

## Report to The Executive Board – 8<sup>th</sup> July 2002

### HOW THE COUNCIL CAN IMPROVE ITS WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AGENCIES TO REDUCE DRUG-RELATED CRIME

<b>Report of:</b> Modernisation Business Unit Manager	<b>WARDS AFFECTED</b>  <b>ALL</b>
<b>Report Author:</b> John Evans Chief Executive's Department Tel no. 01865 252305 Email: jevans@oxford.gov.uk	
<b>Lead Member Responsible:</b> Cllr Susan Brown Portfolio Holder, Crime and Community Safety.	
<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee Responsibility:</b> Social Well-being	
<b>Key Decision:</b> No	
<b><u>SUMMARY</u></b>	
<p>This is the amended report of the Economic and Social Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee on how the Council could improve its relationships with other agencies to reduce drug related crime.</p>	
<p>The original report was first submitted to the Executive Board on April 9<sup>th</sup> 2002. A decision was taken to ask the Overview and Scrutiny officers to add some input from Business Managers (and other key officers) to the recommendations.</p>	
<p>This report summarises those discussions and sets out indicative effort, costs and officer time, alongside possible implementation issues where possible. The original recommendations are re-presented, with officer comments on each recommendation highlighted in bold.</p>	
<p>Each recommendation is cross-reference to Appendix 1, which is the committee's full and original report.</p>	
<p>The Executive Board are asked to consider this report and to comment on the recommendations in the light of the additional evidence made available.</p>	

## **1. Introduction**

The individual relevant recommendations of the Economic and Social Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee were circulated and discussed with the following officers. Their comments have been annotated and incorporated in this summary report. The Executive Board is asked to note that a considerable amount of cooperation has been forthcoming from all the officers involved.

Neil Gibson – Strategic Director for Housing, Health and Community Directorate.

David Hill – Business Manager for Strategic Policy and Research.

Graham Bourton – Business Manager for Oxford Building Solutions.

Richard Adams – Crime Strategy Advisor, Strategic Policy and Research.

Andrew Parsons – Parks Manager, Parks and Green Spaces.

Jason Headley – Area Parks Manager, Parks and Green Spaces.

Graham Smith – Business Manager for Transport and Parking

Fergus Lapage – Area Co-ordinator, Modernisation Unit

Lyn Lawrence – Section 106 Officer, Planning.

John Adcock, Operations and Outreach Manager, Neighbourhood Renewal

Carol Shields, Homelessness Service Manager

Graham Stratford, Special Projects Officer, Housing Management.

Philip Dunsdon, Transport Services Manager, City Works

David Walker, Cleansing

## **2. Evidence gathering process.**

During the compilation of the original report evidence has been gathered from the following areas of expertise.

Richard Adams (ATMOSPHERE Crime and Disorder Strategy, including the Communities Against Drugs Plan 2001/2002 and check list for clients being helped to move out of Oxford);

John Adcock and PC Paul Phillips (Street Scene Task Force)

Inspector Keith Henderson and Inspector Steph Cook (Thames Valley Police)

Dr Tom Knowland (Chair of the Drugs Reference Group)

Khalid Sharif (Health Promotion Officer)

Martin Vincent (Luther Street Medical Centre)

Jeremy Franklin (on controls on Street Drinking)

Steve Kilsby (Crime and Nuisance Action Team - Work with Council Tenants)

Adrian Allen (Public Toilets)

Graham Smith (Car Parks)

Penny Randall (Single Homeless Strategy and Single Homeless Strategy and Drugs Projects)

Celia Angel (Improving Links between the Homelessness Service and Drug Agencies)

Pat Peters (Civil Liaison Officer).

The Committee has also considered a report by Oxford Brookes University on Heroin, Crack and Crime - the Oxford Perspective

A report of the Oxfordshire Drug and Alcohol Action Team on Young People's Audit of Needs

Information on the Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme

Information on Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

A summary of the 2001 Talkback Survey on Crime and Disorder in Oxford

Information on Houses in Multiple Occupation from the Area Coordinators.

### **3. Analysis of the recommendations.**

There are 26 different recommendations in total. Some have already been progressed (possibly due to officers and members lobbying both the Executive Board and Scrutiny simultaneously, or if they were not a key decision, by officers carrying out their day to day obligations), and others have been overtaken by events (e.g. a change in government policy).

Of those that remain, given the fairly large difference in the scope and complexity of each recommendation, the Executive Board may be mindful to obtain a further expansion of the limited detail provided in this brief report. i.e. some may justify a separate report altogether.

#### **4. The comments of officers on the recommendations.**

Housing Issues:

- (1) to ask the Strategic Director for Housing to convene a meeting of all appropriate housing agencies to promote additional residential detox facilities similar to that provided at Walton Street by the English Churches Housing Group (paragraph 20).

