

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL****DRAFT STRATEGIC AIMS**

1. **To be a modern well-managed and top-performing council which provides strategic direction and ensures, in partnership with others, local delivery of high quality services at an acceptable cost**
  - We will set targets for improving performance, especially in areas where you tell us we need to get better.
  - We will strive each year to achieve 2% efficiency savings across all controllable budgets.
  - We will aim to set an annual Council Tax at the average of South East counties.
  - We will work with the Health Service, Police, Business, Parishes and other councils to break down the boundaries, and develop services that reflect local needs.
  - We will develop a 3-year policy-driven Council Plan which provides strategic direction to the improvement of services without significantly increasing the budget.
  - We will choose the most appropriate and cost-effective way of delivering each service, in house, or by externalising, eg through trusts or public or private partners.
  - We will use Best Value and scrutiny to deliver real value, focusing on performance management and outcomes, to build on the good work already done by Root and Branch Reviews.

- We will identify new ways of funding initiatives and service improvements.
- We will conduct Root and Branch Best Value Reviews of all services from a public perspective.
- We will recruit, train and retain well-motivated staff.

**2. To strengthen the prosperity and enhance the quality of life of all of us whilst equally sustaining and improving the environment of our County for our children and future generations**

- We will work with all partners to increase the safety of individuals and reduce fear of crime across the County.
- We will work with business, eg through the Bucks Economic Partnership, to ensure that we maintain a dynamic economy and highly skilled workforce.
- We will work at regional, national and international level to secure inward investment in Bucks.
- We will protect the rural nature of the County.
- We will devise and implement policies which support rural communities and reflect the changing nature of agriculture in the County.

**3. To be open and accountable, and inform, consult and then represent all the people of Buckinghamshire**

- We will be transparent and open, communicating in a way that is accessible to all.
- We will make our services and our policy-making more easily accessible, by giving information freely, using plain language, and making the most of modern technology.
- We will ensure all our Councillors have the opportunity to develop and extend their knowledge and skills.
- We will represent Buckinghamshire on a wide range of external bodies.

**4. To work as community leaders, adopting proactive and realistic policies, and taking pragmatic actions to achieve results for the benefit of the community as a whole**

- We will encourage individuals and groups in Buckinghamshire to contribute ideas to and comment on policy proposals.
- We will enhance our reputation for acting in the interests of Buckinghamshire.
- We will have the courage to take the right decisions in the interests of the County as a whole.
- We will be seen by Buckinghamshire people to be the “natural choice” to take care of their interests, both now and in the future.

- We will play a major part in developing a community strategy for Bucks to ensure better co-ordination of services across public sector agencies targeted to meet the needs of local communities.
- We will take a lead on improving the quality of services provided by other public and private agencies in Buckinghamshire by representing the needs and wishes of the public and through collaborative actions.
- We will lead and influence public opinion in Buckinghamshire on key issues facing the County.

**5. To ensure seamless person-centred services, provided through the most appropriate partnership or direct arrangement, but which are efficient and effective in meeting the assessed needs of our clients within the resources available**

**General Supporting Policies for all Adult Care Services:**

- We will devise improvement plans, including appropriate management arrangements, to ensure service performance achieves quality and efficiency targets.
- We will proactively establish the best partnership arrangements with Health, Primary Care Groups and (prospective) Primary Care Trusts, and other key partners, to ensure seamless “one stop” services for: Learning Disability, Physical Disability, Mental Health and Older People clients.
- We will, as elected community leaders, help the Health Authority to meet its responsibilities under the NHS plan, to explain its policies and performance to the County Council on a periodic basis.

