

STRATEGY PANEL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STRATEGY PANEL OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2000, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY COMMENCING AT 10.30 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 3.30 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr D A C Shakespeare (in the Chair);

Mr M C Appleyard, Mrs A R Bainbridge, Mr M E Brand, Mr W J Y Chapple, Mrs P M Crawford, Mr T J Fowler, and Mr M W Taylor.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies for absence were received from Mr M J Greenburgh, (Mr M Taylor substituting) Mr K I Ross and Mr R J Worrall

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr M E Brand declared an interest as he had a family member who works for the Care Services for Older People.

MINUTES

- 1 The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 5 September 2000, were confirmed.

SERVICE AND BUDGET PLANNING: 2001-2002 AND BEYOND

- 2 The Panel considered the report of the Chief Officer of the Council which set out work achieved to date on the Service and Budget Planning 2001-2002 and the next steps in the process.
- 3 As a response to the policy steers and the requirements for the Service Plans to be reviewed and targets to be set, the Policy Performance and Finance Panels considered the key issues for each service area, which were reported. During discussion a number of issues were highlighted.
- 4 Social Services - The Policy, Performance and Finance Panel (PPF) had considered options to achieve savings of £2m. Approximately two thirds had been identified and work was still in hand. The costs of the NHS Plan, which had been estimated next year at provisionally £0.8m were still unknown. It was noted that the Government had also yet to clarify whether there would be any new specific grants for Social Services.

- 5 Education - It was reported that in view of the uncertainty on savings on home to school transport and the frontline SEN provision, the Panel had achieved 3% savings in all other central budgets to deliver the 2% efficiency savings required. The Standards Fund allocation was also still unknown, although it looked likely to be increased.
- 6 Corporate Services - It was reported that the required 3% savings had so far been achieved in all service areas except for Human Resources, Emergency Planning and ICT. Service Area heads however would seek to continue to work to produce an overall Corporate Services budget at the guideline.
- 7 Environmental Services - A number of issues were highlighted arising from concerns from the PPF Panel about the implications of living within the guidelines. The Panel was supportive of the strategy of capitalising costs where possible and seeking flexibility if necessary between cash envelopes to address a major issue, because of the considerable increase in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) Capital Funding expected in the next six years. The cash envelope for waste management was reported as being insufficient to carry the service and the closure of three household waste sites was a possibility if an additional funding stream was not identified.
- 8 An announcement of the possibility of an additional £4m borrowing ability for highways maintenance under the LTP was reported to have been received. This additional capital money represented a real opportunity for future borrowing.
- 9 The option to disband the South Bucks and Chiltern Forums was discussed in the light of the formation of the Local Committees. It was noted that the exercise would probably only achieve minimal savings on officer time and expenses.
- 10 The Chairman thanked officers, Panels and Committees for the work that had so far been achieved and encouraged further work to meet the required targets.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 **That the County Council at its meeting on 23 November 2000 endorses the policy steers and the work carried out so far in each service area and agrees that work be continued to meeting the targets within existing budget guidelines.**
- 2 **That the Cabinet (with the advice of the Policy Advisory Groups and Select Committees as necessary, and having consulted more widely) develop proposals and report back to the Council on 22 February 2000 with**
 - a **a brief statement of the long term strategic aim for each Portfolio (to replace the strategic aims of the current Council Plan)**

- b **the key outcomes and performance improvement targets for 2001-02 (and later years if necessary or required by statute) for each service, to form part of the Best Value Performance Plan**
 - c **completed Service Plans for each service plan area**
 - d **the proposed revenue and capital budgets for 2001-02 for the Council to enable the delivery of these aims, outcomes and targets**
 - e **indicative revenue and capital budget allocations for our services for 2002-03 and 2003-04**
 - f **the proposed level of Council Tax for 2001-2002.**
- 3 **That Cabinet members develop, initially for the Cabinet meeting on 18 December 2000, a statement of the key future policy directions sought for their Portfolio taking account of the draft Service Plan outcomes, the emerging Bucks Community Plan and any other relevant work already undertaken by PPFs or the current Chairman and Directors.**

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

- 8 The Panel considered the initial Review Report of the Root and Branch Review Team on Learning Disabilities. The Panel agreed that the Best Value Group should review the format of the report. In terms of options to pursue, the following were identified in particular:
- a To continue to ensure that services for adults with learning disabilities are cost effective and appropriate to need, working within statutory framework and practice guidelines;
 - b The external purchasing arrangements should be reviewed;
 - c That further analysis of the main areas of learning disabilities be included within the review to give an overview of what is provided;
 - d That work be continued on the respective funding share from Health and Social Services to meet current and future need.

ROOT AND BRANCH REVIEW OF THE YOUTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

- 9 The Panel considered the initial review report of the Root and Branch Team on Youth and Community Service. The Panel agreed that the Review Team should carry out further work as follows:

- a To maintain the status quo ie keep the current balance between universal and targeted activity subject to any changes that may be required as a result of the development of the Connexions Strategy;
- b Further work should be undertaken in order to evaluate the activity of the Youth and Community Service in relation to other key providers. This would inform priorities and a shift from directly provided work to that of enabling. The focus of the forthcoming Best Value Review of Youth and Youth Facilities would then be to seek how to achieve this through effective partnership (particularly in relation to “generic” or “universal” work) with other agencies (eg District Councils) and the voluntary and private sector;
- c That the Youth and Community Service should be asked to continue to develop the Connexions Strategy with partners in Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire, based on an explicit statement of the Council’s desired outcomes and associated costs.
- d That further work be carried out on market testing of Green Park.
- e Consider how effective linkages between Youth and Community and planning for Children’s Services will be made.

CONTRACTS ROOT AND BRANCH REVIEW

- 10 The Panel received the initial review report of the Root and Branch Review Group on Contracts. Following discussion the broad proposals were supported and asked the appropriate Cabinet member(s) to take the implementation forward.

CHAIRMAN

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