**The DAAT works with many of the housing agencies already. In the first instance a meeting with the DAAT would be beneficial to look at their forward plan both in terms of funding and what developments they are looking at. They are working with housing providers, Stonham Housing Association, Cherwell and OCHA, as well as English Churches HG in providing supported housing and the Detox Project.**

- (2) to invite staff from the various agencies including Housing Associations to meet with the Homelessness Unit to establish and/or improve the links with various voluntary sector agencies who operate in this field (paragraph 23);

**Links already exist between homelessness and the RSLs and some of the voluntary sector homelessness providers; however, stronger links will be sought between homelessness and the voluntary sector in particular over the next few months with closer working and sharing of information with voluntary groups. Research commenced to establish what grants and service level agreements already exist between Council and Voluntary Sector groups that may benefit homelessness. Also underway is a letter to social services to re-establish some sort of protocol between the two services.**

- (3) to offer training in homelessness legislation and City Council policies and practices to the voluntary sector drug agencies in an effort to improve links, and facilitate a better understanding of the role of the Homelessness Unit, legal duties and the restrictions the Unit faces (paragraph 23);

**The Homelessness Manager is presently strengthening the links between homelessness and the voluntary sector organisations that deal with homelessness people. In the first instance it is recommended that a one-page bullet point summary of the Homelessness Legislation is sent out to all possible referring agencies enabling them the information to assess clearly if their clients is statutory homeless thus reducing the number of referrals not falling into the Homelessness criteria.**

- (4) to consider the competing priorities placed on the Homelessness Unit by the various voluntary sector agencies to see if more qualitative exchanges of information could be achieved (paragraph 23);

**Officers feel that this may have some value. At present, however, the priority of the homelessness service is to ensure a basic level of service**

**delivery, and to respond to the District Auditors recommendations. Matter can be included for consideration as part of the Homelessness Best Value Review, which is just commencing.**

- (5) to discuss with the relevant agencies the possible benefits of short-term placements of voluntary sector staff in the Homelessness Unit (paragraph 23);

**Currently members of the community mental health team and probation visit the homeless section at regular intervals, to discuss cases and generally improve communications between the organisations. Further input from Connections and Elmore has also been established ensuring closer working relations and monitoring of the funding we give to these under the supporting people. Placements would be considered if the Voluntary Sector thought this worthwhile.**

- (6) to establish a regular meeting at senior level (Business Manager level and perhaps other levels if staff resources permit) to agree any working practices and/or protocols that could be introduced between the agencies to facilitate more joint working (paragraph 23);

**A number of joint working arrangements are already in place to stimulate joint working at operational and strategic levels through the new Homelessness Task Force, the Strategic Housing Partnership (SHOP), Drugs Action team (DAT), Drugs Reference Group (DRG) and Single Homelessness Strategy Group.**

- (7) that funding for improved IT support for the Homeless Unit should be reinstated (paragraph 24);

**As part of the response to the District Auditor's concerns about homelessness, some improvements are being made to its IT systems. However, due to financial pressures more innovative ways have had to be found to find cost neutral methods of making the most of the IT systems currently available. These included increased access to PC terminals by homelessness officers and a move to in-house developed systems using standard Windows packages, such as spreadsheet applications. These solutions will provide more efficient performance and financial monitoring. Changes are also being made to the HMIS system.**

- (8) to lobby the Government for a national register of vacant homes (paragraph 24).

**Officers have suggested that any lobbying should be directed at Mr Rob Miles, Policy Division, Empty Homes Unit, Office of Deputy Prime Minister (Tel 0207 9443554). Members may wish to offer further advice on who else may also be receptive to this issue.**

Jobs/Rehabilitation/Support Issues:

- (9) to ask officers involved in the Street Scene Task Force to convene a jobs summit to seek to achieve a wide range of job opportunities for those coming out of prison and detox involving the Chamber of Commerce, the Job Centre, major employers in the city, the Council's Human Resources, the homeless network and other voluntary agencies including Emmaus (paragraph 13);

**The Street Scene Task Force is now part of the Homelessness Task Force. The co-ordinator of the SSTF is part of HTF. The Board is asked whether it wishes to pass on this recommendation to the HTF for them to consider including it into their remit.**

- (10) to ask all Business Unit Managers to work with the Health Promotion Officer on an audit of ways they could help with community safety issues such as designing out crime and leisure services diversionary projects (paragraph 5).

**Will involve senior officer resource across many areas of the council.**

- (11) to investigate if the Recovered Assets Fund was available as a source of funding for Local Authority drug related projects (paragraph 13);

**It apparently is. This information has been forwarded to both Policy Units and Neil Gibson regarding funding opportunities, the criteria involved, and how to apply.**

- (12) to investigate what further assistance the Council can give to increasing the provision of structured day care facilities (paragraph 17)

**Will involve officer resource in the investigation, and finances depending on the result of the investigation (either directly provided, by means of grant aided funding, or both)**

- (13) that as a medium/long-term objective, to investigate the setting up of a training scheme to recruit local people and fund training to reduce the skills shortage of drug support worker posts (paragraph 9);

**Will involve officer resource in investigating the setting up of a training scheme. Members should also be aware that it is also possible that the low numbers of applicants for support worker posts may also be linked to other factors. e.g. salaries paid, low unemployment in the area, perception of the work involved etc.**

Education/information issues

- (14) that all members of Council should be provided with regular progress reports on the work of the ATMOSPHERE project and the Street Scene Task Force (or its replacement) (paragraph 14).

