



Committee: COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Date: THURSDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2010

Venue: MORECAMBE TOWN HALL

Time: 5.00 P.M.

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Minutes

Minutes of meeting held on 24 June 2010 (previously circulated).

3. Items of Urgent Business Authorised by the Chairman

4. Declarations of Interest

5. Local Referendums to Veto Council Tax Rises Consultation (Pages 1 - 24)

Report of the Head of Financial Services.

6. Member Development Strategy Review (Pages 25 - 45)

Report of the Head of Democratic Services.

7. Fire Service Consultation on Performance Report and Action Plan (Pages 46 - 60)

Report of the Corporate Director (Community Services).

8. Member Development Charter Level 2 (Pages 61 - 63)

Report of the Head of Democratic Services.

9. Special Council Meeting 2010 (Pages 64 - 66)

Report of the Head of Democratic Services.

10. Appointments to Committees and Changes to Membership

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

(i) Membership

Councillors Karen Leytham (Chairman), Susan Bray (Vice-Chairman), Roger Dennison, Melanie Forrest, John Gilbert, John Harrison and Geoff Knight.

(ii) Substitute Membership

Councillors June Ashworth (Substitute), Abbott Bryning (Substitute), Chris Coates (Substitute), Jean Dent (Substitute), Joyce Pritchard (Substitute) and Malcolm Thomas (Substitute)

(iii) Queries regarding this Agenda

Please contact Debbie Chambers, Democratic Services - 01524 582057 - dchambers@lancaster.gov.uk.

(iv) Changes to Membership, substitutions or apologies

Please contact Members' Secretary, telephone 582170, or alternatively email memberservices@lancaster.gov.uk.

MARK CULLINAN,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
TOWN HALL,
DALTON SQUARE,
LANCASTER LA1 1PJ

Published on 24 August 2010.

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**Local Referendums for Vetoing Council Tax Increases –
Consultation Response
02 September 2010****Report of Head of Financial Services****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To inform the Committee of a Government consultation on proposals to replace the current system of council tax capping with arrangements to introduce local referendums on council tax increases, and to seek approval for the form of the Council's response.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Committee considers the three options for responding to the Consultation, as set out in the report, and authorises the Head of Financial Services to submit a response to the Government along the lines of the Committee's preferred option.

1 Introduction / Proposal Details

- 1.1 The Government recently issued a consultation document on proposals to replace current council tax capping arrangements, with measures that would require an authority to undertake a local referendum if it wished to pursue a council tax increase above certain 'principles' set out by Government. The full consultation paper is set out at **Appendix A**.
- 1.2 The paper has been considered by relevant Officers of the Council and their views are summarised in the draft response set out at **Appendix B**.
- 1.3 Whilst the consultation is referred to as a technical issue, the setting of council tax levels is clearly an important matter for Members and the proposals, if implemented, could have major implications for future spending plans and associated consultation, as well as for the relationships between different tiers of government. For these reasons, it is considered appropriate that the Council's Business Committee considers the draft response prior to it being submitted.
- 1.4 The closing date for the consultation is 10 September 2010.

2 Details of Consultation

- 2.1 No other consultation has taken place, but the proposals have been noted in developing the Council's proposed budget community engagement plan for 2011/12. Clearly the outcome of the Government consultation will inform future budget consultation exercises.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

4.1 Option 1

That the Committee approves the attached as the Council's formal response. This would be on the basis that the Committee accepts all the points put forward and has no further views to be expressed.

Option 2

That the Committee makes amendments to the attached response. Different views may be taken on several of the issues raised, and this option provides for that scenario.

Option 3

That the Committee notes the attached document as an Officer technical response to the consultation, but that the Committee declines to submit a Member response at this time. In view of the subject matter, it is possible that the Council would prefer the response to be deemed purely technical and go forward as an Officer response only.

There are few real risks at this time, given that full consultation is taking place and in any event a technical response will be submitted.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 Whilst it is recognised that the community should have a direct say in the Council's spending plans, from an Officer perspective it is felt that the proposals would be too costly and administratively burdensome. It is felt that local elections, supported by annual budget consultation exercises, are the most appropriate and cost-effective ways of providing communities with the opportunity to express their views on the Council's spending and tax raising decisions.
- 3.2 If in future, however, Government wishes still to retain some form of system that places limitations on budget and council tax increases, it would be helpful in financial planning terms to ensure that early, clear information is gained on Government's views regarding what is acceptable. The current capping legislation does not provide for this.
- 3.3 In view of the issues raised it is felt appropriate to respond, in any of the three ways set out in the options above.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

Any proposals ultimately adopted by Government will be the subject of a full impact assessment, but from the information available so far, there are no obvious implications arising.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Potential implications are outlined in the draft response. Overall, there is a concern that the costs of holding any referendum will outweigh any benefits and prove to be an absolute disincentive, especially for any smaller scale proposals to increase council tax levels slightly above the Government-set principles.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The section 151 Officer has prepared this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising at this stage.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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Telephone: 01524 582117

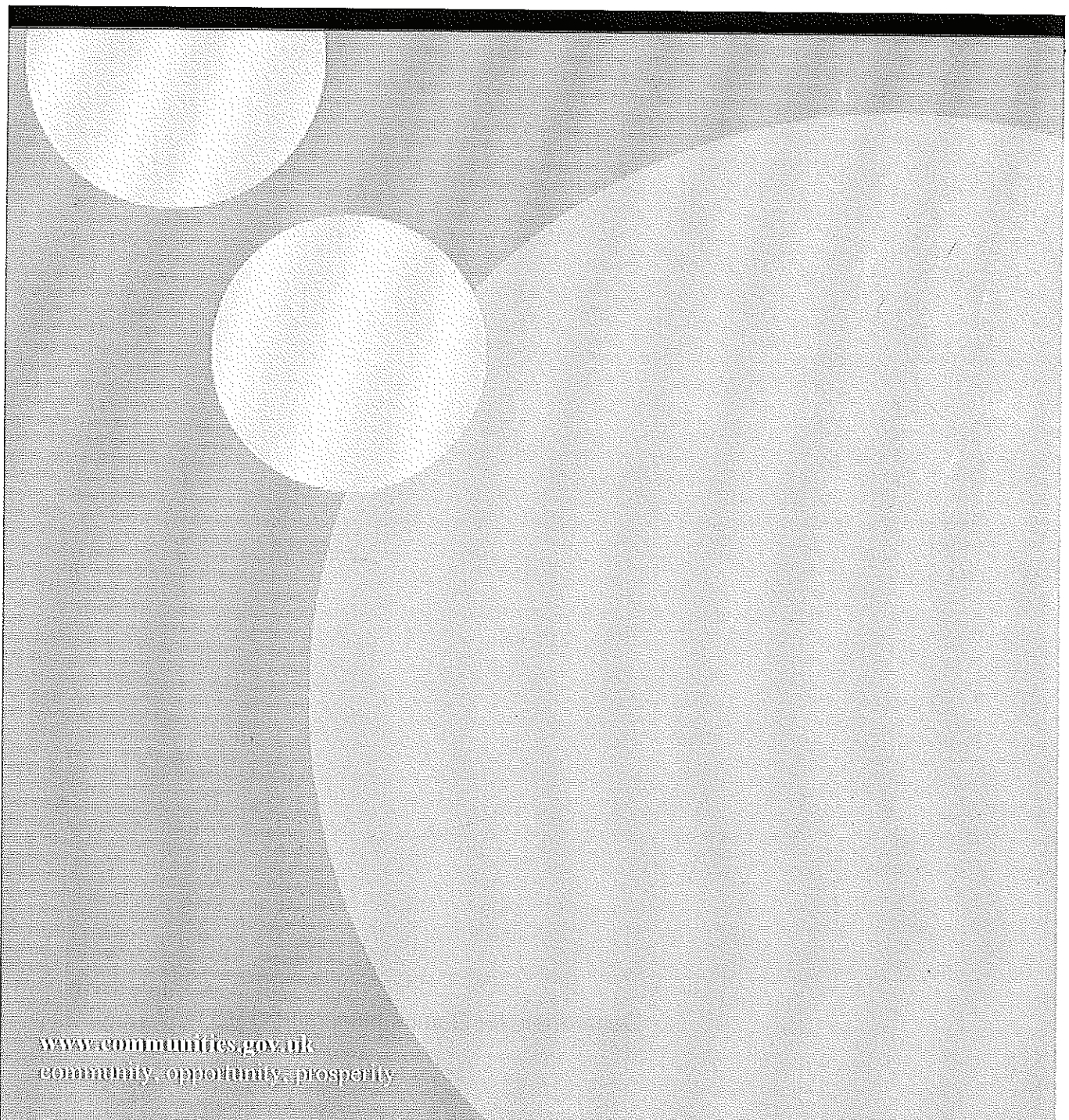
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Ref:



Local referendums to veto excessive council tax
increases

Consultation





Local referendums to veto excessive council tax
increases

Consultation

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About this consultation

Scope of consultation

Topic of consultation	A proposal to allow local referendums to veto excessive council tax increases as an alternative to capping by central government.
Scope of consultation	This consultation seeks views on the practicality and technical feasibility of the scheme, particularly from local authority practitioners.
Geographical scope	England. The relevant legislation covers both England and Wales but the administration of council tax in Wales is a matter for the Welsh Assembly Government.
Impact assessment	Relevant provisions will be included in the Localism Bill, which will be subject to a full impact assessment.

Basic information

To	Local authorities (including police authorities, fire and rescue authorities and local precepting authorities). Representative organisations (including the LGA, London Councils, IRRV, Cipfa, NALC) and others with an interest in local taxation issues.
Body responsible for the consultation	Department for Communities and Local Government
Duration	Six weeks (30 July to 10 September). This is in line with the arrangements agreed under the <i>Framework for Partnership with the Local Government Association</i> .
Enquiries	Jasna Begum Local Government Finance Directorate Department for Communities and Local Government Zone 5/D2 Eland House Bressenden Place London SW1E 5DU Telephone: 030 3444 1304 Email: counciltax.consultations@communities.gsi.gov.uk
How to respond	To either of the addresses above.
Additional ways to become involved	Not applicable.
After the consultation	The Government will take into account the responses to this consultation in its preparation of draft clauses for the forthcoming Localism Bill, to be laid before Parliament in the first Parliamentary session.
Compliance with the code of practice on consultation	This consultation complies with the Code.

Background

Getting to this stage	The Coalition <i>Programme for Government</i> , published on 20 May 2010, stated that the Government would "give residents the power to veto high council tax increases."
Previous engagement	Not applicable

This consultation document and consultation process have been planned to adhere to the Code of Practice on Consultation issued by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and is in line with the seven consultation criteria, which are:

1. Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.
2. Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.
3. Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.
4. Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.
5. Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.
6. Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.
7. Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent and, where relevant, who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the department.

The Department for Communities and Local Government will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties. Individual responses will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.

Are you satisfied that this consultation has followed these criteria? If not or you have any other observations about how we can improve the process please contact:

CLG Consultation Co-ordinator
Zone 6/H10
Eland House
London SW1E 5 DU

or by e-mail to: consultationcoordinator@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Consultation process

The Department for Communities and Local Government invites comments on the proposals set out in this document. This is a technical consultation seeking views from experts on the practicalities of implementing our proposals. Given this, the consultation will run for a shorter timeframe of six weeks – until **10 September 2010**.

When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. Responses to this consultation must be received by **10 September 2010**.

