TOWARDS ONE COUNCIL **AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 (2)**

JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRANSITION BOARD
29 AUGUST 2008

Response to the Board Members' Comments on the Progress Report on 25 July

At the JOSTB meeting on 25 July, members requested further information when considering the Progress Report prepared for the IE on 9 July:

1. Information on Timescales for the Shared Services Team Business Case

Currently the business case is scheduled to be considered by WCC Cabinet on 23 September and discussions are taking place when the business case will be considered by the IE.

2. Under 6.5 (b) of the Progress Report referred to further areas of opportunity for further savings. These are:

The cost savings targeted by the Corporate Finance Office for 2009-10 are £6.6m from LGR and £1.25m from BMP, making £7.85m in total.

The following represent some suggestions which could help to reinforce delivery of the required savings and may provide additional opportunities for achieving more savings.

Staff savings across the services included in LGR were generally restricted to gross salary costs, including salary, employers, national insurance and pension. Further savings which are staff related may be possible by looking at travel, training, ICT and other support costs. This would ensure that the full cost of staff savings are reflected in the budget for 2009-10.

Services are making good headway with improving productivity by removing work duplication, reducing the number of errors and steps in processes together with other efficient ways of working. This creates more time available but with the same staff resources. More time can be devoted to customers or there could be the scope for fewer roles in the organisational structure. The former is referred to as a non-cashable saving and the latter is a cashable saving.

Many services over the last year have set in motion plans for delivering the required LGR cash savings through operating their services with fewer staff in post than the agreed staff establishment level. These savings, plus those under consideration as part of the restructuring process, may deliver savings in excess of those included within LGR.

In most cases, the LGR savings were identified by services with not much attention to cross-service cost efficiencies. There may be scope for savings by centralising the management of costs such as recruitment, printed matter, marketing and promotion etc.

Further opportunities include identifying of the current number of consultants, agreeing a phased reduction and developing in-house capability.

If it is possible to bring savings forward from when originally planned, this would help to increase the cumulative savings over the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, i.e. consolidating one contract for the unitary authority (rather than having several contracts) sooner than planned.

Property-related LGR savings in the form of capital receipts through the disposal of properties were not anticipated to arise until after 2009-10. Opportunities may be arising where capital receipts could start to come through earlier in 2009-10.
The process of harmonising fees and charges may provide some opportunities for increasing income.

There may be opportunities for deploying maintenance staff resources more efficiently across the organisation.

The organisation invests in systems, technology and buildings on an ongoing basis and these consume significant amounts of cash. Cost commitments in these areas must be carefully evaluated and the benefits clearly stated.

It is ensured that all opportunities for "in-sourcing" and "out-sourcing" work have or will be thoroughly reviewed.

3. Clarification on one future Wiltshire Destination Partnership as suggested by the Tourist Information Centres.

There will be one county-wide Tourism Partnership for Wiltshire, which is already in existence and is being encouraged to work towards an early transition.