

Report to: **Scrutiny Committee for Social Services and Health**

Date: **22 September 2004**

Title of report: **Reconciling Policy and Resources**

By: **Director of Law and Performance Management**

Purpose of report: **To seek the Committee's views at this early stage on the direction of travel-policy steers and targets being developed for the relevant portfolio for 2005-06**

RECOMMENDATION - the Committee is recommended to consider any preliminary comments it wishes to make on the planning assumptions set out in the Cabinet report Reconciling Policy and Resources – State of County 2004.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Reconciling Policy and Resources process is the ongoing mechanism used each year by the County Council to bring into line our policies and services with the resources available to deliver them. The Cabinet began this policy and budget planning process for 2005/06 at its meeting on 3 August.

1.2 The Cabinet endorsed the current policy steers which sets the medium term agenda for the Authority. These are set out in Appendix 3 of the attached Cabinet report. The whole Council priorities within the 2004/05 Council Plan are to:

- continue to improve services to older people;
- minimise council tax rises, as far as possible, by focusing on core services;
- raise the economic performance of East Sussex;
- further reduce crime and the fear of crime;
- provide safer and better maintained roads and repair street lights;
- support teachers in raising standards in our schools; and
- promote active citizenship.

1.3 These will be achieved by:

- being clear about priorities and long term direction;
- focussing on customers, particularly on our residents' needs and preferences;
- providing equality of opportunity for all through our service delivery and as an employer;
- departments working more closely with each other and with our partners;
- using a variety of ways to deliver services;
- managing our resources and assets well;
- harnessing the potential of our staff; and
- improving the County Council's reputation.

1.4 Set out in the appendices to the attached Cabinet report is the key information that was presented to Cabinet on 3 August:

- Appendix 1 - General Policy Context

- Appendix 2 - Financial Overview
- Appendix 3 - Council Policy Steers

1.5 Scrutiny committees are now being asked to contribute to the Reconciling Policy and Resources process for 2005/06 by considering the attached report and any preliminary views about their relevant areas of service. Any comments will be considered by Cabinet members in the process of refining the policy steers and financial plans taking place through October and November 2004.

1.6 As in previous years, in addition to the whole Council debating the developing strategy at appropriate times, it is proposed that individual portfolios (ie Lead Member and respective Chief Officers) share their more developed thinking, and draft proformas, with their respective scrutiny committees during the next cycle of meetings. In reality, some scrutiny committees may need to organise an appropriate meeting date. As in previous years also, it is advisable that Lead Members are invited to attend scrutiny committees and listen and respond to the debate in relation to the budget and Reconciling Policy and Resources.

1.7 In addition (again as in previous years):

- each Lead Member and Chief Officer is charged with explaining in detail their proposals and receiving feedback from their respective Scrutiny Chairman prior to the December meeting of Cabinet which is scheduled to agree the near final strategy for 2005/06; and
- the Deputy Leader meets with all Scrutiny Chairmen, at one meeting, to explain his views and receive comments and suggestions. This would need to be before the December Cabinet meeting.

2. Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is recommended to discuss the report and consider any preliminary comments it wishes to make on the planning assumptions set out in the Cabinet report Reconciling Policy and Resources – State of County 2004.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:
Report to Cabinet 3 August 2004