You can email your response to: counciltax.consultations@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Or you can respond in writing to:

Jasna Begum
Local Government Finance Directorate
Department for Communities and Local Government
Zone 5/D2 Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

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Introduction

1. Band D council tax has more than doubled since 1997-98 and high increases in the past have led to various measures designed to constrain local discretion, including council tax capping. Often these measures appeared to be based on the presumption that Government ministers and their civil servants knew better than local communities what was in their best interest. The Coalition Government is determined to reverse this presumption and to rebalance the role of the central state and local communities. This will see the Government playing a much smaller role, with powers and responsibilities being devolved to the most appropriate level, wherever possible empowering local people so that they have a direct say in important decisions that affect their lives. In relation to council tax, this means abolishing capping and giving local people a stronger role in determining annual increases. The Government intends to introduce legislation to achieve this at the earliest opportunity.

Current system

Council tax

2. Council tax is a tax on the capital value of domestic properties. It is the main source of locally-raised income for many local authorities and is therefore an important source of funding. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 ('the 1992 Act') provides for certain local authorities to levy and collect council tax:

- billing authorities (the Common Council of the City of London, London boroughs, metropolitan districts, non-metropolitan districts, and unitary authorities) are required to send out a bill each year to council taxpayers and to enforce collection
- major precepting authorities (the Greater London Authority, non-unitary county councils, police authorities, and fire and rescue authorities) and local precepting authorities (the sub-treasurer of the Inner Temple, the under-treasurer of the Middle Temple, town, parish or community councils, the chairman of a parish meeting, and charter trustees) issue precepts to billing authorities for the collection of council tax on their behalf

3. Properties are allocated into one of eight valuation bands, from Band A to Band H, and this information is used to calculate the council tax base for an area by converting the number of actual properties into an equivalent number of Band D properties¹. Billing authorities and major precepting authorities calculate their own 'basic amount of council tax'² and use this to determine the liability of individual properties. Local precepting authorities, by contrast, simply inform the billing authority of their total budget requirement for the year and leave it to the billing authority to calculate the relevant council tax. The bill which is sent to the council taxpayer shows the amounts required by each billing and precepting authority in the area and the percentage increase in each since the previous year.

¹ Band A properties are liable to pay two thirds of the 'standard' Band D amount. Band H properties are liable to pay double the Band D amount. The remaining bands lie in between these two points. The council tax base is a weighted average based on these proportions.

² An authority's basic amount of council tax is the amount set by the authority under section 33(1) of the 1992 Act if the authority is a billing authority, or section 44(1) of that Act if the authority is a major precepting authority. It is the amount that would be payable in respect of a Band D dwelling if all local precepts and special expenses were payable in respect of all chargeable dwellings in the authority's area.

Capping

4. Successive governments have reserved the right to limit increases in domestic taxation where these have been judged to be excessive. Under current capping legislation (see Chapter 4A of Part 1 of the 1992 Act, which was inserted by the Local Government Act 1999), 36 authorities have had capping action taken against them since the 1999 powers were first used in 2004-05.

5. In order to take capping action, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government must first determine whether the amount calculated by an authority as its budget requirement is excessive, in accordance with a set of principles. If the Secretary of State sets principles, the legislation requires him to set a principle based on authorities' budget requirements. The Secretary of State may set any other principle. In practice there has always been at least one other principle based on council tax increases.

6. If a local authority sets an excessive budget requirement, the Secretary of State may either:

- designate it in relation to the year in question, which would require the authority to re-bill council taxpayers or
- nominate the authority and either:
 - (a) designate it in advance in respect of the following financial year, which effectively means that Government sets the following year's budget requirement for the authority or
 - (b) set a notional budget requirement for the year in question, against which increases in subsequent years can be measured in deciding whether or not these are excessive

7. A criticism made about capping has been the policy of central government to set capping principles after local authorities have set their budget requirements. This has meant that authorities could not be certain whether or not the council tax increases they were setting would be capped.

Parish precepts

8. There has been a growing awareness in recent years of the council tax increases set by local precepting authorities, and of the very high precept increases set by some town and parish councils in particular. Increases in council tax revenue from town and parish councils have outstripped those for England in each of the last five years. The average town and parish precept set in some billing authorities (around £100) is larger than that of the smallest shire district of Breckland (£68). It is right that local precepting authorities should have the resources they need to support neighbourhoods and local communities. However it is also right that council taxpayers are protected from excessive increases.

Introduction of local referendums

Legislation

9. The Government will introduce legislation at the earliest opportunity requiring any billing or precepting authority which sets an excessive council tax increase to hold a referendum. The key elements of the scheme will be as follows:

- (a) The Secretary of State will have the power each year to determine a principle based on a comparison of an authority's level of council tax with the level in the previous year. The legislation will enable the Secretary of State to set additional principles; it will also allow him to determine different sets of principles for different categories of local authorities.
- (b) These principles will be published in a report for approval by the House of Commons. If the principles are approved, any authority planning an excessive council tax increase will be required to prepare a 'shadow budget' based on the maximum non-excessive council tax increase allowed by the principles.³ They will also be required to inform the Secretary of State by notice.
- (c) Any billing authority, local precepting authority or major precepting authority which exceeds the principles will be required to hold a referendum of all registered local electors. Local authorities will be free to hold referendums at any point after the House of Commons has approved any principles set. Referendums must take place no later than the first Thursday in May, to ensure that the process is not subject to delay and that local authorities have certainty over their budgets as quickly as possible in the new financial year.⁴
- (d) The organisation and administration of referendums will fall to billing authorities and will be modelled on the existing provisions for mayoral referendums⁵ where relevant and appropriate. The legislation will allow billing authorities to recoup costs where referendums are held on behalf of a precepting authority. It will also require that only one referendum is held in circumstances where an excessive increase is set by more than one authority in the same geographical area.
- (e) The legislation will require the authority proposing the excessive increase ('the relevant authority') to prepare supporting factual material setting out the proposed council tax increase and budget, the comparative non-excessive council tax rise and shadow budget, and the estimated cost of holding the referendum. At the same time that bills are sent to council taxpayers, the billing authority will send this information, together with polling cards, to every registered local elector. Local councillors would of course be free to make the case for any excessive increase, but the relevant authority would be prohibited from campaigning on the issue.

³ Consistent with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the chief financial officer (for billing authorities and major precepting authorities) would be required to report on the robustness of the estimates in the shadow budget requirement and the adequacy of the reserves provided for in the calculations.

⁴ In every year the ordinary day of election of councillors is the same day for all local government areas in England and Wales. It is the first Thursday in May or such other day as may be fixed by the Secretary of State by order (see section 37(1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983).

⁵ The Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (England) Regulations 2007.

- (f) If the proposed rise in council tax were rejected, the relevant authority would immediately adopt the shadow budget and transfers from the Collection Fund would be reduced accordingly. It would also be required to inform the Secretary of State by notice. The billing authority would be able to issue new bills immediately, offer refunds at the end of the year or allow credits against liability in the following year. However, consistent with existing legislation⁶, billing authorities will be required to refund (and re-bill) any local resident who requests this.

10. This scheme will be applicable to each billing authority, local precepting authority and major precepting authority (including police authorities, fire and rescue authorities and the Greater London Authority). It would also apply to directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners when they come into being. Whilst there would only be one referendum in each geographical area, there would be a separate vote for each element of the overall council tax bill where an authority had set an excessive increase. Voters in these areas would be given a number of voting forms (or a number of separate questions on the same form).

Policy

11. It is not envisaged that the legislation will require the Secretary of State to publish principles at a specific point each year. However, as a matter of policy, the Government intends to propose principles at around the same time as publication of the provisional Local Government Finance Report and to have both the Local Government Finance Report and the report containing the principles debated by the House of Commons at the same time. This will allow local authorities to complete their budget setting and billing processes in the normal way, and to prepare shadow budgets in good time.

12. There are occasions when authorities may set council tax increases that are very large when expressed in percentage terms, even though the absolute cash increase is very small. To prevent such authorities from being required to hold a referendum – and to protect the large majority of smaller parish councils and other local precepting authorities – the Government intends, again as a matter of policy, to include a standard *de minimis* principle which would provide a ‘double lock’ mechanism. This would exclude authorities where **either** (a) the increase in the basic amount of council tax is below a defined amount **or** (b) the total income generated (ie. the council tax requirement) is below a fixed level.

13. The Government sees advantages in giving the Secretary of State discretion to determine different sets of principles for different categories of authorities (such as police authorities and fire and rescue authorities) – and to determine how those categories are defined. This would allow him to take into account circumstances affecting only particular categories of authorities – for example, the potential impact of Formula Grant distribution on different categories of authorities, or pressures on a service or services provided by a particular category of authority.

⁶ See, for example, section 31(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Process

14. The Government believes it is right to require billing authorities to organise referendums given their existing responsibility for administering local government elections. The Government also believes that the referendum franchise should extend to all local electors, not just those liable for council tax, since all benefit in some way from the provision of local services. It is aware that this proposal would exclude council taxpayers who, for whatever reason, do not have a right to vote in local elections.

15. The Government intends to model the provisions for council tax referendums on the existing provisions for mayoral referendums where relevant and appropriate. In particular, this would:

- place certain restrictions on the steps that may be taken, and the expenditure that may be incurred, by a local authority in connection with a referendum
- require the referendum to take place within a specified time period
- set out the structure of the question to be asked

16. There will be no minimum requirement for voter turnout and a simple majority of those voting will be sufficient to determine the outcome of the referendum. If a majority vote in favour of an excessive increase, the relevant authority would continue to receive transfers from the Collection Fund based on its original budget. If a majority vote against an excessive increase, the relevant authority would immediately adopt the shadow budget and transfers from the Collection Fund would be reduced accordingly. In either case, the authority would be required to inform the Secretary of State of the outcome of the referendum and explain to council taxpayers the process for repayment of money where appropriate.

17. A proposed timetable for announcing the council tax principle, local authorities budgeting and billing process, and holding referendums, is attached at Annex A.

Abolition of capping

18. The introduction of council tax referendums will provide a direct link between local residents and the spending decisions of the local authorities to whom they pay their council tax. The Government therefore intends to repeal Chapter 4A of the 1992 Act in its entirety. However, until provisions for council tax referendums are in place, the Government reserves the option to use existing capping powers to protect council taxpayers from excessive increases where necessary.

Alternative notional amount reports

19. To ensure capping decisions are taken as fairly as possible, alternative notional amounts (ANA) reports are produced for authorities where there have been significant changes in function, finance or structure. These are technical adjustments to ensure that year-on-year comparisons of local authorities' budget requirements are made on a like-for-like basis.

20. With the abolition of capping, the Government sees no further need for these reports. Under the proposals set out above, local authorities would be able to explain the impact of any functional, finance or structural changes in the material they produce to accompany the referendum – and local people would then be able to vote on the basis of that information.

21. Where the structural change involves the creation of an entirely new authority – for example if two or more existing authorities are merged, or where a new parish is established – it would be more difficult to judge how the council tax principle might be applied without an ANA report in the year in which the change occurred. In such circumstances, for local precepting authorities, the Government expects that the wider process which led to these sorts of structural changes would ensure they had democratic legitimacy and local support. For billing and major precepting authorities, the Government envisages putting in place bespoke arrangements where necessary to protect council taxpayers from sudden changes in their liability.

