

CABINET MEETING

14 August 2001

Present: Mr Egleton (Leader), Mr Whitehouse (Deputy Leader), Mr Bowater (Environment), Mrs Mallowan (Community), Mr McKenzie (Safety Health and Well-Being) and Mr Sheasby (Resources).

Also Present: Mr Adams, Mr Cooper, Mr Dunlop, Mr Greer, Dr Hollis, Dr Kennedy (Chairman of the Council), Mr Reed, Mrs Temple, Mr Winterbourn and Mrs Woolveridge.

1. SUB-COMMITTEES PANELS AND GROUPS

The Cabinet considered a report of the Leader proposing ways in which the Sub-Committees, Panels and Groups which existed under the old political structures should be incorporated into the new structures.

The Cabinet recalled that decisions on policy issues would be made by the Cabinet (collectively), except where they related to a choice of issues for review (Scrutiny) or where a particular policy decision was reserved to the full Council. Portfolio Holders would be assisted to bring forward reports either with support from Officers; with support from the formation of a Policy Advisory Group (PAG) where the issue was likely to be of limited duration; or by referring the matter to one of the three Review Panels. PAGs could only be formed with the approval of the Leader and it was agreed that the number should be limited to a reasonable level and that generally they fulfil the criteria of a limited life and be related to a single and identifiable issue. PAGs would not have to be exactly politically proportional but would generally be cross party and kept as small as reasonably possibly.

While it had been agreed by the Council that PAGs would not generally be open meetings, the Cabinet considered that for the first meeting of a PAG, Portfolio Holders should extend an open invitation to any interested Member to attend. Other Members could of course be invited or called to attend a PAG at any time at the discretion of the Portfolio Holder.

The Cabinet also considered a question of referral to Review Panels and noted that Cabinet Members were not permitted to be involved in the work of a Review Panel.

• **RESOLVED** that:-

1. References to Review Panels will, for the time being, be made by the full Cabinet
2. Cabinet Portfolio Holders should not be involved in the work of Review Panels but would present a covering report to the Cabinet when recommendations are available;
3. Policy Advisory Groups be approved and set up as set out below:-

Office Move Project PAG (Mr Sheasby)

Finance PAG (Mr Sheasby) – to review at end of trial

ICT Strategy Review PAG (Mr Sheasby)

Land Use Strategy PAG (Mr Bowater)

Grants PAG (Mrs Mallowan and Mr Whitehouse) – to deal with annual grant round. Other requests or large one-offs to go to Cabinet.

Bells Hill Shopping Centre PAG (Mrs Mallowan)

Waste Strategy PAG (Mr Bowater)

Local Plan Review PAG (Mr Bowater) – to include Chairman or Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee. Also two voting Members and two observers/substitutes to serve on County Structure Plan Review Joint Panel.

Concessionary Fares/Dial-A-Ride PAG (Mrs Mallowan) – when appropriate, to cover these specific items previously dealt with by Bus Sub-Committee.

4. The following matters be dealt with by Review Panel:

Annual Budget Review – examination of budgets, growth items etc to three Review Panels for report to Cabinet (co-ordinated through Mr Sheasby).

Health Service Consultation – to Environment and Housing Review Panel to cover in broader link to external health scrutiny (Links also to relevant Portfolio Holders).

5. Other Sub-Committees/Panels would continue or be required as follows:-

Policy Committee - Executive Sub-Committee/Consultative Body

Planning Committee – Executive Sub-Committee/Consultative Body

Licensing Committee – Executive Sub-Committee/Consultative Body

South Bucks/Chiltern Joint Panel – to continue subject to discussions with Chiltern to determine size of membership

Joint Staff Consultative Group – to continue with Mrs Mallowan as Chairman but also reporting to Mr Whitehouse who could attend if necessary or as substitute for the Leader.