- We will develop appropriate strategies for the retention, recruitment, and motivation of staff in the delivery of Adult Care Services.
- We will ensure the necessary senior management capacity is in place, including empowering managers at all levels of the service, to fully deliver the change agenda while protecting the interests of the County Council.
- We will research the reasons for unit cost differences and take steps, where practical or desirable, to reduce unit costs to nearer to those of comparative authorities.
- We will ensure a more proactive, streamlined and uniform method for the Council to publicise all its Adult Care services, fully taking into account ethnic and other community needs.
- We will ensure the provision of adequate and integrated management information both to facilitate service planning, decision-making and performance monitoring but also to facilitate access, by users and carers to services and information.
- We will develop policies, which take account of ability to pay as a contribution to ensuring the provision of quality social care to those most in need. Furthermore, take steps to ensure clients entitled to relevant state benefits (e.g. living allowance) are getting them.
- We will ensure the Cabinet is fully apprised of the opportunities and implications of future resource allocations but then put in place service strategies, which ensure spending is contained within whatever future resources are deemed available for Adult Care Services by the Cabinet.

## **Specific Service Direction**

- We will support policies, including re-configuring of current services where appropriate, which provide for preventative help, rehabilitation and other care arrangements to enable older people to maintain their dignity and independence within the resources available.
- We will continue to support “person-centred” programmes and planning to enable our Learning Disability clients to achieve their potential and to participate fully in the life of their community within the resources available through, for example, supported employment, access to community resources and lifelong learning
- We will support policies, which encourage independence and maintain a reasonable quality of life for our physical disability clients within the resources available through, for example, increased use of direct payments.
- Through joint planning and training with the (prospective) Mental Health Care Trust, we will ensure that our mental health clients are able to live as independently as possible but in a way that takes into account their own safety and well-being and that of their carers and other members of the community.

### **6. To adopt a high profile in facilitating access to safe and responsive public service across all communities**

- We will work to provide safer communities, articulating and championing individual communities' concerns to the Police and other responsible agencies and use our own resources to support and develop improvements.

- We will enhance the customer focus in our service delivery and work with partner agencies to do the same.
- We will facilitate formal and informal learning activities within the community for all ages. We will aid social, mental and economic well-being within the community.
- We will ensure that Buckinghamshire environment and heritage has been enhanced and key elements of it have been conserved, whilst ensuring greater access to and understanding of the county.
- We will clearly identify our Community Services and involve users and potential users in service direction and development.
- We will work with young people within and across communities in a way that celebrates their contribution, motivation, skill and enjoyment and will prepare them for life.
- We will encourage a fair, honest and safe trading environment for consumers and businesses giving particular attention to providing consumer advice and reducing the illegal sales of goods to young people.

**7. To improve the care, education and health of vulnerable children (including those with special educational needs) through co-ordinated services focused on the individual**

- We will ensure that the assessment of a child's needs (whether health, care or education) is undertaken in a co-ordinated way and ideally jointly in accordance with latest guidance [ie the new Assessment Framework]

- We will improve the support available to each child with special educational needs by implementing the Council's SEN strategy.
- We will seek to improve the quality of children's lives and their achievement, including achieving the aspirations for children set out in the Government's "Quality Protects" initiative and the Education Development Plan.

(This will include the QP management action plan, the Education Development Plan monitoring achievement), and fulfilling the responsibilities of elected members as the parents of children in the Council's care).

- We will ensure that appropriate staff are available to provide and develop child-centred services.

(This will address issues of recruitment and retention, appropriate selection of staff – Warner training, and training.)

- We will take opportunities for organising the professional services available so that they are co-ordinated, straightforward to access and child centred.

(This will include developing stronger links between residential special schools, residential units, teachers and social care staff. It will also include projects such as Education of Children in the Public Care (ECPC) and the rapid response service MARRS.)

- We will continue to improve specific services which affect a child's life including expanding fostering and adoption services, minimising school exclusions, and ensuring appropriate support as children become adults.

(This will included reducing exclusion periods (which will involve extra resources) plus leaving care support.)