**Progress reports from ATMOSPHERE will appear on the council's web site in August 2002. At the time of writing the information is in test mode on the council's intranet service.**

**The HTF (the replacement to the SSTF) has agreed to meet publicly. Membership of the group included the Housing Portfolio Holder, the Planning Portfolio Holder and a member from the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It is envisaged that the minutes will be posted to the council's shared folders initially.**

- (15) to ask the Area Committees for comments on their perception of the prevalence of drugs and drug related crime activities on estates (paragraph 11).

**Area Committees can feed in any perceptions of drug misuse to the Drugs Reference Group through their member representative, Pat Peters, (Civil Liaison Officer and Drug Co-ordinator at St. Aldates Police Station) or the local police Inspector. The CANACT team are starting an information sharing casework group to target drug using and dealing individuals.**

**The Area Co-ordinators have indicated that they would be willing to place this kind of item onto their agendas if recommended to do so by the Executive Board.**

- (16) to educate the public that in the main begging is for money for drugs and not for food (paragraph 19);

**This has already been done through a national campaign and articles and interviews in the local press. A sustained local campaign will need further and specific financing, dependent on the size of the campaign.**

- (17) to require all reports that necessitate decisions to detail any potential impacts on crime and disorder to meet the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act, 1998 (and for the Crime Reduction Officer to have a watching brief on this issue) (paragraph 10);

**The need for some form of vetting of all submitted reports to ensure that this statutory obligation is met does not appear to be in question. However, the Crime Reduction Officer may hold the view that this ongoing obligation would adversely impact on other areas of responsibility undertaken by the post holder.**

**Other alternatives where it is considered that Crime and Disorder issues had possibly not been sufficiently addressed could include;**

**The Portfolio holder responsible for the report referring it back to the author before it gets submitted to the Executive Board**

**For the Executive Board to invite the Social Well-being Overview and Scrutiny committee to further examine the Crime and Disorder issues.**

- (18) to ensure that the Council has in place procedures for monitoring information on the number of sharps found in void properties and official bins and discarded needles collected by street cleansing staff and reported by members of the public (paragraph 28)

**Whilst cleansing can record individual needle finds, they would not wish to count the number of needles that are in official bins. This would expose cleansing staff to a greater hazard and put them at an unnecessary risk. Cleansing can, however, record the number and sizes of bins.**

**NB - All hazards and associated risks have been discussed with Health and Safety Officers and cleansing have recently met with their independent safety advisor to ensure that current procedures are correct and adequate.**

**Safety Issues:**

- (19) that in addition to the use of needle gloves for all cleansing staff, consideration should be given to the provision of anti-syringe gloves designed specifically to withstand punctures at a cost in the region of £200 per pair (paragraph 27);

**The approved method of collecting sharps is for the operatives to wear surgical type latex gloves and use a needle grab or litter picker to pick up the discarded needle and place in a secure sharps disposal container. The operative would then decontaminate any equipment used with a hypochlorite solution and dispose of the gloves as clinical waste and thoroughly wash their hands. The anti-syringe gloves would only need to be used by operatives who may have to clear voids or gullies where there may be a risk to the operative from "unseen" sharps. As a rule, cleansing staff do not attempt to clear unseen areas for sharps. Of the 15-20 employees involved at OBS in this type of work, and at £200 per pair a one off purchase could cost around £4000. This is not just a one-off cost because frequently sharps are found in 'filthy' houses (areas) and therefore protective clothing needs to be disposed of after use. There is also a need to replace them for wear and tear. It is not clear how frequently this would have to be done and what the shelf life of each pair of gloves would be.**

- (20) to make arrangements to prune the tree in Bonn Square on a regular basis so that it does not obstruct CCTV surveillance in the area (paragraph 29)

**This action is already in progress. There is a large Sycamore tree on the frontage of Bonn Square which has foliage blocking the views of the CCTV cameras in operation in the area. City Council staff have visited**

**the Thames Valley Police control room in St. Aldates and have been shown the offending branches and the way they block the view of the cameras. On closer inspection of the tree, staff discovered that the entire crown is wired with what they presume are Christmas lights. As a result, the pruning can not be undertaken until such time as the electrical contractors have removed the wires and then reconnected the circuit so as to not render the lights useless. As the power source comes from a lamp in the street, City Council staff are liaising with the County Council about isolating the supply and removing or re-routing the existing circuit. It is expected that the work will be completed by the end of July.**

- (21) to re-affirm the Committees previous recommendation to the Executive Board on 14th January 2002 to fund the installation of new ticketing machines at the Worcester Street car park this financial year (paragraph 31);

**New ticket machines will be in at Worcester Street during this financial year, probably by late summer.**

- (22) to extend staffing at the Westgate car park on Friday and Saturday nights from midnight to 2 am or more Police patrols and/or more CCTV cameras (paragraph 31);

**The staffing times on Friday and Saturday will be 24 hours, Monday to Thursday will be until midnight and Sunday until 10.00 pm, no more Police patrols or CCTV cameras are planned.**

Orders/lobbying:

- (23) that as a matter of priority the Council should put in place an order to control the consumption of alcohol within the City Centre area. (This issue has been referred to the Central, South and West Area Committee who were informed that a report would be submitted by the ATMOSPHERE Group to the Executive Board) (paragraph 30);

**This topic was presented to the Executive Board on May 27<sup>th</sup> and the current Economic&Social Well-being O&S Committee June 20<sup>th</sup> A sub group of E&SW-b met on June 25<sup>th</sup> to further progress the issue. The Area Committees have been asked to decide if there are any public places within their area where they consider public drinking has caused annoyance or disorder.**

- (24) to lobby the Government for a change in the law to allow GPs to consider heroin as a listed treatment for drug users if appropriate (paragraph 34).