Evreham Sports Centre Management Committee – to continue as Joint Committee with BCC reporting to Mr McKenzie

6. Panels or Groups would not be required for the following:-

Other Service Committees - Executive Sub-Committees/Consultative Body

Budget Review Panel – work completed

Modernisation/Electoral Review Panel – work completed (feedback from Members on Modernisation to be reported to Mr Whitehouse/Chief Executive)

Communications Panel (unless PAG required for any specific and substantial issue)Member Training Group – Disband and put under Mr Whitehouse, (with assistance from Dr Scott/Assistant Chief Executive to co-ordinate Member Training)

Stoke Common – can be overseen by Mr BowaterBeacon Centre Panel – can be overseen by Mr McKenzie with scrutiny from the Review PanelEnvironmental Improvements – can be overseen by Mr Bowater with scrutiny by Review Panel

Thames Valley Drainage Partnership Board – Now disbanded

2.

FORWARD PROGRAMME FOR CABINET

The Cabinet considered a report of the Leader setting out the principles behind the rolling four month programme of key decisions and a suggested format.

The Cabinet was required to publish a forward plan containing details of all the matters likely to be the subject of key decisions. The programme of decisions would need to be publicly available, and sent to the relevant Review Panel which in practice would mean all of them, at least two weeks before the start period covered by the programme.

The forward plan had to include the following elements:-

- The issue
- Likely date for decision

- Who will make the decision and how they can be contacted
- What reports/papers are available
- How consultation with affected stakeholders (if any) is to be carried out

It was proposed to issue a bulletin to all Councillors to include the forward programme in draft before it is formally noted by the Cabinet.

A key decision was currently defined as "anything resulting in expenditure or savings which, in relation to the Council's budgets, is significant". This was a very broad definition given by the Government which maybe more closely drawn in future. Under the old Committee system, financial regulations enabled the Policy Committee to approve additional revenue expenditure or reduced income for service Committees to a limit of £5,000. Above this level, the sum was regarded as significant and required full Council approval. The financial regulations were unchanged for the trial period and it was therefore proposed that for the time being, a limit of £5,000 and above be imposed as being significant and therefore defining the key decision.

The forward programme was attached as an appendix to the report in draft and illustrative form, as a rolling programme it would be refined, updated and improved on a regular basis. The Cabinet requested the addition of the Land Use Strategy item and consideration as to the timing for inclusion of the Bells Hill Redevelopment in the Plan.

- **RESOLVED** that:-

1. The draft forward programme, as amended, be approved; and
2. Income or expenditure effects of £5,000 or more (where not already budgeted for) be regarded as significant and thus defined as a key decision.

3.

FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR CABINET MEETINGS

The Cabinet considered a report of the Leader about detailed points in relation to operation of the Cabinet. It had previously been agreed that it would be helpful if all members of the Council received not just the normal minutes and agendas for meetings but in addition were able to look at a regular bulletin setting out what was happening in the Council. This will allow Members not on the Cabinet to have a real input to the decision making process. The bulletin need not cut across either debate at full Council, or the powers of scrutiny and call-in. It would also be possible to make such a bulletin available for Business Unit Heads, other staff and to the Press. An appendix to the report contained a sample format of a bulletin that might be produced. The Cabinet supported the publication of a bulletin in short, punchy style and suggested that longer items such as the Forward Programme only be included in summary form.

As regards timing, the aim would be for the bulletin to be issued within two days after a Cabinet meeting, thus picking up any issues covered in that meeting, and about three to four weeks before the next one, thus allowing coverage of issues likely to come up then. Cabinet meetings would be held generally on a monthly basis on a Monday at 6pm and it was suggested that these be preceded by any informal Management Meeting commencing at 4pm during the trial period, to review business for the following meeting. Bulletins would also cover issues going to Review Panels, Policy Advisory Groups etc. so that Councillors, the Press and staff have as broader view as reasonably possible. However, it was noted that the bulletin may not cover every single item due to be considered by the next following Cabinet.

The production of the bulletin would utilise senior officer time but it was the intention to distribute it by electronic means wherever possible.

- **RESOLVED** that:-

1. The concept of a bulletin be approved, with the details to be agreed with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Communications.