Calculation of budget requirements

22. The requirement for authorities to calculate a budget requirement, as set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (and amended by the Local Government Act 1999), was introduced specifically for the purposes of limiting council tax increases through capping. The question therefore arises as to whether, with the abolition of capping, there is any need to retain those sections of the 1992 Act which require authorities to calculate a budget requirement – and whether the repeal of the budget requirement aspects of the legislation would lift a reporting burden on authorities (bearing in mind that local authorities will still be required to calculate a council tax requirement). The Government therefore invites authorities' views on whether or not the requirement in current legislation to calculate a budget requirement should remain in place, or whether this should be repealed alongside capping.

Questions for consultation

23. We welcome your views on the mechanics of the process outlined above – including whether there are any practical difficulties with the system proposed or any unforeseen implications. In particular we would welcome responses to the following questions:

- Question 1.** Do you agree that local precepting authorities, such as town and parish councils, should be included within the provisions for council tax referendums? If so,
- are there details about the budget setting process for local precepting authorities which need to be taken into account?
 - will the 'double lock' mechanism work to protect the majority of town and parish councils?
- Question 2.** Are the Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (England) Regulations 2007 the right model for organising and administering council tax referendums?
- Question 3.** Are there any practical difficulties in requiring council tax referendums to take place no later than the first Thursday of May?
- Question 4.** What are the advantages and disadvantages of holding a council tax referendum on the same day as another local referendum, or jointly with a local and/or general election? Current regulations allow for higher expenses per elector in a referendum than in a local election – would this raise any concerns if both votes are held on the same day?
- Question 5.** What provision, if any, should be made for properties where the council tax payer is not a local elector?
- Question 6.** Does the timetable at Annex A provide sufficient stability and certainty for local authorities when planning their budgets? Does it provide sufficient time to organise and administer referendums?
- Question 7.** Is it right to give local authorities the discretion to issue new bills immediately, offer refunds at the end of the year or allow credits against liability in the following year?
- Question 8.** How should billing authorities treat bank interest earned on excessive increases that have been rejected in a referendum?
- Question 9.** What practical difficulties, if any, would there be for a billing authority seeking to recoup the cost of a referendum held on behalf of one or more precepting authorities?
- Question 10.** Are there any technical difficulties with the removal of alternative notional amount reports?
- Question 11.** With the abolition of capping, is there any reason why authorities should be required to calculate a budget requirement each year?

Annex A – Local referendums: illustrative timetable

Late November/ early December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisional Local Government Finance Report published for consultation. • Provisional council tax referendum principles announced.
December to March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precepting and billing authorities draw up budgets and proposed council tax levels in the usual way. • Authorities planning to set excessive council tax increases also draw up shadow budgets and prepare material informing residents about the forthcoming referendum (including how they will be able to vote), and billing authority calculates cost of referendum.
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisional Local Government Finance settlement consultation ends. Ministerial decisions on Formula Grant and council tax referendum principles announced.
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliament approves final Local Government Finance Settlement allocations and the report containing the council tax referendums principles. • 14 February – deadline for bodies that levy on local authorities to set their levy.
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 March – major precepting authorities set budgets, and shadow budgets where necessary. • 11 March - billing authorities set budgets and shadow budgets where necessary. • Billing authorities send out council tax bills and details of referendum and supporting material.
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referendums to be held by the first Thursday in May at the latest. • Billing authority to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inform relevant precepting authorities, council taxpayers and electors of result of referendums - send out details of new budget/refunds where necessary - charge relevant precepting authorities for cost of holding the referendum • If the rise in council tax is rejected, the relevant authority immediately adopts the shadow budget.
February/March of the following year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refunds paid to residents where necessary.



Local Authority Chief Executives,
Local Authority Chief Finance Officers, and
Other Consultees

30 July 2010

Dear Colleague,

**LOCAL REFERENDUMS TO VETO EXCESSIVE COUNCIL TAX INCREASES –
A CONSULTATION PAPER**

I am pleased to attach a consultation paper on proposals which would require local authorities in future to hold a referendum should they choose to set an excessive council tax increase .

The *Coalition Programme for Government*, published in May, stated that it would give residents in England "the power to veto excessive council tax increases". This is an important element of its plans to empower local people by giving them a direct say in important decisions that affect their lives. In relation to council tax, this means scrapping outdated capping powers and giving local people the final say on increases in their area. The Government intends to legislate for this in the forthcoming Localism Bill.

The attached consultation paper, which sets out these proposals in more detail, can also be downloaded from our website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/vetocounciltaxincreasesconsult>

This is a technical consultation, seeking views from experts on the practicalities of implementing council tax referendums, and will run for a period of six weeks. Responses are requested by **10 September 2010**, and should be sent to the council tax e-mail account (COUNCILTAX.CONULTATIONS@communities.gsi.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Harries".

**Richard Harries,
Deputy Director, Local Government Finance.**

**Draft Consultation Response on Proposals to introduce Local Referendums
for vetoing Council Tax Increases**

For Consideration by Council Business Committee 02 September 2010

General Comments:

The Council would welcome the abolition of capping; it considers that local elections, supported by annual budget consultation exercises, are the most appropriate and cost-effective ways of providing communities with the opportunity to express their views on the Council's spending and tax raising decisions.

The Council also appreciates the need for Government to have reserve powers regarding national spending plans, however. With this in mind, the existing powers for 'nominating' authorities (i.e. restricting spending/council taxes for the year subsequent to that in question) is considered an efficient way of regulation if the need arises, although it is appreciated that this effectively provides a year's delay in curbing spending.

Further to the above points though, the Council is concerned that the referendum plans put forward are too administratively burdensome and costly. It is felt that generally, local authorities would consider the costs associated with holding referendums and the risks attached to having a 'no' vote far outweigh any potential benefits, and therefore the opportunity for the electorate to have a direct say in spending plans would seldom, if ever, be used. The proposals may therefore act as a disincentive to considering specific spending initiatives, over and above other plans.

If this is an objective, however, then in terms of transparency and efficiency and notwithstanding the views on capping expressed above, the Council would simply rather that the Government retained its capping powers, but that it set out the capping criteria much earlier, e.g. at the same time as announcing the provisional settlement each year. This would make Government's intentions clearer and would give authorities better information with which to plan. The practice of not determining criteria until after councils have set their budgets and council taxes does not help with financial planning and does not present to the public a 'joined up' approach between central and local government. Future budget processes will be difficult enough, given public spending prospects.

Overall therefore, the Council is not supportive of the package of proposals put forward.

In particular Government would welcome responses to the following questions:

Question 1: *Do you agree that local precepting authorities, such as town and parish councils, should be included within the provisions for council tax referendums?*

The answer to this question is based on the premise that referendums would be held only for the electorate of the relevant authority, and in turn they would be charged for the costs of that referendum through their council tax.

If the referendum proposals are adopted, then it may make sense to make some provision to include local precepting authorities, given the scale of tax levels quoted in the consultation, but only to cover exceptional circumstances and only if the proposals are to act as a disincentive to considering increases in council tax. In local circumstances, however, it is considered that none of the area's parish or town councils would ever consider spending decisions big enough to warrant incurring the costs (and risks) of holding a referendum.

If so, - are there details about the budget setting process for local precepting authorities which need to be taken into account?

The arrangements would need to ensure that local precepting authorities have sufficient information on which to understand the costs and risks involved – this would need to be reflected in timescales.

- will the 'double lock' mechanism work to protect the majority of town and parish councils?

The measures could work, but this will depend upon what the de minimis levels are set at. In essence, they would need to be high enough to ensure that the referendum requirements would apply to local precepting authorities in only very very exceptional circumstances.

Question 2: *Are the Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (England) Regulations 2007 the right model for organising and administering council tax referendums?*

Yes, there would be nothing to be gained by having separate regulations.

Question 3: *Are there any practical difficulties in requiring council tax referendums to take place no later than the first Thursday of May?*

Practically, in organisational terms it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to go for a date earlier than the first Thursday in May (but it is also appreciated that final decision-making on council tax levels need to be completed as early in the year as possible).

Question 4: *What are the advantages and disadvantages of holding a council tax referendum on the same day as another local referendum, or jointly with a local and/or general election? Current regulations allow for higher expenses per elector in a referendum than in a local election – would this raise any concerns if both votes are held on the same day?*

Advantages of holding on the same day are considered to be:

- reduced costs (although the arrangements are still expected to be expensive, in excess of £100K potentially);
- increased turnout, potentially.

Disadvantages are considered to be:

- ensuring capacity within the authority to organise multiple elections/referendums;
- increasing the complexity of organising the combined arrangements and more importantly, of voting for the electors.

Overall the differential in expenses is not likely to be the greatest worry; having the capacity to organise multiple elections/referendums is of far greater concern.

Question 5: *What provision, if any, should be made for properties where the council tax payer is not a local elector?*

It is difficult to see how any provisions could be made reasonably within the electoral system.

Question 6: *Does the timetable at Annex A provide sufficient stability and certainty for local authorities when planning their budgets? Does it provide sufficient time to organise and administer referendums?*

The timetable needs more detail before any firm views or assurances could be given. Overall though it provides the minimum possible organisational period; it could certainly not be any tighter or shorter, and would benefit by starting earlier, giving more time to plan.

Question 7: *Is it right to give local authorities the discretion to issue new bills immediately, offer refunds at the end of the year or allow credits against liability in the following year?*

Yes, billing authorities would need discretion to determine such arrangements in the most cost-effective ways, taking account of local circumstances. In particular, the power to bill immediately would be essential to ensure sound cash flow, to maintain collection rates and to avoid significant arrears mounting and associated recovery action being needed.

Question 8: *How should billing authorities treat bank interest earned on excessive increases that have been rejected in a referendum?*

Any interest amounts should simply fall to the billing authority's general fund; it is considered that the amounts involved would not warrant any other (administratively burdensome) measures.

Question 9: *What practical difficulties, if any, would there be for a billing authority seeking to recoup the cost of a referendum held on behalf of one or more precepting authorities?*

Assuming that referendums were held on the same day as elections, clear arrangements would be needed to determine apportionment of costs, to avoid disputes. Generally speaking, if provision was made for billing authorities to deduct costs up front from precept payments there should be few practical difficulties, unless de minimis levels are set too low for any local precepting authorities affected (i.e. and the costs of holding referendums actually exceeds their precepts).

Question 10: *Are there any technical difficulties with the removal of alternative notional amount reports?*

Yes, potentially. Any major functional, finance or structural change would still need to be reflected in the council tax referendum principles announced by Government, and the production of alternative notional amounts (or their equivalent) would still be needed to support this. Without this provisions, there would be the danger that a referendum would be needed as a result of changes by central Government, rather than as a result of local spending proposals – with all the ensuing costs and administration, as well as the risks attached to there being a 'no' vote'.

Question 11: *With the abolition of capping, is there any reason why authorities should be required to calculate a budget requirement each year?*

Yes, the budget requirement is standard to all authorities and aids comparison, although the inclusion of parish precepts does cause confusion and alternative arrangements could be made to exclude these (e.g. simply account for them as payments out of the Collection Fund, as with other precepts). If the budget requirement is abolished, some other measure would be needed for comparison. Ideally, to help with the public's understanding of local authority finance, it would be useful to draw on a reporting level from within authorities' accounts, but there are no obvious alternatives, given recent accounting changes in line International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**Member Development Strategy Review
2 September 2010****Report of Head of Democratic Services****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To agree the revised Member Development Strategy.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATION

That Council Business Committee adopt the amended Member Development Strategy 2010/11.

Report

At its meeting on 24th June 2010 Council Business Committee reviewed the Member Development Strategy in light of the new Corporate Priorities which had been agreed at Council on 17th May 2010.