**In view of the very recently published conclusions of the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee on Drugs the Government is now already taking this line.**

The Committee RECOMMENDS Council:-

(1) to ensure that Bonn Square is appropriately redesigned as soon as practical to remove the problems in the area (paragraph 29);

**The Westgate redevelopment planning application was called-in by the Secretary of State for decision. A public inquiry began in November last year and a decision is expected very shortly. If approved, the developers have entered into a unilateral undertaking to provide funding for works to the Bonn Square area.**

(2) that developers of any type of move-on/supported accommodation should be encouraged to engage with the public in early consultation on projects for future accommodation in advance of the submission of planning applications (paragraph 22);

**Move on and supported accommodation is not promoted in the city without the prior knowledge and often support of the City Council. RSLs or the Voluntary Sector will almost inevitably require the support of the Council through its strategies and to facilitate external funding. Initiatives also often involve Council owned land and buildings.**

**Local Members have access to this information and are often themselves consultees long before planning applications are submitted. Area Committees have an important role to play in deciding when and how consultation should be carried out with local residents on such proposals in their area.**

**Background papers :** Minutes of all the meetings of the Economic & Social Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its inception to April 2002.

<b>This report has been seen and approved by the Head of the Modernisation Unit.</b>
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# **Appendix 1 – The Original Report**

## **Report Author – Lyn Lawrence (ex)committee services**

### **ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT INTO ITS INVESTIGATION ON HOW THE COUNCIL CAN IMPROVE ITS WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AGENCIES TO REDUCE DRUG-RELATED CRIME**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Committee agreed to select how the Council can improve its working relationship with other agencies to reduce drug related crime as its topic for its first investigation as it understood that there had been a recent increase in crime in the City Centre and it was aware that a large proportion of the crime committed was drug related. It has investigated this topic over a period of five months consisting of seven meetings. During this period it has received evidence from Richard Adams (ATMOSPHERE Crime and Disorder Strategy, including the Communities Against Drugs Plan 2001/2002 and check list for clients being helped to move out of Oxford); John Adcock and PC Paul Phillips (Street Scene Task Force); Inspector Keith Henderson and Inspector Steph Cook (Thames Valley Police); Dr Tom Knowland (Chair of the Drugs Reference Group); Khalid Sharif (Health Promotion Officer); Martin Vincent (Luther Street Medical Centre); Jeremy Franklin (on controls on Street Drinking); Steve Kilsby (on Crime and Nuisance Action Team - Work with Council Tenants); Adrian Allen (Public Toilets); Graham Smith (Car Parks); Penny Randall (Single Homeless Strategy and Single Homeless Strategy and Drugs Projects); Celia Angel (Improving Links between the Homelessness Service and Drug Agencies) and Pat Peters (Civil Liaison Officer). The Committee has also considered a report by Oxford Brookes University on Heroin, Crack and Crime - the Oxford Perspective, a report of the Oxfordshire Drug and Alcohol Action Team on Young People's Audit of Needs, information on the Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme, information on Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, a summary of the 2001 Talkback Survey on Crime and Disorder in Oxford and information on Houses in Multiple Occupation.

#### **BACKGROUND**

2. One of the conclusions in the March 2001 Talkback Survey on Crime and Disorder in Oxford was that the main crime and disorder problems in the City Centre were social ones such as alcohol abuse, begging, homelessness and drugs. Most people surveyed considered that the misuse of illegal drugs is a serious problem in Oxford. They also think it is the biggest problem facing young people in Oxford today. Since the last survey on this topic in 1999, there has been a shift in opinion on what would be the most effective way to deal with this problem from a better education for the general public to more resources for law enforcement and the treatment and rehabilitation of drug users.

3. A report in August 2000 prepared by Oxford Brookes University for the ATMOSPHERE Group on Heroin Crack and Crime - the Oxford Perspective - estimates that there is between 1,800-2,300 problem heroin and crack users in the Oxford City area. If this figure is accurate, then Oxford can be placed on par with other areas seen by the Home Office as areas of high level, heavy drug use, for example Brighton. Furthermore, the cost to the City and its communities in economic and social cost is clearly going to be very high. It will also be the case that there will be a significant level of unmet need in terms of treatment and support among problem drug users.

4. The Oxford Brookes report states that there has been a massive increase in heroin use since 1993/95 and a similar rise in the use of crack. Police respondents indicate that drugs such as heroin and crack are a factor in "most" of the cases they now deal with in the City in one way or another. There appears to be a significant amount of criminal activity associated with the use of heroin and crack in the City and in particular a high correlation between burglary, heroin and crack use. The market for and supply of drugs in Oxford also appears to have changed considerably in the last seven years. It can now be characterised as more volatile, violent, organised and "professional" with a high level of penetration of dealers from outside Oxford. The majority of those who took part in the Oxford Brookes University study were poly-drug users with an 80% incident of drug related crime amongst this group. The availability and cost of the drug are also significant factors (the base price appears to be £10 a wrap for heroin) together with the increased sophistication of marketing methods being adopted by dealers. However nearly all of the users who took part in the Oxford Brookes University study either wanted to stop using heroin and crack or if they had already stopped using, stay off these drugs.

