

EVALUATION OF PILOT ARRANGEMENTS

NB: In this document, "overview and scrutiny" committees are referred to as select committees, which was the title adopted at the start of the pilot. In future they will be known as "overview and scrutiny committees".

Political Structure – expected outcome		
The Authority has devised a new structure, which meets the requirements of the County Council and fulfils its obligations under the Local Government Act 2000 in submitting its proposals to the Secretary of State by the end of June 2001.		
Issues to address	Indicators of success	Achievement
Executive and Scrutiny arrangements are introduced and tested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ All members have a role(s) which they think are rewarding and which engage them in the work of the Council. ◆ All select committees have met and have produced at least one report to the Council during the pilot period ◆ A programme of work for 2001-02 has been developed and agreed ◆ The use of the call in procedure has not resulted in any undue delay to cabinet decisions bring taken or implemented ◆ Select committees have equal access to information (parity of esteem has been achieved) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Over 80% of members who responded to a survey in February said that they were contributing to the Council's work within the new arrangements and many were finding it interesting. Most of the remaining 20% felt that it was too early in the pilot period to make a valid judgement. Some members had indicated a sense of detachment, since the Committee system was disbanded, and in response to this arrangements have been made for an all member meeting to take place during those months when there is no County Council meeting. The first of these has already been held which dealt with a range of current issues which members discussed and which proved very successful. ◆ All select committees have held a series of meetings during the pilot period culminating in reports both to Cabinet and the County Council. ◆ A framework is in place, within which the Cabinet is working to its short to medium term (four monthly) programme and the select committees have established their priorities over the same time period. Both the Executive and the select committees will want to review and confirm their programmes of work for the remainder of this year following the June elections. ◆ The call in procedure has been used by one select committee. Consideration of the matter in question did not give rise to any difficulty in terms of delay to the Cabinet Member's decision being implemented. ◆ The right of access of select committees to any information they may need to carry out their work is enshrined in the Constitution (see Standing Orders and Protocols on Decision Making and Select Committees). Select committees are well supported by officers (from the Policy Support Team and Committee Administration) to assist members in accessing and using this information.

<p>Decision making by the Cabinet is better informed and decisions are made more quickly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ All <i>key</i> decisions are made in the knowledge of what is the community's view and meet the criteria set out in the decision making protocol ◆ There is a clear rationale set out for all decisions ◆ There is a four month plan updated monthly for all key decisions ◆ All members of the public, of the Council and Staff know or can find out what decisions the cabinet are going to take and what they have decided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Protocol on Decision Making, contained within the Constitution, sets out clearly and comprehensively all the steps that have to be taken before a key decision can be reached. This includes consultations with the local members and any other parties who have a relevant contribution to make. Information about decisions to be taken at each statutory step is published on the Internet as well as hard copy being placed on deposit. Through seminars and regular information sheets, both members and staff are now fully appraised about how the new arrangements work. The regularity of Cabinet meetings and the ability of individual Cabinet members to take decisions (following due consultation and due time for representations to be made) has ensured that decisions are made more quickly than under the previous arrangements (albeit that the formal decision still has to be taken by the officer). ◆ The new set of templates introduced to ensure that all relevant information is provided in reports in consistent manner has worked well. All reports set out clearly the rationale for the decisions being taken. ◆ The Cabinet reviews and updates its four month plan at each meeting. The plan is available on the Internet. ◆ All Cabinet papers, select committee reports and minutes publicly available on the Internet. In addition members receive a regular hard copy newsheet (Corebrief) containing recent decisions and all Cabinet and select committee news. Staff are briefed through departmental newsletters and at regular seminars. The Council has also just launched a pilot newspaper called "Buckinghamshire times" which, subject to positive feedback being received from the general public, it hopes to produce on a regular basis.
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<p>County Council agrees the medium term plan and sets the agenda to be delivered by the new cabinet in 2001</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is a clear policy framework for the Council which is understood and accessible to all ◆ The Local Performance Plan is published ◆ A programme of work for the Council based on its new role has been established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ At its meeting in March, the County Council concluded its deliberations on the new Council Plan and adopted a set of Strategic Aims and supporting policies. The mechanism for taking this forward, and the contribution to be made by the Executive, Non-Executive and the Council itself is currently being finalised. ◆ The 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. ◆ The new agenda for the Council, within the modernised arrangements, is still evolving and may need further adjustment after the elections to suit the needs of the new Council. However, the current format of County Council meetings already embraces regular reports from the Leader and Cabinet members and from select committees as appropriate. The list of statutory plans forming part of the Council's work has also been agreed.
<p>County Council begins to adopt its new role</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The format of meetings has changed and there are more frequent debates on key issues ◆ Reports of select committees are discussed and recommendations either accepted or referred to the cabinet for decision ◆ A programme of member induction has been set up and is being implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The format is changing and already some key issues have come forward for specific debate. ◆ The Council has already debated one report coming forward from a select committee and others are prepared, either for direct submission to a Council meeting, or via the Cabinet for initial consideration. ◆ A comprehensive programme of member induction and development for implementation when the new Council takes office in June has been developed.
<p>Members have the opportunity to contribute to policy development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ All portfolio holders have set up their PAG and have asked its members for their views at least twice during the pilot period ◆ The cabinet has asked select committees to undertake reviews on its behalf ◆ There has been an opportunity for the policy implications of statutory plans forming part of the policy framework to be considered by cabinet and select committees before being reported to the Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Policy Advisory Groups (PAGs) have been set up within each portfolio and meet regularly to proffer advice to, and act as a sounding board for, the Cabinet member. ◆ The way in which the Council's overall work programme is to be allocated between Cabinet and select committees, to benefit overall efficiency and effectiveness, is currently being worked on. ◆ The policy framework is being finalised and will be put to Cabinet and Council for adoption soon after the election.

