

5: COMMITTED TO QUALITY: STRATEGIC AIMS AND BUDGET PROPOSALS - OVERVIEW

Report of the Cabinet

Introduction

- 1 The proposals that the Cabinet brings forward to the Council today represent the culmination of the extensive work that has been undertaken since their first meeting at the beginning of December 2000.
- 2 In that time, and from a standing start, the Cabinet has:
 - prepared a revised set of strategic aims and supporting policies which will form the basis of a new rolling Council Plan, the first year of which will be our Local Performance Plan for 2001-02;
 - developed and refined the budget strategy laid down by the Council in November 2000, ensuring that it is deliverable and consistent with our aims and policies over both the short and medium term;
 - undertaken consultation on both our aims and 2001-02 budget proposals, through postal and telephone surveys undertaken by an independent research organisation, and through open meetings with stakeholders in each area and countywide;
 - given evidence to the Corporate Performance Select Committee's scrutiny of the budget process.

Consultation

- 3 The consultation exercise on the strategic aims, supporting policies and budget proposals was undertaken between 2 and 29 January 2001. The exercise was conducted in three parts.

Residents of Buckinghamshire

- 4 This part of the consultation exercise was undertaken by an independent research organisation. 5,000 questionnaires were circulated to a random sample of residents, 1,004 of whom were followed up in a telephone survey. A management summary of the survey findings is attached as Appendix A.

Key Stakeholders

- 5 1,200 key stakeholders were invited to attend one of the five meetings arranged across the County. A questionnaire was attached to the invitation letter, so that if a representative could not attend one of the meetings a written response could be submitted. In total 70 organisations were represented at the meetings and about 76 responded by post. Feedback was also sought from staff, initially through the Senior Management Forum and, via managers, the rest of the organisation.

User Satisfaction Survey

- 6 As part of the Best Value arrangements for 2000/2001 the Government placed a requirement upon all local authorities to undertake a "user satisfaction" survey. The style and content of the survey were prescribed by the DETR with the aim of achieving a consistency which would allow comparison nationally between authorities' results.
- 7 In order to undertake the survey as economically and effectively as possible, the County and the four District Councils agreed to work together and carry out a joint survey, with the assistance of independent market researchers, who provided the technical expertise, undertook the survey itself, and set out in detail an analysis of the final results. A summary of these is attached as Appendix B.

Select Committee Views

- 8 At our meeting on 18 December the Cabinet asked the Select Committee for Corporate Performance to scrutinise the budget process. The Cabinet has received and welcomed their report, and an executive summary of which, and the

response of Cabinet Members, is attached as Appendix C. A further report of the Select Committee appears elsewhere on the Agenda.

Council Plan Strategic Aims and Supporting Policies

- 9 The Cabinet has made significant modifications to the consultation draft in the light of the feedback from consultation and the Select Committee. At the Cabinet meeting on 5 February the Deputy Leader and I were asked to finalise proposals to bring forward to the Council, and these will be circulated separately.

Medium Term Financial Framework, Revenue Budget 2001-02 and Capital Budget 2001-02

- 10 These matters are considered in detail elsewhere on the agenda. Initial work on the budget strategy followed the policy steers set by Policy and Resources in September 2000 and endorsed by Council in November. However, the developing work has been increasingly influenced by the emerging strategic aims, supporting policies and the consultation feedback referred to above.

Recommendation:

To agree the Council Plan 2001-04 Strategic Aims and Supporting Policies.

**DAVID SHAKESPEARE
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Cabinet Meetings held in December 2000 and the meeting held on 5 February 2001.