use of public transport, cycling and walking; develop area-based approaches to traffic management; restrict the use of rural roads by inappropriate traffic; develop networks of Quiet Lanes; lower speed limits in selected areas and where necessary apply physical traffic calming techniques.
1. At the Sub-Committee meeting of 27 February 2001, the County Editor reported that application would be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund in the autumn, for five-year funding of additional staff to work on south-eastern parts of the county. During the summer the HLF recommended instead submission of a smaller application for two years' funding involving between six and twelve counties, in order to test new publication, educational, and dissemination strategies. Only after that is the HLF likely to contemplate accepting a 5-year bid covering the whole country.

2. Plans to begin work on the south-east of Oxfordshire have accordingly had to be postponed. In view of its involvement with the Pilot Project and its successful fundraising, Oxfordshire has, however, been invited to participate in the revised bid, and a scheme of work focusing on Burford has been drawn up (Annex 1). Burford is a place which the VCH plans to cover soon in any case (for inclusion in Volume XV), and the aim is still to produce a valuable piece of research which will contribute to the eventual full publication, while satisfying specific HLF and Central VCH requirements. Chief among these requirements are:

(a) production of an interim soft-cover publication at the end of two years (to be published also on the VCH website at englandpast.net);

(b) involvement in the project of the local community, including local schools.

3. The proposed two-year project would run from 2002 to 2004. In order to secure HLF funding it is necessary to state the Council's intentions regarding funding of the VCH during that period. The current three-year County Council Medium Term Financial Plan (to March 2004) includes maintaining expenditure on VCH at existing levels.

**Future Direction of the VCH**

4. The VCH as a whole is currently in the midst of a major review of its priorities, functions, and national strategies, under the guidance of the VCH's new General Editor Professor Anthony Fletcher, and in consultation with the HLF and other interested parties. It is clearly essential that the County Council, as the principal funding body in Oxfordshire, should be consulted over any proposed changes of policy or shifts of emphasis, and that its views should be taken fully into account

5. Rethinking of the national strategy by the new General Editor and his colleagues is currently focusing on the following areas:

(a) a new and integrated publication strategy, combining publication of traditional VCH volumes with electronic publication, and with increased production of cheap soft-cover publications;
(b) substantial broadening of the VCH's audience, including liaison with schools

(c) formulation of a national educational policy;

(d) development of the VCH as a 'community resource', encouraging active participation of local communities in the VCH's work;

(e) internal academic review, to consider research methods, content, and presentation;

6. While these aims are clearly laudable and in line with County Council objectives for lifelong learning, social inclusion and community participation, it must be recognized that involvement in such initiatives may slow down production of traditional VCH volumes, which thus far has been the chief priority both of the VCH and of the County Council, and which in Oxfordshire remains the long-term goal.

7. Members are invited to express their views to the General Editor, both orally at the Sub-committee meeting, and subsequently in writing as the VCH's review of future policy proceeds. The Oxfordshire VCH Trust is being similarly consulted, and the views of funding bodies across the country will be taken into account in formulating future policy.

General Progress and Heritage Lottery Fund Pilot Project

8. The one-year HLF-funded Pilot Project has now been successfully completed. As reported at the last meeting, in Oxfordshire this involved completion of the history of Kelmscott, together with substantial sections on land ownership, manor houses, and Church history for Broadwell, Holwell, and Filkins. All those texts have now been mounted on the new VCH website at englandpast.net, together with the first stages of an online User’s Guide and Glossary and material relating to Darlington (in County Durham). Useful feedback from the Oxfordshire User Group, which met three times as part of the Pilot, has been relayed to the HLF.

9. Following the departure of the HLF-funded researcher before Christmas, work was commissioned from Mr Alan Crossley (former VCH County Editor) on Curbridge, and from Dr Margaret Yates on the Witney cloth and blanket industry. This has been successfully completed, Dr Yates’s work shedding important new light on the history of Witney’s medieval cloth industry.

10. As reported in February the diversion of the County Editor to Pilot-Project work, following staff illnesses and departures, has inevitably delayed his work on Witney, which will not now be completed by the end of the year. The County Editor is now recommencing his work on Witney, and hopes to complete it (and thus Volume XIV) during 2002 or very soon after. The rest of Volume XIV, containing the histories of twelve places including Carterton and Witney, is otherwise virtually complete, and work is underway on Broadwell, Filkins, Holwell, and Kencot, for inclusion in Volume XV.

11. An Oxfordshire VCH website at oxfordshirepast.net, to include draft texts as they are written, should be online by the end of the year. Material for it is in draft, and unpublished VCH histories of Alvescot, Black Bourton, Carterton, and Clanfield will be mounted as soon as possible, to be followed by texts on neighbouring places.

Oxfordshire VCH Trust and Fundraising

12. Two staff members in Oxfordshire are funded entirely by the Oxfordshire VCH Trust. Since the last
meeting the Trust has continued its fundraising, in an attempt to attain its original target of £300,000 over five years. The total raised by 1 May was £281,485, and in June it was accordingly possible to extend the contract of the second researcher for two years, to summer 2004. A successful fundraising event was held at Kelmscott in June, at which the new online VCH was demonstrated.

13. Future fundraising strategy will depend on the outcome of the HLF bid, and on resulting work plans for the period to 2004.