<p>Members have continued the development of new skills required to work in the new structures effectively</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ All members have had the opportunity for at least three days developmental training ◆ The cabinet has undertaken developmental work to support its new role and has an agreed programme of further work ◆ All select committee members have had an induction process and have participated in at least one select committee during the pilot period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ All members were invited to participate in a number of development workshops run by the IDeA during the spring and summer of 2000, covering the representation role of members, the scrutiny function as well as a general overview briefing. In October 2000 the County Council signed up to the IDeA Charter on Member Development. Member training and development is ongoing and importantly the induction and training programme for the post election period will cover <u>all</u> members, not only new ones. This programme will cover both skills and knowledge needs and will be targeted at individual groups and individuals as necessary for maximum effect. ◆ Members of the Cabinet, individually, are actively pursuing skills and knowledge training to suit their own requirements. Collectively the Cabinet has regular "away days" to talk about its procedures and share experience about how each is interacting with other members and with senior officers operating within the Cabinet members' portfolios. ◆ The initial induction was provided through a combination of IDeA and in-house sessions. The IDeA have continued to provide objective assessment of committee work and style of operation by sitting in on a number of meetings of select committees during the pilot period. Very positive feedback has been received, with particular comment being made on the engaging nature of the new style of working.
<p>Officer structures – expected outcome New structures at the senior level have been designed which, whilst minimising disruption, support the new political process. The proposals have been the subject of consultation and have been costed and agreed. Staff involved understand their position and new responsibilities and other staff have been notified of the changes and the reason for them.</p>		
<p>Creation of General Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ General managers have developed their business plan to deliver the political objectives agreed by the cabinet ◆ With portfolio holders GM's have defined what management structure is appropriate to deliver the business plan and costed it for report to the cabinet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The key outcome targets and accompanying "Flagship" projects within each portfolio are now in place. General Managers are now working with their Heads of Service to allocate resources within business plans to ensure the delivery of these outcomes and flagship projects. ◆ A new senior management structure is being put in place. The design of this should ensure the capability is in place to deliver the political objectives. The relationship between the various levels of plans and activity is depicted by the "golden thread".

