

## **CABINET MEETING**

**1 October 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:** Dr Kennedy (Chairman of the Council), Mr Rigby and Dr Scott

### **15. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 14 August 2001 were confirmed and signed by the Leader.

### **16. REVISED FORWARD PROGRAMME**

The Leader presented the Cabinet Forward Programme of key decisions which had been updated to cover the period to October 2002.

- **RESOLVED** that the programme be noted and approved for circulation to all Members.

### **17. BUDGET SPLIT BY COMMUNITY PLAN OBJECTIVES**

The Cabinet considered a report from the Resources Portfolio Holder showing the 2001/2002 budget split over the objectives of the Community Plan.

Cost centres had been reviewed and a split had been produced for each based upon the objectives of the Community Plan and applied to the original budget for 2001/2002. Appendices to the report set out the results in detail. The preparation of this analysis was the first stage of the budget exercise. It was noted that after separating out of the budget certain items which could not be apportioned to a Community Plan objective, together with expenditure on housing benefits where there was no discretion available to the Council, 22% of expenditure was attributable to Creating a Better Environment, 18% to Improving Safety, Health and Wellbeing and 12% to Developing a Thriving Community.

- **RESOLVED** that:-

1. The report be welcomed and noted
2. The information on allocations to the Community Plan priorities be used as a basis for any re-allocation of resources when setting the 2002/2003 budget.

### **18. REGULAR REVIEW OF SPENDING – PROVISIONAL OUTTURN FOR 2001/02**

The Cabinet considered a report from the Resources Portfolio Holder advising on Revenue and Capital expenditure and income incurred as at the end of July 2001, with an explanation of any significant variations.

While there were some changes to individual budgets and the current year net saving of £69,000 attributable to the Budget Review had been taken into account, income and expenditure was generally in line with the Budget and SSA for 2001/2002. In addition to the net running expenses report detailed in appendix A, the appendices showed other details of the Council's financial position. The capital programme showed on the face of it a large increase in spending but this was due to the forecast of land/property purchases and local authority social housing grant, all of which was recouped from the Housing Corporation. Revenue reserves were forecast to slightly reduce over the year, mainly as a result of an incremental loss of interest due to capital spending. A further appendix summarised the

capital reserves of the Council.

- **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## **19. BUDGET PROCESS AND TIMETABLE 2002/03**

The Cabinet considered a report from the Resources Portfolio Holder on the budget process and timetable for the preparation and review of the 2002/03 budgets for the Council.

The report followed the one considered by the Cabinet at its last meeting and showed in detail how it was proposed to assign individual cost centres to Portfolio Holders according to their areas of responsibility as well as setting out how the Review Panels would work with Portfolio Holders and Officers in the development of budgets, much in the same way as Budget Panels had worked in previous years. In assigning cost centres to Portfolio Holders, it was noted that some cost centres covered non-executive functions e.g. Tree Preservation, Elections, Licensing etc. Non-executive functions were not to be managed by the Cabinet but by full Council.

An analysis of the cost centres making up the budgets would be provided with notes of the principal activities of each and their linkage to the delivery of the Community Plan priorities and statutory services. In addition, as the allocations below net running expenses represent the dependencies that delivery of the work by one cost centre has on another, details of the key dependencies would be identified in the notes provided for each cost centre.

The report set out the budget cycle timetable which provided for Review Panels to meet at the end of November/beginning of December leading on to final approval of the budget and setting of the Council Tax by the Council on 5 March 2002. In relation to the schedule of individual cost centres, Portfolio Holders were invited to raise any queries as to where these had been assigned with the Director of Resources.

- **RESOLVED** that:-

1. The assignment of cost centres to Portfolio Holders set out in the report be approved.
2. Cost centres which covered non-executive functions be reviewed as part of the 2002/03 budget cycle.
3. The budget timetable for 2002/03 as set out be approved.

## **20. TOWN AND COUNTRY FINANCE ISSUES GROUP (TACFIG)**

The Cabinet received a report from the Resources Portfolio Holder on the work being carried out by TACFIG on local authority finance.

