

SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 17th OCTOBER 2001.

THE MEDIUM TERM CORPORATE STRATEGY 2001 – 2005

**COMMENTS OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Committee at its meeting on 15th October considered those parts of the draft Medium Term Corporate Strategy that fell within its terms of reference, namely Planning, Highways and Transportation, Country Parks and Waste Disposal.

In the course of a wide-ranging discussion, during which a number of questions were addressed to the members of the Cabinet present at the meeting (Professor M.H. Preston CC, Mrs. L.A.S. Pendleton CC and Mr. P.G. Winkless CC), the Committee was advised as follows:

- (a) The absence of statistical information and performance targets against which the Council's performance in achieving its objectives could be scrutinised was noted. These would be developed and included in the Best Value Performance Plan and other key plans.
- (b) The impact of national and regional policies would need to be taken into consideration in developing Council policies and in partnership working.
- (c) Although the document included no specific reference to Park and Ride Schemes these were covered by reference to the Local Transport Plans.
- (d) The use of other alternative forms of transport such as railways was dependent on having sufficient financial resources. Any expansion of the use of railways would largely depend on support from the Government or the Strategic Rail Authority.
- (e) The Council's ability to achieve its aim of providing 95% of people in the county with direct access to an hourly bus service or better was dependent upon the existing level of resources being available in future years. Subject to this, the aim was sustainable. Greater use of community buses, provided in partnership with local communities and parish councils would help to provide services to those areas not served by the hourly service i.e. 'the deep rural areas'.
- (f) The proposed road safety measures would include, amongst other things, the possible expansion of the use of speed cameras, 20 mph speed limits outside schools, expansion of home zones and quiet lanes schemes. The issue of the speed of traffic approaching villages was recognised as significant in planning future traffic control measures.

- (g) The Strategy did not include any reference to possible proposals relating to the widening of the M1 Motorway in Leicestershire as the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DLTR) had not yet come to a view. The County Council would have the opportunity to comment when the DLTR had developed its 'preferred strategy'.
- (h) The Strategy did not include specific reference to the problem of flooding on the basis that flood relief was primarily the responsibility of District Councils. However the Committee was reminded that the County Council had financed improvements to tackle flooding caused by highways.
- (i) Although there was no specific reference in the Strategy to the Council's attitude towards the distribution of new housing development around the county, the Council would continue to make representations against the level of new housing recommended for central Leicestershire by the Panel following the Examination in Public of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan.
- (j) The Administration remained committed to safeguarding and promoting a sustainable environment, in accordance with Agenda 21 and FABLE.

RESOLVED:-

- a) That the comments made by representatives of the Cabinet in response to questions raised be noted.
- b) That the Scrutiny Commission be advised that this Committee broadly supports the contents of the Strategy but that the Cabinet be asked to consider the following comments:
 - (i) the first bullet point under "Improving Our Transport System" should be expanded to include some reference to the development of community transport as a means of improving public transport to those areas not served by the hourly bus service i.e. 'the deep rural areas'.
 - (ii) under "Improving Our Transport System" a specific commitment should be made to promoting the use of the railways and other alternative forms of transport, as well as buses.
 - (iii) under "Caring for our Environment" the preamble should be amended reflect the Council's commitment to promoting a sustainable environment.
 - (iv) under "Managing Waste Effectively" a specific commitment should be made to exploring alternative forms of waste disposal, including incineration.