Following a detailed discussion on these and other aspects of the Strategy the Committee agreed:

- (1) That all Members be invited to attend Budget and Performance Panel meetings when LDLSP Thematic Group Chairmen would be speaking, to learn about the work of the Thematic Groups and how this related to the Council's priorities.
- (2) That a 'taster' session on Planning and Licensing be included in the Induction for 2011.
- (3) That the Committee recommend to Council that Community Cohesion training be made mandatory for Members every 4 years from 2011.
- (4) That the following 4 areas be agreed as Priorities for 2010/11 :
 - (i) Local Government Finance and Statutory Services
 - (ii) Community Engagement/Partnership Working and Community Leadership
 - (iii) Economic Development and Regeneration
 - (iv) Climate Change

- (5) That preparation for Induction 2011 and Level 2 of the North West Charter for Member Development be added as projects for the coming year.
- (6) That the Member Development Strategy be updated accordingly.

The Strategy has been amended to reflect these recommendations.

With regard to recommendation 3, a report was considered by full Council at its meeting on 21st July 2010.

Council resolved :

“That Community Cohesion training be mandatory for all newly elected Councillors as part of the induction process with effect from May 2011 and all Councillors be encouraged to renew this training every 4 years.”

Attached at Appendix A is the draft Member Development Strategy revised in accordance with Members’ decisions above.

Members are requested to adopt the amended Member Development Strategy or make further amendments as required.

**CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)**

None arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None arising directly from this report. There is a budget of £9,900 in 2010/11 for Member training and development and the priorities set out in the Strategy are used to determine appropriate allocation of that funding.

SECTION 151 OFFICER’S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer would highlight that in the past, finance related training needs have been identified but attendance at courses has often been low. This was reported at the last meeting.

The Council has a need to ensure that its Members have a sound understanding of key finance issues; this is covered in external audits and more explicitly, in developments on particular topics - recent treasury management changes being a good example.

Given previous training offered, the availability of on-line material and in view of the development of the 2011 induction, it is not intended to push specific training courses in the coming months, other than any sessions that may be provided alongside developing the 2011/12 budget. That said, the s151 Officer would welcome more specific consideration of the Council's approach to finance training for Members as part of developing the 2011 induction and future years' strategies.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Business Committee minutes
Member Development Strategy

Contact Officer: Jenny Kay
Telephone: 01524 582065
E-mail: jkay@lancaster.gov.uk
Ref:



LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

Member Development Strategy

20010/11



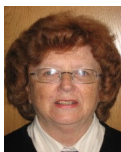
1. Commitment to Member development

The Council took the decision in 2002 to commit to its own internal Charter for training and development for elected Members and employees. Following that the Council then signed up to the North West Charter for elected Member Development.

To formalise this commitment, the Council included within the Terms of Reference of the Council Business Committee, responsibility for Member Development. As Members of this Committee, Councillors have the responsibility to champion Member Development and cascade information to their political groups. Members of the Council Business Committee are:



Councillor Karen Leytham (Chairman)



Councillor Susan Bray (Vice-Chairman)



Councillor Roger Dennison



Councillor Melanie Forrest



Councillor John Gilbert



Councillor John Harrison



Councillor Geoff Knight

2. Member Development Strategy

The first Member Development Strategy for Lancaster City Council was developed by Members and adopted by the full Council in February 2007. This set out the various ways of supporting Members in the Town Hall and their Wards as well as the Council's development priorities for the coming year. The Strategy included a commitment to undertake an annual review which is undertaken by Council Business Committee each year to ensure the Council provides the proper guidance and relevant support to all Members.

Each year information is gathered from the one to one interviews and annual reviews that have take place along with feedback from the variety of training events that take place. The Strategy is then reviewed by the Council Business Committee to reflect the information gathered over the previous 12 months alongside the issues that had emerged from the Corporate Priorities set by full Council for 2010/11.

The Corporate Plan sets out 4 new Corporate Priorities for 2010/11 :

- Economic Regeneration – Supporting our Economy
- Climate Change
- Statutory Services – Meeting our Responsibilities
- Partnership Working & Community Leadership

Within these 4 Priorities are 5 key objectives :

- Energy Coast, and Environmental Technology
- Heritage & Cultural Tourism for the District , including Creative Industries and Employment
- To tackle the challenges of Climate Change
- Meet the council's statutory requirements for service delivery
- To continue to work with our partners to deliver the targets in the Sustainable Community Strategy and to bring about other improvements and efficiencies in the way that services are delivered locally.

This, therefore is a revised edition of the Elected Member Training and Development Programme for 2010/11 agreed as a result of that review.



3. Learning and Development Priorities and Projects

As Champions for Member Development, the Council Business Committee have developed the Member Development Strategy and identified the following six key development priorities for the following year :

- ❖ Local Government Finance and Statutory Services
- ❖ Community Engagement/Partnership Working and Community Leadership
- ❖ Economic Development and Regeneration
- ❖ Climate Change
- ❖ Preparation for Induction 2011
- ❖ NWEO Charter Level 2 preparation

As this is the final year of the four year term, Member Development opportunities will reduce as the elections grow closer and the attention will focus on preparations for the 2011/12 Induction.

Council approved the inclusion of Member Briefings in the Council Calendar taking place on the first Thursday of every month excluding August. With these included in the annual calendar it raises the profile of the briefings and encourages more Councillors to attend. Council Business Committee felt that in this final year, the focus should be on these briefings to provide information to Councillors.

With the focus on Partnership working all Members will be invited to attend Budget and Performance Panel meetings when the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership (LDLSP) Chairmen will be speaking to learn about the work of the LDLSP's Thematic Groups and how this relates to the Council's priorities.

The continued use of different approaches to learning and development will continue to be explored and promoted such as shadowing, on-line learning and mentoring when needed.

Projects

In addition to addressing priority needs by means of training and briefing sessions, it is recognised that action on two of the key priorities will be delivered by means of projects. This year the work will focus on two projects :

- Preparation for Induction 2011
- NWEO Charter Level 2 preparation

To maintain the Charter standards, authorities are reviewed three years after being awarded the Charter. Councils have to demonstrate that they are still committed to Member Development and are maintaining the same level of standards. This means that Lancaster City Council is due to be reviewed in summer 2011.

However there is the option for the Council to be assessed for level 2 of the Charter rather than the 3 year review at level 1. Many local authorities are now trying to achieve level 2 of the Charter rather than being reviewed at level 1.

The Corporate Plan 2010-13 sets out a key Corporate Indicator, CH11, for the Council to achieve level 2 of the Charter next year which would mean that the Council would skip the review of level 1.

4. Progress

Set out below are a number of achievements and successes which highlight the Council's commitment to Member Development.

- ❖ The Council was awarded the North West Employers Organisation's Charter for Member Development in November 2008.
- ❖ The Council was also awarded the prestigious Municipal Journal Award for Member Development.
- ❖ In 2009/10, 79 training and development sessions were offered to Members. This figure does not include the individual support that has been offered to Councillors such as one to one sessions on IT.
- ❖ Councillors now have the use communal Members' rooms both at Lancaster and Morecambe Town Hall. In these rooms they have the use of several computers, access to the Members Library and information on training and development opportunities.
- ❖ The use of innovative development methods has been explored. Councillors can take part in shadowing opportunities on request and 'taster' sessions continue to give Councillors an insight into the diverse communities within the district.
- ❖ All Councillors now use either a Council laptop or their own machine to receive information. Individual support is still offered to new Councillors for them to learn how to use their laptops.
- ❖ E-newsletters continue as a source of valuable information for Councillors.
- ❖ All Council Business Committee meetings are paperless.
- ❖ 80% Members have attended some type of training or development session over the last 12 months.
- ❖ A dedicated area on the intranet has been created for Members containing useful documents, links and ward information.
- ❖ A total of £9,900 is available in 2010/11 to support Member Development activity.
- ❖ Member Briefings are included in the Council Calendar and have been received well with 23 attending the first session.
- ❖ To date since the 2007 election, 49 Councillors have undertaken Equalities /Community Cohesion training which is an admirable 82 %.
- ❖ Council agreed in June 2010 to make Equalities/Community Cohesion training mandatory for all new Councillors.
- ❖ The Council has committed to achieving Level 2 of the Member Development Charter in its Corporate Plan 2010-13

Members' comments

"Very good, informative, fresh and interesting"

Cllr Sarah Fishwick

"Excellent learnt loads – well done"

Cllr Stuart Langhorn

Overview of Local Chinese Community and Culture

"It's given me an increased understanding of needs/difficulties of Chinese community"

Cllr Ian McCulloch

"Interesting, informative and thought provoking –it was all fascinating".

Cllr Val Histed

"Increased my awareness"

Cllr Ron Sands

"It makes us think about the people who we don't hear from and that we need to find them."

Cllr Joyce Taylor

Equalities/Community Cohesion

"Enjoyable and informative – gives me a better understanding and ability to work with different ethnic groups."

Cllr Peter Robinson

"Very good facilitator"

Cllr Jane Fletcher

"It will impact on how we view information and reports."

Cllr Keran Farrow

Licensing Regulatory training

"The information gained was very useful."

Cllr Roger Sherlock

"I felt the course was very informative"

Cllr Ken Brown

"An excellent refresher session"

Cllr Keith Sowden

5. One to One Interviews

All Members have been offered a one to one interview to assess their training and development needs. A Personal Development Plan is produced for each Councillor and the information from these is used not only to monitor the personal progress of the individual but to develop the priorities for inclusion in this Strategy and Training Programme.

A system has been set up to review each Member's Personal Development Plan after a period of 12 months.

These are done to suit the individual either by means of a further face to face interview, a telephone discussion or by email.

To date, 52 out of 60 Councillors (87%) have taken the opportunity to have a one to one interview and where these were done over 12 months ago their Personal Development Plans are under review.

6. Attendance at Seminars/Conferences

It has been identified that attendance at some Conferences and Seminars provides an opportunity for Members to further their personal development in terms of their knowledge and ability to perform particular roles. Control over the funding for this purpose has been transferred to the Head of Democratic Services in consultation with the Chairman of the Council Business Committee where the cost is in excess of £100 per Member and subject to the needs of the individual Member being identified in their Personal Development Plan.

Members wishing to attend such Conferences need therefore to send details to the Head of Democratic Services for approval to enable funding to be allocated.

Certain annual conferences have been highlighted for attendance on an annual basis, subject to the continued relevance and evaluation of the content of the conferences.

7. Member Development Budget

In terms of budget allocation for Member Development, the Strategy goes beyond 2010/11 when the current term of office ends so that budgets set for future years as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy can be programmed to deliver appropriate training and development each year as Members' experience and knowledge grows. For 2010/11 the budget is set as £9,900.

The Head of Democratic Services has been given delegated authority in consultation with the Chairman of the Council Business Committee to approve attendance on external training courses/Conferences/Seminars. When the event/course costs more than £100 the Member will be expected to provide a report on their return for evaluation purposes.

8. Statutory and Mandatory Training

It is acknowledged that there will on occasions be a need for training required to ensure Members understand legislative requirements on them both as individuals and as members of particular committees to be repeated and updated, particularly where new legislation is introduced. This will be included in the training programme by the Head of Democratic Services as the need arises.

9. Members Roles and Responsibilities and the Corporate Plan

The Council sets out its corporate goals and priorities for the coming year in its Corporate Plan which is approved by Council each year. Set out in Appendix A is a list of the relevant (Cabinet) Members' roles and responsibilities and detailed information about how they align to the corporate priorities.

