

MODERNISING LOCAL GOVERNMENT – IMPACT ON COMMUNITY RELATIONS FORUM

To: Community Relations Forum

Date: 30 November, 2000

Author: Director of Corporate Services

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To update the Community Relations Forum on the implications of Buckinghamshire County Council's approach to the Modernising Agenda.

B PROPOSED ACTION

- 2 **The Forum is asked to NOTE the report and consider any performance measures it would like to suggest to the Cabinet which might help assess the success or otherwise of the Council's modernised arrangements.**

C RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4 The Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities, after consultation, to adopt an executive and scrutiny model of administration to replace the traditional committee system.
- 5 One of three styles of executive is permitted for Councils the size of Buckinghamshire. These are:
 - i) Council elected leader and cabinet;
 - ii) Directly elected mayor and cabinet;
 - iii) Directly elected mayor and Council manager.
- 6 The executive is charged with planning and executing the majority of business of the Council. As a counterpoint, an overview and scrutiny committee or committees are required to be set up to examine the workings of the executive and any other issues felt to be significant for the Council.

- 7 Councils may only move to full implementation of the new style arrangements after consultation has been completed and their proposals have been lodged with The Secretary of State. Buckinghamshire expects to complete this process before next May but has decided, with effect from the Council meeting on 23 November, to adopt interim executive and scrutiny arrangements.
- 8 Under these interim arrangements, a Cabinet of eight Members will be established, comprising the Leader and Deputy Leader and six portfolio holders. Details of the proposed portfolios are attached as appendix A.
- 9 In addition, five select committees will be established to undertake the overview and scrutiny function. Details of the five committees are attached at appendix B.
- 10 Some traditional committees are to be retained to undertake sensitive functions, such as Development Control, and monitoring standards of conduct.
- 11 What are the implications of all this for the Community Relations Forum? The Community Relations Forum was established to address a wide range of issues relating to ways of achieving racial equality and examining opportunities for reducing racial harassment. Its terms of reference and its membership are still valid and its work is valued by the County Council.
- 12 The County Council's modernising arrangements will not, therefore, have any direct impact on the work and format of the Community Relations Forum or its meetings. What will change is the way in which the Forum interacts with the rest of the Council once the Policy and Resources Committee, to which it reported, is abolished.
- 13 Racial and ethnic minority equality issues are matters for the executive and so it is suggested that the Community Relations Forum should report in future to the executive via the appropriate Cabinet Member. In my view, this would normally be the Cabinet Member with the Community and Environment portfolio, although the Community Relations Forum may wish to express a view on this matter. Under the new Cabinet arrangements, individual Cabinet Members are able to take action individually or where the matter is especially significant to bring this before the whole Cabinet for decision.
- 14 The interim or pilot period of modernised arrangements in Buckinghamshire is expected to last until May, with a review in April of success factors. Central Government's expectation is that the new arrangements will reduce bureaucracy and improve both the speed and effectiveness of decision making by Councils. The Community Relations Forum may wish to consider any performance indicators it would like to suggest to the Council that could be used next April to evaluate the success or otherwise of the interim arrangements.

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