5. A further report published in November 2001 by the Oxfordshire Drug Alcohol Action Team on Young People's Needs Assessment in Oxfordshire highlights that in the year ending 31st March 2001, 820 out of 15,026 arrests in Oxfordshire up to the age of nineteen were for specific drug offences and all Community Safety Partnership Audits point to serious concern about the anti-social and crime related impact of alcohol use by young people. Similarly there is concern about the level of acquisitive crime committed by young people for use of alcohol or drugs.

To ask all Business Unit Managers to work with the Health Promotion Officer on an audit of ways they could help with community safety issues such as designing out crime and leisure services diversionary projects.

6. In the Oxford Brookes University study, 70% of heroin and crack users had begun use in the age range 13-24. Development work for the Oxford PCT has included two surveys relevant to the estimation of overall numbers. The first was not age banded but covered all City GPs. 62 GPs out of 130 responded indicating 500 class 'A' drug users. Extrapolated to cover non-residents the figure would be around 1,000. Since other users will not be in touch with GPs the overall Brookes figure of 1800-2300 heroin and crack

users might be regarded as high but not unrealistic. The second figure across the GP population again with figures extrapolated suggested between 60 and 70 15-19 year olds. Again given the numbers unlikely to be involved with GPs at those ages, the figures are worryingly high given that they are the tip of the needs pyramid. Inspector Keith Henderson reported to the Committee that up to the end of February 2002 and in comparison to last year, shop theft was down 2% to 1556 incidents across the area, pedal cycle theft was down 7% to 1569, other incidents of theft were up 11% to 1632 and robbery was up 4% to 334. He said the high percentage of incidents of thefts were by people stealing to feed drug habits.

## THE AGENCIES INVOLVED

7. The Committee has been pleased to learn of the significant amount of practical, constructive and innovative work of the various agencies in this field. The following is a summary of some of the main agencies involved.

### ATMOSPHERE

8. Richard Adams has explained to the Committee the work of the ATMOSPHERE Group (Alliance to make Oxford a safer place). The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 required local authorities to work in partnership with other agencies to reduce crime and disorder. This resulted in the formation of the ATMOSPHERE Group including representatives of the City Council, County Council, Health Authority, Police and other private and voluntary sector groups. In 1998 a Steering Group was formed to undertake an audit of crime and disorder problems out of which six priority areas were identified. The six priority areas are reducing burglary, tackling heroin, promoting safety in the City Centre, developing East Oxford and St. Clement's, protecting vulnerable young households and supporting young people.

9. Action groups have been formed for each of the priority areas with annual plans to achieve objectives. Community Against Drugs Funds were now available from the Home Office to support local projects. The amount of money allocated to Oxford City for 2001/02 is £171,000. This funding will provide for a co-ordinator post, Police enforcement operations, targeting areas with high burglary rates, target hardening and environmental design projects for Manzil Gardens and St. Mary St. John's to be undertaken by the East Oxford Action Community Safety Group, sharps bins, a drug education and parental support project for Rose Hill/Littlemore, expansion of drug education in Oxford City schools and the funding of a floating support worker. The Committee heard that there was a problem with the low number of applicants for support worker posts.

That as a medium/long-term objective, to investigate the setting up of a training scheme to recruit local people and fund training to reduce the skills shortage of drug support worker posts.
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10. Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council has responsibility to consider Crime and Disorder issues in everything it does.

Non-compliance of Section 17 could leave the Council liable to legal action. In order to comply with these statutory obligations, the Council needs to demonstrate that it is considering the crime and disorder implications of all its activities. In particular, it needs to make sure that when it makes decisions, it takes into account the possible impact on crime and disorder. The minimal level of implementation of the Act involves having mechanisms in place to check that crime and disorder aspects are considered whenever policies and service developments are approved.

To require all reports that necessitate decisions to detail any potential impacts on crime and disorder to meet the requirements of the Crime and disorder Act 1998 (and for the Crime Reduction officer to have a watching brief on this issue).

#### Oxford City Drugs Co-ordinator

11. Pat Peters has recently been appointed to this post. She is based in St. Aldates Police Station with links to the Council through ATMOSPHERE and the Drugs Reference Group. Her role is to co-ordinate the activities of the various agencies who are involved in the treatment, rehabilitation and support of those using drugs/substance misuse and identify gaps in the service. One potential gap already identified is services available on the City estates. It was also the perception of members of the Committee that drug related crime appeared to be on the increase on estates.

To ask the Area Committees for comments on their perception of the prevalence of drugs and drug related crime activities on estates.

12. Pat Peters co-ordinates a new project, the Oxford City Intervention model which will target the most prolific, drug related acquisitive criminals. This will be a multi-agency approach to ensure offenders receive very focused support designed to break their drug habit and take them through rehabilitation including developing life skills, housing, training and employment. A project bid has been made to the Home Office Recovered Assets Fund for £750,000 to cover treatment/case workers and housing costs.

13. The Committee welcomes the new project initiative and considers job opportunities are an essential part of rehabilitation.