10. Officer Support

All Members of the Council will receive support to enable them to be effective in their role as a Councillor. Members' Services can offer day to day support, and together with Democratic Support they are co-ordinating the Member Development process. The key officers to contact are:

Julie Rutledge
Assistant Ceremonial and Members' Officer
Tel: (01524) 582170
Email: jrutledge@lancaster.gov.uk

Jenny Kay
Democratic Support Officer
Tel: (01524) 582065
Email: jkay@lancaster.gov.uk



CABINET PORTFOLIOS 2010/2011

Councillor Stuart Langhorn	LDLSP Management Group Board	Relationships with other Councils Performance Management Finance/VFM Shared Services Property IS Communications Rural Affairs
Councillor June Ashworth	LDLSP Children and Young People	Children and Young People Cultural Services Tourism
Councillor Abbott Bryning	LDLSP Economy	Economic Development Regeneration Planning
Councillor Peter Robinson	LDLSP Education and Skills	Education and Skills Statutory Services Review
Councillor David Kerr	LDLSP Health and Wellbeing	Housing Environmental Health
Councillor Jon Barry	LDLSP Environment	Climate Change Clean and Green Markets Cycling Demonstration Town Project
Councillor Eileen Blamire	LDLSP Safety	Community Safety Legal and HR Governance
Councillor Jane Fletcher	Valuing People	Older people Equalities Skerton Project Third Sector Grants

Corporate Priority: Economic Regeneration - Supporting our economy	
Objective 1: Energy Coast, and Environmental Technology	
Key Targets:	
<p>NI152 – Working age people claiming out of work benefits. NI153 – Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods. NI170 – Previously developed land that has been vacant or derelict for more than 5 years NI171 – VAT registration rate (source data ONS) target subject to LAA 09/10 negotiations NI172 – VAT registered businesses showing growth (source ONS) not within LAA</p> <p>LOCAL - Tourism spend for last available year (NB. always 12 months lag) LOCAL - Number of individuals assisted with integrated support LOCAL - Number of businesses assisted through business support measures LOCAL - Number of business start ups as a result of local initiatives LOCAL - Number of new businesses as a result of local initiatives surviving 12 months LOCAL - Number of hectares of public realm created or improved LOCAL - Number of enquiries at Visitor Information Centres</p>	
Key Actions:	Action by:
	Lead Cab Mem
1.1 Implement with partner organisations a sustainable economic regeneration programme for the District based upon the LDLSP Economy Thematic Group Economy Action Plan and our own Tourism Strategy.	Councillor Bryning, apart from Tourism Councillor Ashworth
1.2 Complete Economic Investment Strategy by developing projects around each of the following 2 Vision Themes and apply for funding support for each. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge Economy ▪ Heysham to M6 Employment Corridor 	Councillor Bryning,
1.3 Deliver the council's actions in the LSP's Education, Skills, and Opportunities Thematic Group Action plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare Local Employment Skills Plan ▪ Develop Employer Engagement Action Plan ▪ Prepare Outreach and Engagement Action Plans for workless groups and individuals 	Councillor Robinson
1.4 To deliver the council's Energy Coast contribution to the Mid Lancs MAA	Councillor Bryning

Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial assessment of the viability of potential employment sites along the Heysham to M6 Employment Corridor – Councillor Bryning • Lancaster Science Park – Councillor Bryning • Middleton Resource Recovery Park – Councillor Bryning • Deliver a package of integrated support for workless individuals in the district’s most deprived wards – Councillor Robinson • Infrastructure Planning Commission engagement on National Grid upgrade – Councillor Bryning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Business Support rent grant scheme and work with partners to develop other business support initiatives – Councillor Bryning • Work with county council to develop a package of districtwide transport proposals that address traffic related air quality and climate change challenges – Councillor Bryning • Energy Coast related Projects – Councillor Bryning • District Wide Broadband project – Councillor Bryning • Establish effective Business Forums – Councillor Bryning • Centenary House (Co-op) feasibility study – Councillor Bryning • Morecambe Football Club – Councillor Ashworth
<p>Rationale: Economic Investment Strategy, Sustainable Community Strategy</p>

Objective 2: Heritage & Cultural Tourism for the District , including Creative Industries and Employment	
Key Targets:	
Key Actions:	Action by:
	Lead Cab Mem
2.1 Review Development Agreement with Canal Corridor partner	Councillor Bryning
2.2 Implement actions arising from the Cultural Heritage Investment Strategy	Councillor Ashworth
2.3 To deliver the council's heritage, cultural, and tourism contribution to the Mid Lancs MAA	Councillor Ashworth
2.4 Develop an Area action plan for Morecambe	Councillor Ashworth
2.5 Complete the Economic Investment Strategy by developing projects around each of the following 3 Vision Themes and apply for funding to support each. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-Inventing Morecambe • Lancaster City and Riverside • Carnforth northern Gateway 	Councillor Bryning Councillor Bryning Councillor Langhorn
Projects	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare Luneside East for development including site remediation - Councillor Bryning ▪ Survey and viability work for the wider Luneside area - Councillor Bryning ▪ Implement the refreshed West End Action Plan including a revised proposal for the Chatsworth Gardens - Councillor Kerr ▪ Public realm design proposals for Morecambe Central Promenade area - Councillor Ashworth ▪ Work to deliver a programme of rural development initiatives in partnership with Lancashire County Council – Councillor Langhorn ▪ Morecambe Area Action Plan - Councillor Ashworth ▪ Research and develop a Concordat for Morecambe Bay Regional Park - Councillor Ashworth ▪ Lancaster Market – Councillor Barry ▪ Cultural Heritage Investment Strategy - Councillor Ashworth ▪ Morecambe Townscape Heritage Initiative 2 - Councillor Ashworth ▪ Lancaster Square Routes – Councillor Bryning ▪ Public realm design proposals for Morecambe urban centre and promenade - Councillor Ashworth 	
Rationale: Sustainable Community Strategy, Cultural Heritage Investment Strategy	

Projects

- Investigate how technology could be used to further reduce CO2 emissions from the Council's own vehicle fleet - Councillor Barry
- Develop & implement energy reduction plans for each corporate building over a 2 year period – Councillor Barry
- Conduct feasibility study to develop renewable technologies in suitable corporate buildings – Councillor Barry
- Implement actions arising from the district wide Thermal Image Survey – Councillor Barry
- Roll out the Internal Climate Change Communications Plan – Councillor Barry
- Introduction of food waste collection and mixed recycling – Councillor Barry

Rationale :- Sustainable Community Strategy, City Council's Climate Change Strategy

Corporate Priority: Statutory Services

Objective: 4. Meet the council's statutory requirements for service delivery

**Key Targets:
Clean & Green**

NI 195 - Levels of street and environmental cleanliness-

- 2010/11 litter 8%, detritus 12%, graffiti 2%, flyposting 0%
- 2011/12 litter 8%, detritus 11%, graffiti 2%, flyposting 0%
- 2012/13 litter 8%, detritus 10%, graffiti 2%, flyposting 0%

Local- % of customer requests with regard to cleanliness issues responded to within 1 working day- target 90%

Local- Reduce air pollution through air quality action plans to achieve statutory objective levels

Key Actions:

Action by:

Lead Cabinet Member

4.1 To monitor and review all statutory services to provide assurance that minimum standards can be met and to quantify any services provided above minimum standards to enable a decision to be made as to whether or not this is a priority to continue in the future and that it provides value for money.

Councillor Robinson

4.2 Clean and Green Services

Meet our responsibilities by maintaining the cleanliness of our streets & public spaces

- Deliver the Council's actions in the LDLSP's Environment Thematic Group Action plan
- Maintain the cleanliness of our streets & public spaces through a combination of education, enforcement and service delivery.
- Work with other organisations/stakeholders to deliver joint environmental initiatives (eg Clean Sweep, Street Pride, Community Payback)
- Deliver other key environmental services (eg grounds m'tce, playgrounds) in such a way as to contribute to this objective

Councillor Barry

Projects

- Clean Sweep , Community Payback , & Street Pride – Councillor Barry
- Review of districtwide playground provision and grounds maintenance– Councillor Barry
- Housing Options/ Choice Based Lettings – Councillor Kerr
- Air Quality Action Plans – Councillor Barry
- Democratic Renewal Project – Councillor Blamire
- To undertake a review of the council’s fair pay structure – Councillor Blamire
- Workforce Planning – Councillor Blamire
- HR/Payroll replacement programme – Councillor Blamire
- Phase 2 of the Revenues shared service project – Councillor Langhorn

Rationale: To ensure that any statutory service provided above the minimum level is as a result of democratic consideration and prioritisation.

Corporate Priority: Partnership Working & Community Leadership	
Objective: 5. To continue to work with our partners to deliver the targets in the Sustainable Community Strategy and to bring about other improvements and efficiencies in the way that services are delivered locally.	
Key Targets: To increase overall customer satisfaction levels from 39% to 50% by 2011 To meet the council's NI 179 targets for efficiency savings	
Key Actions:	Action by:
	Lead Cab Mem
5.1 To deliver the council's agreed contributions to achieve the priorities and outcomes in the Sustainable Community Strategy and LDLSP's Thematic Group action plans including;- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality and Diversity, • Health and Wellbeing, • Safety • Children and Young People 	Councillors Fletcher, Kerr, Blamire and Ashworth
5.2 To implement the council's agreed programme for Shared Services and research other opportunities wherever possible	Councillor Langhorn
5.3 To produce a Community Plan for Skerton resulting from the successful completion of the Connecting Communities Project.	Councillor Fletcher
5.4 To work with partners to secure the most effective outcomes from utilizing Performance Reward Grant monies	Councillor Langhorn
5.5 To become an 'achieving' authority' under the Equality Framework for Local Government' by March 2011..	Councillor Fletcher

Projects

- Refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy Councillor Langhorn
- Officer project groups of the LDLSP –
 - Arts Councillor Ashworth
 - Asset Mgt Councillor Barry
 - Communications Councillor Langhorn
- Big Ticket projects, including :-
 - Affordable Housing Councillor Kerr
 - Community Cohesion Councillor Langhorn
 - Health Inequalities Councillor Kerr
 - Climate Change Councillor Barry
 - Worklessness Councillor Bryning
- Connecting Communities Project – Councillor Fletcher
- Facilities Management – Councillor Langhorn
- Equality Framework 'achieving project – Councillor Fletcher

Rationale: Sustainable Community Strategy, Shared Services Programme

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**Lancashire Fire and Rescue Services :
Performance Report and Action Plan 2010
02 September 2010****Report of Corporate Director (Community Services)****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To briefly review the Fire and Rescue Services performance report and action plan 2010 and to consider proposed changes in the way services are delivered.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That Committee note the Performance Report and Action Plan 2010.
- (2) That Committee comment on the five key service areas proposed for change as outlined in the body of this report and detailed in the Appendix and authorise the Corporate Director (Community Services) to respond to the consultation on the basis of the Committee's comments".

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Fire and Rescue Performance Report and Action Plan 2010 provides information on how they have performed during 2009/10, gives feedback on the findings of external inspections and includes proposals for change in respect of:
 - review of specialist rescue and support services
 - developing a strategy for Unwanted Fire Signals
 - review of the retained duty system catchment areas for recruitment
- 1.2 On the consultation part of the report (section 5) comments are requested by 07 November 2010. The full report can be found at www.lancsfireandrescue.org.uk.
- 1.3 In terms of actual performance, most performance targets have been met or exceeded although some concerns are expressed about workforce accident figures during the severe winter weather and during more hazardous training exercises. In addition, some of the recruitment targets for BME and gender have not been met. Concern is also expressed at the high turnover rate in the Retained Duty System (RDS) staff and ways of improving retention are built into the action plan.