2. The bulletin be circulated in accordance with the suggested timetable to all Councillors, Business Unit Heads and Directors (with an availability to all staff if they wished to look at it) and to the Press.
3. Feedback from Councillors on the bulletin be invited.

4. SUBMISSION ON NEW POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Cabinet considered a report of the Leader putting forward a draft submission to the Government on the Council's new political arrangements.

The Government has asked each Council to let it know how it proposed to take forward the new political arrangements enshrined in the Local Government Act 2000. In particular it should indicate what consultation was undertaken to support the choice of arrangements. Submissions were required by 10 September. The report contained a draft submission which had been prepared on the basis that it was understood a relatively short document was required, no guidelines had been issued to cover the submission and that the indications were that it would not be examined in detail unless the consultation results appeared to go against the chosen course of that particular Council.

The draft submission contained background details about the District and the Community Plan. Details had been furnished about the political management in South Bucks, the consultation process on new arrangements together with a description of the new arrangements to be trialed including the role of the Council, the Cabinet, Review Panels, Policy Advisory Groups, the Planning and Licensing Regulatory Functions, Standards Committee, Information to Councillors and Officer Structures.

- **RESOLVED** that the draft submission be approved.

5. PROTOCOL FOR NEWS RELEASES

The Cabinet considered the report of the Deputy Leader proposing a protocol for the issue of news releases.

The trialing of the new political arrangements had meant that the procedure for issue of press releases needed to be updated. All new releases would be co-ordinated by the Council's PR and Communications Officer and the protocol set down the procedure for drafting, approval and issue of news releases, including arrangements for consulting the Portfolio Holder for External Partnerships and Communications on cases where there were potential political or commercial sensitivities.

Mr Whitehouse tabled a report scheduling the news releases issued over the last six months including details of the impact and coverage in the media. The Cabinet was pleased to note the high level of coverage and positive impact of the press releases and the Director of Communications was asked to circulate the report to all Members and update it periodically.

- **RESOLVED** that the protocol for news releases be approved.

6. OFFICE MOVE – STAFF SUPPORT PACKAGE

The Cabinet considered a report of the Deputy Leader with proposals for a staff support package for the office move.

The report referred to the proposed relocation of the Council to offices at Capswood, Denham, and summarised the consultations undertaken with staff about the effects of the move. It also contained the report of the Assistant Chief Executive to the Joint Staff Consultative Group Meeting held on 24 July 2001 and the written comments of the Staff Side presented to that meeting. The proposed support package was designed to assist those staff who currently walked or used public transport to get to work and to recompense staff employed (on 'old contracts') which pre-dated the Council's decision to relocate its offices.

- **RESOLVED** that a staff support package for the office move be approved containing the following elements:-
 1. Provision of a minibus to provide pick-up and return to Slough morning and afternoon, as well as from local railway stations and other trips, to support current staff who relied on public transport.
 2. Payment of a mileage allowance of 33p per mile for additional miles travelled (less the first two additional miles each day) for all staff on "old contracts" to compensate additional travel to work costs. The mileage rate be indexed linked and increased at 1 April and to be paid for a maximum of three years.
 3. The flexible working scheme be changed to reduce the core time and increase the flexible lunch period and the Council car loan scheme be extended to all staff.

7. CCTV IN BEACONSFIELD

The Cabinet considered a report of the Leader on developments relating to CCTV in Beaconsfield and a request from Beaconsfield Town Council.

On the recommendation of the Community and Leisure Committee, the Council had agreed to support the installation of a CCTV scheme in Beaconsfield. The scheme would have cameras located in the old and new towns (including Council car parks) and in Holtspur to watch streets and premises with monitoring taking place from High Wycombe. The overall costs of the scheme were in the order of £173,000 capital and ongoing revenue costs of £36,500. The District Council had agreed to meet £30,000 of the capital cost and £7,500 of the revenue cost in recognition of the cameras being installed in the Council car parks.