A particular issue that had been taken up by TACFIG had been pressing the case for a flat rate grant for local authorities and a very much simplified formula. This was in recognition of the fixed costs of Councils i.e. corporate and democratic core costs, which were similar irrespective of the size of the authority.

TACFIG had also received indications of the content of a Government White Paper on finance and other issues due to be issued in the Autumn.

- **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## **21. INVESTMENT POLICY ADVISORY GROUP**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Investment Policy Advisory Group which had met on 18

September 2001 under the Chairmanship of the Resources Portfolio Holder.

The report set out details of the performance of the Cash Fund managers during the first quarter of the year and included the fund manager's predictions of potential returns over the medium/long term (3 – 7 years). The quarterly report on the Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens Maintenance Fund had shown a decline in value during the first quarter of the year (with a subsequent further drop since) much in line with the movement of the market during the period.

The Group had also given consideration to the future yield requirements of the Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens Maintenance Fund having regard to the objectives of achieving income whilst at the same time preserving the capital value of the fund. In particular, the Group had considered changes which would enable the fund to generate sufficient income to cover the annual expenditure on the Memorial Gardens together with an additional requirement, set by the external auditors, that the Fund Managers' fees were to be paid from the income generated from the fund.

Having considered the recommendations of the Group it was

- **RESOLVED** that:-

1. The report be noted.
2. The following changes be made to the fund management arrangements:-
  - (a) To invest in Corporate Bonds rather than Gilts.
  - (b) To use a pooled vehicle for the Corporate Bonds and Equities
  - (c) To leave the investment ratio the same i.e. 60% Equities, 40% Corporate Bonds, to be reviewed after a period of six months when it was hoped the market would be less volatile.
  - (d) To transfer money from the Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens revenue reserves, if necessary, to cover any shortfall in revenue funding of maintenance of the Memorial Gardens.

## **22. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The Cabinet considered a report from the External Partnerships and Communications Portfolio Holder about the continued commitment of the Council to equal opportunities in regard to both the employment of Council staff and the way services were delivered.

Initial examination of equal opportunities across the Council indicated that the current policy was comprehensive and reflects practice in both service delivery and employment. However, there were three areas where some further attention was required: the general position on training where nothing specific on equal opportunities had been carried out; the monitoring and evaluation of equal opportunities policies and procedures; and updating policy on tackling harassment and bullying. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and guidance arising from it had placed particular emphasis on the responsibility to monitor policies and procedures together with their implementation and it was proposed make a twice yearly monitoring report to Cabinet on a range of equal opportunity indicators.

The report recommended the necessary steps to ensure continued commitment to equal opportunities including attention in the three areas outlined above. Measures could be met from within current budgetary provision; it was estimated the training would cost £7,500, with half to come from the Corporate Training Budget and half from Service Unit training budgets.

- **RESOLVED** that:-  
the action recommended in the report on the Equal Opportunities be approved.

## **23. COMMUNITY GRANTS**

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Portfolio Holders for External Partnerships and Communications and Community concerning three applications for community grants.

A total of £28,332 from the original grants budget of £31,000 remained available for the allocation in the remainder of the year. The report detailed the three applications for grants, which had been measured against the recently agreed grants policy and Community Plan objectives, as follows:-

1. Farnham Common Sports Club – to provide toilet facilities to the existing tennis clubhouse - £2,033 requested.
2. Beaconsfield Squash Club – to provide coaching for juniors within local schools - £1,250 requested.
3. Taplow Court Festival – to provide assistance to stage the festival and the Power of the Arts Forum - £4,347 requested.

The report set out details of each organisation with full supporting documentation for their applications. It was suggested that while these background papers should be made available to the Portfolio Holders, they need not be circulated to all the Cabinet with future reports.

The Cabinet noted that it was proposed to improve the marketing of Community Grants in the future with a view to helping to achieve Community Plan objectives and obtaining good and adequate publicity.