To ask officers involved in the Street Scene Task Force to convene a jobs summit to seek to achieve a wide range of job opportunities for those coming out of prison and detox involving the Chamber of Commerce, the Job Centre, major employers in the City, the Council's Human Resources, the homeless network and other voluntary agencies including Emmaus;

To investigate if the Recovered Assets Fund was available as a source of funding for Local Authority drug related projects;

#### Street Scene Task Force

14. The Committee heard that the work of the Street Scene Task Force which had been set up by the Chief Executive in Summer 2001 partly dovetailed the work of the ATMOSPHERE Group. The aim of the Task Force is to reduce the impact of street culture within Oxford City through information sharing, action planning and maintenance of stable life styles. Within that aim the objectives of the Group are to reduce the number of "entrenched" rough sleepers in Oxford City, to reduce street drinking, to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour by the client group, to address drug abuse within target client groups, to target aggressive begging through enforcement, to support an increased access to relevant services, to establish continued after care provision to address life skills, employment and training issues and to develop projects to deter individuals from living on the streets of Oxford. A multi-agency steering group has been established together with a management group including a task force co-ordinator, operation and outreach manager, a seconded Police officer and an outreach nurse based at Luther Street Medical Centre. The Committee felt that regular updates were needed.

That all members of Council should be provided with regular progress reports on the work of the ATMOSPHERE project and the Street Scene Task Force (or its replacement).
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#### Drugs Reference Group

15. Dr. Tom Knowland advised the Committee on the work of the Reference Group which acts as a multi-agency sub-committee group for ATMOSPHERE. It also received information about the Sharps Working Group, a multi-agency sub-group of the Drugs Reference Group looking specifically at the issues surrounding discarded sharps in the City.

#### Luther Street Medical Centre

16. The Committee has received evidence from Martin Vincent of the Luther Street Medical Centre which provides medical services for homeless people and operates under contract with the Primary Care Trust. Martin Vincent informed the Committee that Luther Street has 1,600 patients registered with enduring and complex needs of which 43% were drug dependent, 50% of those being in the age 15-30 year group. 23% of the patients were diagnosed with mental health problems. The Centre provided a needle exchange service, a surgery based drug programme, a substance misuse support worker and a street outreach nurse.

#### Other Agencies

17. The Committee has been pleased to learn of various other multi-agencies working in this field. The Libra/Cranston project provides a community based drugs prevention programme for young people. The County Council has appointed a Drug Adviser and a multi-agency drugs education programme is to be targeted at pupils, school staff, parents, youth and community workers. The Youth Offending Team have undertaken initiatives on drug assistance

work, the Gap Project provides day support for a range of homeless young people and the Bridge Project provides accommodation for young people aged 16-25. The Oxfordshire Drug and Alcohol Action Team has recently produced a report on young people's needs assessment with a view to producing a young people's substance misuse plan with the intention of ensuring that by 2004, there will be substance misuse education information for all young people and their families, advice and support targeted at vulnerable groups, early identification of need and tailored support to all those who need it. However, the Committee supports the view that there is scope for improved co-ordination of services and some suggestions for improved links, particularly with the Homelessness Unit as set out in the next section. There is also a need for more day care provision.

To investigate what further assistance the Council can give to increasing the provision of structured day care facilities

## ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED IN THE INVESTIGATION

18. In learning about the work of the various agencies involved, the Committee acknowledges and welcomes the broad range of initiatives already undertaken to tackle this very difficult issue. It has also recognised the breadth of the subject area! This section highlights the main topic areas considered.

### Begging in the City Centre

19. Richard Adams explained to the Committee that those who were seen begging on the streets were not all rough sleepers although begging was used as a method to obtain money for drugs. The provision of a dedicated Police officer has had a significant impact on reducing anti-social behaviour and work is in progress for the suitable use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders for persistent offenders who beg. However, on the issue of prosecuting beggars, Inspector Keith Henderson advised the Committee that this needed the support of people who were prepared to give evidence in terms of statements and evidence in court as Police officers were not able to solely rely on CCTV evidence and the use of plain clothes Police officers who were not recognisable to beggars was expensive to resource. Inspector Keith Henderson also advised the Committee he was drawing up a code of conduct for sellers of "The Big Issue" magazine to prevent it being used mainly as a front by beggars.

To educate the public that in the main begging is for money for drugs and not for food.

### Rough Sleepers and Move-on Accommodation

20. The Committee has been informed that as part of the Street Scene Task Force, the Fieldwork Co-ordinator based in the Chief Executive's department has collected a significant amount of data on rough sleepers and as a result of intensive outreach work by the Contact and Assessment Team, the number

of people sleeping rough has decreased significantly. In the latest count taken in the early hours of 5th March 2002, the number of people identified was 7. This compares to 31 people identified as sleeping rough in the count undertaken in May, 2000. Some rough sleepers have mental health problems, some take drugs and/or alcohol whilst others do not take drugs. Richard Adams advised the Committee that the Detox House for five persons in Walton Street which would take in rough sleepers was a valuable resource. 44 people have already received treatment under this project and many have gone on to rehabilitation. The Contact and Assessment Team is actively engaging with clients on a regular basis and has been particularly successful in motivating clients to access services. Inspector Keith Henderson said that the lack of available beds resulted in a two month delay for a rough sleeper to come off the streets. There was also a shortage of drug support workers for those entering detox. The need for more direct access provision for younger and more vulnerable people linked to substance misuse services together with the development of more self-contained accommodation with well-funded floating support has been highlighted as a key issue in the link between housing provision and drug related crime.