The Council had also suggested that Beaconsfield Town Council take over the running of the scheme from the Chamber of Commerce who had done most of the initial work. The Town Council had now agreed to take over as the lead agency although the Chamber of Commerce would continue to be involved. Liaison was also taking place with Burnham Parish and Gerrards Cross Parish as regards CCTV in those villages.

The Town Council had now requested that the District Council consider assisting with the running costs of the scheme, which will be £29,000 per year (excluding the costs already being supported by the District Council). Some pledges of support from businesses have been secured to cover part of this but the majority remains to be found. The Cabinet noted that the Town Council currently paid to the District Council a subsidy towards the running costs of the Beacon Centre this payment amounted to £15,000 in the current year reducing to £10,000 in 2002/03 and £5,000 in 2003/04. It was proposed that by cancelling these subsidy payments with immediate effect the District would make an additional substantial contribution to CCTV in Beaconsfield. The Cabinet took the view that this additional support should be approved, and taking into account the Council policy of keeping expenditure within SSA, it would be necessary to match this by savings elsewhere in budgets. Members suggested that the Town Council be asked to report on progress and provide information about the effect of the CCTV scheme on levels of crime.

- **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE COUNCIL** that:-
 - an additional payment towards the cost of CCTV in Beaconsfield be approved as set out above. This will mean that the Council's total commitment to the Beaconsfield CCTV scheme is £30,000 one-off capital grant, together with a revenue grant of £22,500 in 2001/2, £17,500 in 2002/3, £12,500 in 2003/4 and £7,500 per year thereafter whilst the CCTV scheme remains fully operational.

8. BUDGET STRATEGY AND PREPARATION

The Cabinet considered a report from the Resources Portfolio Holder on the policy and methodology for the preparation of the 2002/03 budgets for the Council.

The new style of administration would require a different approach to preparing budgets. The Cabinet Member primarily responsible for each service would need appropriate ownership of and accountability

for the current and proposed budgets relating to his/her role in bringing about the actions under the Community Plan. Also, budgets would not only need to be considered by the Cabinet but also submitted to scrutiny before the Council approved the budget and level of Council tax.

It was proposed the existing service levels and latest approved forecast should be the baseline for the preparation of budgets for the coming year, subject to those being satisfactorily linked to the delivery of the Community Plan and statutory service obligations. The report suggested an outline programme for budget preparation:-

- i. Cabinet to approve the methodology and the assumptions to be built into the base budget.
- ii. Cost centre managers review budgets in the light of this policy and consider the future delivery of the priorities under the Community Plan.
- iii. A Budget Review Policy Advisory Group consider the budgets and review them in the light of the priorities of the Community Plan.
- iv. Resources Portfolio Holder brings a consolidated report to Cabinet showing the implications of recommendations and the overall position with regard to SSA and the grant the Council will receive.
- v. Cabinet make recommendation to Council on budgets and level of Council Tax.

In the light of the discussion about Policy Advisory Groups and matters for review (referred to in Minute 1 above), step (iii) of the above outline programme would need to be adjusted to reflect the role of the Review Panels.

As to budget preparation methodology, a number of changes to budgets and the ways of funding some items of expenditure had already been agreed which would be built into the preparation of the base for next year. General inflation rises would be built into the cash limit at a proposed level of 2% (non pay) allowance. Specific items where 2% would not be the appropriate figure or where increases were linked to a particular index would need to be provided for e.g. contract payments. The full effect of the April 2001 pay award would be provided for and it was suggested that 3% be built in from April 2002. Ongoing commitments would be built into the base where these had been approved by the Council. It was proposed to continue with the 2% staff vacancy ratio.

Other items not taken into consideration at this stage could affect the budget requirement. These included:-

- (i) Any change of income from investments - the Council may be affected by falling yields.
- (ii) Any items listed in the Community Plan but not yet approved for financing.
- (iii) Any possible change to the employers contribution to the Pension Fund. Early indications suggested that there will almost certainly be an increased contribution on a long term basis due to the actuarial valuation assumptions.