- **RESOLVED** that:-  
the following grants be approved:- Farnham Common Sports Club - £2,032.50  
Beaconsfield Squash Club - £1,250  
Taplow Court Festival - £3,000

#### **24. BURNHAM CONSERVATION AREA REVIEW**

The Cabinet considered a report from the Environment Portfolio Holder about a review of the Burnham Conservation Area and an examination of possible amendments to the existing boundary.

The Burnham Conservation Area had first been designated in 1977 and the report contained a draft Burnham Conservation Area appraisal analysing the special architectural and historic interest that Burnham possesses against a background of changes in national policy requiring a more thorough approach to the designation and review of conservation areas.

It was proposed to make three alterations to the boundary of the conservation area:

- To extend the existing boundary around Burnham Library
- To slightly extend the boundary in the south-west area of Lincoln Hatch Lane to include a number of attractive Edwardian properties
- To include an attractive 19<sup>th</sup> century wall running along the west side of Stomp Road

The Community Plan gave a medium priority to continuing to use powers to conserve historic buildings and street scenes and the review of Burnham Conservation Area was specifically mentioned in paragraph A.4. The next step in carrying out the review would be to undertake public consultation on the proposed amendments to the boundary and on the draft Conservation Area appraisal.

Reference was made to the use of Conservation Area Liaison Committees by certain authorities which provided an opportunity for the Council to engage with local residents and local businesses on conservation matters. It was suggested that this be looked at by the relevant Portfolio Holders.

- **RESOLVED** that:-  
a public consultation be undertaken on the proposed amendments to the Burnham Conservation area and on the draft Conservation Area appraisal document.

#### **25. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME FOR 2001 - 2003**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Environment Portfolio Holder with a update on the Environmental Improvements Work Programme.

The report detailed the progress on schemes on the previously agreed programme:-

- Fulmer Lighting – Consultations completed – construction in Autumn 2001.
- Burnham High Street – After redesign and consultations, work in progress on top and middle sections of the High Street including new street lighting and signage. In order not to prolong disruption and extend the difficulties encountered in closing the High Street, now proposed to complete all the phase 1 works from the top of the High Street to the junction with Jennery Lane as a continuous project.
- Beaconsfield Old Town – Draft scheme progressing towards public consultation at the end of November with report on results to Cabinet in February. Revised timing for this scheme to be considered to accord with reduction in overall Projects budget of £125,000 in current year and £100,000 Fixed Projects Budget for future years.
- Taplow Riverside Lighting – Consultations began in August with construction expected in the Autumn.
- Hedgerley Hill Shop – Scheme is constrained by construction of the new shop which is not due to be completed until Summer 2002. Timing of this scheme needs to be reconsidered.
- The Broadway, Farnham Common – Approval and agreement from a large number of different private owners and tenants involved now complete following protracted negotiations. Tenders now to be invited for the work.

The report updated the budget for the current year to include for the changes set above, an addition to the final costs of the Richings Park scheme of £7,675 and incorporating a reduction agreed as part of the Budget Review. The revised budget now totalled £124,475 with £11,825 currently projected as an underspend. The provisional budget allocations for 2002/03 provided for commencement of the Beaconsfield Old Town Scheme, carrying out the Hedgerley Hill shop frontage works, and Community Grants of £3,000. The Community Grant allocation was earmarked for schemes to brighten up the entrances to the District and the Portfolio Holder reported that work could be done to provide details and a format of works that were likely to be approved under this scheme for circulation to Parishes.

- **RESOLVED** that:-

1. The Environmental Improvements Capital Programme for 2001/02 be revised as set out in the report.
2. Should there be any underspend on projects in 2001/02, this be carried forward to next year's budget to be used on the Beaconsfield Old Town Scheme.
3. The provisional budget allocations from the 2002/03 Environmental Improvement Budget for Hedgerley Hill Shop Frontage, Community Grant Schemes and Beaconsfield Old Town be approved.