To ask the Strategic Director for Housing to convene a meeting of all appropriate housing agencies to promote additional residential detox facilities similar to that provided at Walton Street by the English Churches Housing Group.

21. The Committee has expressed concern that the range of support services offered in Oxford has attracted vulnerable people to the area but Richard Adams has advised on the multi-agency approach to support people to move out of Oxford if they are not local to the area which involves identifying a lead agency, consultation with the Luther Street Medical Centre, contacting the Police, Probation and work to check that the client has moved to support services elsewhere.

22. The Committee has learnt that the Single Homeless Strategy Group identifies trends and unmet service needs. The strategy maps existing provision, analyses housing and support needs data on homeless and temporarily housed individuals and sets out service development aims. Penny Randall has informed the Committee of recent progress on the provision of hostel type accommodation. Changes to the admissions policy at Lucy Faithful House has helped rough sleepers access accommodation and services. This was formerly a 68 bed hostel for men over 25. Women, couples, young people and dogs are now accepted as are drug users and drinkers although the use of drugs and alcohol is not permitted on the premises. Stonham Housing Association has opened three drugs projects. Martin Vincent expressed concern to the Committee that the devolving of decisions on planning applications to Area Committees would create potential difficulties if planning permission was sought for similar detox houses to that provided in Walton Street in other areas of the City as he feared devolution would create potential NIMBYism. Councillor Johnson said this had been addressed in his area by the Bromford Project (a mental health scheme) involving early consultation with tenants and residents to alleviate fears.

Developers of any type of move-on/supported accommodation should be encouraged to engage with the public in early consultation on projects for future accommodation in advance of the submission of planning applications.

Improved Links with the Homelessness Service to achieve more effective joint working

23. Celia Angel has advised the Committee that single young people are only accepted as statutory homeless if they are 'vulnerable' which by implication means they are not able to find accommodation for themselves. Her perception was that outside agencies who referred clients to her with letters of recommendation that they should be accepted as homeless were under the misapprehension that her Unit could provide settled and secure accommodation which was what the clients needed. In reality, if the Council was legally required to accept people as homeless, they could only initially be placed with partner organisations in temporary accommodation where they were likely to be moved every 6 months or so. However Celia Angel advised that she believed that there was further scope for improving links between the homelessness service and drug agencies and her suggestion for improvements are set out in the following recommendations:-

- (1) to invite staff from the various agencies including Housing Association meetings with the Homelessness Unit to establish and/or improve the links with various voluntary sector agencies who operate in this field;
- (2) to offer training in homelessness legislation and City Council policies and practices to the voluntary sector drug agencies in an effort to improve links, and facilitate a better understanding of the role of the Homelessness Unit, legal duties and the restrictions the Unit faces;
- (3) to consider the competing priorities placed on the Homelessness Unit by the various voluntary sector agencies to see if more qualitative exchanges of information could be achieved;
- (4) to discuss with the relevant agencies the possible benefits of short-term placements of voluntary sector staff in the Homelessness Unit;
- (5) to establish a regular meeting at senior level (Business Manager level and perhaps other levels if staff resources permit) to agree any working practices and/or protocols that could be introduced between the agencies to facilitate more joint working.

24. The Committee also made the following housing related recommendations:-

That funding for improved IT support for the Homeless Unit should be reinstated;

To lobby the Government for a national register of vacant homes.

### City Centre Toilets

25. Inspector Keith Henderson has advised the Committee that all the City Centre toilets were used for drug related activities and the problem seemed to be most prevalent in the toilets in the Westgate Centre. He said there was evidence of needles in all toilet areas presenting a health and safety risk for both the public and leaving the attendants in the toilet areas vulnerable. Whilst Police officers visited toilets on a regular basis, he asked the Committee to consider the introduction of sharp bins in toilet areas, increased support for toilet attendants, to introduce ultra violet lighting in toilets and to consider introducing charges for use of toilets.

26. Councillor Pressel advised the Committee that using ultra violet lights in toilets which could prevent addicts from seeing veins to inject needles had previously been considered by the Health and Environment Committee. However that Committee had decided not to pursue the issue as on balance, it was felt better for addicts to use the toilets where they had access to clean water and the introduction of preventative measures might in turn endanger the addicts.

27. Adrian Allen has subsequently advised the Committee that two different types of sharps containers had been installed in the toilets in Gloucester Green and the preferred design would be scheduled into an installation programme for use in other public toilets with priority given to City Centre locations. He advised that all operational staff had been issued with mobile telephones to improve communication links between convenience staff and the Cowley Marsh Depot. In addition, given the particular difficulties at Westgate, a hand held two-way radio had been given to an individual member of staff as an extra precautionary measure. The Council's current policy not to charge the public for use of public conveniences was in line with its core value on anti-poverty.

That in addition to the use of needle gloves for all cleansing staff, consideration should be given to the provision of anti-syringe gloves designed specifically to withstand punctures at a cost in the region of £200 per pair.

