



Buckinghamshire County Council

Report

Cabinet

AGENDA ITEM 4 [Cab 2/00]

Date	4 December 2000
Title	Cabinet Forward Plan
Author	Leader of the Council
Electoral Divisions Affected	All
Summary	The report presents a first draft of the Cabinet's forward plan, explains the background to this requirement and invites the Cabinet's comments.
Recommendation	To note and comment on the report.

Cabinet Members will be aware that Government regulations under the new Local Government Act will require the Cabinet to set out its programme of work for the coming 4 months, as far as is known.

The Plan, which needs to be updated on a rolling basis, has to include the issues to be considered, the date any key decisions are expected to be taken, a list of relevant reports and background papers, and an indication of how local stakeholders are to be involved.

A copy of a first attempt at such a plan is attached as Appendix A for the Cabinet's consideration. Inevitably, as we are still at the beginning of a new process, it is as yet incomplete and will need to evolve and develop over time. All senior managers are being asked to identify potential issues for inclusion in the plan, and the Cabinet is invited to identify any items which it would particularly wish to add.

It is important to note that the Plan is in 2 parts. The first part covers meetings of the full Cabinet, and includes all those issues which the Leader has decided should be considered by the Cabinet as a whole, or issues that seem likely at this stage to fall into that category. These issues are divided for convenience into a number of broad categories; especially the policy framework (see below) and associated Key Decisions. The second part relates to individual decisions by Cabinet Members (or in the interim period by the appropriate officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member). This list in particular is likely to expand rapidly as the new system beds down, and Cabinet Members are asked to alert the Head of Cabinet Support at the earliest opportunity to any potential decisions for their area.

An important element of the Forward Plan is the policy framework. This, and the budget are set by the full Council, and the Cabinet is responsible for implementing those policies within the agreed budget.

The Cabinet itself has the responsibility for preparing the draft strategies and plans that form the policy framework for the Council to consider. At the beginning of the pilot of the new arrangements it would be unrealistic, if not impossible, for the Cabinet or the Council itself to attempt to deal with all the plans and strategies forming the policy framework in one go. Many of these have previously been approved and service and business plans have been approved and/or developed to deliver the Council's policy aims. These form the basis of both current and on-going activity.

It will be necessary for the Cabinet and the Council to work through the statutory plans one by one, according to their normal cycles, until the Council is satisfied that it has in place a complete policy framework. Therefore the Forward Plan makes provision for Cabinet Members to bring to the Cabinet, at an appropriate time, reports on the statutory plans and policies for which they are responsible. In some cases, this will require little more than a confirmation of existing plans and strategies; in other cases a more thorough review, or even replacement, may be required.

In addition, attached as Appendix B is the Chief Officer of the Council's End of Term Report, which includes a list of issues to be addressed in the coming months. The key high level policies will also be identified to enable a compendium of main policy directives for the Council to be formulated.

The Forward Plan is potentially a very useful and important tool for the whole Council in the planning of its business, and should be particularly helpful in synchronising work between the Cabinet and the Select Committees and to inform officers of when they will report to the Cabinet to assist in managing the Council's business. For this reason a copy of the draft proposed Select Committee forward programme is attached as Appendix C.

The Government fully recognises that the Forward Plan cannot be an exhaustive list of all decisions, but it should give an indication of those decisions which it is known the Cabinet, or Cabinet Members, will need to consider in the coming period.

There will inevitably be occasions when urgent matters come forward which could not have been foreseen in terms of a forward plan. Whilst it is hoped to keep these to an absolute minimum, the Government recognises that this may need to happen. In these circumstances, the Cabinet will be able to consider issues and make decisions even though they have not been notified on the Forward Plan, as long as at least 3 clear days notice of the decision has been given to Members of the relevant Select Committee and the public. In extreme circumstances a decision can be taken with less than 3 clear days notice, provided that the person responsible for the decision has obtained agreement from the Chairman of the relevant Select Committee that the decision could reasonably be regarded as urgent in the circumstances.

I hope that the Cabinet will focus its discussions on ensuring that the really important issues facing the Cabinet over the next 4 to 6 months have been properly identified and included in the plan. It will be possible for us to discuss more minor issues of presentation etc. as the plan develops over the coming weeks.

Background Papers

1. New Council Constitutions: Guidance Pack Volume 1 (DETR)

2. Protocol for Decision-making and other related papers forming part of P & R Report to Council 23 November 2000.

Representations

Any representations regarding this report should be made to Head of Cabinet Support by 9.00 am 4 December 2000. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382966), Fax (to 01296 383441), or e-mail to cabinet@buckscc.gov.uk

For further information please contact: NICK FANE on 01296 383103