## **26. IVER INDUSTRIAL AREAS LINK ROAD**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Environment Portfolio Holder regarding key issues on the proposed Iver Industrial Areas link road.

The County Council, with funding assistance from the District Council had previously commissioned consultants to evaluate the feasibility and costs for connecting the industrial sites at Ridgeway, Bison and Court Lane, Iver to the strategic highway network to ensure minimal impact on the settlements and residential areas in Iver Parish. Subsequently, the Local Transport Plan had included the scheme as one to be funded by the redevelopment of the Bison Industrial Area. The County Council has also suggested that it would be easier to fund a link road if the development footprint were increased by releasing land from the Green Belt and this would be set out in a planning brief. There were different views on the merits of the alternative routes for a link road.

There were a number of important issues for the District Council to consider:

- Should the Council consider releasing land from the Green Belt in order to assist in funding a new road?
- Will the Structure Plan revision process suggest or facilitate the release of Green Belt for such a purpose?
- Are there exceptional circumstances, as defined in regional planning guidance, to consider a review of the Green Belt boundaries?
- If the Bison site is redeveloped will alternative uses be allowed and how will these affect traffic generation?

The Cabinet considered there was a number of complex issues for the Council to evaluate. After consideration it was

- **RESOLVED** that:-  
the Local Plan Advisory Group be asked to consider the issues set out in the report and in particular whether the District Council wished to see a road provided, even if it required additional land to be released from the Green Belt for further industrial development whereby the Council would seek provision of a link road as part of that development.

## **27. JOINT DOG WARDEN SERVICE WITH CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Environment Portfolio Holder on the possibility of providing a joint dog warden with Chiltern District Council.

The report explained how the Council currently carried out its statutory duties on dogs under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 with the aid of the Pest Control contractor. This mainly related to the collection of stray dogs held by the Police or the public and kennelling them for up to seven days if they were not claimed by their owner. Chiltern District Council directly employed their own dog warden to deal with these matters but also to take on education on responsible dog ownership and enforcement of dog fouling legislation (including fixed penalty notices).

The comparative costs of the service in the two Councils were £47,000 for Chiltern to provide a full dog warden service while in South Bucks the cost was £2,897 (collection and vet/kennel fees) net of income from fines and fees recovered together with internal recharges of £16,421. The Cabinet noted that it had been suggested that this could be an item for reference to the Review Panel. However Members took the view that the current basic service provided was satisfactory, that any joint service provided with Chiltern District Council would result in considerably increased costs, and that this matter had been reviewed previously by the former Environment and Housing Committee and rejected.

- **RESOLVED** that:-  
no further consideration be given to revision of the current service level provision for dog control.

## **28.**

### **WASTE STRATEGY POLICY ADVISORY GROUP**

The Environment Portfolio Holder presented a report of the Waste Strategy Policy Advisory Group which had met on 5 September 2001 under the Chairmanship of Dr Kennedy. The Group had received and endorsed the draft Waste Strategy for Bucks which was being prepared jointly by the Bucks Waste Forum of which the Council was a member. The strategy set out possible ways forward in recycling, would shortly be issued to the public for formal consultation, and did not commit any of the participating Councils to the financial implications contained.

The Group had also received a mass of information and guidance relating to new statutory targets for recycling and possible ways of meeting those targets. The Group noted and agreed a range of actions to take matters forward on recycling. These included:

- A waste audit to be carried out in partnership with Chiltern and Wycombe Councils
- A letter to the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs making representations about various waste management issues.
- Investigations into a new contract for glass recycling arrangements, incentives to recycle for the public, schools and businesses, a trial of new paper recycling boxes and improved publicity, and a presentation from Biffa Waste Services to all Members on 13 November 2001.
- Selection of a recycling site for revamping / improvement together with increased monitoring of recycling sites by Inspectors.
- **RESOLVED** that:-  
the report of the Waste Strategy Policy Advisory Group be received.

## 29. **A355 STRATEGY**

The Cabinet considered a report from the Safety Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder updating Members on the commitment in the Community Plan to lobby the County Council for a survey of the whole A355.