28. Integral sharps bins would feature in any future renovations of public toilets and the use of sharps bins will continue to be monitored and the information passed to the Drugs Reference Group. Information on needle finds is reported via a public hotline to City Works but discarded needles found in major clear ups undertaken by contractors is not recorded

To ensure that the Council has in place procedures for monitoring information on the number of sharps found in void properties and official bins and discarded needles collected by street cleansing staff and reported by members of the public.

## Bonn Square

29. Inspector Keith Henderson has advised the Committee that the number of drug dealers using Bonn Square has started to increase. The layout of Bonn Square with the tree foliage prevented effective CCTV surveillance of this area. A bid for funding to redevelop the area had not proved successful. However he was aware that under the Westgate scheme, there was the potential for developer contributions to redevelop the area.

To ensure that Bonn Square is appropriately redesigned as soon as practical to remove the problems in the area.

To make arrangements to prune the tree in Bonn Square on a regular basis so that it does not obstruct CCTV surveillance in the area.

## Street Drinking

30. Inspector Keith Henderson said that the redevelopment of Bonn Square would also help to control anti-social behaviour associated with street drinking. The opening of the Wet Day Centre in November 2001 had significantly reduced the number of people seen drinking on City Centre streets. The Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 introduced a provision which allows the Police to control the consumption of alcohol in designated public places within the area of a local authority and Inspector Keith Henderson advised the Committee that an alcohol ban in certain areas of the City Centre would help to control the anti-social element of street drinking.

That as a matter of priority the Council should put in place an order to control the consumption of alcohol within the City Centre area. (This issue has been referred to the Central, South and West Area Committee who were informed that a report would be submitted by the ATMOSPHERE Group to the Executive Board).

## Car Parks

31. Inspector Keith Henderson highlighted that there was a particular problem with car crime on levels 3 and 4 of the Westgate car park particularly on Friday and Saturday nights when staff came off duty at about 11 pm. There had also been instances of aggressive begging in the covered area of the Worcester Street car park and he asked the Council to consider using resources to improve payment machines at Worcester Street car park. In response, Graham Smith advised the Committee that staffing at the Westgate car park had been extended from 11 pm to midnight. There was an ongoing joint operation between Council staff and the seconded Police officer to gather evidence to enable the Council to obtain anti-social behaviour exclusion orders on named individuals responsible for aggressive begging near the Worcester Street car park. Graham Smith also reported on his intention to purchase new machines for the Worcester Street car park which would require vehicle registration letters to be entered at the time of purchasing the car parking ticket. This information would then be printed on

the tickets to prevent ticket transfer and reduce begging at the site which was connected to re-selling unexpired tickets. The cost of the new machines was approximately £27,000 but this money would be recovered over a 12-15 month period taking into account the current loss of revenue.

To re-affirm the Committees previous recommendation to the Executive Board on 14th January 2002 to fund the installation of new ticketing machines at the Worcester Street car park this financial year.

To extend staffing at the Westgate car park on Friday and Saturday nights from midnight to 2 am or more Police patrols and/or more CCTV cameras.

### The Covered Market

32. Inspector Keith Henderson advised the Committee that the avenues to the Covered Market were until recently frequently used by rough sleepers. The relocation of the Covered Market gates to the frontages to prevent areas being used by rough sleepers has been agreed by most of the parties involved. Detailed plans will be drawn up with a view to the submission of a planning application.

### Crime and Nuisance Action Team Work with Council Tenants

33. Steve Kilsby explained to the Committee the work of this unit based mainly on the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 under which action can be taken on the occupiers of a premises if harassment, alarm and distress is caused to a minimum of two different households. He said the main work of the Unit is to undertake Anti-Social Behaviour Order action and any action proposed is considered on a conference basis with all partner organisations. Those involved are asked to agree in writing not to participate in anti-social behaviour in future and court action can be taken on any breaches to the Order. He advised the Committee that the vast majority of cases referred to him included a drug related element. He said cases could not be referred to him direct by Councillors although he welcomed Councillors contacting him about particular issues. He advised Councillors that if they received complaints from tenants that the tenants were aware of properties where drug selling took place, the tenants involved should be advised to contact the Local Housing Office and that his Unit could assist with witness support.

### Changes to the Law on Drug Issues

34. The Committee understood that changes were proposed to the law to allow GPs to prescribe heroin to users. Richard Adams advised that GPs cannot prescribe heroin at present although this had been done on an experimental basis in the 1970s. Inspector Keith Henderson said he believed there would still be a market for heroin even if changes to the law took place.

to lobby the Government to allow GPs to prescribe heroin to users if appropriate.

## CONCLUSION AND THOUGHTS ON THE CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE PROJECTS

35. The Committee has recognised that it selected a very broad range topic for its first investigation and feels it has learnt from the experience. Members feel they have benefited from hearing about the work of the wide range of agencies involved. For future projects, the Committee feels its deliberations would be helped by planning well in advance future topics for investigation to allow more time to research the area concerned and to plan a time table for witnesses and information needed. As suggested in the Overview and Scrutiny seminar, it considers that undertaking an investigation in a more concentrated timescale but allowing for advanced planning may be of merit rather than spanning investigations over a five month period with meetings every three weeks or so.