- 1.4 In addition, the performance assessment review by the Audit Commission for 2009/10 resulted in an “excellent” judgement – the only excellent rating out of 46 English Fire Authorities.
- 1.5 The action plan reports on five main improvement areas, but also provides a reference to a further forty plus items which can be accessed via the Fire and Rescue web site.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 In the provision of specialist rescue and support over and above that which is available on front line fire engines, three specialist areas are proposed for review
- major incident support/heavy rescue
 - boat provision
 - rope rescue team
- 2.2 **Major Incident Support:** report identifies that there are two specialist teams located at Preston and Leyland which operate county-wide. The proposal is to close the Preston team down and to focus on using the Leyland based team to provide the sole major incident support and heavy rescue capability in the future (see appendix for details). There are also two further options around whether this team should operate as now or be enhanced to provide a quicker night time response.
- 2.3 **Boat Provision:** Two boat units are currently provided at Preston and Penwortham. However, with the upgrading of seven strategically located fire engines to ‘water rescue pump status’ the demand for boat usage has reduced and the proposals is to keep both boats at Penwortham but only have one trained team. (See appendix for details)
- 2.4 **Rope Rescue:** A specialist rope rescue team is based at St Anne’s and they deal with more complex incidents of rescue of people or animals above and below ground. However, this arrangement relies on volunteers providing the service which has caused some operational difficulties. Four options for change are considered but option 4 is the preferred solution which moves away from using volunteers to use the full time staff at St Anne’s and the Major Incident Support Team at Leyland for rope rescue. (See appendix for details)
- 2.5 There are also proposals to change the high level of unwanted fire signals received by the service. These are ‘false alarms’ generated from automated systems. Almost one-third of 20,367 emergency incidents were this type of false alarm. Detailed proposals are intended to reduce the number of mobilisations to unwanted fire signal incidents. (See appendix for details)
- 2.6 Retained Duty System (RDS) staff are those staff who provide an on-call response – usually in the more rural areas of the county. They are normally recruited from a geographic area which means they can get to their station within five minutes of an emergency alarm. However, this has created recruitment difficulties so the proposal is to extend this travel time to seven minutes for nine rural stations, including Silverdale and Hornby.

3.0 Details of Consultation

3.1 The performance aspects of the report are for information and the Business Committee is itself a consultee of Section 5.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

4.1 The options/options analysis for the five review areas has been carried out by Fire and Rescue and included in the appendix to this report.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Lancashire Fire and Rescue provide an excellent service to the people of Lancashire as assessed by the Audit commission. Proposals are made to make the service more efficient whilst maintaining quality and in some areas making further improvements and members comments are requested on those changes.

**CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)**

This is an information and consultation report and has no direct impact

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to this authority as a result of this report.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Performance Report and Action Plan 2010

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Ref: reports/councilbus/03

Section 5 - CONSULTATION

This section provides a brief overview of specific proposals on which we are inviting comment. The full reports on which these proposals are based can be viewed at www.lancsfirerescue.org.uk and it is strongly recommended that these are accessed to gain a fuller picture of the relevant issues.

This year we are seeking a broader view on three specific issues before determining a way forward regarding our:

1. Provision of specialist rescue and support over and above that which is available on front line fire engines;
2. Approach to unwanted fire signals and the major problem of false alarms; and
3. Retained duty system stations and the catchment areas from which we recruit staff.

As always we will consult widely and have allocated twelve weeks for this purpose commencing 16th August and ending on 7th November. The consultation process will include:

- Physical distribution of the report
- Electronic publication on our website
- Presentations to all staff on the subject matter
- Face to face dialogue with the public via our scrutiny panels and other meetings
- Debate with other interested parties e.g. elected members, local authorities
- Discussion with the business sector
- Dialogue with staff trade unions

The Fire Authority's Planning Committee will consider the outcome of the consultation at the end of November following which it is anticipated that any decisions will be made by the full Fire Authority on 13th December.

HOW TO RESPOND

We welcome your views and will be happy to receive any feedback by letter or e-mail. If you need any further assistance or clarification please ring 01772 862545 and ask for the risk management team. Please send any comments to:

The Risk Management Team
Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service
HQ
Garstang Road
Fulwood
Preston, PR2 3LH
E-mail: rmp@lancsfirerescue.org.uk

Action Plan - Consultation

5.1 SPECIALIST RESCUE AND SUPPORT

The full report on which these proposals are based can be accessed at www.lancsfirerescue.org.uk.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires us to make provision for the rescue of people from road traffic collisions. For this reason - and for rescue purposes at other non-fire emergencies - all sixty LFRS front line fire engines carry a range of modern rescue equipment. Whilst this equipment is often adequate, a level of provision over and above that which is available via this route is sometimes needed. This may be due to the nature of the emergency, or it may be that we require more specialised equipment, or skills, which are not available on a traditional fire engine.

Whilst the demand is low, there are occasions where it would be extremely difficult - if not impossible - to safely resolve

some incidents without this enhanced provision. In recent years we have added to our specialist response capability through both local and national provision and as a result, we now believe some rationalisation/consolidation is needed. To improve services and/or to deliver better value for money, we have therefore examined three areas of specialist support in detail:

- Major incident support/heavy rescue
- Boat provision
- Rope Rescue Team

5.1.1 Major Incident Support/Heavy Rescue

At present, our major incident support/heavy rescue capability comprises a major incident support unit (MISU) located at Preston fire station and an Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team based in Leyland.

The MISU - which is fully funded by the fire authority - comprises a prime mover vehicle and demountable equipment pod which was introduced in 1996 as part of a new rescue strategy. With the provision of rescue equipment on all sixty front line fire engines and other changes over the years, this strategy has now been superseded. The MISU is alternately crewed with other vehicles at Preston and staff have a wider operational remit i.e. they may be on a conventional fire engine one day and the MISU the next. Four posts are included on the station's staffing establishment to reflect this provision and the MISU is immediately available 24 hours a day.

The USAR team - which is fully funded by central government - was introduced in 2007 as part of a national resilience project (19 other USAR teams are located across the country) and comprises three prime mover vehicles, a range of demountable equipment pods and fifteen specialist staff whose sole function is specialist rescue i.e. they do not fight fires. Whilst the equipment and skill sets within the USAR unit significantly exceed those of the MISU, the working arrangements of the USAR team mean that they are immediately available only during the day (normally 0800 - 1800). At night, staff are on call from home and the attendance time to an incident will therefore increase by up to 45 minutes. On this basis, the current dual provision i.e. MISU and USAR, has been sustained with joint attendance to incidents during the day and utilisation of USAR at night only where an extended response time has been acceptable.

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Activity levels for the MISU are very low as evident from tables 5.1 and 5.2 opposite which cover a three-year period and show:

- mobilisations i.e. the number of occasions the vehicle was despatched to an incident; and
- attendances i.e. the number of occasions the vehicle actually attended an incident.

Water rescue incidents are not included as this aspect is considered separately in section 5.1.2.

The USAR team activity is similarly low i.e. 300 mobilisations/135 attendances over the same period and it is evident that a rationalisation of resources is feasible.

Providing the specialist rescue and support function through the USAR team alone would facilitate the optimum emergency response - in an

**Table 5.1 - MISU Activity (Excluding water rescue) 2007/09
 24 - Hour Period**

Year	MISU Mobilisations	MISU Attendances
2007	82	30
2008	69	29
2009	71	33
Total	222	92

**Table 5.2 - MISU Activity (Excluding water rescue) 2007/09
 1800 - 0800 Hours**

Year	MISU Mobilisations	MISU Attendances
2007	36	18
2008	23	11
2009	33	16
Total	92	45

equipment and skills sense - whilst also enabling a cost saving through the reduction of four staff at Preston fire station in the absence of the MISU. It must be recognised, however, that an extended deployment time at night i.e. up to

45 minutes will ensue unless USAR working arrangements are modified to allow immediate 24-hour response. The 'day crewing plus' duty system - which was successfully introduced into LFRS in 2010 - offers a cost effective way

of providing an immediate USAR response capability whilst still achieving significant overall cost savings.

We are therefore proposing that the MISU at Preston is removed from service and that the USAR team provide the sole major incident support and heavy rescue capability in the future.

In making this proposal, two options can be considered:

Option 1 - Maintain existing working arrangements for USAR staff and accept an increased response time at nights.

Operational Implications - Table 5.2 shows that the MISU attended 45 incidents over the three-year period between the hours of 1800 and 0800. Adoption of this option would mean that an extended deployment time of up to 45 minutes would result for an average of 15 incidents per year.

Staffing Implications - Reduction of 4 firefighter posts at C50 Preston.

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Financial Implications - Annual revenue savings of £150,000.

Option 2 - Upgrade USAR to a day-crewing plus (DCP) type system to provide an immediate 24-hour response.

Operational Implications - Improved response capability.

Staffing Implications - Reduction of 4 firefighter posts at Preston and one USAR Watch Manager (a DCP duty system would require 14, rather than the existing, 15 USAR staff).

Financial Implications - Annual revenue savings of £113, 000. Capital costs for temporary accommodation of £25,000 and up to £300,000 for a permanent facility (the USAR team is currently located in temporary accommodation at Leyland pending the construction of a new Chorley fire station in late 2013. The £25,000 temporary accommodation costs would facilitate the transition in early 2011 pending a permanent provision at the new Chorley station).

In respect of either option, it is also acknowledged that the USAR team has a national role i.e. it could - however unlikely - be deployed outside Lancashire for a protracted period. Contingency arrangements to provide the major incident support/heavy rescue function for LFRS in such circumstances will be needed though a number of alternative solutions exist and this is not considered to be an obstacle to implementation.

5.1.2 Boat Provision

In contrast to 5.1.1 detailed previously, there is no legal requirement for us to provide a water rescue capability.

Notwithstanding this, the absence of any alternative provider (no agency has responsibility for inland water rescue at the present time); a legal requirement to protect employees' health and safety; and a public expectation that the fire service will respond to requests for assistance where water related 'emergencies' occur, has meant we have maintained a boat provision for emergency response purposes since 1997. Two boat units are currently provided: one - the principal resource - at Preston and a second back up at Penwortham.

Whilst the boat(s) provided the sole response for 10 years, our water rescue capability was significantly improved in 2007 through the upgrade of seven strategically located fire engines across the county to a 'water

rescue pump' status. Equipment was provided and enhanced training given to staff at these stations to enable them to operate safely and effectively in water. At any such incident, one or more of these vehicles now forms part of the initial attendance and the demand for a boat - and the associated trained staff - has been significantly reduced.

Table 5.3 on page 33 details the extent of boat activity at Preston which is deployed via the MISU whilst the Penwortham unit operates as a fallback and is not routinely mobilised. As is evident, activity is very limited, and whilst the requirement remains for a boat to support the water rescue pumps, an opportunity exists to revise existing arrangements and consolidate on one, rather than the existing two boat units.

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Table 5.3 - MISU Water Rescue Activity 2007/09

Year	Mobilisations	Attendances
2007	49	15
2008	62	26
2009	24	13
Total	135	54

Of the two stations, Penwortham is much less busy operationally and is thereby less prone to disruption. Moreover, as a DCP station, 14 as opposed to the 60 staff at Preston are required to maintain their swift water rescue (SRT) and boat handling skills, both of which are resource intensive from a time and cost perspective. A consolidated approach based on a Penwortham boat unit would also permit the removal of Preston as a designated swift water rescue station eliminating the training requirement and associated costs.

