

5 : CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS

A LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Social Services Funding

- 1 Social Services authorities up and down the country are continuing to press for additional funding for Social Care in advance of the Government's RSG announcement expected at the end of November. Since leading a debate on this issue at the last LGA conference, it is apparent that this is clearly a national problem affecting most local authorities regardless of political control.
- 2 In a recent letter to the Prime Minister, I set out in the clearest possible terms the effects of the Government's policies upon the people in Buckinghamshire and to suggest that the only sustainable answer is for the Government to make a step change in the way it funds Social Services nationally.

Local Government White Paper

- 3 On 30 October, I attended a meeting at the LGA at which Steven Byers outlined his vision for the forthcoming Local Government White Paper. He outlined that the White Paper would give the chance to look afresh at the provision of public services and in particular to foster, as he put it, an "adult relationship" between Central and Local Government. He suggested that powers could be returned to Local Authorities so that they could develop their role from local administration to proper "Local" Government.
- 4 He also outlined increasing freedoms and flexibilities for local authorities and a reduction in the number of statutory plans and also less performance indicators.
- 5 He also said that the White Paper would encourage the judgement of local authorities side by side. Those judged to be performing well in being able to deliver top quality services and to lead their communities would be freed of red tape and bureaucracy and also would be granted freedoms from inspections. For those poorer performing authorities, this position would be reversed.

- 6 He also outlined greater freedoms for authorities to borrow and that the White Paper would probably contain clear statements about what is expected from each type of council. This looks likely to take the form of core expectations, in our case for county councils.
- 7 I shared the stage with Steven Byers at the presentation and was invited to summarise the main points raised during the discussions. My main messages were that there is growing public expectation from Local Government and the services it provides and we would hope that the White Paper would give us the chance to deliver those expectations.
- 8 Above all, there is an expectation that the White Paper will give local government the chance to "get on with the job". If it is merely full of more bureaucracy, more inspection and more sticks, it will be a disappointment for us all.
- 9 The White Paper is expected to be published for consultation in mid-December.

PSA

- 10 Following several weeks of detailed negotiations with the Government, I am delighted to announce that the Buckinghamshire Public Service Agreement is about to be formally signed. The agreement, developed in partnership with the District Councils, the Police and Health Authorities and under the auspices of the Bucks Partnership for Action, contains 13 targets for enhanced service delivery.
- 11 Considering the relatively short time we have had to put this agreement together, it is a tribute to all those involved that we have reached this position. I am sure we will all go on to make it a real success for the community in Buckinghamshire.

**DAVID SHAKESPEARE
LEADER**