Clarity of accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ All staff understand what is proposed and know to whom they are accountable and what the expectation of them will be in the new Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A key requirement of the new officer structures is that staff are clear about to whom they are accountable and the expectations on them. Whilst there have been significant changes at senior level, the impact below that level will be minimal and for most staff there will be no change.
Delegation of decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ All staff understand the decision making process and who has delegated authority for which decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The widespread delegation of decision making needed to maintain operational efficiency is not changed by the new political arrangements. These delegations are enshrined in the Constitution. The individual staff holding the delegated authority, and those that report to them, are aware of the responsibilities through wide discussion in the councilwide Senior Management Forum and through individual management team briefings.
Shared vision which is owned by the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ All staff know what the political priorities of the Council are and through the business and service planning process have the opportunity to contribute to how <i>the</i> Council's vision is delivered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There has been widespread consultation about the Council's new Strategic Aims and Supporting Policies and how these will be translated into action via the service and business planning process. Detailed business plans are now in place and the whole process will be performance managed within an agreed councilwide framework in which the expectations at every level have been discussed, clarified and agreed.
Cultural change in the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Having six general managers has not resulted in the creation of six departments ◆ A programme of culture change has been agreed and is being implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The avoidance of departmentalism in a new guise is one of the critical success factors adopted in establishing the new arrangements. Ongoing monitoring will be carried out, principally by the Chief Officer of the Council and the Cabinet, via regular reporting, to ensure that this principle is upheld. ◆ A programme of implementation is being developed by the Head of Organisational Development in liaison with the Chief Officer's Management Team and the Senior Management Forum. Success in delivering this will be monitored and measured via agreed criteria.
Creating a more corporate and flexible organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A corporate pool of staff to support the executive , select committee and organisational development needs of the organisation has been created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A central policy support team has been created from a mix of permanent core and secondments drawn out of service departments and the Chief Officer's Department. These staff will support all branches of the Council but dedicated individuals at the senior level have been identified to provide specific support for the Executive on the one hand and select committees on the other.

Member support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The support needs of members have been defined and the member support team has been designed and implemented ◆ Members know how to access the information they need and what support they are entitled to in the new structure as well as knowing what is going on in their division. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ongoing discussions with members and information derived from a questionnaire have indicated the areas where support needs to be concentrated. A programme to deliver this is now being implemented under the auspices of the Chief Officer and the newly created post of Member Support Manager. ◆ The new corporate information system (CIA) is in place which allows members (and officers) to access all published information electronically. A more efficient "search engine" will shortly be in place to further assist members. The hardware needs of members are being reviewed and equipment replaced where necessary. An ongoing training programme in the use of computers and software programmes continues. Within the induction and development programme a particular focus will be put on developing a local patch "factfile" for each member to provide them with essential information, including statistical information about what is going on in their own Division.
Management development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A programme of development to provide the skills and competencies of the modernised council has been agreed and is being implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The key requirements for this are understood and most are in place. Appropriate links are being made to the induction and development programme for the post election period. It is a principle of development for members that, as far as possible, this is conducted in parallel with a similar programme for officers to aid mutual and co-operative understanding of what is needed by both members and officers to deliver services within the new political arrangements.
<p>Partner Organisations – expected outcome The needs of partner organisations within the new arrangements have been recognised and built in to the structure. Each organisation and participating representative is being made aware of how they can contribute to the development of policy in the future and the formal lines of communication which are open to them.</p>		
Role of the portfolio holder with partner organisations	Each portfolio holder will know which outside organisations he/she will be personally involved with and will have identified others with which he/she will link.	A comprehensive review of outside bodies has been conducted by the Cabinet and those that the Cabinet will have responsibility for, and those which will fall to each Cabinet member to deal with, has been agreed. The Cabinet members individually have given priority during the pilot period to establishing communication with main partner organisations. A joint event with partner organisations has been planned to take place following the first meeting of the new Council at the end of June.

Select committee co-options	Each select committee has decided what co-options it needs (apart from those designated in the regulations)	The rights of statutory co-optees has been clarified and the individuals concerned are already making an important contribution on the appropriate select committee. Select committees are generally making good use of their opportunity to invite co-optees to join them and there are ongoing discussions with teacher representatives and their trade unions on how best they may contribute within the new political arrangements.
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Support by the corporate administration team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Agreement has been reached on which external meetings <i>must</i> be supported by the committee administration team and how, if at all, other meetings will be recorded◆ There are clear reporting lines for all external representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ The agreed arrangements are in place.◆ This is now in place following a review of representation on outside bodies.
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