14. **Financial, Staff and Environmental Implications and Implications for People Living in Poverty**

There are none arising from this report.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

15. The Sub-Committee are RECOMMENDED to:

(a) receive the County Editor’s Report;

(b) ADVISE the Cultural Services Committee to:

   (1) approve the submission of the revised application to the Heritage Lottery Fund;

   (2) request the Director of Cultural Services to confirm to HLF the County Council’s spending plans for the VCH until 2004;

   (3) request the County Editor to prepare, following consultation with the political Group Spokespersons of the Cultural Services Committee, a written response expressing members’ views on the future direction of VCH.

RICHARD MUNRO
Director of Cultural Services

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Simon Townley, County Editor VCH (01865) 277239

24 September 2001
OBJECTIVES:

1. substantial preliminary research into Burford in preparation for the eventual full VCH account, resulting in production of some draft text, and an interim publication focusing on Burford’s buildings (see below)

2. cooperation with Burford residents and local historians in researching buildings and tenements

3. cooperation with the Oxfordshire Buildings Record and local residents in investigating and surveying buildings

4. cooperation with Oxfordshire County Council Department of Cultural Services (especially the Museum Service, Oxfordshire Record Office, and the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies) in producing an anthology of related digitised source material, available on the www and/or CD-Rom, as an educational resource

5. liaison (especially over [4]) with LEA History advisors and local schools

INTERIM SOFT-COVER PUBLICATION:

focusing on buildings and tenements, incorporating (a) documentary research; (b) detailed building investigation; (c) survey and recording work by volunteers and the Oxfordshire Buildings Record. The publication’s precise scope and content will be determined by the amount of ground covered over the two years, both by VCH staff and by ‘amateur’ volunteers; it is likely, however, to provide a fuller, more heavily illustrated account of Burford’s buildings and tenements than the eventual VCH volume, and the two should therefore complement each other. The study should also provide valuable material on the town’s social and economic history and on its topographical development, though these themes will be more fully explored in the eventual full VCH account. It should be possible to include sections on the church and on the Priory, concentrating on the buildings but giving some historical background as well.

The proposed publication would have academic value and credibility, but should also appeal to local residents, local schools, and tourists, as well as to a non-local audience interested in Oxfordshire towns, buildings, and local history generally.

FORMAT: to be determined, though similar studies of Ludlow and Wandsworth, published in soft-cover A4 booklets of 70-90 pages, provide a useful model. It is anticipated that the booklet will be also published online on the VCH website at englandpast.net, with additional illustrations, and with links to the related digitized material produced as part of the project and to other relevant sites.
CULTURAL SERVICES COMMITTEE - 1 OCTOBER 2001
AGENDA ITEM CS16

CULTURAL SERVICES URGENCY SUB-COMMITTEE – 5 JULY 2001
MINUTES of the meeting commencing at 12 noon and finishing at 12.20 pm

Present:

Voting Members:

Councillors Margaret Ferriman, Jim Moley and Rodney Rose.

Officers:

Whole of meeting: G. Malcolm (Chief Executive's Office); M. Brown and K. Wheal (Cultural Services).

The Sub-Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, copies of which agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes, and in relation thereto determined as follows:-

1/01 ELECTION TO CHAIR

RESOLVED: that Councillor Moley (Liberal Democrat) be elected to chair the meeting.

2/01 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 2 August 2000 were approved and signed.

3/01 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute 7/00: Contract for Fitting Out the Oxfordshire Museum

Mr Brown informed the Sub-Committee that Pilot Projects Ltd had completed fitting out the galleries at the Oxfordshire Museum (Phase II) and arrangements were under way for opening on 21 September 2001.

4/01 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES
(Agenda Item CSU7)

The Sub-Committee considered appointments to Outside Bodies in Categories A and B of the Council's Standing Orders and Manual.

Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Shadow Conservation Board

RESOLVED: to appoint Councillor George Sanders to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Shadow Conservation Board.
**Cotswolds Area Outstanding Natural Beauty - Joint Advisory Committee**

**RESOLVED:** to appoint Councillor Rose (member) and Councillor Robert Evans (deputy) to the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Joint Advisory Committee.

**North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

**RESOLVED:** to appoint Councillor Moley to the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

**County Nature Conservation Forum**

**RESOLVED:** to endorse the Environmental Committee's decision to appoint Councillor Biddy Hudson to the County Nature Conservation Forum.

**Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils**

**RESOLVED:** to appoint Councillor Ferriman to the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils.

**Oxfordshire Rural Community Council**

**RESOLVED:** to appoint Councillor Mrs C. Fulljames to the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council.

**South Eastern Museums Service**

**RESOLVED:** to appoint Councillor Ferriman to the South Eastern Museums Service.

**Southern Arts General Meeting/Southern Arts Company**

**RESOLVED:** to appoint Councillors Ferriman, Moley and Rose to the Southern Arts General Meeting/Southern Arts Company.

**Southern Tourist Board-Executive Committee**

**RESOLVED:** to appoint Councillors Norman Matthews and Moley to the Southern Tourist Board – Executive Committee.

**Great Western Community Forest Steering Committee**

**RESOLVED:** to appoint Councillor Mrs Anda Fitzgerald O’Connor to the Great Western Community Forest Steering Committee.

**Oxfordshire Play Association**
RESOLVED: to appoint Councillor Sylvia Tompkins, subject to consent, else Councillor Ferriman, Councillor Mrs Anda Fitzgerald-O'Connor and Councillor Lesley Legge to the Oxfordshire Play Association.

Wilts & Berks Canal Partnership

RESOLVED: to appoint Councillor Zoe Patrick to the Wilts & Berks Canal Partnership.

A decision on this item was required as a matter of urgency and before the next scheduled meeting of the Cultural Services Committee in order that the County Council could be represented formally on the above Outside Bodies.

in the Chair

Date of signing 2001