We are therefore proposing that the boat and SRT provision at C50 Preston is removed and that we consolidate on one boat unit (whilst maintaining two boats for resilience) at C57 Penwortham.

Operational Implications - Restricted capacity to mobilise boat out of County.

Staffing Implications - None.

Financial implications - Revenue savings of £18,000 through reduction in annual training costs.

5.1.3 Rope Rescue

Since 1995, we have maintained a rope rescue team at St Annes fire station to provide a level of expertise over and above that available on front line fire engines. The team responds to the more complex incidents involving rescue of people or animals above or below ground and/or in confined spaces, and supports other operational activity. Whilst there is no legal requirement for us to make this provision, the team was formed

following a number of high level rescues e.g. Blackpool Tower, where the shortcomings of conventional equipment and training were apparent.

As tables 5.4 and 5.5 following show, the team's activity levels have been very low. From a staff safety and service effectiveness standpoint, however, the rope rescue team has been an important resource when needed.

Table 5.4 - Rope Rescue Team Activity 2007/09 24-Hour Period

Year	Mobilisations	Attendances
2007	33	12
2008	36	16
2009	81	43
Total	150	71

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Table 5.5 - Rope Rescue Team Activity 2007/09
1800 - 0800 Hours

Year	Mobilisations	Attendances
2007	18	7
2008	13	7
2009	33	18
Total	64	32

Historically, all rope rescue team members have been volunteers drawn from the wholetime and RDS workforce at StAnnes, and whilst this volunteer ethos is extremely commendable, it has proved problematic in two respects:

- difficulties have been experienced in maintaining sufficient team members to provide a continuous availability; and
- the ability to relieve rope rescue team members at protracted incidents due to the absence of other qualified staff has been experienced.

With the transition of StAnnes station to day crewing plus (DCP) in July 2010, all 14 DCP staff are now required to be members of the rope rescue team as a condition of their service at the station. Taken alongside existing RDS volunteers, this provides greater resilience in terms of overall staff numbers though the problem of relieving team members at protracted incidents remains.

Alongside these developments at StAnnes, the USAR team - who are routinely trained in rope rescue as a consequence of their primary role - have all recently qualified to the same standard as our rope rescue team. This action was

taken in order to provide continuity of rope rescue provision up to, and immediately following, the change in staffing arrangements at StAnnes which resulted in a number of long standing rope rescue operatives transferring off the station and leaving the team. The USAR team is currently deploying alongside colleagues from StAnnes though the response time at night is increased for reasons outlined in section 5.1.1 previously. In respect of future provision, a number of options can be considered:

Option 1 - Utilise the StAnnes unit (made up of DCP staff and RDS volunteers) as the sole rope rescue capability.

Operational Implications - Accepting that no guarantee regarding RDS volunteers can be provided, 14 DCP staff may be adequate for immediate response but problems of relieving staff at protracted incidents will remain.

Staffing Implications - Continuing, though reduced, reliance on RDS volunteers.

Financial Implications - None
Option 2 - Maintain existing working arrangements for USAR staff and use as the sole rope rescue capability, accepting the increased response time at nights.

Operational Implications - Table 5.5 previous shows that the rope rescue team attended 32 incidents between the hours of 1800 and 0800 over the three-year period which - if this option is adopted - would mean that an extended response time of up to 45 minutes would result for an average of 11 incidents per year. 14 USAR staff may be adequate for first attendance needs but problems of relieving staff at protracted incidents will remain. Contingency arrangements in the absence of the USAR team due to a national deployment will also be required.

Staffing Implications - None

Financial Implications - None

Option 3 - Upgrade USAR to immediate 24-hour availability and use as the sole rope rescue

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capability (only viable if the option to upgrade USAR for major incident support/heavy rescue as detailed in 5.1.1 is adopted).

Operational Implications - 14 USAR staff may be adequate for immediate response but problems of relieving staff at protracted incidents will remain. Contingency arrangements in the absence of the USAR team due to a national deployment will also be required.

Staffing Implications - As per 5.1.1 option 2.

Financial Implications - As per 5.1.1 option 2.

Option 4 - Utilise both the St Annes (DCP staff only) and USAR teams to provide a dual provision which is mobilised on a geographical and/or time-based model.

Operational Implications - Dual approach offers enhanced resilience and addresses issue of relieving team members at protracted incidents.

Staffing Implications - RDS rope rescue volunteers no longer required at St Annes.

Financial Implications - Capital cost of £10,000 to fully equip USAR team for rope rescue response.

On the basis of long-term sustainability and enhanced resilience, we are proposing option 4 as the optimum approach.



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5.2 UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS

Advancements in technology have made fire alarm systems much more affordable and this, together with the impact of new fire safety legislation, has caused the number of installations to increase. Alongside this growth, a corresponding increase in the number of false alarms has occurred.

Whilst a permissible level of 'false alarm' is acceptable within the relevant standard for fire alarm systems (see BS 5839), this is very low at i.e. one unwanted fire signal per detector head per hundred years, emphasising the reliability of effectively managed systems. As a life and building protection feature, fire alarm systems - when properly installed, maintained and managed - clearly enhance public safety. Unfortunately, not all systems are installed correctly and/or maintained, and building management arrangements sometimes fall short of what is required. As a result, fire alarm systems generate 'unwanted fire

signals' (UwFS) i.e. an emergency call generated by an automatic fire alarm which proves to be a false alarm.

In 2009/10 we attended 20,367 emergency incidents of which almost one-third were UwFS. This has a huge impact in a number of respects e.g.:

- the emergency response poses a risk to staff and other road users;
- fire engines are unavailable for genuine emergencies;
- disruption is caused to other fire service activities e.g. fire safety visits, training etc;
- disturbance for retained duty system staff and their employers; and
- significant response costs are incurred.

Quite clearly, any emergency response arrangements need to be carefully balanced against the related risks, and this is particularly important when considering calls from automatic systems. Tables 5.6 and 5.7 on the following page show the total number of fire alarm incidents in Lancashire over a five-year period broken down as 'public/commercial' e.g. shops, offices, schools, hospitals etc and 'domestic' e.g. single private dwellings, sheltered housing, flats etc. As is evident, very few such calls turn out to be actual fires - and these in turn are often minor - and even less result in injury.

Action Plan - Consultation

Table 5.6 - automatic fire alarm incidents 2005/10 Public and commercial buildings

Year	Total AFA calls	Resultant fires (actual numbers and as % of afa calls)	Fires involving casualties (total numbers and as % of calls)	Total Casualties	Casualties receiving other than precautionary check or first aid at scene
2005/06	6301	255 (4.0%)	2 (0.03%)	2	1
2006/07	6439	236 (3.7%)	8 (0.12%)	11	9
2007/08	5766	161 (2.8%)	4 (0.07%)	4	3
2008/09	5712	134 (2.3%)	2 (0.04%)	2	1
2009/10	5914	159 (2.7%)	7 (0.12%)	15	0
Total	30132	945 (3.13%)	23 (0.07%)	34	14

Whilst it is fully accepted that an automatic fire alarm call can result in a fire and/or injury, the likelihood is very low, particularly in public and commercial buildings.

In 2004, we revised our response arrangements to automatic fire alarms and made a number of changes whereby the majority of calls now only receive an immediate attendance of one fire engine, rather than the two or even three as in the past. We have also worked extensively with premises occupiers to address problem systems and to ensure that effective managerial arrangements are in place. This approach has helped to free up resources and to reduce the actual numbers of UwFS in the intervening period. Notwithstanding such improvements, the level of false alarms remains unacceptably high and we believe further action is warranted.

Table 5.7 - automatic fire alarm incidents 2005/10 Domestic Premises

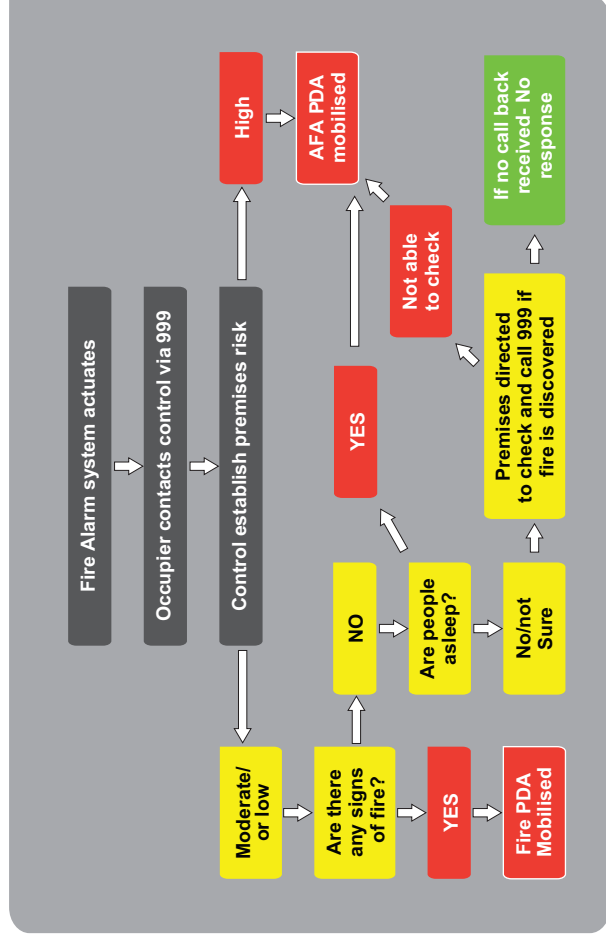
Year	Total AFA calls	Resultant fires (actual numbers and as % of afa calls)	Fires involving casualties (total numbers and as % of calls)	Total Casualties	Casualties receiving other than precautionary check or first aid at scene
2005/06	2171	341 (15.7%)	21 (0.97%)	27	15
2006/07	1821	249 (13.7%)	10 (0.55%)	12	5
2007/08	1489	204 (13.7%)	18 (1.21%)	21	12
2008/09	1447	172 (11.9%)	10 (0.69%)	10	4
2009/10	1974	182 (9.2%)	51 (2.58%)	56	10
Total	8902	1148 (12.89%)	110 (1.23%)	126	46

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We are therefore proposing the introduction of a 'call challenge' process in order to reduce the level of mobilisations to unwanted fire signals. This will apply to all calls originating from an Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) system, thereby ensuring that a response is only automatically made where a premises is categorised as 'high risk', or where the call is likely to be a genuine fire. An example process for a call received in Fire Control via the 999 system is shown right.

In addition, we are also proposing to:

- Enter into agreements with Alarm Receiving Centres (ARC) to ensure that where a premises is not categorised as 'high risk', the ARC will contact the occupier to confirm if there is a fire before passing the call to us;
- Adopt a more robust enforcement approach in



Operational Implications -
 Reduction in mobilisations to unwanted fire signal incidents

Staffing Implications - None

Financial Implications - Reduced operating costs

- respect of 'problem premises' i.e. those where the number of false alarms is high;
- Zone the larger, more complex 'high risk' premises to allow a varied predetermined attendance dependent on risk e.g. on a hospital site, some buildings may attract a greater or lesser weight of attendance;
- Promote robust 'off line' policies where premises are occupied and a responsible person can make a 999 call in the event of fire;
- Consider the adoption of a 'drive to arrive' approach for problem premises i.e. a fire engine response made under non-emergency conditions.