The report summarised the history of concerns about the A355 including the reference to it in the Buckinghamshire County Structure Plan (1996) and the Local Transport Plan published in July 2000. Lobbying by the District Council had been instrumental in obtaining a joint seminar for County and District Members in May 2001 and it was understood that the County Council was currently seeking tenders for consultants for developing a strategy for the A355. This would build on the significant amount of information on HGV flows on the A355 through the Farnhams previously obtained by the County Council.

Cabinet Members recognised that any strategy for the A355 should be comprehensive and not simply impose controls which would divert traffic onto other less appropriate roads.

- **Resolved** that:-
  - i. Progress be noted;
  - ii. When the District Council is formally consulted on the A355 Draft Strategy (probably in November 2001) this be referred to and considered to by a Review Panel.

## 30.

### **SOUTH BUCKS COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP 2001**

The Cabinet considered a report from the Safety Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder about the current activities of the South Bucks Community Safety Partnership.

The Community Safety Partnership comprised the District Council, Thames Valley Police, Buckinghamshire County Council, the Probation Service, Chiltern and South Bucks Primary Health Group, Beacon Housing Association, a local school representative and the wider communities of South Bucks. Its role was to "reduce Crime and Disorder and their social and economic costs in South Bucks".

The report covered the steps being taken to produce a draft of the next Community Safety Strategy, the consultations being undertaken thereon and the Community Safety Audit taking place on which the strategy would be based. Reference was also made to Community Safety Fora, two of which has been established locally in Burnham and Iver to improve co-operation between partnership agencies and local communities. A number of changes in local Police personnel were also noted including the appointment of Inspector David Colchester to the new post of Strategic Partnership Inspector for South Bucks District Council.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to report receipt of the partnership development grant of £29,365 for the partnership development fund. This was new money from central Government and would enable the development of the new audit and strategy together with providing additional resources to address Community Safety fears.

- **RESOLVED** that the report be welcomed and received.

### 31. HOUSING STRATEGY – MONITORING REPORT

The Cabinet received a report from the Safety Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder on the level of activity with regard to:

- Homelessness
- Partner registered social landlords
- Housing Renewal Grants
- Best Value and Local Performance Indicators

The Cabinet was pleased to receive the monitoring report on the various housing matters and noted the very satisfactory allocation of £7 million (approximately) for Chiltern Hundreds Housing Association, a regular partner of the Council, for keyworker housing initiatives. Members were also interested to note the apparent recent downturn in homelessness applications and asked for the reasons for this to be investigated and monitored.

- **RESOLVED** that the report be noted and future monitoring reports be submitted to the Environment and Housing Review Panel.

### 32. ROAD CLOSURES

The Cabinet considered a report from the Safety Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder seeking approval to requests for the temporary closure of roads in Beaconsfield and Gerrards Cross.

The events involved were Remembrance Day Parades on 11 November 2001 at Windsor End, Beaconsfield and East Common, Gerrards Cross and the Beaconsfield Festival of Lights at Station Road, Beaconsfield on the evening of 12 December 2001.

- **RESOLVED** that subject to no objections from the consultees, formal consent be granted for the temporary closure of Station Road, Beaconsfield, Windsor End, Beaconsfield and East Common, Gerrards Cross on the dates referred to, pursuant to Section 21 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847.

### 33. ANNUAL PARADES AND FESTIVALS

The Cabinet considered a report from the Community Portfolio Holder about encouraging annual parades and festivals in support of the Community Plan.

The Community Plan aimed to ensure that all local people had access to services and facilities and were encouraged to feel part of the Community. An objective in this area was to investigate sponsoring / facilitating an annual parade / festival or event in each main village / town without one.

The report indicated current local events which the Council supported, for example, Burnham Carnival and Beaconsfield Festival of Lights. Some of the other villages had other events although these were not all a regular feature. The tone of the report was that the District Council should offer encouragement and support for locally organised initiatives rather than try to create them. It was envisaged this could be done by utilising existing staff and grants available from existing resources to support and encourage local events.

