

B REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER

My report covers the Deputy Leader's portfolio responsibilities as they affect the whole Council, particularly in the areas of policy co-ordination, Best Value and working and communicating with partners.

Policy Co-ordination

- 1 Within policy co-ordination I have given high priority to the formulation of the Council's new Strategic Aims and Supporting Policies. Following extensive external consultation, I believe we now have the right strategic direction in place to serve the future needs of our customers.
- 2 Alongside these Strategic Aims and Supporting Policies we have also developed a series of outcome-based 'flagship projects', which spotlight, for the coming year, important areas of activity. These are detailed in full in the Council's 2001/02 Local Performance Plan and performance against them will be monitored closely during the year.

The Local Performance Plan

- 3 The Council's Local Performance Plan and summary was published on time, with a full Internet version being available by Thursday 5 April. Around 200,000 copies of the summary have been circulated to households and businesses throughout the County as part of a pilot newspaper called 'Buckinghamshire times'.
- 4 We are asking for feedback on the newspaper (a medium used by many other authorities) and, depending on this, it is hoped to develop a timetable for future issues.
- 5 The Performance Plan was difficult to produce this year due to the effects of moving to a pilot modernised structure. Nevertheless it has been achieved through the hard work and dedication of Members and officers working together. The newly formed Best Value Policy Advisory Group has also played an important role in the development of the plan and I am grateful for their assistance. I am looking to this PAG to take a lead on other major aspects of

Best Value during the forthcoming year.

- 6 The Plan is currently being looked at by District Audit and an initial report of their findings is expected in May.

Housing Number Allocations

- 7 On 22nd March this year the Government published the final version of its new Regional Planning Guidance for South East England (RPG9). Amongst other things, the new Guidance confirms the level of new housing provision to be made in each of the constituent counties of the region, in the years up to and beyond 2006. For Buckinghamshire (including Milton Keynes), the required level of provision is an average of 3,210 homes per year. This is almost exactly the same as the 1990s rate of construction in the county and over the 20 year period from 1996 to 2016 is within 100 homes of the figure originally proposed for Buckinghamshire by SERPLAN.
- 8 I am sure all Members are as pleased as I am that our strategy on housing numbers has proved to be well founded. The housing allocations we have received are manageable because they are based on credible figures that we put forward. We played the game fairly by the rules and have been rewarded. Others who adopted less straightforward tactics have found that their targets have been increased. Please see also the report of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation, about the impact on the Structure Plan.

Foot & Mouth Epidemic

- 9 Similarly, in addressing the foot and mouth epidemic we adopted a rational, clear, well-argued stance based on what we judged to be in the best interests of Buckinghamshire. I am pleased to say that when we were summoned to see the Minister to explain our actions, she listened very carefully and accepted fully the rationale behind our position and welcomed the pragmatic way it was being implemented on the ground.

Central Railway

- 10 A joint challenge for my portfolio area, in partnership with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation, in the new council will be developing a response to the Central Railway proposals.

Communication

- 11 I regard this as a particularly important part of my portfolio responsibilities, and I have recently been giving priority within this area to the preparatory work relating to the induction of Members to the new Council. I hope that both new and re-elected Members will find the proposed activities and information both enjoyable and of real practical benefit.

**BILL CHAPPLE
DEPUTY LEADER**