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5.3 RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM STATION CATCHMENT AREAS

Retained duty system (RDS) staff are a key component of our workforce and deliver a range of prevention and emergency response services across the County. In contrast to their wholetime duty system colleagues (where the fire and rescue service is the primary employer) RDS staff often work for other employers, or are self-employed, whilst also giving cover for up to 120 hours per week during which time they are available by alerter to respond to an emergency. RDS staff also attend one evening per week for training and carry out community safety work e.g. home fire safety checks, in their station areas. Due to the 'on-call' nature, RDS staff live and/or work in close proximity to their respective stations which are often located in the more rural areas of Lancashire. Thirty-two of our sixty fire engines are staffed exclusively by RDS personnel and there were 429 RDS staff as of 1st July 2010 providing an essential and very cost-effective service.

Due to the 'on-call' requirement and the need to mobilise fire engines as quickly as possible, RDS stations have historically recruited staff from a catchment area which allows for a response into the station within five minutes when an emergency call is received. In recent years, it has proved increasingly difficult at some stations to recruit suitable RDS candidates from within the defined catchment areas. As a result, some RDS fire engines have been unavailable to respond to emergency incidents, particularly during the day.

Whilst our policy of deploying the nearest available fire engine to emergencies has been met by sending those from neighbouring stations, there are a number of RDS stations which are geographically remote and which - if an extended catchment area was permitted - would still enable a faster response than if fire engines from neighbouring station/s were sent. Whilst we are not advocating a

general extension of catchment areas, we believe that improvements are possible at some more isolated stations if we allow up to seven, rather than the existing, five minutes. This would give us a bigger pool for recruitment, which in turn could help improve RDS fire engine availability.

- Longridge
- Clitheroe
- Silverdale
- Hornby
- Garstang
- Preesall
- Bacup
- Earby
- Ormskirk

We are therefore proposing - in line with our existing policy of sending the nearest available fire engine to an emergency call - that the catchment area for recruitment at the following RDS stations be extended from five to seven minutes.

Operational Implications - Improved availability at some RDS stations and consequential faster response to emergencies.

Staffing Implications - Greater catchment area and larger pool for recruitment.

Financial Implications - None.

Glossary

Accidental Dwelling Fire - A 'Primary Fire' occurring in a property classed as a private dwelling where the cause of the fire is recorded as accidental or not known.

CFA - Combined Fire Authority - the body responsible in law for the provision of a fire and rescue service in Lancashire.

Critical Fire - Any fire likely to involve a significant threat to life, structures or the environment.

Deliberate Fire - Any fire (primary or secondary) where the cause is recorded as deliberate, doubtful or malicious.

LFRS - Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service - employed by the CFA to deliver the fire and rescue service in Lancashire.

Malicious False Alarm - A call made with the intention of getting the fire and rescue service to attend a non-existing emergency.

Primary Fire - Any fire involving casualties, rescues or escape OR any fire involving damage to property (excluding derelict buildings and vehicles) OR any fire attended by 5 or more fire appliances.

Secondary Fire - Any fire not classified as a 'Primary Fire', which did not involve casualties or rescues and was attended by four or fewer appliances. Fires in derelict buildings or vehicles are classified as secondary fires, as are chimney fires confined to the chimney structure.

Unwanted Fire Signal (UwFS) - A call initiated as the result of the actuation of an automatic fire alarm system where the fire and rescue service attended and the actuation was not the result of a fire.

Wholetime (W/T) - Uniformed operational staff whose primary employment is with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and who work 42 hours per week on a day/night shift system.

Retained Duty System (RDS) - Staff whose primary employment is with a non-fire service employer, but who agree to provide a pre-determined level of cover for emergency response ranging from 40 to 120 hours per week.

Day-Crewing - A duty system which provides an emergency response through a combination of wholetime and retained duty systems.

Day-Crewing Plus (DCP) - A more flexible duty system which was introduced into Lancashire in 2009 and which involves a combination of 'on call' and 'standby' provision whilst maintaining an immediate response and which utilises purpose built accommodation in close proximity to fire stations for the standby periods.

Prime Mover - A specialist vehicle onto which can be mounted interchangeable equipment pods.

Alternately crewed - refers to certain specialist vehicles which are crewed at the discretion of the officer in charge or when required.

Major Incident Support Unit (MISU) - An emergency vehicle carrying specialised equipment over and above that carried on front line fire engines.

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**Member Development Charter Level 2
2 September 2010****Report of Head of Democratic Services****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To update Members on progress regarding the choice of a suitable topic for the Council's submission for Charter Level 2 status.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) **That Members note the progress made and approve, in principle, that the Council's submission for Charter Level 2 be based on the induction programme for new Councillors following the elections in May 2011.**

1.0 Introduction

At the meeting on 24 June 2010, Members will recall that the Committee considered potential topics for the authority's Charter Level 2 submission to be made to the North West Employers Organisation (NWEO) in November 2011. Members resolved:

- (1) That Officers undertake further work around a possible level 2 submission on the suggested areas of Community Engagement and the role of Councillors as Community Leaders.
- (2) That Group Administrators request ideas for a level 2 submission from their political groups.
- (3) That a decision on the project for a level 2 submission be delegated to the Head of Democratic Services in consultation with the Chairman once the views of the Committee had been sought by e-mail.

Since that meeting however, officers have spoken with NWEO and talked through some of the issues regarding the suitability of Community Engagement and the Role of Councillors as Community Leaders for Level 2. The feedback from the NWEO was that the ideas around those topics would be unsuitable to develop into a Level 2 submission because they were difficult to directly link back to Member Development or learning activities. They would also be challenging to measure to give a useful 'before and after' picture.

The Democratic Support Officer involved in Member Development has since talked informally with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee to look at the potential for the induction training programme to be used as the basis for the Council's Level 2 submission. This would seem to be a more suitable option with

more easily identifiable ways to measure the 'before and after' picture both anecdotally and in terms of performance, and the topic is directly linked to Member Development and learning activities.

Elsewhere on this agenda there is an update on the special Council meeting planned for 13 October 2010 on the theme 'Would you like to be a Councillor?'. If the Committee is minded to take forward induction training as the basis for the Council's Level 2 submission, then baseline information could be gathered at the special Council meeting and, should any of the prospective candidates be elected to the Council, officers could follow their progress through the induction programme for one strand of the submission.

With the Induction being purely Member Development and support, it would meet the criteria for NWE0.

Members are reminded that the Corporate Plan 2010-13 sets out a key Corporate Indicator, CH11, for the Council to achieve level 2 of the Charter next year.

5.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

Achieving Level 2 of the Member Development Charter during 2010/11 is listed as a Key Corporate Indicator in the Corporate Plan and a suitable topic must be found as soon as possible in order to progress the work that will need to be undertaken.

The options are:

- (1) To approve, in principle, the induction programme for new Councillors following the elections in May 2011 as the basis for the Council's Level 2 submission to NWE0.
- (2) To approve another topic, or suggest that officers carry out more work to suggest some other suitable topic, for the Level 2 submission.

The officer preferred option is option 1 because it would appear to satisfy the requirements of a Level 2 submission well and would run alongside the work officers must do to plan and deliver effective induction training for new Councillors.

5.0 Conclusion

Members are asked to discuss and consider approving, in principle, the induction programme for new Councillors following the elections in May 2011 as the basis for the Council's Level 2 submission to NWE0. This would provide a steer for officers to take further and report back to the Committee after talking again with NWE0 and undertaking some initial preparatory work.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The work of Member Development supports Councillors in delivering the corporate Vision and priorities. The Corporate Plan 2010-13 sets out a key Corporate Indicator, CH11, for the Council to achieve level 2 of the Charter next year.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All financial expenditure for induction training will come from existing budgets.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**Special Council Meeting 2010
2 September 2010****Report of Head of Democratic Services****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To update Members on progress with the arrangements for the special Council meeting 2010.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) **That members note and discuss the progress made so far with arrangements for the special Council meeting and feed back any comments and suggestions to officers.**

1.0 Introduction

At the meeting on 24 June 2010, Members will recall that theme of the special council meeting was agreed as 'Would you like to be a Councillor?' an event to promote the role of City Councillors to people who may be interested in standing in the 2011 local elections. This type of event is usually held before a local election to give potential candidates further information about standing for election as a Councillor. This year, by using the special Council meeting, the event will be on a larger scale and should attract more interest.

It was agreed that officers would report further to the Committee on the progress made with arrangements at this meeting.

2.0 Progress so far

Officers will report further at the meeting itself. However, at the time of drafting this report, political group leaders have already been approached to ask if they:-

- (a) Could publicise this event through their own group channels to any prospective candidates.
- (b) Would be willing to speak to the group of candidates for 5 or 10 minutes at the meeting about their work as a Councillor, perhaps covering why they first became interested in standing and giving a flavour of the Ward and Committee work that they have been involved in.

- (c) Know of any councillors who are fairly new to the Council in their group who would be willing to speak and present their point of view

To accommodate prospective candidates who work, it is felt that the meeting should start at 6pm, with a sandwich buffet available before the meeting commences.

Democratic Services have approached the Community Engagement Service and will be working with communications officers to discuss how best to publicise the event to the general public closer to the time of the event.

3.0 Agenda

The content of the meeting is envisaged to cover:-

- Being a Councillor – what will be expected of you.
- Structure of the Council and decision making. A formal presentation by the Chief Executive.
- Talks from Councillors (Group Leaders and perhaps one or two Councillors elected fairly recently) to give their views of what the role of the Elected Members is really like.
- Informal participative session in several small groups round the tables - a mix of councillors and prospective candidates to ask questions and discuss. Democratic Services staff could pre-draft some questions to start these sessions and/or facilitate each table.
- Feedback from the break away groups and then a talk from officers about the support that is available to Councillors (induction training, Democratic Support, role of officers, etc)
- The Elections Officer to present a segment on election procedures and the timescales for the May election.

Written information will be available for prospective candidates to take away with them.

4.0 Estimated costs

It was agreed that an estimate of costs would be presented to the Committee at this meeting, however the costs will all be contained within the existing Democratic Services budget. Using the Council Chamber at Morecambe with the chamber seating removed to accommodate more people will avoid any extra cost for room hire. It will also be an appropriate place to hold the event, being the room where Members hold their full Council meetings.

As with any meeting starting at 6pm, sandwiches would be available for Councillors and officers from the start. There will be an additional catering cost for supplying extra sandwiches for prospective candidates, but this can be met from the service budget.

Costs of providing written materials for prospective candidates will be met from the electoral promotions budget.

5.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

This update is for noting, however comments and suggestions are invited from the Committee at this stage to inform officers planning the event.

5.0 Conclusion

This report is in line with the Committee's responsibility to agree the agenda and make arrangements for the annual special Council meeting, as set out in Part 3, Section 11 of the Council's Constitution. The Committee is invited to comment and contribute to the planning at this stage.

<p>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)</p> <p>None</p>	
<p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>All financial expenditure will be contained within existing budgets. It is estimated refreshments for the event will be approximately £250 if sandwiches are provided.</p>	
<p>SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS</p> <p>The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.</p>	
<p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>There are no legal implications arising from this report.</p>	
<p>MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.</p>	
<p>BACKGROUND PAPERS</p> <p>None</p>	<p>Contact Officer: Debbie Chambers Telephone: 01524 582057 E-mail: dchambers@lancaster.gov.uk Ref:</p>