Finally, a number of assumptions had to be made in order to prepare a funding statement. The assumptions were:-

- (i) SSA will rise by 3%.
- (ii) No methodology changes in distribution of either SSA or grant.
- (iii) A grant rise of 2.5%.
- (iv) Items which the Council has agreed should be funded outside of the Revenue Budget will be funded in that manner and shown on the statement as withdraw from balances.
- (v) The balance of the funding will fall to be met from Council tax or reserves.

- **RESOLVED** that:-

1. The reporting lines and outline programme for budget preparation (subject to the adjustment referred to above) and the methodology set out be approved.
2. The assumptions built in the budget as set out be approved.

9. JOINT BEST VALUE REVIEW OF EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Cabinet considered a report from the Safety, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder seeking approval to the Emergency Planning Improvement Plan produced following the joint County and District Best Value Review.

The Emergency Planning Best Value Review report had been agreed by the Council in February 2001. A joint inspection by the Best Value Inspection Service (BVIS) was scheduled to commence in mid August and before this could take place the Joint Emergency Planning Improvement Plan needed to be formally approved by all the Councils involved.

The Emergency Planning Service had a good track record of responding to potential crisis effectively. This approach was reflected in a sensible and pragmatic improvement plan which contained clear actions and time scales. However, the Council's own experience of the BVIS report into the Building Control Best Value Review suggested there may be some criticisms that could be applied. The consensus of opinion from the other authorities involved was that the provisional findings of the BVIS report should be awaited before taking any further action. There would be the opportunity to respond on the Best Value Inspector's interim challenge before any final inspection report was issued. A copy of the improvement plan was appended to the report.

- **RESOLVED** that:-

1. The joint Emergency Planning Improvement Plan be approved in the context of the concerns raised in the report.
2. The Head of Environmental Health be authorised to finalise the detail of a joint response to the BVIS Interim Challenge on Emergency Planning, in conjunction with the other local authorities in Buckinghamshire.

10. HOUSING PROVISION IN SOUTH BUCKS 2000/2001

The Cabinet considered a report of the Environment Portfolio Holder on the latest position in relation to housing provision in South Bucks District. The report had been prepared taking into account the revision to PPG 3 Housing (published March 2000) which had increased the amount of housing monitoring undertaken to accord with the plan, monitor, manage approach advocated in the guidance. The report had been prepared on that basis and was attached for consideration.

The report set out the details of housing provision within South Bucks and provided a detailed view of the numbers and type of dwellings coming forward. An analysis showed that the number of larger dwellings permitted in the last year has fallen significantly and currently more one and two bedroom properties had come forward. The report also examined the density of the new housing development across the District and provided a comparison between densities being achieved and that which the revised PPG indicated was desirable.

The Cabinet noted the conclusions drawn in the report and recognised that in assessing applications for development, the Council would need to continue to ensure that where this would be consistent with the character and amenities of the locality, developments should include a high proportion of smaller dwellings and ensure that a site is developed to its capacity consistent with local circumstances.

- **RESOLVED** that the report "Housing Provision in South Bucks 2000/2001" be approved.

11. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

- **RESOLVED** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act:

Revenue Contract Issues

(Paragraph 8 – because of negotiations for proposed expenditure on a contract).

The Cabinet considered a report from the Resources Portfolio Holder on the progress of negotiations with ITnet regarding their claim for extra costs. The report set out options for taking the matter forward. Preferred options were identified for further investigation and report to a future meeting.

Bells Hill Shopping Centre Policy Advisory Group

(Paragraph 9 – because of terms proposed in the negotiation of a contract)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Bells Hill Shopping Centre Policy Advisory Group held on 2 August 2001 under the Chairmanship of the Community Portfolio Holder. The report set out the progress on a number of aspects of the preparation of this redevelopment scheme. A Press Release had been issued drawing attention to the outline planning applications due to be submitted and the full public consultation that would take place. Negotiations were continuing on short term lettings and the Cabinet agreed to recommend the Policy Committee/Council to approve expenditure of £60,000 from the Projects Fund to move the Chinese Take-away to the premises on the upper level of shops.