- **RESOLVED** that the existing grants programme be actively promoted as a mechanism for promoting and supporting local festivals and similar events.

#### **34. FUNDING OF PARISH APPRAISALS**

The Cabinet considered a report from the Community Portfolio Holder about the provision of funding to Parish Councils undertaking Parish appraisals.

Parish Councils were being encouraged by the Countryside Agency to carry out appraisals of their communities and contribute to the Community Planning process. The appraisals will help identify key local issues, priorities and actions which can be fed into the South Bucks Community Strategy. Parish appraisals had also been considered at the last meeting of the South Bucks Forum with great interest although concern had been expressed over resourcing the process.

Bucks Community Action (BCA) had supported and assisted some Parishes throughout the County to carry out Parish appraisals and had suggested a grant of £400 would greatly assist the development of such an appraisal. The costs that Parishes were likely to incur included publicity, posters and leaflets, meeting rooms and photocopying of questionnaires.

The Cabinet supported the proposal to allocate grants to Parishes and agreed that some of the conditions placed on the proposed grants suggested in the report should be relaxed.

- **RESOLVED** that:

(1) grants of £400 be allocated to Parishes undertaking village appraisals on the following basis:-

- a. That Parish Councils will be responsible for the distribution of the funds;
- b. That the grant be payable at the commencement of work on an appraisal; and
- c. That there be no requirement to re-pay the grant if the appraisal is not completed.

(2) the maximum cost of £4,800 be financed from the Projects Fund.

#### **35. CENTRAL RAILWAY UPDATE**

The Deputy Leader reported that it was understood a decision was imminent from the Minister of Transport about whether the hybrid Bill procedure would be approved for Central Railway to advance their proposals. All Members of the Council had recently been circulated with an update of the lobbying and action taken to persuade the Minister to reject this procedure to advance the project.

#### **36. PROTOCOLS FOR CONSULTATION EXERCISES**

The Deputy Leader reported work on a protocol for use by the Council in carrying out its consultations with the public, partners and stakeholders which recognises the different internal processes which will be needed for Best Value consultation. This would ensure a professional approach in the communications made by the Council on any consultation undertaken.

#### **37.**

##### **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:-

##### **Revenues and Benefits Contract**

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

The Cabinet considered a report from the Resources Portfolio Holder on preparation for any re-negotiation of the contract with the revenue service provider, ITnet, and agreed a course of action to take in the negotiations.

**Discretionary Relief Application – National Non-Domestic Rates**

(Paragraph 5 – because of information relating to a recipient of financial assistance)

The Cabinet considered a report from the Resources Portfolio Holder on an application from the Child Bereavement Trust and approved an award of discretionary rate relief.

**Update on sale of Council Offices**

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

The Cabinet considered a report from the Resources Portfolio Holder together with a report of the Office Move Policy Advisory Group on an update on the sale of the Council offices. Having considered a number of options, the Cabinet agreed to recommend the Policy Committee / Council on a particular course of action and asked for the matter to be concurrently considered and reported on by a Review Panel.

**Renovation Grant – Repayment Waiver Request**

(Paragraph 5 – because of information relating to applicant for financial assistance)

The Cabinet considered a report from the Safety Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder about a request to waive repayment of a renovation grant and having considered the circumstances refused the request.

**Anti-Social Behaviour Orders**

(Paragraph 12a and 13 – because it relates to legal proceedings by the authority / proposals to seek an order in the Magistrates Court).

The Cabinet considered a report from the Safety Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder and approved a recommendation to seek two Anti-Social Behaviour Orders in the Magistrates Court.

**Bells Hill Shopping Centre Policy Advisory Group**

(Paragraph 9 – terms proposed in the course of negotiations for a contract)

The Cabinet received a report of the Bells Hill Shopping Centre Policy Advisory Group which met on 25 September 2001, noted the progress being made and approved a recommendation for provision of funding of up to £5,000 for materials for use in the exhibition / public consultation on this proposed redevelopment.