**8. \* To support and challenge all schools further to improve the quality of education provided for all pupils, resulting in improved pupil performance; and to recognise the priority that the Council gives to supporting the distinctive and successful Buckinghamshire system of education.**

- We will revise the Education Development Plan 2002-2005 during Autumn 2001; in consultation with schools and in the light of achievements so far; so as to engage all schools in the refocusing and the re-targeting of effort on agreed priorities for raising achievement;
- We will refocus the Schools Support Team so as more effectively to target professional effort and resources at those schools where need for support is greatest;
- We will further develop the successful strategies to improve literacy and numeracy at Key Stages 1 and 2 and; to exploit the availability of Standards Fund Grant to expand the existing Buckinghamshire programme of targeting support for improvement in literacy levels at Key Stage 3.
- While recognising the importance of appropriate levels of funding across all schools, we will recognise that standards of achievement can best be improved where need is greatest; by targeting resources.
- In partnership with the School Organisation Committee:
  - (i) We will encourage infant and junior schools to combine, while protecting small village infant schools;

- (ii) We will implement a clear strategy to provide sufficient and suitable secondary school accommodation to provide for the period of pupil number growth until 2006;
- We will carry through the review of SEN Policy and Strategy: in particular we will move towards the early identification of and provision for SEN need by formula funding some aspects of SEN provision so that schools are resourced to provide for specific needs earlier without the need for full SEN assessment.
- In partnership with the Early Years and Childcare Partnership, and while further improving the volume and quality of early years education provision, we will expand education placements for three year olds and childcare placement by the demanding targets required by Government.
- In close working the Learning and Skills Council to support the continued provision of high quality academic and vocational post-16 in Buckinghamshire secondary schools.

**9. Whilst protecting and where possible enhancing the environment, to achieve improvements to the transport infrastructure to enable the safe and efficient movement of people and goods**

- We will improve the natural environment while at the same time:-
  - Widening travel choices and seeking innovative ways of providing public transport services, particularly in rural areas.
  - Tackling the effects of increased traffic through the promotion of road safety and traffic calming schemes where appropriate.

- Investing in the basic transport infrastructure to ensure its long-term viability.
- Identifying, prioritising and promoting major capital projects for road building and improvements.
- Achieving an improved level of routine maintenance on all classes of road and pedestrian facilities.
- We will ensure that the updated Local Transport Plan secures maximum government funding to deliver the above aims.
- As Local Planning Authority, we will use our statutory powers to manage development in the County with careful regard for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment.

**10. To develop existing support services and explore innovative ways of meeting the changing needs of the Council**

- We will develop the ICT strategy into specific actions that assist in the improved delivery of service outcomes, within the medium term plan.
- We will build on the Council's aim to be a good employer by taking actions to improve skills and competencies including encouragement of full accreditation of lIP or equivalent.
- We will finalise the integrated Asset Management Plan as a major step in maximising the benefits achievable from more efficient use.

- We will identify interdependencies between support services within the existing Departments and encourage joint use to achieve greater efficiency.

**\* Note to Strategic Aim 8 and associated Policy Directions**

The proposed draft Strategic Aim and Policy Directions need to be seen in the light of the following:

- i. The basic "purpose" of the Schools Portfolio should be little different from the strategic aim set out in the Council Plan; the Education Department Directorate Plan (2000-2001) and the Education Development Plan.
- ii. The draft strategic aim and policy directions need to benefit from wider discussion including with Elected Members, schools and other professionals. As, according to the DfEE, "Schools are ..... the key unit of delivery" for school improvement, they need to share the ownership of the strategic aim and policy directions as has been achieved in the form of the current Education Development Plan.
- iii. Policy Direction 6, below, does not distinguish as yet between the responsibilities of the Schools and the Children and Young People's portfolio responsibilities. It may need to be redrafted, moved or shared by both portfolios.
- iv. The current draft strategic aims are portfolio specific. In considering them all, there should be the opportunity to develop strategic aims which cross portfolio areas (for example, over and above the Best Value Review of Corporate Services, to examine how best to provide high quality services within the County Council and by the County Council to its partners, public and customers.)
- v. The draft strategic aim and policy directions are to be seen alongside and not instead of the priorities in the Education Development and other statutory plans.